

Project Details	
Project Code	NMH27Br Sharp
Title	Social determinants of mental ill-health over the life course: longitudinal analysis of young people in the Philippines and UK.
Research Theme	Neuroscience & Mental Health
Project Type	Dry lab
Summary	This interdisciplinary project provides training in global mental health and advanced epidemiological/statistical methods. Using data from two large cohorts in the Philippines and England, the project will improve our understanding on life course risk factors for poor mental health and self-harm. Data were collected from young people in these settings on a yearly basis, providing two rich datasets to explore important questions which are policy relevant.
Description	The burden of mental health conditions and self-harm are most acutely felt in the poorer nations of the world and minoritized populations. Low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) account for 80% of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs -a measure of overall disease burden) to depressive disorders and self-harm (70% of all self-harm occur in LMIC, 80% of suicide deaths). The drivers of poor mental health in these settings remain poorly understood. Existing research is limited by retrospective designs that hinder causal inference and a lack of longitudinal data exploring life course influences— approaches more common in high-income countries. Our understanding of minoritized populations are also hindered by a lack of representation in existing cohorts of more diverse groups. Without robust, contextually grounded evidence, efforts to reduce the burden of mental illness and self-harm in LMICs and minoritised populations, will remain constrained. There is an urgent need to identify and understand the unique risk factors contributing to poor mental health in these regions. Strengthening the evidence base will enable the design of culturally and developmentally appropriate interventions, ultimately improving mental health outcomes where the need is greatest. This project aims to investigate developmental risk factors for mental ill health—including depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and self-harm—in diverse contexts (Philippines and England). Objectives include identifying high-risk groups and modifiable mediators to inform early interventions, especially when exposures (e.g. parental death) are less amenable to change. Key questions will explore which childhood factors contribute to poor mental health, how associations vary (are moderated) by individual, family, social and economic characteristics/influences, and whether timing of exposure impacts outcomes. This project is exploratory in nature, allowing the student to take ownership by identifying specific research questions of interest and designing analyses to address them, supported by the supervisory team. One central and timely hypothesis is that negative effects of internet and social media use on mental health are moderated by family oversight. The student will leverage two datasets: 1) Longitudinal Cohort Study on the Filipino Child (LCSFC), a unique study tracking 5000 children in the Philippines from age 10 (in 2016) to age 24 (2030). Annual surveys include rich data on child and maternal mental health, self-harm, domestic abuse, bullying, internet/social

	media use, sexual health, climate change, economic conditions, physical health, and environmental factors. 2) Born in Bradford's Age of Wonder (AoW) cohort, which is a whole city ethnically diverse cohort tracking children from birth (2007-2011) to aged 21. From age 12/13, children have been followed up in secondary school annually (in Years 8, 9 and 10), with data collected on a range of measures including mental health, self-harm, climate change, economic conditions, sexual health, physical health, environmental factors, lifestyle behaviours, bullying, and internet/social media use. The repeated measures allow for in-depth exploration of how exposures at different developmental stages influence later mental health outcomes. As one of the few large-scale cohorts in a LMIC with frequent mental health data collection, LCSFC offers rare opportunities for life course analysis[RW2.1]. In addition, the AoW cohort is ethnically diverse, with a large proportion of participants living in deprived neighbourhoods, enabling examination of mental health trajectories in underrepresented groups. Both datasets also allow for exploring differing trajectories of mental health and how these relate to risk factors. With the data already available, this project will develop the student's epidemiological skills in addressing methodological and contextual challenges inherent to secondary analysis. This PhD spans the disciplines of psychiatry, psychology, and epidemiology. The student will work with complex datasets, apply advanced epidemiological methods (e.g. causal inference), and use sophisticated statistical techniques (e.g. multilevel modelling, multiple imputation). Training will include proficiency in statistical software, advanced quantitative epidemiological methods, cross-cultural comparisons and exposure to global health research in LMIC settings, and underserved populations. This project offers a chance to contribute to a growing evidence base on mental health in under-researched populations, with potential to inform policy and future data collection.
Can be completed part time?	Yes
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