

Project Details	
Project Code	MRC22PHSBr Knipe
Title	Life-course influences for mental ill health: an analysis of birth cohort data from the Philippines
Research Theme	Population Health Sciences
Summary	This interdisciplinary project provides training in global mental health and advanced epidemiological/statistical methods. Using data from a large Filipino cohort, the project will improve our understanding on life course risk factors for poor mental health/ suicidal thoughts. We know little of what contributes to poor mental health in low and middle-income countries. Engagement of policymakers will occur early to ensure that the findings result in real-life change
Description	<p>The burden of mental disorders and self-harm are most acutely felt in the poorer nations of the world. 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).</p> <p>Despite this our understanding of what contributes to the development of ill mental health is largely unknown in these emerging economies and is limited by the current evidence base. Firstly, much of the existing evidence uses retrospective study designs, which make explorations of causality difficult. Secondly, there is a growing body of evidence from high-income countries that poor mental health such as depression develops as a consequence of factors that work across the life course – this is less well explored in LMIC. Lastly, many of the investigations exploring risk factors for depression and suicidal behaviour in LMIC fail to appropriately account for the different experiences (e.g. type and frequency of adverse childhood experiences) and environmental contexts. The relative importance of certain influences at various developmental stages may differ. Without better quality evidence, progress in reducing the burden of mental ill health and suicide in LMIC will continue to be hindered. An improved understanding of contributing factors to the development of depression and suicidal thoughts is urgently needed to allow for contextually relevant interventions to be developed. This PhD will address these limitations by utilising an ongoing large cohort dataset (Cebu Longitudinal Health and Nutrition Survey - CLHNS) established in the Philippines. It is a follow-up study of 3327 Filipino women who gave birth in the early 1980s and their 3080 offspring. The offspring of the index children are also now being followed up. This rich data source includes data on physical health (e.g. stunting, morbidity), social (e.g. household composition, educational outcomes), economic (e.g. financial resources), and environmental (e.g. neighbourhood assessment) factors. There are also measures of childhood adversity (e.g. parental domestic violence, child labour). The inclusion of measures over time will allow for the exploration of potential mechanisms by which certain factors might contribute to later mental health outcomes at different developmental stages. Importantly this is one of the only established birth cohort studies which have tracked individuals through their childhood that has data on depression symptoms and suicidal thoughts in adulthood (ages 18, 21, and 35) from a LMIC. This project will investigate the influence of factors across</p>

	<p>development on adulthood depression and suicidal thoughts in a LMIC. It will aim to identify potential high-risk groups (including modifiable risk-factors) for the development of early interventions, and modifiable mediators when the exposure is less amenable for intervention (e.g. parental death). The study will address the following questions: - What factors across development (prenatal to young-adulthood) contribute to depression and suicidal thoughts in adulthood? - What are the mechanisms through which risk-factors impact on mental health? - Are there specific time-points at which the exposure to certain risk factors contributes to a worsening of depression and/or suicidal thoughts in adulthood? This PhD spans the disciplines of psychiatry, psychology, and epidemiology. It provides a unique opportunity for the student to develop skills across a range of sophisticated epidemiological and statistical techniques, including mediation analysis, strategies for dealing with missing data (such as multiple imputation) and causal inference. Given the paucity of evidence and the high-quality nature of the dataset, this project has the potential to significantly contribute to the knowledge base and identify contextually relevant targets for intervention.</p>
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