

## **Study on the Impact of Mental Health Challenges on the Enjoyment of Human Rights by Young People**

### **Human Rights Council Resolution 57/30**

#### **Consolidated answers from:**

VIDES Philippines Youth Leaders and Scholars (Ages 12–22)

All respondents are from low-income families

Mobile Education Programs – Cavite City and Quezon City

January 2026

### **1. Main Mental Health Challenges Faced by Young People**

As young people in the Philippines, we see that many of us struggle with anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and low self-esteem. These challenges are often caused by academic pressure, high family expectations, financial difficulties, peer comparison, bullying (including cyberbullying), and the strong influence of social media.

For many of us, poverty and unstable home environments add another layer of emotional stress. Some youth feel pressured to succeed not only for themselves but also to help support their families. Others experience discrimination or unsafe living conditions, which affect their sense of security and belonging.

These mental health challenges deeply affect our daily lives. Many young people have difficulty concentrating in school, completing tasks, managing responsibilities, and maintaining healthy relationships. Some withdraw socially, lose motivation, or experience physical symptoms such as fatigue and sleep problems.

Marginalized youth—especially those from low-income families, rural areas, informal settlements, conflict-affected communities, or unstable households—are more vulnerable. Limited access to mental health services and safe spaces makes it harder for them to seek support.

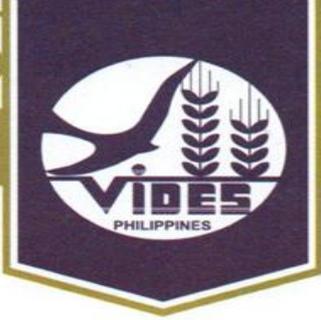
Because of these challenges, young people are sometimes unable to fully enjoy their rights to education, participation, safety, decent work, and a dignified standard of living. Mental health struggles are not only personal issues—they directly affect our human rights and future opportunities.

### **2. Government Actions to Address Youth Mental Health**

The Philippine Government has taken important steps to address youth mental health through laws and programs.

One major law is **Republic Act No. 11036 (Philippine Mental Health Act of 2018)**, which recognizes mental health as a basic human right. It integrates mental health services into communities, healthcare systems, and schools. It also promotes awareness and reduces stigma.

Another important measure is **Republic Act No. 12080 (Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act)**, which requires public schools to establish Care Centers. These centers provide counseling, crisis response, early intervention, and suicide prevention programs.



Government agencies such as the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Education (DepEd), in partnership with organizations including the World Health Organization (WHO), have expanded school-based and community-based services. Funding for mental health programs has increased in recent years, including allocations for school mental health initiatives.

Special attention is given to vulnerable groups such as learners with disabilities, children in conflict with the law, youth affected by disasters, and victims of abuse.

While these efforts show progress, implementation is still uneven, especially in rural and low-income areas. Many services remain limited or difficult to access.

### **3. Barriers to Accessing Mental Health Support**

Despite existing laws and programs, many young people still face serious barriers in accessing mental health care.

#### **a) Stigma and Fear of Judgment**

Stigma remains one of the biggest challenges. Many young people are afraid of being judged, labeled, or misunderstood. Mental health issues are sometimes seen as weakness or something to hide. Because of this, many suffer in silence.

#### **b) Lack of Awareness**

Some youth do not fully understand mental health conditions or where to seek help. Mental health literacy is still limited in many communities.

#### **c) Shortage of Professionals and Facilities**

There is a shortage of psychiatrists, psychologists, and trained counselors, especially outside major cities. Services are concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural communities underserved.

#### **d) Financial and Geographic Barriers**

Mental health treatment can be expensive. Transportation and distance from facilities also prevent many young people from accessing support.

#### **e) Gaps in Implementation**

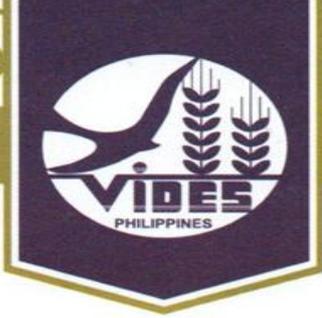
Although laws mandate services at the local level, implementation is inconsistent. More training and coordination are needed at the *barangay* and school levels.

These barriers affect the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality of services. As a result, young people's rights to health, education, safety, and participation are restricted.

### **4. Laws, Policies, and Youth Participation**

The Philippines has enacted policies that aim to protect youth mental health:

- a) **Republic Act No. 11036** – Establishes a rights-based national mental health framework and mandates community and school integration.
- b) **Republic Act No. 12080** – Strengthens school-based mental health programs and establishes Care Centers.
- c) School guidance counseling services and national hotlines provide additional support.
- d) NGO-led initiatives, including VIDES Philippines programs, help create safe spaces and provide psychosocial support.



Young people have participated in consultations, surveys, focus group discussions, and youth councils. However, we are rarely primary decision-makers. While our voices are heard, there is still a need for more meaningful and direct youth involvement in designing and evaluating policies.

Existing measures have improved:

- Availability** – More school-based programs and counseling services.
- Accessibility** – Free or low-cost services in schools and communities.
- Acceptability** – Increased awareness campaigns and youth-friendly approaches.
- Quality** – Better training and more structured referral systems.

However, gaps remain, particularly for marginalized and rural youth.

## 5. Public Expenditure on Youth Mental Health

Mental health receives only a small portion of the national health budget, and only a fraction of this is specifically allocated to youth services.

In recent years, funding has increased. The Department of Health allocated billions of pesos for mental health programs, and the Department of Education allocated funds for school-based mental health and well-being programs, including a significant allocation in the 2026 national budget.

Recent improvements include:

- ₱2.1 billion allocated by the Department of Health in 2023.
- ₱210 million allocated by the Department of Education in 2024.
- ₱2.9 billion allocated in the 2026 national budget for school-based programs.

Despite these improvements, funding remains limited compared to the growing needs of young people. Historical underinvestment and staff shortages continue to affect service quality and coverage.

## 6. Recommendations

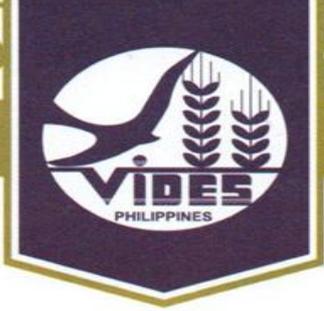
As young people, we respectfully recommend the following:

### a) For Governments and International Organizations:

- ✓ Increase funding specifically for youth mental health.
  - ✓ Expand community-based and school-based services, especially in rural areas.
  - ✓ Train and hire more mental health professionals.
  - ✓ Invest in digital mental health solutions such as teletherapy and online counseling.
  - ✓ Strengthen anti-stigma campaigns.
  - ✓ Ensure services are free or affordable.
  - ✓ Include young people meaningfully in planning and decision-making.
- Address root causes such as poverty, discrimination, violence, and digital risks.

### b) For Civil Society:

- ✓ Provide safe spaces for dialogue and peer support.
- ✓ Continue advocacy for stronger mental health policies
- ✓ Promote mental health education at the community level
- ✓ Offer seminar for parents to understand what mental health is



**c) For Young People:**

- ✓ Speak openly about mental health.
- ✓ Support friends who may be struggling.
- ✓ Seek help from trusted adults and professionals.
- ✓ Participate actively in youth consultations and initiatives.

We believe that protecting mental health is essential to protecting human rights. When young people are mentally healthy, we are better able to study, work, participate in society, and contribute positively to our communities.

**Prepared by:**

**30 Youth Leaders and Scholars (Ages 12–22) of VIDES Philippines  
Mobile Education Program – Cavite CityCenter and Quezon City Center  
January 2026**

**Preparation / Timeline:**

- ❖ January 10, 2026 : Presentation and discussion of the Survey Questionnaire by VIDES Delegate - Sr. Melanie Pilar, FMA to the youth
- ❖ January 11 to 20, 2026 : Research period about the topic, personal answers
- ❖ January 21, 2026 : Brainstorming and deliberation of the gathered information among the youth
- ❖ January 24, 2026 : Consultation with Sr. Melanie Pilar FMA
- ❖ January 25, 2026 : Finalizing the Answers

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