

Full source reference:

Bhana, A., Abas, M. A., Kelly, J., Van Pinxteren, M., Mudekanye, L. A., & Pantelic, M. (2020). Mental health interventions for adolescents living with HIV or affected by HIV in low-and middle-income countries: systematic review. *BJPsych open*, 6(5).

Free access link:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7488323/pdf/S2056472420000678a.pdf>

Article Overview:

This systematic review examined mental health interventions for adolescents living with HIV or affected by HIV in low- and middle- income contexts. 16 studies were included.

Sample: adolescents aged 10-24 years living with HIV or affected by HIV.

Key take home messages:

1. Family-strengthening are the most often used (12 studies) interventions and favoured over school or group-based or individual interventions. Eight of these studies showed a significant effect on mental health outcomes. Focus of intervention: enhancing caregiver and adolescent resilience, improving communication and parenting skills (monitoring and supervision) and increasing social support and social networks to reduce social isolation.
2. Studies varied in sample size, design, measurement, therefore it is difficult to know what might account for significant/unsignificant findings. Most studies trained the adolescent and families in problem-solving, which is an evidence-based way to improve depression. Several programmes also provided sessions to enhance knowledge and understanding of sexual and reproductive health, which, within the context of fears about HIV transmission, may positively influence mental health outcomes.
3. Five studies reported statistically significant changes in adolescent and caregiver mental health or mental well-being
4. Overall, family-based interventions and economic strengthening show promise.
5. Interventions targeted at mental health concerns may need to extend the focus of family strengthening to include a broader range of life issues associated with adolescents living with HIV and not only focus on health. This may mean that such interventions must be delivered through community-based agencies sensitive to local contexts.