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## Child Mental Health does matter: A global perspective

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has indicated that 10-20% of children worldwide are affected by mental health conditions, disorders and diseases. Furthermore, elaborate studies have noted that health-related problems in children are often associated with mental health challenges. For example, neuropsychiatric conditions have been identified as a leading cause of disability in young people in all countries. Well documented studies have emphasized the point that if these mental health conditions are untreated, they severely influence children's development, their educational attainments and their potential to live fulfilling and productive lives. Unfortunately, most professionals and practitioners seem to focus more on the physical health of children often neglecting child mental health conditions. This paper makes a strong argument for child mental health to be taken seriously because it does matter in the holistic treatment of children, especially in low and middle-income

countries. Special emphasis is placed on the prevalence, risk and protective factors, and interventions to prevent and treat childhood mental health problems based on a systematic review of literature. A bio-social ecological model is presented as a counter to the rigid application of a medical model that highlights deficits rather than the assets in children. It is argued that this holistic model would be useful in the optimal development of children, especially those most vulnerable, with the possibility of reducing the burden of mental health challenges on governments as children grow older.

### Speaker Biography

Jace Pillay completed his doctorate in 1996 at the Rand Afrikaans University in South Africa. He is the South African Research Chair in Education and Care in Childhood focusing on the mental health of orphans and vulnerable children. He has published numerous papers in reputed journals and has presented his research at numerous international conferences. He is a licensed educational and counselling psychologist.

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