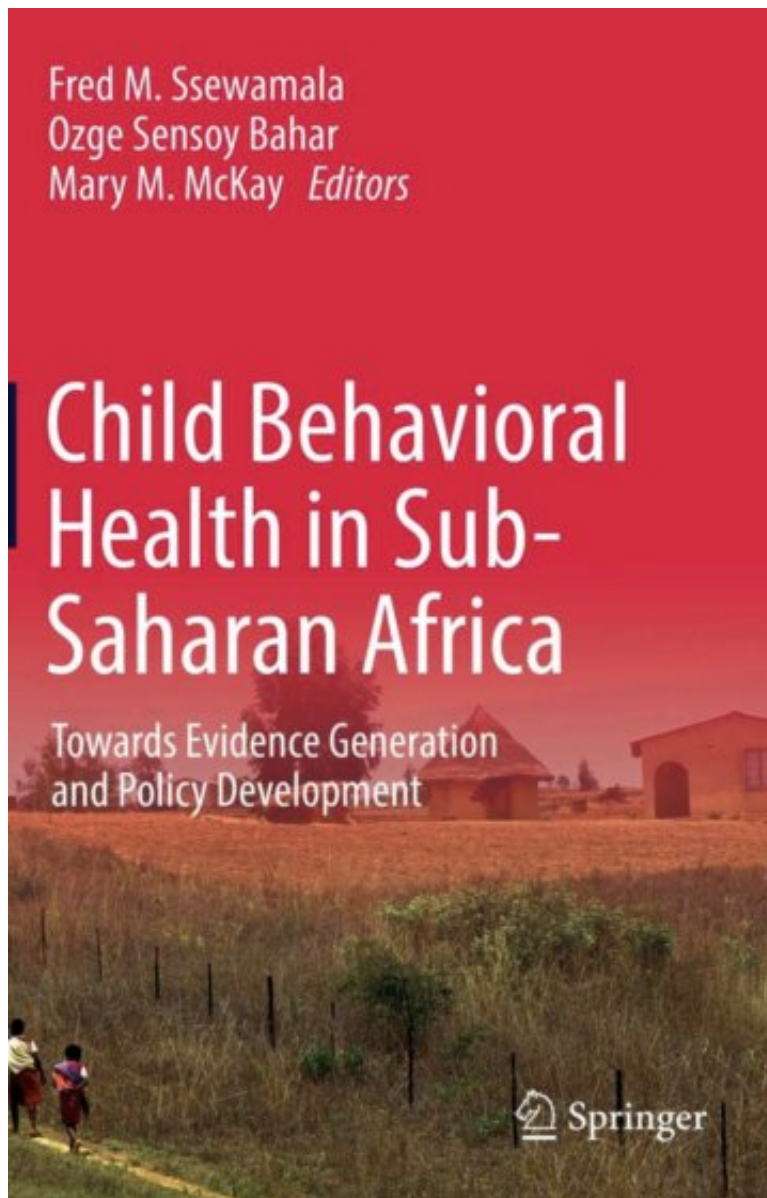


Child behavioral health in sub-Saharan Africa

January 27 2022, by Mary McKay, Fred Ssewamala, Ozge Sensoy Bahar



Credit: Springer

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa have experienced considerable political and social instability. They also have the highest rates of HIV/AIDS and malaria globally, resulting in a myriad of physical and cognitive consequences for young people.

The burden of mental [health](#) problems among children and adolescents in Africa is significant, and the treatment gap in mental health is widening. Mental health policy in the region is also at an early stage and needs context-specific attention to its successes and shortcomings.

A trio of Brown School researchers—Professors Mary McKay and Professor Fred Ssewamala, with Research Assistant Professor Ozge Sensoy Bahar—co-edited a recently published book highlighting the emerging research and policy efforts to address [child](#) and [adolescent](#) behavioral health in sub-Saharan Africa.

Titled "[Child Behavioral Health in Sub-Saharan Africa: Towards Evidence Generation and Policy Development](#)," the book brings together accomplished researchers, practitioners, and leaders both from the region and the U.S. to examine evidence-based, culturally appropriate child and adolescent behavioral health research from the region; highlight intervention research and dialog on what works to improve child and adolescent behavioral health; and offer insights on how to advance child and adolescent behavioral health in policy, research, and practice.

"This unique and timely book will be a valuable resource to individuals and organizations that are committed to improving child behavioral health and strengthening mental health service models for a healthier future for children and their families in the region," said Ssewamala, the William E. Gordon Distinguished Professor.

Ssewamala has spent years designing economic empowerment interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa that address children and adolescents' health, [mental health](#), and educational outcomes.

This book is the first work of its kind with an exclusive focus on the understudied region of Sub-Saharan Africa. The chapters highlight the current state of policy and research evidence both in the region as a whole and in country-specific contexts, including Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda.

McKay, the newly appointed vice provost of interdisciplinary initiatives, said the book brings together the critical work being done by colleagues in Sub-Saharan Africa and the U.S. who are committed to generating research evidence and policy to improve children's well-being in the region.

"It outlines the current state of child behavioral health in Sub-Saharan Africa and provides a framework for next steps in research, policy and practice," she said.

The book was inspired by the team's work at the Brown School's SMART Africa Center (Strengthening Mental Health and Research Training) and the International Center for Child Health and Development (ICHAD), which have field offices in Uganda. The book is a collective effort to draw attention to the importance of investing in child and adolescent behavioral health in sub-Saharan Africa, where children and adolescents make up more than half of the population.

Provided by Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis

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