

A Survey of Educational Interventions on Mental Health Literacy and Life Adjustment in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of educational interventions in improving mental health literacy and life adjustment strategies, which include stress management, emotional regulation, and problem-solving, among adults in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research survey. The population for this study comprised adults and youths aged 18 to 50 years in Lagos State, Nigeria. A sample size of 200 participants was selected for this study, and the sampling technique used was purposive sampling. The study used two self-developed instruments for data collection, which are the Mental Health Literacy Questionnaire (MHLQ) and Life Adjustment Inventory (LAI), with items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Results showed educational interventions are effective in improving mental health literacy and life adjustment strategies. The study concludes by recommending the implementation of structured mental health education programs in educational and community settings across Lagos State.

Keywords: Mental Health Literacy, Life Adjustment, Educational Interventions, Stress Management, Emotional Regulation.

Introduction

Mental health literacy (MHL) is the knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders that assist in recognizing, managing, and preventive measures. Promoting mental well-being and ensuring individuals can navigate the mental health challenges they may encounter is essential. On the other hand, life adjustment refers to how individuals adapt to their environment and circumstances, which includes managing stress, making decisions, and maintaining overall mental health (Adesina, Bamidele & Olasupo, 2022). Educational interventions aimed at improving mental health literacy and life adjustment are essential in mitigating the negative impacts of these pressures. This study analyses the role of such interventions in Lagos State, Nigeria, investigating how they impact mental health literacy and life adjustment.

Mental health literacy in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos State, is relatively low. Gureje, Abdul Malik, Kola *et al.* (2020) reported that misconceptions about mental health, including the belief that mental illness is caused by spiritual forces, are still prevalent in many parts of the country. This has significant implications for both prevention and treatment, as individuals may be less likely to seek professional help or recognize early symptoms of mental health issues.

Lagos State faces unique challenges as a major urban center, including high stress levels due to economic inequality, unemployment, and overcrowding. These stressors often exacerbate mental health conditions, making it even more crucial to enhance MHL. Educational interventions can play a key role in this process by dispelling myths, promoting accurate information, and providing individuals with the tools they need to manage their mental health (Osinowo, 2019).

Life adjustment refers to individuals' ability to cope with the daily stresses and challenges they face. In Lagos State, rapid urbanization has brought about an increase in societal pressures, which include economic instability, housing shortages, and the challenges of maintaining a work-life balance (Uwakwe & Olawale, 2021). These factors have become increasingly relevant in contemporary Nigerian society, particularly in Lagos State, where rapid urbanization and socio-economic disparities often place immense psychological pressures on individuals (Adesina *et al.*, 2022).

Educational interventions designed to improve life adjustment often focus on equipping individuals with coping strategies, stress management techniques, and decision-making skills. In Lagos, where many people face high levels of uncertainty, such programs are important. Adesina *et al.* (2022) found that educational programs focusing on life skills and stress management improved mental well-being and satisfaction among participants in urban centers like Lagos. Educational interventions can take various forms, from school-based programs to community outreach initiatives. These interventions aim to increase

awareness and understanding of mental health issues while providing practical strategies for life adjustment. In Lagos State, several such programs have been implemented with varying degrees of success. For instance, a mental health literacy initiative led by the Lagos State Ministry of Health in 2021 aimed at secondary school students reported a marked improvement in participants' understanding of mental health conditions. The program included workshops on stress management, peer support, and identifying mental health symptoms. A follow-up study showed that students participating in the program were more likely to seek help for mental health challenges and support peers going through similar issues (Adeoye & Akintunde, 2022). Furthermore, life adjustment programs implemented in Lagos workplaces, targeting adults dealing with workplace stress and life challenges, have shown positive outcomes. Participants in these programs demonstrated improved resilience and better-coping mechanisms in dealing with everyday stressors. Akinola and Sanni (2023) posited that these interventions significantly enhanced life adjustment by promoting healthier responses to stress and fostering better decision-making skills.

Life adjustment strategies are essential for individuals to navigate life's challenges effectively: Stress management involves techniques and practices designed to help individuals cope with life stressors. Effective stress management can improve mental health, enhance quality of life, and better overall well-being. Strategies for managing stress include mindfulness, relaxation techniques, physical activity, and time management. Masten *et al.* (2021) emphasized that individuals equipped with effective stress management strategies exhibited lower levels of anxiety and depression. Additionally, mindfulness practices, such as meditation and deep breathing exercises, have significantly reduced stress levels (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). These techniques help individuals focus on the present moment, reducing ruminative thoughts that often exacerbate stress.

Emotional regulation refers to managing and responding to emotional experiences healthily. It involves recognizing one's emotional states,

understanding their causes, and employing strategies to enhance or diminish those emotions as needed. Effective emotional regulation is associated with better mental health outcomes, improved relationships, and enhanced resilience. Gross (2019) outlines various emotional regulation strategies, including cognitive reappraisal, where individuals reinterpret a situation to alter its emotional impact, and expressive suppression, which involves inhibiting emotional expression. Rotheram-Borus *et al.* (2023) found that participants who practised cognitive reappraisal reported greater emotional stability and less emotional distress. This ability to regulate emotions is vital for life adjustment, enabling individuals to cope with adversity and maintain psychological well-being.

Problem-solving is a cognitive process that involves identifying challenges, generating potential solutions, and implementing strategies to overcome obstacles. Effective problem-solving skills are critical for individuals to navigate daily life, achieve goals, and enhance overall functioning. According to Nezu *et al.* (2022), effective problem-solving is linked to better mental health outcomes. The authors highlight that individual who employ systematic problem-solving techniques experience reduced stress and anxiety levels when confronted with challenges. Problem-solving training programmes have shown promise in enhancing individuals' abilities to tackle personal and professional issues (Bennett & Murphy, 2024). These programmes often include defining the problem, brainstorming solutions, evaluating options, and acting.

Despite the positive impacts, there are challenges associated with implementing educational interventions to improve mental health literacy and life adjustment in Lagos. One of the major barriers is the cultural stigma surrounding mental health issues. Many people still view mental illness as a source of shame, and this can hinder efforts to increase mental health literacy. Moreover, there are logistical challenges in reaching marginalized populations, including those in low-income areas, who may not have access to educational programs (Aluko & Idowu, 2020). Another challenge is the lack of trained personnel and resources to

deliver these programs effectively. Mental health education is still in its infancy in Nigeria, and there is a shortage of qualified professionals to implement large-scale interventions (Ogundele & Oye, 2019). Without adequate training, many programs risk being ineffective or unsustainable.

Statement of the Problem

Mental health literacy remains low in Lagos State, contributing to widespread stigma, under-utilization of mental health services, and poor life adjustment outcomes among individuals. Although Lagos has experienced rapid urbanization and development, the growing population faces numerous stressors, including economic hardship and heightened mental health risks. This study aims to address the gap in mental health education by evaluating the effectiveness of educational interventions in improving MHL and life adjustment strategies for Lagos residents.

Purpose of study

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of educational interventions in improving mental health literacy among individuals in Lagos State, Nigeria.
2. To determine the impact of educational interventions on life adjustment strategies: stress management, emotional regulation, and problem-solving abilities.

Research Questions

1. How effective are educational interventions in improving mental health literacy among individuals in Lagos State, Nigeria?
2. What is the impact of educational interventions on life adjustment strategies, such as stress management, emotional regulation, and problem-solving, among participants in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive research survey design. The population for this study comprised adults and youths aged 18 to 50 years in Lagos State, Nigeria. The participants were drawn from educational institutions, community

centers, and health outreach programs. A sample size of 200 participants was selected for this study, and the sampling technique used was purposive sampling to ensure that participants with limited prior knowledge of mental health but who have received educational interventions were selected. The study used two self-developed data collection instruments: the Mental Health Literacy Questionnaire (MHLQ) and the Life Adjustment Inventory (LAI). Both instruments were structured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Both instruments were tested for reliability, and both yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82 for the MHLQ and 0.85 for the LAI, indicating good internal consistency. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results

Research Question One: How effective are educational interventions in improving mental health literacy among individuals in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mental Health Literacy (MHL)

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	The educational program has improved my ability to recognize mental health issues such as depression or anxiety.	4.2	0.75	Strong Agreement
2	I now understand that mental health issues are medical conditions, not caused by supernatural forces.	4.5	0.65	Strong Agreement
3	The program helped me understand the importance of seeking professional help for mental health challenges.	4.6	0.72	Strong Agreement
4	I can now differentiate between everyday stress and mental health disorders.	4.3	0.78	Strong Agreement
5	I am more aware of the symptoms associated with common mental health issues like anxiety and depression.	4.4	0.80	Strong Agreement
6	I believe that people with mental health conditions should be supported, not stigmatized.	4.7	0.62	Strong Agreement
7	I now know the different treatment options available for mental health disorders.	4.3	0.77	Strong Agreement

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
8	The educational program has helped reduce any negative beliefs I had about mental health problems.	4.5	0.71	Strong Agreement
9	I am more likely to seek help if I experience mental health issues in the future.	4.4	0.74	Strong Agreement
10	I feel more confident in talking about mental health issues with others.	4.2	0.79	Strong Agreement
Grand mean		4.41		

Table 1 indicates that, on average, participants agreed strongly with the statements in the Mental Health Literacy (MHL).

Research Question Two: What is the impact of educational interventions on life adjustment strategies, such as stress management, emotional regulation, and problem-solving, among participants in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Life Adjustment Strategies

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	The educational program has improved my ability to manage stress effectively.	4.3	0.72	Strong Agreement
2	I have learned new coping mechanisms to deal with daily challenges.	4.4	0.76	Strong Agreement
3	I feel more confident in handling stressful situations after attending the intervention.	4.5	0.69	Strong Agreement
4	I am now more resilient when faced with personal or professional difficulties.	4.2	0.74	Strong Agreement
5	I have developed better emotional regulation skills since participating in the program.	4.3	0.70	Strong Agreement
6	Educational intervention has improved my ability to solve problems independently.	4.4	0.75	Strong Agreement

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
7	I have learned techniques for maintaining a work-life balance.	4.2	0.77	Strong Agreement
8	I feel better equipped to manage conflicts in my personal and professional life.	4.5	0.71	Strong Agreement
9	The program has made me more aware of the importance of self-care and relaxation.	4.6	0.64	Strong Agreement
10	I can adjust to changes in my environment more since completing the program.	4.3	0.73	Strong Agreement
Grand mean		4.37		

Table 2 indicates that, on average, participants strongly agree that the educational program improved their life adjustment strategies, including stress management, emotional regulation, and problem-solving.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the effectiveness of educational interventions on mental health literacy and life adjustment strategies, such as stress management, emotional regulation, and problem-solving, among participants in Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that educational interventions significantly improved mental health literacy and life adjustment abilities, providing evidence of the value of structured programs.

Table 1 shows that the mean score has a strong agreement with the research question, saying educational interventions are effective in improving mental health literacy. Also, the standard deviations show that the mean score doesn't vary much from the individual scores in the study. This finding was supported by Gureje *et al.* (2020), who noted that mental health literacy in Nigeria is generally low, with many misconceptions about mental illness being caused by supernatural forces. The increase in participants' ability to recognize and manage mental health issues aligns with the study of Adeoye and Akintunde (2022), who

observed similar improvements in mental health awareness among students in Lagos following educational programs. These interventions are critical in overcoming the cultural stigma surrounding mental health in Nigeria (Aluko & Idowu, 2020).

Table 2 revealed substantial improvement in life adjustment strategies, including stress management, emotional regulation, and problem-solving. A mean score of 4.37 shows a strong agreement between educational interventions and life adjustment strategies obtained through mental health literacy and leading a good life. This aligned with Masten *et al.* (2021), who emphasized that individuals equipped with effective stress management strategies exhibit lower levels of anxiety and depression. The study by Masten *et al.* (2021) further supported the current findings, as participants reported better emotional regulation and problem-solving skills after the intervention, indicating the program's effectiveness. Emotional regulation improvements were in line with findings by Gross (2019), which demonstrated that effective emotional regulation strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, lead to greater emotional stability. Participants in this study also showed better emotional responses to stressful situations, a key aspect of life adjustment. Problem-solving abilities significantly improved, echoing the research of Nezu *et al.* (2022), who linked systematic problem-solving skills to better mental health outcomes. These results are supported by the work of Akinola and Sanni (2023), who demonstrated that educational interventions targeting stress management and problem-solving significantly improved participants' ability to handle everyday challenges.

Conclusion

The study emphasizes that educational interventions are critical in enhancing mental health literacy and life adjustment strategies. These findings underscore the importance of mental health education in promoting well-being and improving life outcomes and should be used in intervention programmes. The ability to manage stress, regulate emotions, and solve problems are essential skills

for navigating daily challenges in a high-stress environment like Lagos State. The relevant stakeholders and policymakers must establish a mental health strategic programme to address these challenges.

Recommendations

1. To broaden their reach and impact, The Lagos State government should scale up educational programs targeting mental health literacy and life adjustment in schools, workplaces, and community settings.
2. Future interventions should include components that address cultural stigma and misconceptions about mental health to encourage more individuals to seek help when needed.
3. More mental health professionals and facilitators need to be trained to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of educational programs, especially in underserved areas.
4. These programs should be regularly evaluated to assess their long-term effectiveness and adapt to evolving societal needs.

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