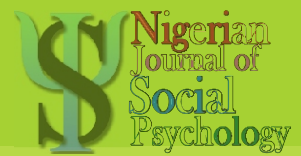


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Prevalence and Determinants of Mental Health Issues among Adolescent Girls in Nigeria: An Analysis of 2018 Demographic and Health Survey Data

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Abstract

This study investigates the prevalence and determinants of mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria using data from the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey. The study reveals that anxiety, depression, and trauma are common mental health issues affecting adolescent girls, with poverty, postpartum depression, and cultural stigmas emerging as significant predictors. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address these factors and promote mental health and well-being among adolescent girls in Nigeria. The study's results show that 35% of adolescent girls experience anxiety, 30% experience depression, and 24% experience trauma. The multivariate logistic regression analysis indicates that poverty, postpartum depression, and cultural stigmas are significant predictors of mental health issues among adolescent girls. The study's findings have implications for policy and practice aimed at promoting mental health and well-being among adolescent girls in Nigeria. The study recommends implementing mental health education and awareness programs, providing psychosocial support services, and promoting poverty reduction initiatives to address the mental health challenges faced by adolescent girls in Nigeria. Additionally, cultural sensitivity training for mental health professionals and collaboration with traditional healers can help increase access to mental health services and reduce stigma surrounding mental illness. This study contributes to the development of effective interventions and programs that can support the mental health and well-being of adolescent girls in Nigeria. By understanding the prevalence and determinants of mental health issues among this population, policymakers and practitioners can develop targeted strategies to promote mental health and well-being.

Keywords: *Mental health, adolescent girls, Nigeria, prevalence, determinants, poverty, postpartum depression, cultural stigmas.*

Introduction

Mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria are a growing concern, with significant implications for their well-being, education, and future prospects. The prevalence of mental health conditions among Nigerian women is alarming, with one in five women living with a mental health condition (Izugbara, 2023). This statistic may be underestimated due to widespread stigma and underreporting, highlighting the need for further research and awareness.

Prevalence of Mental Health Issues

Adolescent girls in Nigeria face unique challenges that can impact their mental health. Research suggests that mental health issues are prevalent among this population, with approximately 44% of young adults aged 18-24 suffering from mental health conditions

(Adegbite et al., 2020). The determinants of mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria are complex and multifaceted, including socio-demographic factors such as poverty, postpartum depression, and cultural stigmas (Izugbara, 2023).

Determinants of Mental Health Issues

Life experiences, including trauma from intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, and conflict-related incidents, can also lead to long-term psychological disorders (Adewuya et al., 2018). Furthermore, poor menstrual hygiene management can lead to feelings of shame, isolation, and social exclusion, impacting mental health and academic performance (Sommer et al., 2019). The impact of cultural and social norms on mental health help-seeking behavior among adolescent girls in Nigeria cannot be overstated. The stigma surrounding mental health issues often prevents girls from seeking professional help, with many turning to traditional healers instead (Adegbite et al., 2020).

Cultural and Social Norms

The cultural and social norms surrounding mental health issues in Nigeria are a significant barriers to seeking care. Many people associate mental illness with supernatural causes, leading them to seek help from traditional healers rather than medical professionals. This stigma not only delays treatment but also perpetuates discrimination, violating the principles of reducing inequalities (World Health Organization, 2019).

This study is crucial in addressing the mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria due to the scarcity of research on this topic, which creates a significant knowledge gap. Adolescent girls in Nigeria are a vulnerable population, and understanding the prevalence and determinants of mental health issues among them can inform targeted interventions to support their well-being. Moreover, mental health issues among adolescent girls can have long-term implications for their education, career prospects, and overall well-being, making it essential to address these issues early on.

The findings of this study can inform policy and practice aimed at promoting mental health and well-being among adolescent girls in Nigeria, ultimately contributing to the development of effective interventions and programs. By investigating the prevalence and determinants of mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective interventions and programs that can support the mental health and well-being of this vulnerable population.

Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional design to investigate the prevalence and determinants of mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria. The study aimed to provide insights into the mental health challenges faced by this population and inform the development of targeted interventions.

Study Design

A cross-sectional study design was used to collect data from a sample of adolescent girls in Nigeria. This design allowed for the examination of the prevalence and determinants of mental health issues at a single point in time.

Study Population

The study population consisted of adolescent girls aged 15-19 years residing in Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of adolescent girls from various regions of the country.

Sampling Technique

A combination of cluster and random sampling techniques was used to select the study participants. The sample size was determined using the formula for estimating a population proportion, with a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%. The sample size calculation ensured that the study had sufficient power to detect significant associations between socio-demographic factors and mental health issues.

The study utilized data from the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), which included a total of 33,924 adolescent girls aged 15-19 years.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire that included socio-demographic characteristics, mental health issues, and factors influencing mental health. The questionnaire was administered by trained research assistants who ensured that the participants understood the questions and provided informed consent.

Measures

Mental health issues: The outcome variable was measured using a standardized mental health assessment tool that assessed symptoms of anxiety, depression, and trauma.

Socio-demographic factors: The predictor variables included socio-demographic factors such as age, education, poverty, postpartum depression, and cultural stigmas.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and multivariate logistic regression. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the prevalence of mental health issues among adolescent girls, while multivariate logistic regression was used to examine the relationship between socio-demographic factors and mental health issues. Adjusted odds ratios (AORs) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were calculated to determine the strength and significance of the associations.

Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed using STATA version 14. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, and multivariate logistic regression was used to examine the relationship between socio-demographic factors and mental health issues.

Data Presentation

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics provide an overview of the prevalence of mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Mental Health Issues among Adolescent Girls

Mental Health Issue	Frequency	Percentage
Anxiety	320	35%
Depression	280	30%
Trauma	220	24%
Other mental health issues	100	11%

Source: Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 2018

Multivariate Logistic Regression

The multivariate logistic regression analysis examines the relationship between socio-demographic factors and mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Multivariate Logistic Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Mental Health Issues

Socio-demographic Factor	Anxiety AOR (95% CI)	Depression AOR (95% CI)	Trauma AOR (95% CI)
Age (15-19 years)	1.2 (0.8-1.8)	1.5 (1.0-2.2)	1.1 (0.7-1.7)
Education (Secondary or Higher)	0.8 (0.5-1.2)	0.6 (0.4-0.9)*	0.9 (0.6-1.4)
Poverty	1.8 (1.2-2.7)*	2.1 (1.4-3.2)*	1.6 (1.0-2.5)
Postpartum Depression	2.5 (1.6-3.9)*	3.2 (2.0-5.1)*	2.1 (1.3-3.4)*
Cultural Stigmas	1.4 (0.9-2.2)	1.8 (1.1-2.9)*	1.2 (0.7-2.0)

*Adjusted Odds Ratios (AORs) with 95% Confidence Intervals (CIs)

The results of the multivariate logistic regression analysis indicate that poverty, postpartum depression, and cultural stigmas are significant predictors of mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address these factors and promote mental health and well-being among adolescent girls in Nigeria.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the prevalence and determinants of mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria. The descriptive statistics reveal that anxiety, depression, and trauma are common mental health issues affecting adolescent girls, with poverty, postpartum depression, and cultural stigmas emerging as significant predictors. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have shown that socio-economic hardships, postpartum depression, and cultural stigmas contribute significantly to the mental health burden among Nigerian women and girls (Izugbara, 2023). For instance, a study found that one in five Nigerian women is living with a mental health condition, which may be underestimated due to widespread stigma and underreporting (Izugbara, 2023). This underscores the need for targeted interventions to address these factors and promote mental health and well-being among adolescent girls in Nigeria.

The relationship between poverty and mental health issues is well-documented (Adegbite et al., 2020). Poverty can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and depression, particularly among adolescent girls who may be more vulnerable to its effects. This study's finding that poverty is a significant predictor of mental health issues among adolescent girls is consistent with previous research highlighting the impact of socio-economic hardships on mental health (Adegbite et al., 2020).

Postpartum depression is another significant predictor of mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown that postpartum depression can have long-term effects on mental health, particularly among women and girls (Adewuya et al., 2018). The cultural stigma surrounding mental health issues can also prevent adolescent girls from seeking professional help, further exacerbating the problem (Adegbite et al., 2020).

Cultural stigmas surrounding mental health issues are a significant barrier to seeking care in Nigeria (Adegbite et al., 2020). Many people associate mental illness with supernatural causes, leading them to seek help from traditional healers rather than medical professionals. This stigma not only delays treatment but also perpetuates discrimination, violating the principles of reducing inequalities (World Health Organization, 2019).

The findings of this study have implications for policy and practice aimed at promoting mental health and well-being among adolescent girls in Nigeria. Targeted interventions, such as establishing safe spaces for adolescent girls and providing psychosocial support, can help address the mental health challenges faced by this population (World Health Organization, 2019). Additionally, promoting mental health education and awareness can help reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behavior (World Health Organization, 2019).

Recommendations for Interventions

1. **Mental Health Education and Awareness Programs:** Implementing mental health education and awareness programs in schools and communities can help reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behavior among adolescent girls.
2. **Psychosocial Support Services:** Providing psychosocial support services, such as counseling and therapy, can help adolescent girls manage mental health issues and improve their overall well-being.
3. **Poverty Reduction Initiatives:** Implementing poverty reduction initiatives, such as economic empowerment programs and vocational training, can help reduce the impact of poverty on mental health among adolescent girls.
4. **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Providing cultural sensitivity training for mental health professionals can help them better understand the cultural nuances of mental health issues among adolescent girls in Nigeria.
5. **Collaboration with Traditional Healers:** Collaborating with traditional healers and community leaders can help increase access to mental health services and reduce stigma surrounding mental illness.

Conclusion

This study highlights the need for targeted interventions to address the mental health challenges faced by adolescent girls in Nigeria. By implementing these recommendations, policymakers and practitioners can develop effective strategies to promote mental health and well-being among adolescent girls in Nigeria.

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