



MENTAL HEALTH: THE DILEMMA OF THE AFRICAN YOUTHS/STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Mental health is important especially during these time of global hardship, stress, disappointment, intimidation, and feelings of failure.
- ❖ A healthy mind is necessary for overall wellness especially now that mental health awareness and challenges have increased globally.

INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Mental health disorders, depression, suicide, hopelessness, fear, stress, and drug dependency are some of the issues that young people face.
- ❖ Half of all mental illness begin at age 14, with three-quarter of them manifesting by the age of 24.
- ❖ This program is in line with the Emma Njoku Foundation health objective that gave birth to “friends of the brain club” launched last year in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. Nigeria and our Mental Health o'clock with Karlmax advocacy platform.

What is Mental Health?

- Mental health is a complex concept that has been defined in different ways by various scholars and organizations.
- WHO defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community"

What is Mental Health?

➤ The American Psychological Association (APA) defines mental health as "a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity"

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is not merely the absence of mental illness or disorder, but it is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being.

Mental health is influenced by various factors:

- genetics,
- environment,
- lifestyle,
- social support

The Causes of Mental Health Problems

There are many factors that can contribute to mental health problems in youths/students and these include:

- **Genetics:** Some mental health disorders have genetic component and can run in families. For example, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and major depression many have a genetic link.
- **Environment:** Environmental factors such as trauma, abuse, neglect, poverty, and social isolation can contribute to the development of mental health issues.

The Causes of Mental Health Problems

- **Medical condition:** Certain medical conditions such as brain injuries, hormonal imbalance, and chronic illness can affect mental health.
- **Substance use:** Substance use, including alcohol and drugs, can have a significant impact on mental health.

The Causes of Mental Health Problems (cont.)

- **Life Event:** Major life events such as the death of a loved one, divorce, or job loss can trigger mental health problems.
- **Psychological Factors:** Psychological factors such as negative thinking patterns, low self-esteem, and perfectionism can contribute to mental health issues.
- **Social factors:** Social factors such as discrimination, stigma, and lack of social support can affect mental health.

It's important to note that mental health issues are complex and can have multiple contributing factors, and often it's a combination of these factors that lead to mental health.

The Youth/Students and Mental Health

- ❖ • In Africa, there are many cases of failed government and systems that are frustrating rather than encouraging.
- ❖ In the just concluded 2023 elections in Nigeria, many Nigerians complained of passing through stress to vote but yet the system was flawed with lots of inconsistencies and thus leads to mental dissatisfaction and ability to move ahead in a system that does not support initiatives and development.

The Youth/Students and Mental Health

- ❖ In South Sudan, the case of war is still fresh in the minds of its youths/students and citizens.
- ❖ In Somalia, youths/students are facing hard times trying to balance achieving their future and believing in a failed system where they are not assured of peace.
- ❖ In some parts of Africa, the question of ethnicity and inclusiveness has become problematic.

The Youth/Students and Mental Health (Cont.)

- ❖ As at the time of articulating this, South African Universities are grappling with epileptic power supply while most Universities in Africa are merely glorified secondary schools lacking in effective deployment of technology and ICT.
- ❖ Experiences and studies show that students in most African classrooms are stressed beyond necessary from poor living accommodation, excessive financial demand, abuse from the teacher, poorly equipped classrooms and laboratory and poor electricity to aid learning.

The Youth/Students and Mental Health (Cont.)

❖ The list is also inclusive of victims of rape, those carrying the memory of their departed loved ones, those who lost their jobs, youths with illness, homeless youths, hungry youths, those caught up in war and in some cases, rape trauma, excessive demands from family with little resources to meet up, financial hardship and no employment.

❖ Young persons are like water, if the community and government fail to provide them a positive pathway, the street is there to provide them a negative path with its devastating result like substance use, joining dangerous cult groups and other antisocial behaviors.

Mental Health in Youths/Students: Towards an Enhancement

The following therefore are ways through which the community, policy makers, parents, guardians and all tiers of government can help our students and youth.

1. The youths/students must be seen as active participants in our society and as such cannot be treated as mere objects. They must become active partners and key stakeholders in issues regarding mental health.
2. There is need for psychological interventions which will include cognitive behavioural therapy and parental-family based therapy.

Mental Health in Youths/Students: Towards an Enhancement

3. Our schools must have an inclusive system where everybody is regarded as a necessary part of a whole and its programme must include appropriate training of teachers who are conscious of the children they are raising, stress management, parental education and possible inclusion of child psychologist and counsellors.

Mental Health in Youths/Students: Towards an Enhancement (Cont.)

4. Institutions must be student engaging and encourage the act of seeking for help without negative labelling/stigmatization.
5. There is need to pay attention to our use of language and choice of words. Substance abuse is never an option and all hand must be on deck towards Curbing and stopping It.
6. We must teach our youths /students how to cope with dif ficulties in life first by making them to understand that life comes with difficulties and confronting and solving them is necessary to have a sound mental health

Mental Health in Youths/Students: Towards an Enhancement (Cont.)

7. We must offer a support base system to those who are facing mental disorder in the form of being practical.
8. Empathy, emotional support and sharing of experiences increases confidence and self-esteem. Hence such should be encouraged.
9. Other ways of maintaining good mental health include physical activities, relaxation, coping mechanism, mindfulness, social support and not always taking life too serious.

Mental Health in Youths/Students: Towards an Enhancement (Cont.)

10. Speak up. Our system most times does not encourage people to speak out when in need or abused. We must encourage our youths/students to speak out, to share their problems and to always seek solution.
11. The Government must increase its funding of education and provide key basic social amenities that can help make life easier and worth living.

Conclusion

❖ The stigma surrounding mental illness can make it challenging for young people to seek help and support.

❖ It is crucial for society to prioritize addressing youth mental health issues, particularly for those who are experiencing homelessness or living on the street.

Conclusion

❖ At the Emma Njoku Foundation and "Friends of the Brain club", our key focus is on advocacy towards rescuing young persons between the age bracket of 14-35 from the harmful effect of substance abuse. Equally our Mental Health O'clock with Karlmax is virtually powered to provide weekly tips on sound mental health and living positively.

❖ By prioritizing student and youth mental health, we can help to create a brighter future for all young people for mental health is everybody's business, once lost, everything is lost.



**THANK
YOU
FOR
LISTENING!**