

Family Economic Hardship and Stress as a Predictor of Mental Health among Students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the Family Economic Hardship and Stress as a predictor of Mental Health among Students in College of Education, Kaduna State. The objective of the study was to determine if family economic hardship and stress can predict mental health among Students in College of Education in Kaduna State. Survey Research Design was used for study. Population of the study comprises 2500 N.C.E II students. 380 male and female students were randomly selected from the two colleges of education in Kaduna State. 180 students were randomly selected from Federal College of Education Zaria and 150 students from Kaduna State College of Education Gidan Waya. Three instruments were used for the study which are Economic Hardship Questionnaires (EHQ), Students Stress Scale (SSS) and Mental Health Questionnaire (MHQ). Two research questions were formulated with their corresponding null hypotheses. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant. The results showed that economic hardship has a significant negative relationship with mental health among Students in College of Education in Kaduna State ($r = -0.732, p = 0.005$). Stress has a significant negative relationship with mental health among Students in College of Education, Kaduna State ($r = -0.654, p = 0.025$). Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among others that Government should devise economic plan to ease the economic situation of the people in the country to reduce the hardship and stressful situation which in turn affect the mental health of their children. More counsellors should be trained and employed for psychological intervention among students facing family economics hardship and finally counselling unit should be established in our schools to help students in any difficult situation they may face in the school.

Keywords

Economic, Hardship, Stress, Mental Health.

Introduction

The primary goal of education is to prepare students to lead successful, fulfilling adult lives and ultimately nation and societal development. This can be achieved by means of providing the students with relevant educational experiences, support and resources needed to have sound mental health. However, many factors within could serve as barrier towards providing student the support and learning experience could bring about sound mental health and successful academic pursue.

It is essential to understand the factors which directly affect the

students and the quality of education that they experience and, consequently, their learning. One of these factors that are likely to affect the students and the quality of learning are family economic hardship and stress which may likely affect the student's mental health. Mental health of learners is key factor in determining how well a student achieve success in their academic pursue [1].

Economic hardship is the inability to meet reasonable basic living expenses. It means a person is unable to pay basic living expenses like food, clothing, housing, utility, medical expenses, transportation, child-care, and child support. Economic hardship refers to psychological distress that results from a perception of relatively low economic resources [2].

Amrik and Prashant [1] asserted that economic hardship resulting from income loss, unemployment, job instability, and economic insecurity rather than low income *per se* is another potential mediator of income effects on child well-being. School children raised under this condition are likely to be affected by the hardship.

According to this 'family stress model,' economic hardship is associated with parental stress and depression which leads to more inconsistent, unsupportive, harsh, and punitive parenting practices. These reduced quality parent child interactions, in turn, are associated with emotional and school problems in children [3].

According to Simay and Janelle [4] Stress can cause psychological and emotional distress. When it becomes chronic, it can increase a person's risk for anxiety and depression. Experiencing long-term stressful situations, like caregiving, without stress management efforts can lead to emotional overwhelm and burnout. Chronic stress can have negative effects on the body and mind and create a multitude of unpleasant physical and psychological symptoms. For example, it can cause tension, leading to muscle pain and headaches, or memory issues.

Simay and Janelle [4] further state that mental health conditions that may be linked to stress include anxiety, depression, substance use difficulties, sleep issues, chronic pain. What causes stress for one person may be different for another. Stress often happens if one feels high pressure or are trying to meet a deadline. It can also arise if there is a threat to one's health or relationships, or if a person does not have enough resources to answer all the demands of life. Mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression may make some people feel more easily stressed than others. Common causes of stress include financial hardship, work, relationships, health problems, family responsibilities, poor sleep or diet, life changes.

A student who is under the condition of economic hardship arising from inability of the parents to support him in school is prone to experience stress which may affect his mental health thereby disrupting his academic pursue.

According to Kim et al. [5], numerous family socioeconomic hardships have been linked to placing adolescents at risk for suffering poor mental health outcomes. More so, children's social, emotional, and cognitive development can be affected by experiences of instability. They further state that adolescents' deteriorating mental health outcomes may reflect socioeconomic inequalities specifically, the economic well-being of households.

McCloud and Bann [2] carried out a study on financial stress and mental health among higher education students in the UK and conclude that among higher education students in the UK, there is evidence that the amount of debt is associated with mental health.

Amrik and Prashant [1] stated that psychological well-being is a state of mental health that allows individuals to handle life's stresses, recognize their abilities, learn effectively, function well,

and contribute to their community. It is an essential aspect of overall well-being that supports our ability to make decisions, build relationships, and shape our environment. Mental health is also a fundamental human right.

In recent times, mental health has become a critical issue as many students face challenges in real-world situations. Even before the pandemic, schools and other institutions struggled to meet the rising demand for mental health care, revealing that traditional counselling centre models are insufficient to address the problem adequately [1].

Maryrose [3] conducted a quantitative study examining the effect of financial stress on entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduate students in Nigeria. The study concluded that financial stress significantly impacts these students, serving as a predictor of their motivation to start physical businesses. This suggests that financial stress can influence their entrepreneurial intentions. Furthermore, financial stress is one of several stress factors that undergraduates face, alongside academic and psychosocial stress.

The effects of economic recession such as rising prices for goods and services, insufficient regulatory frameworks for financial institutions, and a loss of direction and purpose impact undergraduates' lifestyles and coping strategies. Additionally, perceived stress among medical students is influenced by factors including financial shortages, weak religious faith, anxiety symptoms, problematic alcohol use, and parental influence on their choice of study. Finally, financial difficulties are linked to a higher prevalence of general psychiatric issues among undergraduate students, underscoring the need for financial support and encouragement of personal prayer devotion [3].

Kim et al. [5] examined whether pandemic related family economic hardships influenced adolescents' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic in Korea. They hypothesized that family economic hardship due to the pandemic is associated with mental health problems among adolescents. They reported that adolescents, 39.7, 24.7, and 5.9% reported slight, moderate, and severe economic hardship, respectively. COVID-19 related family economic hardship was significantly associated with higher odds of adolescents reporting anxiety, depressive symptoms, and suicidal ideation. This association was stronger among adolescents with low to middle family economic status.

Ramirez et al. [6] assessed mental health symptomatology (depression, anxiety, life stress), academic challenges, and economic stress during the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic. A total sample of 361 college students were used for the study. Findings revealed that community college students faced disproportionately negative mental health symptomatology, academic challenges, and economic stress during the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Obidigbo [7] investigated if socio-economic hardship and stressors have any significant impact on people's psychological health and

well-being. The results of the analysis reveal high-level prevalence of financial crisis and socioeconomic stressors in the region that tend to influence respondents' psychological health and well-being through anxiety and stress. The study concluded that financial crisis and socioeconomic stressors have potential negative impacts on people's psychological health and well-being in Southeast Nigeria. Similarly, Roberts et al. [8] investigated the relationship between the physical, social, and psychological health of students and their financial circumstances. The results of their study suggested that the financial circumstances of students may be having an adverse impact on their health.

Family hardship has become thing of concern that should be given attention because inability to meet family demands affects almost every aspect of the family including the child mental well-being. Hardship can cause stress and stress is a risk factor for mental well-being [9].

Despite several studies on family economic hardship and its impact on mental health among students, there is still gap because little is known about the prevalence of economic hardship in Nigeria especially in Kaduna State. Most studies have focus on economic hardship and its impact more on foreign countries. The economic hardship faced by many Nigeria today is a pathetic and capable of stress both to parents and the students. This became a thing of concern for the researchers who seek to investigate whether family economic hardship and stress predicts the mental health among students in colleges of education, Kaduna State.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to determine

1. The relationship between economic hardship and mental health among students in colleges of education, Kaduna state
2. The relationship between stress and mental health among students in colleges of education, Kaduna state

Research Questions

This research work answers the following questions.

1. what is the relationship between economic hardship and mental health among students in colleges of education, Kaduna state?
2. what is the relationship between stress and mental health among students in colleges of education, Kaduna state?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between economic hardship and mental health among students in colleges of education, Kaduna state
2. there is no significant relationship between stress and mental health among students in colleges of education, Kaduna state

Methodology

Survey Research Design was used for study. Population of the

study comprises 2500 N.C.E II students of which 1800 students of which were from FCE Zaria and 700 from C.O.E Gidan Waya. 380 male and female students were randomly selected from the two colleges of education in Kaduna State. 180 students were randomly selected from Federal College of Education Zaria and 150 students were randomly selected from Kaduna State College of Education Gidan Waya. Three instruments were used for the study which are Economic Hardship Questionnaire (EHQ), Students Stress Scale (SSS) and Mental Health Questionnaire (MHQ). Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant to determine the relationship between family economic hardship, stress, and mental health among Students in Colleges of Education in Kaduna.

Result

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between Economic Hardship and Mental Health among Students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna state.

Variables	N	Mean	Std	Df	r	p
Family Economic Hardship	380	53.52	10.37	378	-0.732**	0.005
Mental Health	380	13.417	1.71			

Correlation is at 0.05 level of significance.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between Economic Hardship and Mental Health among Students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna state revealed that the calculated p value of 0.005 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance at a correlation index r level of - 0.752. This means that there is a negative relationship between Economic Hardship and Mental Health among Students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna state which implies that family economic hardship negatively affects the mental health of Students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between family economic hardship and mental health among Students, Colleges of Education in Kaduna state was rejected.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between Stress and Mental Health among Students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna state.

Variables	N	Mean	Std	Df	r	p
Stress	380	53.22	10.32	378	-0.654**	0.025
Mental Health	380	10.417	0.812			

Correlation is at 0.05 level of significance.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between Stress and Mental Health among Students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna revealed that the calculated p value of 0.025 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance at a correlation index r level of - 0.654. This means that there is a negative relationship between Stress and Mental Health among Students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna state which implies that stress arising from economic hardship negatively affects the mental health of Students

in College of Education, Kaduna state. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between stress and mental health among Students in College of Education, Kaduna state was also rejected.

Discussion

This study investigated Family Economic Hardship and Stress as Predictor of Mental Health among Students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna State. The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between family economic hardship, stress and mental health among Students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna State.

The null hypotheses that guided the study was stated as thus; there is no significant relationship between economic hardship and mental health and secondly there is no significant relationship between stress and mental health among Students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna state. Both hypotheses were rejected because the study revealed a negative relationship between family economic hardship, stress, and mental health among students in Colleges of Education, Kaduna State. This implies that the economic hardship faced by my family in Kaduna State negative affect family support for children and their education.

This study agreed with the study of Obidigbo [7] who investigated if socio-economic hardship and stressors have any significant impact on people's psychological health and well-being. The result of his study revealed high-level prevalence of financial crisis and socioeconomic stressors in the region that tend to influence respondents' psychological health and well-being through anxiety and stress. The study concluded that financial crisis and socioeconomic stressors have potential negative impacts on people's psychological health and well-being in Southeast Nigeria.

Kim et al. [5] also confirmed the influence of family economic hardships on adolescents' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic in Korea. They concluded that COVID-19 related family economic hardship was significantly associated with higher odds of adolescents reporting anxiety, depressive symptoms, and suicidal ideation.

In another study conducted by Roberts et al. [8] who investigated the relationship between the physical, social, and psychological health of students and their financial circumstances. The results of their study suggested that the financial circumstances of students may be having an adverse impact on their health. From the available studies that supported the current study, we can infer that family economic hardship and stress can predict mental health of students in Colleges of Education in Kaduna State.

Conclusion

The study concluded that family economic hardship and stress negatively affect the mental health of students in Colleges of Education in Kaduna State. Family economic hardship resulting from inability to meet needs for life and school is stressful and thereby affect the mental health of the students in colleges of education in Kaduna state.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that

1. Government should devise economic plan to ease the economic situation of the people in the country to reduce the hardship and stressful situation which in turn affect the mental health of their children.
2. More counsellors should be trained and employed for psychological intervention among students facing family economics hardship.
3. Counselling unit should be established in our schools to help students in any difficult situation they may face in the school.

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