



## Interaction of Psychological Health Factors Influencing Students' Academic Performance in Nigeria.

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### Abstract

*This study examined the interaction of psychological health factors influencing students' academic performance in Nigeria, with specific focus on anxiety, academic stress, depression, and emotional regulation. Increasing evidence had suggested that students' academic outcomes were not determined solely by cognitive ability or instructional quality, but were significantly shaped by their psychological well-being. However, existing studies in Nigeria had largely examined these variables in isolation, resulting in a fragmented understanding that limited the development of effective interventions. This study addressed this gap by adopting an integrated perspective that analysed how these psychological factors interacted to influence academic performance. Drawing on recent empirical evidence from health and educational research, the study established that anxiety disrupted attention and working memory, thereby reducing students' ability to process academic information effectively. Persistent academic demands further intensified anxiety, leading to academic stress, which undermined motivation, concentration, and engagement in learning activities. When stress became prolonged and unmanaged, it progressed into depression, a more severe condition characterised by low motivation, cognitive impairment, and withdrawal from academic tasks. These variables did not operate independently but formed a dynamic psychological system in which each condition reinforced the others, resulting in cumulative negative effects on academic performance. The study further highlighted the role of emotional regulation as a critical moderating factor within this system. Students with strong emotional regulation skills were better able to manage anxiety and stress, thereby reducing their vulnerability to depression and maintaining academic engagement. Conversely, poor emotional regulation amplified psychological distress and worsened academic outcomes. This interaction framework provided a more comprehensive understanding of how psychological health influenced academic performance, particularly within the Nigerian educational context where structural and socio-economic challenges further intensified students' psychological burden. Based on this integrated analysis, the study proposed a multi-level, evidence-based approach to improving academic performance through psychological health interventions. These included the integration of mental health into educational policy, implementation of school-based mental health programmes, capacity building for educators, adoption of digital mental health solutions, and strengthening of family and community support systems. The study concluded that addressing psychological health as an interconnected system rather than isolated variables was essential for enhancing students' academic performance in Nigeria. This research contributed to existing literature by providing a holistic, context-sensitive framework that bridged the gap between psychological health and academic outcomes. It also offered practical insights for policy makers, educators, and mental health practitioners seeking to improve both students' well-being and educational achievement.*

**Keywords:** Psychological well-being, anxiety, stress, depression, emotions, academic achievement, mental health, students

### Introduction

Understanding the role of psychological health in academic performance has become increasingly critical in modern education, particularly as students face intensifying academic and socio-environmental pressures. Recent global evidence indicates that mental health challenges among students are not only widespread but also directly linked to reduced academic functioning. For instance, a large-scale post-pandemic study by Pinho et al. (2025) highlights that anxiety and depression remain highly prevalent among university students across multiple countries, significantly affecting their daily functioning and academic engagement. Similarly, Liu et al. (2024) demonstrate that mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression are strongly associated with decreased student satisfaction and overall academic experience, reinforcing the idea that psychological well-being is central to educational success. These findings establish psychological health as a foundational determinant of academic outcomes, thereby necessitating a closer examination of its key components, beginning with anxiety.



Anxiety is one of the most prominent psychological conditions affecting students and has been consistently linked to disruptions in cognitive functioning and academic performance. Recent empirical evidence shows that anxiety interferes with concentration, memory, and information processing, which are essential for learning. A 2025 systematic review reported that anxiety prevalence among students remains significantly high, with a median rate of about 32%, indicating its widespread impact on academic populations. In addition, a 2025 Nigerian-based study by Adeleke (2025) found notable levels of anxiety among undergraduates, with clear evidence of its association with depressive symptoms and academic difficulties. These findings suggest that anxiety not only affects students independently but also interacts with other psychological pressures within academic environments. As students continue to experience persistent academic demands, anxiety often evolves into a broader condition known as academic stress.

Academic stress emerges from sustained exposure to academic workload, performance expectations, and institutional pressures, and it has been identified as a major contributor to declining academic outcomes. Recent research by Roy et al. (2025) indicates that a substantial proportion of students experience moderate to high levels of stress, with over three-quarters of students reporting significant stress levels in academic settings. Chronic exposure to such stress has been shown to impair cognitive functioning, reduce motivation, and limit students' ability to engage effectively in learning activities. In many developing contexts, including Nigeria, stress is further compounded by structural and socio-economic challenges, intensifying

its impact on students' academic experiences. Importantly, prolonged academic stress does not remain isolated; rather, it often progresses into more severe psychological conditions, particularly depression.

Depression represents a more persistent and debilitating psychological condition that significantly disrupts students' academic engagement and overall functioning. Contemporary studies reveal alarmingly high rates of depressive symptoms among students. For example, Malebari et al. (2024) reported that over 80% of surveyed students experienced depressive symptoms, highlighting the severity of the issue within academic populations. Depression is associated with reduced motivation, impaired concentration, and withdrawal from academic activities, all of which negatively affect performance. Furthermore, longitudinal evidence suggests that depression is not only a consequence of anxiety and stress but also reinforces these conditions, creating a cycle of psychological distress. While these negative psychological states significantly hinder academic outcomes, students' emotional experiences provide an additional dimension that shapes how they respond to academic challenges.

Emotional experiences, both positive and negative, play a crucial role in influencing students' academic engagement and performance. Recent research emphasises that students' emotional states determine how they perceive and respond to academic demands. Positive emotional experiences enhance motivation and cognitive engagement, while negative emotions such as fear and frustration reduce academic persistence. Liu et al. (2024) further demonstrate that emotional well-being is closely tied to students' academic satisfaction and mental health outcomes, indicating that emotions are deeply interconnected with anxiety and depression. These emotional dynamics do not operate in isolation but interact continuously with anxiety, stress, and depression, forming a complex psychological system.

The interaction among anxiety, academic stress, depression, and emotional experiences reflects a dynamic and interconnected psychological framework that shapes students' academic performance. Evidence from recent studies shows that these variables are strongly correlated and often co-occur, amplifying their effects on learning outcomes. For instance, Haruna et al. (2025) found that anxiety, stress, and depression significantly coexist among first-year students, jointly influencing their academic adjustment and performance. This interconnectedness suggests that addressing one psychological factor in isolation may be insufficient, as these variables operate as a system rather than independent elements. Despite growing global evidence, there remains limited context-specific research within Nigeria that comprehensively examines how these psychological factors interact across different educational settings. This gap highlights the need for a more integrated and context-sensitive understanding, which forms the basis for the present study and leads directly to a critical review of existing literature.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical literature in recent years has increasingly established psychological health as a critical determinant of academic performance across educational contexts. Contemporary large-scale studies indicate that mental health challenges among students are strongly associated with reduced academic engagement, lower achievement, and increased dropout intentions. For example, a global cross-sectional study by Bruffaerts et al. (2021) found that mental disorders significantly predict impaired academic functioning among university students across multiple countries. Similarly, a study by Alonso et al. (2022) reported that students experiencing mental health difficulties were more likely to exhibit poor academic persistence and reduced learning outcomes. These findings provide strong evidence that psychological health plays a foundational role in shaping academic success, thereby justifying a focused examination of its specific components, beginning with anxiety.

Anxiety has consistently been identified as one of the most significant psychological predictors of academic performance due to its direct impact on cognitive processes. Recent research demonstrates that anxiety disrupts attentional control, reduces working memory efficiency, and impairs information processing during learning tasks. For instance, a study by Panayiotou et al. (2021) found that high levels of anxiety are associated with significant deficits in cognitive performance, particularly in tasks requiring sustained attention. In addition, Duffy et al. (2023) reported that students with elevated anxiety levels are more likely to experience academic difficulties, including lower grades and reduced task completion rates. These findings reinforce the understanding that anxiety directly interferes with learning processes. However, anxiety rarely exists in isolation and is often accompanied by academic stress, which further intensifies its negative effects.



Academic stress, arising from continuous exposure to academic demands such as workload and performance expectations, has been widely documented as a major factor influencing students' academic outcomes. Recent evidence suggests that prolonged academic stress leads to cognitive fatigue, reduced motivation, and decreased academic engagement. A longitudinal study by Pascoe, Hetrick, and Parker (2020) demonstrated that chronic stress is significantly associated with poorer academic performance and increased psychological distress among students. Furthermore, a study by Beiter et al. (2015), still widely cited in recent literature, identified academic workload and pressure to succeed as primary sources of stress among university students. In more recent contexts, Hernández-Torrano et al. (2020) emphasised that stress levels among students have intensified due to evolving academic demands and environmental pressures. As stress becomes prolonged and unmanaged, it often transitions into more severe psychological conditions, particularly depression.

Depression represents a more severe and persistent psychological condition that has profound implications for students' academic functioning. It is characterised by diminished motivation, impaired concentration, and withdrawal from academic activities, all of which negatively affect performance. A study by Ibrahim et al. (2022) reported that depressive symptoms are significantly associated with lower academic achievement and increased risk of academic failure. Similarly, Mortier et al. (2021) found that students experiencing depression are more likely to disengage from academic tasks and exhibit reduced educational attainment. Depression often develops as a progression from sustained anxiety and stress, reinforcing the interconnected nature of psychological distress. While these conditions highlight the negative dimensions of psychological health, students' emotional experiences introduce an additional layer that shapes academic behaviour.

Emotional experiences play a significant role in influencing students' engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. Recent research in educational psychology emphasises that emotions are central to how students process information and respond to academic challenges. For example, a study by Villavicencio and Bernardo (2023) found that positive emotions such as enjoyment and hope significantly enhance academic motivation and performance, while negative emotions hinder learning engagement. In addition, Reschly, Huebner, Appleton, and Antaramian (2020) demonstrated that students' emotional well-being is strongly linked to their academic satisfaction and achievement. These findings suggest that emotions are not independent variables but interact closely with anxiety, stress, and depression in shaping academic outcomes.

The interaction among anxiety, stress, depression, and emotional experiences reflects a complex and dynamic psychological system that determines academic performance. Recent studies highlight that these variables often co-occur and reinforce one another, amplifying their effects on students' learning outcomes. For instance, Eisenberg, Lipson, and Posselt (2022) found that students experiencing multiple mental health challenges are significantly more likely to experience academic difficulties compared to those with isolated conditions. Additionally, Farrer et al. (2021) emphasised that the cumulative effect of psychological distress leads to reduced academic resilience and increased dropout risk. These findings underscore the importance of understanding psychological health as an integrated system rather than isolated variables.

Despite the growing body of recent global evidence, significant gaps remain in the literature. Much of the existing research has been conducted in high-income countries, limiting its applicability to developing contexts such as Nigeria. Furthermore, many studies rely on cross-sectional designs, which do not adequately capture the long-term interactions among psychological variables. There is also limited research focusing on diverse educational settings, particularly technical and vocational institutions. These limitations highlight the need for context-specific, longitudinal, and integrative studies that examine how anxiety, stress, depression, and emotional experiences collectively influence academic performance. Addressing these gaps provides a strong justification for the present study.

### 3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Psychological health challenges among students have become a growing global concern, with increasing evidence showing that mental health conditions significantly impair academic performance. Recent empirical findings indicate that depression, anxiety, and stress are strongly associated with poor academic outcomes, including reduced grade point averages, low academic engagement, and increased dropout intentions. For instance, Sinval et al. (2025) established that depression, anxiety, and stress collectively predict academic performance and are directly linked to reduced academic engagement and higher dropout tendencies among students. Similarly, Osman and Alim (2025) found significant negative correlations between academic performance and psychological distress variables, confirming that mental health difficulties are not isolated issues but central barriers to effective learning. Despite these findings, many educational systems, particularly in developing countries, continue to prioritise academic achievement without adequately addressing the underlying psychological factors influencing it.

Among these psychological factors, anxiety remains one of the most prevalent and disruptive conditions affecting students' academic functioning. Recent evidence suggests that anxiety significantly interferes with students' cognitive processes, particularly concentration, memory, and information processing, which are essential for academic success. A 2025 study conducted among Nigerian undergraduates by Olayiwonuola, Olufunsho, and Kolapo (2025) revealed that anxiety has a significant negative influence on academic performance, especially through its cognitive and behavioural dimensions. This highlights that anxiety is not merely an emotional experience but a cognitive barrier that directly limits students' academic potential. However, anxiety rarely operates independently; instead, it is often intensified by persistent academic demands, leading to the emergence of academic stress.

Academic stress, driven by continuous exposure to workload, deadlines, and performance expectations, has been identified as a major contributor to declining academic outcomes. Contemporary studies indicate that academic stress significantly affects students' mental well-being and learning capacity. Chongjin et al. (2025) emphasised that academic stress negatively influences both psychological well-being and academic performance, particularly when it becomes



chronic and overwhelming . In addition, Pérez-Jorge et al. (2025) highlighted that academic stress has intensified in recent years due to increasing academic pressures and changing learning environments, further exacerbating students' psychological burden . As stress becomes prolonged and unmanaged, it often evolves into more severe psychological conditions, particularly depression, thereby deepening its negative impact on academic functioning.

Depression represents a more persistent and debilitating psychological condition that significantly disrupts students' academic engagement and overall performance. It is associated with symptoms such as loss of motivation, impaired concentration, and withdrawal from academic activities, all of which directly hinder learning. Recent findings by Parveen et al. (2025) indicate that depression, alongside anxiety, contributes to maladaptive cognitive patterns that negatively affect students' academic behaviour and performance . Furthermore, Roy et al. (2025) reported that a substantial proportion of students experience depressive symptoms severe enough to impair their academic functioning, reinforcing the seriousness of the issue . The progression from anxiety and stress to depression highlights a continuum of psychological distress, suggesting that these variables are interconnected rather than independent factors.

The interaction among anxiety, stress, depression, and emotional experiences creates a complex psychological framework that shapes students' academic outcomes. Evidence shows that these variables are highly interrelated and often co-occur, amplifying their combined effect on academic performance. For example, Osman and Alim (2025) reported strong intercorrelations among depression, anxiety, and stress, indicating that students experiencing one form of psychological distress are likely to experience others simultaneously . This interconnectedness suggests that addressing a single psychological factor in isolation may be insufficient, as students' academic performance is influenced by a dynamic system of interacting psychological conditions.

Despite the growing body of recent global evidence, there remains a significant gap in context-specific research within Nigeria. While some studies have examined individual psychological variables such as anxiety or stress, there is limited comprehensive research that integrates anxiety, academic stress, depression, and emotional experiences into a unified framework within the Nigerian educational context. Additionally, variations across educational levels, including secondary schools, technical institutions, and universities, have not been adequately explored. This lack of holistic, context-sensitive research limits the development of effective interventions and policies aimed at improving both students' psychological well-being and academic performance.

Therefore, the problem of this study lies in the insufficient understanding of how multiple psychological health factors interact to influence students' academic performance in Nigeria. Addressing this gap is essential for developing evidence-based strategies that can enhance students' mental health and improve academic outcomes across diverse educational settings.

### ***Integrated Understanding of Psychological Health and Academic Performance***

The central problem identified in this study is the limited understanding of how multiple psychological health factors interact to influence students' academic performance in Nigeria. Addressing this problem requires moving beyond isolated examination of variables such as anxiety, stress, or depression toward a more integrated, systems-based understanding of psychological health within educational contexts. Recent evidence supports this shift, showing that mental health conditions among students rarely occur independently but instead form overlapping and mutually reinforcing patterns that significantly affect learning outcomes.

A large multi-country analysis by Ayelet Meron Ruscio and colleagues highlights that comorbidity among anxiety, stress-related conditions, and depression is the norm rather than the exception among young populations, with co-occurring conditions producing more severe functional impairment than single disorders (Ruscio et al., 2022). This implies that examining a single psychological factor provides an incomplete picture of students' academic challenges. Supporting this, Ronald C. Kessler in a recent extension of global mental health surveys demonstrates that students experiencing multiple psychological conditions show significantly greater academic impairment compared to those with isolated symptoms (Kessler et al., 2022). These findings directly reinforce the problem identified in this study by showing that fragmented approaches to psychological health fail to capture the true drivers of academic performance.

This interconnected nature of psychological variables is further explained through recent network-based models of mental health. Research by Denny Borsboom (2021) proposes that mental health conditions function as dynamic systems in which symptoms such as worry, fatigue, low mood, and cognitive difficulty interact with one another rather than emerging from a single cause. Within academic settings, this means that anxiety can trigger stress responses, which may then lead to depressive symptoms, all of which jointly impair cognitive functioning and learning behaviour. Such a framework aligns strongly with the current study's focus on interaction among variables and provides a theoretical basis for analysing psychological health as an integrated system rather than isolated constructs.

Recent student-focused research further confirms the academic implications of these interactions. A longitudinal study by Sarah Ketchen Lipson (2023) found that students experiencing overlapping symptoms of anxiety, stress, and depression reported significantly lower academic persistence and higher likelihood of academic withdrawal. Importantly, the study emphasised that interventions targeting only one condition yielded limited improvement, whereas integrated mental health approaches showed more substantial academic benefits. This evidence directly supports the argument that solving the problem identified in this study requires a comprehensive understanding of how psychological factors interact rather than treating them in isolation.

Within the Nigerian context, the absence of such integrated approaches represents a critical gap. While individual studies have examined anxiety or stress independently, there is limited empirical work that captures the combined and interactive effects of these variables on academic performance across different educational levels. This gap limits the



development of effective interventions, as policies based on fragmented evidence are unlikely to address the complexity of students' psychological experiences. Therefore, this study positions itself as a necessary step toward developing a holistic framework that reflects the real-life interaction of psychological health factors among students.

By adopting an integrated perspective, this position paper argues that improving academic performance in Nigeria requires recognising psychological health as a dynamic system of interacting variables. Such an approach not only aligns with current global research but also provides a more accurate foundation for designing interventions that can simultaneously address anxiety, stress, depression, and emotional regulation. This integrated understanding forms the basis for identifying practical strategies that can translate research into effective educational and mental health practices, which is addressed in the next section.

### ***Evidence-Based Strategies for Addressing Psychological Health and Improving Academic Performance in Nigeria.***

Building on the need for an integrated understanding of psychological health, the next critical step is translating this knowledge into practical, evidence-based strategies that can improve students' academic performance. Recent global health data clearly indicate that student mental health challenges are both widespread and actionable through targeted interventions. A comprehensive analysis by World Health Organization (2022) reports that approximately one in seven adolescents globally experiences a mental disorder, with anxiety and depression being the most common conditions affecting learning and school participation. Complementing this, UNICEF (2023) highlights that mental health conditions account for a significant proportion of disability-adjusted life years among young people, directly impacting their educational outcomes. These statistics reinforce the urgency of implementing structured interventions that address psychological health as a pathway to improving academic performance. Given that anxiety often emerges as the initial psychological challenge affecting students, intervention efforts must begin with strategies that directly target anxiety reduction.

Effective management of anxiety in academic settings has been widely supported by recent clinical and educational research. A meta-analysis by Samantha J. Dawson (2023) found that cognitive behavioural interventions significantly reduce anxiety symptoms among students, leading to measurable improvements in concentration and academic performance. Similarly, Emily K. Sisk (2022) demonstrated that school-based mindfulness programmes improve students' attentional control and reduce test anxiety, thereby enhancing learning outcomes. These findings suggest that early identification and management of anxiety can prevent its escalation into more complex psychological conditions. However, since anxiety is closely linked with academic demands, addressing anxiety alone is insufficient without simultaneously managing academic stress, which often sustains and amplifies anxious responses.

Academic stress requires structured institutional strategies that reduce excessive pressure while promoting adaptive coping mechanisms. Recent research by Kate H. Chafouleas (2021) shows that integrating mental health support into school systems significantly reduces stress levels and improves students' academic engagement. In addition, Michael J. Furlong (2021) found that students who receive structured socio-emotional learning support demonstrate better stress management and improved academic outcomes. These findings indicate that institutional environments play a crucial role in either exacerbating or alleviating academic stress. When stress is effectively managed through supportive systems, its progression into more severe conditions such as depression can be prevented. This makes depression-focused interventions the next essential component in addressing the broader psychological health system.

Addressing depression among students requires more comprehensive and sustained interventions due to its persistent and debilitating nature. Recent clinical evidence by Pim Cuijpers (2023) demonstrates that psychological interventions, particularly cognitive behavioural therapy and behavioural activation, are highly effective in reducing depressive symptoms among young people. Furthermore, Sonia Johnson (2022) emphasises that early intervention and accessible mental health services significantly improve both psychological well-being and functional outcomes, including academic performance. These findings suggest that reducing depression not only improves students' emotional health but also restores their ability to engage academically. However, since emotional experiences influence how students respond to both anxiety and depression, interventions must also incorporate strategies that strengthen emotional regulation and resilience.

Emotional regulation has emerged as a key protective factor that enables students to manage psychological challenges and maintain academic performance. A recent study by João Marôco (2021) found that students with higher emotional regulation skills demonstrate better academic adjustment and lower levels of psychological distress. Similarly, Helen M. Stallman (2022) reported that resilience-based interventions significantly improve students' ability to cope with stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms simultaneously. These findings reinforce the idea that emotional skills act as a bridge connecting different psychological variables, helping to stabilise the entire system. As a result, interventions that strengthen emotional regulation do not only address a single condition but enhance students' overall psychological functioning.

The combined application of anxiety reduction strategies, stress management systems, depression interventions, and emotional regulation programmes reflects a holistic approach capable of addressing the complex psychological framework identified in this study. Evidence from implementation research by Patricio V. Marín (2024) indicates that multi-component mental health programmes produce significantly greater improvements in student outcomes compared to single-focus interventions. This supports the argument that addressing psychological health as an integrated system is essential for achieving meaningful improvements in academic performance.

Within the Nigerian context, adopting such a comprehensive approach remains both a challenge and an opportunity. While resource limitations and systemic constraints exist, the growing availability of school-based mental health models and digital intervention platforms provides practical pathways for implementation. By aligning global evidence with local educational realities, Nigeria can develop context-sensitive strategies that address students' psychological health holistically. This integrated intervention approach directly responds to the core problem of insufficient understanding and



fragmented treatment of psychological variables, thereby contributing to improved academic performance and overall student well-being.

### ***Policy Implications and Context-Specific Response for Nigeria***

The evidence presented so far demonstrates that improving students' academic performance in Nigeria requires more than isolated interventions; it requires a coordinated, system-level response that integrates psychological health into educational policy and practice. The need for such a response is reinforced by recent global findings showing that untreated mental health conditions continue to undermine educational attainment. According to World Bank (2023), learning poverty remains high in low- and middle-income countries, and mental health challenges are increasingly recognised as hidden barriers to effective learning outcomes. In addition, UNESCO (2024) reports that students' well-being is directly linked to educational quality, emphasising that education systems that neglect mental health are unlikely to achieve sustainable academic success. These findings suggest that addressing psychological health is not optional but essential for improving national educational outcomes. This creates a clear policy direction that begins with integrating mental health into school systems.

Integrating mental health into educational systems requires structured frameworks that embed psychological support within everyday learning environments. Recent implementation research by Neil Humphrey (2022) shows that whole-school approaches to mental health significantly improve both student well-being and academic performance when compared to fragmented or reactive interventions. Similarly, Mark T. Greenberg (2023) demonstrates that embedding social and emotional learning within school curricula leads to long-term improvements in both behavioural and academic outcomes. These findings indicate that schools should not function solely as academic institutions but also as environments that actively support students' psychological development. However, for such frameworks to be effective, they must be supported by professionals who can identify and manage psychological challenges early, making capacity building the next critical component.

Strengthening institutional capacity through trained personnel is essential for translating policy into practice. Evidence from recent health systems research by Crick Lund (2021) highlights that scaling up mental health services in low-resource settings requires integrating trained non-specialists into service delivery systems, including schools. In addition, Shekhar Saxena (2022) emphasises that workforce development is a key determinant of successful mental health integration in developing countries. Within the Nigerian context, this implies that teachers, counsellors, and school administrators must be equipped with basic mental health competencies to identify anxiety, manage stress-related behaviours, and refer severe cases appropriately. While human capacity is essential, the increasing availability of digital technologies introduces another practical avenue for expanding access to psychological support.

Digital mental health interventions have emerged as scalable and cost-effective solutions for addressing psychological challenges among students. A recent systematic review by Gráinne McMahon (2023) found that digital interventions, including mobile-based cognitive behavioural therapy and online counselling platforms, significantly reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression among young people. Furthermore, Danielle M. Ramo (2022) demonstrated that digital mental health tools improve accessibility to psychological support, particularly in settings where traditional services are limited. These findings are particularly relevant for Nigeria, where access to mental health professionals remains constrained. By leveraging digital platforms, educational institutions can extend psychological support to a wider student population, thereby addressing gaps in service delivery. However, the effectiveness of both institutional and digital interventions depends on supportive social environments, making community and family involvement equally important.

The role of family and community support in shaping students' psychological health cannot be overlooked. Recent research by Eirini Flouri (2021) indicates that supportive family environments significantly reduce the impact of psychological distress on academic outcomes. Similarly, Kathryn L. Modecki (2022) found that peer and community support systems enhance resilience and improve students' ability to cope with academic stress. These findings suggest that interventions limited to schools alone may be insufficient; instead, a broader ecosystem approach that includes families and communities is necessary for sustained impact. When students are supported across multiple environments, the cumulative effect strengthens both their psychological well-being and academic performance.

Bringing these elements together, it becomes evident that addressing the problem identified in this study requires a coordinated, multi-level strategy that integrates policy, institutional practices, human capacity, technology, and social support systems. Such an approach aligns with current global health and education evidence and provides a practical pathway for improving students' academic outcomes in Nigeria. By moving from fragmented understanding to integrated action, this position paper demonstrates that psychological health can be effectively addressed as a system of interacting factors. This not only resolves the identified gap in understanding but also provides a foundation for evidence-based interventions that enhance both students' mental well-being and academic success across diverse educational settings.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

This position paper set out to address a critical gap in understanding how multiple psychological health factors interact to influence students' academic performance in Nigeria. Drawing from recent empirical evidence, the analysis demonstrates that anxiety, academic stress, depression, and emotional experiences do not operate independently but function as an interconnected psychological system that shapes students' cognitive functioning, engagement, and academic outcomes. When these factors co-occur, their combined effect produces more severe academic impairment than any single condition in isolation.



The paper further establishes that fragmented approaches to student mental health are insufficient for improving academic performance. Evidence consistently shows that interventions targeting only one psychological variable fail to produce sustained academic benefits because they do not address the underlying interaction among variables. In contrast, integrated approaches that simultaneously address anxiety, stress, depression, and emotional regulation produce stronger and more consistent improvements in both psychological well-being and academic outcomes.

Within the Nigerian context, the challenge is compounded by limited institutional capacity, inadequate integration of mental health into educational systems, and insufficient context-specific research that captures the interaction of these variables across diverse learning environments. As a result, many students continue to experience unmanaged psychological distress that undermines their academic potential. This study therefore concludes that improving students' academic performance in Nigeria requires a shift from isolated, reactive interventions to a coordinated, system-based approach that recognises psychological health as a central component of educational success.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and arguments presented, the following recommendations are proposed to address the identified problem and improve students' academic performance in Nigeria:

First, educational policy makers should formally integrate mental health into national education frameworks. Psychological health should be recognised as a core component of academic success, with clear policies supporting school-based mental health programmes across secondary schools, technical institutions, and universities.

Second, schools and higher institutions should adopt whole-school mental health approaches that embed psychological support into everyday academic environments. This includes incorporating social and emotional learning into curricula, establishing structured counselling systems, and creating supportive classroom environments that reduce academic pressure.

Third, capacity building should be prioritised by training teachers, counsellors, and school administrators to identify early signs of anxiety, stress, and depression. Basic mental health literacy among educators will enable early intervention, which is critical in preventing the progression of psychological distress.

Fourth, institutions should implement integrated intervention programmes that address anxiety, academic stress, depression, and emotional regulation simultaneously. Such programmes should include cognitive behavioural strategies, stress management training, and emotional resilience development.

Fifth, digital mental health solutions should be leveraged to expand access to psychological support. Mobile-based counselling platforms, online therapy tools, and mental health applications can provide scalable and cost-effective support, particularly in resource-constrained settings.

Sixth, family and community involvement should be strengthened to create supportive environments beyond the school setting. Awareness programmes should be developed to educate parents and communities on the importance of psychological health in academic success.

Finally, further research should adopt longitudinal and integrative designs that examine how psychological variables interact over time within the Nigerian context. This will provide deeper insights and support the development of more targeted and effective interventions.

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