



RISK FACTORS AND YOUTHS SUICIDAL TENDENCIES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH SOUTH, NIGERIA

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(Received 4, October 2023; Revision Accepted 24, November 2023)

ABSTRACT

The study sought to ascertain the influence of certain risk factors on suicidal tendencies among youths in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was utilized. The population consisted of undergraduate students of four tertiary institutions located in Niger Delta Region of South South Nigeria. Through stratified random sampling, coupled with purposive sampling technique, a sample size of 620 was derived. Four research questions were raised and a questionnaire titled, Risk Factors and Suicidal Tendencies Questionnaire (RFSTQ) was used for the data collection. Accruing data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The result revealed that risk factors such as family disruptions, substance abuse, academic stress and internet exposure influence suicidal tendencies. It was therefore concluded that certain risk factors such as substance abuses, academic stress and depression are closely associated with suicidal tendencies among youths. Hence, the recommendation was that all tertiary institutions should have fully functioning counselling centres that would mount intervention programmes aimed at boosting the mental health of their student clientele; where students can be taught adaptive, coping and problem solving skills to handle the myriads of pressures and problems they face at home, school and among friends.

KEYWORDS: Risk Factors, Youth, Suicide.

INTRODUCTION

Suicide is a growing public health concern among teens and adolescence worldwide. Young people are by nature vulnerable to mental health problem especially during adolescence, because the adolescent's years are anxious and unsettling period as adolescence face difficulties of transition into adulthood.

It is a confusing period that sometimes live them isolated from family and peers. The self-doubt, confusion and pressure to succeed or conform can come at a high price for troubled youths. Blisen (2018) observed that young people have to make decision about important and concrete directions in life and address new challenges with regards to building their own identity, developing self-esteem, acquiring independence and

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responsibility, building new intimate relationship. Young people are subject to psychological and physical changes. Besides, the young are confronted with high expectation, sometimes too high from significant relatives and peers. Such situation invariably provides a certain degree of helplessness, insecurity, stress and a sense of losing control (Crattenn, Sawyer, Ross & Atten, 2016). Some may at one point or the other conceive suicide as permanent solution to problems (Collins, 2007). Denga (2015) observed that suicide attempt has increasingly become common phenomenon in Nigeria and other African countries because of the rising distress caused by unemployment, poverty, and other form of frustration in life. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) data, an estimated 800,000 people die by suicide annually and Nigeria now rates among the top suicide prone countries. In the World Population Review, Nigeria has a suicide rate of 9.5 per 100,000 population and ranks 10th in Africa and 67th in the world suicide table. In Europe, youth suicide rank is the second greater cause of death among ages 15-19. It is even the most frequent cause of death among female of age 15-19 years (WHO. Mental Health, 2018). Kutie (2000) observed that girls attempt at suicide is higher than those of boys. Gay and Lesbian youth are more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual peers.

In Nigeria, it was reported that between January and August 2019, there were 13 suicide cases of students in tertiary institutions across the country (Olufemi, 2019). The report added that in one particular university about 13 cases of suicide were recorded that year. Furthermore, students in tertiary institutions topped the list of 42 Nigerian youths reported to have committed suicide within a period of 6 months. Method of suicide used ranged from using snipers, hanging and cutting of self, jumping into the river or lagoon and setting oneself on fire. Denigwe, Eke and Ngwu (2022) observed that suicides among youths have been on the increase in recent times. No wonder one often hears such headlines as 'man jumps into Lagoon and dies, students commit suicide because of poor grades, man's body found hanging on ceiling fan in his room, man dies after intentionally drinking poisonous liquid', and so on.

Suicide according to Public Health Agency of Canada (2018) is defined as a fatal-injurious act with some evidence of intent to die, while suicidal behaviour ranges from thought of suicide to suicide attempt to death by suicide. It is difficult to identify youths who contemplate suicide. This is because they prefer to bottle up whatever they are experiencing and are often reluctant to talk about their problems and their inner thoughts and feelings. They conceal their anguish, fears and anxiety such that the significant others around them including their parents would have no idea about the magnitude of what they might be going through or that they might be going through or that they might be contemplating suicide (Blisen, 2018). Denwigwe, Eke and Ngwu (2022) observed that issue risk of suicidal behaviour is seen as a public health concern, especially by counsellors, media practitioners, government, public healthcare professionals, teachers and parents. Efforts to ensure the prevention of suicidal behaviour, despite these effort and suggestion, suicide behaviour seen to be on the high side in Nigeria.

Certain predisposing factors are believed to precipitate the contemplation of suicide, predispositions are variable that increase the chances of occurrence of certain negative phenomena or situations. According to Wortley, Scot and Tanner (2003), risk factors refer to situation that are empirically related to a particular outcome. Bilsen (2018) list risk factors to include, mental disorders, previous suicide attempt, family process, psychosocial stressors, exposure to inspiring model and availability of means of committing suicide. Risk factors can also be place into four main categories, namely: family disruptions, substance abuse, academic stress and internet exposure.

Family disruptions: Family disruptions involves interference in the course of youth everyday life. These may include financial difficulties/losses, loss of job, conflict in the family, separation, divorce, protracted illness, and death of a parent, and changing moral climate in the society. This type of situations have potentials to induce stress, depression and sense of emptiness and despair in youths. Collins (2007) asserted that children deprived of warmth, positive interaction with adult and experience parental rejection, have tendencies to manifest apathy, poor health,

sadness, depression and contemplation of suicide. Denga (2015) indicated that direct conflicts with parents often produce negative impact on youths and that a great number of youths suicidal cases are traceable to violent home background. Thus, adolescent and youths who are lacking in family and social support, who experience low self-esteem, trauma, sibling's rivalry, step-parent issues, emotional neglect, physical and sexual abuse and domestic violence have tendencies towards suicide, such events have the potentials to form the trigger for suicide attempts among youths.

Adejoh (2019) in this view on moral decadence in virtually every level beginning from the home, asserted that the family provides the buffer for the individual, and that when an individual is traumatized from outside, home becomes the place of hope, solace, comfort and succour. However, it is doubtful if the family still plays that fundamental role. There is pervasive abandonment of members of the family to other youths and peers. Parents appear to have given up on their responsibility towards their children. They seem to think that their responsibility and emotional reinforcement that is derived from one-on-one interaction with children seems to be lacking. There is little coaching and teaching on moral values. Children are staved of intimacy and connectiveness to parents. Children are glued to phones and social media leaving them isolated and individualized. These are some of the reasons suicide is on the increase among youths (Adejoh, 2019).

Some youths are overwhelmed by hurt as a result of loss and disappointment in relationships, divorce and death of loved ones have capacity to deal shattering blow on youths. Their emotions become numbed, their perception distorted and lead to despair and suicide. According to Collins (2007) significant losses such as death of parents or loved ones seems to be painful to bear. As such a time of grief, young people will entertain the thought of suicide, an attempt to end the seemingly unbearable sorrow or grief.

Ndueso (2020) observed that many young Nigerians are fast developing a passion for psychoactive substance. Substance abuse refers to a pattern of harmful use of psychoactive such substance such as alcohol, legal and illegal drugs and other substances that are not drugs at

all for mood-altering purpose. Poverty, unemployment, underemployment, insecurity, economic down turn, cultism, societal pressure, frustrations and challenges of modern day living, often push young people to find solace in narcotics and other hard substances (Miller & Taylor, 2005). This is a bit to escape from the depression occasioned by their harsh reality. Unfortunately, the high they receive from the drugs also give them the boldness to end the misery through suicide. Elisha, Galaif and Lockel (2019) opine that alcohol use remains extremely widespread among today's adolescents which is related to depression and suicide. Substance abuse more specifically alcohol misuse, drug abuse are strongly associated with suicide risk (Bridge, Goldstein & Brent, 2006). The effect of suicide and the emotional fall out among survivors is both deep emotional, psychological, affecting people's life for years. Those closet to a suicide victim are at a higher risk of attempting suicide.

Kyunghee, Eun-Jung, Mi-young Chon, Eun-ja (2006) observed that young people are often prone to mental distress regarding anticipated academic challenges and the fear of the possibility of academic failure and the consequent disappointment of parents, significant others and even self. Similarly, Arun and Chavan (2009) opine that youths experience stress regarding examinations deadlines, workload, parental expectations, poor time management and difficulty in organizing work. The academic frustrations of the Nigeria youth is further compounded by the processes of admission into the higher institutions/registration and integration upon admission, combined with course work and project supervision. Such frustrations are capable of pushing youths to their emotional limits, towards suicide.

Oftentimes, young people go into higher institution with the notion that these are places of fun and freedom; only to realize that they are fraught with frustration and enormous challenges that occasionally send some spiraling into the deep end. It is the assertion of Onyedika (2019) that Nigerian youths, typically have lofty dreams and great expectations of the future and life in general. However, when circumstances cause them to feel defeated, their dreams fade away, expectations are shattered, depression and despair set in and the thought of death as a viable alternative to escape their life struggles become very attractive.

Internet exposure: The Internet represents one the greatest modern day technological advancements that have both its positive and negative sides. On a positive note, it provides a highway of information on every subject under the surface of the earth, shrinks the vast world into a global village and creates a network of connections among the humans. In the same token, it provides a platform for the young and the vulnerable to be preyed upon and victimized, causes the young minds to be fixated on a virtual world to the exclusion of meaningful relationships with significant others; and also provides information and materials that are detrimental to the mental health, socio-emotional development and well-being of young individuals. As Collins (2007) aptly put, social media has changed the way youths socialized make and maintain friendships; they miss out on critical social development because they spend most of their free time interacting through the screen.

Young minds are impressionable and so they tend to absorb materials on the internet hook, line and sinker. It is the observation of WHO (2000) that the glorification of violence in social media and exposure to internet sites have a significant impact on youths. They get lost in a world of unrealistic comparison, cyberbullying and other negative activities. Researches have linked suicidal ideation to the experience of cyber bullying, victimization and offending. The study of Sameer, Justin, Patchin, Taylor and Francis (2010) revealed that youths who experienced traditional or cyberbullying have more suicidal thoughts and are more likely to attempt suicide than those who have not experienced such peer aggression. Internet use can cause more exposure to graphic content and lead to cyberbullying, and over the past ten years, many cases of cyberbullying have led to self-harm and suicide (Peterson, 2009).

There is also evidence of online availability of suicide methods and online suicide communities. According to Denwigwe, Eke and Ngwu (2020) media report on suicide cases can result to in more suicides, the internet poses a risk of some vulnerable youths; there are pro-suicide websites that encourage suicide explicitly by promoting the decision of suicide as an individual right. Blisen (2018) also reported that sensational media reporting or detailed internet reporting about

means and methods of committing suicide also enhance youth's tendencies towards suicide.

Youths, by their nature are impulsive and reckless with a high sense of invincibility and when that is combined with exposure to videos depicting violence and risky behaviour on the internet, the recklessness escalates to suicidal behaviour. It is the position of Van Herringen (2001) that youths often display casual disregard for their safety and their lives and demonstrate a fascination with the unknown, including death. The volatile blend of curiosity, impulsiveness and feeling of invincibility in the youth's heart and mind sometimes create dangerous propensity for suicidal acts and self-destructive behaviour (Van Herringen, 2001).

The Rational Emotive Therapy by Albert Ellis emphasizes that man's behaviour which is either that of happiness or sadness arises from ones perception of events around him or her. He believed that man is inherently rational and that he is born with a tendency to help himself achieve desired goals. However, man is also inherently irrational and also born with tendency to defeat those same positive goals he holds with negative thinking and negative attitudes that react and sabotage his or her positive goals or even kill himself slowly or stay alive miserably. He summarises human thinking and human behaviour into eleven irrational ideas; which when internalize could lead to neurosis, through self-talk, re-indoctrination and irrational thinking and behaviour. Practically, many people on many occasions in all cultures, in all times all over the world have strong tendencies to present themselves in a self-defeating manner when faced with certain situations; they make themselves extremely anxious, depressed, hostile, self-downing and self-pitying or even committing suicide. Man has a tendency to complain about life's troubles rather than doing something about them. How a person thinks often determines how he or she feels. The most effective counselling for the people is to help them change their thinking.

Suffice it to say that the youthful years of adolescence and early young adulthood are the periods of irrational behaviour, delusion of knowing-it-all and invincibility. These are indeed phases characterized by stressors occasioned by expectations from family, peers, school, self and

society at large (Erikson, 1968). In essence pressures are mounted on youths from all sides,

sometimes to breaking points. Oftentimes, these lead to the experience of very strong negative emotions such as fear of the future, anxiety, depression and suicide.

It does seem like suicide is becoming very prevalent in many societies of the world and Nigeria has not been spared from this ill. The frustrations occasioned by family disruption, relationship problems, academic stress and other challenges of everyday living seem to be causing a rise in suicidal tendencies among youths in Nigeria. The study therefore, seek to answer the question, do variable such as family disruptions, substance abuse, academic stress and internet exposure constitutes risk factors of suicidal tendencies among youths in tertiary institutions in Cross River State?

The purpose of the study therefore, is to ascertain the extent to which such risk factors influence suicidal tendencies among youths in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. For this purpose, four research questions were generated namely:-

1. Do family disruptions influence suicidal tendencies among youths?
2. To what extent does substance abuse influence suicidal tendencies among youths?
3. Can academic stress lead to suicidal tendencies among youths?
4. To what extent does exposure to the internet influence suicidal tendencies among youths?

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was utilized and the area of study comprised University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT), University of Calabar (UNICAL), University of Uyo, (UNIUYO), University of Benin (UNIBEN). All four institutions are found in South South Nigeria, located in the Niger Delta, within the South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The population consisted of all undergraduates of these institutions. Using the stratified random sampling technique, 5 faculties/schools were selected from each institution, then 1 department from each of the 5 faculties/schools were selected, making 5 departments from each institutions; and then using the purposive sampling technique, the following was derived:

UNICAL, 41 students from each of the 5 departments, giving a total of 205 – 100 males and 105 females; UNIPORT, 33 from each department, giving rise to 165 – 80 male and 85 females; UNIUYO, 25 from each department, giving a total of 125 – 60 males and 65 females; UNIBEN, 25 from each department, giving rise to a total of 125 – 60males and 65 females. The total sample size derived was 620 comprising 300 males and 320 females with age range of 17 – 22. Purposive sampling technique was used as they sat for their second semester examinations because that is the time the absentee and truant students all show up.

The instrument consisted of a questionnaire titled, Risk Factors and Suicidal Tendencies Questionnaire (RFSTQ). The first part required biographical information such as gender, age, department, year of study and institution. The second part consisted of 20 statements that sought information on the risk factors as they relate to suicidal tendencies. Items were given to other experts in the area for their comments and suggestions, thus refining the instrument and establishing its validity. Through the test re-test procedure, a reliability estimate of 0.76 was established for the instrument.

Participants were to give responses of either “Agree” (A) or “Disagree” (D) and the frequencies of each response were to be tallied at the end of the exercise. The researchers and their four research assistant, with the cooperation of the course lecturers, administered the instrument on the students in the examination hall at the tail end of the examinations. The researchers thoroughly briefed the participants on the process of response to the items, the purpose of the exercise and the confidentiality of their responses. Respondents were able to fill out the questionnaire properly, within 30 minutes after which the researchers retrieved all of them. The accruing data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

RESULT**Research question one**

tendencies among youths?

To answer this research question, responses to items 1-5 of section B on the questionnaire were analyzed. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Frequencies and percentages for family disruptions and suicidal tendencies (N – 620)

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES				Total %
		A		D		
		f	%	f	%	
1	Increased conflicts with my parents sometimes make me feel like disappearing from the world.	370	59.68	250	40.32	620 100
2	No one seems to care, so I wonder what I am living for.	400	64.52	220	35.48	620 100
3	I just can't cope with the hostility between my parents.	366	59.03	254	40.97	620 100
4	The hardship due to my father's lost of job is causing me intense depression.	355	57.26	265	42.74	620 100
5	I don't see the need to continue living since after the death of my parents/love ones.	409	65.97	211	34.03	620 100

From Table 1, it can be observed that 370 representing (59.68%) of the total respondents agreed that increased conflict with their parents sometimes make them feel like disappearing from the world, while 220 (40.32%) disagreed. Also, 400 (64.52%) agreed that lack of care from their parents make them feel bad, while 220 (35.48%) disagreed. Again, 366 (59.03%) agreed they can't cope with hostility between their parents; 254 (40.97%) disagreed. Also, 355 (57.26%) agreed that their parents loss of job cause them intense depression; while 265 (42.74%) disagreed. Finally, 409 (65.97%) agreed that the death of their parents and loved

ones has taken away the need to continue living, while 211 (34.03%) disagreed.

The results of the analysis indicate that the percentage of agreement for all the five items are higher than 50. This implies that family disruption can lead to suicidal tendency.

Research question two

To what extent do substance abuse influence suicidal tendencies?

To answer this research question, responses to the items 6-10 on section B on the questionnaire were analyzed. The result is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Frequencies and percentages for substance abuse and suicidal tendencies (N=620)

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES				
		A		D		Total %
		f	%	F	%	
6	I can't escape my persistence depression without the use of hard drugs or alcohol.	433	69.84	187	30.16	620 100
7	When I am on drugs everything including killing myself and others look easy.	399	64.35	221	35.65	620 100
8	Drugs give me such boldness that I can jump from the bridge.	365	58.87	255	41.13	620 100
9	I do drugs hoping that one day they would end my miserable live.	240	38.71	380	61.29	620 100
10	I hate myself for my drug addiction and I want to end it all.	385	62.10	235	37.90	620 100

The result in Table 2 shows that 433 (69.84%) of the total respondents agreed that they can't escape persistent depression without the use of hard drugs or alcohol, while 187 (30.16%) do not. 399 (64.35%) agreed that when on drugs everything including killing self and others look easy, while 221 (35.65%) do not. 365 (58.87%) agreed that when they take drugs it gives them boldness to jump from the bridge; while 255 (41.13%) do not. 240 (38.71%) agreed that doing drugs bring hope of ending miserable life; while 380 (61.29%) do not. Finally, 385 (62.10%) agreed that they hate themselves for drug

addiction and want to end it all; while 235 (37.90%) do not.

The result of the analysis, indicate that the percentage of agreement for all the five items are higher than 50. This result therefore signifies that substance abuse can lead to suicidal tendency.

Research question three

Can academic stress lead to suicidal tendencies?

To answer this research question, the items 11-15 of the questionnaire were analyzed. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Frequencies and percentages for academic stress and suicidal tendencies (N – 620)

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES				Total %
		A		D		
		f	%	F	%	
11	My performance in school is poor I feel I should just die.	241	38.87	379	61.13	620 100
12	The harassment from some of my lecturers make me feel like killing myself to end it all.	200	32.26	420	67.74	620 100
13	Financial difficulties may end my schooling abruptly and I'm thinking of killing myself.	320	37.42	388	62.58	620 100
14	There is just no pleasing anybody no matter how I try, it is better to end it all.	301	48.55	319	51.45	620 100
15	The pressure to succeed is so high I'm reaching my breaking point.	250	40.32	370	59.68	620 100

The result in Table 3 reveals that, 241 (38.87%) of the total respondents agreed that their poor performance in school make them feel like dying, while 379 (61.13%) do not. Also, 200 (32.26%) agreed that harassment from some of their lecturers make them feel like killing themselves, while 420 (67.74%) are not. 320 (37.42%) agreed that lack of money to buy their school needs make them feel like killing themselves, while 388 (62.58%) do not. 301 (48.55%) agreed that they became frustrated when they cannot please anybody no matter how they try, so it is better to end it all, while 319 (51.45%) do not. 250 (40.32%) agreed that the pressure to succeed is

so high, and reaching my breaking points, while 370 (59.68%) disagreed.

The result of the analysis indicated that the percentage of agreement for all the five items is higher than 50. This result therefore means that, academic stress can lead to suicidal tendency.

Research question four

To what extent does exposure to internet influence suicidal tendencies? To answer this research question, the items 16-20 of the questionnaire were analyzed. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4: Frequencies and percentages for internet exposure and suicidal tendencies (N – 620)

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES				Total %
		A		D		
		f	%	f	%	
16	I believe strongly in everything that I watch/read on the internet.	245	39.52	375	60.48	620 100
17	I have exhaustively read on the internet how to commit suicide or murder without getting caught.	230	37.10	390	62.90	620 100
18	I love watching movies depicting violence/ritual murder on the internet.	253	40.81	367	59.19	620 100
19	I'm always by myself surfing, through the internet uninterrupted.	206	33.23	414	67.77	620 100
20	I like experimenting what I see on the internet	372	60	248	40	620 100

From Table 4, it can be observed that 245 (39.52%) agreed that they strongly believe everything they read, watch on social media, while 375 (60.48%) do not. 230 (37.10%) agreed that they have exhaustively read on the internet how to commit suicide or murder without being caught on social media; while 390 (62.90%) do not. 253 (40.81%) agreed that they love watching movies depicting violence, fight and murder in the internet while 367 (59.19%) do not. 206 (33.23) agreed that they spent more time surfing the internet interrupted, while 414 (67.77%) do not. The result also shows that 372 (60%) of the total respondents agreed that they like experimenting what they see on the internet while 248 (40%) do not.

The results of the analysis indicate that the percentage of agreement for all the five items are higher than 50. This implies that internet usage can lead to suicidal tendency.

DISCUSSION

The result revealed that family disruption is related to suicidal tendencies. This is supported by Collins (2007) who observed that parent-child discord is the single most precipitant for contemplation of suicide in adolescents. Poor communication between parent and children, social disconnection and isolation and lack of sense of belongingness might be critical influences on suicide behavior (Jomer 2005). This is further supported by Collins (2007) who observed that suicide and suicide attempts are often seen among teenagers, people who live alone, the unmarried especially divorced, those who are abused and person who are depressed. Studies have found that bereavement conveys an increased risk for depression and suicide.

The result also indicated that substance abuse is linked to suicidal tendencies.

This is not surprising because, according to Elisha, Galail and Lockel (2019), today's youths experience extreme pressure and alcohol use remain extremely widespread and related to depression and suicidal thoughts. Narcotics and other hard drugs and alcohol create euphoria in distressed youths and in such mood, they could have the boldness to do the unthinkable, suicide (Bridge, Goldstein and Brent, 2006).

Result also revealed that academic stress and depression relate to suicidal tendencies. This is supported by Aru and Chavan (2009) who observed that adolescent face stress regarding worry about examination, deadline, much work in some subjects, failure in school work and parental expectations which could all lead to depression and suicide. Higher institutions are places which are often times fraught with serious challenges and frustrations where dreams of fun and high achievement are shattered, and when that happens youth become depressed and push towards suicide (Onyedika, 2019).

The findings further revealed that internet usage expose youths to suicidal tendencies. This is supported by Biddle, Donovan and Hawton, Kapar and Crunnell (2008) who observed that internet has provided a forum for people to obtain information on how to commit suicide and means of killing themselves. The internet provides a forum to spread information on how to die by suicide, self-harm videos which may re-inforce self-injurious behavior such as self-cutting, burning and hitting oneself. Suicide note shared on social media may influence the decision of vulnerable people. The result is further supported by Samec, Justin, Patchin, Francis and Taylor (2010) who found that youths who experience cyberbullying have higher tendencies towards committing suicide.

CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that risk factors such as family disruptions, substance abuse, academic stress and internet exposure influence suicidal tendencies among youths in tertiary institutions. Young people are often stressed out by expectations from family, peers, school, society, and even self. They experience tremendous amount of pressure, fear of the future, anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. The study has shown that changes in the family dynamics and fortunes as well as traumatic events in the family can lead to depression and suicidal thoughts;

frustration and challenges endemic in the academic environment can cause depression and suicidal thoughts; exposure to the materials on the internet can further validate and strengthen youth suicidal thoughts; substance use and abuse provide the impetus and resolve to actualize the suicidal thought. Rational Emotive Theory of Albert Ellis has suggested that human (old and young) have a strong tendency to present themselves in self-defeating manner when faced with difficult circumstances; they allow themselves to be anxious self-pitying, self-drowning, hostile, depressed and suicidal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

Fully functional, counseling centres with well trained professional should be established in all higher institutions in the state. These centres would then mount counselling and intervention activities and programmes that are both preventive and curative aimed at boosting the mental health of their student clientele. Programmes should include orientation for freshmen that would focus on the challenges and frustrations they are likely to encounter, peer pressure, time management, study habits, relationship with lecturers, work load and other related issues. Counselling programmes should also involve parents and should also be ongoing programmes should include:

- Conflict resolution in the family.
- Conflict resolution among peers, classmates relationship.
- Dealing with bereavement, grief and losses.
- Dealing with romantic relationships and breakups.
- Feeling of neglect and abandonment.
- Dangers of drug and alcohol use and abuse.
- Financial loses/managing finances.
- Dangers inherent in the internet.
- Spirituality/church attendance.
- Need to open up and leave the communication lines open.
- Reiterating that suicide is never the solution.

- Emphasizing the need to keep hope alive, to hold the dream, hope for a brighter future and to see the glass half full and not half empty. In essence, youths in tertiary institutions have a dire need to be taught adaptive coping and problem-solving skills to handle the myriads of pressures and problems they face at home, school and among friends.

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