

The Impact of Mental Health on the Academic Performance of Junior Secondary School Students

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.909000678>

Received: 18 September 2025; Accepted: 23 September 2025; Published: 25 October 2025

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of mental health on the academic performance of Junior Secondary School students in Basic Science. Four research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with a sample of 100 Junior Secondary School students. A self-structured questionnaire on mental health and academic performance was used for data collection. The data obtained were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and chi-square. The findings revealed that common mental health concerns such as stress, anxiety, sadness, concentration difficulties, and social withdrawal are prevalent among students, with mean scores ranging between 2.75 and 3.25. Academic stress and examination anxiety were the most commonly reported challenges ($\bar{x} = 3.25$, $SD = 1.408$). Results also showed that different aspects of mental health significantly influence students' performance in Basic Science, with mean scores ranging from 3.11 to 3.40. Specifically, poor mental health was found to reduce comprehension ($\bar{x} = 3.40$, $SD = 0.387$), while positive mental states improved classroom participation ($\bar{x} = 3.31$, $SD = 0.514$). The study further revealed that challenges in learning Basic Science are largely associated with lack of practical activities ($\bar{x} = 3.31$, $SD = 0.517$), inadequate resources ($\bar{x} = 3.22$, $SD = 1.547$), and ineffective teaching methods ($\bar{x} = 3.71$, $SD = 0.500$), rather than conceptual difficulty. Most importantly, findings indicated that mental health has a significant effect on students' educational attainment in Basic Science, with mean scores between 3.11 and 3.87. Poor mental health was strongly linked with lack of concentration ($\bar{x} = 3.87$, $SD = 1.271$), while students acknowledged that school-based mental health support can improve attainment ($\bar{x} = 3.86$, $SD = 0.772$). The inferential analysis revealed that mental health exerts a significant influence on academic performance in Basic Science ($\chi^2 = .000$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that mental health challenges substantially affect students' academic outcomes in Basic Science and recommends that schools integrate mental health support services, improve teaching methods, and provide adequate resources to enhance student performance and well-being.

Keywords: Mental health, academic performance, Basic Science, stress, concentration, Junior Secondary School students.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional, psychological, and social well-being are all components of mental health, which is crucial for student's overall development and academic achievement. Public health professionals are very concerned about the prevalence of mental illness worldwide (Poreddi, Reddy, Mathematics & Thimmaiah, 2013). In both developed and developing countries, the growing health and socioeconomic effects of mental illnesses and disorders are currently a major concern. Overall well-being depends on mental health, which is also crucial for finding happiness and contentment in life. According to the World Health Organization (2019), mental health is a state of optimal well-being in which people can reach their full potential, deal with everyday stressors, stay productive, and actively participate in their communities. According to the American Psychological Association (2015), mental illness includes conditions that affect a person's ability to think, feel, and, as a result, function daily. Over 450 million people worldwide suffer from mental or behavioral issues, and one in four families has at least one member with a mental illness (Fiasorgbor & Aniah, 2015).

People with mental illness often have difficulty accessing education, treatment, and opportunities for steady work, which impedes their economic advancement and deprives them of social support and recognition in their community (World Health Organization, 2019). Young adults, who make up the most economically active group

in society, have the highest prevalence of mental illnesses. Adolescence is a particularly noteworthy time for the development of these issues. For any country, this is a major economic concern (Fiasorgbor & Aniah, 2015). It was widely believed that mental health disorders were "private matters" that were primarily handled by individuals and families, with little access allowed to outside parties like other family members and medical professionals. The way a person interacts with and supports people who have mental health disorders is significantly influenced by their beliefs and attitudes regarding these conditions (Kobau & Zack, 2013). According to Abo El-magd and Al Zamil (2013), mental health disorders are a group of issues that cause major disruptions in emotional experiences, cognitive functions, and interpersonal relationships.

Every social group has a unique viewpoint on mental health issues, with a focus on college students and the younger generation. Since the attitudes and values of college-bound students have the biggest influence on society, secondary schools are thought to be the best place to implement a comprehensive mental health strategy (Mahto, Verma, Verma, Singh, Chaudhury & Shantna, 2009). Understanding undergraduate students' attitudes and beliefs regarding people with mental health disorders is therefore essential as a first step in addressing the commonly noted negative attitudes, as demonstrated by numerous studies (Poreddi et al., 2013). It is essential to have information about the prevalence of mental health issues among secondary school pupils. Unfortunately, the information that is currently available is restricted to studies on particular groups or regional research. There is no information on the prevalence of mental health issues in schools overall. According to a recent study by Elbur et al. (2004) in Taif, relatives of patients with mental health disorders frequently harbor stigmatizing beliefs and negative attitudes toward mentally ill people and mental health disorders, despite the prevalence of mental health issues. Few studies on undergraduate students' attitudes toward mental health disorders have been carried out in lab settings (Poreddi, Thimmaiah, Pashupu, Ramachandra, & Mathematics, 2014).

Parents, legislators, and educators all place a high premium on ensuring that students succeed academically. Academic success is influenced by a number of factors, but mental health has been found to be a key one. Mental health issues like stress, anxiety, and depression can have a detrimental effect on students' cognitive capacities, concentration, and academic achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to holistically investigate the impact of mental health on the academic performance of junior secondary school students. Specifically, the study is set to;

- i. determine the pervasiveness of common mental health concerns among Junior Secondary School students;
- ii. examine how different aspects of mental health impact students' academic performance in Basic Science;
- iii. identify the challenges faced by students in learning Basic Science and how they affect their engagement and motivation;
- iv. determine the effectiveness of mental health on the educational attainment of Basic Science students in secondary school.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

1. What is the pervasiveness of common mental health concerns among Junior Secondary School students?
2. How do different aspects of mental health impact students' academic performance in Basic Science?
3. What are the challenges faced by students in learning Basic Science, and how do they affect their engagement and motivation?
4. Is there any effect of mental health on the educational attainment of Basic Science students in secondary school?

Research Hypothesis

The following research hypotheses were formulated for the study;

H₀₁: There is no significant impact of mental health on the academic performance of students in Basic Science.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have demonstrated a link between academic success and mental health. Eisenberg et al. (2009) found that students with mental health disorders are more likely to experience difficulties in their academic performance. Likewise, Hunt and Eisenberg (2010) found that mental health interventions have a significant positive effect on academic performance. Problems with psychological health can have a big impact on academic performance, attendance, and participation in school-related activities. Furthermore, they may lead to relationship difficulties, social isolation, and an increased propensity to engage in risky behaviors. In order to minimize negative effects and improve students' mental health and academic performance, Ackerman (2016) highlights the significance of quickly identifying and taking appropriate action. Adolescent mental health in secondary school is a global concern that needs careful attention. To fully understand the complex interplay of pertinent factors and develop effective preventative and intervention strategies, more research is required. To ensure that every adolescent has fair and equal access to high-quality mental healthcare services, tailored approaches that take into account unique regional and cultural circumstances are essential. Teens cannot thrive unless a supportive learning environment is established through early intervention, stigma reduction, and collaboration between educators, mental health professionals, and families.

Adolescence is a critical time for mental health, and many students experience significant psychological changes during this time. According to Kessler et al. (2005), more than 20% of teenagers experience a mental health issue each year. By affecting students' ability to concentrate, retain information, and engage in educational activities, these factors can hinder academic success.

Basic Science Instruction and Acquisition of Knowledge

Whether in a public or private secondary school, the way that students and teachers are perceived is essential to fostering effective teaching and learning. Perceptions held by teachers have a significant impact on how well students learn. If the teacher has a stellar reputation, regularly exhibits readiness, concentration, and a love of teaching, and takes the time to explain complex concepts and difficult subjects, the students will be inspired to come to class. For educators with the necessary knowledge and perspective, teaching basic science should be seen as a full-fledged calling rather than just a job (Grey, 2001). Unfortunately, the Nigerian educational system has hired people who have no academic background as teachers. This group is more concerned with defending their employment by highlighting the "areas of concentration" syndrome and its beneficial effects on test scores than it is with forming and fostering the next generation of graduates. People who lack a genuine enthusiasm for learning typically approach teaching with a negligent and uncaring attitude. Additionally, they over politicize and manipulate the educational system, which leads to numerous distortions that are detrimental to academic endeavors (Berzins, Petch, & Atkinson, 2003).

Similar to this, students who erroneously believe that school is only a place to earn a certificate rather than a thorough education are uninterested in learning basic science. They lack the fundamental skills of curiosity and observation that are necessary for learning the material. They also object to being asked to solve problems in class and to impromptu testing. They detest homework and prefer to copy completed assignments from their classmates rather than engage in the practice necessary to become proficient in basic science. Effective learning and mastery of basic science require active participation rather than passivity, claim Ayonrinde, Guruje, and Lawal (2004).

A learning and teaching environment facilitates the study of basic science.

For Basic Science instruction and comprehension to be successful, a dynamic and interactive environment is necessary. A typical laboratory with cutting-edge equipment, chemicals, and other consumables should be used to define this kind of setting. Superior working conditions and safety regulations must be upheld in the Basic Science lab. There is an adequate amount of current and relevant Basic Science books and electronic resources available at the School Library. It is expected that the classrooms will be spacious, clean, well-ventilated, and well-lit. The lab should have regular electricity, working fans or air conditioning, and dependable internet access.

Antagonism, sexual harassment, bullying, and discrimination are also unacceptable. The majority of Nigerian private schools, in contrast to public ones, provide a setting that is favorable for the teaching and learning of basic science. Although this condition is necessary, more is required. To have a balanced and complementary effect on teachers' and students' academic activities, other intervening variables must also be optimized. It is clear from a thorough analysis of the challenges in Basic Science teaching and learning that these issues require immediate attention and workable solutions (Ayonrinde et al., 2004).

METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive research design of a survey type. One hundred junior secondary school basic science students from four different schools made up the sample. To guarantee a representative sample, stratified random sampling was used to choose the students. Both sexes of respondents were included in the study sample. A self-structured questionnaire under the supervision of a psychologist, with 20 items served as the study's research tool. For the study, a standardized questionnaire called the "Mental Health Questionnaire (MHQ)" was developed, and its validity and reliability were examined. The instrument which measures stress, anxiety, and depression were administered under the strict supervision of a psychologist. An internal consistency coefficient of 0.86 was obtained using the Spearman-Brown split-half method. Three months were spent gathering the data. The MHQ was administered to students, and their academic performance records were obtained from school administrations.

The descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyse and answer the research questions raised to guide the study. In contrast, the inferential statistic of the Chi-square test of the independent sample was used to test the hypothesis formulated for the study at the 0.05 level of significance using SPSS version 26.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1:

What is the pervasiveness of common mental health concerns among Junior Secondary School students?

Table 1: Response to the pervasiveness of common mental health concerns among Junior Secondary School students

S/N	Item	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	I often feel stressed or anxious about my schoolwork and examinations.	100	3.25	1.408	Agree
2.	I sometimes feel sad or hopeless for several days without knowing why.	100	3.05	1.110	Agree
3.	I find it difficult to concentrate in class because of worries or negative thoughts.	100	2.98	1.007	Agree
4.	I sometimes feel lonely or withdrawn, even when I am around my friends.	100	3.00	1.210	Agree
5.	I often feel overwhelmed by pressure from teachers, parents, or classmates.	100	2.75	.748	Agree

The findings in Table 1 revealed that common mental health concerns are prevalent among Junior Secondary School students. The mean scores ranged from 2.75 to 3.25. It was revealed that the majority of the students often feel stressed or anxious about their schoolwork and examinations ($\bar{X} = 3.25$, $SD = 1.408$). This indicates

that academic stress and examination anxiety are the most commonly reported concerns among the students. The relatively high standard deviation also shows some variation in the responses. Also, most of the students indicated that they sometimes feel sad or hopeless for several days without knowing why, with ($\bar{X} = 3.05$, $SD = 1.110$), pointing toward emotional distress and possible depressive symptoms.

Concentration difficulties due to worries or negative thoughts were also reported ($\bar{X} = 2.98$, $SD = 1.007$), reflecting the impact of mental health concerns on students' cognitive functioning in the classroom. Similarly, feelings of loneliness or withdrawal were evident ($\bar{X} = 3.00$, $SD = 1.210$), indicating that social aspects of students' well-being are also affected. Most of the students indicated that they often feel overwhelmed by pressure from teachers, parents, or classmates ($\bar{X} = 2.75$, $SD = 0.748$). The analysis indicated that mental health concerns such as stress, sadness, concentration problems, and social withdrawal are pervasive among Junior Secondary School students.

Research Question 2

How do different aspects of mental health impact students' academic performance in Basic Science?

Table 2: Response to How different aspects of mental health impact students' academic performance in Basic Science

S/N	Item	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Nervousness negatively affects my ability to focus during Basic Science lessons.	100	3.20	1.023	Agree
2.	When I feel emotionally stable, I perform better in Basic Science assessments.	100	3.18	1.547	Agree
3.	Stress makes it difficult for me to complete Basic Science assignments on time.	100	3.11	.617	Agree
4.	A positive mental state improves my participation in Basic Science class activities.	100	3.31	.514	Agree
5.	Poor mental health reduces my ability to understand Basic Science concepts.	100	3.40	.387	Agree

The findings in Table 2 reveal that different aspects of mental health significantly influence students' academic performance in Basic Science. The mean scores ranged between 3.11 and 3.40. It was revealed that nervousness negatively affects students' ability to focus during Basic Science lessons

($\bar{X} = 3.20$, $SD = 1.023$) and that students perform better in Basic Science whenever they feel emotionally stable, with a mean of 3.18 ($SD = 1.547$). Majority of the students indicated that stress makes it difficult for them to complete Basic Science assignments on time with ($\bar{X} = 3.11$, $SD = 0.617$) and that a positive mental state improves their participation in Basic Science class activities with ($\bar{X} = 3.31$, $SD = 0.514$) while most of the students acknowledged that poor mental health reduces their ability to understand Basic Science concepts with ($\bar{X} = 3.40$, $SD = 0.387$). The findings collectively demonstrate that mental health conditions, such as nervousness, stress, emotional stability, and general well-being, play a crucial role in determining students' academic performance in Basic Science.

Research Question 3

What are the challenges faced by students in learning Basic Science, and how do they affect their engagement and motivation?

Table 3: Response to the challenges faced by students in learning Basic Science and how they affect their engagement and motivation

S/N	Item	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	I find the concepts in Basic Science difficult to understand, which reduces my interest in the subject.	100	2.01	1.113	Disagree
2.	Lack of practical experiments and hands-on activities makes it harder for me to stay motivated in Basic Science classes.	100	3.31	.517	Agree
3.	Limited access to learning resources (e.g., textbooks, lab materials, visual aids) affects my engagement with Basic Science.	100	3.22	1.547	Agree
4.	The way Basic Science is taught (e.g., teaching methods, pace of lessons) affects my motivation to learn the subject.	100	3.71	.500	Agree
5.	Challenges in learning Basic Science make me less confident in participating actively during class activities.	100	2.99	.721	Agree

Table 3 presents students' responses regarding the challenges they face in learning Basic Science and how these challenges affect their engagement and motivation. The findings revealed that most students did not find the concepts in Basic Science difficult to understand ($\bar{x} = 2.01$, $SD = 1.113$), indicating that conceptual difficulty may be a less pressing issue compared to factors like teaching methods, lack of practical activities, and inadequate resources. The majority of the students indicated that the lack of practical experiments and hands-on activities was a major challenge ($\bar{x} = 3.31$, $SD = 0.517$). Access to learning resources ($\bar{x} = 3.22$, $SD = 1.547$) was another significant concern, highlighting that the limited availability of textbooks, laboratory materials, and visual aids negatively impacts student engagement. Also, the way Basic Science is taught affects most students' motivation to learn the subject ($\bar{x} = 3.71$, $SD = 0.500$), indicating that teaching methods and instructional delivery strongly influence students' motivation levels. Most of the students indicated that the challenges in learning Basic Science make them less confident in participating actively during class activities, with a mean of 2.99 ($SD = 0.721$). This shows that difficulties in understanding concepts reduce students' confidence and classroom participation. The findings indicated that while students face multiple challenges in learning Basic Science, the most significant barriers relate to instructional methods, lack of practical engagement, and limited resources, all of which directly affect their motivation and active participation in the subject.

Research Question 4

Is there any effect of mental health on the educational attainment of Basic Science students in secondary school?

Table 4: Response to the effect of mental health on the educational attainment of Basic Science students in secondary school

S/N	Item	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Mental health challenges (such as stress, anxiety, or depression) negatively affect students' performance in Basic Science.	100	3.72	1.007	Agree
2.	Students with good mental health are more likely to achieve higher grades in Basic Science.	100	3.54	1.387	Agree
3.	Poor mental health leads to a lack of concentration, which reduces students' ability to understand Basic Science concepts.	100	3.87	1.271	Agree

4.	Emotional well-being has a direct influence on students' motivation to learn Basic Science.	100	3.11	1.078	Agree
5.	Mental health support in schools can improve students' educational attainment in Basic Science.	100	3.86	.772	Agree

The results presented in Table 4 revealed that mental health significantly affects students' academic outcomes in Basic Science, with mean scores ranging from 3.11 to 3.87, with corresponding standard deviations between 0.772 and 1.387. The findings revealed that mental health challenges such as stress, anxiety, or depression negatively affect students' performance in Basic Science with a mean of 3.72 (SD = 1.007), and that students with good mental health are more likely to achieve higher grades in Basic Science with ($\bar{x} = 3.54$, SD = 1.387), asserting the positive correlation between emotional well-being and academic achievement. Most of the students indicated that poor mental health leads to a lack of concentration, which reduces their ability to understand Basic Science concepts ($\bar{x} = 3.87$, SD = 1.271), indicating that lack of concentration resulting from mental health issues is perceived as one of the most critical factors hindering students' performance in Basic Science. Also, most of the students indicated that emotional well-being has a direct influence on students' motivation to learn Basic Science, with the mean score of 3.11 (SD = 1.078), indicating that motivation is also influenced by students' mental health status. It was further indicated by most of the students that mental health support in schools can improve students' educational attainment in Basic Science with ($\bar{x} = 3.86$, SD = 0.772), highlighting the importance of intervention and support systems in enhancing learning outcomes. The results clearly demonstrate that mental health exerts a significant effect on students' educational attainment in Basic Science.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant impact of mental health on the academic performance of students in Basic Science.

Table 5: Chi-square analysis of the impact of mental health on the academic performance of students in Basic Science

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.302 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	17.00	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	92.81	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	18.211	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	100				
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 29.21.					
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table					

The analysis in Table 5 shows the influence of mental health on students' academic performance in Basic Science. The chi-square test revealed that the calculated χ^2 (.000) was less than the significance level at 0.05.

This implies that mental health substantially influences students' academic performance in Basic Science. Hence, the null hypothesis was not upheld, while the alternative hypothesis was upheld. This implies a significant influence of mental health on students' academic performance in Basic Science.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

According to the study's descriptive analysis, junior secondary school students frequently experience common mental health issues like stress, anxiety, sadness, difficulty concentrating, and loneliness. This is consistent with the findings of Eisenberg et al. (2009), who found that the main causes of anxiety in teenagers are stress related to school and exam pressure. Eisenberg et al. (2009) noted that anxiety disorders and depression symptoms are common in secondary school populations, impacting students' social and emotional functioning. According to the study, academic demands are not the only things that strain students' emotional health; hopelessness and social disengagement can also have an impact on classroom participation. It was also demonstrated that students' mental health has a big impact on their learning and performance in basic science. Positive mental states were found to increase class participation, whereas nervousness was found to impair concentration. Students also stated that stress hinders their ability to finish assignments and that mental illness makes it harder to understand scientific ideas. These results are in line with those of Suldo, Thalji, and Ferron (2011), who highlighted that students who are better at controlling their emotions typically do better academically. Furthermore, mental health issues undermine cognitive engagement, which is necessary for success in science-related courses, according to Poreddi et al (2014). Therefore, the current results highlight how important psychological health is to students' comprehension of basic science. The study also showed that although students do not think Basic Science concepts are very hard, obstacles like a lack of real-world experiments, a lack of resources, and poor teaching strategies have a big impact on their motivation and involvement. These difficulties cause students to become less confident when participating in class. This is consistent with Ayorinde et al. (2004), who found that students' interest and success in science are hampered by inadequate pedagogy and restricted access to science labs. Likewise, practical experiments and hands-on activities enhance motivation and comprehension in science education, according to Gray (2001). According to the current research, pedagogical and structural obstacles demotivate students more than conceptual difficulty alone.

The results also showed that students' achievement in basic science is strongly impacted by their mental health. Students concurred that while mental health improves grades, stress and anxiety have a negative impact on performance. Concentration issues were closely associated with poor mental health, whereas motivation was found to be influenced by emotional well-being. Students also underlined that receiving mental health support in schools could enhance their academic performance. These findings corroborate those of WHO (2019), which emphasized the strong correlation between mental health and cognitive functioning and academic success. In a similar vein, Abo El-magd and Al Zamil (2013) discovered that social-emotional learning initiatives enhance students' well-being and academic performance. Thus, it can be said that a strong predictor of success in basic science is mental health.

The results of the inferential analysis showed that students' academic performance in Basic Science was significantly impacted by their mental health. This indicates that the alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected. This research provides empirical support for the idea that students' performance is significantly influenced by their mental health. Additionally, Richardson, Berzins et al (2003) discovered a strong predictive correlation between academic performance and psychological well-being, indicating that learning outcomes are likely to improve when student mental health is addressed.

CONCLUSION

The study looked at how junior secondary school students' academic performance in basic science was affected by their mental health. The results showed that students frequently experience mental health issues like stress, anxiety, depression, difficulty focusing, and social disengagement. It has been demonstrated that these difficulties significantly impair students' capacity to concentrate, finish tasks, comprehend ideas, and engage fully in Basic Science classes. Additionally, the study discovered that students' motivation and academic achievement in Basic Science are significantly impacted by their mental health. While students with poor mental

health have trouble focusing and participate less in class, those with good mental health typically earn higher grades and show better classroom engagement. Furthermore, challenges such as inadequate learning resources, lack of practical activities, and ineffective teaching methods exacerbate the negative impact of mental health difficulties on students' learning outcomes.

Hypothesis testing confirmed that mental health exerts a significant influence on students' performance in Basic Science, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis. These findings highlight the urgent need to prioritize mental health support within the school system, alongside improving pedagogical practices and resource availability, to foster better learning outcomes in science education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations were made;

For students who are struggling with stress, anxiety, or emotional issues, schools should set up counseling departments staffed by qualified specialists to offer ongoing mental health support, direction, and interventions. To assist students in identifying and coping with stress, anxiety, and other emotional difficulties, educators should integrate mental health education into their lesson plans. To increase motivation and engagement, educators should also use interactive, student-centered teaching strategies that incorporate group projects, real-world experiments, and inquiry-based learning. To lessen resource-related difficulties in learning basic science, the government and school officials should guarantee a sufficient supply of textbooks, lab apparatus, and instructional aids.

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