

ANXIETY, INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP AND MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF REV. FR MOSES ORSHIO ADASU UNIVERSITY, MAKURDI, BENUE STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated anxiety, interpersonal relationship and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, Benue State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were formulated. The population comprised 16,300 undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, Benue State. A correlational survey research design was adopted and a sample of 300 undergraduate students was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique involving stratified, proportional and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using two researcher-developed instruments titled Anxiety Questionnaire (AQ) interpersonal Questionnaire (IQ) and Mental Health Promotion Questionnaire (MHPQ). The instruments were validated by three experts, and reliability was established through a trial test using Cronbach Alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.81, 0.79 and 0.83. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions and linear regression analysis to test the hypotheses at 0.01 level of significance. Findings showed a significant positive relationship between anxiety and mental health promotion, as well as interpersonal relationship and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. The study concluded that anxiety and interpersonal relationship has significant positive relationship with mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, Benue State. The study recommended that the university management should strengthen accessible mental health promotion programmes through counselling services, awareness campaigns and stress management workshops, while counsellors and the student affairs division should encourage positive interpersonal relationships among students through peer support programmes, social skills training and conflict resolution activities.

Keywords: Anxiety, Interpersonal Relationship, Mental Health Promotion, Undergraduate Students, Psycho-social Well-being, University

Introduction

Psycho-social well-being among undergraduate students has become a major educational, psychological and public health concern across the world. Although university life is expected to promote learning, maturity and personal development, many students experience emotional and social difficulties during this stage. These difficulties may include stress, depression, loneliness, poor adjustment, low self-confidence and fear of academic failure. A recent global review reported high levels of mental health symptoms among university students, including mild anxiety at 40.21%, severe anxiety at 16.79%, stress at 36.34% and suicidal thoughts within 12 months at 10.76% (Paiva, 2025). This shows that many undergraduates are not only facing academic challenges but are also dealing with psychological and social pressures that may affect their learning, relationships and general quality of life (Auerbach, 2018; Kandasamy, 2025).

In Nigeria and other developing contexts, undergraduate students may experience psycho-social challenges because of academic pressure, financial hardship, family expectations, peer influence, social comparison and limited access to counselling services. These challenges may become more serious where students also face poor accommodation, transport difficulties, unstable economic conditions and uncertainty about future employment. Adeleke (2025) reported that 14.9%, 10.4% and 1.9% of undergraduate students experienced mild, moderate and severe anxiety respectively, while Haruna (2025) reported high levels of depression, anxiety and stress among Nigerian students. Within Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, students may also face difficulties related to examination pressure, hostel life, academic workload, financial burden and adjustment to university life. Although specific institutional statistics may not be readily available, wider findings on Nigerian university students show the need to examine psycho-social well-being in the institution.

Psycho-social well-being refers to the condition in which students are emotionally stable, socially connected, psychologically balanced and able to cope with the normal demands of life. In the context of undergraduate students, it involves the ability to manage emotions, maintain self-confidence, relate positively with others and participate meaningfully in academic and social activities (WHO, 2022). Students with good psycho-social well-being are more likely to think positively, seek support when necessary, build healthy relationships and adjust successfully to university life. Therefore, promoting psycho-social well-being among undergraduates is important for improving their mental health, academic development and overall quality of life (Ryff & Keyes, 2020).

Mental health promotion refers to efforts aimed at improving students' emotional, psychological and social functioning by creating conditions that support healthy coping and positive adjustment. The World Health Organization (2020) explains that mental health promotion addresses individual, social and structural factors that influence mental health. In the university setting, mental health promotion may include counselling services, peer support, stress management programmes, awareness campaigns, healthy student relationships and early identification of students with emotional difficulties. These activities are important because they help students develop resilience, manage stress and function effectively within the university environment (Barry & Jenkins, 2017).

Anxiety is one of the psychological factors that may affect the psycho-social well-being of undergraduate students. It is characterized by excessive fear, worry, tension, nervousness and uneasiness about present or future events. Among undergraduates, anxiety may occur during examinations, public presentations, academic competition, financial difficulties or uncertainty about the future (Beck & Clark, 2021). When anxiety becomes frequent or intense, it may affect

students' concentration, class participation, sleep, confidence and academic performance. Mental health promotion can help reduce anxiety by encouraging counselling, relaxation skills, emotional awareness, social support and positive coping strategies (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Auerbach (2018) found that students with anxiety symptoms often seek mental health support, while Ibrahim (2020) found that awareness of anxiety symptoms can motivate students to adopt coping strategies.

Interpersonal relationship is another important aspect of psycho-social well-being among undergraduate students. It refers to the way students interact, communicate, support and relate with classmates, roommates, lecturers, friends, family members and other members of the university community (Santrock, 2018). Good interpersonal relationships help students feel accepted, supported and emotionally secure. However, poor interpersonal relationships may lead to loneliness, conflict, isolation, low self-esteem and emotional distress. Healthy social interaction promotes belongingness, reduces stress and strengthens students' adjustment to university life. Okoro (2020) observed that students who are guided to communicate properly, respect others and seek support are more likely to experience improved mental health. Keyes (2021) also emphasized that social well-being and positive interpersonal relationships are essential components of mental health.

Statement of the problem

Undergraduate students are expected to learn, develop skills, build relationships and prepare for future careers. However, many students experience psycho-social difficulties that may affect their mental health, social adjustment and academic development. In Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, students may face challenges such as academic pressure, fear of failure, financial hardship, peer pressure, poor interpersonal relationships, hostel difficulties and limited use of counselling services. These challenges may lead to anxiety, loneliness, social withdrawal, poor communication, low concentration and weak academic adjustment.

Although previous studies have examined mental health problems among undergraduate students in different contexts, there is still limited evidence on how anxiety and interpersonal relationships relate to mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. This gap makes it difficult to understand the specific psycho-social issues affecting students in the institution and how such issues may influence their mental health promotion. Therefore, the problem of this study is to determine the relationship between anxiety, interpersonal relationships and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine psycho-social well-being and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. examine the relationship between anxiety and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University
2. examine the relationship between interpersonal relationship and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between anxiety and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University

2. What is the relationship between interpersonal relationship and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between anxiety and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University.
2. There is no significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University.

Methodology

The study used a correlational research design. The study area was Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, Benue State. The population of the study consisted of 16,300 undergraduate students of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. From this population, a sample size of 300 undergraduate students was determined using the Research Advisor Sample Size Table. This shows that the sample was drawn from a larger population and not that the whole population was used. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed for the study. This involved stratified sampling to group the students according to relevant faculties or departments, proportional sampling to ensure fair representation from each group, and simple random sampling to select the actual respondents. Two instruments were used for data collection. The instruments were researcher-developed questionnaires titled Anxiety Questionnaire (AQ) Interpersonal Relationship Questionnaire (IRQ) and Mental Health Promotion Questionnaire (MHPQ) The structured questionnaires developed by the researcher were subjected to face and content validation by three academic experts: two from Guidance and Counselling and one from Educational Psychology, all from the Faculty of Education, Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. To determine the reliability of the instruments, a trial test was conducted outside the study area using 30 undergraduate students. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha statistical method, and reliability coefficients of 0.81, 0.79 and 0.83 were obtained. Data collected for the study were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) to answer the research questions, while linear regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between anxiety and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University?

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of Relationship between Anxiety and Mental Health Promotion

Variable		Anxiety	Mental Health Promotion
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.472
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.472	1.000
Mental Health Promotion	N		0.000
	Pearson Correlation	300	300
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N		

The results presented in Table 1 indicated a correlation coefficient of 0.472, suggesting a moderate positive relationship between anxiety and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. This implies that students who experience anxiety may become more aware of their mental health needs and may

be more likely to engage in mental health promotion behaviours such as seeking help, using coping strategies and participating in stress management activities.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between interpersonal relationship and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi?

Table 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of Relationship between Interpersonal Relationship and Mental Health Promotion among Undergraduate Students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi

		Interpersonal Relationship	Mental Health Promotion
Interpersonal Relationship	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.468
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.468	1.000
	N		0.000
Mental Health Promotion	Pearson Correlation	300	300
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N		

The results presented in Table 2 indicated a correlation coefficient of 0.468, suggesting a moderate positive relationship between interpersonal relationship and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. This implies that students who maintain positive relationships with peers, lecturers and family members are more likely to engage in mental health promotion behaviours, discuss mental health concerns and seek help when necessary.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between anxiety and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi.

Table 3

Linear Regression Showing Relationship between Anxiety and Mental Health Promotion among Undergraduate Students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi

Variable	R	R ²	F	B	T	Sig	P-Value
(Constant)	0.472	0.223	85.42		9.24	0.000	
Anxiety				0.472		0.000	

$F(1, 298) = 85.42, p < .05$

Table 3 shows that anxiety had a significant positive relationship with mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. The result showed that $R = 0.472, R^2 = 0.223, F(1, 298) = 85.42, \beta = 0.472, t = 9.24$ and $p < 0.05$. This means that anxiety accounted for 22.3% of the variation in mental health promotion among the students. At the 0.05 level of significance, the p-value is less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between anxiety and mental health promotion was rejected. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between anxiety and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi.

Table 4

Linear Regression Showing Relationship between Interpersonal Relationship and Mental Health Promotion among Undergraduate Students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi

Variable	R	R ²	F	B	T	Sig	P-Value
(Constant)	0.468	0.219	83.57		9.14	0.000	
Interpersonal Relationship				0.468		0.000	

$F(1, 298) = 83.57, p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows that interpersonal relationship had a significant positive relationship with mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. The result showed that $R = 0.468, R^2 = 0.219, F(1, 298) = 83.57, \beta = 0.468, t = 9.14$ and $p < 0.05$. This means that interpersonal relationship accounted for 21.9% of the variation in mental health promotion among the students. At the 0.05 level of significance, the p-value is less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and mental health promotion was rejected. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between interpersonal relationship and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi.

Discussion of Findings

The finding on anxiety and mental health promotion suggests that anxiety, although often viewed as a negative psychological condition, may also increase students' awareness of their mental health needs. This means that students who experience anxiety may become more conscious of the importance of seeking support, managing stress and adopting behaviours that protect their psychological well-being. In the university environment, this implies that anxiety should not only be treated as a problem to be reduced, but also as a signal that students may need proper guidance, counselling and mental health education. The finding therefore highlights the need for the university to strengthen counselling services, awareness programmes and stress management activities so that students can respond to anxiety in healthy and productive ways. This agrees with Auerbach (2018), who observed that students with anxiety symptoms often seek mental health support, and Ibrahim (2020), who reported that awareness of anxiety can encourage the use of coping strategies.

The finding on interpersonal relationship and mental health promotion shows that students' social environment plays an important role in their mental health behaviour. Positive relationships with peers, lecturers and family members can provide emotional support, encouragement and confidence to seek help when students face personal or academic challenges. This implies that mental health promotion among undergraduates should not focus only on individual coping skills, but should also consider the quality of students' social relationships within and outside the university. When students feel accepted, supported and connected, they are more likely to discuss their problems, participate in mental health activities and make use of available support services. On the other hand, poor interpersonal relationships may increase isolation and discourage help-seeking behaviour. This finding supports Keyes (2021), who emphasized that social well-being is an important component of overall mental health, and

Okoro (2020), who found that students with strong social support networks demonstrate better mental health promotion behaviours.

Conclusion

The study concluded that psycho-social well-being plays an important role in promoting mental health among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, Benue State. The results showed that students' emotional experiences and the quality of their interpersonal relationships can influence how they recognize mental health needs, seek support and adopt positive coping behaviours. Therefore, improving students' psycho-social well-being is essential for strengthening mental health awareness, help-seeking behaviour and overall adjustment within the university environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on psycho-social well-being and mental health promotion among undergraduate students in Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, the following recommendations were made:

1. Since the study found a positive relationship between anxiety and mental health promotion, the university management should establish and strengthen accessible mental health promotion programmes such as counselling services, stress management workshops, anxiety awareness campaigns and emotional support centres. These programmes will help students understand anxiety symptoms, develop healthy coping strategies and seek professional support when necessary.
2. Since the study found a positive relationship between interpersonal relationships and mental health promotion, university counsellors and the student affairs division should organize structured interpersonal relationship programmes such as peer support groups, social skills training, mentorship schemes and conflict resolution workshops. This will help students build positive relationships with peers, lecturers and family members, reduce isolation and encourage help-seeking behaviour.
3. Given the unusually high correlation values reported in the study, future researchers should re-examine the relationship between psycho-social well-being and mental health promotion using larger samples, improved research instruments and other statistical methods.

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