


Chapter 7

Stabilization of Students With Mental Health Crises in Nigeria's Higher Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the roles of school counselors in stabilizing students facing mental health crises in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. The challenges of mental health crises are huge because misconceptions about mental health continue to thrive, even among students of higher institutions of learning. Crisis intervention has become inevitable as traumatic events like school shootings, sexual harassment, abduction, and suicide continue to hold sway in campuses. The study looks at cases of traumatic events that could trigger mental health crisis and prevalence of mental health challenges drawn from research. This contribution makes a clarion call to school counselors to make stabilization of students' mental health a priority. It also recommends, among others, government involvement in creating mental health awareness across the country.

INTRODUCTION

Students' mental health is essential for their psychosocial well-being, which seems to be threatened by many challenges that could result in mental and emotional disturbances. Crises that could lead to students' traumatization keep increasing and negatively impact their mental health stability worldwide- Nigeria is not an exception.

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Students in higher institutions in Nigeria are being exposed to traumatic events as a result of psychosocial disruptions being created by mass violence, school shootings, attacks of insurgents and bandits in and around schools, kidnapping and killing of students, farmers-herders clashes, and sociopolitical unrest going on in the country (Enokela, 2022). In addition, school or campus crises could also be triggered by traumatic events like sudden or accidental death, serious injury of a student or staff, violent situations, and natural disasters. As a result of these situations, many students could experience crises that require stabilization interventions to bring them back to proper functioning before long-term counseling is established or referring them to other professionals for further treatment.

James and Gilliland (in Walz, and Bleuer, 2013, P.8) see mental health crisis as: “the perception or experiencing of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the person’s current resources and coping mechanisms. Unless the person obtains relief, the crisis has the potential to cause severe affective, behavioral, and cognitive malfunctioning up to the point of instigating injurious or lethal behavior to oneself or others.” Similarly, The Mississippi Department of Mental Health (n.d.) defines it as “any situation in which someone’s behavior puts them at risk of becoming unable to properly provide self-care, of functioning in the community, or maybe even of hurting themselves.” Based on these definitions of mental health crises, students who are facing mental health crises leading to significant impairment of daily functioning may need the help of professional school counselors that could facilitate stabilization interventions to bring them to proper functioning by helping them to attain a reasonable level of psychological peace before further treatment.

Muhammed (2020) asserts crises that could lead to self-harm or suicide include: depression, psychosis, maudlin (self-pitying and sentimental crying). In addition, Ifeanyi et al., (2020) find a high positive and significant correlation between depression and attitude towards suicidal behavior among university students in the southeastern states in Nigeria. Oyetunji, and colleagues (2020) reported 350 suicide cases in Nigeria between January 2010 and December 2019 as sorted from 10 online newspapers; the highest among the participants were students (33.6%). Muhammed (2020) also reports cases of Nigerian students who committed suicide in the year 2019, including 22-year-old Chukwuemeka Akachi, a final year student of the Department of English and Literary Studies at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), who committed suicide on Monday, May 13 Uzaka Ebiweni, a 300-level student of Medicine and Surgery of the Niger Delta University (NDU), Amassoma in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, who committed suicide on May 23 because he failed an examination; a 17-year-old Amos Ibrahim, who took his life in Jos, Plateau State, on May 14, after failing the 2019 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations (UTME); and an 18-year-old, Olaitan Gbadamosi, a 100-level student of Chemical

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