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LIFE ADJUSTMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONGST YOUNG ADULTS IN LAGOS MAINLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Young adulthood is a challenging phase of life, when the individual faces many challenges of life from academic, to career to family to heterosexual issues. These issues can adversely affect their life adjustment and mental health. Therefore, this study investigated the relationship between life adjustment and mental health among young adult. The study was guided by two specific objectives and two corresponding questions. The study was conducted in Lagos Mainland local government of Lagos state. The target population is all 216 young adults. who were selected from various socio-economic backgrounds who were residents between September 2014 and October, 2024. Multi-stage sampling process was used to ensure diversity in educational and employment status of respondents. 54 respondents each from each of the four communities, making a total of 216 participants. A 22-item semi-structured researcher-develop was adapted from the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) questionnaire and life adjustment questionnaires titled Life Adjustment and Mental Health for Young was used for data collection. A pilot study was carried out to determine the reliability of the instrument and. and were found to be of 0.67 and 0.71 respectively. Data collected was analyzed using standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment correlation. The study found that a positive and significant relationship exists between socio-economic status and life adjustment etc. Based on the findings of the study, some recommendations were made which include: The need for culturally sensitive mental health programmes that recognize the socio-economic and cultural context of Nigeria.
Keywords: Life Adjustment, Mental Health, Peers, Socio-Economic Status and Social support

Introduction

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a critical period marked by significant psychological, emotional, and social changes. In Nigeria, young adults, typically those aged between 18 and 35, face unique challenges as they navigate the complexities of adulthood within a rapidly changing socio-economic environment. Life adjustment during this phase entails the process by which individuals align their behaviors, expectations, and roles in response to internal needs and external demands (Oladeji & Oyeleye, 2019). When life adjustment is hampered, it often correlates with mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, and stress disorders.

Mental health is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), is a state of well-being in which individuals realize their abilities, cope with normal stresses, work productively, and contribute to their communities. For young adults in Nigeria, achieving this state has become increasingly difficult due to a convergence of personal, cultural, and socio-economic factors. While life adjustment is essential for psychological stability, social integration, and personal fulfillment. In developmental psychology, young adulthood is associated with tasks such as identity formation, career development, establishing intimate relationship and financial independence (Erikson, 1968). These tasks are often disrupted by contextual realities in Nigeria, including academic stress, family pressures, unemployment and sociopolitical instability. The inability to successfully adapt to these challenges can lead to psychological distress, low self-esteem, poor interpersonal relationships, and ultimately, mental health disorders.

Mental health has long been an under-addressed public health issue in Nigeria. Estimates suggest that around 20–30% of Nigerians suffer from mental health disorders, many of whom are young people (Gureje et al., 2015). However, due to stigma, lack of awareness, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure, most cases go untreated. A 2020 study by the Nigerian Association of Psychiatrists highlighted that less than 10% of Nigerian s with mental health conditions receive effective treatment. Among young adults, the situation is compounded by a reluctance to seek help due to fear of judgment, poor mental health literacy, and cultural misconceptions about mental illness (Atilola, 2016).

Socioeconomic hardship is a central factor affecting life adjustment and mental health among Nigerian youth. High rates of unemployment, especially among university graduates, have been linked to feelings of worthlessness, depression, and substance abuse (Olayinka & Adedokun, 2021). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), youth unemployment

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in Nigeria stood at 53.4%, indicating a dire economic climate. The absence of stable income and job opportunities creates a cycle of frustration, leading to maladaptive coping strategies and heightened psychological vulnerability. Furthermore, financial dependency on parents or relatives can strain familial relationships and increase the emotional burden on young adults, who may feel inadequate or pressured to meet unrealistic expectations (Nwokocha, 2020). Poverty also limits access to quality mental healthcare, leaving many without support during critical periods of psychological distress.

The Nigerian education system, characterized by overcrowded classrooms, outdated curricula, and frequent industrial actions by academic staff, is another source of adjustment problems. Students face enormous academic pressure to excel in a competitive environment that often lacks the necessary resources to support learning and development (Adeusi et al., 2017). Prolonged strikes, such as those led by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), contribute to academic delays and uncertainty about future prospects, which negatively affect students' mental health (Eze & Ezeah, 2020). Additionally, career uncertainty poses a significant challenge. Many graduates are unable to secure employment in their fields of study, leading to career dissatisfaction, identity crises, and hopelessness. This disconnects between academic training and labor market demands exacerbates feelings of frustration and psychological instability.

Also, family relationships play a pivotal role in shaping the mental health of young adults. In Nigeria, where communal and family-oriented values are deeply entrenched, there are high expectations placed on young adults to contribute to family welfare, marry early, and uphold cultural values. Failure to meet these expectations can result in conflict, guilt, and emotional distress (Okonkwo, 2018). For women, societal pressure to marry and bear children early can interfere with educational or career aspirations, leading to internal conflict and mental strain (Uzochukwu & Eze, 2019). On the other hand, overly controlling or authoritarian parenting styles common in many Nigerian households can impede the development of autonomy and self-confidence, which are crucial for life adjustment. Young adults who are not allowed to make independent decisions may struggle with self-doubt and anxiety in adulthood (Iheanacho, 2016).

The rapid urbanization of Nigerian cities such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt has led to increased social dislocation, overcrowding, and environmental stressors. Young adults migrating from rural areas to urban centers in search of better opportunities often face difficulties adjusting to the fast-paced and competitive nature of city life. These changes can lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and identity confusion, especially when social support systems are lacking (Adewale, 2021). Moreover, urban environments are often associated with higher crime rates, noise pollution, and inadequate housing all of which have been linked to increased stress and reduced mental well-being. Without adequate coping mechanisms or access to mental health resources, many young people become susceptible to psychological disorders. The use of psychoactive substances among Nigerian youth has been on the rise, with alarming consequences for mental health and social functioning. Substances such as tramadol, cannabis, and codeine-based cough syrups are commonly abused as a form of escapism from emotional or financial difficulties (Nnodim et al., 2019).

While digital technology has brought about global connectivity and access to information, its misuse among young adults in Nigeria presents new challenges for life adjustment and mental health. Excessive use of social media platforms has been associated with negative self-perception, cyberbullying, and social comparison, which can lead to depression and anxiety (Akinwole & Adebusuyi, 2022). The pressure to project an idealized life online often contrasts starkly with personal realities, resulting in emotional dissonance and dissatisfaction. Furthermore, technology addiction can disrupt sleep patterns, reduce face-to-face interactions, and impair academic or professional productivity; all of which are vital for healthy adjustment. The overall mental health infrastructure in Nigeria is insufficient to address the growing needs of young adults. There are fewer than 350 psychiatrists serving a population of over 200 million people (WHO, 2022). Mental health services are often concentrated in urban centers and are financially inaccessible to the majority. In schools and universities, there are limited counseling units, and where they exist, they are often understaffed or underutilized due to stigma. Moreover, mental health policies in Nigeria remain poorly implemented.

ln addition, life challenges such as unemployment, housing deficits, and urban congestion significantly impact mental health, increasing anxiety and depression rates among residents (Adewale, 2021; Okonkwo & Olatunji, 2022). The lack of accessible mental health services exacerbates these issues, deepening psychological distress in the community (WHO, 2023). Therefore, there is a critical need to investigate how life adjustments impact mental health among young adults in Lagos Mainland. Understanding the interplay between these factors can inform targeted interventions and policies to promote mental well-being and build resilience in this vulnerable population in Lagos Mainland Local Government

In addition, this study will advance new knowledge by contributing a theoretical framework for understanding the interaction between life adjustment and mental health of young adults. The framework can serve as a guiding tool for counsellors, trainers, social workers and policy administrators when designing poverty alleviation programmes, planning empowerment programmes, skill acquisition workshops, and mental health seminars.

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Statement of the Problem

In recent years, there has been a growing concern over the challenges young adults face in adjusting to life transitions and maintaining positive mental health. Life adjustment, which includes adapting to new social roles, managing academic or career pressures, and building emotional resilience, is a critical aspect of development during the young adult stage. However, many young people today struggle with these adjustments due to rapidly changing societal expectations, economic uncertainties, social media influences, and shifting cultural norms. These pressures have significantly impacted their mental health, leading to increased rates of anxiety, depression, emotional instability, and even suicidal ideation. Mental health services and support systems for young adults are often underfunded or poorly structured, particularly in low- and middle-income settings. Stigma surrounding mental health issues also prevents many young adults from seeking help. Consequently, there is a growing population of young individuals silently battling mental health challenges without access to appropriate support or intervention. Moreover, life adjustment difficulties are not only a concern for the individual but also have broader implications for society, such as reduced academic performance, workplace inefficiency, strained social relationships, and increased demand on healthcare systems. Despite the growing body of literature highlighting the importance of early intervention and life skills education, there remains a gap in the understanding of how specific adjustment challenges contribute to mental health outcomes in young adults. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the relationship between life adjustment and mental health among young adults, identify key areas of concern, and provide evidence-based recommendations for improving mental health outcomes through better life adjustment support. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals who are committed to fostering a healthier, more resilient young adult population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore life adjustment and mental health amongst young adults in Lagos Mainland Local Government, Nigeria, the specific objectives are to:

1 Examine the relationship between socio-economic status and life adjustment among young adults in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Nigeria.
2 Assess the relationship between of social support systems and mental health of young adults in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered in the study:

1 What is the significant relationship between socio-economic status and life adjustment among young adults in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Nigeria?
2 What is the significant relationship between social support systems and mental health of young adults in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Nigeria?

Methodology

This study employed the quantitative research design and the strategy was cross-sectional survey to capture the experiences of young adults in the Local Government. The study was conducted in Lagos Mainland Local Government of Lagos State. Lagos Mainland Local Government is one of the 20 local government areas (LGAs) in Lagos State, Nigeria. Located in the heart of Lagos metropolis, it covers key districts such as Ebute Metta, Yaba, and Oyingbo. Known for its mix of residential, commercial, and institutional activities, the area hosts several important establishments including the University of Lagos (UNILAG) and the Yaba College of Technology. Lagos Mainland is also recognized as a major transportation and business hub, with a dense population and vibrant markets. It plays a critical role in the socio-economic development of Lagos State due to its strategic location and urban character. It houses a cross sections of low income earners, middle income earners and high income earners and it also has some slums scattered around it. The location was chosen because of these unique features.

The population of young adults in Lagos mainland between the age of 18-30years was 77,219 (Census, 2006). The sample consisted of all young adults aged 18-30 years in Lagos Mainland Local Government. However, the target population comprised young adults who have been residents in the local government for over one decade. 384 respondents was chosen because the population was above 70,000. They were selected from various socio-economic backgrounds who were residents between September 2014 and October, 2024. A sample size of 384 was used. A multi-stage sampling process was used to ensure diversity in educational and employment status of respondents. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select two slum settlement (Makoko and Ilaje-Ebute-metta) and formal' settlement were Oyadiran Estate and Joseph Harrison estate. This was followed by using simple random sampling technique to select 96 respondents each from each of the four communities, making a total of 384 participants.

A 22-item semi-structured researcher-develop was adapted from the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) questionnaire and life adjustment questionnaires titled *Life Adjustment and Mental Health for Young Adult* was employed to collect data. The instrument used for this study was a researcher developed, semi-structured four-point scale questionnaire. The Likert scale

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options were: Strongly Agreed (SA) =4, Agreed (A)=3, Strongly Disagreed (SD) =2 and Disagreed (D) =1. A pilot study was carried out to determine the reliability of the instrument and to find out if the participants would have any problem answering any item in the instrument. 20 Participants were selected randomly from Oshodi-Isolo local Government of Lagos state. The validity of the research instrument was ascertained through review by experts in the field of measurement & evaluation and Guidance & Counselling. To ascertain the degree to which the instrument consistently measures what it meant to measure, the questionnaire was subjected to a test-retest method of reliability. The instrument was administered to participants twice within an interval of two weeks. The reliability coefficients of the instrument with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.67 and 0.71 were obtained. This was considered reliable enough to be used for data collection.

Four female research assistants who had attained tertiary level education collected data through standardized questionnaires. Training of research assistants took place in one day. They were trained in research ethics. In addition to the administration of questionnaires, research assistants were also trained to review questionnaires for completeness as well as maintenance of ethical standards. Respondents were given information on the study and participation was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Data collected was analyzed using standard deviation and Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Results

All research instrument was administered to 384 respondents, only 379 (98.69%) were useful and analyzable for the study.

Research Question 1: What is the significant relationship between socio-economic status and life adjustment among young adults in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Nigeria?

Table 1: Pearson correlation of socio-economic status and life adjustment of young adults

		Socio- economic status	Mental Health adults
	Pearson correlation	1	0.544
	Sig (2 tailed)		0.527
Social economic status	N	379	379
	Pearson correlation	0.544	1
	Sig (2 tailed)	0.527	
Mental health young adults	N	379	379

Source; Field work, 2025

Table 1 reveals that there was a significant relationship between the socio-economic status of young adults and the mental health of young adults, that is, [$r = 0.544$; $p < 0.05$]. This means that there was a positive relationship between the socio-economic status of a young adults and life adjustment of young adults, indicating that the relationship was statistically significant.

Research Question 2: What is the significant relationship between available social support systems and mental health of young adults in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Nigeria

Table 2: Pearson correlation of social support and life adjustment

		Social support	Mental health
	Pearson correlation	1	0.526
	Sig (2 tailed)		0.586
Social support	N	379	379
	Pearson correlation	0.589	1
	Sig (2 tailed)	0.526	
Life Adjustment of young adults	N	379	379

Source: Field work, 2025

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Table 2 reveals that there is a significant relationship between the social support of young adults and the life adjustment of young adults, that is, [r = 0.589; p < 0.05]. This means that there was a positive relationship between the social support available to young adults and mental health of young adults, indicating that the relationship was statistically significant.

Discussion of Findings

This study established that there is a positive relationship between socio-economic status and mental health among young adults in Lagos Mainland local government. This implies that socio-economic status influences the mental health of young persons. The socio-economic status (SES) of individuals is often measured through income, education, and occupation, has a profound influence on life adjustment and mental health among young adults. The finding corroborates the current level of desperation display by most youths to make money especially with the present economy situation of our great nation, Nigeria. It also aligns with the report of Gomez and Klein, (2020). Life adjustment and mental health are critical developmental concerns among young adults in urban environments such as Lagos, Nigeria. As young adults transition from adolescence to independence, they are confronted with various challenges, including academic pressures, job insecurity, unstable social relationships, and identity formation. These challenges are further compounded in Lagos by the city's fast-paced lifestyle, high cost of living, unemployment, and limited access to quality mental health services. A growing body of research supports the view that the stress of adapting to these life transitions in Lagos significantly affects the mental health of young adults.

In agreement with this, Eze and Alabi (2021) argued that limited coping skills and poor emotional intelligence among Lagos youth further exacerbate adjustment difficulties. They reported that young adults who lacked effective coping mechanisms often displayed signs of emotional distress, isolation, and even suicidal tendencies. The authors emphasized the need for targeted mental health education, life skills training, and support systems within academic institutions and community settings in Lagos. However, some studies offer divergent views. For instance, Bamidele and Okonkwo (2022) questioned the direct correlation between life adjustment difficulties and mental health, suggesting that some young adults in Lagos demonstrate resilience and adaptive capacity despite facing harsh socio-economic conditions. They argue that the influence of personal traits, family support, religious involvement, and community networks can moderate the negative effects of life challenges. According to this view, mental health outcomes are not solely determined by adjustment difficulties but also by the presence of protective factors that buffer against stress. Another divergent perspective comes from Musa and Daramola (2023), who assert that while life adjustment challenges are real, they are not the sole contributors to mental health problems among Lagos youth. They highlight the growing influence of digital technology and social media on self-esteem, peer comparison, and emotional instability. These factors, they argue, are increasingly affecting young adults' mental well-being, independent of traditional adjustment concerns like education or employment.

In addition, the study established that social support influences life adjustment among young adults. This This could be due to the fact that emotional support from family members and friends often provide young adults with a sense of belonging, security, and self-worth, which is essential for mental well-being (Ojo & Eze, 2018). This is because the love and warmth they receive from family members and peers, give them courage and increase their resilience in difficult or challenging situations. young adults in Nigeria, family support remains the most common and readily available form of social support. In Nigerian society, family is valued highly, and family members are often the first line of support in times of crisis. Social support has been empirically shown to play a vital role in the mental health of young adults, especially in transitional phases such as university education, employment, and early independence. In the Nigerian context, several studies affirm the protective effects of social support, while a few others highlight contextual gaps that reduce its effectiveness. Empirical studies demonstrate that family and peer support significantly contribute to improved mental health outcomes among young adults. Olagunju et al. (2019) found that undergraduate students in Lagos who reported high levels of perceived social support from family and peers exhibited lower symptoms of depression and anxiety. Similarly, Adeosun et al. (2021) highlighted that emotional and practical support from family members helped reduce suicidal ideation among young adults undergoing psychological stress.

Conclusion

This study explored the complex interplay of socio-economic factors and social support in shaping the life adjustment and mental health outcomes of young adults. The findings unequivocally demonstrate a significant relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and life adjustment, indicating that individuals from higher SES backgrounds tend to exhibit better adaptive capabilities in various life domains. This association aligns with existing literature suggesting that greater financial stability, access to resources, and opportunities often provided by higher SES can buffer against life stressors and facilitate smoother transitions and greater overall well-being during young adulthood. Conversely, lower SES may present significant challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and stable employment, which can impede successful life adjustment and increase vulnerability to adverse outcomes. Furthermore, a robust and significant relationship was identified between available social support and the mental health of young adults. This highlights the indispensable role of strong social networks, including family, friends, and community connections, in promoting psychological well-being. The presence of

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adequate social support appears to act as a protective factor, offering emotional comfort, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging, all of which are crucial in mitigating the impact of stress, anxiety, and depression. These findings resonate with theories emphasizing social embeddedness and the buffering hypothesis, where social ties can mediate the negative effects of stressful life events on mental health. Young adults, often navigating significant life transitions such as career development, independent living, and relationship formation, particularly benefit from consistent and reliable social support systems.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is a need for culturally sensitive mental health programmes that recognize the socio-economic and cultural context of Nigeria as a way of increasing mental health awareness, reducing stigma, and expanding access to mental health resource and mental health care are essential steps toward supporting young adults in their life adjustment journey.
2. There is need to reawaken and bring back to life the African culture of communism and collectivism to ensure that people across all ages especially the young adults have a sense of acceptance and belongingness to increase their self-worth and being love as a way to enhance their mental health and resilience.
3. Income is crucial indices of SES, therefore, hardwork and dignity of labour should be celebrated and not the wealth without sweat. Also, contentment should be inculcated to children from cradle.

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