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### Relationship Between Psychosocial Resilience and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria

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#### Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between Psychosocial Resilience and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria. Correlation research design was used for the study. Two research objectives, research questions and hypotheses were used for this study. The population was 16,800 and a sample of 376 was used for the study. Multistage sampling procedure was used to compose the sample. Two research questions were answered while two hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance. Two instruments were used to collect data- Students' Psychosocial Resilience Questions (SPRQ) and Students' Mental Health Questionnaire (SMHQ). The SPRQ is made up of 20 items on emotional regulation and problem-solving ability. SMHQ also comprised 20 items on students' mental health. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions on the basis of the values of  $r$  (coefficient of correlation) and also test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance by comparing the  $p$ -value (probability values). It was found that there is a significant positive relationship between students' emotional regulation and mental health of junior secondary school students. It also revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between students' problem-solving ability and mental health of junior secondary school students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others- that teachers and school counsellors incorporate emotional regulation training into classroom activities and guidance programs. The study concluded that emotional regulation enhances students' mental health and supports their psychological balance, while problem-solving ability promotes resilience and reduces stress.

**Keywords:** Psychosocial Resilience, Emotional Regulation, Problem-Solving Ability, Mental Health

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental tool for individual development and societal advancement. It equips learners with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to function effectively in a rapidly changing world. Beyond literacy and numeracy, education fosters creativity, critical thinking, and adaptability, enabling young people to cope with life's challenges and contribute positively to their communities. It provides a foundation for citizenship, social mobility, and economic productivity. It also plays a vital role in shaping self-identity, promoting resilience, and supporting healthy social interactions. Through formal schooling, students are introduced to structured learning environments where they cultivate interpersonal relationships, self-discipline, and problem-solving abilities. According to Ochieng (2020), education enhances not only academic achievement but also emotional and social growth, making it essential for holistic development. For junior secondary school students, these experiences are crucial in helping them manage academic demands, peer relationships, and personal challenges. Importantly, the quality of students' educational outcomes is closely tied to their well-being, as mental health determines how they absorb knowledge, interact with others, and respond to difficulties.

Students' mental health is widely regarded as a cornerstone of academic success and overall well-being. It reflects their emotional, psychological, and social functioning, shaping how they think, feel, and behave within and beyond the school setting. Good mental health enables students to build resilience, cope with stress, and engage productively in learning. Learners who are mentally healthy are more likely to sustain concentration, remain motivated, and foster positive relationships with peers and teachers, all of which enhance participation and achievement. Mental health also acts as a determinant of student progress by influencing their ability to set goals, persevere through difficulties, and adjust to setbacks. As Mensah (2021) notes, schools serve not only as centers of intellectual development but also as environments where emotional regulation, peer bonding, and self-esteem are reinforced. Similarly, Olakunle (2021) observed that schools prioritizing mental well-being foster academic excellence, reduce dropouts, and prepare learners for active societal roles. Conversely, poor mental health weakens memory, disrupts focus, and undermines social interactions, ultimately hindering academic and personal growth. Despite its importance, the researcher has observed cases of poor mental health among junior secondary students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria, possibly linked to psychosocial resilience, emotional regulation, and problem-solving ability.

Psychosocial resilience reflects a student's ability to withstand and recover from stress, adversity, or change. It is not the absence of challenges but the capacity to adapt positively despite them. In school environment, resilient students often display persistence in learning, optimism in the face of setbacks, and a proactive approach to difficulties. This resilience provides a psychological buffer, protecting them from the negative consequences of stressors such as academic pressure, peer conflicts, or family challenges. As noted by Djourova (2019), resilience supports students in sustaining motivation and cultivating positive social connections, which are essential for navigating the complexities of academic development. For junior secondary students, resilience enables them to cope with peer

pressure, rejection, or academic competition without internalizing these experiences as failures. It also nurtures a sense of agency, encouraging learners to believe in their ability to influence outcomes despite obstacles. The importance of psychosocial resilience lies in its dual role: it strengthens academic engagement while simultaneously safeguarding mental health. Without resilience, students may succumb to stress, leading to anxiety, withdrawal, or reduced classroom performance. Thus, psychosocial resilience serves as a foundation for both emotional stability and sustained academic progress, making it a central focus in understanding student mental health.

Emotional regulation is the process through which students monitor, evaluate, and modify their emotional reactions in ways that promote adaptive functioning. It involves recognizing emotions, controlling impulses, and responding appropriately to challenging situations. For junior secondary school students' emotional regulation is important, a period marked by heightened emotional intensity and social sensitivity. Students who can regulate emotions manage stress more effectively, resolve conflicts constructively, and maintain positive peer relationships. According to Braet (2020), the ability to regulate emotions not only prevents the escalation of negative moods but also contributes to academic success by fostering concentration and problem-solving during stressful situations. In the classroom, emotionally regulated students demonstrate patience, cooperation, and resilience in group activities, all of which improve learning outcomes. On the other hand, poor emotional regulation may manifest as aggression, withdrawal, or disruptive behaviour, which undermines both social adjustment and academic achievement. Importantly, emotional regulation supports mental health by reducing vulnerability to anxiety and depression. It equips students with coping mechanisms that allow them to balance personal challenges with academic demands. Thus, emotional regulation acts as a protective factor, ensuring that learners maintain psychological balance while pursuing academic and social goals.

Problem-solving ability refers to the cognitive and behavioural strategies students use to identify, analyze, and resolve challenges. It is a skill that extends beyond academics, shaping how students interact with peers, handle conflicts, and pursue personal goals. Strong problem-solving skills foster students' adaptability, creativity, and independence, allowing them to approach difficulties with confidence rather than avoidance. Chan (2018) emphasizes that effective problem-solving reduces stress by transforming challenges into manageable tasks, thereby preventing feelings of helplessness that undermine mental health. Within the school environment, students with well-developed problem-solving ability are more likely to engage actively in group discussions, make constructive contributions, and negotiate solutions during peer conflicts. Such skills not only enhance interpersonal relationships but also promote academic achievement by encouraging logical thinking and persistence. Poor problem-solving ability, on the other hand, can heighten frustration, fuel anxiety, and trigger withdrawal from social or academic tasks. This inability to cope with obstacles often exacerbates stress and diminishes overall well-being. Consequently, problem-solving serves as both a cognitive and emotional asset, reinforcing psychosocial resilience and supporting emotional regulation. Together, these attributes form a critical triad that sustains students' mental health and educational success. Yet, despite the importance of mental health and government efforts through policies and school-

based interventions aimed at improving students' well-being, poor mental health issues are still observed by the researcher among junior secondary school students. It is against this background that the present study examined the relationship between psychosocial resilience and mental health of junior secondary school students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria.

## **Objectives**

The general purpose of this study is that it examined the relationship between Psychosocial Resilience and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically,

1. Determine the relationship between students' emotional regulation and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria
2. Examine the relationship between students' problem-solving ability and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between students' emotional regulation and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between students' problem-solving ability and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria?

## **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were postulated for this study.

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between students' emotional regulation and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between students' problem-solving ability and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria

## **METHOD**

The study adopted a correlation survey research design. Correlation survey research design is a method that examines the degree and direction of relationships between two or more variables without manipulating them. It is particularly useful in identifying patterns

and associations in natural settings where experimental control is not possible. Creswell (2014) defines correlation research design as the specific procedures for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to understand relationships among variables. In this study, the correlation design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to determine whether psychosocial resilience significantly relates to the mental health of junior secondary school students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Nigeria.

The population of the study consist of 16,800 JSS 2 students from 48 Junior Secondary Schools in seven Local Government Area (Odukpani, Akampa, Calabar Municipality, Akpabiyo, Bakassi, Biase) of Calabar South Senatorial District, Nigeria (source: Cross River State Ministry of Education). The sample size of this study is 376 JSS 2 students from the 16 public Junior Secondary Schools in South Senatorial District, Nigeria which was determine using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of determining sample size of a given population.

The sample size was drawn using multistage sampling procedure. It began with the clustering of seven Local Government Area under Calabar South Senatorial District (Odukpani, Akampa, Calabar Municipality, Akpabiyo, Bakassi and Biase). This was followed by the use of simple random sampling technique (Lucky dip) in the selection of 16 schools from all the six Area Councils. Thereafter, proportionate sampling techniques was used to select the sample of 376 J SS 2 students among the 16 public junior secondary school under Calabar South Senatorial District.

The study employed two self-developed instruments: Students' Psychosocial Resilience Questions (SPRQ) and Students' Mental Health Questionnaire (SMHQ). The SPRQ consisted of 20 items, with items 1–10 assessing Students' Emotional Regulation and items 11–20 measuring Students' Problem-Solving Ability. The SMHQ also contained 20 items, carefully designed to assess students' mental health. Both instruments were structured on a four-point rating scale with the following response options: SA = Strongly Agree (4 points), A = Agree (3 points), D = Disagree (2 points), and SD = Strongly Disagree (1 point). Four points rating scales are widely recognized as effective scales for measuring psychological and behavioral constructs (Joshi et al., 2015). The two instruments were validated by experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The validation process focused on face and construct validity to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. The instruments obtained a validity index of 0.82 for SPRQ and 0.85 for SMHQ.

To establish reliability, a trial test was conducted using 40 students drawn from two junior secondary schools in Calabar South within the study area but excluded from the main sample. It was carried out in Hope Waddell Training Institute, Calabar and West African Peoples' Institute (WAPI), Calabar. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha measure of determining the internal consistency of an instrument. The analysis yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.84 for SPRQ and 0.88 for SMHQ. Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC) was used to answer and analyze the research questions on the basis of the values of  $r$  (coefficient of correlation). Any correlation coefficient value below 0.50 was considered low while those above were considered high. The hypotheses were however

tested at 0.05 level of significance by comparing the p-value (probability values) of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) obtained from SPSS application with the significance level at 0.05. For hypotheses whose p-values were less than 0.05, they were rejected while for those greater than 0.05 they were accepted.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Correlation between students' emotional regulation and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria**

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	Std.D	Df	r	Remark
emotional regulation	376	3.14	1.85	372	0.689	Positive correlation
Mental Health	376	2.91	1.71			

Table 1 shows the correlation between students' emotional regulation and mental health of junior secondary school students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria. The result revealed responses from 376 students with a degree of freedom (df) of 372. The mean scores for emotional regulation and mental health are 3.14 and 2.91, with corresponding standard deviations of 1.85 and 1.71, respectively. The correlation coefficient (r) is 0.689, which exceeds the benchmark value of 0.50. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between students' emotional regulation and their mental health in junior secondary schools of Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria.

**Table 2: Correlation between students' emotional regulation and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria**

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	Std.D	Df	r	r <sup>2</sup>	P-value	Decision
emotional regulation *	376	3.14	1.85	372	0.689	0.475	0.001	Reject
Mental Health	376	2.91	1.71					

***Level of significance Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) < 0.05 shows significant relationship***

Table 2 shows the relationship between students' emotional regulation and mental health of junior secondary school students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria. The result revealed a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.689$ ,  $r^2 = 0.475$ , and a p-value of 0.001 which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between students' emotional regulation and mental health of junior secondary school students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria.

**Table 3: Correlation between students' problem-solving ability and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria**

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	Std.D	Df	r	Remark
problem-solving ability	376	3.45	1.91	372	0.623	Positive correlation
Mental Health	376	2.91	1.71			

Table 3 shows the correlation between students' problem-solving ability and mental health of junior secondary school students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria. The result revealed responses from 376 students with a degree of freedom (df) of 372. The mean scores for problem-solving ability and mental health are 3.45 and 2.91, with corresponding standard deviations of 1.91 and 1.71, respectively. The correlation coefficient (r) is 0.623, which exceeds the benchmark value of 0.50. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between students' problem-solving ability and mental health in junior secondary schools in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria.

**Table 4: Correlation between students' problem-solving ability and Mental Health of Junior Secondary School Students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria**

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	Std.D	Df	r	r <sup>2</sup>	P-value	Decision
problem-solving ability*	376	3.45	1.91	372	0.623	0.388	0.003	Reject
Mental Health	376	2.91	1.71					

**Level of significance Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) < 0.05 shows significant relationship**

Table 4 shows the relationship between students' problem-solving ability and mental health of junior secondary school students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria. The result revealed a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.623$ ,  $r^2 = 0.388$ , and a p-value of 0.003, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between students' problem-solving ability and mental health of junior secondary school students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria.

**DISCUSSION**

The finding from hypothesis one revealed a significant positive relationship between students' emotional regulation and mental health of junior secondary school students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria. The finding is in line with Okon (2020) whose study showed that emotional control reduced anxiety and depression among adolescents, thereby fostering healthier mental outcomes. It was also supported by Ekanem and Bassey (2022) who discovered that effective regulation of emotions enhanced psychological resilience and reduced vulnerability to stress among young learners. Similarly, Johnson (2019) reported that students who developed skills of self-regulation were less

prone to disruptive emotional experiences, contributing to better social adjustment and overall well-being. In the same vein, Tolu (2021) emphasized that students with higher emotional regulation competence demonstrated stronger coping strategies and lower incidence of mental distress in school contexts. Furthermore, Adeh (2023) confirmed that emotional regulation significantly predicted improved psychological balance among secondary school students reinforcing its relevance to mental health stability.

The finding on hypothesis two further revealed a significant positive relationship between students' problem-solving ability and mental health of junior secondary school students in Calabar South Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria. This agrees with Ejeh (2021) whose work highlighted that junior secondary school students with strong problem-solving competence were less likely to experience helplessness and psychological distress. The result was supported by Nwafor and Ekpo (2023) who reported that problem-solving capacity helped learners cope effectively with school-related challenges, thereby maintaining healthier mental states. It was also substantiated by Bello (2020) whose study showed that problem-solving training improved emotional balance and reduced stress among secondary school adolescents. Similarly, Bakari (2022) found that students who applied constructive problem-solving strategies demonstrated higher resilience and reduced vulnerability to depression. In the same vein, Idowu (2019) revealed that effective problem-solving skills significantly enhanced students' psychological adjustment, thereby fostering mental well-being in secondary schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concluded that emotional regulation plays a vital role in enhancing the mental health of junior secondary school students by fostering stability, resilience, and healthy social interactions. It strengthens learners' capacity to cope with stress and contributes to their psychological balance, which in turn promotes better academic and personal outcomes. The study also affirmed that problem-solving ability is a strong predictor of positive mental health, equipping students with the competence to confront challenges constructively and reduce vulnerability to anxiety or distress. By nurturing both emotional regulation and problem-solving skills, schools can help adolescents achieve holistic growth that supports learning and well-being.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Based on the first finding, it is recommended that teachers and school counsellors incorporate emotional regulation training into classroom activities and guidance programs. This will help students develop healthier coping strategies, reduce stress, and enhance their mental well-being.
2. Based on the second finding, it is recommended that schools integrate problem-solving skills into the curriculum through collaborative projects and critical thinking

exercises. Such initiatives will not only improve students' academic performance but also strengthen their mental health by fostering resilience and adaptability.

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