



Mental Health Of Lecturers Amid Banditry In Zamfara State: Implications For Counseling And Psychotherapy

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Abstract

Keywords:

banditry;
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implications;
mental health of
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In the context of ongoing banditry incidents in Zamfara State, Nigeria, this study aimed to assess the mental health status of lecturers in Federal University Gusau (FUGUS). The purpose was to examine whether banditry had affected psychological well-being of the university teachers. Employing a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 86 lecturers using a Self-Reporting Mental Health Inventory (SMHI). The inventory demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89) and comprised dimensions reflecting positive mental health attributes. Data analysis involved the use of mean scores, one-sample and Independent Sample T-Tests. The results of the analyses revealed that the mean scores for various dimensions of mental health were consistently below 3.0, suggesting a significant level of negative mental health experienced by the participants. Furthermore, an Independent Sample T-Test indicated that gender did not exert a significant influence on the observed negative mental health outcomes ($t=-0.195$, $p>0.05$). The findings underscore the need for targeted counselling interventions and support strategies to address negative mental health outcomes among lecturers, irrespective of gender, and to cultivate a conducive academic environment that promotes their psychological well-being.

Abstrak	
Kata kunci: perbanditan; implikasi konseling; kesehatan mental para dosen	Dalam konteks insiden penjarahan oleh bandit di Bagian Negara Zamfara, Nigeria, penelitian ini melakukan penilaian atas status Kesehatan mental pengajar di Federal University Gusau (FUGUS). Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah menelaah apakah kasus bandit memengaruhi kesejahteraan psikologis pengajar. Menggunakan desain survei deskriptif, data dikumpulkan dari 86 pengajar menggunakan <i>Self-Reporting Mental Health Inventory</i> (SMHI). Inventori tersebut memiliki konsistensi internal yang tinggi (alpha Cronbach=0.89) dan mencakup dimensi-dimensi yang menggambarkan atribut kesehatan mental positif. Analisis data melibatkan analisis rerata skor dan juga uji beda. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa rerata skor untuk berbagai dimensi Kesehatan mental menunjukkan skor di bawah 3.0, mengindikasikan kondisi kesehatan mental yang negatif. Terlebih lagi, <i>Independent Sample T-Test</i> menunjukkan bahwa gender tidak berpengaruh dalam kondisi kesehatan mental negatif partisipan ($t=-0.195$, $p>0.05$). Temuan penelitian menggarisbawahi pentingnya melakukan intervensi konseling dan strategi dukungan yang mengacu target spesifik untuk mengatasi kondisi kesehatan mental negatif di antara pengajar, apapun gendernya, dan juga untuk menciptakan lingkungan akademik yang kondusif dan mendorong kesejahteraan.

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INTRODUCTION

Background Of The Study

Banditry in Nigeria is a multifaceted criminal phenomenon with roots in socio-economic disparities, historical grievances, and security lapses (Osasona, 2023). The intricate interplay of poverty, ethno-religious tensions, and challenging terrains contributes to its prevalence (Tume, 2021). In Zamfara State, this menace manifests through kidnapping, cattle rustling, and community attacks (Ojo et al., 2023) These criminal activities significantly impact tertiary institutions in Zamfara, creating security concerns that are detrimental to learning (Tsafe, 2022). Safety concerns, disruptions in academic schedules, and compromised educational quality become prevalent issues (Olawunmi & Shola, 2023).

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Lecturers, who are responsible of disseminating knowledge, mentoring students, and contributing to research and development, find themselves in an increasingly challenging environment. The persistent threat of banditry can contribute to stress, anxiety, fear, and a range of psychological concerns among lecturers (Ojo et al., 2023). The uncertainty, fear of attacks, and potential disruptions to their work and personal lives can take a toll on their psychological well-being.

Understanding how university lecturers navigate the complex landscape of banditry and maintain their psychological well-being is necessary. The mental health of educators not only impacts their personal lives but also influences the quality of education they provide to their students. Lecturers who are emotionally and mentally sound are more likely to create conducive learning environments and support their students effectively (Kaura, Musa, & Abubakar, 2021). Ultimately, fostering positive psychological well-being among lecturers can lead to better academic quality, research continuity, and the well-being of future generations who benefit from their guidance (Lukat et al., 2016).

Banditry can have specific and unique impacts on the mental health of university lecturers, particularly those teaching in areas affected by such criminal activities, such as Zamfara, Katsina and Kaduna States, Nigeria. Lecturers may experience heightened levels of stress and anxiety due to concerns about their personal safety. The fear of becoming victims of banditry or being caught amid crossfires can contribute to persistent anxiety and affect overall mental well-being (Femi-Lawal et al., 2023). Furthermore, banditry can disrupt normal academic activities, leading to increased work-related stress for lecturers. They may face challenges in conducting research, attending conferences, or even commuting to and from the university, which can impact job satisfaction and professional fulfillment (Rosenje et al., 2022).

If lecturers witness or experience violent banditry incidents, they are at risk of developing trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The psychological toll of such experiences can affect their ability to function optimally in their academic roles. Similarly, banditry can lead to the closure of universities, interruption of academic calendars, and a general sense of instability in education. Lecturers may find it challenging to maintain a sense of normalcy in their job, leading to frustration and stress (Sheldon, 2012). Lecturers may also bear the emotional burden of ensuring students'

well-being, especially if students are directly impacted by banditry. This emotional labor can take a toll on lecturers' mental health (Femi-Lawal et al., 2023).

Mental health refers to a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being, which encompasses thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and ability to cope with the challenges of life, maintain fulfilling relationships, and make rational decisions (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). Positive mental health is a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being characterized by positive feelings, a sense of purpose, effective coping, and the ability to build and maintain healthy relationships (Lukat et al., 2016). It goes beyond the absence of mental illness and encompasses aspects of life satisfaction, happiness, resilience, and overall mental well-being. Individuals with positive mental health are generally able to experience positive emotions such as joy, happiness, contentment, and gratitude (Barry, 2001). These emotions contribute to a positive outlook on life. People with positive mental health have strong coping skills that enable them to navigate challenges and stressors (Cavioni, Grazzani, & Ornaghi, 2020). They can adapt and bounce back from setbacks. Such people are often engaged in activities that provide a sense of purpose, accomplishment, and satisfaction, whether related to work, hobbies, relationships, or community involvement (Akunne, et.al, 2021).

Individuals with positive mental health are mindful of their well-being and prioritize self-care activities such as exercise, relaxation, balanced nutrition, and adequate sleep (Katrakazas, Grigoriadou, & Koutsouris, 2020). They seek personal and intellectual growth, engage in continuous learning, and explore new experiences that contribute to personal development. Positive mental health involves finding a balance between various aspects of life, including work, family, social interactions, and personal endeavors.

Flourishing refers to a state of optimal mental functioning where an individual is not only free from mental health issues but is thriving and experiencing a high level of well-being (Zábó, Oláh, & Vargha, 2022). In essence, positive mental health is a holistic and multifaceted concept that encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

Negative mental health on the other hand refers to the presence of psychological distress, emotional discomfort, and impaired well-being within a specific group, which encompasses a range of mental health challenges, including stress symptoms, burnout,

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anxiety, depression, and other psychological disorders ([World Health Organization \[WHO\], 2021](#)). Given the unique demands and pressures of the academic environment, university lecturers are particularly vulnerable to negative mental health outcomes.

Assessment of mental health of lecturers in Federal University Gusau draws from several interconnected theoretical perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The framework encompasses elements of positive psychology, stress and coping theory, and resilience theory. Positive psychology focuses on the study of positive emotions, strengths, and well-being ([Barry, 2001](#)). Within the context of this study, positive psychology provides the foundation for understanding the mental health of university lecturers. It emphasizes the importance of cultivating positive emotions, personal strengths, and a sense of purpose, all of which contribute to well-being and resilience ([Cavioni, Grazzani, & Ornaghi, 2020](#)). The framework acknowledges positive mental health as more than just the lack of mental disorders, and instead as a state characterized by flourishing and thriving.

Stress and coping theory helps to explain how individuals perceive and manage stressors in their environment. Banditry and security concerns represent significant stressors for lecturers in Federal University Gusau. This theory offers insights into how lecturers appraise these stressors, the emotional and cognitive responses they elicit, and the coping mechanisms they employ to manage the resulting stress ([World Health Organization \[WHO\], 2021](#)). It recognizes that effective coping strategies are crucial for maintaining positive mental health in the face of adversity ([Katrakazas, Grigoriadou, & Koutsouris, 2020](#)).

Resilience theory contributes to the theoretical framework by highlighting the importance of resilience in promoting positive mental health ([Cavioni, Grazzani, & Ornaghi, 2020](#)). Resilience refers to an individual's ability to bounce back from challenges and adversity. In the context of banditry, resilience theory helps explain how lecturers develop the capacity to adapt, thrive, and maintain a positive mental state despite the ongoing security concerns. Resilience factors, such as social support, personal attributes, and effective coping strategies, play a significant role in overcoming negative mental health ([Barry, 2001](#)).

The theoretical framework integrates these perspectives to provide a holistic understanding of the mental health status of lecturers in Federal University Gusau.

Positive Psychology underscores the importance of fostering positive emotions and

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strengths, Stress and Coping Theory explains how lecturers manage stressors and utilize coping mechanisms in order to overcome negative mental health, and Resilience Theory highlights the role of resilience factors in maintaining well-being. In other words, positive psychology, resilience, stress, and coping theories are vital in bolstering the mental health of lecturers in bandit-ravaged institutions.

Positive psychology, emphasizing strengths over pathology, can be applied by recognizing and leveraging lecturers' strengths in teaching, research, and resilience (García-Álvarez, Soler, & Achard-Braga, 2021). Creating a positive work environment, celebrating achievements, and fostering community contribute to well-being (Zábó, Oláh, & Vargha, 2022). Resilience training equips lecturers with skills to rebound from adversity, incorporating stress management and problem-solving. Social support networks enhance resilience, providing emotional aid and practical assistance (Macía et al., 2021). Addressing stressors specific to bandit-ravaged contexts involves implementing security measures, resource provision, and a supportive organizational culture. Mindfulness practices like meditation and yoga aid stress management (Krohne, Pieper, Knoll, & Breimer, 2002). Problem-focused coping strategies address stress roots through collaboration with security experts and contingency planning (Kaura, Musa, & Abubakar, 2021). Emotional support, counseling, and workshops on emotional regulation are crucial for managing the emotional toll of banditry. Integrated, targeted interventions create a supportive environment for lecturers' well-being (Akunne et al., 2021).

Literature Review

In a study on banditry and mental health among university staff in North Central Nigeria (Owolabi & Adewuyi, 2019), the authors examined the psychological impact of banditry on university staff members in North Central Nigeria. It revealed that exposure to violence and insecurity negatively affected mental well-being. Lecturers reported increased stress, anxiety, and fear. The study called for interventions to support the mental health of educators. Another study on assessment of psychosocial well-being of academic staff in a Nigerian University (Olatayo, Aminu, & Isah, 2020); this research found that factors such as insecurity due to banditry contributed to stress and compromised mental health. The study highlighted the need for proactive strategies to address security concerns and support faculty members. A study on banditry and mental health: a qualitative study among higher education faculty in Northwestern

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Nigeria was conducted by Aliyu & Ibitoye (2020). This qualitative study explored the experiences of faculty members in Northwestern Nigeria in the context of banditry. The findings emphasized the impact of security challenges on mental health, with lecturers expressing feelings of vulnerability and fear. Coping strategies included reliance on faith and community support. The impact of banditry on psychological well-being among university lecturers in North-Western Nigeria (Yakubu & Ibrahim, 2021), investigated the effect of banditry on the psychological well-being of university lecturers. Findings revealed a significant negative impact on mental health, with lecturers reporting symptoms of anxiety and depression. The study underscored the need for institutional and government interventions. Ajayi (2021) assessed the experiences of academic staff members on campus insecurity: a study of selected Nigerian universities. This study explored the experiences of academic staff members across Nigerian universities regarding campus insecurity, including banditry. It highlighted how security concerns negatively affected lecturers' job satisfaction and overall mental well-being. The study recommended improved security measures and support systems.

Novelty Of The Study

The present study at Federal University Gusau (FUGUS) offers a unique exploration of the mental health of lecturers amid banditry, setting itself apart from previous research in several dimensions. In terms of research design, the varied methods in previous studies encompass qualitative and quantitative methodologies while the present adopts a distinctive descriptive survey approach, emphasizing the structured survey method to delve into the mental health status of FUGUS lecturers. This focused approach ensures a comprehensive understanding tailored to the specific context. While previous research explores regional perspectives across Nigeria, the current study focuses on the localized experiences of lecturers at Federal University Gusau, enriching the understanding of mental health challenges in the context of banditry within this institution.

Rationale Of The Study

These empirical studies collectively underscore the profound challenges posed by banditry on the mental health of university lecturers. They highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to address security concerns, provide psychological support, and develop resilience among educators. The findings emphasize that banditry goes beyond physical threats, impacting the overall well-being of the academic community.

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As higher educational institutions grapple with the realities of security instability, the insights from these studies call for reassessment of security situation, policy decisions, interventions, and collaborations between institutions and government bodies to create safe and supportive environments for both students and lecturers. Studies focusing on mental health assessment of university lecturers amid rampant banditry have emerged as a response to the security concerns faced by educators in vulnerable regions.

Research Gap

Despite the importance of assessing mental health status of lecturers in Federal University Gusau amidst banditry in Zamfara State, there exists a notable research gap in this area. Existing research tends to predominantly focus on the physical security aspects of banditry (Akor & Dajo, 2022). There is insufficient attention to the psychological toll this environment takes on educators who work under constant stress and uncertainty. While some studies have qualitatively explored the experiences of lecturers, a comprehensive quantitative analysis is lacking (Osasona, 2023). Quantitative research can provide a broader understanding of the extent and magnitude of mental health challenges. This research gap emphasizes the need to bridge the divide between knowledge and practical solutions. By addressing these gaps, the present study not only contributes to the academic discourse but also offers valuable insights necessary for counselling and psychotherapeutic interventions in order to create a supportive environment for lecturers working amidst banditry-related challenges in Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State.

Purposes/Hypotheses Of Study

This study aimed to explore mental health of lecturers in Federal University Gusau in the face of the growing threat of banditry in Zamfara State. Banditry, characterized by acts of criminal violence and terrorism, has become a significant concern in various parts of Northwest states, causing disruptions to daily life, economic activities, and social stability (Akor & Dajo, 2022). In recent years, Zamfara State has been experiencing an upsurge in banditry, leading to heightened insecurity, displacement of communities, and disruptions to essential services (Olawunmi & Shola, 2023).

The study was poised to achieve the following objectives: 1) examining the mental health status of lecturers in Federal University Gusau amidst banditry in Zamfara State,

and 2) assessing whether male and female FUGUS lecturers differed in their mental health status.

The alternative hypotheses tested by the study were: 1) the mean score of mental health of FUGUS lecturers amid banditry in Zamfara State was significantly different from the hypothesized population mean, and 2) male and female FUGUS lecturers significantly differed in their mental health status. Meanwhile, the null hypotheses proposed in the study were: 1) the mean score of mental health of FUGUS lecturers amid banditry in Zamfara State was not significantly different from the hypothesized population mean, and 2) male and female FUGUS lecturers did not significantly differ in their mental health status.

METHODS

Research Design

The descriptive survey design implemented in this study centers on assessing the psychological well-being of lecturers amid the prevalent concern of banditry in Zamfara State. The primary objective of the study was to gain insights into the mental health status of the lecturers considering the security challenges they face.

Research Sample And Sampling Technique

The population of this study was 530 lecturers at Federal University Gusau. To glean insights from this population, a sample size of 86 lecturers was strategically selected from among lecturers in the university. Participants were chosen using the convenience sampling method, with the inclusion criterion being actively affiliated with the university. These participants confirmed their availability and willingness to participate in the study. While the convenience sampling technique may introduce some degree of bias (Coulter et al., 2014), it proved to be a practical and efficient means of data collection given the security situation.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection was done using a Google Form, representing a modern and accessible approach to survey administration (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). This digital method not only ensured efficiency in gathering responses but also aligned with contemporary research practices that leverage technology for streamlined data collection processes (Haruna, 2010).

Instruments Of Measurement

The primary instrument used in this study, the "Status of Mental Health Inventory (SMHI)," was derived from the Positive Mental Health Scale developed by [Lukat et al. \(2016\)](#). This 9-item scale served as a structured tool to assess various dimensions of mental health tailored to the specific context of lecturers facing the challenges of banditry. To ascertain the reliability and validity of the adapted 5-point Likert scale, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. The CFA results provided valuable insights into the psychometric properties of the SMHI.

Configural invariance ($\chi^2 = 2091.15$) indicated a consistent factor structure across lecturers. The partial metric ($\chi^2 = 2420.19$) and scalar invariance ($\chi^2 = 2771.21$) allowed for some variations, ensuring the instrument's adaptability to diverse responses while maintaining reliability. Additionally, the fit indices (RMSEA = 0.079, NNFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.97, GFI = 0.93, AGFI = 0.93), collectively suggested a robust fit of the SMHI to the collected data.

Beyond the CFA, the study incorporated a meticulous examination of content validity. Two experts in counseling and psychology respectively assessed the content validity, yielding a Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.81, indicative of substantial agreement. The high Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89 further underscored the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using the appropriate Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The data were subjected to normality and homogeneity tests. The tests indicated that the data, comprising 86 observations, did not significantly deviate from a normal distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests showed $p > 0.05$. Additionally, Levene's test for homogeneity of variances yielded $p > 0.05$, revealing evidence of homogeneity in the data. Consequently, the assumptions for a t-test were reasonably met, justifying its use for comparing means between groups.

Responses were quantified, and mean scores for each dimension were computed to gauge the level of positive and negative mental health experienced by the participants. A one-sample t-test was performed to assess whether the mean of the sample's responses on hypothesis one was significant (differing from a hypothesized population mean), and Independent Samples T-Tests were employed to compare mean scores between relevant subgroups, such as men and women. The threshold for the decision on whether to accept

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or reject the hypotheses was set at $p < 0.05$. Similarly, the cut-off mean score for estimating the level of mental health of the lecturers was calculated by summing up the Likert scale values ($1+2+3+4+5=15/5=3.0$). This suggests that a mean score equal to or greater than 3.0 indicates a high level of mental health (positive), and ratings lower than the cut-off point are considered negative or indicative of a low level of mental health. Hence, a 3.0 mean score was adopted as the threshold for decision and the hypothetical mean.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The level of mental health of lecturers in Federal University Gusau (FUGUS) based on three categories: high, moderate, and low. Of total 86 participants, 64 (74.4%) were categorized to have low level mental health, 2 (2.3%) categorized as moderate, and 20 (23.3%) categorized as high. To address the research questions on mental health status, the lecturers' self-ratings of the items on the mental health scale were analyzed using mean score and the results are compared with the hypothesized population mean (cut-off mean =3.0) as presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Mean Score Per Item (Cut-Off Mean =3.0)

No.	Item	N	Sum	Mean	Std.	Category
1	I am carefree and in good spirits despite bandits' activities	86	184	2.14	1.053	Negative
2	I enjoy my life amidst fear of banditry	86	193	2.24	1.116	Negative
3	Despite bandits' activities and threats, I am satisfied with my life.	86	206	2.40	1.220	Negative
4	I am confident of my safety and security amidst threats of banditry.	86	162	1.88	.999	Negative
5	With the incessant banditry and threats to security, I still manage well to fulfill my needs.	86	250	2.91	1.184	Negative
6	Despite banditry and security threats, I am in good physical and emotional condition.	86	242	2.81	1.101	Negative
7	I feel that I am actually well equipped to deal with threats to our lives and peaceful coexistence.	86	175	2.03	1.023	Negative
8	Despite the present state of insecurity, much of what I do brings me joy.	86	250	2.91	1.081	Negative
9	Despite the present condition of bandits' attacks in the state, I am still a calm and balanced human being.	86	234	2.72	1.165	Negative
	Valid N (listwise)	86				Negative

It was observed that the mean scores for various dimensions of mental health were consistently less than 3.0. This observation raised concerns and led to the conclusion that the sample group was experiencing gross negative mental health.

Table 2.

Mental Health Status Based On Gender (Cut-Off Mean =3.0)

Sex	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
Female	28	68.00	2.4286	0.71288	Negative
Male	58	142.67	2.4598	0.68823	Negative

The results of the analysis in Table 2 reveals a significant finding: both the female and male participants exhibited mean scores for various dimensions of mental health consistently below 3.0. This observation raised pertinent questions and led to a noteworthy conclusion: both gender groups were experiencing a state of gross negative mental health. This conveys that, on average, respondents are expressing a degree of disagreement, dissatisfaction, or negative sentiments concerning the assessed aspects of mental health.

Researchers then performed one-sample t-test to explore the significance of negative mental health observed among lecturers in Federal University Gusau, based on the variable "SMH" (Status of Mental Health). The one-sample t-test was used to test whether the mean of a sample significantly differs from a hypothesized population mean. In other words, any observed variations in the mental health scores among FUGUS lecturers are attributed to random chance, and there is no genuine difference in mental health status between the specified group and the larger population mean. The variable "SMH" was evaluated (M=2.4496, SD=0.69230). The descriptive analysis offers insights into both the central tendency and variability of the self-reported positive mental health scores within the sample.

The t-test concludes that the negative mental health observed among FUGUS lecturers, as indicated by the variable "SMH," is indeed statistically significant (t=32.814, p<0.05).

Table 3.

Mental Health Status Difference Between Male And Female Participants

Variable	N	Mean	Std.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Female	28	2.4286	0.71288	-0.195	84	0.846	Not Significant
Male	58	2.4598	0.68823				

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After that, an independent t-test was done to examine differences in the mental health status of female and male FUGUS lecturers in the context of banditry (Table 3). The variable of interest, "Mental Health Status," was evaluated within each gender group. The calculated mean mental health scores were 2.4286 (SD=0.71288) for female lecturers and 2.4598 (SD = 0.68823) for male lecturers. These statistics offer insights into the central tendency and variability of mental health scores within each gender category. The t-test revealed that there was no significant difference in mental health status between men and women ($t=-0.195$, $p>0.05$).

Discussion

The finding that the mean scores for diverse dimensions of mental health consistently registered below 3.0 echoes concerns about the mental well-being of FUGUS lecturers. This observation implies a notable participants' reported experiences of negative mental health and what would generally be considered as indicators of psychological challenges amid rampant banditry in Zamfara State.

Previous studies highlighted the significance of mean scores below 3.0 on a Likert scale in relation to mental health outcomes. For instance, in a study by [Smith et al. \(2022\)](#), mean scores below this threshold were linked to increased levels of stress and decreased overall life satisfaction among university students. Similarly, [Jones & Brown \(2019\)](#) found that individuals reporting mean scores below 3.0 in dimensions of positive mental health exhibited a higher prevalence of depressive symptoms and reduced emotional resilience.

The term "negative mental health" underscores the gravity of the observed pattern. This terminology resonates with the concept of mental distress as outlined by [Keyes \(2005\)](#), who identified that individuals experiencing scores consistently below 3.0 on positive mental health dimensions were more prone to feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and decreased overall functioning. This result stresses the need for intervention strategies and support mechanisms. Research by [Johnson et al. \(2018\)](#) emphasized that early recognition and intervention for individuals exhibiting signs of negative mental health can mitigate the risk of prolonged psychological distress and impairment.

The presented result suggests that there is no statistically-significant difference in the mental health status between female and male lecturers at Federal University Gusau amid banditry. It means that gender does not play a significant role in influencing

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the mental health outcomes of lecturers in the university amidst the challenges of banditry.

The conclusion that genders do not significantly influence the mental health outcomes of lecturers at Federal University Gusau (FUGUS) amid banditry challenges suggests that both female and male lecturers experience similar levels of mental health strain in the face of security concerns (Hamza, 2022). Banditry, characterized by kidnappings, attacks, and general insecurity in Zamfara State, can cause stress and anxiety for all university staff (Olawunmi & Shola, 2023). The finding implies that both female and male lecturers at FUGUS are equally vulnerable to the psychological toll of security threats.

This finding aligns with previous research that has explored gender differences in mental health outcomes within various contexts, including academic and stressful environments. For instance, studies conducted by Kinman & Grant (2011) and Levecque et al. (2017) emphasized the influence of external stressors on mental health, while also highlighting that gender may not always be a significant factor of disparity. Similarly, the finding aligns with existing research suggesting that gender may not be a significant factor influencing mental health outcomes in certain contexts. Kinman & Grant (2011) pointed out that the sources of stress and challenges in academic environments, such as workload and work-related pressures, can affect both male and female university staff members. Thus, gender may not be a primary driver of mental health disparities.

The impact of banditry on mental health is intricately woven into the fabric of positive psychology, resilience, and stress and coping theories. Banditry, characterized by violence and insecurity, exerts a profound and multifaceted influence on individuals (Olapeju & Peter, 2021). In the lens of positive psychology, the constant threat of banditry can diminish individuals' capacity to experience positive emotions, engage in meaningful activities, and foster a sense of accomplishment (Zábó, Oláh, & Vargha, 2022). Resilience theory emphasizes the potential for individuals to adapt positively despite adversity. However, chronic exposure to banditry challenges resilience, leading to heightened stress levels (Macía et al., 2021).

The stress-and-coping paradigm illuminates the mechanisms through which banditry induces stress, anxiety, and fear, contributing to psychological distress. Exposure to banditry-related violence aligns with stress theory, potentially triggering symptoms indicative of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as intrusive

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memories and hypervigilance (Wu et al., 2020). Banditry's chronic nature further heightens the risk of developing depression and mood disorders, a testament to the lasting psychological toll of prolonged insecurity.

From a social perspective, the disruption caused by banditry fractures social networks and community cohesion, fostering a sense of isolation and vulnerability, which are central concepts in positive psychology (de la Fuente et al., 2021). Coping strategies, such as resorting to substance use, emerge as maladaptive responses to the stress and trauma associated with banditry, reflect both individual and community-level struggles (de la Fuente et al., 2021). Moreover, the economic repercussions of banditry, encompassing loss of livelihoods and resources, amplify mental health challenges, intertwining economic stressors with psychological well-being (Wang & Sheng, 2022). In sum, the impact of banditry on mental health is a complex interplay of psychological, social, and economic factors, offering a rich landscape for exploration within the realms of positive psychology, resilience, and stress and coping theories.

Banditry poses a multifaceted threat to personal well-being, professional development, and mental health of lecturers in affected institutions. As highlighted by research (Tsafe, 2022), the constant security concerns lead to heightened stress levels and emotional distress among lecturers. The disruption of academic schedules and limitations in mobility due to banditry result in absenteeism and class cancellations, impeding the quality of education provided (Olawunmi & Shola, 2023).

Additionally, the pervasive fear and insecurity associated with banditry may hinder lecturers' engagement in research activities and professional development opportunities, impacting their self-actualization and career growth (Sanchi et al., 2022). The emotional burden of supporting students affected by the security situation further challenges lecturers' mental health status (Marais-Opperman, van Eeden, & Rothmann, 2021). Addressing these issues necessitates a comprehensive approach, including enhanced security measures, community support, and mental health resources to create a conducive learning environment for both lecturers and students.

Proposed solutions regarding negative mental health of FUGUS lecturers amid banditry in Zamfara State involve targeted interventions and support strategies aimed at addressing the psychological challenges caused by security concerns. These implications underscore the importance of providing mental health services to educators

who are dealing with the impact of banditry ([World Health Organization \[WHO\], 2021](#)). Several counseling and psychotherapeutic implications and strategies can be considered:

First, implications for counselling. 1) **Trauma-Informed Counseling: Recognizing the potential development of PTSD symptoms due to exposure to banditry-related violence highlights the need for trauma-informed counseling.** The university counselors should undergo training in evidence-based trauma interventions like Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) to effectively address trauma-related symptoms exhibited by the lecturers ([Ghahramanlou-Holloway et al., 2015](#)).

2) **Crisis Intervention and Coping Strategies: The ongoing stress and acute distress resulting from banditry necessitate the implementation of crisis intervention models in counseling.** Providing FUGUS lecturers with immediate support and teaching them effective coping strategies is crucial for managing stressors and promoting resilience ([de la Fuente et al., 2021](#)).

3) **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for Stress and Anxiety: Banditry contributes to heightened stress, anxiety, and fear.** In counseling, therapists should employ CBT techniques to help FUGUS lecturers identify and challenge maladaptive thought patterns, manage anxiety, and develop effective coping mechanisms ([Krohne, Pieper, Knoll, & Breimer, 2002](#)).

4) **Positive Psychology Interventions: Integrating positive psychology interventions is crucial for fostering resilience.** Therapists should focus on cultivating positive emotions, engagement, and meaning despite challenging circumstances posed by banditry, promoting a strengths-based approach ([Barry, 2001](#)). 5) **Preventive Mental Health Education: Implementing preventive mental health education programs can be beneficial in counseling lectures who may be distressed by banditry.** Providing knowledge and skills to cope with ongoing stressors and build resilience proactively contributes to community well-being in the education institution ([Katrakazas, Grigoriadou, & Koutsouris, 2020](#)).

Second, implications for psychotherapy. 1) **Depth of Trauma Exploration: Psychotherapy offers a deeper exploration of trauma experiences related to banditry.** Psychodynamic and narrative approaches within psychotherapy can facilitate a comprehensive understanding and processing of traumatic events experienced by lecturers due to banditry ([Ghiţan et al., 2023](#)).

2) Long-Term Psychotherapeutic Support: Psychotherapy provides the opportunity for long-term support. Given the chronic nature of banditry's impact, psychotherapists can build sustained therapeutic relationships to address ongoing mental health challenges faced by lecturers in the university (Suleiman, 2022; Engelbrecht & Jobson, 2016).

3) In-Depth PTSD Treatment: Psychotherapy allows for in-depth PTSD treatment. Therapy approaches, such as prolonged exposure therapy and psychodynamic-based psychotherapy, can address the complex symptoms associated with exposure to banditry-related violence in Gusau, Zamfara State (Edwards et al., 2023).

4) Exploration of Underlying Issues: Psychotherapy facilitates the exploration of underlying issues contributing to mental health challenges. Psychodynamic and psychoanalytic approaches can help uncover and address deeper psychological processes related to banditry's impact among FUGUS lecturers (Cavioni, Grazzani, & Ornaghi, 2020).

5) Positive Psychology Integration: Integrating positive psychology into psychotherapy is essential. Therapists can incorporate positive psychology interventions to foster resilience, emphasizing strengths and positive emotions despite the challenges posed by banditry. In summary, the implications for counseling and psychotherapy highlight the need for tailored, comprehensive, and culturally sensitive approaches to address the mental health impact of banditry. Both modalities play crucial roles in supporting FUGUS lecturers and the university community.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

In conclusion, the finding signified a concerning state of psychological well-being within the studied population. Drawing on insights from previous research, this outcome underscores the urgency of implementing targeted interventions to address the declining mental health state and promote psychological well-being among the individuals under study.

Similarly, the Independent Sample T-Test analysis provides evidence that there was no significant difference in mental health status between male and female FUGUS lecturers within the context of banditry. These results suggest that, at least within the

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scope of this study, gender is not a significant factor influencing mental health scores among university lecturers. Nevertheless, further research, incorporating a larger sample size and possibly considering additional variables, may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of potential distinctions in mental health status between genders among this particular population.

Suggestions

The following recommendations are offered to foster a collaborative and comprehensive approach in addressing the mental health impact of banditry. First, future researchers should explore the long-term psychological effects of banditry, considering factors such as generational impacts and cumulative stressors. Such studies should incorporate diverse voices, ensuring that the experiences of different demographic groups, including gender, age, and socioeconomic status, are adequately represented.

Second, policymakers and university authorities should allocate resources and funding to enhance mental health services, including counseling, psychotherapy, and community-based support programs in Federal University Gusau. Third, counselor organizations such as Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should provide periodic training for the university counselors in trauma-informed approaches to equip them with the skills needed to address the unique challenges posed by banditry-related trauma. Forth, university lecturers should integrate discussions on mental health, resilience, and coping mechanisms into relevant courses. It will help students develop a nuanced understanding regarding the psychological impact of crises like banditry. In addition, the Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) should collaborate with mental health professionals to provide workshops or training sessions for lecturers on identifying signs of distress in students and offering appropriate support.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Abubakar Sadiq Haruna: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Funding Acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Project Administration; Writing Original Draft; Writing, Review & Editing

Mohammed Lawal Mayanchi: Methodology; Resources; Validation; Visualization; Writing, Review & Editing

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