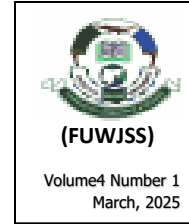


ADULT LEARNERS' MENTAL HEALTH AND ACADEMIC OUTCOMES AT THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OYE-EKITI SANDWICH PROGRAMME, NIGERIA



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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of mental health challenges among adult learners at the Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Sandwich Programme, Ekiti State, Nigeria. It focuses on adult learners' mental health and academic outcomes at the university. A total of 130 respondents were selected from a population of 217 via the simple random sampling technique. Majority of respondents acknowledged that mental health significantly affects their preparedness to learn ($\bar{x}=2.79$), with stress ($\bar{x}=3.32$) and anxiety ($\bar{x}=3.04$) frequently disrupting their studies. The study highlights gender and employment status as significant determinants of mental health, with chi-square values of 5.592 ($p=0.018$) and 8.454 ($p = 0.017$), respectively. Students' financial support from spouse and family members emerged as the most endorsed strategy (76.9%) to alleviate their mental health challenges, followed by counselling services (34.6%) and time management strategies (32.3%). The findings also revealed that while most learners (63.8%) feel they have the necessary resources for effective learning, a significant minority (36.2%) lack adequate resources. Additionally, 66.9% of the respondent expressed moderate confidence in managing their time between work, study, and personal responsibilities. The study concludes that about 92.3% of respondents felt academically prepared before enrollment, though many struggled with re-adjusting to academic life after a break. Thus, this study underscores the critical need for mental health support, financial assistance, and flexible learning strategies to enhance the academic success and well-being of adult learners.

Keywords: Adult learners, mental health, sandwich programmes, Learning preparedness

Introduction

Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with stresses of life can work productively and

fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (WHO, 2004; WHO, 2023). It serves as an important aspect of health and well-being that supports our individual and shared capacities to make choices, establish relations, and influence the environment we live in. (WHO, 2023). Mental health, which includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being, affects how people handle stressful situations and make positive choices (Cleverley, McCann, O'Brien, Davies, Bennett, Brennenstuhl, Courey, Henderson, Jeffs, Miller, Pignatiello, Rong, Rowland, Stevens, & Szatmari, 2022). Mental health reflects a condition of mental well-being that allows individuals to handle life's stresses, recognise their strengths, learn effectively, perform well, and engage with their community (WHO, 2023). Mental health is an essential human right and is crucial for individual, community, and socio-economic advancement (Africa CDC, 2023).

Adult learners are typically non-traditional students who are older, usually 25 years and older, and come from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. Many of them work part-time or full-time along with family responsibilities. Adult learners often pursue education for personal or professional reasons. While many return to improve their job prospects, for others, education can be a transformative experience that leads to personal growth, intellectual development, increased self-esteem, and greater confidence (Higher Education Today, 2019).

The mental health and academic outcomes of adults in higher education have grown to be increasingly significant areas of research, especially as more adults pursue education later in their lives (Campbell, Blank, Cantrell, Baxter, Blackmore, Dixon, Goyder, & Hulme, 2022). In contrast to traditional students, adult learners frequently balance various obligations, such as work, family, and education, which may affect their mental health and academic outcome (Waterhouse, Samra, & Lucassen, 2020). This trend has resulted in a larger number of adult learners attending universities, who encounter numerous challenges in committing to their education (*Osam, Bergman, Matt, & Cumberland, 2017*). According to Shankar, Sievers, & Sharma (2020), the complex nature of these responsibilities can result in heightened stress, anxiety, and other mental health concerns that may impede academic success. These challenges are especially pertinent in sandwich programmes, devised to meet the specific needs of adult learners by providing flexible schedules. However, the mental health challenges encountered by these adult learners remain a major concern.

Mental health is fundamental to the learning process of adult learners, influencing cognitive function, motivation, and overall academic achievement (Jianwu, Chun, & Chen 2024). Students frequently face challenges such as stress, anxiety, and burnout, yet discussions surrounding mental health within this demographic remain limited. Gaining an

understanding of mental health strategies and addressing mental health concerns are essential not only for academic achievement but also for overall well-being and quality of life. Khan, Perwez, Gaddam, Aiswarya, Abrar Basha, Malas, Haque, & Ahmad, (2024), study demonstrates that mental health challenges, including stress and anxiety, can considerably diminish cognitive abilities such as memory, attention, and problem-solving skills. These cognitive challenges directly impact academic outcomes, as students experiencing mental health challenges are less likely to fully engage with their studies and achieve their potential.

Academic outcome represents performance that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in school, college, and university (Steinmayr, Meißner, Weidinger, & Wirthwein, 2014). It encompasses various aspects such as grades, test scores, course completion rates, retention rates, and overall academic success. Academic outcomes reflect a student's ability to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and apply learning effectively in different settings (Kumar & Anburaj, 2024).

These academic outcomes are influenced by several factors, including learning preparedness, study habits, mental health, institutional support, motivation, leadership and authority traits, soft skills, and adult learners' attitudes (Richardson, Abraham, & Bond, 2012; Ojokheta, Oladeji & Omokhabi 2016; Ojokheta, Oladeji & Omokhabi, 2018; Omokhabi & Omokhabi, 2024). Strong academic outcomes indicate mastery of subject matter, critical thinking ability, and learning preparedness for further education or professional careers (Guamanga, Saiz, Rivas & Almeida, 2024). Research has shown that students with strong learning preparedness and self-regulation skills tend to achieve better academic outcomes, as they are more capable of managing their time, setting goals, and engaging in deep learning strategies (Oluwagbajami, 2024). On the contrary, poor academic outcomes may signify challenges in comprehension, lack of preparedness, or external barriers such as employment and family responsibilities affecting learning (Blessing, 2024). Studies suggest that mental health and well-being significantly impact academic outcome, with stress and anxiety being major hindrances to learning effectiveness (Grøtan, Sund, & Bjerkeset, 2019).

In sandwich programmes, where adult learners often face significant pressure, the impact of mental health on learning preparedness becomes even more significant (Waller, Hodge, Holford, Milana, & Webb, 2018). This elevated level of stress highlights the essential role of mental health in shaping learners' preparedness for academic engagement. The Federal University Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE) Sandwich programme could present a significant opportunity for adult learners to engage in higher education while balancing various life responsibilities. Nevertheless, the simultaneous

demands of academic work and external obligations can intensify mental health challenges, hindering students' ability to concentrate and prepare adequately for learning. According to Bohlmeijer, Prenger, Taal, & Cuijpers, (2010), mental health interventions within educational contexts are essential for fostering students' well-being and improving their academic outcomes. However, there exists a gap in research that specifically addresses the mental health and academic outcomes (learning preparedness) of adult learners in Nigerian sandwich programmes, including those offered at FUOYE. The relationship between mental health and learning preparedness is complex, encompassing a range of factors including stress, effective time management, and the availability of support services. Hurst, Baranik, & Daniel, (2013), indicates that strategic time management and stress reduction skills are essential for academic achievement, particularly among adult learners who must manage educational pursuits alongside various other responsibilities. Nevertheless, when mental health challenges are not sufficiently addressed, even well prepared students may find it difficult to meet academic demands. This highlights the critical need for holistic support systems that comprehensively tackle mental health challenges and learning preparedness within adult education programmes. In addition to individual factors, institutional support is crucial for the academic success of adult learners. The availability of mental health resources, academic counselling, and peer support can substantially improve students' preparedness to learn and their overall educational experience. A study conducted by Evans, Bira, Gastelum, Weiss, & Vanderford (2018) underscores the positive influence of accessible mental health services on student outcomes, indicating that students who take advantage of these services are more likely to achieve academic success. Nevertheless, many institutions, including FUOYE, require more focused support systems designed to address the specific needs of adult learners in sandwich programmes.

As adult learners manage the challenges of balancing academic, work, family and social responsibilities, their mental health and preparedness to learn are adversely affected. This study seeks to address the gap in knowledge by investigating the mental health challenges and academic outcomes of adult learners enrolled in the FUOYE Sandwich Programme. By identifying the important factors that affect these areas, the study will offer important insights into enhancing support for adult learners in reaching their academic goals. The findings will contribute to the development of effective interventions and policies that promote mental well-being and academic success among adult learners in Nigerian higher education.

Overview of Mental Health in Adult Learners

Mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and stress are common among adult learners, often intensified by the numerous roles they fulfill in their lives, including employment, family, and education. Adult learners encounter unique stressors compared to traditional students, which increase their susceptibility to mental health challenges (Soares, 2019). These stressors involve managing academic demands with work responsibilities, family commitments, and financial strains. Recent studies indicate that nearly one-third of adult learners report mental health challenges, such as anxiety and depression, which disrupt their ability to concentrate on studies (Aontas, 2023). These difficulties are often worsened by obstacles to accessing mental health services, such as lengthy wait times, stigma, and financial limitations, making it harder for adult learners to obtain the assistance they require (Cambridge University Press, 2023). For example, adult learners might face difficulties when re-entering an academic setting after a long gap, coping with financial stress, and managing their educational goals alongside personal duties (Smith & Lewis, 2023). Effective strategies for enhancing mental health in this demographic include mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), and peer-led support initiatives. These strategies have been associated with improved coping skills and decreased rates of depression and anxiety (Tindle, Hemi, & Moustafa, 2022).

Adult learners, also known as non-traditional undergraduates, adult students, working learners, or twenty-first-century students, are individuals over the age of 25 who work full-time and are financially independent (Higher Education Today, 2019). Many of these learners are returning to school after spending years in the workforce or raising a family. Some may even be older than their instructors or lecturers.

In this study, the focus is on adult learners enrolled in the FUOYE sandwich education programme for the 2022/2023 academic session. These students have multiple responsibilities, including work, family, and financial responsibilities, which set them apart from their traditional counterparts. They enter the sandwich programme with diverse life experiences, professional goals, and personal challenges. The complexities of their daily lives expose them to unique mental health challenges, making emotional well-being an essential aspect of their academic success.

Prevalence of Mental Health Challenges among Adult Learners in Nigerian Universities

Mental health disorders encompass a variety of conditions that differ in severity, ranging from mild to moderate to severe. Mental health is increasingly recognized as a crucial component of academic success.

Numerous studies highlight how mental health conditions, such as anxiety, depression, and stress, adversely affect cognitive functions, attention, and memory, leading to poor academic performance. Owens, Stevenson, Hadwin, & Norgate, (2012) demonstrated that students experiencing high levels of anxiety and stress tend to have lower grades and are more likely to drop out of school. Mental health challenges impact one's ability to focus and concentrate, information retention, and engage fully in learning activities and motivation (Rowan Center for Behavioral Medicine, 2024). Barbayannis, Bandari, Zheng, Baquerizo, Pecor, & Ming (2022) investigated the correlation between stress, depression, and academic performance. The findings established that both academic and family-related stress contribute to student depression, which in turn has a negative influence on their academic performance and learning outcomes. Zhang, Peng, & Chen (2024), investigate the relationships between mental health, self-control, and academic performance among college students. The correlation analysis revealed significant associations between stress, depression, and anxiety levels with academic performance. Xu, Chi, Chen, Qi, Zhang, & Yang (2014) examined the prevalence of depression among college nursing students in China and explored the factors that contribute to it. The findings indicated that academic stress and performance pressure are strongly correlated with increased rates of depression among these students.

Many adult learners report experiencing stress and anxiety, especially those participating in part-time or sandwich programmes. Managing education alongside work and family obligations can indeed lead to considerable stress, negatively affecting both academic achievement and general well-being. Walinga and Rowe (2013) and Rowe and Fitness (2018) highlighted that adult learners frequently encounter overwhelming demands while trying to balance several roles, which can lead to chronic stress and burnout. This ongoing pressure not only hinders their ability to concentrate on academic tasks but also affects their mental and physical health. Adult learners are particularly vulnerable to anxiety and depression, which further disrupts their academic involvement and performance (Walinga & Rowe, 2013). Recent research indicates that stressors such as difficulties with time management and emotional exhaustion are widespread among adult learners and are associated to poorer learning outcomes (Aontas, 2023; Barbayannis et al., 2022). Depression is a significant issue for adult learners, frequently resulting from elements such as social isolation, academic demands, and adjusting to unfamiliar educational settings. Wyatt and Oswalt (2013) discovered that adult students, particularly those re-entering education after an extended hiatus, face an increased risk of depression. This arises from the difficulties of re-entering the academic world, which can heighten stress and feelings of incompetence, ultimately impacting their mental well-being and

academic performance (Wyatt & Oswalt, 2013). The feeling of being disconnected from fellow students and the academic environment can further worsen these emotions, resulting in a cycle of diminished motivation and inadequate academic outcomes.

Contributing Factors to Mental Health Challenges among Adult Learners

A significant factor contributing to mental health challenges among adult learners is their responsibility to balance many roles. Unlike traditional learners, adult learners often face considerable external responsibilities, such as full-time job, parenting, and caregiving for elderly family members. A study conducted by Barbayannis et al. (2022) reported that managing academic, individual, and professional responsibilities can create considerable emotional distress, with many participants citing stress related to parenting duties and family health challenges. Effective coping strategies, including effective time management, self-care, and seeking support from partners and friends, have proven important for navigating these challenges and successfully continuing their education (Freire et al., 2020). Also, recent study on parenting stress highlights that adult learners, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities, experience higher levels of stress due to the challenges associated with balancing professional duties and family responsibilities. A study indicates that parenting stress, intensified by workplace demands, can contribute to heightened parental burnout. This, in turn, complicates the adult learner's capacity to concentrate on their academic goals, resulting in heightened stress and fatigue (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2023).

Financial Pressures

Financial challenges are another major factor impacting the mental health challenges of adult learners. Many adult learners fund their own education and also financing other responsibilities, such as getting loans, childcare, and daily living expenses. The anxiety of accumulating debt or failing to provide for their families while pursuing studies can lead to considerable stress and worry. Financial pressures can also restrict the amount of time that adult learners can focus on their education, as they often have to put in long hours to meet their financial needs, resulting in increased stress and academic challenges (Nasr, et al. 2024). Also, financial pressure can hinder the time available for studies. Many adult learners have to work extended hours to manage their costs, which can heighten stress and academic challenges. This managing act between employment and education frequently worsens their mental health challenges (Brown & Davis, 2024).

Theoretical Framework: Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

According to Bandura's theory (1986), the Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy is critical for accomplishing set goals. In Bandura's view, self-efficacy plays a very prominent role in determining motivation, learning, and behaviour of an individual. The self-efficacy people have regarding themselves makes them prone to actively participate in the learning process, go through all challenges that may arise and turn out to be successful in their education.

Self-efficacy can be affected by a range of factors including mental health challenges. To illustrate, Learner centered ideas such as sociology and other schools of thought focus student's self-supporting views, and anxiety and depression provide detrimental effects on this view so that the learner believes less about his or her chances of making it in the academic arena. Unlike the former, mental health challenges develop a supportive self-efficacy that describes the concept of having never-give-up spirit and problem-solving skills. Bandura also argues that self-efficacy can be alter by social context, such as solicited or unsolicited admiration from a teacher or fellow students (Zajda, 2024). This is important for adult learners who can have mental health challenges and other factors while maintaining multiple roles (Bandura, 1986). Bandura's theory, the Social Cognitive Theory, indicates that self-efficacy is critical about oneself as a belief one can be competent in accomplishing specific tasks. Bandura states that self-efficacy influences the odds with which motivation, learning, and such constructs behave. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more inclined to engage active.

Research Methodology

The study used a cross-sectional survey research design. The study population focus on adult learners enrolled in the FUOYE Sandwich Programmes. A sample of 130 respondents was selected for the study, using the simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a adapted questionnaires to collect quantitative data on mental health status (using validated scales such as the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21, DASS-21) and Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS). Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS to identify correlations, regressions, and significant predictors of mental health and learning preparedness.

We received ethical approval from the Directorate of Sandwich and Affiliate Programme Federal University Oye-Ekiti. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, guaranteeing privacy and the ability to leave the study at any time. The study complies with ethical standards for studies

involving human participants, paying special attention to the study's implications for mental health.

Results and Discussions

Socio-Demographic variables

Table: 1 Demographical characteristics of adult learners in sandwich programme at Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria

S/n	Variables	Labels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	18-24 years	6	4.6
		25-34 years	22	16.9
		35-44 years	64	49.2
		45-54 years	34	26.2
		55 years and above	4	3.1
2	Gender	Male	40	30.8
		Female	90	69.2
3	Marital status	Single	22	16.9
		Married	106	81.5
		Divorced	2	1.5
4	Employment status	Employed full-time	86	66.2
		Employed part-time	10	7.7
		Employed part-time	26	20.0
		Self-employed	6	4.6
		Unemployed	2	1.5
5	Number of children	Retired		
		None	26	20.0
		1-2 children	34	26.2
		3-4 children	64	49.2
		5 children and above	6	4.6
6	Level of education completed	Secondary school	14	10.8
		OND/NCE	109	83.8
		HND	7	5.4

Table. 1 is a frequency distribution table showing results on the demographic variables of respondents of the study. Overall, 130 adult learners participated in the study. The majority of the respondents fall within the age range 35-44, making up 49.2% of the sample, followed by the age group 45-54, and accounting for 26.2%. The lowest proportions are found in the 18-24 age range (4.6%) and those aged 55 and above (3.1%). This reflects a predominance of middle-aged adults in the programme. In terms of gender, female respondents form the majority 69.2%, while males account for

30.8%. Most adult learners (81.5%) are married, with 16.9% being single and only 1.5% divorced, indicating that the study population largely consists of married individuals.

The majority of adult learners are employed full-time (66.2%), with a smaller percentage being self-employed (20.0%) or part-time employed (7.7%). A minority of adult learners are unemployed (4.6%) or retired (1.5%), indicating that the workforce is largely engaged in stable employment. Forty-nine point two per cent (49.2%) of adult learners have 3-4 children, while 26.2% have 1-2 children, and 20% have no children. Only 4.6% have five children or more, showing a trend towards moderate family sizes among the respondents.

The majority of adult learners, 83.8%, have completed education at the OND/NCE level. In contrast, 10.8% have secondary school education, and 5.4% hold HND qualifications. This distribution highlights that most respondents have achieved mid-level education, with fewer possessing higher educational qualifications.

Table: 2. Learning preparedness among adult learners in Federal University, Oye Ekiti Sandwich programmes

S/n	Variable	Label	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Do you feel like you have the resources you need to learn?	No	47	36.2
		Yes	83	63.8
2.	How confident are you in your ability to manage your time effectively between work, studies, and personal life	Not confident at all	6	4.6
		Slightly confident	17	13.1
		Moderately confident	87	66.9
		Very confident	18	13.8
		Extremely confident	2	1.5
3.	Do you feel that you were adequately prepared academically before enrolling in the sandwich programme	No	10	7.7
		Yes	120	92.3
4.	How often do you study (e.g., summarizing, note-taking) to help you retain information?	Sometimes	35	26.9
		Often	41	31.5
		Always	54	41.5
5.	How challenging do you find it to re-adjust to academic life after time away from formal education?	Not challenging	35	26.9
		Slightly challenging	23	17.7
		Moderately challenging	34	26.2
		Very challenging	32	24.6
		Extremely challenging	6	4.6
6.	How prepared are you for your exams and assignments in the sandwich programme?	Not prepared at all	2	1.5
		Slightly prepared	10	7.7
		Moderately prepared	47	36.2
		Very prepared	65	50.0
		Extremely prepared	6	4.6

Table 2 examined the learning preparedness among adult participants in the FUOYE Sandwich Programme, the result indicate that majority (63.8%) of the respondents believe they possess adequate resources for effective learning. Nonetheless, a significant proportions representing (36.2%) reported insufficient resources, highlighting the necessity for enhanced

support to ensure that all learners are properly equipped for their academic pursuits. In relation to time management, majority of the participants (66.9%) expressed reasonable confidence in their ability to manage work, studies, and personal responsibilities, while smaller percentages indicated higher confidence levels. This suggests that, while many learners feel somewhat capable of managing their schedules, there remains significant potential for improvement, especially among those who are less confident.

However, it is important to acknowledge that many learners without access to these resources encounter significant challenges, underscoring the necessity of enhancing resource distribution. In terms of academic preparedness, majority (92.3%) of adult learners believe they were adequately prepared preceding to enrolling in the programme, indicating a strong sense of preparedness. Effective study habits, including summarization and note-taking, are prevalent, as 41.5% of learners report consistently employing these techniques. However, a significant number (31.5%) only study regularly, while 26.9% do so occasionally, and which may affect retention and academic performance. Additionally, 50.8% of learners perceive the transition back to academic life after a break as moderately or extremely challenging, suggesting that many face difficulties in re-adjusting to formal education. Despite these obstacles, 50% of respondents express a high level of preparedness for examinations and assignments, though a lower proportion (36.2%) indicate being moderately prepared.

One of the specific goals of the research is to determine learning preparedness among adult learners. The results of the research on student learning preparedness reveals that a significant number 92.3% of participants believe they are sufficiently prepared for the program. These findings is consistent with the research conducted by Porque and Napil (2022), which indicates that a substantial majority of learners felt adequately equipped, reflecting the same 92.3% noted in this study. This sense of preparedness is linked to prior educational experiences, motivation, and the availability of resources prior to enrollment.

[illegible]

Table 3. The analysis of the mental health status of adult learners in the Federal University, Oye Ekiti Sandwich programme revealed that they experience moderate levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. The weighted mean of 2.79 revealed that, on average, learners face mental health challenges, though not at extreme levels. However, variations in individual experiences indicated that some students are significantly affected, while others manage their mental well-being more effectively.

The mean stress level of 3.32 (S.D. = 0.908) showed that most respondents experience high stress due to their studies, work, and personal life. Similarly, the mean anxiety score of 3.04 (S.D. = 0.960) indicated that learners are moderately anxious about their academic performance, with some respondents feeling extreme anxiety. Support availability, with a mean of 2.85 (S.D. = 0.706), indicated that while many students feel they have adequate support, others may lack sufficient emotional or financial assistance. Depression symptoms, reflected by a mean of 2.75 (S.D. = 0.881), indicated that respondents sometimes experience feelings of sadness or hopelessness, though not consistently. The impact of mental health on academic performance has a mean of 1.98 (S.D. = 1.107), showing that for most students, mental health issues have had a low effect on their studies, though some have reported significant struggles.

Overall, while mental health challenges are moderately prevalent among adult learners, the variation in standard deviations indicated that some students face severe difficulties, particularly in managing anxiety and depression. The findings indicate that a significant proportion of students are facing long-term mental health challenges stemming from both academic and personal pressures.

These results align with the study by Walinga and Rowe (2013), which emphasizes increasing mental health difficulties among adult learners, highlighting the adverse effects of managing multiple responsibilities, including employment, family, and educational commitments. Also, the study corroborates the findings of Kunasegaran, Khan, Nadarajah, & Arumugam, (2023), who reported that adult learners are more prone to mental fatigue and burnout due to the demands of managing various responsibilities, such as work and caregiving.

The outcomes are consistent with a related descriptive study examining the demographic factors influencing the mental health of adult learners. The findings indicate that both gender and employment status are significant determinants of mental health outcomes. Specifically, these factors significantly impact the mental well-being of adult learners participating in the FUOYE Sandwich Programmes. These results align with research conducted by Patel, Smith & Wong (2020), which identifies considerable gender disparities in mental health outcomes, revealing that women often

experience higher levels of stress and anxiety. Furthermore, the work of Batic-Mujanovic, Poric, Pranjic, Ramic, Alibasic, & Karic (2017) also supports the findings, emphasising that unemployed individuals generally report poorer mental health outcomes compared to their employed counterparts.

Table: 4 Chi-square analysis revealing the relationship between the demographic characteristics and mental health of adult learners

Demographic characteristics	Chi-square value	Contingency co-efficient	Correlation	P-value	Remarks
Age	6.537	.219	.105	.162	Not Sig.
Gender	5.592	.203	.207*	.018	Sig.
Marital status	1.534	.108	.098	.464	Not sig.
Employment status	8.454	.247	.271*	.017	Sig.
Number of children	3.734	.167	.124	.292	Not Sig.
Level of education	2.549	.139	.043	.280	Not Sig.

* **Sig. at P< 0.05**

Table 4 examined the correlation between various factors influencing the mental health of adult learners enrolled in the FUOYE Sandwich Programme. The result indicate that gender and employment status significantly affect the mental well-being of adult learners participating in the FUOYE Sandwich Programmes. Specifically, the analysis showed a chi-square value of 5.592 for gender with a p-value of 0.018, indicating a significant relationship between gender and mental health at the 0.05 significance level. Likewise, employment status exhibited a chi-square value of 8.454 and a p-value of 0.017, confirming that employment status significantly affects the mental health of participants. The contingency coefficients of 0.203 for gender and 0.247 for employment status reflect moderate correlations, suggesting that these variables significantly shape the mental health outcomes for the learners. This finding is consistent with the work of Strandh, Hammarström, Nilsson, Nordenmark, & Russel, (2013) who reported how employment, gender, and marital status influence mental health. Also the finding support the work of Faturohman, & Fahmi, (2024), that for adult learners, job stability acts as a protective factor for mental health.

Table: 5 Association between mental health and learning preparedness of adult learners in Federal University, Oye Ekiti Sandwich Programmes

S/n	Variables	Label	Frequency	Percentage
1	Do you believe that your mental health status affects your learning preparedness?	No	57	43.8
		Yes	73	56.2
2	How often do feelings of stress or anxiety interfere with your ability to study effectively?	Never	18	13.8
		Rarely	16	12.3
		Sometimes	72	55.4
		Often	20	15.4
		Always	4	3.1
3	Do you think that improving your mental health would enhance your academic performance?	No	4	3.1
		Yes	126	96.9

Table 5 indicates that a majority of adult learners (56.2%) believe that their mental health significantly influences their preparedness to learn, indicating awareness of the direct correlation between mental well-being and academic performance. On the contrary, 43.8% do not share this perspective, underscoring the vital role mental health plays in shaping adult learners' preparedness for study. This association is further highlighted by the frequency with which feelings of stress or anxiety disrupt effective studying. Specifically, 55.4% of learners reported that these feelings occasionally interfere with their study efforts, 15.4% frequently experience such interference, and 3.1% report that it is a constant issue. These findings illustrate that a considerable proportion of adult learners are struggling with mental health challenges that directly impact their capacity to focus, engage, and achieve academic success. Additionally, there is a significant agreement that enhancing mental health would lead to improved academic performance, with 96.9% of participants validating this perspective. This agreement indicates that mental health support could play a pivotal role in advancing educational outcomes and overall academic achievement. The fact that only 3.1% of individuals disagreed with the view that enhancing mental health would positively influence their academic performance implies that majority of adult learners are strongly aware of the strong correlation between their mental well-being and their learning abilities.

The findings on mental health and adult learners' preparedness to learn indicate that a significant majority, specifically 56.2%, recognize that their mental health plays a crucial role in their preparedness to engage in learning activities. In contrast, 43.8% of respondents do not share this perspective, highlighting the vital influence of mental health on adult learners' preparedness for academic pursuits. These results demonstrate that a notable proportion of adult learners are facing mental health challenges that adversely affect their ability to concentrate, participate, and succeed academically. These findings are consistent with the research conducted Zhang et al. (2024), which indicated that a substantial percentage of learners acknowledge the impact of mental health on their academic performance. Furthermore, evidence provided by Md. Fajlay & Md. Sefatul (2024) emphasizes that many learners in their study reported that stress and anxiety frequently hinder their academic efforts.

Table 6 **Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between mental health and learning preparedness of adult learners in Federal University, Oye Ekiti Sandwich programmes**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	r	p-value	Remarks
Mental health	13.95	2.629				
Adult learners'	38	18	1	.45	.00	Sig.
preparedness	6.346	1.321	3	5*	1	
	2	92	0			

*** Significant at $P < 0.05$**

Table 6 presents the findings of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis investigating the relationship between mental health and learning preparedness of adult learners in Federal University, Oye Ekiti Sandwich programmes. The table showed that there is a statistical significant relationship between mental health and adult learners ($r=.455$, $n=130$, $p(.001) < .05$). Hence, mental health influenced learning preparedness of adult learners in Federal University, Oye Ekiti Sandwich programmes in the study. This study finding that mental health significantly influences learning preparedness aligns with research by Faciolan (2024), who found that students experiencing emotional distress were more likely to report difficulty in academic engagement and learning preparedness. Similarly, Zhang, Peng, & Chen (2024) demonstrated that poor mental well-being

negatively affects academic performance and learning efficiency among university students

Table: 7 Strategies to be implemented to improve mental health and learning preparedness among adult learners

S/n	Strategies	No	Yes
1.	Counselling services	85(65.4%)	45(34.6%)
2.	Financial support	30(23.1%)	100(76.9%)
3.	Time management	88(67.7%)	42(32.3%)
4.	Peer support groups	104(80.0%)	26(20.0%)
5.	Flexible study schedules	93(71.5%)	37(28.5%)
6.	Others	126(96.9%)	4(3.1%)

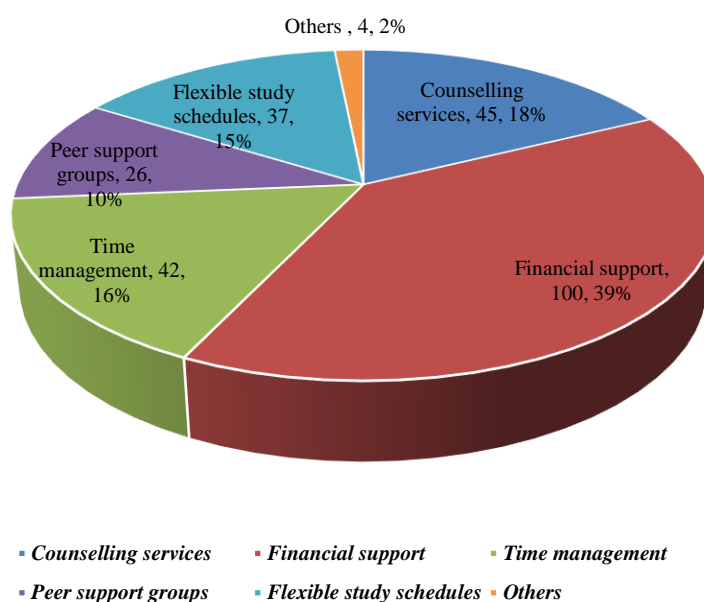
Table 7 presents a variety of strategies aimed at improving the mental health and learning preparedness of adult learners in the FUOYE Sandwich Programme. The most preferred strategy is the provision of financial assistance, with 76.9% of respondents identifying it as a significant factor in enhancing their mental health and academic preparedness. This highlights the substantial economic pressures faced by many adult learners, suggesting that easing this burden may positively influence their mental well-being. Counselling services and effective time management are also widely admitted as beneficial strategies, with support from 34.6% and 32.3% of respondents, respectively. Additionally, flexible study schedules and peer support groups are viewed as advantageous by 28.5% and 20.0% of participants, respectively.

Concerning preferred strategies for enhancing mental health and academic preparedness among adult learners. The survey results reveal that financial assistance stands out as the most favored approach, with 76.9% of participants recognizing it as a crucial element for enhancing their mental well-being and academic preparedness.

This finding emphasizes the substantial economic challenges encountered by adult learners, indicating that reducing financial stressors can significantly enhance their overall health and educational outcomes. In addition to financial aid, counselling services and effective time management techniques are identified as advantageous by 34.6% and 32.3% of respondents, respectively. These observations underscore the necessity for accessible mental health resources and skills that assist learners in efficiently managing their academic responsibilities. These findings support the study investigated by Killackey, Allott, and Woodhead (2017), which reported that providing financial assistance or alternative supportive measures is among the most effective methods for improving mental health outcomes and promoting academic preparedness. This conclusion is further

reinforced by the current study, wherein 76.9% of participants recognized financial support as an essential factor in fostering both psychological health and a supportive academic environment.

Fig...1: Pie chart showing the strategies implemented to improve mental health and learning preparedness among adult learners



Conclusion and Recommendation

The research indicates that adult learners participating in the FUOYE Sandwich Programmes are generally well-equipped to engage in academic pursuits. Nonetheless, they encounter significant challenges pertaining to mental health, time management, and access to essential educational resources. Important factors such as financial pressure, employment conditions, and mental well-being play a crucial role in shaping their academic experiences, frequently serving as obstacles to optimal performance. While adult learners in the FUOYE Sandwich Programmes report high levels of academic preparedness, their mental health remains a significant concern. Addressing these challenges through targeted financial support, accessible counseling services, flexible learning options, and time management training will be crucial in enhancing both their well-being and

academic performance. By adopting a holistic strategy that addresses both the academic and personal challenges faced by adult learners, FUOYE can substantially bolster students' preparedness, resilience, and overall success within the programme.

The study shows that while many adult learners in sandwich programmes feel academically prepared, many face challenges related to mental health, financial stress, time management, and resource accessibility. To improve academic performance and overall experience, FUOYE management should consider the following recommendations:

Sandwich programmes should prioritise accessible mental health resources, incorporating counselling services, peer support groups, and stress management workshops into the curriculum. To ease financial pressures, they should explore scholarships, flexible payment plans, and partnerships to provide funding support, allowing learners to focus on their studies. Effective time management is crucial for adult learners. The programmes should offer workshops and resources to help learners plan, prioritise, and manage their schedules more efficiently. The institutions must address resource disparities by ensuring all learners have access to essential materials and technology through reliable online platforms and clear communication channels.

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