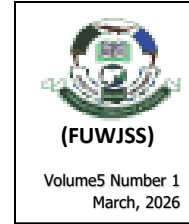


CONSEQUENCES OF QUIET BURNOUT AMONG YOUTH IN LAGOS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of quiet burnout among youth in Lagos State, Nigeria, exploring how hustle culture, economic pressures, and social media exposure collectively contribute to this emerging mental health concern. Using symbolic interactionism and social strain theory as theoretical frameworks, the research employed a mixed-method approach to collect data from 450 respondents aged 18-35 across three Local Government Areas: Eti-Osa (Lagos East), Ikeja (Lagos Central), and Badagry (Lagos West). Findings reveal that 68.4 percent of respondents exhibit moderate to high levels of quiet burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, detachment from work or academic pursuits, and sustained performance despite internal distress. The study shows that 73.6 percent of youth engage in multiple income streams, with 81.2 percent reporting chronic stress related to financial obligations. Social media use averaging 5.8 hours daily significantly correlates with comparison anxiety (76.9 percent) and inadequacy feelings (64.2 percent). Statistical analysis confirms significant relationships between hustle culture participation, economic pressures, social media exposure and burnout symptoms. The research concludes that addressing quiet burnout requires systemic interventions including mental health literacy programmes, economic policy reforms targeting youth employment, regulation of work culture norms, and digital wellness initiatives that promote healthier engagement with social media platforms.

Keywords: Quiet burnout, hustle culture, economic pressure, social media, youth mental health.

Introduction

Nigeria's youth population, estimated at over 60 million people aged 15-35, represents both the nation's greatest asset and its most vulnerable demographic in terms of mental health and economic wellbeing (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). This generation faces unprecedented challenges including high unemployment rates, underemployment, inflation, and the psychological burden of navigating a rapidly digitizing economy where success narratives are constantly broadcast through social media platforms. Lagos State, as Nigeria's economic hub and most populous state with over 15 million residents, serves as the epicenter of these pressures, where the pace of life, cost of living, and intensity of economic competition create a unique urban context for youth development and mental health outcomes (Lagos State Government, 2024).

Within this environment, a concerning pattern has emerged that researchers and mental health practitioners are beginning to identify as quiet burnout. Unlike traditional burnout, which manifests through obvious signs such as absenteeism, dramatic performance decline, or open expressions of distress, quiet burnout represents a more insidious form of psychological exhaustion where individuals continue to function at high levels externally while experiencing profound internal depletion, emotional numbness, and a growing sense of disconnection from their work, studies, or life pursuits. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent among high-achieving young adults who feel compelled to maintain appearances of success and productivity even as their mental and emotional resources become critically depleted. Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, detachment, and a reduced sense of accomplishment, and it does not always manifest in ways that visibly disrupt performance (Maslach & Leiter, 2016), meaning young people may appear functional while experiencing significant internal psychological strain.

The rise of hustle culture, a social and economic phenomenon that glorifies constant work, multiple income streams, and the prioritization of productivity above rest or leisure, has been identified as a significant contributing factor to youth burnout globally. In Lagos, this culture is intensified by economic realities where formal employment opportunities remain scarce, pushing youth toward entrepreneurship, gig work, and the simultaneous management of multiple economic activities often referred to locally as "side hustles". The valorization of sleeplessness, constant availability, and relentless ambition becomes internalized as not merely desirable but necessary for survival and success, creating psychological conditions where rest is perceived as laziness and self-care as self-indulgence. In Lagos State, where youth face intense economic pressures,

limited formal employment opportunities, and strong social expectations that equate personal worth with productivity, many young people may experience chronic exhaustion, emotional numbness, and disconnection from their pursuits without displaying obvious signs that would trigger intervention. Economic hardship and financial insecurity are well established risk factors for psychological distress, stress, and reduced mental well-being (Haushofer & Fehr, 2014; Ridley et al., 2020), making this issue particularly relevant within challenging socioeconomic contexts.

Compounding these pressures is the pervasive influence of social media platforms, which have become central to how Lagos youth construct their identities, measure their success, and understand their place in society (Esimone, Alexander, & Ugoo-Okonkwo, 2022). Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and increasingly TikTok create endless streams of carefully curated success narratives, wealth displays, and achievement posts that foster comparison anxiety and feelings of inadequacy (Vogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2019). For young people already struggling with economic pressures and the demands of hustle culture, social media amplifies the sense that everyone else is succeeding while they are falling behind, intensifying the pressure to work harder, present better, and achieve more. Research has shown that heavy social media use is associated with depression, anxiety, psychological distress, and negative social comparison among adolescents and young adults (Keles et al., 2020; Vogel et al., 2019), and these comparison processes can intensify feelings of inadequacy and emotional strain, which may contribute to exhaustion and disengagement.

Research on burnout has traditionally focused on occupational settings, particularly among healthcare workers, teachers, and corporate employees, with substantial evidence documenting its prevalence, causes, and consequences in these populations (Maslach & Leiter, 2021; Rotenstein, Torre, Ramos, et al., 2018). However, there is limited empirical understanding of the prevalence and manifestation of quiet burnout among youth populations in Lagos. Without baseline data on how widespread this phenomenon is and how it presents among young people navigating Lagos's unique socioeconomic environment, mental health practitioners, policymakers, and support systems cannot adequately respond. Existing research attention in many contexts tends to focus more on clinical conditions such as depression and anxiety (Ridley et al., 2020), while the more subtle psychological strain linked to chronic stress, overwork, and the pressure to maintain an appearance of success receives less emphasis. Additionally, individuals often manage how they are perceived socially and may conceal distress to maintain socially valued identities, which can further obscure recognition of internal struggles (Goffman, 1959). The specific

manifestation of quiet burnout among youth populations in African urban contexts, particularly as it relates to the intersection of economic precarity, digital culture, and localized hustle mentality, therefore remains significantly understudied.

Furthermore, while hustle culture, economic pressure, and social media are widely discussed as stressors affecting young people, there is insufficient empirical evidence showing how these factors relate specifically to burnout-type symptoms in measurable ways within the Lagos context. Economic insecurity may increase stress exposure while limiting opportunities for rest and psychological recovery (Haushofer & Fehr, 2014), yet context-specific data linking these pressures directly to burnout-related experiences among Lagos youth remain scarce. Policymakers and mental health advocates equally lack clear, localized evidence connecting the environmental, economic, and digital pressures faced by Lagos youth with concrete mental health outcomes. Without this understanding, interventions are often generalized and may fail to address the culturally and economically specific drivers of youth psychological distress, limiting the development of effective, contextually appropriate mental health policies, educational support systems, and youth-focused wellbeing programs tailored to the realities of young people in Lagos.

Understanding this phenomenon in the Lagos context is therefore critical for developing appropriate mental health interventions, informing youth policy, and addressing the systemic factors that contribute to youth psychological distress in Nigeria's most economically dynamic yet socially challenging urban environment. The implications extend to multiple stakeholders. For policymakers and government agencies, understanding quiet burnout among Lagos youth can inform employment policies, mental health service provision, and educational reforms that address the root causes of youth distress rather than merely managing its symptoms. For mental health professionals and counselors working with young people, this research provides evidence-based insights into the specific stressors affecting their clients and the cultural contexts shaping their experiences. For educational institutions, particularly universities and vocational training centers, the findings can guide student support services, curriculum design, and campus mental health programming. For youth themselves, research in this area validates their experiences, challenges toxic productivity narratives, and provides language for understanding and communicating their struggles. For civil society organizations and advocacy groups focused on youth development and mental health, this study offers data to support campaigns for systemic change, workplace reforms, and digital wellness initiatives.

Against this backdrop, this study examines the prevalence and manifestations of quiet burnout among youth in Lagos State, assesses the

influence of hustle culture, economic pressures, and social media exposure on burnout symptoms among Lagos youth, and evaluates the relationship between sociodemographic factors and the experience of quiet burnout among selected youth populations in Lagos State. It is hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between hustle culture participation, economic pressures, social media exposure, and quiet burnout among Lagos youth.

Prevalence and Manifestations of Quiet Burnout among Youth

Quiet burnout refers to a state of chronic psychological, emotional, and physical exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to work-related or achievement-oriented stressors, in which individuals maintain external functioning and appear competent while experiencing internal depletion, emotional detachment, cynicism, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Burnout is fundamentally characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or detachment, and reduced personal accomplishment, and it may exist even when performance appears intact (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Unlike classical burnout that shows visible behavioral decline, quiet burnout is hidden, with individuals continuing to meet expectations while internally struggling with persistent fatigue, emotional numbness, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances, and feelings of inefficacy. In this study, it describes Lagos youth aged 18–35 who sustain work, academic, or entrepreneurial performance while experiencing emotional exhaustion, psychological detachment from their pursuits, and persistent inadequacy despite objective achievements. It is operationalized through three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or detachment, and reduced personal accomplishment within the context of hustle culture, economic uncertainty, and social media exposure.

Hustle culture is a social and economic value system that glorifies constant work, relentless productivity, entrepreneurial ambition, and multiple income streams while stigmatizing rest and work-life balance as laziness or lack of ambition. It promotes long work hours, equates self-worth with productivity, and creates social pressure to demonstrate continuous progress through both explicit motivational messaging and implicit norms of constant availability. Such pressure to achieve within competitive social structures aligns with strain-based perspectives that link blocked opportunities and success pressures to psychological stress (Merton, 1938; Agnew, 2019). It is especially prevalent in gig economies and among youth in precarious labor markets where survival often depends on multiple income sources. In this study, hustle culture refers to the beliefs, behaviors, and pressures Lagos youth experience regarding productivity and success,

operationalized through engagement in multiple income activities, excessive work hours, attitudes toward rest and sleep, exposure to motivational “grind” content, productivity-based social comparison, and guilt or anxiety when not working.

Economic pressures refer to financial stressors and material insecurities arising from insufficient or unstable income, unemployment or underemployment, rising living costs, debt, and the gap between economic aspirations and actual circumstances. These pressures generate psychological strain through worry about meeting basic needs, anxiety about future security, and cognitive load associated with decision-making under scarcity (Haushofer & Fehr, 2014). Persistent financial hardship is strongly linked to depression, anxiety, and overall psychological distress (Ridley et al., 2020). Young adults are particularly vulnerable due to transitions into financial independence and unstable employment pathways. In this study, economic pressures describe the financial stress experienced by Lagos youth aged 18–35, operationalized through employment stability, income adequacy, financial obligations, food or housing insecurity, inability to afford essential services, reliance on support or loans, financial anxiety, and the gap between aspirations and current economic reality.

Social media refers to digital platforms that enable users to create, share, and interact with content and social networks through internet-enabled technologies such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn. Research shows that social media environments encourage social comparison, exposure to idealized self-presentations, and validation-seeking behaviors, which are associated with reduced self-esteem and psychological distress among young people (Vogel et al., 2019; Keles et al., 2020). These platforms shape perceptions of success, lifestyle norms, and social expectations in ways that can influence emotional wellbeing. In this study, social media refers to platforms used by Lagos youth for communication, networking, and self-presentation, operationalized through time spent online, number of platforms used, patterns of engagement, exposure to success and lifestyle content, comparison tendencies, validation seeking, pressure to present an ideal image, and interaction with hustle-oriented content.

Burnout among young adults has emerged as a global concern, with research documenting increasing rates of psychological exhaustion, particularly among high-achieving populations navigating competitive academic and economic environments. Duffy, Twenge, and Joiner (2019), in their analysis of mental health trends among college students, found significant increases in anxiety and depression symptoms related to academic pressure and future economic uncertainty, with students reporting chronic stress despite maintaining high performance levels. Their work

suggests that the pressure to succeed academically while simultaneously building professional networks, gaining work experience, and managing financial constraints creates conditions for sustained psychological strain that students often internalize rather than openly express.

In examining burnout specifically, Bakker and de Vries (2021), provide important theoretical insights into how high-functioning individuals experience exhaustion differently from classical burnout presentations. Their research on job demands and resources theory explains that certain personality types and social contexts lead individuals to continue performing despite depletion, particularly when external validation, economic necessity, or internalized achievement standards prevent disengagement. This theoretical framework is particularly relevant to understanding Lagos youth, who face strong cultural expectations around success, limited alternative pathways, and social environments that valorize constant productivity.

Chirico, Sharma, Zaffina, and Magnavita (2020), contribute empirical evidence on burnout among younger workers in precarious employment situations. Their study across European contexts found that gig economy workers and those in unstable employment experienced higher rates of emotional exhaustion and cynicism compared to workers in traditional employment, with psychological distress often masked by the need to maintain professional appearances and secure future opportunities. Although conducted in different cultural contexts, their findings resonate with Nigerian youth experiences in Lagos's informal and gig-dominated economy.

More recent research by Molino, Cortese, and Ghislieri (2020), examined burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic period, finding that economic uncertainty and social isolation intensified psychological exhaustion among young adults, particularly those managing work and study simultaneously. Their longitudinal data showed that symptoms often remained hidden as young people feared stigma or professional consequences of admitting struggles, leading to what they termed "silent suffering" that aligns conceptually with quiet burnout.

Influence of Hustle Culture, Economic Pressures, and Social Media on Youth Mental Health

Research examining hustle culture's impact on mental health has grown substantially in recent years Petersen (2019), with scholars arguing that younger generations have internalized productivity as a moral imperative, making rest feel like failure and creating psychological conditions where burnout becomes inevitable. Empirical research examining relationships between work intensity, productivity beliefs, and mental health outcomes among young professionals found that individuals endorsing hustle culture

beliefs reported significantly higher emotional exhaustion, sleep problems, and anxiety, even when controlling for actual work hours, suggesting that the psychological impact stems not only from objective workload but from internalized beliefs about the necessity and virtue of constant productivity (Regmi & Manandhar, 2025).

In African contexts (**Dzineku, Van Niekerk & Dzansi, 2025**), research has examined Nigerian youth involvement in multiple economic activities, finding that 67 percent of urban youth aged 20-35 engaged in two or more income-generating activities simultaneously, driven primarily by economic necessity rather than ambition. Critically, findings show that psychological distress increased with number of concurrent hustles, but that youth rarely connected their stress symptoms to overwork, instead attributing distress to insufficient hustle, creating a cycle where the solution to burnout becomes more work. This finding highlights culturally specific manifestations of hustle culture in Nigerian contexts.

Economic pressure's impact on youth mental health is well-documented globally. Ridley et al. (2020), in their comprehensive review of poverty and mental health in low- and middle-income countries, demonstrate clear causal relationships between economic insecurity and psychological distress, mediated through mechanisms including chronic stress activation, reduced cognitive resources for emotion regulation, shame and social exclusion, and barriers to accessing mental healthcare. Haushofer and Fehr (2014), contribute experimental evidence showing that financial scarcity directly impairs cognitive function and emotional wellbeing, creating conditions where individuals struggle to make optimal decisions about work, rest, and self-care, precisely when such decisions are most needed.

In Nigerian contexts, Onyemaechi, Okere, Chukwuemeka, & Ifeoma (2018), has examined relationships between unemployment, underemployment, and mental health among Lagos youth, finding significant associations between economic insecurity and anxiety, depression, and somatic complaints. Importantly, findings show that underemployment (working but earning insufficient income) produced similar psychological impacts as unemployment, suggesting that the subjective experience of economic inadequacy, rather than employment status alone, drives psychological distress.

Social media's role in youth mental health has become one of the most researched areas in recent psychology (Appel, Gerlach & Crusius, 2016). Meta-analytic evidence shows that social comparison on social media consistently predicts lower wellbeing, with effects strongest among young adults and those already experiencing psychological vulnerabilities. They identify mechanisms including upward comparison (comparing oneself unfavorably to others), chronic exposure to idealized presentations that

create unrealistic standards, validation seeking through likes and engagement metrics, and time displacement where social media use replaces activities that genuinely support wellbeing.

Vogel et al. (2019), examined Instagram use specifically, finding that passive consumption of others' content produces more negative psychological effects than active posting or genuine interaction, with effects mediated through social comparison and perceived social isolation. Their longitudinal data showed that comparison on Instagram predicted decreased self-esteem and increased depressive symptoms over time, particularly when users consumed content related to achievements, lifestyles, and success.

In Nigerian contexts, studies of social media use among Lagos university students have found average daily usage of 5.3 hours, with Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp being most popular (Lawal 2023). Research by Malik, Dhir, Kaur & Johri, (2020) has found significant associations between time spent on social media and anxiety symptoms, but noted that relationships were complex, with social media serving both as stressor (through comparison and information overload) and coping mechanism (through connection and distraction). Evidence shows how social media amplifies hustle culture, with exposure to entrepreneurial success stories and motivational content on Instagram creating pressure to emulate extreme productivity, with users reporting both inspiration and inadequacy after consuming such content.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs two complementary sociological theories to understand quiet burnout among Lagos youth: symbolic interactionism and social strain theory. Together, these frameworks provide comprehensive lenses for examining both the micro-level meaning-making processes and macro-level structural pressures that contribute to youth psychological distress in Lagos's unique urban context.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism, originating from the work of George Herbert Mead and developed extensively by Herbert Blumer, posits that human behavior and social life are constructed through symbolic communication, shared meanings, and interpretive processes (Blumer, 1969). The theory rests on three core premises: that humans act toward things based on the meanings those things have for them, that meanings arise from social interaction and communication, and that meanings are modified through interpretive processes as individuals encounter new situations (Aksan, Kısac, Aydın, & Demirbükten, 2009). Unlike theories that view behavior as determined by fixed social structures or psychological drives, symbolic

interactionism emphasizes human agency, the importance of subjective interpretation, and the socially constructed nature of reality.

Central to symbolic interactionist analysis is the concept of the self as a social object that emerges through interaction with others and is maintained through processes of self-reflection, role-taking (imagining how others perceive us), and the internalization of societal expectations (Mead, 1934; Stryker, 2008). Individuals continuously engage in identity work, negotiating between their personal identities and social identities, managing impressions they present to others, and adjusting their self-concepts based on feedback received through interaction (Goffman, 1959). Language, symbols, and shared cultural meanings provide the tools through which people construct their understanding of themselves, their situations, and appropriate responses to life challenges.

Applied to quiet burnout among Lagos youth, symbolic interactionism illuminates how young people interpret and respond to hustle culture, economic pressures, and social media messages based on the meanings these phenomena hold within their specific social and cultural contexts. Hustle culture is not merely an objective set of work demands but a symbolic system that defines what success means, how worth is measured, and what behaviors are virtuous versus shameful. Through interaction with peers, family, media, and social institutions, Lagos youth learn to interpret constant work as admirable ambition rather than unhealthy overwork, rest as laziness rather than necessary self-care, and economic struggle as personal failure rather than structural inequality.

Social media platforms serve as critical sites for symbolic interaction where youth construct and present identities, interpret others' presentations, and derive meanings about success and normalcy through comparison and validation-seeking (Vogel et al., 2019). The likes, comments, and engagement that content receives become symbols of social approval and personal worth, while absence of validation can signify failure or inadequacy. Young people engage in ongoing identity work on social media, carefully curating presentations of their lives to align with cultural ideals around success and productivity, while simultaneously consuming others' curated presentations and using these as reference points for evaluating their own adequacy.

Critically, symbolic interactionism helps explain why quiet burnout remains hidden. Young people interpret their exhaustion through cultural lenses that define struggling as personal weakness or insufficient effort rather than legitimate responses to overwhelming demands. The meaning of burnout symptoms themselves becomes filtered through hustle culture logic, where fatigue signals the need to work harder rather than rest, emotional numbness indicates insufficient passion rather than psychological depletion,

and feelings of inadequacy despite achievement confirm that one is not hustling enough. This interpretive framework prevents recognition of burnout as burnout and drives the continuation of behaviors that perpetuate distress.

Social Strain Theory

Social strain theory, originally developed by Robert Merton (1938), and expanded by institutional anomie theory and general strain theory, examines how social structures create pressures toward deviance, psychological distress, or maladaptive coping when legitimate means for achieving culturally valued goals are blocked or insufficient (Agnew, 2019; Messner & Rosenfeld, 2019). Merton's foundational insight was that societies promote certain goals (particularly economic success in modern capitalist societies) while simultaneously creating unequal access to legitimate means for achieving those goals, producing strain particularly among groups facing structural disadvantages (Merton, 1938).

General strain theory, developed by Robert Agnew, expands this framework beyond economic strain to encompass multiple sources of pressure including failure to achieve positively valued goals, removal of positively valued stimuli, and confrontation with negative stimuli (Agnew, 2019). Strain produces negative emotional states including frustration, anger, disappointment, and anxiety, which individuals may attempt to cope with through various means, some adaptive and others maladaptive. Whether strain leads to particular outcomes depends on additional factors including magnitude of strain, coping resources available, social support, and alternative opportunities for goal achievement (Agnew, 2019).

Institutional anomie theory, extending Mertonian strain theory, argues that societies characterized by strong cultural emphasis on economic success combined with weak non-economic institutions (family, education, community) that could provide alternative sources of identity and worth create conditions of anomie where pursuit of economic goals becomes all-consuming and undermines other aspects of human wellbeing (Messner & Rosenfeld, 2019). In such contexts, economic metrics dominate evaluation of personal worth, social relationships become instrumental rather than intrinsic, and individuals experience chronic pressure to pursue financial success regardless of personal cost.

Applied to Lagos youth, social strain theory illuminates the structural conditions producing quiet burnout. Nigeria's youth unemployment rate, estimated at 42.5 percent in 2023 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024), creates massive strain between the culturally promoted goal of economic success and the blocked legitimate means for achieving it through formal employment. Lagos as Nigeria's economic center intensifies this pressure, as

the concentration of wealth and opportunity makes success seem simultaneously more attainable and more necessary, while the actual barriers including competition, cost of living, corruption, and lack of capital remain formidable.

Young people experience strain through multiple mechanisms. There is the strain of unemployment or underemployment despite educational credentials, creating a gap between expected and actual outcomes. There is the strain of insufficient income to meet basic needs or achieve independence despite working multiple jobs. There is the strain of blocked mobility, where pathways to advancement seem closed by structural barriers including lack of connections, required bribes, or geographic concentration of opportunities. These objective strains produce negative emotions including frustration, anxiety, shame, and anger, which youth must manage while continuing to pursue economic goals given the absence of viable alternatives.

Critically, contemporary Lagos presents an institutional anomie context where economic institutions dominate and alternative sources of meaning and worth have weakened. Traditional community support systems, extended family economic solidarity, and cultural values that provided identity beyond economic achievement have eroded under urbanization and economic pressure, leaving economic success as the primary metric by which youth evaluate their worth and others evaluate them. This creates conditions where young people feel they must pursue economic achievement relentlessly, regardless of cost to their health, relationships, or psychological wellbeing, because no alternative sources of social value or personal meaning remain available or legitimate.

Hustle culture, in strain theory terms, represents an adaptive response to structural conditions where formal paths to success are blocked but alternative informal paths through entrepreneurship, gig work, and multiple hustles remain available, though these paths require extreme effort and sacrifice. However, the adaptation itself becomes a source of strain, as the demands of hustling exceed human capacity for sustained effort, creating psychological and physical exhaustion. Social media amplifies strain by making visible the apparent success of others, intensifying perceptions that goals are achievable (everyone else seems to be succeeding) while simultaneously making one's own struggles feel like personal failures rather than products of structural barriers.

Quiet burnout, therefore, represents a psychological outcome of chronic strain where youth continue adaptive efforts to achieve culturally mandated economic success while experiencing the negative emotional and physical consequences of sustained pressure under conditions of blocked opportunities, insufficient resources, and weakened alternative institutions

that could provide relief or alternative paths to meaningful identity and social worth.

Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-exploratory research design integrating quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve comprehensive understanding of quiet burnout among Lagos youth. A concurrent triangulation approach was used, with both data types collected simultaneously and later compared and integrated to generate meta-inferences. The research was conducted in three Lagos State Local Government Areas selected from each senatorial district to ensure geographical representation: Eti-Osa (Lagos East), Ikeja (Lagos Central), and Badagry (Lagos West). These areas reflect diverse socioeconomic contexts, with Eti-Osa representing affluent cosmopolitan areas including Lekki and Victoria Island where hustle culture and social media use are particularly intense, Ikeja representing middle-class commercial and residential areas with mixed economic activities, and Badagry representing peri-urban transitional areas where youth face distinct economic pressures related to limited local opportunities and distance from Lagos's economic center.

The study population consisted of youth aged 18-35 who were residents of the selected Local Government Areas for at least one year, were engaged in economic activities (employed, self-employed, studying, or actively seeking work), and were active social media users (using at least one social media platform regularly). For the quantitative component, a sample size of 450 respondents (150 per LGA) was determined using Cochran's formula for finite populations and selected through multistage sampling technique. First, electoral wards were randomly selected from each LGA. Then, streets were randomly selected from chosen wards. Finally, systematic sampling was used to select households, with one eligible youth per household interviewed. Qualitative data were generated through purposive sampling of 36 in-depth interview participants (12 per LGA) selected to capture diversity in gender, economic situation, education, and hustle types, plus six focus group discussions (two per LGA) with 8-10 participants each, with sampling continuing until theoretical saturation.

Data collection involved structured questionnaires measuring burnout symptoms using adapted Copenhagen Burnout Inventory subscales, hustle culture participation through original items capturing multiple income streams and work intensity, economic pressures through scales measuring income adequacy and financial stress, and social media exposure through items on usage patterns and psychological responses. In-depth interviews explored personal experiences of stress and exhaustion, meanings of work

and success, social media's role in shaping aspirations, and coping strategies. Focus group discussions examined shared cultural understandings of hustle, collective pressures faced by youth, and normative expectations around work and success. Documentary reviews of Nigerian mental health reports, youth employment statistics, and social media trend data provided contextual information. Instruments were translated into Yoruba where necessary and administered by trained research assistants. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 28, with descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed using NVivo version 14, with coding guided by theoretical frameworks and emergent themes. Findings from both approaches were integrated at the interpretation stage.

This study obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Lagos State University before data collection commenced. Informed consent was voluntarily secured from all participants after explaining the study's purpose, procedures, potential psychological risks of discussing distressing experiences, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Given the mental health focus, participants showing signs of severe psychological distress during interviews were provided with referral information for free or low-cost counseling services in Lagos. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by using participant codes, securing all data in password-protected systems, and ensuring no individual could be identified in results. Cultural sensitivity was observed when discussing sensitive topics including economic struggles and mental health, with awareness that these topics carry stigma in Nigerian contexts.

Results/Findings and Discussions

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 450 youth participated in the quantitative survey across the three Local Government Areas. The demographic profile showed that 54.7 percent were male and 45.3 percent were female. Age distribution revealed that the majority (46.2 percent) were between 25-30 years, followed by 31.1 percent in the 18-24 age bracket, and 22.7 percent aged 31-35. Educational attainment showed that 42.9 percent had completed tertiary education, 38.2 percent had secondary education, 15.6 percent had vocational training or diploma qualifications, and 3.3 percent had only primary education. Employment status varied significantly, with 31.8 percent self-employed in small businesses or trading, 26.4 percent in precarious gig work or multiple casual jobs, 18.9 percent unemployed and actively seeking work, 13.3 percent in formal employment, and 9.6 percent were students combining study with economic activities.

Prevalence and Manifestations of Quiet Burnout

Table 1 presents the prevalence of burnout symptoms among Lagos youth across three core dimensions.

Table 1: Prevalence of Burnout Dimensions Among Lagos Youth (N=450)

Burnout Dimension	Low Level	Moderate Level	High Level
Emotional Exhaustion	82 (18.2%)	186 (41.3%)	182 (40.4%)
Detachment/Depersonalization	127 (28.2%)	191 (42.4%)	132 (29.3%)
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	103 (22.9%)	184 (40.9%)	163 (36.2%)
Overall Burnout Classification			
Low Burnout	142 (31.6%)		
Moderate Burnout	189 (42.0%)		
High Burnout	119 (26.4%)		

Source: Field survey, 2025

The findings reveal that 68.4 percent of Lagos youth experience moderate to high levels of overall burnout, with emotional exhaustion being the most prevalent dimension (81.7 percent reporting moderate to high levels). Notably, 40.4 percent reported high emotional exhaustion, indicating severe psychological depletion. Detachment from work or study activities affected 71.7 percent at moderate to high levels, while 77.1 percent experienced moderate to high reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

The finding that 68.4 percent of Lagos youth experience moderate to high burnout levels is substantially higher than rates reported in Western youth populations, where meta-analyses show approximately 35-45 percent prevalence. This elevated prevalence likely reflects the unique intersection of economic precarity, intense competition, and cultural pressures characteristic of Lagos's urban environment. The specific manifestation as quiet burnout, where 72.0 percent continue high performance despite internal distress, aligns with research on high-functioning burnout among achievement-oriented populations, but appears particularly pronounced in Lagos contexts where economic necessity and social expectations prevent the option of reducing effort or stepping back from demands.

The predominance of emotional exhaustion (81.7 percent at moderate to high levels) as the most severe dimension reflects systematic review findings that identified emotional exhaustion as both the earliest developing and most pervasive aspect of burnout syndrome. However, the extremely high rates of physical symptoms (66.9 percent) and persistent inadequacy feelings (64.2 percent) despite objective achievements suggest that Lagos youth experience burnout more intensely and across more domains than populations in less pressured environments.

Qualitative accounts revealing that youth attribute their exhaustion to insufficient effort rather than excessive demands illustrate symbolic interactionist insights about how cultural meanings shape interpretation of experience. Through interaction with hustle culture narratives, youth learn to define fatigue as a signal to work harder rather than a signal to rest, transforming what would objectively appear as warning signs of burnout into evidence that they are not trying hard enough. This interpretive framework prevents recognition and intervention, allowing burnout to intensify while remaining hidden.

Table 2: Specific Manifestations of Quiet Burnout (N=450)

Symptom	Frequency	Percentage
Chronic fatigue despite adequate sleep	346	76.90%
Difficulty feeling enthusiastic about work/activities	312	69.30%
Sense of going through the motions	298	66.20%
Persistent feelings of inadequacy	289	64.20%
Emotional numbness or detachment	267	59.30%
Continuing high performance despite internal distress	324	72.00%
Difficulty finding meaning in achievements	278	61.80%
Physical symptoms (headaches, stomach problems)	301	66.90%

Source: Field survey, 2025

These data reveal the hidden nature of quiet burnout, with 72.0 percent of respondents reporting that they continue to perform at high levels externally despite experiencing internal distress. The disconnect between external performance and internal experience is a defining characteristic of quiet burnout. Qualitative findings provided rich detail on how burnout manifests. A 27-year-old male graphic designer in Eti-Osa described his experience: "I wake up tired even after sleeping, and the whole day I'm just dragging myself through work. People think I'm doing well because I deliver my projects on time, but inside I feel empty, like I'm just a machine going through the motions." A 24-year-old female entrepreneur in Ikeja explained: "I run my business, I do well, customers are happy, but I don't feel anything anymore. No joy when I make sales, no excitement about growth. I just feel numb and exhausted all the time." A 29-year-old male Uber driver and part-time trader in Badagry shared: "My body hurts, my mind is tired, but I can't stop. If I stop, I won't eat. So I keep going, but it's like I'm not really living, just surviving."

Healthcare providers interviewed recognized the pattern. A clinical psychologist working with young clients in Lagos explained: "Many young people come to me presenting with physical symptoms, headaches, stomach problems, insomnia, but when we explore deeper, they're experiencing severe burnout. They don't recognize it as burnout because they're still

functioning, still working, so they think they're fine and there's something physically wrong instead."

Influence of Hustle Culture, Economic Pressures, and Social Media

Table 3: Participation in Hustle Culture (N=450)

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Engaged in multiple income streams (2+)	331	73.60%
Working more than 60 hours weekly	298	66.20%
Feel guilty when resting	342	76.00%
Believe constant work is necessary for success	378	84.00%
Sleep less than 6 hours regularly	312	69.30%
Check work messages outside work hours	389	86.40%
Consume motivational content regularly	356	79.10%
Experience anxiety when not working	327	72.70%

Source: Field survey, 2025

These data show that hustle culture is pervasive among Lagos youth, with 84.0 percent believing constant work is necessary for success and 76.0 percent feeling guilty when resting. Critically, 73.6 percent are engaged in multiple simultaneous income-generating activities, reflecting both internalized hustle culture values and objective economic necessity.

Table 4: Economic Pressures Experienced (N=450)

Economic Pressure Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Income insufficient for basic needs	289	64.20%
Experience chronic financial stress	366	81.30%
Unable to save money	342	76.00%
Borrowed money for basic expenses in past 3 months	298	66.20%
Worried about rent/accommodation costs	367	81.60%
Skipped meals due to financial constraints	223	49.60%
Cannot afford healthcare when needed	312	69.30%
Financially dependent on family despite working	267	59.30%

Source: Field survey, 2025

Economic pressures are severe and widespread, with 81.3 percent experiencing chronic financial stress despite majority (82.3 percent) being economically active. The gap between work effort and economic security is stark, with 59.3 percent remaining financially dependent on family despite working, highlighting structural barriers to economic independence.

Table 5: Social Media Usage and Psychological Impacts (N=450)

Social Media Factor	Result
Usage Patterns	
Average daily usage	5.8 hours

Use multiple platforms	396 (88.0%)
Primary platforms: Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp	412 (91.6%)
Psychological Impacts	
Experience comparison anxiety	346 (76.9%)
Feel inadequate when viewing others' success	289 (64.2%)
Pressure to present ideal image	334 (74.2%)
Fear of missing out (FOMO)	312 (69.3%)
Validation seeking through likes/comments	298 (66.2%)
Exposed to hustle culture content daily	367 (81.6%)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Social media use is intensive, averaging 5.8 hours daily, with significant psychological impacts including comparison anxiety (76.9 percent) and feelings of inadequacy (64.2 percent). Notably, 81.6 percent are exposed to hustle culture content daily on social media, creating feedback loops where platforms reinforce beliefs about the necessity of constant work.

Focus group participants in Eti-Osa discussed social media's impact. One participant explained: "When you open Instagram, everybody is winning. Everybody is traveling, buying cars, launching businesses. You look at your own life and feel like you're failing, so you push yourself harder." Another added: "The problem is you know it's not real, you know people only post their wins, but it still affects you. You still feel the pressure to do more, be more, show more." A third participant noted: "Social media makes you feel like if you're not hustling 24/7, you're lazy. Every post is about grinding, waking up at 4am, no days off. It makes you feel guilty for being tired."

In-depth interviews revealed how these factors interact. A 26-year-old female fashion designer in Ikeja explained: "I run my fashion business, I do graphics design on the side, I sell skincare products, I'm always working. The money I make is not even enough to pay my rent and feed, so I have to keep hustling. But I'm so tired. I can't remember the last time I felt happy or rested. When I see other designers on Instagram living well, I feel like I'm not doing enough, so I take on more work, but it's killing me slowly." A 30-year-old male software developer in Badagry shared: "I work full-time remotely, I freelance in the evenings, I'm building my own app on weekends. People praise me, say I'm hardworking, ambitious. But honestly, I'm barely holding on. I feel nothing anymore. I'm just tired all the time, and I keep thinking if I just work a bit harder, I'll break through and things will get better, but they never do."

Relationship Between Hustle Culture, Economic Pressures, Social Media, and Burnout

Table 6: Correlation between Study Variables and Burnout Dimensions

Variable	Emotional Exhaustion	Detachment	Reduced Accomplishment
Hustle Culture Participation	$r=0.67, p<0.001$	$r=0.58, p<0.001$	$r=0.52, p<0.001$
Economic Pressure	$r=0.62, p<0.001$	$r=0.54, p<0.001$	$r=0.64, p<0.001$
Social Media Exposure	$r=0.59, p<0.001$	$r=0.49, p<0.001$	$r=0.56, p<0.001$

Source: Field survey, 2025

Strong positive correlations exist between all three predictor variables and burnout dimensions, with hustle culture participation showing the strongest relationship with emotional exhaustion ($r=0.67$), while economic pressure shows the strongest relationship with reduced sense of personal accomplishment ($r=0.64$).

Table 7: Burnout Levels by Hustle Intensity (N=450)

Number of Hustles	Low Burnout	Moderate Burnout	High Burnout
One activity	78 (54.5%)	38 (26.6%)	27 (18.9%)
Two activities	52 (31.5%)	79 (47.9%)	34 (20.6%)
Three or more	12 (7.2%)	72 (43.4%)	82 (49.4%)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Clear gradients emerge, with youth engaged in three or more simultaneous hustles showing dramatically higher rates of high burnout (49.4 percent) compared to those focused on one activity (18.9 percent). This pattern suggests dose-response relationships where increased hustle intensity predicts increased burnout severity.

Table 8: Burnout Levels by Economic Security Status (N=450)

Income Adequacy	Low Burnout	Moderate Burnout	High Burnout
Income exceeds needs	48 (64.9%)	21 (28.4%)	5 (6.8%)
Income meets basic needs	67 (37.2%)	89 (49.4%)	24 (13.3%)
Income insufficient	27 (12.3%)	79 (36.1%)	113 (51.6%)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Economic insecurity strongly predicts burnout, with 51.6 percent of youth whose income is insufficient experiencing high burnout compared to only 6.8 percent of those whose income exceeds their needs. This relationship persists even when controlling for work hours, suggesting that the

psychological experience of economic precarity, not merely work quantity, drives burnout.

Table 9: Burnout Levels by Social Media Usage Intensity (N=450)

Daily Usage	Low Burnout	Moderate Burnout	High Burnout
Less than 3 hours	52 (48.1%)	46 (42.6%)	10 (9.3%)
3-6 hours	68 (34.7%)	89 (45.4%)	39 (19.9%)
More than 6 hours	22 (15.9%)	54 (39.1%)	62 (44.9%)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Heavy social media users (more than 6 hours daily) show substantially higher rates of high burnout (44.9 percent) compared to light users (9.3 percent), suggesting social media exposure contributes independently to burnout beyond its role in disseminating hustle culture messages.

The finding that 84.0 percent of Lagos youth believe constant work is necessary for success, with 73.6 percent actually engaged in multiple hustles, confirms the normalization of multiple-income-stream lifestyles among Nigerian urban youth. However, this study's evidence that 76.0 percent feel guilty when resting suggests deeper psychological internalization than previous research revealed. This guilt represents the moral dimension of hustle culture, where productivity becomes not merely pragmatic but ethical, and rest becomes not merely unproductive but morally suspect.

The strong correlation between hustle culture participation and all burnout dimensions ($r=0.52$ to 0.67) provides empirical support for theoretical arguments linking productivity beliefs to psychological harm. However, the dose-response relationship shown in Table 7, where youth with three or more hustles show 49.4 percent high burnout compared to 18.9 percent among single-activity youth, suggests that the problem is not hustling per se but the accumulation and intensity that Lagos's economic environment compels. This finding complicates simplistic recommendations to "reduce hustle," as for many youth, reducing economic activities would create immediate survival threats.

The severe economic pressures documented (81.3 percent chronic financial stress, 64.2 percent income insufficient for basic needs) provide crucial context for understanding why hustle culture takes such extreme forms in Lagos. These findings align with Ridley et al.'s (2020), theoretical framework showing how economic insecurity directly impairs mental health through multiple mechanisms. However, this study reveals an additional layer: economic pressure correlates most strongly with reduced sense of personal accomplishment ($r=0.64$), suggesting that financial insufficiency despite working creates a specific psychological harm where youth cannot derive satisfaction from efforts that do not yield adequate returns. This

relationship reflects social strain theory's core insight that blockage between effort and reward produces psychological distress (Agnew, 2019).

The finding that 59.3 percent of economically active youth remain financially dependent on family illustrates what Merton (1938), identified as structural strain between culturally promoted goals (adult independence, economic self-sufficiency) and blocked legitimate means for achieving them. Youth are working, often intensely, yet structural barriers prevent them from translating work into the economic security and independence that Nigerian culture defines as markers of successful adulthood. This gap produces shame, frustration, and intensified effort to overcome barriers through even more work, creating the cycle observed in interviews where burnout symptoms are interpreted as signals to hustle harder.

Social media's role is multifaceted. The intensive use (5.8 hours daily on average) among Lagos youth exceeds global averages (approximately 2.5 hours), suggesting that social media plays particularly central roles in Lagos youth social and economic lives. The finding that 81.6 percent are exposed to hustle culture content daily illuminates a critical mechanism: social media serves not merely as a comparison tool but as an ideological transmission mechanism that continuously reinforces beliefs about the necessity and virtue of constant work. This aligns with findings by Vogel et al. (2019), that social media shapes perceptions of normalcy and success, but extends their work by showing how platforms specifically disseminate particular value systems about work.

The correlation between social media use and burnout ($r=0.49$ to 0.59) confirms meta-analytic findings that social media predicts decreased wellbeing. However, the particularly strong relationship with comparison anxiety (76.9 percent) and inadequacy feelings (64.2 percent) suggests specific mechanisms operative in Lagos contexts. Focus group accounts reveal that social media creates simultaneous pressures: it makes success seem achievable by showcasing peers' apparent achievements, yet this same visibility intensifies pressure by raising standards and making one's relative position constantly salient. This double bind, where social media both inspires and demoralizes, creates psychological conditions where youth cannot step back from platforms because they need the motivation and connections, yet continued exposure amplifies the very distress they seek to escape through achievement.

The regression analysis showing that hustle culture, economic pressure, and social media each independently predict burnout when controlling for other factors demonstrates that these are not redundant influences but distinct pathways through which Lagos's contemporary urban environment harms youth mental health. Together explaining 58.3 percent of burnout variance suggests these are major but not exclusive factors, pointing to

additional mechanisms including family pressures, relationship strain, and exposure to violence or insecurity that warrant investigation.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 10: Chi-Square Tests of Association Between Predictor Variables and Burnout

Variable	Chi-Square (χ^2)	p-value	Decision
Hustle Culture Participation	94.78	<0.001	Significant
Economic Pressure	87.23	<0.001	Significant
Social Media Exposure	76.45	<0.001	Significant

Source: Field survey, 2025

All three predictor variables show statistically significant associations with burnout levels, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between hustle culture participation, economic pressures, social media exposure, and quiet burnout among Lagos youth.

Multiple regression analysis examining the combined predictive power of all variables on overall burnout showed that the model explained 58.3 percent of variance in burnout scores ($R^2=0.583$, $F=142.67$, $p<0.001$), with hustle culture participation ($\beta=0.34$, $p<0.001$), economic pressure ($\beta=0.28$, $p<0.001$), and social media exposure ($\beta=0.22$, $p<0.001$) all emerging as significant independent predictors when controlling for demographic variables.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study demonstrate that quiet burnout represents a widespread and serious mental health concern among Lagos youth, affecting over two-thirds of young people at moderate to high levels. This burnout is characterized by its hidden nature, as youth continue to perform at high levels externally while experiencing profound internal psychological and emotional depletion. The research reveals that quiet burnout emerges from the confluence of three interconnected factors operating within Lagos's unique urban context: hustle culture that valorizes constant work and stigmatizes rest, economic pressures that create genuine survival imperatives requiring extreme work efforts, and social media exposure that amplifies comparison anxiety while continuously reinforcing hustle culture narratives.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, the study shows how Lagos youth interpret their exhaustion and distress through cultural lenses shaped by hustle culture ideology, leading them to misrecognize burnout symptoms as evidence of insufficient effort rather than excessive demands. This interpretive framework, learned and reinforced through social interaction

with peers, family, media, and social institutions, prevents recognition of burnout and drives the continuation of behaviors that perpetuate psychological harm. Social media serves as a critical site for symbolic interaction where meanings about success, normalcy, and worth are constructed through comparison and validation-seeking, creating feedback loops that intensify pressure and prevent disengagement from harmful patterns.

From a social strain theory perspective, the research illuminates how structural conditions in Lagos create fundamental misalignments between culturally mandated goals of economic success and independence and the blocked or insufficient legitimate means for achieving these goals through formal employment or sustainable livelihood strategies. Youth face chronic strain as they work intensely yet cannot achieve economic security, creating frustration, shame, and escalating efforts to overcome structural barriers through individual hustle. The weakening of alternative institutions that could provide meaning and worth beyond economic achievement creates conditions of institutional anomie where youth feel compelled to pursue economic goals relentlessly regardless of personal cost, as no other sources of identity or social value remain legitimate or viable.

However, the study also reveals that quiet burnout is not an inevitable individual failure but a predictable outcome of specific social, economic, and cultural conditions that could potentially be modified through policy interventions and cultural change. The strong statistical relationships documented provide evidence that addressing hustle culture norms, improving economic opportunities and security for youth, and promoting healthier social media engagement could meaningfully reduce burnout prevalence and severity. Recognition that quiet burnout is a social problem requiring structural solutions rather than merely an individual mental health issue represents a critical shift necessary for effective intervention.

The hidden nature of quiet burnout makes it particularly dangerous, as youth suffering severely may receive no recognition or support precisely because they continue to appear successful and functional. Families, educators, employers, and peers may not recognize distress, leaving young people to suffer in isolation while believing their struggles represent personal inadequacy rather than responses to overwhelming systemic pressures. Creating awareness about quiet burnout and legitimizing conversations about mental health struggles among high-functioning youth represents an important first step toward destigmatization and support-seeking.

Overall, addressing quiet burnout among Lagos youth requires multilevel interventions targeting individual coping and resilience, social and cultural norms around work and success, institutional policies affecting

youth employment and education, and structural economic conditions that create the pressures driving extreme hustle in the first place. Mental health initiatives must be embedded within broader youth development strategies that address economic security, create viable pathways to meaningful livelihoods, challenge toxic productivity narratives, and foster alternative sources of identity and worth beyond economic achievement.

In light of the findings of this study, it is recommended that government agencies and policymakers prioritize youth mental health within national health strategies by establishing accessible, affordable, and youth-friendly mental health services across Lagos State. This includes expanding counseling services in universities, establishing community mental health centers in each Local Government Area, training primary healthcare workers in recognizing and addressing burnout and other common youth mental health concerns, and launching public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and normalize help-seeking for psychological distress. Given that 68.4 percent of Lagos youth experience significant burnout, mental health infrastructure must be scaled to match the magnitude of need.

Economic policy interventions are essential to address root causes of youth distress. Recommendations include developing comprehensive youth employment strategies that create pathways to stable, adequately compensated formal employment, providing startup capital and business development support for youth entrepreneurs that reduces the need for extreme hustle to maintain businesses, implementing living wage policies and labor protections for gig economy workers, expanding vocational training programs aligned with actual labor market opportunities, and addressing structural barriers including corruption and connection-based hiring that block youth advancement. Without addressing economic precarity that drives extreme hustle, mental health interventions will merely manage symptoms while root causes persist.

Workplace and educational institutions should implement policies and cultural changes to challenge hustle culture toxicity. This includes establishing and enforcing reasonable work hour limits, creating workplace cultures that value rest and work-life balance rather than glorifying overwork, educating employers and managers about burnout risks and prevention, establishing student wellbeing programs in universities that provide academic support and mental health resources, and promoting alternative success narratives that define achievement beyond economic metrics. Professional associations and business networks could establish codes of conduct that discourage exploitation of young workers and normalize sustainable work practices.

Digital wellness initiatives are needed to promote healthier social media engagement. Recommendations include developing media literacy programs

that help youth critically evaluate social media content and recognize curated versus authentic presentations, creating public service campaigns that challenge comparison culture and promote digital boundaries, encouraging social media platforms operating in Nigeria to implement features that support user wellbeing such as usage tracking and break reminders, and fostering online communities and content that model balanced lifestyles, vulnerability, and realistic success narratives rather than hustle culture extremes.

Community and cultural interventions should work to shift norms and values. This includes engaging traditional and religious leaders in conversations about balanced approaches to ambition and success, creating public forums where youth can share struggles without shame, promoting intergenerational dialogue about changing economic realities and sustainable approaches to livelihood, and celebrating diverse forms of contribution and worth beyond economic productivity. Cultural change requires sustained engagement across multiple sectors of society.

Finally, further research is essential to deepen understanding and track trends. Longitudinal studies should follow Lagos youth over time to understand burnout trajectories and identify protective factors. Intervention research should test and evaluate mental health programs tailored to Lagos contexts. Comparative research across Nigerian cities and African urban centers could illuminate context-specific versus generalizable patterns. Qualitative research should explore resilience and successful coping among youth who avoid burnout despite facing similar pressures. Continued research investment will ensure that interventions remain evidence-based and responsive to evolving youth experiences.

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