Effects of Listening to Music on Mental Health of Nigerian Undergraduate Students

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Aim: The impact of music on mental health, specifically among Nigerian undergraduate students, is an area yet to be fully explored. This study therefore sought to investigate the impact of music listening habits on the mental health of Nigerian undergraduate students.

Methodology: This study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. The population of this study comprised of students from three tertiary institutions in Moor Plantation, Ibadan, Nigeria, namely: Federal College of Animal Health and Technology, Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, and Federal College of Agriculture. A random sampling technique was employed to select four hundred (400) undergraduate students who were studying for the National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) respectively.

Results: A majority of the respondents (56.75%) listen to music several times a week, with 78% admitting to listening to music while studying. The genres most listened to were Hip hop (35.15%) and Gospel (27.12%). Most students reported feeling happier (39.87%) and more relaxed (33.26%) after listening to music, indicating a positive influence on mood and emotion. Furthermore, 83% of respondents claimed their mood influenced the type of music they chose to listen to, and 71.50%

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noted that different genres affected their mood distinctly. When asked about their mental health status, most students rated their mental health as good (71.25%) or excellent (26.75%). The majority acknowledged that music significantly influences their mood (87.25%), reduces stress levels (84%), and helps with concentration (85.25%). Up to 95.25% of the students have used music as a coping mechanism during emotional distress. Despite these benefits, a small percentage (2%) observed negative impacts on their mental health linked to their music listening habits. Overall, a significant 86.25% of students believe music positively influences their mental health. Notably, only 2.75% of students have sought professional help for mental health issues, and of these, 72.73% were recommended music as a therapeutic tool. Up to 93% expressed openness to the idea of music therapy.

Conclusion: These findings underscore the potential of music as a tool for enhancing mental health among Nigerian undergraduate students. However, the observed negative impacts on a minority of students highlight the need for further exploration and potential regulation of music-based interventions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Music, a universal language, has been inextricably intertwined with human life since ancient times. Its presence has been documented in every known culture and has the potential to stimulate various responses in individuals, including mood regulation, stress reduction, and enhanced cognitive performance [1]. However, the impact of music on mental health, specifically among Nigerian undergraduate students, is an area yet to be fully explored.

It is well-established that university students, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, face numerous challenges, which might negatively affect their mental health. Issues such as academic pressure, financial instability, and adjustment to new environments are common among undergraduates, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and other mental health disorders [2]. Given the rising concern about mental health among this demographic, it is crucial to identify strategies that can aid in promoting better mental health outcomes.

Music has been studied extensively as a therapeutic intervention in various settings, from healthcare to education. Its effects on mental health have been reported in the literature, with positive findings suggesting that it can reduce anxiety, alleviate depression, and improve overall emotional wellbeing [3,4]. However, most of the research has been conducted in Western contexts, and its applicability to Nigerian undergraduate students has been largely unaddressed.

Moreover, cultural differences may also influence how music is perceived and used as a coping strategy. In the Nigerian context, music plays a significant role in various social functions and is a common part of daily life. Music genres like Afrobeats, Highlife, and traditional folk music may present unique therapeutic possibilities for Nigerian undergraduate students that are not covered in the existing literature, underscoring the need for culturally sensitive studies [5].

The effect of music on mental health has been a topic of interest to many scholars around the world. Research indicates that music has the potential to influence an individual's mood, stress level, and overall mental health [4]. However, much of the existing research is concentrated in Western populations, and there is a relative scarcity of studies focusing on the impact of music on the mental health of individuals in non-Western cultures, including Africa. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by examining the effects of listening to music on the mental health of Nigerian undergraduate students.

In Nigeria, university students often face multiple challenges, such as academic stress, social issues, and financial hardship, which can all significantly impact their mental health [6]. Due to the ubiquity of music in our daily lives, it is essential to understand how such an easily accessible tool could serve as a potential coping strategy for these students.

Prior studies have suggested a potential link between listening to music and reduced levels of

stress, anxiety, and depression [7]. However, these studies have rarely extended their analyses to include undergraduate populations in Africa, especially Nigeria. This study will thus investigate whether the previously established benefits of music listening extend to Nigerian undergraduate students and provide critical insights into the potential therapeutic implications of music in this specific cultural context.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. This design allows for the collection of data at a specific point in time [8]. The design is appropriate for gathering information regarding the effects of listening to music on mental health of Nigerian undergraduate students. In this study, the researcher examined the opinions of undergraduate students. The population of this study comprised of students three tertiary institutions in Moor Plantation, Ibadan, Nigeria, namely: Federal College of Animal Health and Technology, Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, and Federal College of Agriculture. A random sampling technique was employed to select four hundred (400) undergraduate students who were studying for the National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) respectively.

The instrument (questionnaire) was subjected to content and face validity checks by educational and psychological experts to ensure its suitability and relevance to the study's objectives. To establish reliability, a test-retest reliability method was used. The questionnaire was administered twice within a two-week interval to a group of 30 students not part of the main study. A high correlation coefficient (r = 0.85) demonstrated the instrument's reliability. Data was collected over a period of four weeks. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and their informed consent was obtained. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher. Data collected were coded and entered into SPSS for Windows Version 26.0 for analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) were calculated for each variable in the study.

3. RESULTS

The results of this study provide an overview of the respondent's demographics, music listening habits, and perceptions of music's impact on mood, emotion, mental health, and professional assistance. This table provides an overview of the respondent's demographics. The majority of the respondents were between 18-30 years old, slightly more were male (51%), and the highest number of respondents were in the academic level of ND 2 (32%) (Table 1). Most respondents listen to music often (56.75%) and typically for less than one hour per day (48.5%). Most prefer to listen alone (64.75%) and while studying (78%). The majority of respondents have no preference when it comes to seeking out Nigerian music or music from other cultures (38%). The most popular genre of music was Hip hop (35.15%) (Table 2). When asked about the effects of music on their mood and emotion, most respondents reported that music makes them feel happier (39.87%) and more relaxed (33.26%). Most respondents' mood influences the kind of music they choose to listen to (83%) and listening to certain genres of music affects their mood more than others (71.5%). Only a third noticed negative effects on their mood or emotions after listening to certain types of music (33.25%) (Table 3). The majority of respondents rated their overall mental health as good (71.25%) and feel stressed often (64.75%). However, most respondents do not feel anxious/depressed often (55.75% responded "not so much", and 24.75% "not at all"). A substantial number believe that music positively influences their mental health (86.25%), affects their mood (87.25% responded "very much" or "much"), and helps them concentrate or focus better (85.25%). Most respondents have used music as a coping mechanism during times of emotional distress (95.25%) and think the government and educational institutions should promote music as a tool for mental health among students (78.5%) (Table 4). Few respondents have sought professional help for mental health issues (2.75%). Among those who did, most were recommended the use of music as a therapeutic tool (72.73%). The majority of respondents would be open to the idea of music therapy if it were suggested to them (93%).

Table 1. Demographic information of respondents

Demographic Information	Frequency (n = 400)	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)		
Under 18	73	18.25
18 – 24	125	31.25
25 – 30	167	41.75
Above 30	35	8.75
Gender		
Male	204	51.00
Female	196	49.00
What is your current academic level?		
ND 1	105	26.25
ND 2	128	32.00
HND 1	89	22.25
HND 2	78	19.5

Legend: ND = National Diploma, HND = Higher National Diploma

Table 2. Music listening habits of respondents

Variable	Frequency (n = 400)	Percentage (%)
How often do you listen to music?		
Very Often (daily)	65	16.25
Often (several times a week)	227	56.75
Sometimes (once a week)	76	19.00
Occasionally	23	5.75
Rarely	9	2.25
Never	00	0.00
***What genre(s) of music do you frequently listen to? (Select all that apply to you) (n = 697*)**		
Hip hop	245	35.15
Rock	15	2.15
Gospel	189	27.12
Raggae	24	3.44
Jazz	22	3.16
Classical	31	4.45
Blues	18	2.58
Highlife	69	9.90
Afrobeat	52	7.46
No specification	32	4.59
How many hours do you spend listening to music on a typical day?		
Less than one hour	194	48.50
1 – 3 hours	146	36.50
4 – 5 hours	53	13.25
More than 5 hours	7	1.75
Do you listen to music more when you are alone or with others?		
Alone	259	64.75
With people	141	35.25
Do you listen to music while studying?		
Yes	312	78.00
No	88	22.00
Do you actively seek out Nigerian music or music from other cultures?		
Primarily Nigerian music	71	17.75
A mix of both	109	27.25
Primarily music from other cultures	68	17.00
No preference	152	38.00

* = multiple responses

Table 3. Effects of music on mood and emotion of respondents

Variable	Frequency (n = 400)	Percentage (%)
How does listening to music generally make you feel? (Select all that apply to you) (n = 938)		
Happier	374	39.87
More relaxed	312	33.26
More focused	89	9.49
More energized	106	11.30
No noticeable change	57	6.08
Does your mood influence the kind of music you choose to listen to per time?		
Yes	332	83.00
No	68	17.00
Does listening to certain genres of music affect your mood more than others?		
Yes	286	71.50
No	114	28.50
Have you noticed any negative effects on your mood or emotions after listening to certain types of music?		
Yes	133	33.25
No	267	66.75

= multiple responses

Table 4. Effects of music on mental health of respondents

Variable	Frequency (n = 400)	Percentage (%)
How would you rate your overall mental health?		
Excellent	107	26.75
Good	285	71.25
Fair	8	2.00
Poor	00	0.00
How stressed do you feel in your daily life?		
Very much	71	17.75
Much	259	64.75
Not so Much	70	17.50
Not at all	00	0.00
How often do you feel anxious/depressed?		
Very much	36	9.00
Much	42	10.50
Not so Much	223	55.75
Not at all	99	24.75
How much do you feel that listening to music affects your mood?		
Very much	111	27.75
Much	238	59.50
Not so Much	38	9.50
Not at all	13	3.25
Do you feel that listening to music has an effect on your stress levels?		
Yes	336	84.00
No	24	6.00
Not sure	40	10.00
If yes, what kind of effect?		
Positive	336	100.00
Negative	00	0.00
Do you feel a difference in your mental state when you listen to different genres of music?		
Yes	329	82.25
No	23	5.75
Not sure	48	12.00

Variable	Frequency (n = 400)	Percentage (%)
Have you ever used music as a coping mechanism during times of emotional distress?		
Yes	381	95.25
No	19	4.75
Do you believe that music positively influences your mental health overall?		
Yes	345	86.25
No	12	3.00
Not sure	43	10.75
Have you noticed any negative impacts on your mental health that could be linked to your music listening habits?		
Yes	8	2.00
No	366	91.50
Not sure	26	6.50
Have you noticed any changes in your mental health when you listen to music regularly?		
Significant improvement	208	52.00
Slight improvement	128	32.00
No noticeable change	62	15.50
Slight decline	2	0.50
Significant decline	00	0.00
Does listening to music help you concentrate or focus better?		
Yes	341	85.25
No	59	14.75
Do you think the government and educational institutions should promote music as a tool for mental health among students?		
Yes	314	78.50
No	29	7.25
I don't think so	57	14.25

Table 5. Professional assistance and guidance

Variable	Frequency (n = 400)	Percentage (%)
Have you ever sought professional help for mental health issues?		
Yes	11	2.75
No	389	97.25
If you have sought professional help, did the professional recommend the use of music as a therapeutic tool?		
Yes	8	72.73
No	3	27.27
Would you be open to the idea of music therapy if it were suggested to you?		
Yes	372	93.00
No	28	7.00

4. DISCUSSION

The present study explored the effects of listening to music on mental health among Nigerian undergraduate students. The sample consisted of 400 participants. The age distribution indicates that the majority of the respondents are traditional undergraduate students aged between 18 and 30 [9]. This distribution indicates a majority of the sample falls into the typical undergraduate age range, providing an accurate representation of the student population [10]. These age groups typically characterize the period of emerging adulthood, a phase of life when individuals experience significant life transitions and stressors that can impact mental health [11]. The effects of music listening in this context, therefore, are of particular importance.

The similar number of males and females in this study (51% male, 49% female) suggests that the findings can be interpreted with less gender bias, further promoting the relevance of the outcomes to a broader student population. Such a close ratio provides an opportunity for balanced insights from both genders and ensures the findings are not skewed towards one gender [12]. The participants were also well-represented across different academic levels, including ND 1

(26.25%), ND 2 (32.00%), HND 1 (22.25%), and HND 2 (19.5%). The spread across academic levels, from ND 1 to HND 2, also offers insights into the potential influence of academic pressure on music listening habits and the corresponding impacts on mental health. This distribution allowed for a more thorough investigation of how academic pressure might influence mental health and the potential role music might play in mitigating or exacerbating this pressure. The result suggests a good representation across different academic levels, from ND 1 to HND 2, which strengthens the generalizability of the findings to the overall undergraduate population [13].

The importance of examining music's impact on mental health in the university population, particularly in Nigeria, can't be overstated. Nigerian university students often face various stressors, including academic stress, financial difficulties, and social adjustment issues [14]. Therefore, coping mechanisms, including music listening, could be crucial for mental health [13].

Previous research indicates that music has a powerful impact on mental health, including improvements in mood, reductions in stress, and promotion of relaxation [4]. The current study extends this body of research by focusing on a specific population, Nigerian undergraduate students, whose mental health outcomes are crucial considering their educational stressors.

Based on the collected demographic data, the age distribution shows that the majority of the students are in their late teens to early adulthood. This period is often marked by substantial emotional, cognitive, and social changes [11], making these individuals particularly susceptible to mental health issues. The nearly balanced gender distribution ensures that any gender-specific influences on the relationship between music and mental health are adequately represented.

The different academic levels included in the study reflect a diverse student population. There may be varying stress levels and coping mechanisms across these academic levels due to the different challenges that each level presents. For instance, recent research indicates that students' stress levels can vary significantly depending on their year of study, with higher stress levels often reported in later years [15].

This study explored the impact of music listening habits on the mental health of Nigerian undergraduate students. A clear majority of respondents reported listening to music very often or often (73% combined), indicating that music is an integral part of their daily lives. This corroborates the findings of Krause et al. [16], who posited that music is a ubiquitous part of human experience and can significantly influence psychological states. This result is also in line with previous studies which have reported that listening to music is a prevalent activity among young people and is perceived as a significant aspect of their lives [1,17].

Concerning duration, most participants (approximately 85%) spent less than three hours listening to music per day, with a minuscule percentage (1.75%) listening to music for more than five hours daily. This is a significant finding as it resonates with the contention that excessive engagement with music may contribute to addictive behaviours and can be harmful to mental health [18].

A plurality of respondents (35.15%) favoured the hip-hop genre, followed by Gospel (27.12%) and highlife (9.90%). This may reflect the influence of cultural and contemporary trends on the musical preferences of Nigerian undergraduate students. Hip hop, with its roots in African and African American culture, often contains lyrical content relating to social issues, identity, and personal experience [19]. The popularity of hip hop among Nigerian students may be associated with the global appeal and expressive lyrics of this genre, which often tackle contemporary societal issues [20]. Similarly, gospel music is deeply rooted in religious and spiritual beliefs, which might provide comfort, hope, and a sense of community to listeners [21]. The prominence of gospel music, on the other hand, could be connected to Nigeria's deep religious roots [22]. Highlife, a genre indigenous to West Africa, reflects students' appreciation for traditional music, which can foster cultural identity [23]. The implication of these findings is that further research is required to understand how different genres of music influence mental health among this population. Previous research has suggested that certain types of music can evoke and regulate specific emotions [24], which may further relate to mental health outcomes.

A significant 78% of students reported listening to music while studying. This reflects a trend among many young people who use music as a

study aid [25]. It can be inferred that music plays an essential role in students' study habits, possibly aiding concentration or making the studying process more enjoyable [26]. Research has shown that music can affect cognitive performance, but its influence is highly dependent on the nature of the task and the type of music [25]. The beneficial or detrimental effects of this practice on academic performance may vary depending on the type of task, the complexity of the music, and the individual's personality [27]. While this study did not directly investigate these factors, it would be interesting to explore in further research how these variables interact with mental health.

Nearly two-thirds (64.75%) of the participants reported listening to music more when alone. This implies that music might serve as a form of individual therapy for students, providing a source of comfort, solace, or distraction from stressors [3]. Previous researches suggest that people often use music for emotional regulation when alone [28,29,30]. This solitary engagement with music may support self-reflection, emotional exploration, and mood regulation, which may have implications for mental health.

Interestingly, when asked about the cultural origins of the music they prefer, the largest group of students (38%) expressed no preference. This could indicate the globalizing influence of music, as well as the importance of cultural context in shaping music preferences [30]. This could also suggest a level of openness to cultural diversity, which may also contribute positively to mental wellbeing [31]. This finding could signify the globalizing influence of music and its ability to transcend cultural barriers, promoting understanding and empathy towards different cultures, which can contribute to better mental health [32].

The results of the present study offer significant insights into the effects of music on the mental health of Nigerian undergraduate students. It has been widely documented in previous research that music can affect emotions and mood states [3,4,24]. Consistent with these findings, a large proportion of participants in this study reported feeling happier (39.87%) and more relaxed (33.26%) when they listen to music. These results suggest a considerable impact of music on mental health by positively influencing mood states. This indicates that music can serve as a potent psychological tool for enhancing positive

emotions and reducing stress among undergraduates [4].

Such findings resonate with Koelsch [33]'s assertion that music has the potential to evoke strong emotional responses, thus influencing an individual's mood. It further aligns with the study by Särkämö et al. [34] that demonstrated the mood-enhancing effects of music, particularly in alleviating depression and anxiety.

The study also showed that music plays a pivotal role in focus and energy levels, albeit to a lesser extent, with 9.49% and 11.3% of students respectively stating they feel more focused and energized when listening to music. Such results are in line with recent studies that indicate a link between music and improved cognitive performance [35].

The data further revealed that the vast majority of students (83%) allow their mood to influence their music choice, implying that students use music as a tool for emotional regulation. This resonates with earlier findings showing that people often choose to listen to music that mirrors their current emotional state [34]. It also suggests a sophisticated level of emotional intelligence in the students, where they consciously or subconsciously leverage the emotional impact of music to align with or modify their mood states. This resonates with Randall and Rickard [36]'s study, which highlighted how people often select music that mirrors their current emotional state, suggesting a strong interaction between mood and music preference. This potentially paves the way for music to be utilized as a tool for self-regulation, given that listeners can strategically select music to either maintain or alter their current emotional states [29].

In addition, about 71.5% of the participants acknowledged that certain music genres affect their mood more than others, reaffirming the premise that music's influence on emotions can be genre-specific [37]. This finding also corroborates previous research suggesting that different music genres can elicit a variety of emotional responses [17,38]. This outcome necessitates further exploration into how different genres of music distinctly impact mental health.

Interestingly, 33.25% of participants reported experiencing negative mood or emotional changes after listening to particular types of music. This resonates with the work of Garrido *et*

al. (2016), who found that some individuals might experience short-term negative moods when listening to sad or aggressive music. This result hints at the potential downside of music on mental health, a concept that has received less attention in academic discourse but was indicated in recent studies [39]. This underscores that the impact of music on emotion isn't universally positive and may be contingent on numerous factors including personal preferences, emotional state, and the context of music consumption [17].

Further research may be required to delve deeper into this subject matter, particularly exploring what specific genres tend to generate these negative impacts and why. Such investigations may also seek to understand the individual differences among listeners that could moderate the relationship between music and mood.

The present study revealed some significant findings about the impact of music on the psychological well-being of the subjects. Overall, a high percentage of respondents (98%) reported good to excellent mental health, and this group was also largely involved in music listening, suggesting that the habit of engaging with music could be beneficial to mental health. The effects of music on mental health are well-documented. A recent meta-analysis has indicated that music can have a positive impact on mental health, including stress and anxiety reduction [3]. All participants who indicated that music affects their stress levels reported it as a positive influence, suggesting that music can serve as a natural stress-reliever for students. This aligns with previous studies that have identified music as a modality for stress reduction [4].

A considerable portion of the participants (87.25%) claimed to feel very much to much stressed in their daily life, which corresponds with the high stress levels often associated with academic pressures [40]. These findings are consistent with research emphasizing the high levels of stress among university students due to various academic and social pressures [41].

It's noteworthy that 84% of the respondents affirmed that music had an effect on their stress levels, and all those who confirmed this felt the impact was positive. This is in line with studies illustrating that music listening can be an effective stress management tool [4]. This also aligns with research highlighting that music genre

can influence mood and emotional state (Van den Tol & Edwards, 2013). This finding is also consistent with a study conducted by Lonsdale and North [17], which reported that different types of music genres affect emotions and moods differently.

A vast majority of the students (95.25%) reported using music as a coping mechanism during times of emotional distress. This is consistent with recent research suggesting that music listening can be a cost-effective and easily accessible coping strategy for managing stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions [4].

A significant proportion of students also believed that music positively influences their mental health (86.25%). Conversely, a small percentage (2%) noticed any negative impacts linked to their music listening habits, while most (91.50%) did not notice any adverse effects. This overwhelmingly positive response indicates the therapeutic role of music, substantiating previous findings [42]. These results suggest that for the majority of participants, music appears to have a benign or beneficial influence on mental health, corroborating findings of previous research [43].

In terms of the effect of music listening on their mental state, 82.25% reported feeling a difference when they listen to different genres of music. It has been documented that different music genres have different effects on listeners' emotions and physiological responses [44]. For example, classical music has been found to induce relaxation, while heavy metal could potentially induce anxiety in some individuals. This is in line with previous studies, which found that background music could enhance cognitive performance and focus [26,45].

Regarding the therapeutic effects of music, 52% of the participants experienced a significant improvement in their mental health when they listen to music regularly, and 32% observed a slight improvement. These findings corroborate existing literature suggesting that regular music listening can have substantial therapeutic benefits, improving mood, reducing stress, and combating anxiety [3].

The influence of music on cognitive performance was also reported, with 85.25% of students indicating that music helps them concentrate or focus better. This echoes previous research suggesting that background music can enhance cognitive performance [26].

When asked whether the government and educational institutions should promote music as a mental health tool, the majority of respondents (78.5%) responded affirmatively. This reflects the growing recognition of the potential of music as a non-pharmacological intervention to improve mental health and well-being among students [32]. This underlines the potential of music as a cost-effective and accessible means to foster mental health and wellbeing in educational settings [46,47].

The results indicate that a considerable majority of participants, 97.25%, had not sought professional help for mental health issues. This statistic points to a possible underutilization of mental health services amongst Nigerian undergraduates, which is consistent with previous studies that have found a low rate of mental health help-seeking behaviours in African countries, including Nigeria [48,49]. This could be due to various barriers such as stigma, lack of mental health literacy, lack of awareness or access to services, and the normalization of stress in academic settings and limited access to mental health services [50].

In terms of the role of music as a therapeutic tool, it is significant that a considerable majority of the small subset of students who had sought professional help reported that their mental health professional had recommended music therapy. This is consistent with recent research findings that highlight the therapeutic benefits of music [3]. For instance, studies have indicated that music can serve as an effective coping strategy, fostering emotional well-being and helping to manage stress. This suggests that healthcare professionals in Nigeria recognize and are beginning to employ the benefits of music therapy for improving mental health. This aligns with growing global recognition of the therapeutic power of music and its effects on mental health [51]. Music therapy has been found to reduce anxiety and depression symptoms, and enhance emotional well-being [52].

It's also worthy of note that among students who had not sought professional help, there was an overwhelming openness to the idea of music therapy, with 93% indicating they would be amenable to this form of therapy. This high acceptance of music therapy corroborates previous studies asserting the popularity and cultural acceptability of music therapy in various societies, including Nigeria [53]. This suggests that students perceive music therapy as a potentially accessible and non-stigmatizing approach to mental health management [54]. Given the low levels of formal mental health service utilization and the high potential receptivity to music therapy, there is an opportunity for interventions that incorporate this form of therapy to improve the mental health outcomes of Nigerian undergraduates.

The fact that only a small fraction of the participants had ever sought professional help for mental health issues speaks to the general stigma attached to mental health in many parts of the world, including Nigeria [55]. This is particularly problematic in academic settings where students are faced with numerous stressors that could impact their mental well-being [50]. Further research is needed to explore the barriers to mental health service utilization in this population and find ways to increase awareness and access to these crucial resources.

The use of music as a therapeutic tool for those who sought professional help is consistent with the growing body of research that suggests music has several mental health benefits. Studies indicate that music can reduce anxiety, depression, and stress while improving mood, self-esteem, and quality of life [3,47]. In a therapeutic setting, music allows for emotional expression, relaxation, and distraction from distressing thoughts [56].

Furthermore, the high rate of acceptance (93%) towards music therapy among the participants is encouraging. This willingness could be a result of the prevalent use and appreciation of music in Nigerian culture, and the generally non-invasive and enjoyable nature of music therapy [57]. However, despite this high acceptance, actual implementation and accessibility to music therapy in Nigeria may be limited due to lack of professional training and resources, highlighting an area needing policy and infrastructure development [58].

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDA-TIONS

This study illustrates a strong connection between music and positive mental health outcomes among Nigerian undergraduate students, suggesting that music can serve as a valuable tool in managing stress, anxiety, and promoting overall mental health. It is suggested

that more initiatives should be put in place to promote music as a tool for mental health among students. Therefore, the government and educational institutions could consider integrating music-based interventions into mental health programs and stress management strategies for students. Further research could also be conducted to explore the differential effects of various music genres on mental health, as well as the potential benefits of formal music therapy among this population.

ETHICAL APPROVAL AND CONSENT

The study adhered to ethical standards in educational research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured that participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time without consequences. All information obtained in the study remained confidential, and personal identifiers were not used in data analysis.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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