

**INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON THE MENTAL HEALTH
CONDITIONS ON STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

OCTOBER, 2025.

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**A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was carried out by **PETER EJIMOFOR AZIKIWE**, with Matriculation number **EDU2102550**, of the Department of Health Safety and Environmental Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City.

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DEDICATION

To God almighty for incessant strength, guidance, supervision, and grace throughout this course of study.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Students' mental health has a significant impact on their academic performance and is an essential component of their development. Schools are more than just places to study academic material; they are also places where young people can develop their confidence, make friends, and learn how to communicate. However, a number of elements of the educational setting, such as bullying, pressure to perform well academically, relationships between teachers and students, and availability of mental health resources, can either promote or impede students' wellbeing. We must comprehend how these elements affect students in order to develop strategies that effectively promote their psychological wellbeing. At the University of Benin, for example, many undergraduates struggle with stress, anxiety, and depression. This is often due to pressures from their peers, heavy workloads, and not enough access to counseling services. The university's demanding academic atmosphere, the competitive culture, living conditions in the hostels, and sometimes inadequate mental health services all combine to affect how students feel and function. Clearly, examining the impact of the school environment on mental health is essential if we want students to do well both academically and personally.

The comfort, safety, and health of the school environment, as well as the availability of sufficient resources and trained personnel, all have a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning. According to Abbott (2014), a positive school climate is essential to successful teaching and learning; without it, the entire process is ineffective. According to Kwa (2017), establishing a friendly and encouraging environment is equally as crucial as the lessons being taught. The overall environment is more important than just the buildings, the technology, or the instructors.

Schools are important locations for health interventions, according to the World Health Organization (2010). The health of students, particularly their lungs, can be harmed by things like wood smoke, tobacco smoke, mold, and chemicals. This can cause more absences and interfere with learning and emotional development. A healthy school environment influences students' attitudes and promotes learning, according to Alexander (2013). Beyond the bare necessities, schools should have secure structures, lots of natural light, clean water and air, peaceful surroundings, and safe materials and maintenance procedures. According to Blum (2015), students focus better and are more likely to realize their full potential in relationships, activities, and academics when schools cultivate a positive, respectful environment. These schools have unambiguous rules that encourage kindness and respect, fostering an atmosphere free from negative conduct. Students are less stressed and less likely to take chances when they feel safe, connected, treated fairly, content to be at school, and near others. Reduced risky

behaviour and violence are associated with high connectedness. Instructors observe that students who are invested in their school have higher self-esteem, and that a positive school climate is associated with fewer absences and suspensions. Students who perceive their school as supportive are less likely to engage in drug use, violence, or other problems, according to Hawkins et al. (1999), referenced in Pohnpei (2010). Rather, they develop healthier relationships and more positive self-perceptions.

When students in supportive schools feel valued and like they belong, they perform better. According to Nathaniel (2014), the term "school environment" refers to the social and physical characteristics that influence classroom activities. This covers not only the layout of the room but also the relationships, rules, and management of the area. Everyone at the school is impacted by the broader elements that make up the school environment, such as the community, teachers, leaders, and policies. Class size, discipline, materials, relationships, curriculum, tests, libraries, labs, playgrounds, sanitation, upkeep, and even the appearance of the school are some of the many factors that Eric (2009) listed as influencing learning. Unfortunately, there are significant obstacles facing many Nigerian public secondary schools, particularly those in rural areas. Common issues include crowded classrooms, a lack of seats, filthy or stuffy classrooms, messy surroundings, subpar labs or libraries, and ineffective leadership (Udoh, 1999, cited in Blum, 2015). These problems can impair students' health and academic performance. Students' comfort levels and learning outcomes can be significantly

impacted by the size, lighting, seating, and noise levels of a classroom. Fraser (2002, cited in Nathaniel, 2014) defined the environment as encompassing everything from the physical state of the room to the classroom climate and teaching style.

A good classroom has enough light and fresh air, is not overcrowded, and is well-organized. In addition to ensuring that everyone can hear and participate, teachers should foster a positive environment (James, 2012). Physical elements, such as lighting, temperature, and even flooring type, have an impact on students' comfort and morale, according to Pohnpei (2010). Students may lose motivation if they believe their classroom is worse than others. According to Njoku and Yaya (1997, cited in Kwa, 2017), a classroom with a climate of trust and respect is the best place to learn, whereas one with a climate of distrust and disrespect results in distractions and subpar performance. Miller (2011) expanded this concept to encompass psychological aspects like social context and instructional strategies. Denise (2012) referred to the classroom as a "home away from home" and urged educators to make it both welcoming and practical. The needs of the students should guide every design decision, from wall décor to desk arrangements. While a hostile atmosphere encourages more distractions, a friendly classroom encourages students to feel free to voice their opinions and ask questions.

Another element that can hinder learning is noise. Both indoor and outdoor noise can impair students' reading, motivation, and memory, as well as lower their test scores,

according to studies (Knez & Hygge, 2002; Stansfeld & Matheson, 2013; Shield & Dockrell, 2008; Bradley & Sato, 2018). Students may find it more difficult to learn if there is constant noise because it can increase stress and blood pressure. Students are increasingly experiencing mental health issues like stress, anxiety, and burnout. Despite the existence of certain support services, many students are either unaware of them or are unable to use them. Finding out which aspects of the school environment have an impact on students' mental health and how to improve it is the goal of this study.

Ultimately, how welcoming, healthy, and friendly the school environment is has a direct impact on students' academic performance. However, crucial questions still exist: Are the University of Benin's public secondary schools really appealing and educationally supportive? Are classrooms not overcrowded and have adequate ventilation? Is there an issue with noise and are there enough seats? According to Udoh (1999, cited in Blum, 2015), inadequate facilities, poor lighting, poor ventilation, and poor seating are problems in many schools. The environment becomes unwelcoming, unhealthy, unsafe, and unsuitable for efficient teaching and learning when students are learning in such circumstances.

Statement of the Problem

The extent to which students excel in their academics is largely dependent on the friendliness, healthiness and conduciveness of the school environment in which students

find themselves. However, the questions that keep begging for answers are how attractive, friendly and conducive is the school environment in the University of Benin? Are the classrooms well ventilated? Is the class size relatively small? Are there enough desks for students to sit comfortably and learn? Are students sometimes distracted by noise of vehicles, heavy duty cars and noise from construction sites? Most school environments in tertiary institutions in Nigeria are characterized by over crowdedness, inadequate seats for learners to comfortably sit and learn, dirty classrooms, lack of well-ventilated classrooms, bushy school surroundings, unequipped school libraries, inadequate school laboratories etc. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological system theory (1979), the immediate environment, including schools, significantly impacts an individual's development. However, increasing rates of anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions among students raise concerns about whether the current school environment adequately supports students' mental wellbeing.

This study seeks to explore the extent to which various aspects of the school environment contribute to or alleviate mental health conditions among students of the University of Benin. It aims to identify environmental factors that may act as stressors or protective factors, thereby informing strategies to create more supportive and mentally healthy school settings.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following key questions

- I. What is the influence of sport complex on the mental health condition of students in University of Benin?
- II. What is the influence of lecturer student's relationship on the mental health condition of students in University of Benin?
- III. What is the influence of lecture rooms on the mental health condition of students in the University of Benin?
- IV. What is the influence of hall of residence faculties on the mental health condition of sstudent's in the University of Benin?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of the school environment on mental health conditions among undergraduate students of the University of Benin. Specifically the study aims to:

- I. Investigate the influence of the sports complex on the mental health condition of students at the University of Benin, exploring how physical activity and recreational engagement impact psychological well-being.

- II. Examine the nature of lecturer–student relationships and how these interpersonal dynamics affect students’ academic experiences, emotional resilience, and mental health.
- III. Assess the impact of lecture room environments, including design, comfort, and facilities, on student engagement, stress levels, and academic performance.
- IV. Explore the role of halls of residence and faculty housing arrangements in shaping students’ social interactions, sense of belonging, and mental health outcomes.

Significance of the Study

The study will inform university administration, faculty members, and student bodies about the importance of promoting a positive environment to safeguard students' mental health. Insights from the findings can guide policies and interventions. This study will contribute to better understanding of how the environment affects the mental condition of students. Studying the influence of the school environment on mental conditions is essential for identifying risk factors and protective elements within educational setting. This study will enable educators, policymakers, university administrators, health professionals to designed targeted interventions, promote early detection and prevention of mental health issues and create supportive atmospheres conducive for undergraduate students.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study is restricted to full-time undergraduate students at the University of Benin, Ugbowo campus. This study investigates how various aspects of the University of Benin's academic and social environment influence the mental health of its undergraduate students. The scope encompasses factors such as academic pressure, peer relationships, faculty-students interactions, campus facilities and the availability of support services. Limitations include potential bias in self-reported data and challenges in generalizing findings across different faculties. While the study considers the impact of institutional support services, it may not fully capture the complexities of students' coping mechanisms or external factors such as family background and personal history. Also, the reliance on self supported data may also introduce biases or inaccuracies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

- Conceptual framework
- Concept of mental health and wellbeing
- Causes, types and treatment of mental disorder
- Factors contributing to mental health among tertiary students
- School environment and the mental and emotional health
- Summary of reviewed literature

Conceptual framework

The foundation of the framework for comprehending how the school environment affects tertiary students' mental health is the notion that educational environments have a major impact on students' psychological health. It suggests that different facets of the educational setting, such as the amount of work required for coursework, interpersonal interactions, institutional support, physical amenities, and campus culture, influence mental health outcomes in different ways. While access to counseling services and a welcoming social environment can promote resilience and well-being, intense academic pressure and a competitive environment can cause stress and anxiety. How students handle difficulties is also influenced by elements like peer relationships, bullying, and the

availability of mental health resources. Schools can identify important areas to improve support for tertiary students by acknowledging that the school environment is a complex system that affects mental health.

Concept of mental health and wellbeing

Mental health does not exist on its own. It is an important part of overall health, which can be defined in at least three ways; as the absence of disease, as a condition in which the organism is able to perform all of its functions, or as a state of equilibrium both inside oneself and with one's social and physical surroundings (Sartorius, 2002).. Which of these three definitions is used depends on the level to which the basic health needs are satisfied. These needs include food, shelter, survival, protection, society, social support, and freedom from pain, environmental hazards, unnecessary stress and from any part of exploitation. A person in good mental health is able to establish and sustain loving relationships with others, fulfill social roles that are typically performed in their culture, adapt to change, identify, acknowledge, and express positive behaviours and thoughts, and control emotions like sadness.

A state of well-being influenced by cultural and genetic factors that results in long-lasting pleasure and reward is referred to as mental health (Nor, Shela, Saleh, 2021). Mental health is impacted by a number of stressors, including personal problems, financial

difficulties, genetic issues, and stress at work (Hoyle, Leigh, 2010). According to Pankajakshan, Vijayanthi, and Indu (2018), mental health problems can show up as personality disorders, depression, emotional stress, and suicidal thoughts. Domestic violence and elder abuse have an effect on family mental health as well (Jack, Piachaud, 2007). Reduced labor force participation and more medical visits are two economic effects of poor mental health, particularly for women, older people, and those with poor physical health (Christopher, M., Doran, Irina, Kinchin, 2020).

A person in good mental health has a sense of self-worth, control, and comprehension of how their body and mind work. Similar to mental illness, biological, social, psychological, and environmental factors also have an impact on mental health. The social world surrounds the person at the center of functioning; in the proximal world, this includes friends, family, coworkers, employers, peers, and colleagues; in the distal world, it includes society and culture. Building healthy communities, which can support mental health, depends heavily on interactions between individuals and society. A lack of emotional resilience, low self-esteem and social standing, a sense of helplessness and helplessness, issues related to sexuality or sexual orientation, loneliness, and poor integration are all internal factors that can contribute to mental illness. Poor social conditions (housing, poverty, and unemployment), abuse or discrimination, cultural conflict, stigma, and a lack of autonomy are some examples of external factors that have been identified as contributing to this vulnerability. A person in good mental health will

have a strong sense of self and others; they will be able to and want to build healthy relationships while still feeling at ease in their own company. Culture will have a significant impact on how people think about themselves, and personality and culture will determine whether a person is egocentric or sociocentric. Attempts to alter this self-concept could result in cultural conflict, personal dissonance, and unhappiness. The ability to develop psychologically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually; to initiate, develop, and maintain mutually emotionally satisfying relationships; to be aware of others and empathize with them; and to use psychological distress as a development process and learn from it so that it does not hinder or impair further development are among the capacities that mental health offers. The core senses of mental health are trust, challenge, competency, accomplishment, and humor. According to the Mental Health Foundation (MHF, 2008), a person's mental health is determined by their thoughts and feelings about themselves and their lives, and it influences how they handle and cope with hardship. Mental health is perceived as influencing one's abilities to perform optimally and make the most of the opportunities that are available, and to engage fully with family, workplace, community and peers. There is a close link between physical and mental health, as they affect each other directly and indirectly. It is thus possible to suggest that mental health is a state of equilibrium where the individual is at peace with themselves, is capable of functioning socially and managing both basic and higher-level requirements independently.

According to the World Health Organization (2014), mental health is a crucial component of overall health. According to the WHO constitution, "health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". This definition implies that mental health encompasses more than just the absence of mental diseases or disabilities. Mental wellness refers to a "state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". Several elements, including social, psychological, and biological aspects, influence an individual's mental health at any given time. For example, WHO (2004) discovered that chronic socioeconomic pressures, particularly those related with poverty and low levels of education, are risk factors for poor mental health outcomes in individuals and communities. Other societal variables that contribute to poor mental health include gender discrimination, human rights violations, social marginalization, unhealthy lifestyle choices, and danger and exposure to violence. Furthermore, certain biological, psychological, and personality characteristics predispose some people to mental illness, including mental illnesses (WHO 2018).

Mental health, a complex yet critical part of human well-being, has been broadly defined by numerous institutions and specialists. The World Health Organization defines mental health as a condition of well-being in which people are aware of their potential, resilient to life's usual stresses, productive at work, and able to positively contribute to their

communities (World Health Organization, 2004). This definition emphasizes the individual's ability to perform optimally in social circumstances. Expanding on this viewpoint, the Public Health Agency of Canada underlined the multifaceted character of mental health in 2006, describing it as the ability to experience emotions, thoughts, and behaviours that improve our ability to enjoy life and overcome obstacles. It reflects a positive emotional and spiritual well-being that values cultural diversity, equity, social justice, interconnectedness, and personal dignity (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). Context and cultural sensitivity are emphasized as crucial elements in understanding mental health by this definition. Building upon these foundational perspectives, the World Health Organization provided a more recent and holistic definition of mental health in 2022. This definition recognizes mental health not merely as the absence of mental disorders, but as “a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community” (World Health Organization, 2022). Compared with the 2004 definition, the 2022 version adopts more concise language and explicitly emphasizes the notion of “a state of mental well-being”, thereby further clarifying the conceptual core of mental health. Moreover, it places greater emphasis on overall functioning in learning and work, while relatively downplaying the previous focus on “being productive”

Causes of mental disorder

Psychological disorders have complex and multiple causes, which can include a combination of biological, psychological, and environmental elements. Some of the major factors contributing to the development of these illnesses include. A family history of mental disease can raise an individual's risk of getting a psychiatric problem. Certain genes may predispose individuals to conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depressive disorder. Imbalances in neurotransmitters (chemical messengers in the brain) can lead to conditions like depression and anxiety. Neurotransmitters like serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine play crucial roles in regulating mood and emotions (Claridge 2013). Traumatic experiences, such as physical or emotional abuse, neglect, or a major life event (e.g., loss of a loved one or divorce), can trigger the onset of psychological disorders. Chronic stress can also contribute to the development of these conditions. Socioeconomic status, access to healthcare, exposure to toxins, and cultural factors can all influence an individual's risk of developing a psychological disorder. Childhood experiences, including early attachment patterns and the quality of parenting, can shape an individual's emotional and psychological development, impacting their susceptibility to mental health issues later in life (Leavy 1983).

Types of mental Disorder

Psychological disorders encompass a wide range of conditions, each with its own unique set of symptoms and characteristics. Some common types of psychological disorders include. These disorders involve disturbances in a person's mood or emotional state. Examples include major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, and cyclothymic disorder. Anxiety disorders are characterized by excessive fear, worry, or nervousness. They include conditions such as generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and social anxiety disorder (Salim S, 2014). Psychotic disorders, like schizophrenia, involve a disconnection from reality, with symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions. Personality disorders are characterized by long-standing patterns of behaviour, cognition, and inner experience that deviate from cultural expectations. Examples include borderline personality disorder and narcissistic personality disorder. Conditions like anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder involve abnormal eating habits and distorted body image. Conditions like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) result from exposure to traumatic events and are marked by symptoms such as flashbacks and hyper vigilance. These disorders typically manifest early in life and include conditions like Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Treatment of mental disorder

Treatment for psychological disorders often involves a combination of psychotherapy, medication, lifestyle modifications, and support systems. Here are some common approaches. Talk therapy, including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), and psychoanalytic therapy, can help individuals understand and manage their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. In some cases, medication can be prescribed to alleviate symptoms of certain psychological disorders. Antidepressants, antipsychotics, mood stabilizers, and anti-anxiety medications are examples (Templin JL, 2006). Maintaining a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise, a balanced diet, adequate sleep, and stress management techniques can significantly improve mental health. Support from peers who have experienced similar struggles can be invaluable in the recovery process. Support groups offer a sense of community and understanding. In severe cases where an individual poses a risk to themselves or others, hospitalization may be necessary to provide intensive treatment and ensure safety.

Factors contributing to mental health among tertiary students

Bullying

Bullying is a widespread issue in colleges and universities, happening in classrooms, hallways, common areas, and online. Despite efforts to curb it through anti-bullying policies, it takes a heavy toll, leaving students with low self-esteem, depression,

loneliness, and struggling grades. Bullying involves repeated aggressive behaviour driven by a power imbalance, whether it's physical, emotional, or verbal, and it affects both those targeted and those who bully. Victims often become withdrawn, have fewer friends, and feel less connected to their school, while the behaviour can lead to physical and mental health issues for everyone involved, with lasting damage to their overall wellbeing. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics' 2019 School Crime Supplement, 22% of students aged 12 to 18 said they'd been bullied at school, and 14% of educators and administrators reported dealing with it daily or weekly, making it a frequent challenge in academic settings.

Bullying in schools and universities takes many forms, each leaving a deep mark on those involved. According to reports, about 15% of students face rumors spread about them, 14% endure verbal harassment like taunts, insults, or name-calling, 6% are deliberately excluded from activities, 5% experience physical acts like pushing, tripping, or spitting, 4% face threats, and 2% are forced into tasks or have their belongings damaged. Verbal bullying, though less visible than physical acts, cuts just as deeply. Words like insults or cruel nicknames can linger, shaping how kids see themselves long after the taunts stop. In fact, verbal abuse, including threats and name-calling, makes up 16% of bullying cases reported to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). Then there's cyberbullying, a growing issue fueled by technology. It happens through texts, emails, social media, or online forums, often mirroring the cruelty of in-person bullying but with

unique challenges. Cyberbullying can be anonymous, spread to a wide audience, and involve content that's hard to erase. Many who bully online also do so offline, and this form of harassment can follow victims' home, invading their lives after school hours. The National Council against Bullying (NCAB) describes cyberbullying as deliberate, repeated harm through digital devices, like phones or computers. It's relentless, often hitting victims when they're alone. The impact of bullying is profound and long-lasting. Kids who are bullied often grapple with anxiety, depression, low self-worth, and even substance abuse. Some turn to risky behaviours, girls may self-harm, while boys might act out violently or get into trouble. Research, like studies from deLara (2019), shows bullying can push young people toward delinquency or hostility. Even more alarming, severe bullying raises the risk of suicidal thoughts or attempts, as Kwan et al. (2022) found. For those already struggling with mental health, bullying can make things worse, but it can also spark new issues in kids who were previously okay. Academically, victims often see their grades slip, as Mbah (2020) noted, adding another layer of struggle to their lives. Bullying doesn't just hurt in the moment, it shapes futures in ways that are hard to undo.

The primary goal of the student bullying survey in a hostile classroom environment was to determine and quantify the prevalence of bullying, its effects on students' lives and learning, and the behaviour of students and staff members in the hostile environment that

occurs and recurs on the school campus so that it can be addressed. According to Lindstrom Johnson (2019), learning more about bullying can help individuals, particularly parents and teachers, recognize pupils who require assistance, whether they are bullies or victims. They can avoid negative consequences in both the short and long term by taking action. According to the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2) and several De La Salle University scholars, the PISA 2018 and 2022 findings show that bullying is a big concern among Filipino pupils. The commission stated that the Philippines had the greatest percentage of bullying incidences among member countries in 2018, a trend that persisted in 2022, albeit at a slower rate (EDCOM 2 Communications, 2024). According to the PISA 2019 data, 65% of Filipino students reported experiencing bullying at least a few times a month, with 40% facing frequent bullying once a week or more. In the 2022 assessment, it was noted that one in three students reported being bullied, with 43% of girls and 53% of boys encountering bullying multiple times a month. This rate far exceeds the Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) averages of 20% and 21%, respectively (EDCOM 2 Communications, 2024).

Educational leaders have expressed concerns regarding the high prevalence of bullying, highlighting the need for better reporting mechanisms to capture actual incidents since there is a possibility of underreporting. Discrepancies between the data reported by the Department of Education (DepEd) and international assessments have raised questions

about the accuracy of the statistics. The growing concern for the safety and well-being of students necessitates immediate attention and action from educational authorities to address this pervasive issue. Behaviour (especially in boys), are more common in young people who experience bullying (deLara, 2019). Research has indicated that those who experience severe bullying are also at a higher risk of attempting or completing suicide and that bully victims are particularly prone to suicidal thoughts (Kwan et al., 2022). Bullying can worsen mental health conditions in young people who already have them, as well as cause mental health problems in victims who did not previously have any. Additionally, studies have demonstrated that victims of bullying typically see drops in their academic achievement (Mbah, 2020).

In addition to the possibility of bodily harm from a bully's attack, victims may also suffer from psychosomatic symptoms including headaches, stomach aches, palpitations, and light-headedness, as well as actual symptoms like persistent pain and disturbed sleep. Bullying victims also frequently have increased amounts of cortisol, a hormone linked to stress that can impair normal brain function. Higher cortisol levels, according to some experts, might be the cause of some victimization-related behavioural problems, such as acting out and becoming aggressive toward parents, siblings, or classmates (Dikel, 2019). They typically exhibit high introversion by being more reclusive, anxious, and afraid of unfamiliar settings. They have fewer close friends and are less content with their school lives. They consequently have a higher likelihood of dropping out of school. According

to Abdelaziz and Harraz (2021), girls, in particular, suffer significantly due to being avoided in social situations or given a bad reputation by their peers. Depression, psychosomatic symptoms, and psychiatric referrals are all associated with bullying. Bullying participants demonstrated the highest risk for both suicide ideation and actual suicide. Some young people commit suicide each year as a result of bullying at school. The growing concern for the safety and well-being of students necessitates immediate attention and action from educational authorities to address this pervasive issue. Various forms of bullying, including physical, verbal, and cyberbullying, have been identified as significant issues among students. These bullying incidents are negatively impacting students' mental health, contributing to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, which ultimately affect their academic performance and social development. Factors such as large class sizes and socio-economic challenges further exacerbate the problem in schools.

Financial Burden and Living Standards

There are many things that might affect college students' mental health, such as the stress of adult obligations like employment, money, important relationships, and living with new roommates or housemates (Pedrelli et al., 2015). The rising costs of tuition that are not matched with financial assistance also have contributed to the rise in stress among college students. Research shows that at least 70% of college students experience stress

from their financial state (White, 2020). Additionally, employment status can significantly predict stress levels. For example, students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds who do not need to work to pay for their education tend to have less financial stress than students who work (White, 2020). The number of students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds is increasing as well (Reppond, 2019). In addition to financial instability, many students experience discomfort in their living standards and suffer socially. According to Reppond (2019), 36% of college students are estimated to be in unstable housing, and another 9% of college students have reported being homeless. When a college student faces poverty and unstable housing, the likelihood for poor test scores increases, and their chance of graduating decreases. Students who must work to afford their education and housing also tend to have less time and funds to participate in social activities. This is concerning because when students have anxiety about affording activities that their peers can afford, this can lead to social isolation, affecting their mental health (White, 2020).

Substance Use

Many people who are in college are experiencing new freedoms for the first time, such as living independently and without parents. Because this is a critical time for many young adults, adults ages 18-24 are more likely than other adults to have episodes of heavy drinking (Pedrelli et al., 2015), which has the potential to lead to a substance use disorder or other mental health issues (Mason et al., 2014). Evidence shows that nearly 1 in 5

college students could be classified as having a substance use disorder. According to Pedrelli et al. (2015), 44% students 10 binge drink, and binge drinking is “the number one public health hazard and the primary source of preventable morbidity and mortality for college students in the United States” (p. 3). College students who engage in substance use are also likely to have increased difficulty completing their degrees because they often spend less time studying, have lower GPAs, and miss more class (Welsh et al., 2019). Further implications of substance use during college are unemployment following graduation, and death from comorbid medical or psychiatric issues.

Alcohol.

According to Mason et al. (2014), 60.8 % of full-time college students consider themselves to be current drinkers, 39.1% binge drink, and 13.6% drink heavily. For part-time college students, the respective rates were 52.0%, 35.4%, and 10.5%. The authors found that almost 1 in 5 (18.0%) students enrolled in a college class had met the diagnostic criteria for alcohol abuse or dependency (currently called alcohol use disorder) within the last year. Ponsford et al. (2016) found that recurrent binge drinking could contribute to major depression and generalized anxiety disorder. Although 67% of the students who binge drank often and had a mental health issue recognized that they needed mental health assistance, only 38% of them had received mental health services within the previous year. In addition, rates for binge drinking are highest among college students

who belong to a sorority or fraternity, and members of these organizations tend to experience additional consequences of alcohol use than non-members (Welsh et al., 2019). Males who live in fraternity houses are at an increased risk for heavy drinking and developing alcohol use disorder after college. Other implications for both sorority and fraternity members include driving under the influence, physical injury, memory loss, and unsafe sex (Welsh et al., 2019)

Employment stress

Employment is an often discussed livelihood problem. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, a nationwide poll of urban inhabitants indicated that the unemployment rate was 5.3 percent for the six months from January to June, 0.4 percent lower than the previous year. While employment is a national priority and a problem that is addressed to the best of its ability, according to the Ministry of Education's forecast data, the number of college graduates in 2023 will be around 11.58 million, an increase of 820,000 over last year, resetting the record for the "most difficult employment season in history". The number of university graduates will rise again, which means that there will be a further increase in the number of socially-employed persons, and that the competitive pressure on employment will increase. Facing the current situation of fierce competition for employment, the biggest source of pressure for undergraduates is the employment problem related to their personal future. In particular, college students who are about to graduate have a higher level of employment anxiety. Employment anxiety in pre-graduate

college students is primarily influenced by three factors: employment awareness, employability, and employment preparedness. The greater the levels of the above three, the lower the level of job anxiety, whereas the higher the levels of employment stress and despair, the more serious the employment confusion. If they are in this kind of anxiety and irritability for a long time, it will have a bad effect on their psychological status, and even lead to the occurrence of extreme events. At the same time, employment anxiety will aggravate the fear of employment of college students, which is detrimental to their future life development.

Lack of physical exercise

There is no doubt that physical activity offers numerous benefits for people. Physical activity, for example, can help you gain muscle strength. At the same time, physical activity has helped to improve the negative state of mind. Participating in sports benefits students' mental health and helps alleviate anxiety and despair, allowing them to exhibit less emotional illnesses. The charm, openness, and competition of exercise will bring happiness to college students, because these features can improve students' interpersonal communication skills as well as help them master their emotions and mental frustration, which have a positive effect on college students' mental health. According to the research, while high and low-intensity sports can improve physical and mental health to some extent, moderate intensity sports are best suited. Chinese and foreign research has endorsed that moderate intensity physical sports is a value threshold, and moderate

intensity physical sports has a good effect on improving sports performance and maintaining mental health. But surveys and studies have found that many students do not strictly adhere to the school's extra-curricular exercise regimes, and they are busy with other things in their out-of-school hours, which leads to not getting effective exercise. In 2016, a survey conducted by the Centre for the Social Survey of the Chinese Journal of Youth through the questionnaire network of 2001 surveyed university students showed that a quarter of the surveyed college students exercise less than once a week, and 60.0% of the college students surveyed say that they do not exercise because of laziness. Thus, while physical exercise is beneficial to the mental health of college students, a large proportion of university students occupy the time of exercise because of their laziness or other things, which leads to the inability to improve their mental health.

Family environment

The family is a very important environment for children's growth, and the family environment plays a significant role in students' mental health. Studies show that children who experience more emotional warmth and less negative educational patterns during their growth are more likely to form and develop mediocre thoughts to protect themselves from negative emotions. In recent years, parents have paid greater attention to their children's education, and more and more people are aware that proper education should begin at a young age. However, in order to maintain the family's economic burden, many parents must leave home to work when their children are small, resulting in a dearth of

parental companionship. According to studies, the three experiences of absence, movement, and single-parenthood have a substantial impact on college students' mental health; students who have had these experiences have much inferior mental health than non-single parent students. It can be seen that lack of parental companionship in childhood will have a great impact on college students' mental health. In addition to the lack of parental companionship, parents' negative parenting style also poses a threat to college students' mental health, among which parents' overprotection is more significant than parents' rejection. Parents sometimes reject a child's request, although this behaviour is sometimes beneficial to children's psychological health. However, poor parent-child interactions have a significant impact on college students' psychology, primarily through interference and rejection of parent relationships. Interference-type personal relations refer to parents' excessive involvement in their child's learning and life, which results in hostility and reversal; rejection-type parent-child relations reflect the parents' disagreement with the child's choice, causing the child to be frustrated repeatedly, lose self-confidence, and be easily capitalized. It is clear that the family environment is a key issue to consider when discussing university students' psychological concerns, which mostly involve parental upbringing, accompaniment time, and connections with children. Pandemics and Health Crisis.

Pandemics and Health Crises

The Covid-19 pandemic have affected people all over the world and it did not exclude college students. The pandemic, which forced people to learn online, stay away from others, and isolate themselves, has hurt the minds of a lot of college-aged people. For example, one Canadian survey reported that for people between the ages of 15 and 24, 64% experienced negative mental health effects after the Covid19 social distancing regulations began (Campbell et al., 2022). Conversely, slightly over one-third (35%) of people in the 65 and older age category reported a negative impact on their mental health. The National Union of Students in the United Kingdom said that more than half of U.K. students believed their mental health got worse once the pandemic started. In the Philippines, it was found by Lim et al. (2022) that college students had psychological symptoms linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, 1 out of 4 of respondents had moderate-to-severe anxiety and one out of six had moderate-to-severe depression. The authors further reported that the pandemic may have worsened pre-existing mental health issues and increased the risk for suicide among students. The worldwide distribution of Covid-19 added stress and problems for college students, which may have caused their mental health to get worse (Campbell et al., 2022). These factors include increased uncertainty, loneliness, and financial changes. The new strain of the coronavirus raised public health concerns, which made things feel uncertain. Many students were suddenly cut-off from in-person social supports due to travel and social distancing restrictions, and they had limited access to services which they relied on, such as counselling, career

advising, and financial aid (Campbell et al., 2022). Students missed out on enjoyable college experiences, were laid off from jobs, or had to work increasingly to meet the essential needs of their communities (Halliburton et al., 2021). In addition, the prevalence of food insecurity, which already disproportionately affects college students, increased. Fang et al. (2021) found that food insecurity during the pandemic was nearly three times more likely to predict a negative change in 13 mental health than losing a job. Students were also quickly uprooted from student housing, which potentially forced them into unhealthy living and learning environments. Halliburton et al. (2021) surveyed 1,903 college students affected by the pandemic to explore stressors. Results showed that 40 % of them reported stress because of a lack of routine, “including issues regarding class restructure in the remote learning environment and disruptions in exercise, eating and sleep habits”. Some reported frustrations with the change in routine were the students’ lack of experience learning online, lack of preparation for online learning for professors, and elevated amounts of work to make up from shut-down times. Included in this study were quotes from students stating that it was saddening to miss aspects of their college experience, such as graduation or time with friends? Other stressors included the lack of social contact and financial and work concerns. The authors concluded that during the pandemic, students experienced negative mental health including anxiety, depressive symptoms, and suicidal ideation. Like the Covid-19 pandemic, prior pandemics have been known to contribute to mental health issues for college students. When any

pandemic begins, students are forced to adapt to a health crisis. During the rise of swine flu (H1N1 virus) in 2009, 45% of college students in Guangzhou, China reported feeling worried about themselves or family members contracting the virus, and 10.7% had symptoms of panic, depression, and emotional disturbance because of the crisis (Lim et al., 2022). The world will likely face more pandemics in the future, and students should be prepared for such circumstances.

School environment and the mental and emotional health

School environment refers to the educational approach, cultural context or physical setting in which teaching and learning occurs. The school environment encompasses the cultural setting of the school or classroom. These include conducting classes in relevant classrooms, grouping of desks in specific ways, decorating the wall with learning materials, utilizing audio, visual and digital technology, learning style and physical setting in which teaching and learning takes place (Ibok, in Akpan, 2020). The environment exerts significant influence on students' academic performance. For example, when a school is sited in a noisy area like an airport, industrial area or in the heart of a city where business activities are very high, it disrupts effective teaching/learning. As such, one should not expect students in these areas to do very well academically. Noise in anything interferes with the teaching/learning process (Mudassir et al., 2015). However, the physical structure of the school building and the interactions between teachers and students can also influence students' performance. School climate

can be a positive influence on the health of the learning environment or a significant barrier to learning. The school environment can affect many areas of the people within the school. For example, a positive school climate has been associated with fewer behavioural and emotional problems for students. A positive teacher–student relationship helps regulate students' emotions, improve class participation, cultivate learning abilities, and ultimately promote academic achievement and goals. Teachers are described as listeners in mental health, academic leaders, and supporters of creative thinking—roles that collectively foster student success Dai, Pinyul (2024). It is believed that school environments have considerable influences on the academic performance of students in both internal and external examinations like the. The not so good performance of students in these external examinations may be attributed to some extent to the nature of the school environment, such as the physical facilities, learning environment among others. Salah Eldin Kassab et al. (2024) demonstrates that students' perceptions of their educational environment significantly inform their behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Crucially, behavioural and cognitive engagement directly influenced academic achievement, and were key mediators between the educational environment and GPA outcomes. Ihuoma and Ebere (2022) stated that the environmental difference and the difference in the quality of instruction from one school to another, can as well create differences in the level of knowledge acquisition of the children. This implied therefore, that the learning facilities in the school will expose the children to socio-

economic influence which can affect their academic performance. This was supported by Ojiambo, Owuamalam & Obi (2022) which investigates how various aspects of the school environment influence academic performance among students.

Cunnigham and Cunnigham (2022) defines environment as the circumstances and physical conditions that surround an organism or group of organisms, or the social and cultural conditions that affect an individual or community. The physical environment consists of objects or materials found in the home, classroom, or neighborhood, while the social environment includes elements such as family, friends, and community. Both physical and intangible factors make up the school environment. This encompasses course materials, teachers, students, group dynamics, and teaching methods. A safe and appealing school environment increases students' investment in and pride in their education. Ayodele (2004) emphasized the importance of the learning environment, noting that individuals' educational experiences are influenced not just by the availability of learning opportunities but also by the quality of their living or learning environment. He argued that education is about more than merely acquiring knowledge and that a person's upbringing significantly affects their motivation to learn and grow, as well as their openness to new information and skills. It is widely recognized that environmental and organizational factors significantly impact the quality of learning. According to Addenda (2015), "learning is an intimate transaction between the learner and their environment," underscoring the importance of the setting in this exchange. The

advantages of learning in a conducive environment extend beyond the classroom, encompassing the entire community and country. Elements such as the walls, floors, lighting, and mechanical systems of a school all play an active role in enhancing the learning process for students. The school environment serves as the foundation for various activities within an educational institution. According to Karfe and Azuaga (2019), highlighted that students from broken homes exhibit significantly poor academic achievement based on truancy, diminished concentration and feelings of inferiority irrespective of their intelligent quotient. The International Journal of Scientific and Research Populations (2025) describes school environment as a place for learning where learners acquire knowledge and interacts with learning facilities in order to be socialised and face the challenges in the society. In this study, environment includes all the external factors and conditions in the school that influence the academic achievements of the students. The school environment has the potential to foster positive relationships among individuals of different ages, facilitate changes, promote choices and activities, and initiate various forms of social and emotional learning. Thus, it can be considered a "second teacher." The achievement of a school's goals is significantly influenced by its environmental factors. Variations in students' knowledge acquisition can occur due to different environmental and instructional variables present in various schools. This indicates that children's academic performance may be affected by their access to learning facilities and the socioeconomic factors they experience. The school

environment encompasses not only the building and its surroundings—such as noise, temperature, and lighting—but also any biological, chemical, or physical agents that may impact learning. Consequently, the school environment includes both physical and human resources, creating a comprehensive learning atmosphere formed by their interaction. Teaching and learning occur within what is referred to as the "learning environment," which consists of natural and artificial surroundings. According to Ezike (2018), a "teaching and learning environment" encompasses "the physical and conceptual setting in which teaching and learning are conducted according to intentional, planned procedures." The term "learning environment" pertains to the school's overall setting, the amenities available in the classroom, and the relationship between teachers and students (Adamu, 2015). In university settings, academic performance tends to be much higher when adequate educational resources are accessible to students. The context of any educational initiative is crucial for its success, as most learning occurs when individuals effectively utilize the resources available in their environment. Access to various resources significantly affects people's ability to learn. Shamaky (2015) notes that participating in meaningful activities within one's environment is essential for healthy brain development. This investigation is rooted in the prevailing dissatisfaction with Nigeria's educational system. Numerous external factors have contributed to the challenges these students face in achieving success in the classroom. Several reasons may account for students' low academic performance, including poor study habits, a lack of resource materials, an

unsupportive school climate, insufficient discipline, inadequate facilities, unqualified instructors, and an unsatisfactory learning environment for both students and teachers. It is hypothesized that the type of learning environment in universities plays a role in contributing to students' low levels of achievement. For example, some universities benefit from favourable locations, sufficient infrastructure, well-stocked libraries, qualified administrative personnel, experienced instructors, and adequate laboratory equipment. In contrast, other schools lack these essential resources, leading to issues such as physical discomfort among students, a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate or poorly maintained facilities, and unsuitable building designs, all of which can negatively impact academic performance. Many parents and community members form their first impressions of an educational institution based on the school's outward appearance and the overall condition of its facilities. They may be put off by neglected school grounds, which might include overgrown bushes, sagging roofs, and crumbling walls. Additionally, rubbish on the streets and gardens and obscene graffiti on the buildings can detract from the school's image. The public perception of a school is significantly influenced by its physical environment. The academic success of students is also affected by the location of their schools. Several factors contribute to the significant disparity between rural and urban schools, including the uneven distribution of resources, poor school mapping, inadequate facilities, a shortage of qualified teachers willing to work in isolated areas, lack of proper roads, poor communication, and the casual attitude of some communities

toward education. For instance, the University of Benin, located in an urban area, is less impacted by these issues compared to "Usen Polytechnic", which faces many of these challenges. Rural school districts often do not have enough competent instructors. The absence of desirable social amenities in rural areas discourages many educators from leaving city schools. Urban students benefit from comprehensive tutoring in preparation for public examinations, fostering a sense of competitiveness that may be lacking among their rural counterparts. Research has shown that urban students tend to outperform their rural peers in the classroom, suggesting that students in metropolitan areas enjoy a more conducive learning environment, which positively impacts their academic performance. A school building serves as a physical structure for education, containing classrooms, labs, workshops, faculty lounges, offices, reading rooms, libraries, dormitories, and cafeterias. The connection between school buildings and educational goals is crucial for successful teaching and learning. The school building influences students' comfort, safety, and academic achievement while also providing protection from the elements. The school library is a vital space where students can access a wide variety of resources, including books, magazines, journals, periodicals, audiovisual materials, and computers. It functions as the school's "central laboratory," offering resources for all subjects taught there. According to Okoro (2019), a school library is a well-curated collection of print and non-print resources that have been thoughtfully chosen, explained, and placed at a school for the benefit of instructors and students in order to support the achievement of

learning objectives. An effective school library should cater to students' needs and support the institution's mission and educational objectives. Learning should not be confined to textbooks and direct instruction; instead, the library encourages alternative methods of learning. A school's location does not always need to be in an urban area. However, due to a lack of resources and personnel, rural schools often perform worse than urban schools. Research, as cited in Shamaki (2015), indicates that various factors in the educational environment—rural versus urban—affect students' performance. Additionally, Shamaki asserts that a student's academic behaviour is influenced not only by familial motivational factors, scholastic aptitude, and academic values but also by the social pressure from peers within the school environment. Similarly, Abenga (2015) suggests that improvements in environmental conditions may lead to higher intelligence scores, while poor conditions contribute to lower scores. For the purposes of this discussion, "academic achievement" will refer to students' test and exam results. The term "resources" encompasses a person's ability to access and utilize various materials. Classroom furnishings include tables, chairs, blackboards, wastebaskets, instructional aids, computers, generators, calculators, and more. According to Oradein and Babalola (2020) a significant combined influence of teachers' professionalism and school facilities influences students' cognitive performance. Adequate school facilities support quality instruction, learning, and efficient administration. Ultimately, the cognitive development of students is greatly influenced by their learning environment. The school environment

plays a crucial role in a child's academic achievement. This issue is particularly evident in schools that lack proper resources, making it essential to examine how the school environment influences students' academic success. The term "school environment" encompasses the physical and social conditions within a school that can affect students' attitudes, behaviours, and overall well-being. This includes factors such as the presence of adult role models, the level of adult supervision, and the overall safety of the school. Research indicates that a positive school environment can enhance psychosocial functioning and reduce the likelihood of bullying. After home, school is where children spend most of their time, making it unsurprising that school experiences significantly impact children's mental health. Schools can positively influence children and help alleviate some adverse effects from other social factors, such as difficult home environments. However, for some students, schools may also be a source of stress, worry, and unhappiness, particularly if they experience bullying. Ogunleye and Salami (2018) pointed out that bullying, teacher neglect and academic overload were prescient to mental health challenges in schools. Many factors, such as poverty, war, and trauma, are outside the scope of individual interventions that can be implemented by Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists (CAP). However, it is essential for those working with children facing mental health challenges, even if they are not specifically trained in the field, to consider the impact of these factors on the child's mental state.

Summary of related literature

The reviewed literature employs Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) to examine how the school environment influences the mental health of Nigerian tertiary students, emphasizing its role as a microsystem interacting with family, peers, and societal factors. Mental health, defined as a state of well-being enabling individuals to cope with stress, realize their abilities, and contribute to their community (WHO, 2004, 2022), is shaped by biological, psychological, and social factors, with vulnerabilities like low self-esteem, poverty, and discrimination increasing risks of disorders such as depression, anxiety, psychosis, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, and PTSD, which arise from complex genetic, biochemical, and environmental interactions. Among tertiary students, bullying, employment stress, lack of physical exercise, and adverse family environments (e.g., parental absence, negative parenting) significantly contribute to poor mental health, leading to issues like anxiety, depression, and reduced academic performance. The school environment, encompassing physical facilities, teacher-student relationships, and social climate, acts as a "second teacher," with positive settings fostering resilience and engagement, while negative factors like noise, inadequate resources, and bullying exacerbate mental health challenges (Dai & Pinyul, 2024; Ogunleye & Salami, 2018). This framework highlights the need for supportive institutional policies to enhance mental well-being among Nigerian tertiary students.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology used to examine the influence of school environment on the mental health conditions of students of the University of Benin. The methodology is discussed under the following subheadings:

- Design of the Study
- Population of the Study
- Sample Size and Sampling Techniques
- Research Instrument
- Validity of Instrument
- Reliability of Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Design of the Study

The descriptive survey design was chosen as the research methodology for this investigation. This approach is suitable since it makes it possible to gather information from a sizable population in order to describe and examine current circumstances,

viewpoints, or actions without changing any of the factors. In this regard, the study aims to characterize the ways in which different aspects of the educational setting impact the mental health states of University of Benin students. Studies in the social and behavioural sciences, where the researcher seeks to comprehend things as they naturally occur, are especially well-suited for the descriptive survey design. The design enables a comprehensive and accurate depiction of the current state of affairs because the research focuses on students' experiences and perceptions of their school environment and how it affects their mental health.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises all undergraduate students enrolled at the University of Benin (UNIBEN) during the 2024/2025 academic session. This includes students across all faculties and departments within the university, representing a diverse mix of academic disciplines, year levels, and demographic backgrounds. Focusing on undergraduate students is critical because this group is at a pivotal stage in their academic and personal development, where environmental factors at the university can significantly impact their psychological well-being. Additionally, undergraduate students are more likely to face unique stressors such as academic workload, adjustment to campus life, and social challenges, making them a relevant population for this study.

Table 1. Faculty and student population

S/N	FACULTY	POPULATION OF THE STUDY
1	Agricultural Science	1,685
2	Arts	6,262
3	Basic Medical Science	3,437
4	Dentistry	111
5	Education	7,416
6	Engineering	5,481
7	Environmental Science	1,015
8	Law	1,078
9	Life Science	5,132

10	Management Science	3,506
11	Medicine	685
12	Pharmacy	1,107
13	Physical Science	3,283
14	Social Science	3,411
15	Veterinary Medicine	70
	TOTAL	43,679

Source Academic Planning Unit, Student Affairs Division, University of Benin, Ugbowo campus.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study will be 2000 respondents. This was selected using the simple random sampling technique to select 5 major faculties out of the 15 faculties in the University of Benin. These faculties include Faculty of education, faculty of

engineering, faculty of arts, faculty of basic medical sciences and the faculty of agricultural sciences. This method will give each respondent an equal chance of being included in the study.

Table 2: sampling and sampling technique

FACULTY	NO. OF STUDENTS	NO. OF SAMPLED STUDENTS 200
Education	7,416	40
Engineering	5,481	40
Arts	6,262	40
Basic medical science	3,437	40
Agricultural science	1,685	40
TOTAL	9,600	200

Research Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection in this study will be a structured questionnaire designed to gather quantitative data on the influence of the school environment on the mental health conditions of students at the University of Benin. The questionnaire consists of 2 sections aligned with the study variables:

Section A: Demographic Information This section will collect basic information about the respondents, including: Age, Gender, Faculty/Department, Year of study.

Section B; School Environment Variables and mental health conditions This section will assess various aspects of the school environment that may impact mental health, such as: physical environment (classroom conditions, availability of study resources, campus facilities), social environment (relationships with peers and lecturers, social support), academic environment (workload, pressure, and expectations), safety and security on campus, availability and accessibility of mental health support services. These will be measured using Likert-scale items (e.g., Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) adapted from validated scales on school climate and environment to ensure reliability and validity.

Validity of the Research Instrument

The validity of an instrument is the consistency with which an instrument measures what it sets to measure. The instrument was reviewed and validated by the project supervisor and two academic experts in the Department of Health Safety and Environmental

Education, Faculty of Education. These experts examined the items to ensure they accurately measured the aims and objectives of the study. The final version of the questionnaire was developed based on their corrections and suggestions.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the research instrument is the consistency with which an instrument measures what it sets to measure. The test retest reliability method will be employed to determine the reliability of the instrument. The questionnaire will be re-administered to the pilot group after a two-week interval to assess the stability of responses over time. Consistent results across both administrations would indicate good test-retest reliability.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher will personally distribute the questionnaires to the respondents personally. This approach is intended to help maintain a high response rate. The completed questionnaires by the respondents will be retrieved personally by the researcher immediately they are complete.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation will be used to analyse the responses and summarise the demographic information. The results will be presented in tables for better clarity and easy understanding.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of findings based on the data collected from respondents in relation to the research questions guiding the study.

Data was collected using a structured likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using frequencies, percentage, mean and standard deviation. A mean benchmark of 2.5 was used to make decisions. Any item with a mean of 2.5 or above was accepted, while those below 2.5 were rejected.

Demographic data

Table 4.1: The distribution of the demographic data of respondents based on gender

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Male	93	46.5
Female	107	53.5

TOTAL	200	100
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Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 1 indicates that 46.5% of respondents are male while the remaining 53.5% are female. This implied that the majority of the respondents sampled for the study were female.

Table 4.2: The distribution of the demographic data of respondents based on Age

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
16-20	78	39.0
21-25	86	43.0
26-30	24	12.0
30 and above	12	6.0
TOTAL	200	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 4.2 indicates that respondents between 16 and 20 years had the highest representation at 39 percent, followed by those aged 21 to 25 years who constituted 43 percent. The 26 to 30 age group accounted for 12 percent, while those aged 30 years and above formed the smallest group at 6 percent.

Table 4.3: The distribution of the demographic data of respondents based on Faculty

FACULTY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Agricultural science	40	20
Engineering	40	20
Education	40	20
Arts	40	20
Medical sciences	40	20

TOTAL	200	20
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Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 4 above indicates that all five departments contributed equally with 40 respondents each, providing balanced departmental representation

Table 4.4: The distribution of the demographic data of respondents based on Level and residence

LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
100	57	28.5
200	49	24.5
300	41	20.5
400	31	15.5
500	22	11
TOTAL	200	100
RESIDENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
On campus	117	58.5
Off campus	83	41.4

TOTAL	200	100
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Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 3 above indicates that 28.5% of the respondents are in 100 level, 24.5% are in 200 level, 20.5% are in 300 level, 15.5% are in 400 level while the remaining 11% are in 500 level. This indicates that majority of respondents in the study are in 100 level. In terms of residence, respondents who live on campus had the higher representation of 58.5 percent while those who live off campus had the lower representation of 41.4 percent.

Presentation and Interpretation of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the influence of the sport complex on the mental health condition of students in university of Benin?

Table 4.5: Response of Respondents influence of the sport complex

S/ N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mea n	Std. Dev	Decision
1.	Using the sport complex helps me reduce stress related to academic	37 (18.5%)	106 (53%)	36 (18%)	21 (10.5	2.96	0.81	Accepted

	work									
										%)
2.	Regular physical activities improve my mood and well-being	33 (16.5%)	113 (56.5%)	31 (15.5%)	23 (11.5%)	2.94	0.85	Accepted		
3.	Access to the sport complex helps manage anxiety and depression	42 (21.%)	97 (48.5%)	37 (18..5%)	24 (12%)	2.95	0.83	Accepted		
4.	Lack of access to the sport complex negatively affects my mental health	47 (23.5%)	75 (37.5%)	49 (24.5%)	29 (14.5%)	2.70	0.90	Accepted		
5.	The sport complex offers a supportive environment for mental health	58 (29%)	85 (42.5%)	36 (18%)	21 (10.5%)	2.90	0.87	Accepted		

Cluster Mean = 2.89

Benchmark: ≥ 2.5 = Accepted < 2.5 = Rejected

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 4.4 presents responses on the influence of the sport complex on the mental health condition of students in university of Benin. The mean values range between 2.70 and 2.96, with the highest score observed for stress related to academic work (2.96) and the lowest for effect on mental health (2.70). All mean values are above the acceptable mark, showing a favourable perception of students on the positive influence of sport complex on mental health. Thus, the sport complex helps reduce stress related to academic work, improve mood and wellbeing, manage anxiety and depression, has a positive influence and provides a supportive environment on mental health. The cluster mean of 2.89 indicates that access to sporting facilities significantly helps students manage academic stress and anxiety. It can be inferred that accessibility to the sport complex in University of Benin have a positive effect on students' mental health.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of lecturer student's relationship on the mental health condition of students in university of Benin?

Table 4.6: Response of Respondents influence of lecturer student's relationship

S/ N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mea n	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	Positive relationships with lecturers improve my motivation to study	43 (21.5%)	101 (50.5%)	37 (18.5%)	19 (9.5%)	3.01	0.82	Accepted
2.	Good communication with lecturers enhances my overall mental well-being	38 (19%)	109 (54.5%)	32 (16%)	21 (10.5%)	3.02	0.79	Accepted
3.	Lecturer support plays an important role in helping me cope with academic pressure	41 (20.5%)	97 (48.5%)	36 (18%)	26 (13%)	2.95	0.85	Accepted
4.	Students finds it difficult to communicate with lecturers	34 (17%)	102 (51%)	41 (20.5%)	23 (11.5%)	2.86	0.88	Accepted
5.	Students prefer confiding in their peers	39	99	40	11	2.89	0.84	Accepted

than with lecturers (19.5%) (49.5%) (20%) (11%)

Cluster Mean = 2.95

Criterion Mean: ≥ 2.5 = Accepted < 2.5 = Rejected

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 4.5 presents responses on the influence of the lecturer students on the mental health condition of students in university of Benin. The mean values range between 2.86 and 3.02, with the highest score observed communication with lecturers enhances mental wellbeing (3.02) and the lowest for difficulty of students to communicate with lecturers (2.70). The consistently high means across all items indicate that most students perceive lecturer student relationships as beneficial for academic motivation and mental stability. The cluster mean of 2.95 confirms that lecturer student relationships are largely viewed as positive though some communication barriers exist. It can be inferred that good relationship between students and lecturers contributes positively to students’ mental wellbeing.

Research Question 3: What is the influence of lecture rooms on the mental health condition of students in the University of Benin?

Table 4.7: Response of Respondents influence of lecture rooms

S/ N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mea n	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	Overcrowded lecture rooms increase my feelings of stress and discomfort	41 (20.5 %)	106 (53%)	34 (17 %)	19 (9.5%)	2.96	0.80	Accepted
2.	Noise levels in lecture rooms impact my ability to understand lectures effectively	36 (18%)	112 (56%)	31(1 5.5%)	21 (10.5 %)	2.95	0.83	Accepted
3.	The size of the lecture room does not influence how comfortable I feel participating in class.	29 (14.5 %)	79 (39.5 %)	59 (29.5 %)	33 (16.5 %)	2.52	0.91	Rejected
4.	Comfortable seating in lecture rooms helps reduce physical fatigue and improves my engagement	32 (16%)	101(50.5 %)	45 (22.5 %)	22 (11%)	2.83	0.85	Accepted
5.	Proper ventilation and temperature control in lecture rooms help me stay	35 (17.5	105 (52.5	38 (19	22	2.86	0.84	Accepted

0%) 0%) 0%) (11%)

Benchmark: ≥ 2.5 = Accepted < 2.5 = Rejected

Table 4.6 presents responses on the influence of lecture rooms on the mental health condition of students in the University of Benin. The mean values range between 2.52 and 2.96. The highest mean score (2.96) was recorded for stress and discomfort, while the lowest (2.52) related to size of lecture room. The consistently high means across all items indicate that most students perceive lecturer student relationships as beneficial for academic motivation and mental stability. Items with higher means indicate that respondents feel that overcrowded rooms increase feeling of stress and discomfort, whereas areas with lower means reveal that lecture rooms do not necessarily influence participation in class. The cluster mean of 2.82 reveals that most students associate well maintained lecture rooms with better mental focus and engagement. However, room size was not considered a strong determinant.

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Table 4.8: Response of Respondents influence of hall of residence faculties

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1.	Living in the hall of residence positively impacts my social life and mental well-being	39 (19.5%)	107 (53.5%)	33 (16.5%)	21 (10.5%)	2.92	0.83	Accepted
2.	The environment in the hall of residence helps reduce my feelings of loneliness and stress.	37 (18.5%)	104 (52%)	39 (19.5%)	20 (10%)	2.89	0.84	Accepted
3.	The halls of residence create distractions that sometimes hinder my academic focus.	43 (21.5%)	93 (46.5%)	40 (20%)	24 (12%)	2.86	0.86	Accepted
4.	Poor maintenance of the hall of residence creates stress and anxiety for me.	46 (23%)	82 (41%)	43 (21.5%)	29 (14%)	2.73	0.90	Accepted

5.	Support from fellow students in the hall contributes to better coping with academic pressure	31 (15.5%)	111 (55.5%)	35 (17.5%)	23 (11.5%)	2.86	0.85	Accepted
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Cluster Mean = 2.85

Benchmark Mean: ≥ 2.5 = Accepted < 2.5 = Rejected

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 4.7 presents responses on the influence of hall of residence faculties on the mental health condition of students in university of Benin. The mean values range between 2.73 and 2.92. The highest mean score (2.92) observed impacts on social life and mental wellbeing, while the lowest (2.73) related maintenance of hall of residence. All mean values are above the acceptable mark, showing a favourable perception of hall of residence on mental wellbeing. The cluster mean of 2.85 indicates an accepted relationship between accommodation quality and mental wellbeing. It can be inferred that the hall of residence positively influences the mental health and social adjustments of students.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that the school environment significantly influences the mental health conditions of students in the University of Benin. The data analysis

across the four research questions demonstrated that students' mental health is positively affected by factors such as access to sports facilities, supportive lecturer–student relationships, conducive lecture rooms, and well-maintained halls of residence.

The findings from Research Question One indicated that a majority of students agreed that the sports complex helps reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. The mean scores show that physical activity and recreational opportunities have a calming and rejuvenating effect on students' minds. This aligns with the work of Biddle and Asare (2011), who emphasized that regular physical activity improves mood and reduces anxiety. Similarly, Peluso and Andrade (2005) found that exercise promotes endorphin release, enhancing overall mental well-being. At the University of Benin, the sports complex serves as a psychosocial coping mechanism that enhances emotional balance and helps students manage academic stress.

The findings from Research Question Two revealed that positive lecturer–student relationships enhance students' motivation, communication, and emotional stability. The mean values indicated that supportive lecturers play a significant role in students' mental health. This supports the findings of Hagenauer and Volet (2014), who argued that students are more engaged and emotionally stable when they experience warmth and empathy from lecturers. Likewise, Tinto (2017) noted that strong lecturer–student relationships foster a sense of belonging and reduce academic anxiety. However, some

responses in this study also highlighted communication barriers, consistent with Klemen (2017), who observed that large class sizes can hinder interaction.

The findings of Research Question Three showed that classroom conditions, including overcrowding, noise, ventilation, and comfort, directly affect students' focus and well-being. The mean scores reveal that while most students found classroom comfort beneficial, the size of the lecture room did not strongly influence their comfort level, leading to the rejection of one item. This finding aligns with Evans and Wachs (2010), who stated that environmental stressors like noise and crowding can lead to fatigue and cognitive overload. Similarly, Barrett et al. (2015) found that classroom design significantly contributes to students' academic performance and overall mental wellness.

The findings of Research Question Four revealed that the hall of residence significantly influences students' social well-being and emotional adjustment. Mean values indicated that students viewed their hostels as both supportive and, at times, stressful environments. These findings agree with Bradley (2017), who found that accommodation quality and peer support networks can either promote or undermine mental health. Similarly, Diener and Ryan (2009) noted that supportive living environments enhance happiness and resilience. At the University of Benin, halls of residence foster companionship and social bonding, but poor maintenance and distractions were also highlighted as stress factors.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

This study investigates the influence of the school environment on the mental health conditions of students in the University of Benin. The focus is to determine how the sports complex, lecturer–student relationships, lecture room conditions, and halls of residence affect students’ mental and emotional well-being.

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study and the population consisted of undergraduates students in the University of Benin during the 2024/2025 academic session. With a total population of about forty three thousand, six hundred and seventy nine (43,679) undergraduate students. A total of two hundred (200) students were selected to represent the population of the study. The instrument was validated by experts from the Department of Health, Safety, and Environmental Education, University of Benin. The test retest reliability method was used to establish the reliability of the questionnaire. The results reveal that the school environment plays a significant role in shaping students’ psychological balance and academic engagement. In particular, access to sports facilities, strong lecturer–student interactions, and comfortable learning and living spaces were found to contribute to improved mental stability, lower stress levels,

and greater academic motivation among students. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

Findings

Based on the data collected and analyzed, the findings of the study revealed that:

1. Students who regularly use the sports complex report lower levels of academic stress and emotional fatigue. This finding agrees with Biddle and Asare (2011), who assert that regular physical activity helps to improve mental resilience and reduce anxiety. Similarly, Peluso and Andrade (2005) explained that exercise releases endorphins that promote happiness and well-being.
2. Positive lecturer–student interaction was shown to have a direct effect on students’ mental health. Students who perceive their lecturers as approachable and empathetic demonstrate higher motivation and lower stress levels. This aligns with Hagenauer and Volet (2014), who emphasize that emotionally supportive lecturers enhance student engagement and well-being, and with Tinto (2017), who highlights the importance of a sense of belonging for academic persistence.
3. The condition of lecture rooms, especially ventilation, seating, and noise, influences students’ focus and emotional comfort. This supports the work of Barrett et al. (2015), who discovered that classroom design significantly affects students’ learning performance and psychological state. Similarly, Evans and

Wachs (2010) found that overcrowded environments increase stress and cognitive overload.

4. Hostel life was found to shape students' emotional and social well-being. While many students enjoyed peer support and social bonding, poor maintenance and distractions created stress for others. This reflects the findings of Bradley (2017), who stated that well-managed accommodation improves student adjustment, and Diener and Ryan (2009), who noted that positive social environments promote resilience and happiness.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the school environment has a significant influence on the mental health conditions of students in the University of Benin. A positive and well-maintained environment enhances emotional stability, motivation, and academic performance, while a poor environment contributes to stress and anxiety.

Therefore, for students to thrive academically and psychologically, the university must foster supportive lecturer–student relationships, maintain functional and clean facilities, and promote recreational and mental health activities across campus.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- **Enhancement of Sports Facilities:** The University should improve the sports complex and encourage students to engage in recreational activities to relieve stress and improve their mental health.
- **Strengthening Lecturer–Student Interaction:** Lecturers should adopt student-centered teaching approaches and mentorship programs to improve academy.
- **Improvement of Lecture Room Conditions:** Lecture halls should be regularly maintained, ventilated, and equipped with comfortable seating. This will create a learning atmosphere that promotes concentration and emotional comfort.
- **Upgrading and Maintaining Halls of Residence:** The University should provide proper maintenance of hostels and develop programs that support social bonding, as a healthy residential environment fosters mental stability.
- **Promoting Mental Health Awareness:** Mental health seminars, counselling sessions, and peer support groups should be organized regularly to help students identify and manage stress early.

Suggestions for further Studies

1. Effects of other environmental factors such as financial stress, peer influence, and campus security on students' mental health of the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

2. Comparative studies between students living on campus and those living off campus among Undergraduates of the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SAFETY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON THE MENTAL HEALTH
CONDITIONS OF UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

I am a final-year student in the Department of Health, Safety, and Environmental Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin. This questionnaire is part of a research study titled “Influence of School Environment on the Mental Health Conditions of University of Benin”.

This study aims to understand how school environments influence the mental health conditions of students. Your honest answers will help provide useful information that may support better health for students. All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used only for academic purposes.

Researcher,

Azikiwe Peter

Instructions: Please answer all questions honestly. There are no right or wrong answers.

Tick (✓) the option that best shows how much you agree with each statement.

Section A: Demographic Information

Please tick or write your answer where appropriate.

1. Age: range 16 – 20yrs () 21 – 25yrs () 26 – 30yrs () 30yrs and above ()

2. Gender:

Male ()

Female ()

3. Faculty:

Agricultural science ()

Engineering ()

Education ()

Arts ()

Medical sciences ()

4. Year of Study:

1st Year ()

2nd Year ()

3rd Year ()

4th Year ()

5th Year ()

5. Do you live on campus or off campus?

On campus ()

Off campus ()

Section B: School Environment and mental health conditions

Research question 1: What is the influence of the sport complex on the mental health condition of students in university of Benin?

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Using the sport complex helps me reduce stress related to academic work.				
2.	Regular physical activity at the sport complex improves my mood and overall mental well-being				
3.	Access to the sport complex provides a healthy outlet to manage anxiety and feelings of depression				

4.	Lack of access to the sport complex negatively affects my mental health and stress levels.				
5.	The sport complex offers a supportive environment that positively influences my mental health				

Research Question 2: What is the influence of lecturer student's relationship on the mental health conditions of students in university of Benin?

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Positive relationships with lecturers improve my motivation to study				
2.	Good communication with lecturers enhances my overall mental				

	well-being				
3.	Lecturer support plays an important role in helping me cope with academic pressure				
4.	Students finds it difficult to communicate with lecturers				
5.	Students prefer confiding in their peers than with lecturers				

Research Question 3: What is the influence of lecture rooms on the mental health conditions of students in university of Benin?

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Overcrowded lecture rooms increase my feelings of stress and discomfort				
2.	Noise levels in lecture rooms impact my ability to understand lectures effectively				
3.	The size of the lecture room does not influence how comfortable I feel participating in class.				
4.	Comfortable seating in lecture rooms helps reduce physical fatigue and improves my engagement				
5.	Proper ventilation and temperature control in lecture rooms help me stay focused.				

Research question 4: What is the influence of hall of residence faculties on the mental health conditions of students in university of Benin?

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Living in the hall of residence positively impacts my social life and mental well-being				
2.	The environment in the hall of residence helps reduce my feelings of loneliness and stress.				
3.	The halls of residence create distractions that sometimes hinder my academic focus.				
4.	Poor maintenance of the hall of residence creates stress and anxiety for me				
5.	Support from fellow students in the hall contributes to better coping with academic pressure				