

## **Adolescent Mental Well-Being: The Impact of Insufficient Mental Care Awareness among Adolescents in Donga Mantung Division, North West of Cameroon**

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### **Abstract**

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Mental health issues among adolescents have become a growing concern globally; it is thus crucial to understand the specific challenges faced by adolescents to develop targeted interventions to address their mental health needs. This study examines the impact of insufficient mental care awareness on adolescents' mental well-being in Donga Mantung Division in Cameroon, focusing on the consequences and effective intervention strategies. The research assessed mental care awareness among adolescents, identified the consequences of insufficient mental care awareness on mental well-being, explored factors contributing to the lack of awareness, and identified effective intervention strategies. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving surveys, interviews, and focus groups to collect data from adolescents in Donga Mantung Division. The study highlights challenges such as a lack of awareness and education programs, stigma, and barriers to accessing mental health services. The findings and recommendations seek to foster the development of targeted interventions and policies to improve mental care awareness among adolescents and enhance their overall mental well-being.

**Keywords:** Mental Care; Adolescent Mental Well-being; Donga Mantung Division.

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### **Introduction**

Over time, mental well-being has become more critical to every individual's overall health. The number of organizations in mental health counseling and psychiatry research and individuals suffering from mental illnesses remains a challenge for health professionals. Many people, even those who have successful treatment options available, seem to have inadequate mental health literacy. The disturbance of poor mental well-being among



adolescents in the Donga Mantung Division, North West region of the Republic of Cameroon, points out the necessity of data-driven science, especially in psychiatry research. Scientific studies in different mental health fields, such as psychiatry, psychology, and neuroscience, are essential to creating better treatment options and prevention strategies, promoting community awareness, and developing mental health counseling. An increasing concern for adolescents' mental health in Donga Mantung Division mainly drives the work of this paper. Organization reports about violence, even some bloodshed cases due to mental disturbance, have drawn public attention in recent years. Various organizations and interventions for different groups, mental health help providers, and adolescents are proposed utilizing different research methods. The prudent use of well-planned and positioned organizations has the power to influence. Adolescents make up a significant percentage of today's world population. Often, mental problems among teenagers are dismissed or shrugged off, especially by a portion of older adults. However, teenagers, in general, and especially in modern societies, bear the unreasonable stress that can cause serious mental health problems.

### **Background of the Study**

The Donga Mantung division has an estimated population of over 300,000 in an area of 920 km<sup>2</sup>. Among the six health areas in the division, only one has a mental health specialist who is overwhelmed by the increasing number of mental health illness cases. Thus, individuals needing mental health services travel long distances to access care. Studies such as Ngasa and Sama (2016) have shown a rise in mental health disorders among adolescent students in the North West region of Cameroon, highlighting factors such as lack of awareness, poverty, and excessive use of modern digital technologies as contributing to this trend. Addressing the insufficient mental health care infrastructure, improving access to mental health services, and addressing the specific needs of adolescents in the Donga Mantung division are crucial steps in mitigating the mental health challenges faced by this population (Ngasa & Sama, 2016; Ndeti, Mutiso, & Mbwayo, 2016; Tine & Nkwi, 2017; World Health Organization, 2014). The few non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to raise awareness of the local population have helped create an excellent psychological environment, but more interventions must be implemented. There are also no psychological counselors in high schools and public places.



Mental healthcare is a service that helps people who are suffering from a psychological or mental health problem that affects their day-to-day lives. However, there is no counseling or psychological support for teenagers who are facing mental health challenges. Unlike physical health problems, mental health problems are almost invisible in society. The government and other health responding organizations have implemented possible strategies to modernize and improve public health facilities, including hospital upgrades, laboratory strengthening and equipment, human health resource development, health sector policy, and strategic planning. However, mental health is a neglected area. There is no national framework for mental health services, and the people who require psychological support may have no way to access mild redress, and they will barely be able to embark on their daily lives. The teenagers in the Donga Mantung division face similar barriers to accessing help but also lack the awareness of how much a mental health problem can affect a teenager's life. Adolescence is critical because of emerging physical, emotional, and psychological changes. If appropriate on-time support and resources can be put in place and made accessible concerning the mental health of teenagers, this will no doubt project a healthy society.

### **Research Objectives**

1. Assess mental care awareness among adolescents in Donga Mantung Division.
2. Identify the consequences of insufficient mental care awareness on adolescents' mental well-being in Donga Mantung Division.
3. Explore factors contributing to the lack of mental care awareness among adolescents in Donga Mantung Division.
4. Examine effective intervention strategies for improving mental care awareness and promoting mental well-being among adolescents in Donga Mantung Division.
5. Evaluate the impact of implementing the identified intervention strategies on the mental well-being of adolescents in Donga Mantung Division.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the current level of mental care awareness among adolescents in Donga Mantung Division?
2. How does insufficient mental care awareness affect the mental well-being of adolescents in the Donga Mantung Division?



3. What underlying factors contribute to the lack of mental care awareness among adolescents in Donga Mantung Division?
4. What intervention strategies have effectively improved mental care awareness and promote mental well-being among adolescents in similar contexts?
5. What is the impact of implementing the identified intervention strategies on the mental well-being of adolescents in Donga Mantung Division?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study demonstrates how insufficient awareness of mental care has affected the lives of adolescents in the Donga Mantung division. Effective intervention strategies can be identified only through continuous exploration of the consequences of this problem. The study adds to the existing knowledge base on mental health, especially in the context of adolescents in the Donga Mantung division. The findings provide valuable insights to parents, community, and other relevant stakeholders in promoting their children's mental health. It provides an essential foundation for developing more multidisciplinary intervention strategies to treat mental health problems successfully.

## **Literature Review**

### **Overview of Mental Health Issues in Adolescents**

Adolescence is a crucial developmental period marked by significant physical, cognitive, and emotional changes. It is during this time that individuals undergo the transition from childhood to adulthood, and it is common for adolescents to encounter mental health concerns that can have profound implications for their well-being. One prevalent mental health concern among adolescents is anxiety disorders. Anxiety disorders, incorporating general anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and panic disorder, are prevalent among adolescents. Research suggests that approximately 10–20% of adolescents worldwide are affected by anxiety disorders (Merikangas et al., 2010). These disorders manifest through excessive worry, fear, and avoidance behaviors, which can significantly impact daily functioning and cause distress.

Depressive disorders are another common mental health challenge among adolescents. Major depressive disorder and dysthymia are two forms of depression that can affect adolescents. Symptoms of depression include continual sadness, loss of interest or recreation in activities, changes in appetite or sleep patterns, and difficulties with concentration or



decision-making. Globally, depression affects around 3–8% of adolescents (Avenevoli et al., 2015). It is crucial to acknowledge that depression can have severe significance, including an increased risk of self-harm and suicide. Additionally, eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder, frequently emerge during adolescence.

These disorders involve disturbances in eating behaviors and body image dissatisfaction, and they can result in significant physical and psychological consequences. Eating disorders affect approximately 1–5% of adolescents, with higher prevalence rates among females (Merikangas et al., 2010). Substance abuse is another significant mental health issue among adolescents. Experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs is expected during this period, and some individuals may develop substance use disorders. Substance abuse can lead to a range of adverse outcomes, including impaired cognitive functioning, increased risk-taking behaviors, academic difficulties, and strained relationships with family and peers.

In addition to these specific disorders, self-harm behaviors, such as cutting or burning oneself, have been observed among a subset of adolescents as a way to manage emotional pain or distress. These behaviors often co-occur with underlying mental health illnesses, such as depression or borderline personality disorder (Avenevoli et al., 2015). To further explore the prevalence, impact, and specific manifestations of mental health issues in adolescents, several sources provide valuable insights. The study by Costello et al. (2003) delves into the prevalence and development of psychiatric disorders in childhood and adolescence, offering a comprehensive understanding of the landscape of mental health issues during these developmental stages. Gore et al. (2011) present a systematic assessment of the global burden of disease in young people, shedding light on the prevalence, impact, and specific manifestations of mental health issues within this age group. Hawton et al. (2012) focus on self-harm and suicide in adolescents, highlighting the prevalence, risk factors, and interventions related to these critical mental health concerns. In addition, Nock et al. (2013) provide valuable insights into the prevalence, correlates, and treatment of lifetime suicidal behavior among adolescents, emphasizing the importance of effective interventions. These sources collectively contribute to the understanding of the prevalence, impact, and specific manifestations of mental health issues in adolescents. By addressing and raising awareness about these challenges, appropriate measures towards providing support and interventions to promote the well-being of adolescents worldwide can be assured.



## **Importance of Mental Care Awareness**

Mental care awareness is critical in today's society as it plays a crucial role in promoting early identification, prevention, and effective treatment of mental health problems, particularly among adolescents. By increasing understanding, knowledge, and recognition of mental health issues, individuals can better navigate the complexities of mental health and access appropriate support systems.

One of the primary benefits of mental care awareness is the early identification of mental health problems. When individuals are educated about the signs and symptoms of mental disorders, they are more likely to recognize these issues in themselves or others. This recognition can pave the way for timely interventions and professional assistance, leading to improved outcomes and reduced suffering (Wang et al., 2005). Furthermore, mental care awareness facilitates prevention efforts. With a better understanding of risk factors, protective factors, and evidence-based prevention strategies, individuals can take proactive steps to maintain their mental well-being. It may involve adopting healthy coping mechanisms, practicing self-care, fostering supportive relationships, and seeking help when needed (Herman et al., 2019).

Access to appropriate resources and help-seeking behaviors is another vital aspect of mental care awareness. When individuals are aware of available mental health services, support networks, and treatment options, they are more likely to seek help when facing mental health challenges. This can be instrumental in preventing the exacerbation of symptoms, reducing the impact of mental disorders, and promoting recovery (Clement et al., 2015).

Additionally, mental care awareness plays a crucial role in combating the stigma surrounding mental health. By promoting understanding and empathy, it helps challenge misconceptions, negative attitudes, and discriminatory behaviors toward individuals with mental health conditions. It fosters a more supportive and inclusive society where people feel comfortable seeking help without fear of judgment or prejudice (Thorncroft et al., 2007). The study by Clement et al. (2015) explores the impact of mental health literacy programs on mental health knowledge, stigma reduction, and help-seeking attitudes. Wang et al. (2005) provide insights into the benefits of early detection and intervention in mental health disorders, emphasizing the importance of public awareness campaigns. Herman et al. (2019) focus on prevention strategies for mental health problems, highlighting the significance of



proactive measures. Thornicroft et al. (2007) discuss the role of stigma reduction in mental health care, emphasizing the need for increased awareness and understanding.

In conclusion, mental care awareness is crucial for promoting early identification, prevention, and effective treatment of mental health problems among adolescents. By increasing understanding, recognition, and access to appropriate resources, mental care awareness empowers individuals to seek help, reduces stigma, and fosters a supportive society. It is essential to continue promoting mental care awareness through education, public campaigns, and community initiatives to ensure the well-being of persons and organizations.

### **Consequences of Insufficient Mental Care Awareness**

#### *Increased Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders*

The dominance of mental health disorders among adolescents has been on the rise, with insufficient mental care awareness identified as a contributing factor. Without adequate awareness and understanding of mental health issues, many cases may go undiagnosed and untreated, leading to significant consequences for individuals and society as a whole.

Insufficient mental care awareness can result in a lack of recognition and understanding of symptoms. Adolescents experiencing mental health challenges may not be aware that what they are experiencing is related to a mental health disorder. This lack of awareness can delay help-seeking behaviors and prevent individuals from receiving appropriate care promptly (Kessler et al., 2012).

Limited awareness of available mental health resources and support systems can impede access to care, as adolescents may not be well-informed about the services and treatment options that exist. This lack of awareness can perpetuate the prevalence of untreated mental health conditions, preventing individuals from receiving the necessary support and interventions (Patel et al., 2007).

The limited awareness of available mental health resources and support systems among adolescents can significantly impact their access to care. According to Patel et al. (2007), adolescents may not be well-informed about the services and treatment options that exist, which can contribute to the persistence of untreated mental health conditions. This situation underscores the importance of addressing the issue of mental health awareness among adolescents to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and resources to seek appropriate care.





The consequences of insufficient mental health care awareness can be substantial. Without timely and appropriate interventions, mental health disorders can worsen in severity and become chronic, leading to long-term impairment in functioning, decreased quality of life, and increased risk of comorbid physical health conditions (Kessler et al., 2012). As highlighted by Kessler et al. (2012), without timely and appropriate interventions, mental health disorders can escalate in severity and become chronic. This can impair an individual's functioning and diminish their overall quality of life. Additionally, it has been observed that individuals with untreated mental health conditions have a higher likelihood of developing concurrent physical health problems. It is crucial to prioritize educational efforts and awareness campaigns to address the growing occurrence of mental health disorders and the impact of limited awareness regarding mental health care. Through promoting mental health literacy, individuals can enhance their understanding of mental health issues, identify symptoms, and proactively seek appropriate care (Patel et al., 2007).

To effectively tackle the rising rates of mental health disorders and the issue of inadequate mental health care awareness, it is essential to emphasize educational initiatives and raise awareness. Patel et al. (2007) propose that by fostering mental health literacy, individuals can acquire a better comprehension of mental health issues, enabling them to recognize symptoms and seek suitable care. This underscores the importance of empowering adolescents with the knowledge and skills necessary to address their mental health needs effectively.

Furthermore, studies by Kessler et al. (2012) have underscored the prevalence and factors associated with mental disorders, emphasizing the need for boosted access to mental health care. Patel et al. (2007) discuss the global burden of mental health disorders among young individuals and stress the significance of mental health awareness and resource allocation.

The expanded prevalence of mental health disorders among adolescents is influenced, in part, by insufficient awareness of mental health care. When symptoms are unrecognized due to a lack of understanding, there can be delays in seeking appropriate care, leading to the worsening of mental health conditions. By prioritizing mental health education and awareness campaigns, we can address the gaps in mental health care awareness and promote early intervention and treatment, ultimately reducing the burden of mental health disorders among adolescents.





### *Impaired Academic Performance*

Insufficient mental care awareness negatively impacts academic performance among adolescents. Mental health issues can impair concentration, memory, and cognitive functioning, making it challenging for students to engage in learning activities effectively. It can result in lower academic achievement, increased dropout rates, and limited educational and career opportunities (Lee et al., 2014; Patel et al., 2007).

### *Social and Interpersonal Difficulties*

Adolescents with inadequate mental care awareness often face challenges in their social interactions and relationships. Mental health issues can disrupt communication, emotional regulation, and social skills, leading to difficulties in forming and sustaining healthy relationships with peers, family, and authority figures. This can contribute to isolation, loneliness, and reduced social support (Rigby et al., 2007; van Harmelen et al., 2017).

## **Factors Contributing to Insufficient Mental Care Awareness**

### *Lack of Education and Awareness Programs*

Insufficient mental care awareness among adolescents can be attributed to a lack of comprehensive education and awareness programs in schools and communities. Limited emphasis on mental health in educational curricula and inadequate teacher training on mental health topics hinder the dissemination of accurate information and promote misconceptions (Werner-Seidler et al., 2017).

### *Stigma and Cultural Barriers*

The stigma surrounding mental health and cultural beliefs and norms can impede mental care awareness among adolescents. Negative attitudes, stereotypes, and fear of judgment often discourage individuals from seeking help or discussing mental health openly. Cultural beliefs that discourage help-seeking or label mental health issues as a sign of weakness or personal failure can further perpetuate insufficient awareness (Clement et al., 2015; Thornicroft et al., 2007).

### *Limited Access to Mental Health Services*

Inadequate availability and accessibility of mental health services contribute to insufficient mental care awareness. Adolescents residing in rural or low-resource areas face challenges in accessing mental health professionals, clinics, and information resources. Also, limited



financial resources, transportation barriers, and long waiting lists for services act as deterrents to seeking timely and appropriate care (Patel et al., 2007; World Health Organization, 2010).

## **Methodology**

### **A. Research Design**

The study was a cross-sectional study that followed a descriptive and quantitative approach. Cross-sectional research involves studying a subset of the population and extending the characteristics of the sample to the population. Based on the objectives, this design made it possible to obtain information by determining, identifying, and describing mental health issues and phenomena. Using this approach, it was easy to systematically observe, identify, and describe mental health practices, behaviors, and needs so that the causes, effects, and effective intervention strategies could be accurately determined. This research design permitted the researcher to look at multiple variables relating to mental health challenges. These variables, such as mental health awareness, barriers to accessing mental health, and effective intervention strategies, had to be quantified, necessitating the need for quantitative methods to be employed. With this done, the quantified data was then suitable for statistical analysis. This particular design was used to improve the validity and reliability of the work because other researchers have used it to assess mental health-related issues in research.

### **B. Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

Sampling involves selecting part of a population group to represent the entire interest group. Through purposeful sampling, a sample of 81 participants drawn from the various divisions of the Donga Mantung division was used for this survey. On the inclusion principle, only participants aged 15 to 65 years old and based in the Donga Mantung division were included in this study. On the contrary, those in this age group who were unwilling to respond to the questionnaire were excluded.

### **C. Data Collection Methods**

This research work has made use of two basic sources of data collection: primary and secondary sources.

#### *Primary Sources*

This study used questionnaires to collect first-hand information from respondents on the adolescents' mental well-being. The various objectives and variables of the study were captured in the questionnaire to facilitate understanding and responses from the participants.



In this research phase, the researcher administered the questionnaire and guided the respondents on the various questions as they filled. The consent of participants was sought, and the Google Forms link to the form was sent through WhatsApp or email, where they filled out and submitted it.

### *Secondary Sources*

Secondary sources refer to data that existed before the need to solve a problem. Relevant information here was collected from textbooks, magazines, and publications already written on the subject of mental health specifically for a literature review

### **D. Data Analysis Plan**

Data questionnaires were screened to eliminate incompletely filled questionnaires and ensure data quality. The screened data collected was kept anonymous by giving each participant a code (serial number). Data was entered into pre-designed and tested data masques on Microsoft Excel to ease analysis and later imported into Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. A descriptive statistical analysis of the study population was performed, and values were reported as frequencies and percentages. Where appropriate, data is displayed on the pie chart, bar chart, and histogram.

## **Results of Findings**

The results of this research were obtained from the responses to the questionnaire administered to participants from the five sub-divisions of the Donga Mantung division of the North West Region of Cameroon. These participants were males and females ranging from the age of 15 years to about 60 years old. They had undergone formal education with qualifications ranging from FSLC to Masters Degree. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 20, and descriptive statistics was used to present the results using tables and charts, as seen in the preceding sections.

### **Socio-Demographic Information of Respondents**

The demographic information (gender, age, marital status, level of education, and sub-division of origin) of the participants in this study is represented in Table 1. The study demographics show that, of the 81 participants, 55 (67.9%) were males, whereas 26(32.1%) were females. The majority (35 respondents) were of the age group 31–30 years, while only 2 (2.5%) were between the ages of 10–20. Regarding marital status, 25 (30.9%) of the



respondents were single, as opposed to a majority of 69.1% being married persons. Regarding the academic qualification of the respondents, 8 (9.9%) were holders of the FSLC, 6 (7.4%) were holders of the GCE Ordinary level certificate, 9 (11.1%) were holders of the GCE advanced level certificate, 8(9.9%) were holders of HND, 24 (29.6%) were holders of a bachelor degree and 26 (32.1%) were master degree holders. Similarly, the respondents were from different sub-divisions of the Donga Mantung division in the North West of Cameroon. A majority of the respondents, 48 (59.3%), were from the Ndu sub-division, 1 (1.2%) from the Ako sub-division, 25 (130.9%) from the Nkambe sub-division, and 7 (8.6%) from Ako sub-division. Unfortunately, there was no response from the Mesaje sub-division. The difficulty in getting participants from Mesaje was due to a poor road network and internet connectivity. Equally, females contacted to turn in their responses were too busy, explaining why only 32% of participants were female.

Table 1: *Socio-Demographic Information of Respondents*

Items		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	55	67.9%
	Female	26	32.1%
Age range	10 – 20 years	2	2.5%
	21- 30 years	13	16.0%
	31-40 years	35	43.2%
	40-50 years	23	28.4%
	Above 50 years	8	9.9%
Marital status	Single	25	30.9%
	Married	56	69.1%
Level of Education	FSLC	8	9.9%
	GCE O/L	6	7.4%
	GCE A/L	9	11.1%
	HND	8	9.9%
	Degree	24	29.6%
	Masters	26	32.1%
	PhD	0	0.0%
Sub-Division of origin	Ako	1	1.2%
	Mesaje	0	0.0%
	Ndu	48	59.3%
	Nkambe	25	30.9%
	Nwa	7	8.6%

The distribution of the respondents from the various sub-divisions of the Donga Mantung division of the North West of Cameroon is shown in Figure 1.



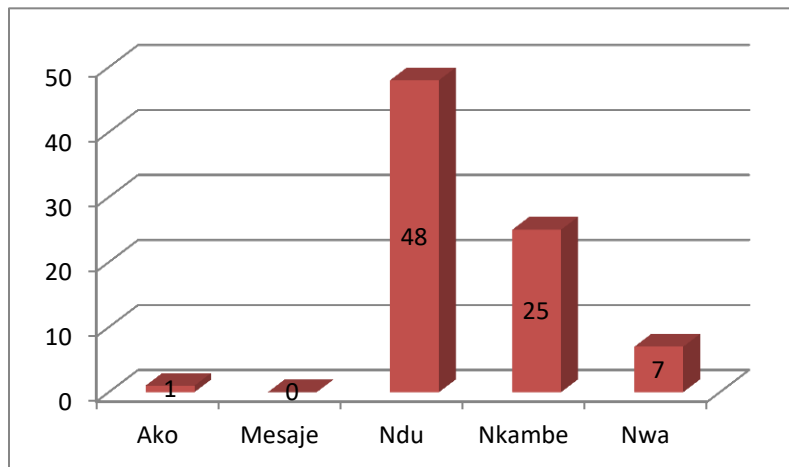


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents according to sub-division of origin

### Perception of Mental Health Care and Awareness

This section captures the perception of mental health care and awareness of participants in the various divisions of the Donga Mantung division, as summarised in Table 2. Out of the 81 respondents, a majority of 60 (74.1%) rated the availability of mental health care in this division as being very poor or poor, and 19 (23.5%) rated it as averagely available. In contrast, only 2 (2.4%) gave a positive response; out of the participants who have ever sought mental care, only 4 (4.9%) acknowledged ever seeking mental care, whereas an absolute majority of 77 (95.1%) indicated that they have never sought mental health care.

Different sources of information on mental health care awareness were identified; out of the sources, 35 (36.8%) had the information from healthcare providers, 21 (22.1%) from the media, 16 (16.8%) from community organizations, 22 (23.2%) from schools while only one respondent identified the church as the source information of mental health. The participants identified factors that justify their reasons for not seeking mental healthcare; out of the 94 responses on these factors, 73 (77.7%) said the lack of awareness and limited availability of these services had retarded them from seeking these services. Also, 16 (17.0%) attributed their reason to the lack of financial resources, and only 5 (5.3%) did not seek these services because of cultural or religious beliefs. The sources of information on mental healthcare are shown in Figure 2.



Table 2: Perception of Mental Health Care and Awareness

Items	Frequency	Percentage	
How would you rate the availability of mental health care services in Donga Mantung Division?	Very poor	29	35.8
	Poor	31	38.3
	Average	19	23.5
	Good	1	1.2
	Very good	1	1.2
Are you aware of the mental health services available in the community?	Yes	42	51.9
	No	39	48.1
Have you ever sought mental health care services in Donga Mantung Division?	Yes	4	4.9
	No	77	95.1
Specify the sources through which you gained awareness (Select all that apply to you)	Healthcare providers	35	36.8
	Media	21	22.1
	Community organizations	16	16.8
	Schools	22	23.2
	Church	1	1.1
	Total	95	100.0
Please specify the reasons for not seeking mental health care services (Select all that apply to you)	Cultural or religious beliefs	5	5.3
	Lack of awareness about available services	39	41.5
	Lack of financial resources	16	17.0
	Limited availability of mental health professionals	34	36.2
	Total	94	100.0

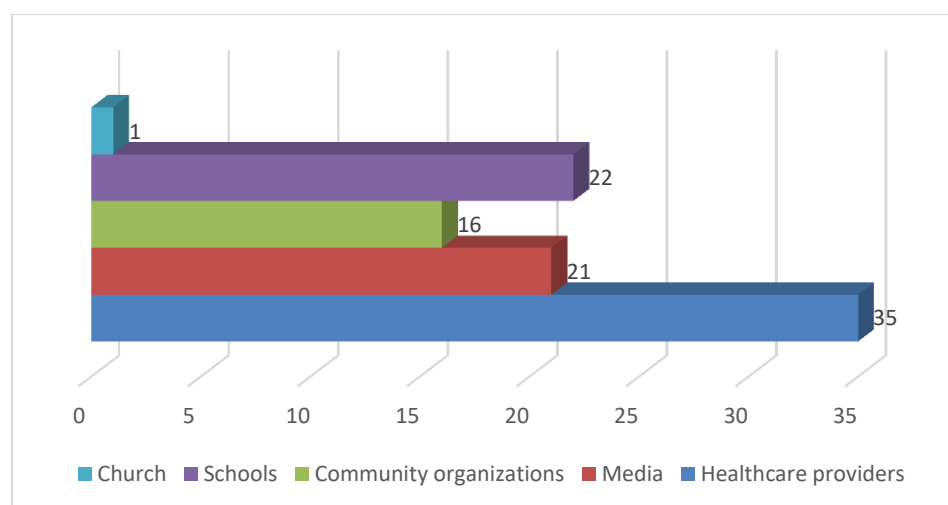


Figure 2: Sources of information on mental healthcare



### Impact of Insufficient Mental Care and Awareness on Mental Well-Being

This section sought to investigate the impact of insufficient mental healthcare on participants' mental well-being, as summarised in Table 3. A total of 72 (88.9%) respondents believed that insufficient mental healthcare has greatly affected their mental well-being, whereas only 9 (11.1%) said insufficient mental healthcare has not affected their mental well-being. The participants experienced different forms of mental health challenges, which was a multiple-response question, and a total of 189 responses were obtained. Out of the 189 responses, stress was the highest challenge that participants encountered, with 69 (36.5%) responses; depression was 45 (23.8%) responses; anxiety 43 (22.8%); eating disorders 18 (9.5%), substance abuse 8 (4.2%) and lastly 6 (3.2%) on self-harm. This outstanding majority is a call for concern; necessary measures should be taken to remedy this. This will go a long way to help the inhabitants to manage stress, depression, and anxiety. The different forms of mental health challenges and the negative effects of the absence of mental healthcare and awareness on participants are summarised in Figures 3a and 3b, respectively.

Table 3: *Impact of Insufficient Mental Care and Awareness on Mental Well-being*

Items	Frequency	Percentage	
Do you believe that the lack of mental health care and awareness has affected your mental well-being?	Yes	72	88.9
	No	9	11.1
	Total	81	100.0
Have you experienced any of the following mental health challenges? (Select all that apply to you)	Anxiety	43	22.8
	Eating disorders	18	9.5
	Self-harm	6	3.2
	Stress	69	36.5
	Substance abuse	8	4.2
	Depression	45	23.8
	Total	189	100.0
	Please describe the specific ways in which the absence of mental care and awareness has impacted your mental well-being or that of others	Caused some people to go mad	37
Caused stress and disorder in the community		59	48.4
Has led to dead of some people		26	21.3
Total		122	100.0





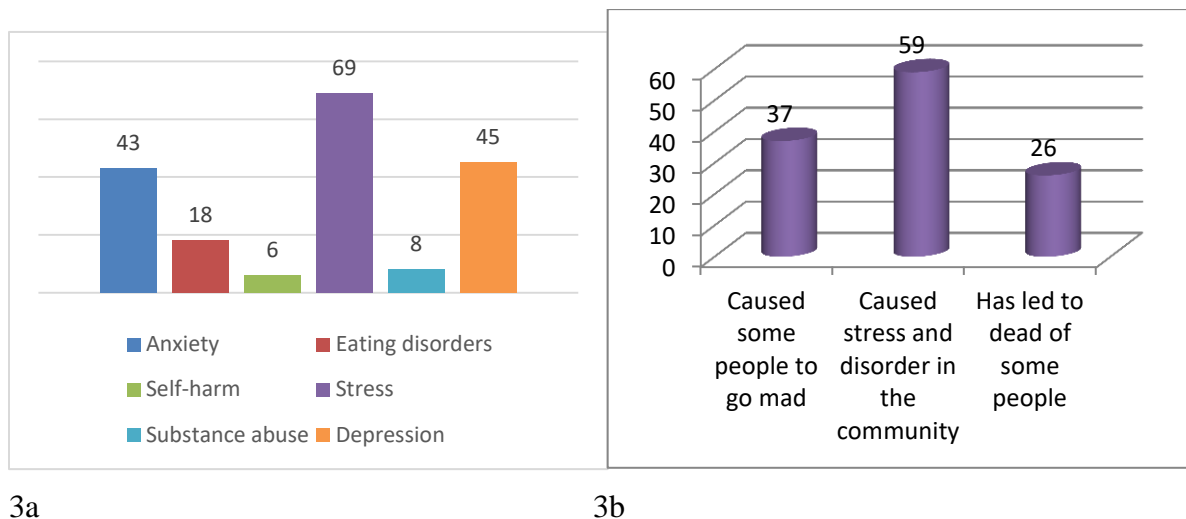


Figure 3: Forms of mental health challenges and effects of the absence of mental healthcare and awareness

### Effective Intervention Strategies

This section addresses the intervention strategies while highlighting barriers to accessing mental healthcare in the Donga Mantung division and the role of the government, community, and private sectors in promoting mental healthcare, as shown in Table 4. The limited availability of mental health professionals was identified as the greatest barrier, constituting 56 (30.4%) of the 184 responses for the barriers, and a lack of awareness was observed in 51 (27.7%) of the responses. Also, a lack of financial resources resulted in a score of 37 (20.1%) responses, the stigma associated with mental health was 24 (13.0%), and cultural or religious beliefs were 16 (8.7%). These reasons confirm the reality of the barriers encountered by the population of Donga Mantung division and the need for the barriers to be dealt with. The results show that these services are minimal, and the inhabitants are unaware of the available ones.

On the role of the government in addressing mental health issues among adolescents, 54 (66.6%) said that the government is either ineffective or very ineffective in addressing mental health issues among adolescents, 19 (23.5%) respondents were neutral. Only 8 (9.9%) said the government is effective in addressing mental health issues among adolescents. Regarding the role of community organizations and private sectors in promoting mental health care and awareness, 33 (40.7%) opined that the community organizations and private sectors are ineffective in promoting mental health care and awareness, 20 (24.4%) were neutral, and 28 (34.6%) opined that the community organizations and private sectors are



effective in promoting mental health care and awareness. The involvement of the government and the community in addressing this need is crucial for the benefit of the population. Healthcare personnel, especially those specializing in mental health, should sensitize the community and the government to consider addressing this need.

Table 4: *Distribution of Effective Intervention Strategies*

Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
What are the most significant barriers to accessing mental health care in Donga Mantung Division?	Cultural or religious beliefs	16	8.7
	Lack of awareness about available services	51	27.7
	Lack of financial resources	37	20.1
	Limited availability of mental health professionals	56	30.4
	The stigma associated with mental health	24	13.0
	Total	184	100.0
	How would you rate the role of the government in addressing mental health issues among adolescents?	Very ineffective	21
Ineffective		33	40.7
Neutral		19	23.5
Effective		6	7.4
Very effective		2	2.5
How would you rate the role of community organizations and private sectors in promoting mental health care and awareness?	Very ineffective	9	11.1
	Ineffective	24	29.6
	Neutral	20	24.7
	Effective	22	27.2
	Very effective	6	7.4

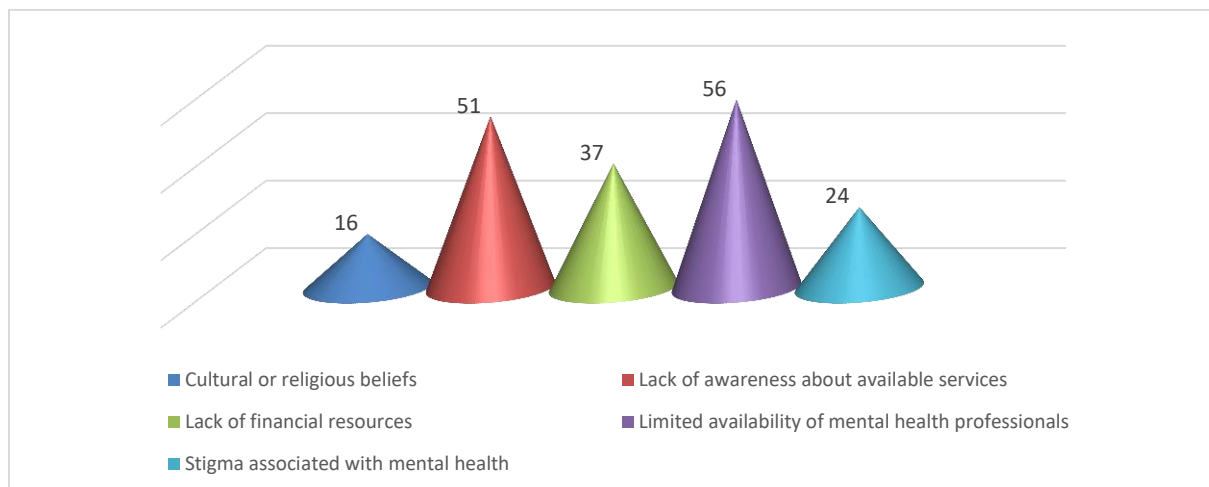


Figure 4: Barriers to Accessing Mental Health Care in Donga Mantung Division



## Adolescents Mental Well-being

This section seeks to assess the mental well-being of adolescents and is captured in Table 5. On rating the overall mental health of adolescents, 35 (43.2%) participants accounted that the state of their mental health is good, whereas 46 (46.8%) believed that the state of their mental health is either poor or on average. This shows that mental health concerns are a serious call for concern in the Donga Mantung division. An absolute majority of 74 (91.3%) of the participants acknowledged the fact that avoiding drugs and alcohol has a positive effect on mental well-being, as opposed to only 7 (8.6%) who thought otherwise. As a coping strategy, 76 (93.8%) opined that individuals who manage stress well would have good mental well-being as opposed to 5 (6.2%) who had a contrary view.

Table 5: *Mental Well-being of Adolescents*

	Items	Frequency	Percentage
How would you rate your overall mental well-being?	Very poor	5	6.2%
	Poor	6	7.4%
	Average	35	43.2%
	Good	28	34.6%
	Very good	7	8.6%
Avoiding drugs and alcohol has a positive effect on my mental well-being.	Strongly Disagree	7	8.6%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Agree	24	29.6%
	Strongly agree	50	61.7%
Individuals who manage stress well will have good mental well-being.	Strongly Disagree	2	2.5%
	Disagree	3	3.7%
	Agree	33	40.7%
	Strongly agree	43	53.1%

## Discussion

### A. Summary of Findings

For every community, the knowledge of the existence of any services serves as the basis for exploiting these services. In evaluating the perception of mental health care and awareness in Donga Mantung division, it is observed that mental healthcare centers are not readily available in Donga Mantung division as only 2.4% of the participants affirmed the opinion that it was available as opposed to 97.6% who were either neutral or confirmed that these



services were not available (Patel et al., 2007). This observation explains why only 4.9% of the participants have ever sought mental care in this area, with 95.1% of participants not seeking this service because it is absent. Healthcare providers constituted the greatest source of information for the participants on mental health. This suggests that most of the inhabitants of the area need to be sensitized to the available healthcare centers in general and mental healthcare units in particular (Wang et al., 2005).

As long as mental health service is a necessity to every community, different factors were identified as a hindrance to accessing and enjoying such amenities. Among these factors was the limited availability of mental health professionals, which was recognized as the greatest barrier, constituting 56 (30.4%) of the 184 responses for this barrier. Equally, many inhabitants of the Donga Mantung division are unaware of the services available in their localities. This could result from a lack of education and sensitization on the part of the health unit and the government as a whole (Werner-Seidler et al., 2017). Another major challenge observed as a setback was the lack of financial resources, as opined by 20.1% of the participants. If these services are substantially subsidized, it will go a long way to help the local population to benefit from the available services. Another cause of resentment toward mental health care services was stigma, constituting 13% of the causes, which is a major call for concern (Thornicroft et al., 2007). Education and counseling should be given to the inhabitants of this area on the fact that mental health challenges are common and adverse. Therefore, it should be treated as an emergency, and the value of one's life should drive away every form of stigma. This education will, in a similar way, eradicate cultural or religious beliefs that have caused other citizens of Donga Mantung division to withdraw from seeking mental health care (Clement et al., 2015). These reasons confirm the reality of the barriers encountered by the population of Donga Mantung division and the need for the barriers to be dealt with.

The negative effects of the absence of mental healthcare and awareness on participants were examined and observed to be enormous. One of the consequences was stress and disorder in the community. Social peace will always remain a wish as long as people exist with impending mental ills that are not handled and will undoubtedly become a nuisance to the community. This is because mad persons will continue to parade the street, a factor that was identified to be another consequence of the lack of mental health care among adolescents (Kessler et al., 2012). In addition, mental health challenges have resulted in the death of many



persons in the Donga Mantung division. Other negative impacts among the inhabitants, such as stress, depression, eating disorders, anxiety (Merikangas et al., 2010), and self-harm (Hawton et al., 2012) have been observed among adolescents. This observation mirrors the research of Avenevoli et al., carried out in 2015. Seeing the devastating consequences of insufficient mental healthcare facilities, addressing this need is of prime importance. This will enable a suitable environment and reduce the number of individuals and families that lack these facilities. It will equally reduce the mortality rate recorded annually in this division.

The struggle to ensure a mentally healthy society should be a fight for all. This includes individuals, families, communities, healthcare providers, and the government. The roles of these key actors have not been significant in the Donga Mantung division, as many are indifferent to addressing mental health issues. The government was identified to be ineffective or very ineffective in addressing mental health issues among adolescents, as over 80% of the participants were for this. Equally, community organizations and private sectors have played a minimal role in promoting mental health care and awareness; 40.7% opined that community organizations and private sectors are ineffective in promoting mental health care and awareness. In addition, 91% of the respondents concur with the fact that avoiding drugs and alcohol has a positive effect on mental well-being. As an intervention strategy, a ban should be made on drug consumption, and adolescents should be educated on the devastating consequences of drugs and alcohol. The involvement of the government and the community in addressing this need is crucial for the population as it will help in reducing the negative outcome of mental health issues (Wang et al., 2005). Healthcare personnel, especially those specializing in mental health, should sensitize the community and the government to consider addressing this need (Wang et al., 2005).

## **B. Implications of the Results**

From the results of the findings, the following can be implied:

1. There are limited mental health care facilities in the Donga Mantung division.
2. There is little awareness of this area's available mental health care facilities. Community sensitization through the media and healthcare personnel could ameliorate their awareness.



3. Diverse factors have influenced the ability of the local population to seek mental care. If these factors are addressed, the inhabitants of this area will have improved ways of coping with mental health challenges.
4. The role of the private sector, community, and government in promoting mental health issues has been ineffective. Their active participation in campaigning and crusading mental health-related problems will significantly boost adolescents and improve their mental well-being.

### **C. Challenges Faced in the Course of the Study**

1. Insecurity was one of the limitations faced by the researcher due to the socio-political instability in the Region. This prevented accessing some interior subdivisions and villages to gather information.
2. Financial challenges were also faced when sponsoring the data collection and other aspects of the research.
3. The challenge of time was also faced, which slowed down the research process.
4. Many people were not willing to take part in this survey. This limited the sample size of the study.

### **Conclusion**

This research assessed mental care awareness among adolescents in the Donga Mantung Division of the North West region of Cameroon. It identified the consequences of insufficient mental care awareness on adolescents' mental well-being in this division. It explored the factors contributing to the lack of mental care awareness among adolescents. In addition, effective intervention strategies for improving mental care awareness and promoting mental well-being among adolescents were assessed. Primary data was obtained by administering a questionnaire to gather first-hand information on this topic with a sample size of 81 participants. The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS to get insight into the information and to make meaning from the data.

The findings reveal that adolescents in the Donga Mantung division are unaware of the mental care services in their locality. Most of these services were not readily available in this locality. Although few of these services were available, most people could not seek mental health care services because of the lack of financial resources, lack of awareness of the



few available ones, cultural and religious beliefs, and, equally, because of the stigma associated with mental health conditions.

The lack of these mental health services has resulted in stress and disorder in the community, causing some people to go mad and to the death of some people of this community. Notably, stress, depression, eating disorders, anxiety, and self-harm have been observed among adolescents, pointing to the nature of the situation.

The reasons for the lack of mental health services were identified to be the absence of these facilities, lack of financial resources, lack of awareness on the few available ones, cultural and religious beliefs, and, equally, the stigma associated with mental health conditions. The efforts by the government, private, and community sectors in promoting mental health care and awareness among indigents of this division have been minimal. These sectors should be involved in a healthy society, and these services should be affordable.

### **Recommendations**

For effective intervention strategies, the government and public health should create many mental health care centers to help the inhabitants of Donga Mantung meet the demands and challenges of mental health. The following initiatives can improve the situation.

1. The government should subsidize mental health treatment so that the inhabitants can readily afford these services.
2. More mental healthcare workers should be employed in the various health units that are available in this division.
3. Healthcare practitioners, especially those specializing in mental health, should educate the population of this locality on the importance of mental health and sensitize them using schools and media on the available health centers.
4. Adolescents should be encouraged to visit healthcare units to check their mental health conditions regularly.
5. Drug consumption among adolescents should be banned, and security apparatus should enforce this in the locality.
6. Community organizations and private sectors should be involved in promoting mental health care and awareness.





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