

Roles of Psychology in Advancing Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria: A Pathway to Organizational Change

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Abstract

Psychology offers valuable insights into behaviour change, mental health, and community engagement, which are critical for addressing complex and persistent challenges that hinder sustainable development. This review explores the potential of psychology to significantly contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria, focusing on areas such as health, education, gender equality, economic growth, and climate action. Data sources included peer-reviewed journals, government publications, and international development reports accessed through academic databases and reputable online repositories. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify core areas where psychology can impact specific SDGs, with emphasis on SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Case studies from Nigeria were included to provide context and highlight successful psychology-based interventions. The findings suggest that integrating psychological insights into Nigeria's SDG strategies can enhance the effectiveness of development programs by addressing underlying behavioural, mental health, and social factors. The review concludes with recommendations for policy, practice, and future research to leverage psychology's full potential in Nigeria's pathway to sustainable development.

Keywords: *Psychology, Sustainable Development Goals, Pathway to Change, Nigeria*

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Background to the Study

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations in 2015, represent a universal agenda to address some of the world's most pressing issues, such as poverty, inequality, health, education, climate action, and social justice, by 2030. In Nigeria, a nation with an estimated population of over 220 million as of 2024, sustainable development is critical to improving the living standards and future well-being of its people. The country faces significant social and economic challenges, including high rates of poverty, youth unemployment, gender inequality, and climate vulnerability, which hinder progress toward the SDGs (World Bank, 2023). Psychology offers tools to address the complex behavioural and societal challenges underlying the SDGs, such as encouraging healthier lifestyles, fostering educational achievement, promoting social equality, and advocating for environmentally sustainable practices. Research highlights that behavioural change is crucial for the success of various SDGs, particularly in contexts where social norms, attitudes, and mental health influence the pace of development (Prilleltensky, 2021). In Nigeria, where approximately 40% of the population lives below the poverty line, behavioural interventions can support initiatives to promote mental health (SDG 3), improve educational outcomes (SDG 4), advance gender equality (SDG 5), and mitigate environmental impacts (SDG 13) (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). Similarly, Adedoyin and Soyinka (2023) found that psychological interventions targeting educational inequalities can improve student performance in under-resourced Nigerian schools. These findings align with UNESCO's (2023) report, which underscores the need for psychosocial support in educational contexts to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education. Moreover, research on community psychology emphasizes the importance of engaging local populations in climate action. A recent survey conducted by Nze and Emeka (2024) found that community-driven environmental programs significantly increased public willingness to engage in eco-friendly behaviors, highlighting the impact of psychology on achieving SDG 13 in Nigeria. In the light of the above, this review explores and highlights how psychological principles, research, and interventions can be strategically applied to address key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria, focusing on areas such as health, education, gender equality, economic growth, and climate action.

Conceptual Clarifications

Psychology

The concept of psychology has evolved over centuries, emerging as a formal discipline in the 19th century, though its philosophical roots trace back to ancient civilizations. Psychology is broadly defined as the scientific study of the mind and behavior, focusing on understanding individuals' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. It applies both empirical methods and theoretical frameworks to analyze and interpret human actions within various contexts, from individual mental health to social and organizational settings. The APA defines psychology as "the study of mind and behavior," emphasizing its scientific basis and applications in understanding individual and social phenomena (APA, 2021).

Psychology now encompasses multiple subfields such as clinical psychology, educational psychology, organizational psychology, and environmental psychology, each applying psychological principles to specific contexts. Modern psychology integrates multidisciplinary

approaches to address global issues, such as mental health, social justice, environmental sustainability, and technology's impact on society (Dunn, 2011). The biopsychosocial model, developed by George Engel in 1977, suggests that biological, psychological, and social factors interact to influence behavior and mental health, providing a comprehensive framework for psychology's application in fields like healthcare and social work (Engel, 1977).

Key Contributions to the Concept of Psychology

1. Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920): Wundt, often regarded as the "father of modern psychology," established the first experimental psychology lab in Leipzig, Germany, in 1879. He advocated for psychology as a separate scientific discipline from philosophy, focusing on introspection as a method to study conscious experience (Schultz & Schultz, 2011). His work marked the beginning of psychology as an empirical science.
2. William James (1842-1910): In the United States, William James promoted the functionalist approach, emphasizing the purpose of mental processes in adapting to the environment. His influential text, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), is considered foundational in defining psychology as a discipline focused on both mind and behavior (Hergenhahn, 2009).
3. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939): Freud's psychoanalytic theory introduced a new dimension to psychology by exploring the unconscious mind. He posited that human behavior is influenced by unconscious motives and early childhood experiences, shaping the study of personality, behavior, and mental health (Freud, 1900).
4. John B. Watson (1878-1958) and Behaviorism: Watson advanced behaviorism, which shifted psychology's focus to observable behavior, rejecting introspection as subjective and unreliable. Behaviorism emphasized the role of environmental factors in shaping behavior, laying the groundwork for later researchers like B.F. Skinner (Watson, 1913; Skinner, 1953).
5. Humanistic Psychology (1950s): Humanistic Psychology (1950s), emerged in the mid-20th century, with proponents like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. This perspective emphasized individual potential, free will, and self-actualization, contrasting the deterministic views of behaviorism and psychoanalysis (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1951).
6. Psychology (1960s-present): The cognitive revolution reintroduced the study of mental processes. Pioneers such as Jean Piaget, Noam Chomsky, and Ulric Neisser advocated for the scientific study of perception, memory, and thought. Cognitive psychology laid the foundation for contemporary research in neuroscience and artificial intelligence (Neisser, 1967; Chomsky, 1959).

Concept of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The concept of "sustainable development" became prominent after the World Commission on Environment and Development, led by Gro Harlem Brundtland, released the report *Our Common Future*. The commission defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Commission, 1987). This definition laid the groundwork for future sustainability initiatives, including the SDGs. The United Nations Conference on

Environment and Development (UNCED), commonly known as the Rio Earth Summit, introduced Agenda 21, a comprehensive action plan that outlined sustainable development goals for the global community. This summit emphasized the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, and social issues, which later shaped the SDGs (UNCED, 1992).

The MDGs were the precursor to the SDGs, focusing on eight goals aimed at reducing global poverty, hunger, disease, and inequality by 2015. While the MDGs achieved some success, particularly in reducing extreme poverty, they were criticized for limited scope and their failure to address issues such as environmental sustainability comprehensively (Sachs, 2012). Lessons from the MDGs informed the broader, more inclusive scope of the SDGs. Following the MDGs, the need for a more ambitious and universally applicable framework led to the formulation of the SDGs. In 2012, the Rio+20 Conference formally launched negotiations for a new set of global goals, which culminated in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in 2015 (United Nations, 2015). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2015, aimed at addressing a broad range of social, economic, and environmental challenges by 2030. They are designed to achieve a sustainable, equitable, and inclusive world, building on the successes and lessons of the earlier Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were implemented from 2000 to 2015.

Theoretical Framework

Various psychological frameworks provide insights into human behavior related to environmental and social issues, offering a foundation for advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For instance, *Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)* developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991, TPB aims to explain how individual intentions predict behavior. It is widely applied in environmental psychology to understand pro-environmental actions. TPB posits that three factors influence behavioral intentions: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. TPB is often used to assess intentions toward recycling, energy conservation, and other environmentally friendly behaviors. Studies show that positive attitudes, social norms, and high perceived control correlate strongly with sustainable practices (Bamberg & Möser, 2007). Meta-analyses confirm TPB's applicability in sustainability, with factors like attitudes and control explaining 27-39% of the variance in sustainable behaviors (Bamberg & Möser, 2007). Cialdini et al. (2006) applied TPB to examine how social norms influence energy-saving behaviors in households. They found that individuals conform to environmental norms when they see others engaging in similar practices.

Goal Framing Theory: Proposed by Steg and Vlek (2009), this theory explains how different goal frames impact decision-making. Goal framing theory identifies three main frames – gain, normative, and hedonic – that influence behavior. Normative frames (e.g., pro-environmental messages) are especially effective in promoting sustainable behaviors. Goal framing has been used in campaigns to reduce energy usage, promote recycling, and encourage water conservation. Normative goal frames, which focus on “doing the right thing” for the environment, have shown to be most effective (Steg et al., 2009). Studies reveal that framing sustainability in normative terms increases engagement more than hedonic or gain frames

(Steg et al., 2009). Values-Beliefs-Norms (VBN) Theory, introduced by Paul Stern and colleagues in 1999, VBN theory seeks to explain the psychological basis of pro-environmental behavior. VBN theory links values (e.g., altruism), ecological beliefs, and personal norms to environmental actions. This model has been used to understand why individuals adopt behaviors to mitigate climate change. Studies show that individuals with strong environmental values are more likely to support sustainable policies and engage in eco-friendly practices (Stern, 2000). Research supports VBN's utility, finding that environmental values and beliefs predict behaviors like recycling and energy conservation (Nordlund & Garvill, 2003).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), advanced by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985), SDT explores human motivation, focusing on intrinsic motivation as a driver of behavior. SDT posits that three needs – autonomy, competence, and relatedness – drive motivation. Individuals who feel these needs are satisfied are more likely to engage in pro-social and pro-environmental behaviors. SDT suggests that autonomous motivation enhances engagement in sustainable actions. Policies that provide individuals with autonomy in their sustainable choices are more effective than those relying on external pressure (Pelletier et al., 1998). Studies indicate that intrinsic motivation significantly predicts environmentally conscious behaviors, especially when people feel aligned with a larger purpose, such as protecting future generations (Pelletier et al., 1998). De Groot & Steg (2009) conducted a study linking SDT and VBN, demonstrating that individuals motivated by intrinsic values and personal norms are more likely to engage in recycling and conservation behaviors. These theories demonstrate the potential for psychology to foster sustainable behavior by focusing on attitudes, norms, motivations, and identity, ultimately supporting the achievement of the SDGs.

Psychology's Contribution to Specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria

Psychology's contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria are essential in addressing social, environmental, and economic challenges. Psychologists leverage empirical research and interventions to impact goals such as health, education, gender equality, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. Here are key areas where psychology plays a role in Nigeria's progress toward specific SDGs:

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being: Mental health remains a significant concern in Nigeria, with only around 10% of people needing mental health services having access to them (Gureje et al., 2015). Psychological research supports the development of community-based mental health interventions, improving access to mental health care and addressing stigma (Adewuya & Ola, 2021). Studies in Nigeria show that culturally adapted cognitive-behavioral therapies (CBT) and mental health education can reduce stigma and improve mental health outcomes (Omigbodun et al., 2008). Such interventions also improve general well-being and resilience in communities. According to the World Health Organization, Nigeria has one of the highest rates of depression in Africa, with about 4.3% of the population affected by depressive disorders. In addition, psychology-based interventions address the rising incidence of substance abuse in Nigeria. Drug abuse among Nigerian youths increased from 14.4% in 2018 to approximately 20% by 2022 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Psychological strategies like Motivational Interviewing (MI) and peer-group therapy have shown success in reducing

substance abuse among youth (Adeniran et al., 2020). In a study by Adeniran et al. (2020), MI reduced relapse rates among young Nigerian substance users by over 30%.

SDG 4: Quality Education: Enhancing Learning through Cognitive and Behavioral Techniques approaches contribute to improving learning outcomes in Nigerian schools. Interventions addressing cognitive development and behavioral reinforcement improve students' academic performance and reduce dropout rates. Research by Ibeagha et al. (2019) showed that schools using behavior-based learning interventions saw an improvement in students' academic achievements by 15%. Nigeria's literacy rate among young adults increased from 62% in 2010 to 75% in 2020 due to educational reforms and psychological interventions (UNESCO, 2021). Consequently, psychologists support SDG 4 by providing psychosocial interventions for children in regions affected by conflict, such as the Northeast. These interventions address trauma, improve emotional well-being, and enhance academic performance (Waldman & Hudd, 2021). Waldman and Hudd (2021) demonstrated that children receiving trauma-focused therapies exhibited reduced symptoms of PTSD and improved school attendance by 25%.

SDG 5: Gender Equality: Promoting Gender Equality through Behavioral Change, as psychologists use behavioral change theories to address gender stereotypes, promoting gender equality in communities. Programs based on Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) reduce gender biases by altering societal perceptions of gender roles. Studies in Northern Nigeria show that gender-focused interventions led to a 20% increase in female school enrollment by reshaping parents' and community leaders' views on girls' education (Aliyu et al., 2020). Gender parity in primary education in Nigeria has improved, with the Gender Parity Index increasing from 0.85 in 2015 to 0.92 in 2022 (UNICEF, 2022). More importantly, psychological support services help GBV survivors rebuild resilience, reducing the long-term mental health impacts of violence. Psychologists provide counseling, trauma therapy, and empowerment programs to aid recovery. Psychosocial counseling for GBV survivors in Nigeria increased the likelihood of survivors engaging in community activities and employment by 30% (Olatunde & Ogundipe, 2021).

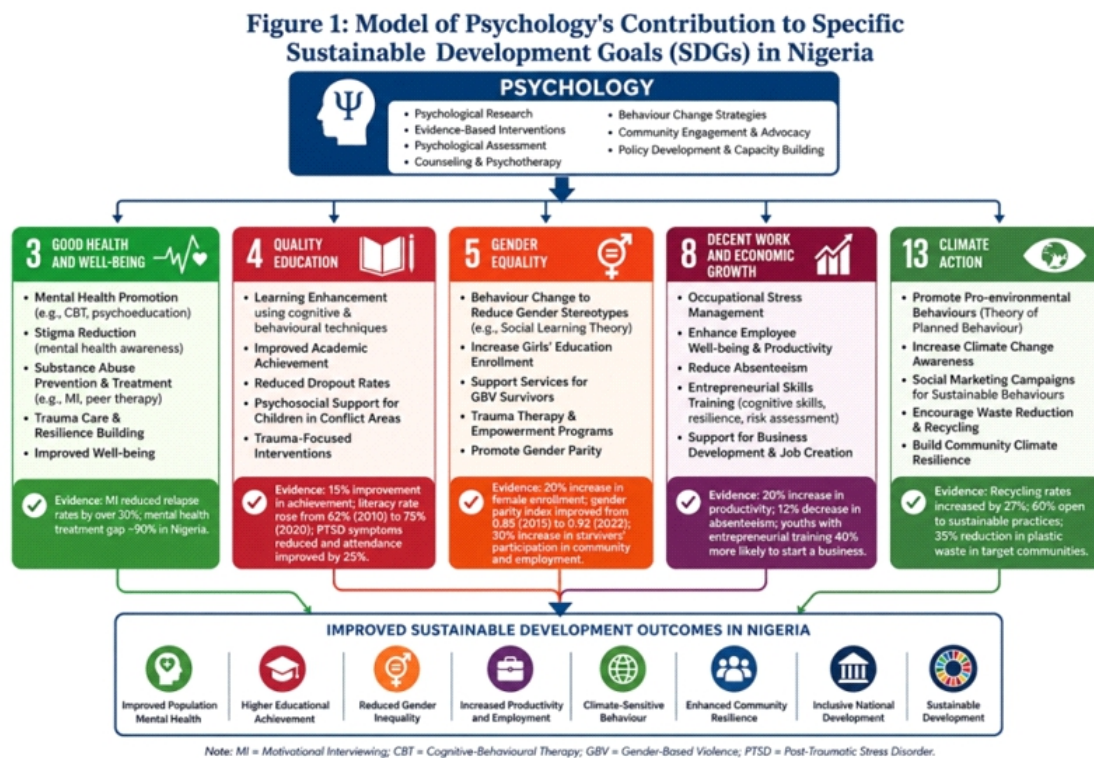


Figure 1.

Source: Developed by the author based on synthesis of literature on psychology and the Sustainable Development Goals (WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, National Bureau of Statistics, and related empirical studies).

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: Psychologists contribute to improving workplace conditions by addressing occupational stress and enhancing employee well-being, which are essential for sustainable economic growth. A study by Oguntuase et al. (2020) indicated that companies implementing workplace stress reduction programs reported a 20% increase in employee productivity. According to the Nigerian Institute of Management, workplace stress reduction initiatives correlate with a 12% decrease in absenteeism rates. Besides, psychological interventions foster entrepreneurial skills, especially among Nigerian youths. Training in cognitive skills, resilience, and risk assessment supports business development and job creation. Okoye et al. (2019) found that youths who underwent entrepreneurial training were 40% more likely to start a business within a year compared to those without such training.

SDG 13: Climate Action: Psychologists leverage behavioral theories, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, to encourage pro-environmental actions, addressing climate change on an individual level. Bamberg & Möser (2007) found that interventions based on environmental values increased recycling rates by 27% in communities. A survey by the Nigeria Climate Action Network in 2020 showed that 60% of Nigerians are open to adopting sustainable practices if given sufficient awareness. Also, psychological research supports the use of social

marketing to change attitudes towards climate issues. These campaigns enhance public awareness and encourage sustainable behaviors, such as waste reduction. In Lagos, campaigns based on social norms led to a 35% reduction in plastic waste in target communities (Adeboye et al., 2021).

Key Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Psychology-Based SDG Initiatives

Implementing psychology-based initiatives aimed at achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria faces numerous challenges and barriers. These hurdles span across systemic, cultural, financial, and infrastructural limitations. Here's a detailed examination, including statistics, empirical literature, and key citations on these challenges:

1) Limited Mental Health Infrastructure

Nigeria faces significant shortages in mental health infrastructure, which limits the effectiveness of psychology-based SDG initiatives, especially those related to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). Nigeria has less than one psychiatrist per million people and an estimated 250 practicing psychologists for a population of over 200 million (World Health Organization, 2021). According to Gureje et al. (2015), the lack of accessible mental health infrastructure reduces the reach and impact of psychological interventions, particularly in rural areas. Efforts to decentralize mental health services and integrate psychological services into primary healthcare are often hampered by inadequate funding and resource allocation. The country spends only about 4% of its health budget on mental health services (WHO, 2021), significantly lower than the global average of 12%.

2) Stigma and Cultural Barriers

Stigmatization and cultural beliefs about mental health and psychological interventions are prevalent, creating barriers to the acceptance and implementation of SDG-related psychological services. Stigma deters individuals from seeking mental health support and obstructs interventions addressing SDG 3 and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Research by Adewuya & Makanjuola (2008) found that stigma surrounding mental illness in Nigeria leads to social exclusion and a reluctance to engage in psychological interventions. Gender-based barriers also affect women disproportionately, as cultural expectations often discourage women from seeking psychological support. In a 2019 survey by the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research, approximately 70% of Nigerians believed mental illness should be hidden within families due to societal stigma.

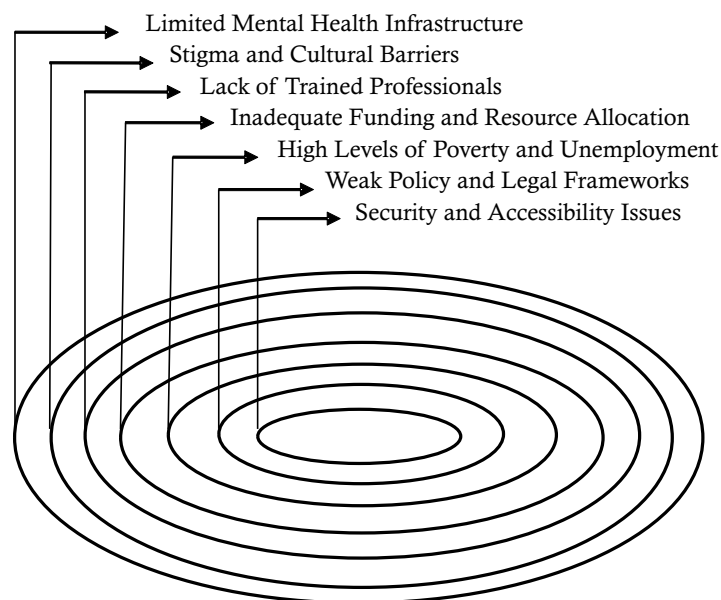
3) Lack of Trained Professionals

Nigeria suffers from a scarcity of trained mental health professionals, which limits the capacity to implement psychology-based initiatives. This shortage particularly affects SDG 3 initiatives that aim to provide mental health support and foster well-being. Oguntayo et al. (2017) highlight that the demand for psychological services far exceeds the availability of trained personnel. Most rural and semi-urban regions lack qualified psychologists, contributing to a gap in psychological support for marginalized communities. There are fewer than 300 clinical psychologists and approximately 200 trained counselors in Nigeria, resulting in an estimated psychologist-to-population ratio of 1:700,000 (Nigerian Psychological Association, 2020).

4) Inadequate Funding and Resource Allocation

Funding limitations restrict the reach and impact of psychology-driven SDG projects. Many psychology-based interventions require sustained financial support, which is often unavailable due to competing national priorities and limited budget allocations. According to Adesola & Ola (2021), underfunding is one of the main obstacles to scaling up community-based mental health programs. Their study showed that only 0.02% of Nigeria's annual budget is directed toward psychological and mental health services, inhibiting the growth of sustainable programs. A report by the Central Bank of Nigeria (2021) indicates that the country allocates only 0.5% of its gross domestic product (GDP) to healthcare, much lower than the WHO's recommended 5% minimum for developing nations.

Figure 2: Model of Key Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Psychology-Based SDG Initiatives



Source: Authors' Initiative

1) High Levels of Poverty and Unemployment

Socioeconomic challenges, such as high poverty rates and unemployment, limit participation in psychology-based interventions, as basic needs take precedence. This impacts SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 1 (No Poverty) efforts that require psychological support for economic empowerment and resilience-building. Research by Okojie & Anumudu (2020) found that individuals facing economic hardship are less likely to engage in programs for mental health and well-being. Instead, they prioritize meeting immediate financial needs, leaving psychological well-being unattended. Nigeria's poverty rate stands at approximately 40%, with youth unemployment at over 30% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020), making it difficult for citizens to engage in long-term psychological interventions.

2) Weak Policy and Legal Frameworks

Inadequate policies and weak legal frameworks impede the implementation of psychology-based interventions for SDG progress. Without supportive legislation, psychology-based initiatives lack the necessary structure for large-scale and sustainable implementation. Aliyu & Musa (2019) discuss how policy gaps in mental health legislation create challenges for protecting the rights of mental health patients and ensuring access to care. The absence of a dedicated mental health law restricts the availability of structured psychological services. Nigeria's mental health policy, last updated in 1991, has not been fully implemented, and there is no dedicated funding for its enforcement (Nigerian Federal Ministry of Health, 2021).

3) Security and Accessibility Issues

Security concerns, especially in the northern regions affected by conflict, limit the reach of psychology-based SDG initiatives. Insecure areas are often inaccessible, hindering the delivery of mental health and psychological support services necessary for achieving SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Studies by Yusuf et al. (2020) reveal that insecurity disrupts mental health outreach programs and increases psychological trauma among vulnerable populations, with PTSD rates among internally displaced persons (IDPs) reaching as high as 30%. Nigeria has over 3 million IDPs as of 2021 (UNHCR, 2021), with limited access to psychological support due to insecurity and instability.

Strategies for Integrating Psychology into Nigeria's SDG Agenda

Integrating psychology into Nigeria's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda is crucial for addressing mental health, promoting well-being, and supporting inclusive development. Here are strategies that could enhance this integration:

1. ***Developing a Comprehensive National Mental Health Policy:*** A robust mental health policy is necessary for psychology to effectively contribute to the SDGs. A well-defined policy framework ensures that psychological services are prioritized and adequately funded, aligning with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). According to Gureje and Alem (2020), countries with national mental health policies are better equipped to improve public health outcomes. Nigeria's mental health policy, last updated in 1991, lacks enforcement mechanisms and does not adequately fund mental health services. Only 3.5% of Nigeria's health budget is allocated to mental health services (World Health Organization, 2021), compared to the WHO recommendation of 10% for effective mental health intervention.
2. ***Incorporating Psychological Education into the Curriculum:*** Integrating psychological education into Nigeria's school curriculum at all levels can improve mental health awareness and reduce stigma, supporting SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 3. Educating young people about mental health, emotional intelligence, and resilience fosters a society more equipped to address psychological needs. Aluede et al. (2019) emphasize the role of psychological education in improving emotional resilience among students, noting that psychological literacy among youth significantly enhances their capacity to manage stress and prevent mental health issues. A 2019 study by Nigeria's Ministry of Education found that less than 10% of secondary schools provide any form of mental health education.

3. ***Building Community-Based Psychological Services:*** Community-based mental health services make psychological support accessible to underserved populations, especially in rural and conflict-affected regions. This aligns with SDG 3 and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), promoting inclusivity and resilience. Studies by Obindo et al. (2020) show that community-based psychological interventions increase mental health service utilization and reduce stigma by providing localized, culturally sensitive care. Community-based programs can also be more sustainable as they leverage local resources and personnel. Approximately 70% of Nigerians live in rural areas, where access to mental health services is minimal (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Community-based initiatives can bridge this gap.
4. ***Strengthening Training and Capacity Building for Mental Health Professionals:*** There is a critical shortage of trained mental health professionals in Nigeria, which hampers psychology's role in achieving SDGs. Investing in the training of psychologists, counselors, and social workers will improve the availability and quality of mental health services. Adegoke et al. (2018) argue that training more psychologists and mental health professionals would help Nigeria meet global mental health goals. They advocate for increased university programs and professional certifications in psychology. Nigeria has approximately 300 clinical psychologists for over 200 million people, or one psychologist per 700,000 residents (Nigerian Psychological Association, 2020).
5. ***Promoting Public Awareness Campaigns:*** Public awareness campaigns on mental health, well-being, and stigma reduction are essential for creating a supportive environment for psychology-based SDG initiatives. Such campaigns can address misconceptions about mental illness, encouraging more people to seek psychological support. Adamu and Isa (2019) demonstrated that public awareness campaigns led to a 25% increase in mental health consultations in targeted Nigerian communities. They found that community radio, television, and social media were effective channels. A survey by the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (2019) found that 62% of Nigerians consider mental health issues to be the result of supernatural forces, highlighting the need for public education on mental health.
6. ***Collaboration with International Organizations:*** Partnerships with international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), can provide technical and financial support for psychology-based SDG projects in Nigeria. Such collaborations can bring in resources, knowledge, and best practices for scaling up mental health initiatives. Alli and Olatunji (2021) found that partnerships with organizations like WHO resulted in more effective program implementation, particularly in conflict zones where mental health needs are urgent. According to the UNDP (2020), international grants and collaborations accounted for over 40% of Nigeria's funding for mental health programs between 2015 and 2020.
7. ***Incorporating Psychological Research in Policy Development:*** Research in psychology can inform policies that address the psychological dimensions of social and economic issues, such as poverty, education, and health. Engaging psychologists in policy-making can contribute valuable insights for achieving SDG targets. Research by Edeh

et al. (2020) supports that policies informed by psychological research are more effective in addressing complex social issues. They advocate for regular consultations with psychologists during policy formulation, especially on issues like education and public health. Less than 5% of policymakers in Nigeria currently consult psychologists in their decision-making processes, according to a 2019 report by the Nigerian Policy Think Tank.

Conclusion

Psychology plays a vital role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria by addressing the psychological and social factors that influence individual and community well-being. With its focus on human behavior, cognition, and emotions, psychology can drive meaningful change in areas such as mental health, education, poverty reduction, and community resilience, contributing directly to SDGs like Good Health and Well-Being (SDG 3), Quality Education (SDG 4), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), and Sustainable Communities (SDG 11). Despite the potential of psychology to influence Nigeria's SDG agenda, challenges such as limited mental health resources, the stigma surrounding psychological issues, and insufficient integration of psychological expertise in policy and practice remain significant barriers. Nevertheless, through targeted interventions and collaborations, psychology can play a transformative role in addressing these barriers and ensuring that SDGs are not just aspirational but achievable for the Nigerian population.

Policy Recommendations

Given the outcomes of the review, the followings are recommended:

- i). **Strengthen Mental Health Infrastructure and Funding:** Government should allocate a higher percentage of the health budget (at least 10%, as recommended by WHO) to mental health services and build capacity in rural areas. A strong mental health infrastructure will improve access to psychological care and contribute to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being).
- ii). **Integrate Psychology into National Education Policy:** Implement psychological education as a mandatory component of the national curriculum at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels to raise awareness about mental health and emotional well-being. Education is crucial for fostering a psychologically informed society. SDG 4 (Quality Education) can benefit from incorporating psychological concepts like emotional intelligence and mental resilience into curricula. Collaborate with educational institutions to develop and implement comprehensive mental health education programs.
- iii). **Promote Community-Based Psychological Interventions:** Design and scale up community-based psychological services to address mental health needs in rural and conflict-prone areas. Community-based interventions are cost-effective and culturally appropriate, supporting SDGs 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and 11 (Sustainable Communities). Partner with local leaders, NGOs, and healthcare providers to deliver psychological services at the community level.
- iv). **Enhance Psychological Research and Data Collection:** Encourage research on psychology's contribution to SDGs and develop a robust data collection system to

- track progress on mental health and well-being. Evidence-based policy development relies on sound research and data. Psychology can help shape policies that are responsive to the needs of the population. Establish research grants and funding mechanisms for psychology research focused on the SDGs, and improve collaboration between universities and governmental agencies.
- v). **Address the Stigma Surrounding Mental Health:** Launch national campaigns to reduce stigma surrounding mental health, emphasizing the importance of psychological well-being as part of overall health. Public stigma about mental health prevents individuals from seeking help, which undermines efforts to meet SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). Collaborate with media outlets, community leaders, and influencers to create awareness and reduce misconceptions about mental health.
 - vi). **Capacity Building for Mental Health Professionals:** Train more psychologists and mental health professionals to meet the increasing demand for mental health services. Nigeria faces a severe shortage of mental health professionals, which hampers effective service delivery. Increasing capacity can significantly improve mental health outcomes, supporting SDG 3. Expand and fund psychology degree programs, scholarships, and certification opportunities for professionals, especially in underserved areas.
 - vii). **Foster Multisectoral Collaboration for SDG Implementation:** Promote partnerships between psychology organizations, government agencies, and international bodies to implement psychology-based SDG initiatives. Collaboration across sectors ensures that psychological strategies are integrated into broader development goals, making the SDGs more achievable. Formalize collaborations between psychologists, policymakers, NGOs, and international organizations to align efforts and resources for SDG implementation.
 - viii). **Incorporate Psychological Expertise into National Policy Development:** Involve psychologists in the policymaking process to ensure that mental health and psychological factors are considered in all SDG-related policies. Psychological insights can inform better policies that address the root causes of social and economic issues. This is particularly relevant for SDGs focused on health, education, and well-being. Establish advisory roles for psychologists in policy-making bodies to provide expertise on human behavior and mental health.

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