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Social Adjustment Strategies and Mental Well-Being of Secondary School Students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the extent to which social adjustment strategies predict the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three corresponding null hypotheses guided the study. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The study population consisted of 7,864 SS2 students in public secondary schools. A sample of 650 SS2 was selected for the study using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire titled "Social Adjustment Strategies and Mental Well-being Questionnaire (SASMWQ)" developed by the researchers. The instrument was face validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using the internal consistency method, and reliability coefficients obtained were 0.79 for emotional regulation, 0.82 for social support, 0.76 for problem-solving ability, and 0.81 for mental well-being, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.80. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression statistics. The analysis of data revealed that the three social

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adjustment strategies investigated, namely emotional regulation, social support, and problem-solving, significantly predicted the mental well-being of secondary school students. It was concluded that effective improvement of students' mental health requires a holistic approach that integrates emotional, social, and cognitive support systems within the school environment. Based on the major findings of the study, three recommendations were made, among which is that secondary schools in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State should integrate structured emotional regulation training and counseling services into their guidance programs to help students develop effective coping strategies for stress and emotional challenges.

Keywords: social adjustment, strategies, emotional regulation, social support, problem-solving, well-being

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical stage of human development during which young people experience rapid physical, emotional, and psychological changes that may influence their thoughts, feelings, and general well-being. Within the school environment, students are expected to cope with academic demands, peer pressure, family expectations, and personal identity challenges. These pressures may sometimes create emotional strain and psychological difficulties that can affect students' mental health and overall functioning. Mental well-being refers to the state in which students are able to manage their emotions, cope with stress, maintain positive self-perception, and function effectively in their daily activities, as highlighted by Ojiofor (2021). When students possess healthy mental well-being, they are more likely to demonstrate emotional stability, resilience, and positive attitudes toward life. On the other hand, poor mental well-being may lead to anxiety, stress, depression, and emotional instability, which may hinder students' academic and personal development.

However, students' mental well-being may depend largely on the social adjustment strategies they adopt in responding to the various challenges encountered in school and in their personal lives. Social adjustment strategies refer to the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive approaches students use to interact effectively with others, manage social demands, and cope with interpersonal challenges. According to Ukaegbu

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and Nnaji (2025), adjustment strategies help individuals respond to stressful situations, environmental demands, and social difficulties in ways that promote psychological balance. In the context of secondary school students, social adjustment strategies may include emotional regulation, seeking social support, and applying problem-solving skills in social situations. Students who possess effective social adjustment strategies are better able to manage stress, build supportive relationships, and maintain emotional stability. On the other hand, students who lack these strategies may struggle with anxiety, emotional distress, and poor mental well-being (Ukaegbu & Obikoya, 2017).

One important social adjustment strategy that can influence students' mental well-being is emotional regulation. Emotional regulation refers to the ability of individuals to recognize, understand, and manage their emotional responses in different situations (Ukaegbu & Nnaji, 2025). Students who regulate their emotions effectively are more likely to cope with stress, manage anxiety, and maintain psychological balance. Emotional regulation helps students control feelings such as anger, frustration, and fear, thereby reducing the risk of emotional instability. Conversely, poor emotional regulation may result in heightened stress, anxiety, and emotional disturbances, which can negatively affect students' mental well-being (Graham & Graham, 2022).

Another important social adjustment strategy is social support. Social support refers to the ability of students to seek and receive assistance, encouragement, and guidance from others during periods of stress or difficulty. According to Uko and Iwok (2021), students who receive support from teachers, counselors, parents, and peers are more likely to experience emotional comfort and psychological stability. Supportive relationships provide opportunities for students to share their concerns, receive reassurance, and reduce feelings of loneliness or anxiety. When students feel supported, they are more likely to develop confidence and maintain good mental health. In contrast, lack of social support may lead to isolation, stress, and poor mental well-being (Olaolu, 2020).

Problem-solving ability is also an important social adjustment strategy that may influence students' mental well-being. Problem-solving refers to the ability of individuals to identify challenges, analyze possible solutions, and take appropriate actions to resolve difficulties encountered in their daily lives (Ukaegbu & Nnaji, 2022). Students who possess effective problem-solving skills are better able to manage stress and handle life challenges in a constructive manner. Such students are more likely to approach problems

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with confidence and rational thinking, thereby reducing anxiety and emotional distress. On the other hand, students who lack problem-solving skills may feel overwhelmed by challenges, leading to frustration and poor mental well-being (Nkanang & Okafor, 2021).

From the foregoing, understanding how social adjustment strategies predict the mental well-being of students is essential for promoting emotional stability and psychological health among adolescents. Effective adjustment strategies can help students cope with stress, manage emotions, and maintain positive mental health. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the extent to which social adjustment strategies predict the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

The mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, has become a growing concern, as it affects students' ability to manage emotions, cope with stress, and function effectively within the school environment. In these areas, there are increasing observations of students experiencing anxiety, emotional instability, stress, and other psychological challenges that may affect their overall well-being. These issues suggest possible deficiencies in students' ability to adjust socially and cope with the demands of adolescence.

Despite the importance of social adjustment strategies in enhancing students' mental well-being, there is limited empirical evidence on how these strategies predict students' psychological functioning. While several studies have examined academic and social outcomes, less attention has been given to the role of social adjustment strategies in shaping mental well-being, particularly within the context of secondary schools in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State. This creates a gap in knowledge that needs to be addressed. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate the extent to which social adjustment strategies predict the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which social adjustment strategies predict the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to determine:

- i. The extent to which emotional regulation predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students.
- ii. The extent to which social support predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students.
- iii. The extent to which problem-solving ability predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. To what extent does emotional regulation predict the mental well-being of secondary school students?
- ii. To what extent does social support predict the mental well-being of secondary school students?
- iii. To what extent does problem-solving ability predict the mental well-being of secondary school students?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

- i. Emotional regulation does not significantly predict the mental well-being of secondary school students.
- ii. Social support does not significantly predict the mental well-being of secondary school students.
- iii. Problem-solving ability does not significantly predict the mental well-being of secondary school students.

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Scope of the Study

The study examined how social adjustment strategies predict the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas, Akwa Ibom State. Emotional regulation, social support, and problem-solving ability were the independent variables; mental well-being was the dependent variable. The study focused on Senior Secondary Two students in public secondary schools during the 2025/2026 academic session.

Theoretical Framework

Social Support Theory by Sidney Cobb (1976)

Social Support Theory was propounded by Sidney Cobb in 1976 and focuses on the importance of supportive relationships in promoting individuals' psychological health and social adjustment. The theory emphasizes that individuals who receive emotional, informational, and instrumental support from significant others such as family members, friends, teachers, and community members are better able to cope with stressful situations and maintain positive mental and social well-being. Social Support Theory explains that supportive interactions provide individuals with a sense of belonging, reassurance, and acceptance within their social environment. These supportive relationships help individuals manage emotional stress, build confidence, and develop positive coping mechanisms when confronted with life challenges. According to Cobb, social support functions in several ways, including emotional support, which involves expressions of empathy, care, and understanding; informational support, which involves guidance, advice, or knowledge that helps individuals solve problems; and instrumental support, which involves tangible assistance that helps individuals cope with difficulties. When individuals perceive that they are valued and supported by others, they tend to develop stronger emotional stability and better interpersonal relationships. Conversely, individuals who lack adequate social support may experience feelings of isolation, stress, and poor social adjustment.

The relationship between Social Support Theory and this study can be explained as follows: Secondary school students often encounter social and emotional challenges as they interact with peers, teachers, and family members. Social adjustment strategies such as social support from trusted individuals may help students manage stress, resolve

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interpersonal conflicts, and develop healthy relationships. Students who receive adequate support from teachers, counselors, and peers may develop a sense of belonging and social acceptance within the school environment. This support may enhance their mental well-being by promoting positive interactions and emotional stability. Therefore, Social Support Theory provides a useful explanation of how adjustment strategies involving social support can predict the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State.

Self-Determination Theory by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985)

Self-Determination Theory was propounded by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in 1985 and focuses on the role of basic psychological needs in promoting individuals' mental well-being and optimal functioning. The theory emphasizes that individuals' psychological health depends on the satisfaction of three fundamental needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to Deci and Ryan, when these needs are adequately satisfied, individuals are more likely to experience emotional stability, personal growth, and positive mental well-being. However, when these needs are not met, individuals may experience psychological distress, anxiety, and reduced well-being.

Self-Determination Theory explains that autonomy refers to the individual's ability to regulate their own behavior and make independent decisions; competence involves the ability to effectively handle challenges and achieve desired outcomes, while relatedness refers to the need to feel connected, accepted, and supported by others. These needs are essential for maintaining psychological balance and emotional health. When individuals perceive that they have control over their actions, feel capable in their activities, and experience supportive relationships, they tend to develop higher levels of self-confidence, emotional stability, and mental well-being. Conversely, lack of autonomy, competence, and relatedness may result in stress, low self-worth, and poor mental health.

The relationship between Self-Determination Theory and this study can be explained as follows: Secondary school students are constantly exposed to social and emotional challenges that require effective social adjustment strategies such as emotional regulation, social support, and problem-solving ability. Emotional regulation enables students to manage their feelings and maintain self-control, thereby promoting autonomy. Problem-solving ability helps students develop competence by enabling them

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to handle challenges effectively. Social support enhances relatedness by fostering a sense of belonging and connection with peers, teachers, and family members. When these adjustment strategies are effectively utilized, they help satisfy students' psychological needs, leading to improved mental well-being. However, students who lack these adjustment strategies may experience emotional instability, stress, and poor mental health. Therefore, Self-Determination Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how social adjustment strategies such as emotional regulation, social support, and problem-solving ability can predict the mental well-being of secondary school students in the Uyo and Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State.

Empirical Literature

In their study, Nwoye and Okonkwo (2020) investigated the influence of social support on the mental well-being of secondary school students in Enugu State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study was 5,100 students, and a sample of 510 students was selected using the stratified sampling technique. Data were collected using a questionnaire titled Social Support and Mental Well-being Scale (SSMWS). The reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained using Cronbach's alpha, while validity was established through expert review. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and regression analysis. The findings revealed that social support significantly predicts students' emotional stability and mental well-being. Students who received support from peers, teachers, and parents demonstrated better psychological outcomes. The study recommended strengthening school-based support systems and peer mentoring programs.

Eze and Nwachukwu (2021) explored the relationship between problem-solving ability and mental well-being among secondary school students in Abia State. The study used a correlational research design. The population consisted of 3,200 students, from which 320 students were sampled using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Problem-Solving and Mental Health Scale (PSMHS). The instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.88 using Cronbach's alpha, and validity was ensured through expert validation. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and regression analysis. Findings indicated that students with strong problem-solving skills experienced lower levels of stress and better mental health outcomes.

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Another study by Oladele (2022) investigated problem-solving ability and mental well-being among secondary school students in Oyo State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised 4,000 students, with a sample of 400 selected through a stratified sampling technique. Data were collected using a questionnaire titled Problem-Solving Skills and Well-being Inventory (PSSWI). The reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.81 using the test-retest method, while validity was ensured through expert judgment. Data were analyzed using regression and ANOVA. Findings revealed that although problem-solving ability contributes to mental well-being, it does not independently predict it, as emotional intelligence and social relationships also play significant roles. The study concluded that mental well-being is influenced by multiple interacting variables. It recommended a holistic approach to student development that integrates cognitive, emotional, and social skills. Smith and Smith (2023) carried out a study on social support and mental well-being among adolescents in the United Kingdom. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The population consisted of 2,500 adolescents, with a sample of 300 selected using a systematic sampling technique. Data were collected using standardized instruments including the Perceived Social Support Scale (PSSS) and Mental Health Inventory (MHI). Reliability coefficients of 0.82 and 0.85 were reported, respectively. Data were analyzed using hierarchical regression analysis. Findings showed that while social support contributes to well-being, it does not always directly predict mental health outcomes, as individual coping styles and personality traits significantly moderate the relationship.

Ezekwem (2024) investigated emotional regulation as a predictor of mental well-being among secondary school students in Imo State. The study employed an ex-post facto research design. The population comprised 3,800 students, with a sample of 380 selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Emotional Regulation and Mental Health Inventory (ERMHI). The instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.79 determined through the test-retest method, while validity was confirmed by specialists in measurement and evaluation. Data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The findings indicated that emotional regulation alone is not a strong predictor of mental well-being, as other factors such as social support and environmental influences showed stronger effects. The study concluded that mental well-being is multidimensional. It recommended that interventions should focus on a combination of emotional, social, and environmental factors. Nnaji (2025) conducted a study on the emotional self-regulation

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and psychological well-being of secondary school students in Anambra State. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population consisted of 4,200 senior secondary school students, out of which a sample of 420 students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Emotional Regulation and Well-being Scale (ERWS). The reliability coefficient of the instrument was established using the Cronbach alpha method and yielded 0.84, while face and content validity were ensured by experts in educational psychology. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and simple regression analysis. The findings revealed that emotional self-regulation significantly enhances students' psychological functioning and mental well-being. It was concluded that students who effectively regulate their emotions experience reduced stress and improved mental health outcomes.

More so, Ukaegbu and Nnaji (2025) investigated the relationship between social adjustment strategies and academic achievement of secondary school students in Government in the Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 5,076 students offering government as a subject in 25 public senior secondary schools in the Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. A sample of 346 senior secondary two students offering government was selected for the study using a multi-stage sampling procedure. Two researcher-made instruments, entitled "Social Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire" (SASQ) and "Government Achievement Test" (GAT), were used for data collection. The Social Adjustment Strategies Questionnaire was face validated, while the Government Achievement Test was content validated. The internal consistency reliability of the instruments was established, which yielded reliability coefficients of .73 and .75 for SASQ and GAT, respectively. The Pearson product-moment correlation statistic was used to answer the research questions and also test the null hypotheses. Analysis of data revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between peer interaction, help-seeking behavior, emotional self-regulation, and academic achievement of secondary school students in the government in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Despite numerous studies on mental well-being and its predictors, there is still limited research that specifically investigates the extent to which social adjustment strategies predict the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and

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Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas, considering their unique socio-cultural and school environments. This gap underscores the need for the present study to provide context-specific insights that can guide effective interventions and improve students' psychological and social outcomes.

Research Design

The study adopted a correlational research design to investigate the relationship between social adjustment strategies and mental well-being of secondary school students. According to Nworgu (2015), correlational research design is used to establish relationships among variables as they naturally occur. This design is therefore suitable for investigating how social adjustment strategies predict the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 7,864 SS Two students in public secondary schools in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. There are 22 public secondary schools in the area of the study (Akwa Ibom State Secondary Schools Board, 2026).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consisted of 650 SS Two students drawn from a population of 7,864 SS Two students in public secondary schools in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The sample size was derived using Taro Yamane's formula for a finite population. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the respondents. The population was first stratified based on the two local government areas, after which the sample was proportionately distributed according to the size of each stratum. Thereafter, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents from the respective schools.

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Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire titled “Social Adjustment Strategies and Mental Well-being Questionnaire (SASMWQ)” developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, namely Section A and Section B. Section A consisted of 18 items designed to measure the independent sub-variables of social adjustment strategies (emotional regulation, social support, and problem-solving ability), while Section B consisted of 15 items that measured respondents’ mental well-being. The items were structured on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts, comprising two experts in guidance and counseling and one expert in measurement and evaluation, all from the Faculty of Education. The experts examined the instrument for clarity, relevance, appropriateness of language, and adequacy in measuring the variables under study. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the instrument to ensure that it adequately measured the social adjustment strategies and mental well-being of secondary school students.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was established using the internal consistency method. The instrument was administered to 30 SS Two students in a public secondary school outside the study area but with similar characteristics. The data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.79 for emotional regulation, 0.82 for social support, 0.76 for problem-solving ability, and 0.81 for mental well-being, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.80. These values indicated that the instrument was reliable for the study.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher used a direct administration method in collecting data for the study. Permission was obtained from the school authorities before administering the questionnaire. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents in their

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respective schools. The purpose of the study was explained to the students, and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, after which the completed copies were collected immediately to ensure a high return rate.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using simple linear regression statistics. The R values of simple linear regression statistics were used to answer all the research questions. The null hypotheses were tested using the F-ratio associated with the simple linear regression coefficient at a .05 alpha level of significance. All data were subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Decision Rule

The following decision rule guided the answering of all the research questions:

0.80 - 1.00 Very high extent

0.60 - 0.799 High extent

0.40 - 0.599 Moderate extent

0.20 - 0.399 Low extent

0.00 - 0.199 Very low extent

Therefore, if the value of significant value is less than the 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significance was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was upheld and vice versa.

Results

Table 1: Simple regression analysis on the extent to which emotional regulation predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State (n = 650)

Model	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Remarks
1	.634	.427	.415	9.77224	Moderate Extent

Table 1 presents the result of the simple regression analysis on the extent to which emotional regulation predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State. The R-squared value of 0.427 means that emotional regulation accounts for 42.7% of the variation in students' mental well-being. This implies that the prediction of the mental well-being of secondary school students by emotional regulation is moderate.

Table 2: Simple regression analysis on the extent to which social support predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State (n = 650)

Model	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Remarks
1	.877	.769	.753	9.65492	High Extent

Table 2 presents the result of the simple regression analysis on the extent to which social support predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State. The R-squared value of 0.769 shows that social support accounts for 76.9% of the variation in students' mental well-being. This indicates that social support is a strong predictor of the mental well-being of secondary school students.

Table 3: Simple regression analysis on the extent to which problem-solving predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State (n = 650)

Model	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Remarks
1	.869	.755	.719	9.55071	High Extent

Table 3 presents the result of the simple regression analysis on the extent to which problem-solving predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State. The R square value of 0.755 shows that problem-solving accounts for 75.5% of the variation in students' mental well-being. This indicates that problem-solving significantly predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students.

Table 4: Summary of simple regression analysis on the extent to which emotional regulation predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State (n = 650)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	17856.42	1	17856.42	187.63	.000
Residual	61792.15	648	95.37		
Total	79648.57	649			

Since the p-value of .000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that emotional regulation significantly predicts students' mental well-being.

Table 5: Summary of simple regression analysis on the extent to which social support predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State (n = 650)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	31245.68	1	31245.68	327.54	.001
Residual	61802.92	648	95.43		
Total	93048.59	649			

Since the p-value of .001 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that social support significantly predicts students' mental well-being.

Table 6: Summary of simple regression analysis on the extent to which problem-solving predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State (n = 650)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	29876.54	1	29876.54	313.42	.000
Residual	61792.03	648	95.35		
Total	91668.57	649			

Since the p-value of .000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that problem-solving significantly predicts students' mental well-being.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of data on the extent to which emotional regulation predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students revealed that emotional regulation contributes moderately to mental well-being. In addition, the test of the corresponding null hypothesis showed that emotional regulation significantly predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students, suggesting that the ability of students to manage and control their emotions plays an important role in maintaining psychological stability. Emotional regulation enables students to cope with stress, reduce anxiety, and respond appropriately to challenging situations within the school environment. Students who are able to regulate their emotions are less likely to experience emotional disturbances such as anger, frustration, or fear, which could negatively affect their mental health. This ability helps them maintain calmness, improve concentration, and develop resilience when faced with academic and social pressures. In the context of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas, emotional regulation serves as a coping mechanism that supports mental well-being, although its influence is moderate, suggesting that other factors may also contribute to students' mental health. This finding is consistent with the study of Ukaegbu and Nnaji (2025), who found that emotional self-regulation significantly enhances students' psychological functioning and well-being.

According to them, students who can effectively manage their emotions tend to exhibit lower levels of stress and better mental health outcomes. However, this finding contrasts with the work of Ezekwem (2024), who reported that emotional regulation

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alone may not be a strong predictor of mental well-being, as other factors such as social support and environmental influences may have stronger effects on students' psychological health.

The analysis of data on the extent to which social support predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students showed that social support contributes highly to mental well-being. Additionally, the test of the corresponding null hypothesis indicated that social support significantly predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students, suggesting that the presence of supportive relationships plays a crucial role in enhancing students' psychological health. Social support provides students with emotional comfort, encouragement, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for maintaining mental well-being. Students who receive support from peers, teachers, parents, and counselors are more likely to feel valued and accepted, thereby reducing feelings of loneliness and emotional distress. This support system helps students to cope with stress, share their concerns, and develop positive self-concepts. In the context of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas, social support appears to be a strong determinant of mental well-being, highlighting the importance of positive interpersonal relationships in students' lives.

This finding agrees with Nwoye and Okonkwo (2020), who found that students who actively seek and receive social support demonstrate better emotional stability and mental well-being. According to them, supportive relationships enhance students' ability to cope with stress and improve their overall psychological functioning. However, this finding disagrees with the study of Smith and Smith (2023), who argued that while social support is beneficial, it may not always directly predict mental well-being, as individual coping styles and personality traits may influence how support is perceived and utilized.

The analysis of data on the extent to which problem-solving ability predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students indicated that problem-solving ability contributes highly to mental well-being. More so, the test of the corresponding null hypothesis showed that problem-solving ability significantly predicts the mental well-being of secondary school students, suggesting that students who can effectively identify and resolve challenges are more likely to maintain good mental health. Problem-solving ability enables students to approach difficulties with confidence, analyze possible solutions, and take appropriate actions to overcome obstacles. This reduces feelings of helplessness and frustration, thereby promoting emotional stability and psychological

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balance. Students with strong problem-solving skills are more likely to manage academic and social challenges effectively, which enhances their overall mental well-being.

In the context of secondary school students in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Astan Local Government Areas, problem-solving ability serves as a key factor in helping students cope with everyday challenges and maintain positive mental health. This finding is in line with the study of Eze and Nwachukwu (2021), who found that students with effective problem-solving skills experience lower levels of stress and better mental health outcomes. According to them, problem-solving ability enhances students' confidence and resilience in dealing with life challenges. However, this finding contrasts with the work of Oladele (2022), who reported that problem-solving ability alone may not fully predict mental well-being, as emotional and social factors may also play significant roles in influencing students' psychological health.

Conclusion

The study concluded that effective improvement of students' mental health requires a holistic approach that integrates emotional, social, and cognitive support systems within the school environment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- i. Secondary schools in Uyo and Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State should integrate structured emotional regulation training and counseling services into their guidance programmes to help students develop effective coping strategies for stress and emotional challenges.
- ii. School administrators in area of study should strengthen social support systems by promoting peer mentoring, teacher-student relationships, and parental involvement to enhance students' sense of belonging and psychological well-being.
- iii. Curriculum planners in Nigeria should incorporate problem-solving and life skills education into school programmes to equip secondary school students with the competencies needed to manage academic and social pressures effectively.

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SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT STRATEGIES AND MENTAL WELL-BEING QUESTIONNAIRE (SASMWQ)

Instruction: Choose your response from the number of alternatives by ticking appropriately in the box provided.

Keys: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

Section A: Social Adjustment Strategies

S/N	Emotional Regulation	SA	A	D	SD
1	I am able to control my emotions in challenging situations.				
2	I remain calm when I am under pressure.				
3	I can manage my anger without hurting others.				
4	I can adjust my feelings to suit different situations.				
5	I stay emotionally balanced even when things go wrong.				
6	I can handle frustration without losing control.				
	Social Support				
7	I have friends who care about me.				
8	People around me provide encouragement when I need it.				
9	I have someone to talk to when I feel stressed.				
10	I receive help from family members when I need assistance.				
11	I feel accepted by my peers.				
12	I am satisfied with the support I receive from people around me.				
	Problem-Solving Skills				
13	I identify problems before trying to solve them.				
14	I think of different ways to handle a problem.				
15	I am confident in my ability to solve difficult problems.				
16	I persist until I find a solution to a problem.				
17	I seek information that can help me solve problems.				

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18	I approach problems with a mindset.				
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Section B: Mental Well-Being

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	I feel happy with my life as a student.				
2	I am satisfied with my daily activities in school.				
3	I am able to cope with academic stress effectively.				
4	I feel confident in my abilities as a student.				
5	I maintain a positive outlook on life.				
6	I feel relaxed during school activities.				
7	I am able to manage my worries effectively.				
8	I feel comfortable participating in group activities.				
9	I sleep well and feel refreshed for school activities.				
10	I rarely feel anxious about schoolwork.				
11	I can balance my academic and personal life.				
12	I feel hopeful about my future.				
13	I usually concentrate well during lessons.				
14	I can control negative thoughts about myself.				
15	I feel mentally strong when dealing with challenges.				