Psychological Distress and Substance Abuse as Predictors of Psychological Well-Being of Smallholder Farmers' in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State.

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ABSTRACT

Farmers work hard throughout the seasons to produce food and meet Sustainable Development Goal 2, which aims to eliminate all forms of hunger by 2030 and achieve food security. Understanding the psychological distress that smallholder farmers' experience is critical to advancing food and nutrition security. According to research, farmers are particularly vulnerable to psychological distress. Depression, anxiety, stress, and substance abuse were investigated as predictors of farmers' psychological well-being in Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State. The study included 355 farmers from four communities in Kighir and Adem, Apir, and Adeke, chosen at random. Five hypotheses were proposed and tested.Data were gathered using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21), the Drug Abuse Screen Test (DAST-10), and the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB-18). Using Multiple Linear Regression for data analysis, results from the four-hypothesis showed that depression, anxiety, stress, and substance abuse all had a significant negative impact on farmers' psychological well-being. The fifth hypothesis (β= -0.262, t= -2.637, P< 0.05 and β= -0.211, t= -2.135, P< 0.05) found that depression and stress jointly have a significant negative impact on farmers' psychological well-being. The study recommends that the federal, state, and local governments, non-governmental organizations, philanthropists, and private sector actors take immediate action to address the causes of distress in farming communities and provide farmers with access to psychological services in farming communities. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the critical need for psychological research, citing the study's population and psychological well-being as important topics in mental health discussions.

Keywords: Psychological distress, Well-being, Depression, Anxiety, Stress, and Substance Abuse.

INTRODUCTION

Psychological Well-being is crucial for farmers to be productive and contribute to society. Psychological distress factors such as depression, anxiety, stress, and substance abuse can negatively impact their psychological well-being, affecting their overall well-being and productivity. The psychological well-being of farmers is an essential aspect of their overall health and quality of life. Agriculture's complex lifestyle can lead to stress, affecting appetite, weight, sleep, and overall well-being. Poor Psychological well-being among farmers can also lead to withdrawal from social activities and negatively impact the world economy. According to the United Nations Statistics Division, Development, and Data Outreach, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)aims to achieve food security and find sustainable solutions to end all forms of hunger by 2030. Farmers put in a lot of effort throughout the year to feed everyone, but this comes with a lot of relationship responsibility that may be stressful for them and harm their Psychological Well-being. According to the October 2022 Cadre Harmonisé report, nearly 25 million Nigerians are at risk of facing hunger in 2023.

Global and local factors, such as conflicts, war, climate change, increased financial responsibilities, government policies, disease outbreaks, limited access to services, banditry, rape, a lack of qualified professionals, and a lack of awareness of Psychological Well-being issues, can have a positive or negative impact on farmers' psychological well-being. To advance food security, it is essential to comprehend the psychological distress that affects farmers' well-being. There is proof that other elements like risky working conditions, long hours, a lack of workers, a lack of support, family dynamics, excessive workloads, time constraints, work-life balance, mental strain, psychosomatic disorders, a negative attitude, and low self-esteem negatively impact farmers' well-being. About one-third of those who work in the agricultural sector make an economic contribution to the world at large. Farmers are the backbone of this highly productive sector, which contributes the most to Nigeria's GDP. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the agricultural sector contributed 41 (N41) trillion, or 23.24% of the country's total nominal GDP, to the country's GDP in 2021 (NBS, 2022). The contributions of the farmer cannot be overstated given the significant role the agricultural sector is playing·For instance, droughts and floods brought on by climate change have presented farmers in Nigeria with unpredictable crop yield and output. More recently, they have had to deal with a conflict involving cattle herders and other invaders.

These Psychological Well-being issues are not only harmful to farmers because they reduce their productivity, but they also result in a high cost of food. According to a systematic review, farmers most frequently experience stress, depression, and suicidal thoughts during harvest, planting, lambing, and calving seasons. These stressors may also include equipment failures, fluctuating livestock, and crop prices, difficult access to markets and financing, and a lack of knowledge of better farming techniques. Compared to the general population, farmers are significantly more likely to experience psychological distress (depression and anxiety) and mood or anxiety disorder. Fishers, farmers, ranchers, and lumber harvesters are more likely than any other major occupational group to experience major depressive disorder, according to Rosmann (2021). Low mood, changes in appetite, sleep disturbances, fatigue, substance use, withdrawal, confused thinking, loss of concentration, personality change, loss of pleasure, negative thoughts, etc. are common symptoms of depression and anxiety in farmers.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a serious detrimental impact on farmers' Psychological Well-being. The Smallholder Women Farmers Organization in Nigeria (SWOFON) president reported the emotionally upsetting experiences of its members during the lockdown, including watching their fruits and vegetables rot due to inadequate storage facilities, being harassed and intimidated while transporting their products through security checkpoints, and rising prices of agricultural inputs like fertilizers, herbicides, and seedlings.

Substance abuse, including alcohol and drug misuse, is another issue prevalent among farmers (Alves, R. M. et. al. 2021). The stresses and challenges of farming can lead some individuals to turn to substances as a coping mechanism. Substance abuse not only has detrimental effects on physical health but can also significantly impact psychological well-being. It can exacerbate symptoms of psychological distress, contribute to the development of psychological well-being disorders, and hinder farmers' ability to cope with the pressures they face.

In the context of Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria, it is important to investigate the relationship between psychological distress, substance abuse, and the psychological well-being of farmers. The farming community in this region faces unique challenges related to agricultural practices, economic factors, conflicts, drought, and local environmental conditions. Understanding the predictors of psychological well-being among farmers in this specific context can provide valuable insights for developing targeted interventions and support systems.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of psychological factors such as depression, anxiety, stress, and substance abuse on the psychological well-being of farmers in the rural Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. Existing studies predominantly originate from foreign perspectives, leaving a knowledge

gap regarding the psychological variables specific to agriculture, which constitutes the most vital sector of Nigeria's economy.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

a. To investigate how stress affects farmers' psychological well-being in Makurdi LGA
b. To investigate the impact of depression on farmers' psychological well-being in Makurdi LGA
c. To better understand how anxiety affects farmers' psychological well-being in Makurdi LGA
d. To ascertain the impact of drugs on the psychological well-being of farmers in the Makurdi LGA
e. To investigate the combined effects of stress, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse on farmers' psychological well-being in the Makurdi LGA

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to a review of the theoretical underpinnings of psychological distress, social exclusion brought on by a lack of access to credit, high-quality farm inputs, and agronomic practices is correlated with poverty. Both low- and high-income groups typically share the same risk factors for psychological distress. Stress, anxiety, and depression non-specific symptoms are referred to as psychological distress. High levels of psychological distress can be a sign of common psychological disorders like depression and anxiety disorders and are a sign of poor mental health. According to the World Health Organization, stress is any kind of change that puts a strain on one's body, mind, or emotions.

Physical distress is described by Mirowsky and Ross (2002) as emotional suffering. Depression and anxiety symptoms predominately characterize these psychological distresses. There is evidence that stress hurts distress; however, by including stress in the definition of distress, the presence of distress in the absence of stress is not acknowledged. Stress, anxiety, and depression non-specific symptoms are referred to as psychological distress. Increased psychological distress is a sign of poor mental health. Some situations may be avoided by people with anxiety disorders out of fear. They might also experience physical side effects like sweating, trembling, nausea, or an accelerated heartbeat.

A pattern of harmful substance use for mood-altering purposes is known as substance abuse. Alcohol, other drugs (legal or not), and some substances that aren't even drugs can all be considered "substances." Drug use costs individuals, families, and society a great deal of money.
Our physical, social, and psychological well-being are crucial components of our general health. It entails enjoying a high level of life satisfaction and a sense of purpose as well as being in good physical and mental health. Good well-being includes a wide range of advantages in addition to the absence of mental illness. A concept in and of itself, well-being has both subjective and objective dimensions.

A farmer is a producer who cultivates crops, raises fish, or raises livestock on a small scale. The majority of farmers work less than 2 hectares (5 acres) of land. The lack of a market is one of the most damaging elements preventing productivity in farming.

This study was framed by the positive functioning, person-environment fit, and transactional stress theories proposed by Ryff (1989). Psychological well-being is regarded by the positive functioning domain as being more than just the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect. Instead, it is said that positive and negative effects operate separately and have a weak correlation. Active participation in various existential challenges is essential for psychological well-being. A thorough analysis of earlier theories of positive

functioning was carried out by Ryff in 1989. At the intersections of the ideas, she picked out themes. Autonomy, Life Purpose, Positive Relationships with Others, Personal Development, Environmental Mastery, and Self-Acceptance were operationalized as these points.

Psychological well-being, according to Ryff (1989), is active participation in several existential struggles. The degree of compatibility between a person and their environment is described by the person-environment fit theory. According to this theory, a farmer can have positive functioning, which gives him the ability to meet and overcome the challenges of life.

HYPOTHESES

1. Stress will significantly predict the psychological well-being of Smallholder Farmers in Makurdi, Benue State
2. Depression will significantly influence the psychological well-being of Smallholder Farmers in Makurdi, Benue State
3. In Makurdi, Benue State, Smallholder Farmers' psychological well-being will be significantly influenced by anxiety.
4. The psychological Well-being of Farmers in Makurdi, Benue State, will significantly be influenced by Substance Abuse.
5. Stress, Depression, Anxiety, and Substance Abuse will significantly and jointly predict the psychological well-being of Smallholder Farmers in Makurdi, Benue State.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The researchers used a descriptive research design for the study. This statistical method assessed farmers in Benue State's Makurdi Local Government Area using a validated scale on the variables of stress, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and psychological well-being.

Participants

A total of three hundred fifty- five (355) Smallholder Farmers in the Makurdi villages of Kighir, Adem, Apir, and Adeke settlements were selected and considered adequate to assess the study's population by Fisher's formular (2000). Their ages range from 19 to 63, with a mean age of 38.39 and a standard deviation of 10.822. Males (N = 194, or 54.6%), and females (N = 161, or 45.4%). Out of 355 were African traditionalists (8.5%), Muslims (16.6%), and (74.9%) were Christians. Single (N= 131; 36.9%), Married (N= 186; 52.4%), Separated (N= 18; 5.1%), and Divorced (N= 20; 5.6%) were the four different marital statuses. Commercial (N = 239; 67.3%) and substantial (N = 116; 32.7%) were the two farming types. Those with Income: below N30,000 were 14 (3.9%), between N31,000 and N50,000: 68 (19.2%), between N51,000 and N70,000: 169 (47.6%), and above N70,000: 104 (29.3%). None (N= 131; 36.9%), 1-3 Children (N= 122; 34.4%), 4-6 Children (N= 70; 19.7%), and 7 Children and Up (N= 32; 9%) were the number of children had by the farmers. Farming method: local tools (N= 314) and mechanized (N= 41; 11.5%). Crops (N = 190; 53.5%), livestock (N = 129; 36.3%), and purchases and sales (N = 36; 10.1%) make up the nature of farming. Farmer's educational levels werenon-educated (17; 4.8%), Primary (27; 7.6%), Secondary (80; 22.5%), ND/NCE (36; 10.1%), as well as B.Sc. 57.7% of HND (N=187) and M.Sc. (N= 8; 2.3%).

Sampling Technique/Sample Size:

The sample size determined for this study using Fisher's formula is 383. Fisher's formula was used to determine

the minimum sample size for this study. The participants were chosen using a practical random sampling technique (Bornstein et al., 2013) from well-known, literate, and semiliterate farmers in the communities (reading and numeracy skills). The participants picked lotteries of "Yes' and "No" and received a briefing on the study's ethical protocol.

Instrument

Four survey instruments were employed to collect data in this study. The instrument was divided into four sections, A through D, where the questionnaires used in this study to collect data:

Section A: Demographic information about the participants is included, such as their gender, religion, age, marital status, income, and farming type.

Section B: Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21) by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) psychological scale, short version, consisting of 21 questions and three components: depression (7 questions), anxiety (7 questions), and stress (7 questions). It is graded on a Likert scale with a maximum score of four (very similar to me = 3, completely different from me = 0). The psychometric properties of this scale were evaluated in the Brazilian population with pain, and only one of this study's aims and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha of 0.96) were found in the exploratory factor analysis. Test-retest validity was 0.81 for depression, 0.78 for anxiety, 0.80 for stress, and 0.82 for the entire questionnaire, and they reported internal consistency (alpha coefficient) for stress, depression, and anxiety equal to 0.87, 0.85, and 0.93 for each of these variables, respectively (Molla & Nikmanesh, 2017). The scale has high construct validity, convergence, and divergence. DASS, which consists of 21 items, had a Cronbach reliability result from a pilot study in this research that revealed a Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient of.882.

Section C:The Drug Use Screening Inventory (DUSI) is a self-report tool that was initially created by Tarter, & Hegedus (1991) for adolescent drug use screening, but Coleman & Trunzo (2015) found that it was also valid among adult populations. The DUSI is used to determine whether a person uses drugs or alcohol and to forecast how severely they might use drugs or alcohol before meeting the criteria for a substance use disorder. There are ten scales or domains on the instrument. These are the following domains: substance use, health status, psychiatric disorder, behavior patterns, work and school adjustment, family system, peer relationships, social competence, and 10.leisure/recreation. The DUSI has superior psychometric qualities overall. (Tarter & Hegedus, 1991; Tarter & Kirisci, 1997). Only domain 1 of the DUSI was used in this study to assess alcohol and drug use. The DUSI provides a list of drugs for assessment of substance use, including alcohol, marijuana/pot, stimulants/uppers, opiates, PCP, sniff gases or fumes, and others. When asked, "How many times have you used each of the drugs listed below in the last month? ", respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of use for each substance by choosing one of five options." (0 times, 1-2 times, 3-9 times, 10-20 times, more than 20 times). In response to a subsequent question, the participant is asked to identify the substance they feel they have the most trouble with. The third question then asks the participant to say which substance they prefer. In this study, the reliability index for the DAST-10, which has 10 items, had a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of.541.

Section D: Psychological Well-beingScale(PWBS) was employed for use. This questionnairecan be completed in three (3) to five (5) minutes (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The checklist includes questions on self-acceptance, good relationships with others, independence, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal development. The subscale items for autonomy are Q15, Q17, and Q18. The subscale items for environmental mastery are Q4, Q8, and Q9. Q11, Q12, and Q14 are the subscale items for personal growth. Q6, Q13, and Q16 are the subscale items for positive relations with others. Q3, Q7, and Q10 are the subscale items for "Purpose in Life." Q1, Q2, and Q5 are the subscale items for self-acceptance. (Brown, 2003). The 18-item Reliability Index for Psychological Well-Being (PWB), which was used in this study, had a Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient of.646.

Report on a Pilot Study

The Reliability Index for DASS, which consists of 21 items, was tested in a pilot study with 50 participants from a population of farmers in Karu LGA, and the results showed a Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient of.882. Additionally, the 18-item Reliability Index for Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS) has a Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient of.646. As a result, the study determined that the relevant questionnaires were valid and reliable for this study. For more information on the reliability test, refer to Appendix III.

Procedure

For the study, the researcher visited the communities in Benue State's Makurdi Local Government Area with permission from the Ministry of Agriculture Makurdi. Before visiting the various locations in these villages and farm settlements, the researcher informed the village heads of Kighir, Adem, Apir, and Adeke of the research's purpose and verbally obtained their consent. The researcher also had two trained research assistants who assisted in giving the survey to the participants. For ten days during the survey's administration, each farmer who took part in the survey received refreshments in the form of snacks and drink. The survey took an average of 30 minutes to complete for each respondent.

The confidentiality of all the information the Participants provided was guaranteed, they were reassured that the research was safe, and their consent was obtained before the administration of the questionnaire. Additionally, the researcher used a straightforward practical random sampling technique to distribute the questionnaires to 383 farmers, and only 355 of the farmers finished the survey. The study was conducted close to harvest season for maize and planting of soybeans. This means that any farmer who was willing and available to participate in the study was eligible. Only three hundred and fifth-five, (355 total) copies of the questionnaire were filled out and returned. The difference did not impact negatively on the study, based on the 2006 population census. Under the study's goals, data analysis was done on the information collected from participants.

Statistical Technique Used

To test the hypotheses in this study, the researcher employed both descriptive and inferential statistics for the analysis of data. Descriptive statistics of mean, frequency standard deviation, and percentage were used to describe the demographic characteristics while the inferential statistics of linear regression analysis were used to test hypotheses one, two, three, and four. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis five.

DATA ANALYSIS

The correlational matrix results of the relationship among the variables of the study on psychological well-being among Smallholder Farmers in some selected communities in Makurdi LGA of Benue State. The results revealed that there is a significant correlation of age (r = .204, *P*< .01), religious affiliation (r = -.255, *P*< .01), income (r = .115, *P*< .05), farming approaches (r = .194, *P*< .05), nature of faming (r = .168, *P*< .01), education (r = .106, *P*< .05), depression (r = -.373, *P*< .01), anxiety (r = -.274, *P*< .01), stress (r = -.365, *P*< .01) and substance abuse (r = -.214, *P*< .01) on psychological well-being but indicates insignificant correlation with gender (r = -.021, *P*> .05), marital status (r = .029, *P*> .05), farming type (r = -.069, *P*> .05) and number of children (r = .021, *P*> .05). The results also indicates that majority of the variables are significantly inter-correlated among other variables in the study.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: The first hypothesis states that the impact of stress on small farmers in Makurdi, Benue State,

will be highly predictive of psychological well-being. This hypothesis was tested using linear regression analysis and the result is presented in Table 4.3 thus:

Table 1.0:Influence of Stress on the PsychologicalWell-Being of Smallholder Farmers in Makurdi

Variables	B	T	R	R^2	F	Sig
(Constant)	88.889	165.899	.365	.133	54.284	.0000
Stress	-.557	-7.368				

df= 1, 353

The summary findings of the linear regression analysis of the impact of stress on mental health among small farm owners are presented in Table 4.3. According to the findings, stress significantly affectspsychological well-being (R=.365; F=54.284, P.01), which explains about 13.3% of the variation in the psychological well-being of Makurdi farmers. The findings also show that stress has a significant negative impact on farmers' mental health (= -.557 t= -7.368, p.01). In other words, this study provided significant confirmation of the hypothesis. This suggests that the high levels of stress that farmers experience have a detrimental effect on their mental health.

Hypothesis 2: This hypothesis states that the presence of depression will have a significant impact on the psychological well-being of Smallholder Farmers in Makurdi, Benue State. This hypothesis was tested using linear regression analysis and the result is presented in Table 4.4 thus:

Table 1.1: Influence of Depression on the Psychological Well-Being of Smallholder Farmers in Makurdi

Variables	B	T	R	R^2	F	Sig.
(Constant)	91.232	119.861	.373	.139	56.890	.000
Depression	-.822	-7.543				.000
df= 1, 353						

The summary findings of the linear regression analysis of the impact of depression on psychological well-being among small farm owners are shown in Table 1.1 According to the findings, depression significantly affects mental health (R=.373; F=56.890, P.01), and this relationship accounted for about 13.9% of the variation in the mental health of Makurdi's farmers. Additionally, the findings show that depression has a significantly negative impact on farmers' mental health (= -.822 t= -7.543, p.01). In other words, this study provided significant confirmation of the hypothesis. This suggests that farmers' depression has a detrimental effect on their mental health.

Hypothesis 3: The third hypothesis states that anxiety will significantly impact on psychological well-being of Smallholder Farmers in Makurdi, Benue State. This hypothesis was tested using linear regression analysis and the result is presented in Table1.2 thus:

Table 1.2:Influence of Anxiety on the Psychological Well-Being of Smallholder Farmers in Makurdi

Variables	B	T	R	R^2	F	Sig.
(Constant)	91.048	94.426	.274	.075	28.675	.000
Anxiety	-.597	-5.355				.000

df= 1, 353

The study reveals that anxiety significantly impacts the psychological well-being of small farm owners in Makurdi, accounting for 7.5% of their variance. Furthermore, anxiety has a significant detrimental effect on their mental health, confirming the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: The psychological well-being of Farmers in Makurdi, Benue State, will significantly be influenced by substance abuse. This hypothesis was tested using linear regression analysis and the result is presented in Table1.3 thus:

Table 1.3:Influence of Substance Abuse on the Psychological Well-Being of Smallholder Farmers

Variables	B	T	R	R2	F	Sig.
(Constant)	95.281	43.446	.214	.046	16.948	.000
Substance Abuse	-.696	-4.117				.000

df= 1, 353

The study found that substance abuse significantly impacts the psychological well-being of Smallholder Farmers in Makurdi, accounting for 4.6% of their variance. However, it also has a significant negative impact, indicating that the level of substance abuse negatively affects their psychological well-being.

Hypothesis 5: Smallholder Farmers in Makurdi, Benue State, will have theirmental health jointly predicted by stress, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse.This hypothesis was tested using Hierarchical Regression Analysisand the result is presented in Table1.4 thus:

Table 1.4: Summary of the Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Psychological Distress and Substance Use on Psychological Well-Being of Farmers.

	R	R^2	F	B	t.	P-Val.
Model 1	**.388**	**.150**	**20.680**	**-**	**80.912**	**.000**
Depression				-.262	-2.637	.009
Anxiety				.089	1.093	.275
Stress				-.211	-2.135	.033
Model 2	**.388**	**.151**	**15.507**	**-**	**5.239**	**.000**
Depression				-.255	-2.526	.012
Anxiety				.087	1.064	.288
Stress				-.205	-2.037	.042
Substance use				-.021	-.373	.709

The study found that stress and depression are the main predictors of psychological well-being among farmers in Makurdi, Benue State. The first model showed that 15% of farmers' psychological well-being is influenced by these factors, while the second model, including substance use, indicates that 15.1% of farmers' psychological well-being is influenced by substance use. These findings suggest that stress, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse negatively impact the mental health of farmers in Makurdi.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study examined the psychological well-being of farmers in Makurdi, Benue State, using a sample of 355 participants. The results showed that stress significantly predicted the psychological well-being of farmers, with

small farmers being the most vulnerable to stress. Climate change-related problems, such as droughts and floods, make farming one of the most demanding occupations in modern society. Farmers' labor is in high demand due to the low adoption of mechanization in farming communities, which puts pressure on the aging few farmers in the community to cultivate small plots of land with the same people and primitive tools.

Depression was found to be a key determinant of the psychological well-being of farmers in Makurdi, Benue State. Factors contributing to depression and anxiety include high levels of stress, changes in market prices and input costs, disease outbreaks, equipment failures, poverty, low standards of living, governmental policies, and unfavourable environmental conditions.

Anxiety had a significant negative impact on farmers' psychological well-being, with symptoms including low mood, changes in appetite, sleep disturbances, fatigue, substance use, withdrawal, confused thinking, loss of concentration, personality change, loss of pleasure, negative thoughts, etc.

Drug abuse also had a significant negative impact on the psychological well-being of farmers in Makurdi, Benue State. The findings were consistent with previous research, suggesting that stressors frequently connected to farming and ranching are linked to anxiety and depression.

Farmers in Makurdi regularly consume and sometimes abuse "Brukutu," a popular locally brewed alcoholic beverage made from fermented millet or sorghum, which is a common stimulant among farmers.

The study suggests that stress, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse are significant predictors of the psychological well-being of farmers in Makurdi, Benue State.

In conclusion, understanding risk factors affecting farmers' psychological well-being is crucial for reducing the psychological distress burden and improving food and nutrition security in farming communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The knowledge of risk factors affecting farmers' mental health is essential for reducing the burden of psychological distress, so this research is an important step in synthesizing some of these important factors and ensuring that farmers do not rely on substances to manage their challenges in farming activities.

The study recommends that smallholder farmers diagnosed with psychological distress be offered psychological help through effective counseling services or intervention that will help the individual or the community in dealing with challenges encompassing farming activities such as financial pressure, concerns about the future, and unforeseen climate change impact such as drought, flood, farmer-headers clashes, banditry, kidnapping actions that negatively impact on the farming.

The Federal Government of Nigeria should urgently review the National Primary Health Care Policy to include mental health care services Gatchel, R. J., & Oordt, M. S. (2003) by recruiting qualified counselors and psychologists to identify, diagnose, and treat psychological distress. This will enable smallholder farmers to detect psychological distress early.

Raising awareness about the negative effects of psychological distress on well-being is critical. The intervention plan must include educating the public and the community of small-holder farmers to ensure that the farmers' overall well-being is monitored and cared for by professionals.

Finally, governments at all levels should prioritize mental health at all levels. Federal, state, and local governments should prioritize the mental health of smallholder farmers in their agricultural policies. This could

involve allocating allocation resources to establish mental health support programmes specifically tailored to farming communities. Additionally, policies addressing broader social and economic issues affecting farmers, such as access to health care, and financial stability should be implemented.

LIMITATIONS

There are some limitations to this study. The main advantage of this study is that it was conducted among farmers.

Future research should aim to increase the sample size to improve the generalizability and applicability of the findings. Meanwhile, more research should be done using samples from various local governments across the state to provide clear insight and understanding of farmers' psychological distress, as well as better psychological interventions that may be appropriate for farmers' mental well-being in the state.

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