



School-Based Mental Health Support for Adolescents with Anxiety Disorders in South African Secondary Schools: A Three-Year Implementation and Longitudinal Psychological Impact Study

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Abstract

School-based mental health support programmes for adolescents with anxiety disorders are increasingly being implemented in secondary schools to address the growing prevalence of such conditions. The study employed ethnographic methods, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups to gather detailed qualitative data from educators, students, and parents within the participating schools. Data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in participants' experiences. During the three-year intervention period, it was observed that a significant proportion (75%) of students reported improved mental health outcomes, with particular emphasis on reductions in anxiety symptoms and improvements in academic performance among those who received regular support sessions. Themes emerging from interviews included enhanced social skills and increased self-awareness. The findings suggest that school-based mental health programmes can have a positive impact on the psychological well-being of adolescents diagnosed with anxiety disorders, contributing to their overall development and academic success. Based on this study, it is recommended that schools continue to integrate mental health support into their curricula, providing regular sessions for students as part of their standard educational offerings. Additionally, further research should explore the scalability of such interventions across different contexts and populations. adolescents, anxiety disorders, school-based mental health, longitudinal impact study

Keywords: *African Geography, Anxiety Disorders, Qualitative Research, Psychoeducation, School Culture, Social Support Networks, Phenomenology*

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