

Weekly Webinar Training

Theme: The Weight of Silence – Addressing Mental Health Challenges Facing Nigerian Men

The event spotlighted mental health crisis among Nigerian men, revealing how cultural norms have long equated silence with strength, fueling emotional suppression, isolation, and often, tragedy.

Dr. Thompson emphasized that while silence may preserve dignity in tradition, it can be deadly in matters of mental health. Drawing from the DSM-5, he explained that mood, cognitive, and behavioral disturbances are clinical issues, not moral failings. Some Nigerian men, he noted, often mask their struggles with harmful coping mechanisms such as alcohol use, aggression, emotional withdrawal, or humor, leading to deeper suffering.

About 80% of Nigerian men face serious mental health challenges, yet less than 10% receive adequate care. One in four Nigerians will experience mental illness, and men are 2–3 times more likely to die by suicide than women. Statements like “Real men don’t cry” are not just harmful, they can be deadly.

Targeted solutions to break this cycle:

- Train faith and community leaders to recognize mental health symptoms and offer informed support.
- Establish male-focused safe spaces where men can openly share their struggles without fear of judgment.
- Normalize therapy and help-seeking behaviors through public campaigns and influential male role models.
- Incorporate mental health education into schools, religious gatherings, and workplaces.
- Integrate mental health care into primary healthcare systems to make services more accessible and stigma-free.

Breakout sessions reinforced these suggestions, with participants highlighting the urgency of visibility, empathy, and education

Words on Marble

“True strength lies not in enduring suffering silently, but in the courage to break the silence.”

” Dr. David Thompson

Weekly WhatsApp Interactive Session

ICTMH Mental Health Week Report

Theme: The Weight of Silence: Mental Health Challenges Facing Nigerian Men

Date: July 14th – July 20th, 2025

Overview

Overview: The Initiative for Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health (ICTMH) successfully hosted its Mental Health Wellness Week from July 14th to July 20th on WhatsApp. This year’s theme, “The Weight of Silence: Mental Health Challenges Facing Nigerian Men,” aimed to shed light on the often-unspoken mental health battles faced by Nigerian men due to societal expectations, cultural norms, and internalized pressure to remain emotionally resilient. The week-long virtual event featured daily reflections, conversations, polls, trainings, and interactive exercises that fostered healing, dialogue, and community support. It provided a rare safe space for both men and women to reflect, connect, and grow.

Theme Background

In a society where strength is often equated with silence, Nigerian men are conditioned to suppress their emotions. This event highlighted the urgent need to dismantle such norms and open up healthy conversations around mental health, vulnerability, and healing for men.

Daily Highlights

Motivational Monday “Unspoken Battles” This day opened the week with a stirring narrative about “Jide,” a seemingly strong man who broke down under the pressure of unspoken emotional burdens. It served as a powerful wake-up call to normalize help-seeking and emotional expression among men.

Participant Reflections:

“Speaking out without fear and timidity will make the world a peaceful abode.” – Uzo

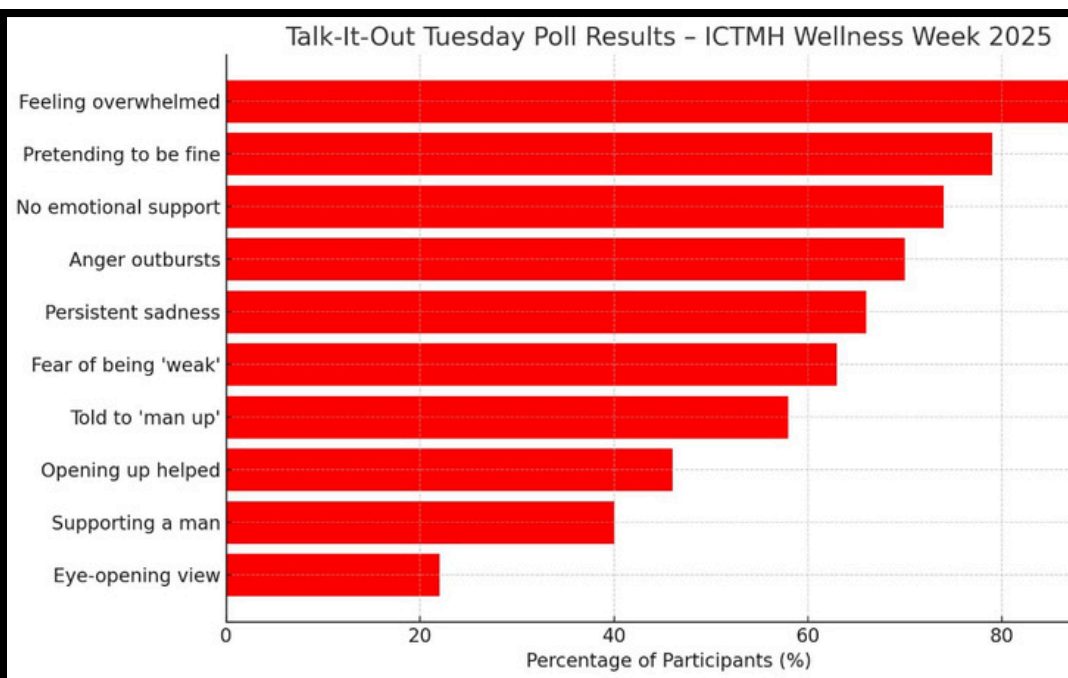
“As men, we carry so much and say so little. But we must learn to speak, to breathe, and to heal.” – Victor

“Many men need help but are not able to speak out.” – Hafsat

Talk-It-Out Tuesday “Going Deeper” Participants were encouraged to vote anonymously in a community poll about their emotional experiences or those of men close to them. This exercise served as a temperature check and led directly into the focus for the next day.

Survey Summary – Talk-It-Out Tuesday Poll Poll Question: What have you or someone close to you experienced? (Multiple selections allowed)

Key Insight: The most selected response was “Constantly feeling overwhelmed but keeping it in,” which became the focus for Wellness Wednesday.



Data: ICTMH July 2025 Event Log and compiled by Elizabeth Idowu



Wellness Wednesday – “No More Bottling It Up” Participants were guided through practical tools for emotional release, including talking to someone, journaling, prayer, movement, and breathing exercises. Members shared one-word responses representing how they felt or what they were releasing, such as: “Healing,” “Trying,” “Hopeful,” and “Lighter.” Voices from the Community: *“HEALING is the word for me today. One step at a time.”* – Michael *“Little drops of water build an ocean... Amazing Wellness Wednesday.”* – Uzo

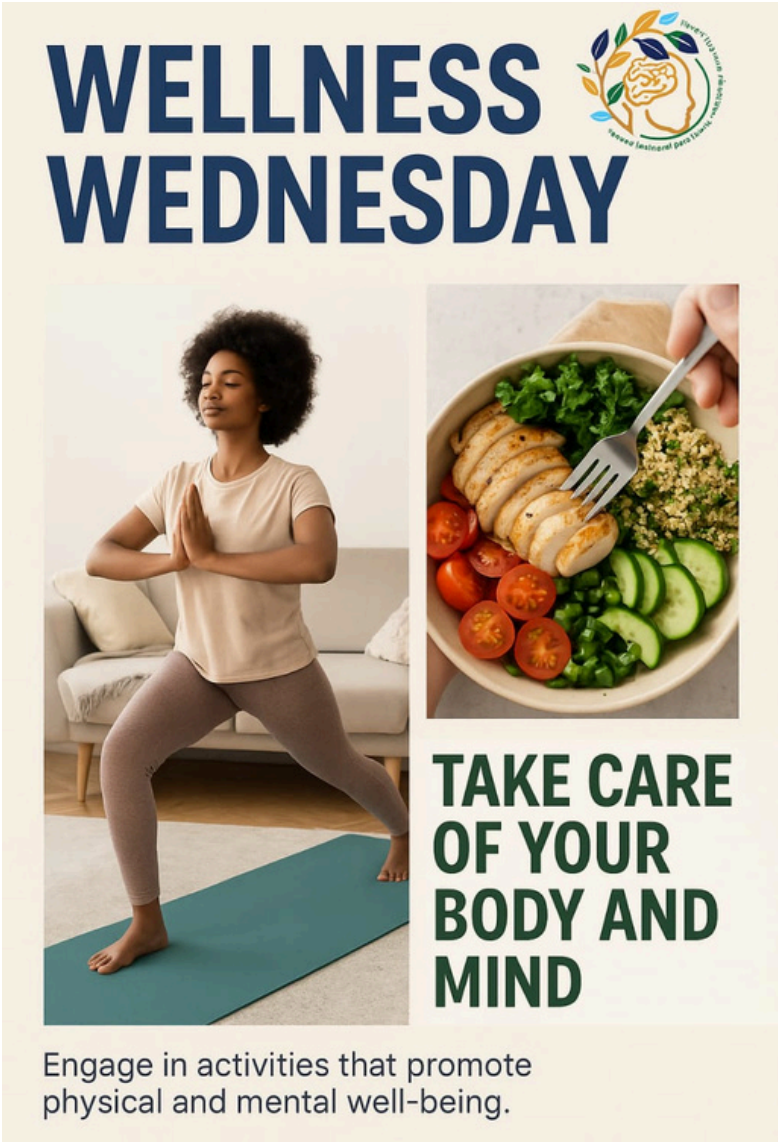
Thankful Thursday –“Gratitude in the Storm” The day encouraged gratitude even amid mental and emotional storms. Participants shared what they were thankful for, reinforcing the value of resilience and grace. Community Responses: *“Thankful for challenges that expand my thinking.”* – Mfon *“Thankful for peace of mind.”* – Hafsat *“Grateful for unexpected growth; trusting God for leadership.”* – Michael

Fun Friday –“Laughter is Therapy Too!” Participants were invited to drop jokes, riddles, and funny Nigerian clips. The evening concluded with a men-focused training emphasizing the importance of joy, connection, and emotional well-being. Highlights: Hafsat shared a popular riddle: *“I am something free for everyone, I can exist without everyone but everyone cannot exist without me. What am I?”* (Answer: Air)

Self-Care Saturday –“You Can’t Pour from an Empty Cup” Participants reflected on ways to implement emotional rest and self-care. From saying “no,” to eating well, to slowing down, it was a gentle push to prioritize inner peace. Member Insights: *“Self-care is essential. It shouldn’t be optional.”* – Ese *“I ate maize and native pear... maybe that was my self-care today!”* – Uzo

Reflection & Q&A Sunday –“Reset and Recharge” The week ended with a reflective reset. Participants shared insights about their emotional growth, healing needs, and self-care plans for the upcoming week. Prompts Included:

- One word for how you’re feeling today
- One thing that stood out to you this week
- One step you’re taking for yourself moving forward



Event of the Week: Survey Insights

Special Edition, Kazaure Road Pre-Outreach Survey

Survey Insights: Dr. Stephanie Rocky Okolo

Date: July 2025

Matters Arising from the Survey

- Why Kazaure Road?
- Key Findings at a Glance
- What the Community Thinks
- Where Do We Go From Here?

WHY KAZAURE ROAD?

The Kazaure Road area in Northern Nigeria was selected for a pre-outreach survey to understand how people perceive mental health, seek help, and navigate cultural beliefs. With over *250 respondents* from diverse backgrounds, this baseline study lays the foundation for culturally grounded mental health interventions.

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

- 64.8% have heard the term “mental health”
- Only 21.2% rated their understanding as “good” or “very good”
- 33.6% said their understanding was poor

CAUSES OF MENTAL ILLNESS (PERCEIVED)

- Addiction (alcohol/drugs) – 78.8%
- Depression – 74.8%
- Witchcraft/spiritual attacks – 40.8%

HELP-SEEKING PREFERENCES

- Hospital – 42%
- Prayer – 37.2%
- Counseling – 16.4%
- Ignore – 4.4%

ADDICTION EXPERIENCE

- 80.8% reported personal or close experience with addiction
- Language Impact:
 - Hausa speakers more likely to believe in spiritual causes
 - Less likely to seek professional help

WHAT THE COMMUNITY THINKS

“People still think it’s a spiritual attack. That’s why they go to prayer houses before hospitals.” – Survey respondent

“Mental health isn’t about being mad. Sometimes you just need help thinking clearly.” – Community youth leader

Traditional beliefs remain strong, especially among women and older adults. Spiritual interpretations dominate, but addiction and stress are increasingly recognized as real mental health issues.

WHAT WE’RE DOING NEXT

Community Education Sessions

- Culturally adapted, language-inclusive awareness campaigns
- Focus on demystifying spiritual beliefs and reducing stigma

Partnering with Faith & Traditional Leaders

- Training them as mental health allies
- Using their influence to shift mindsets

Boosting Access to Care

- Creating easy-to-understand referral pathways
- Linking prayer centers, clinics, and local counselors

Addiction-Specific Programs

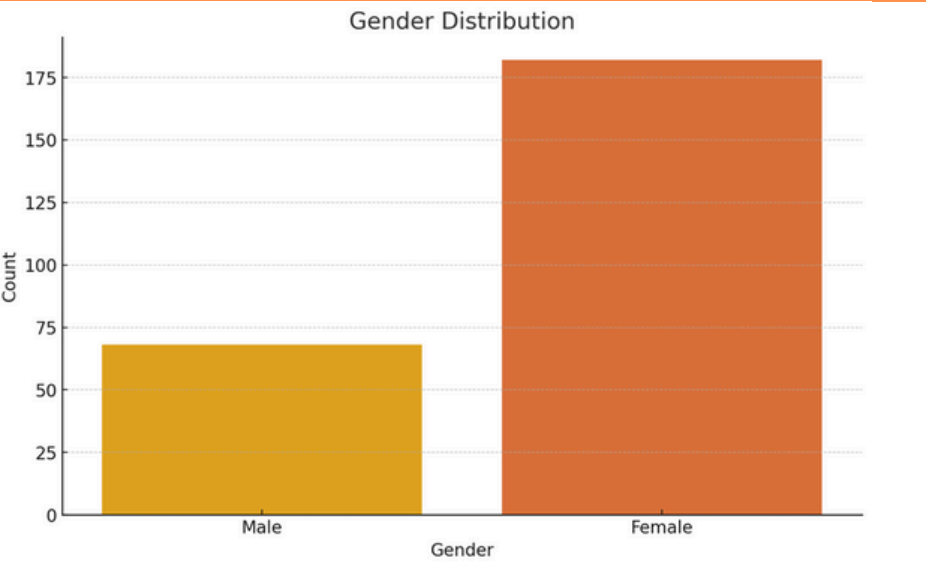
- Tailored support for families affected by substance use
- Youth-focused workshops

Monitoring & Evaluation

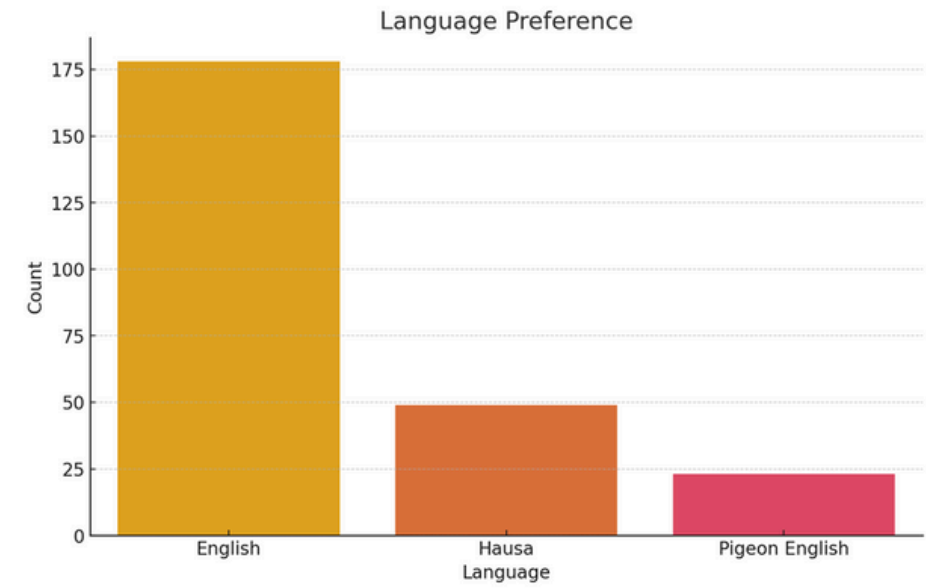
- Post-outreach surveys to measure change
- Long-term follow-ups to track community impact

EVALUATION INSIGHT

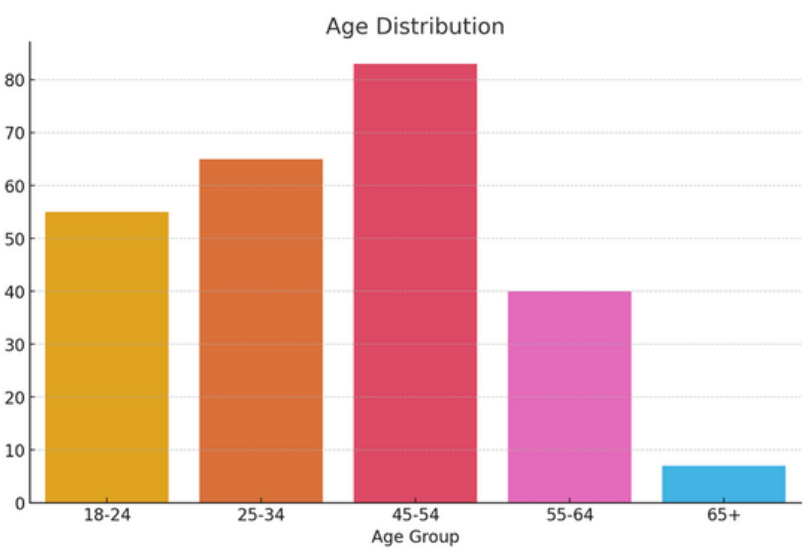
“From an evaluation and monitoring perspective, the pre-survey data can determine programming areas. Outreach input will inform delivery, while post-survey data will measure impact. With long-term presence, behavior change can be tracked and harvested.” – ICTMH Research Team



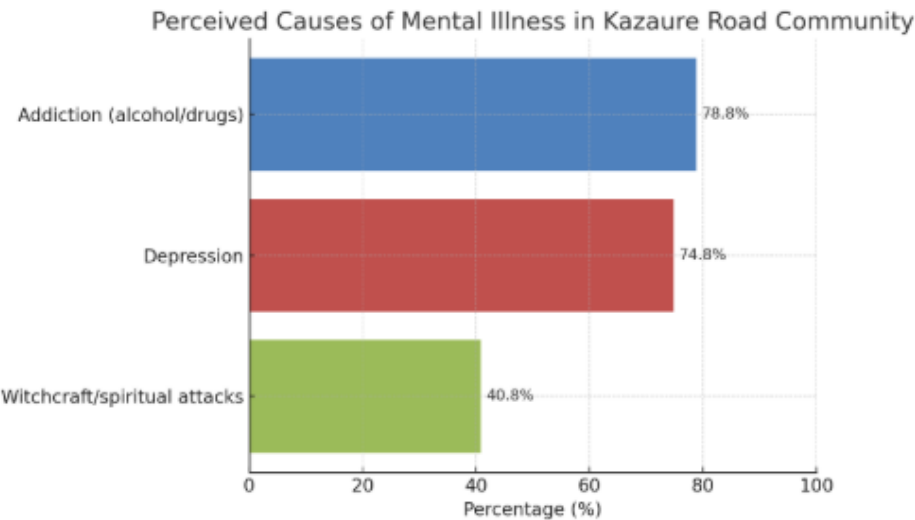
Gender Distribution
Female respondents constitute almost 70% of the demographics



Preferred Language
ApprOximately 70% of respondents were carried out their survey in English, with Hausa as second preferred accounting for almost 20%, leaving Broken English at the rear

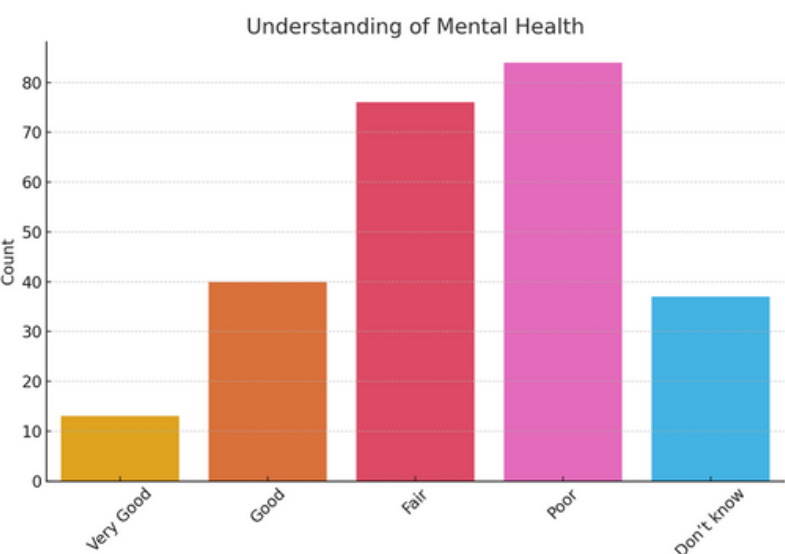


Age Distribution
The majority of respondents fall within the active youth and young adult age brackets of 25-35 and 45-54 years, respectively.

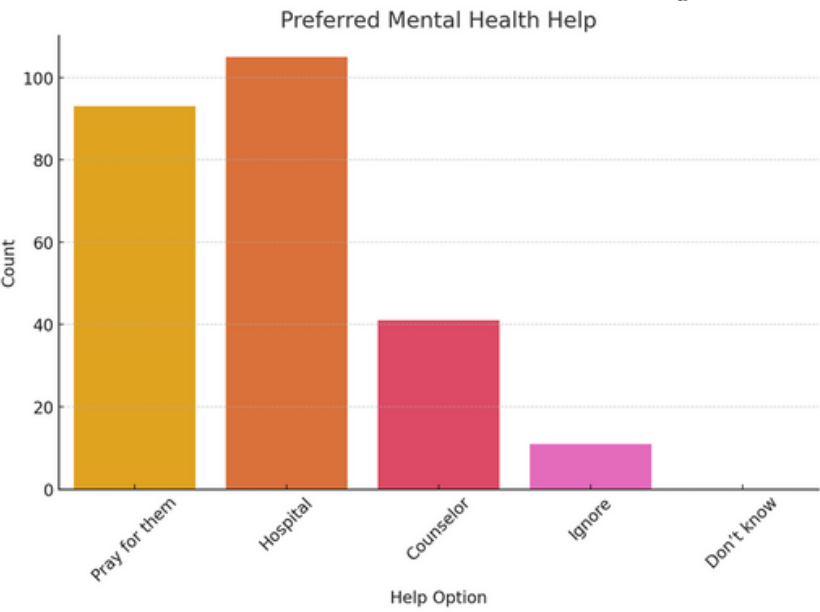


Causes of Mental Illness (perceived):

- Addiction (alcohol/drugs) - 78.8%
- Depression - 74.8%
- Witchcraft/spiritual attacks - 40.8%



Mental Health Awareness:
64.8% have heard the term “mental health”
Only 21.2% rated their understanding as “good” or “very good”
33.6% said their understanding was poor



Help-Seeking Preferences:
Hospital - 42%
Prayer - 37.2%
Counseling - 16.4%
Ignore - 4.4%

Star Event of the Week: Picture Collage



Staff of ICTMH and Kazaure Road volunteers pose for a shot before embarking on administration of survey for Kazaure Outreach Program slated for August 5th, 2025 in Kaduna State.

RESOURCE & ANNOUNCEMENTS



ONLINE TRAINING

Parenting With Empathy; Raising Emotionally Healthy Children

TIME 8:00PM (WAT)

DATE FRI 25, 2025

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/register/elXnfrBeTdibGb4PPBepNA>

REGISTER NOW

www.cognitiveng.org

Dr. Mfon Bassey
TRAINER

INITIATIVE FOR COGNITIVE THERAPIES AND MENTAL HEALTH



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P R E S E N T S

JULY WEBINAR

THE TALKING DRUM OF THE MIND: MENTAL HEALTH IN AFRICAN WORLDVIEW

26 06
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ONLINE VIA
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SPEAKERS
FR. BATURE B. JOSEPH
DR. STEPHANIE OKOLO (HOST)
DR. MUHAMMAD G. IBRAHIM
DR. MFON BASSEY

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Call for Journal Articles – ICTMH

ICTMH invites submissions of journal articles focused on mental health and cognitive behavioural therapies, especially those offering African-based solutions.

A list of suggested topics is available, but you're welcome to propose your own. Writing guidelines, including word counts and tips, are also provided.

Interested?

Contact Ese (07068487474) or Latifa (07064269139) on WhatsApp.

We're happy to support you through the process.

Thank you!

To get feedback or stories? Email us at enquiry@cognitiveng.org

For volunteering opportunities, join our team via social media

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