

WEEKLY

# Newsletter



## Editorial Note

ICTMH is excited to share this week's edition of our newsletter! The summary: there is no health without mental health. Nigeria's future depends on how we listen to and empower our young people.

Voices Unmuted: Empowering Nigerian Youth for Mental Wellness and Resilience is the theme of this week's Mental Health Wellness Week on WhatsApp. Young people shared real struggles, unemployment, stigma, substance use, and pressure from society. But they also showed us courage, strength, and hope.

Still on the topic, Voices Unmuted: Empowering Nigerian Youth for Mental Wellness and Resilience, on ICTMH'S weekly Seminar, Dr. Mfon Bassey emphasized how, "Knowledge is power." When youths learn about mental health, they can spot early signs, seek help, and support others without shame.

ICTMH remains dedicated to breaking stigma, building resilience for a thriving generation, and equipping the world with knowledge to combat mental health challenges.

**Warm regards  
Ese Ogheneovo  
for ICTMH**

# Weekly Webinar Training

**Topic:** Voices Unmuted:  
Empowering Nigerian Youth for  
Mental Wellness and Resilience

**Date:** August 22, 2025

**Host:** Dr. Bassey Mfon

## Introduction

This week, on ICTMH weekly training on mental health, Dr Bassey Mfon spoke on *Voices Unmuted: Empowering Nigerian Youth for Mental Wellness and Resilience* which highlights the urgent need to empower Nigerian youth facing stigma, unemployment, drug abuse, and mental health struggles.

With over 70% under 30, awareness and literacy are vital. By replacing silence with dialogue and stigma with compassion, society can foster resilience, hope, and safeguard Nigeria's future.

## Quotes and key statistics

- *"Ignoring youth mental health is risking Nigeria's future."* **Dr. Mfon**
- *"Seeking help is strength, not weakness."* **Anonymous**
- *"Voices unmuted means giving the youth courage to speak openly."* **Dr. Mfon**
- *"There is no health without mental health."* — **WHO**
- 70% of Nigerians are under 30 – the country's largest demographic group.
- 1 in 6 Nigerian youths lives with depression or anxiety (UNICEF, 2021).
- Communities with higher awareness about mental health report better treatment outcomes and stronger resilience (WHO).

## Challenges Youth face

Many Nigerian youths remain muted by stigma and silence, facing multiple struggles:

- Economic pressure – unemployment, lack of opportunities, and heavy family expectations.
- Academic & social stress – high exam pressure, parental career demands, and unrealistic social media comparisons.
- Substance abuse – drugs such as tramadol used as escape routes.
- Stigma & fear of judgment – many youths hide struggles to avoid being labeled "weak" or "mad."

## Anecdote

Dr. Bassey recounted the tragic case of a 20-year-old boy from a loving Christian family who, despite seeming secure, secretly struggled until collapsing from tramadol abuse. His story shows that even supportive homes and schools are not immune, and highlights how stigma drives many youths to fight silent battles.



# Weekly Webinar Training

## Healing & Growth Pathways

### Self-Awareness:

Youth mental health is everyone's responsibility (families, schools, communities, and policymakers)

#### 1. Awareness & Education

- Campaigns, school integration, and community dialogues.
- Use of celebrities/role models to share mental health stories.

#### 2. Resilience Building

- Healthy coping: journaling, mindfulness, exercise, faith practices, peer support.
- Encourage alternatives to harmful substances.

#### 3. Support Systems

- Access to counselors, NGOs, hotlines, peer groups, digital platforms.
- Schools must create "safe spaces" for open conversations.

#### 4. Compassionate Community Response

- Show concern: "I've noticed you're not yourself; I'm here if you want to talk."
- Listen without judgment; avoid dismissive remarks.
- Encourage professional help and maintain follow-up.
- In crises (e.g., suicidal ideation): involve family, remove harmful objects, and seek immediate help.

#### 5. Youth Empowerment

- Train youths as mental health ambassadors in schools, churches, and online platforms.
- Equip them with knowledge = power to identify early warning signs.

## Voices from Breakout Sessions

### On causes of Struggle

- *"The pressure of unemployment makes young people feel worthless, even when they are educated."*
- *"Social media is fueling unhealthy competition — everyone wants to measure up to unrealistic standards."*

### On Stigma and Silence

- *"When a youth opens up about depression, people quickly label them as lazy or weak. That is why many keep quiet."*
- *"We need to change the language we use around mental illness — words can either heal or harm."*

### On Solutions

- *"Safe spaces in schools and communities can give youths the courage to talk without fear of judgment."*
- *"Peer support groups should be strengthened. Young people often listen more to friends than adults."*
- *"Training youths as mental health ambassadors will normalize conversations and break stigma."*

## Call to Action

At its core, this was a call-to-action: If we unmute young voices, equip them with knowledge, and build resilience, we safeguard not just their future, but Nigeria's.

*"Youth mental health is vital to Nigeria's future. Ignoring it is too costly. Voices must be unmuted, and resilience must be built."* Dr. Mfon



# Weekly WhatsApp Interactive Session

## ICTMH Mental Health Week Report

**Theme:** : Voices Unmuted:  
Empowering Nigerian Youths for  
Mental Wellness and Resilience

**Date:** August 17 – August 24, 2025

### Overview

ICTMH hosted its weekly Mental Health Wellness Week from August 17th – 24th, 2025. Conducted virtually via WhatsApp, the event centered on the theme: “Voices Unmuted: Empowering Nigerian Youths for Mental Wellness and Resilience.”

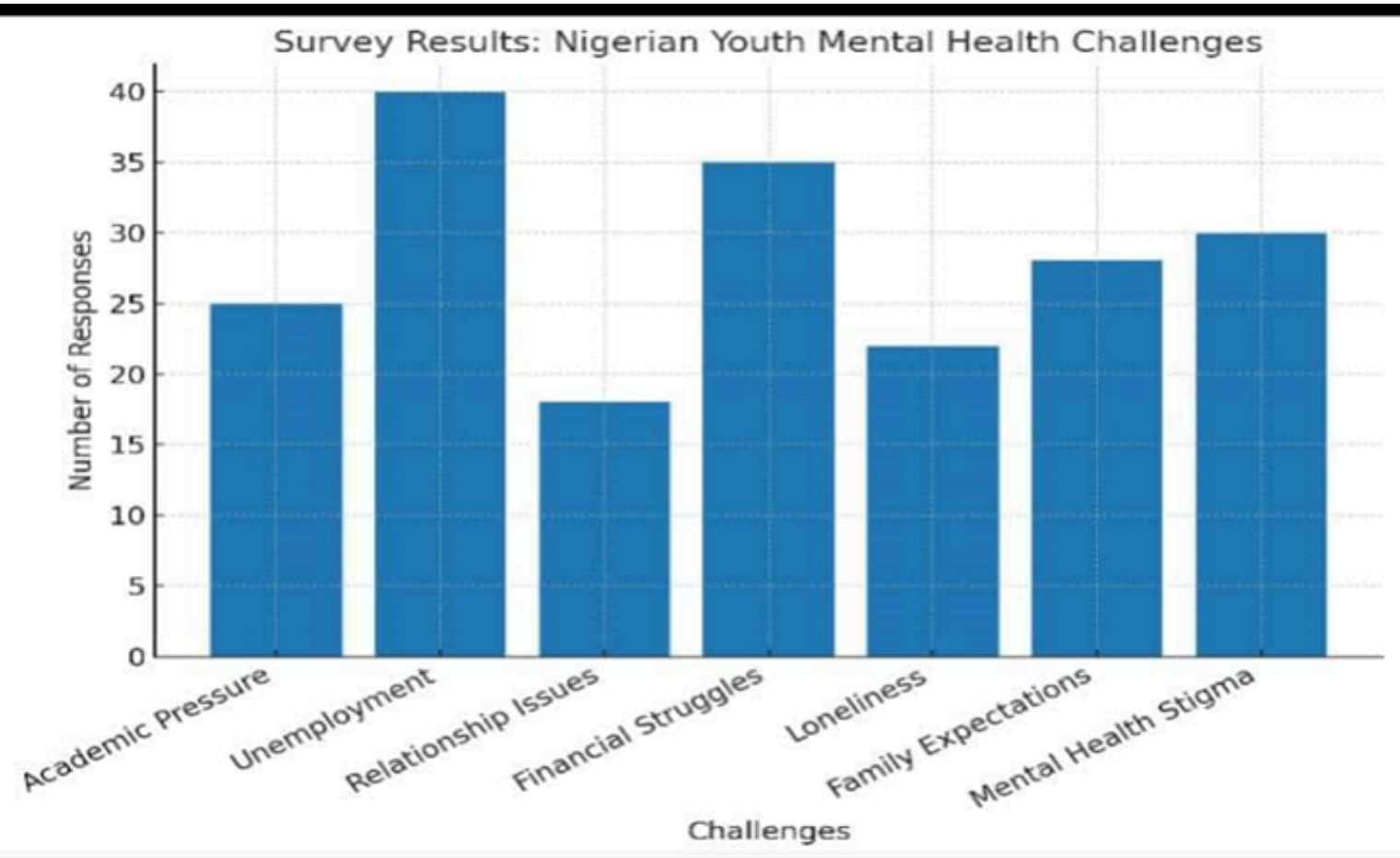
This theme was chosen to highlight the urgent need for Nigerian youths to break the silence surrounding their mental health struggles. In a culture where stigma, societal pressure, and limited resources often keep young people muted, this campaign emphasized the importance of self-expression, resilience, peer support, and healing through shared stories. .

### Motivational Monday

The week opened with a powerful motivational session, encouraging participants to begin the journey of “unmuting” their voices. The talk centered on hope, strength, and the courage to embrace vulnerability as a tool for healing. “Every great change begins with a single voice. This week is your opportunity to speak, to share, and to remind yourself that your story matters. You are not weak for struggling—you are strong for choosing to rise above it. Let your voice be heard, because someone out there needs your testimony to find their own strength.”

### Talk-It-Out Tuesday

The focus was on creating a safe space for youths to express their realities. Participants were encouraged to complete a short SurveyMonkey questionnaire designed to identify key mental health challenges faced by Nigerian youths.



**Insights:** The top challenges reported were unemployment (40 responses) and financial struggles (35 responses). Mental health stigma (30 responses) also stood out, confirming that fear of judgment prevents many youths from seeking support. Academic pressure and family expectations remain significant contributors to stress. This exercise reinforced the importance of listening to youths and demonstrated how data-driven dialogue can uncover hidden realities that must be addressed for sustainable wellness.

**Wellness Wednesday**

This session highlighted the silent struggles many youths endure smiling outwardly while carrying pain inwardly. Participants were reminded that: “My voice matters.” “My struggles are valid.” “I don’t have to fight alone.”

**Community Contributions:**

Hafsat: *“My voice matters, my struggles are valid, and I’m committed to building resilience this week.”*

Uzo: *“My struggles are valid and won’t be in vain. It’s a brand-new day, and we keep getting greater.”*

Amina: *“For me everything here is true, but I refuse to be quiet—I will voice out.”*

This reaffirmed the collective spirit of resilience and peer support

**Thankful Thursday**

Gratitude was the focus, with participants encouraged to pause and acknowledge blessings despite challenges. The conversation emphasized that: Gratitude is healing. Gratitude builds resilience. Gratitude keeps us grounded.

**Community Contributions:**

Lizzie: Expressed gratitude for family, ICTMH support, friends, health, peace of mind, and God’s mercies.

Hafsat: Grateful for peace of mind amidst busyness and for the prayers and support of her late parents.

Vicky: *“Gratitude helps you to gain altitude you never imagined.”*

**Fun Friday**

Friday was dedicated to relaxation, laughter, and joy. Activities included riddles and sharing of funny videos, with participants reminding one another that laughter itself is therapy.

Community Response:

Robert: *“I think the answer is echo.”*

Uzo: *“Whispers.”*

**Self-Care Saturday**

The Self-Care Saturday: The session reminded participants that self-care is not selfish but essential.

Suggestions included rest, prayer, journaling, connecting with loved ones, and laughter. “When you take care of yourself, you build the strength to help others find their voice.” Participants committed to small acts of self-care to strengthen resilience and maintain balance.

**Reflections & Q&A Sunday**

The week ended with a reflective dialogue where participants shared their biggest takeaways.

**Community Contributions:**

Victor: *“Sharing our own stories can spark healing for someone else. Going into this new week with an open heart and a daily dose of gratitude.”*

Udoma: Emphasized peace of mind as priceless, urging others to walk away from negativity.

Uzo: Shared a deeply personal reflection about meditation, solitude, and joy in small blessings like feeding birds.

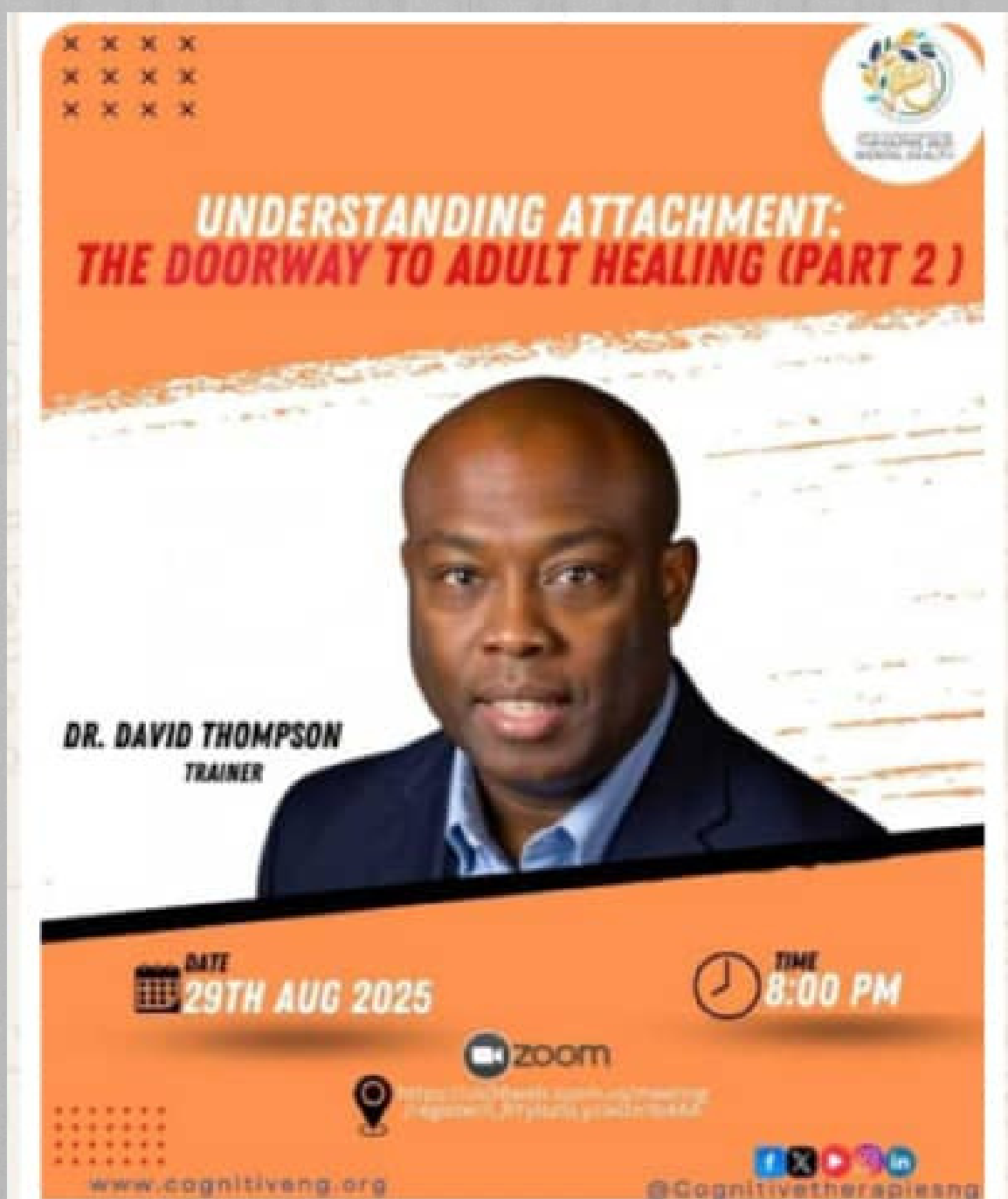
Hafsat: *“This week reminded me I’m not alone. Self-care isn’t selfish it’s survival. My biggest takeaway is that small consistent steps truly build resilience.”*

**Conclusion**

ICTMH Wellness Week empowered Nigerian youths, fostering dialogue, resilience, gratitude, and healing while addressing stigma, unemployment, pressures, and promoting supportive communities.



# RESOURCE & ANNOUNCEMENTS



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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 Michael( 08143296589) on WhatsApp. We're happy to support you through the process. Thank you!

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To get feedback or stories? Email us at [enquiry@cognitiveng.org](mailto:enquiry@cognitiveng.org)

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