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Differences in the predictors of mental health between undergraduates in Nigeria and Japan

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Mental health is an important component for academic and social adjustment in college. The present study examined differences in the factors predicting mental distress among University students in Nigeria and Japan, based on the ecological model. A total of 716 undergraduates (391 Nigerians, 325 Japanese) from four universities in both countries took part in the study. Average age of participants was 25.63 and 20.08 years in Nigeria and Japan, respectively. A self-report questionnaire assessed several predictors including individual characteristics via the BNSG scale; micro level factors via the UCLA Loneliness Scale and SPUSSS; exo-level factors via the MacArthur scale of subjective status and macro level factors via social participation on the outcome measure of mental health via the GHQ-12. A four-step hierarchical regression was computed on the data from both countries and the findings from the final model revealed that the predictors accounted for 16.1% (in Nigeria) and 31.8% (in Japan) of the variance in mental health. Furthermore, in Nigeria, competence and loneliness were statistically significant predictors of mental health while for Japan, autonomy, competence, relatedness, loneliness and club participation had significant regression weights. Further analyses to evaluate the structure of the final model from the two countries showed that autonomy ($Z=-4.44$, $p<0.01$), relatedness ($Z=5.13$, $p<0.01$) and loneliness ($Z=2.57$, $p<0.05$) had significantly different regression weights between the countries. These findings suggest cross-cultural differences in the influence of ecological factors on mental health of undergraduates with implications for the mental health of college students in both societies.

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