COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE
1ST WOMEN DERIVE MATHEMATICAL MODELS FOR MENTAL HEALTH (WEALTH) AND 2ND CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH (CAMH) CONFERENCE 2026

Introduction & Context

The Centre for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, College of Medicine (CCAMH), University of Ibadan, convened the 1st Women dErive mAthematical modeLs for menTal Health (WEALTH) and 2nd Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH) Conference from Monday 20 July to Wednesday 22 July 2026, at the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan / University College Hospital premises, Ibadan, Nigeria. The conference is organised under the Gates Foundation-funded "Utilizing Mathematical Modelling to Tackle Depression and Other Related Mental Illnesses Among Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Sub-Saharan Africa" Project, branded as WEALTH, in partnership with the Department of Epidemiology and Medical Statistics, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, the University of Warwick, United Kingdom; the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA); the Federal University Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE); the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA); the Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professionals in Nigeria (ACAPAN); and the Africa Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health (AACAMH).

The WEALTH programme was established to build a critical mass of African women researchers and policymakers with expertise in mathematical and statistical modelling to advance research on the mental health of Adolescent Girls and Young Women. Rooted in the conviction that investing in adolescent girls and women strengthens families, communities, and nations, the programme received 453 applications from 24 African countries for its inaugural fellowship, far exceeding its original target of 20 trainees. Following a rigorous selection process, 170 Fellows were admitted into the introductory programme, with 128 remaining active. Of the active fellows, 28 were selected for full sponsorship to participate in the 1st WEALTH and 2nd CAMH Joint Conference and in a Policy & Paper Accelerator to develop the manuscripts and policy briefs that will emerge from their research projects.

The conference brought together 176 delegates – researchers, clinicians, persons with a lived experience, statisticians, data scientists, mental health professionals, policymakers, WEALTH Fellows, students, adolescents, and development partners from across Africa and beyond. Over three days, participants engaged in keynote and plenary lectures, capacity building workshops, mentorship lunches, oral and poster presentation sessions, roundtable discussions, career conversations, as well as workshops specifically tailored for adolescents. The conference provided a platform for interdisciplinary learning, collaboration, and knowledge exchange on advancing mathematical modelling and evidence-informed approaches to improving the mental health and wellbeing of adolescent girls, young women, and other vulnerable populations.

Having concluded its deliberations, the participants hereby issue this communiqué to present the major discussions, key observations, resolutions, and recommendations arising from the conference.

Objectives

The conference objectives were:

- **To share evidence** on tackling depression and related mental health disorders among adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to a network of researchers, policymakers, persons with lived experience and the general public.
- **To build capacity** among **researchers and policymakers** in the area of modelling with a focus on depression and other related mental health disorders with a gendered lens.
- **To strengthen the community of practice** around modelling to tackle depression and related mental health disorders among adolescent girls and young women in SSA.
- **To catalyse community and policy action** to tackle depression and related mental health disorders among adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa.

Summary of Deliberations

Workshops

Workshops provided researchers with hands-on learning on various tools important for researchers conducting mathematical and statistical modelling to tackle depression and other related mental health disorders. This included training on Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for literature review and data analysis; machine learning; mathematical and statistical modelling; and research translation for community engagement and policy uptake. Crucially, these sessions enhanced fellows' understanding of research rigour, research design, and their capacity to work on complex data sets using R.

Plenaries

Plenaries and round-table discussions comprised high-level talks focused on broadening researchers' understanding of the importance of transdisciplinary research and working with methodologists and policymakers from the outset. Presentations on real-world case studies demonstrated how clear, credible health modelling directly shapes national legislation, while evidence on gender-based violence and life-course vulnerability urged leaders to reframe interventions for women and girls as proactive prevention rather than treatment.

Adolescent Sessions

Designed to build resilience and agency, these specialised workshops provided young participants with practical tools to navigate digital environments and personal emotional wellbeing. Interactive discussions on social media and AI empowered students with critical digital literacy skills, such as practising digital detoxes and verifying online information, to mitigate digital stress and cyberbullying. Complementary creative writing exercises offered a therapeutic outlet for self-expression, encouraging long-term habit formation and confidence-building through personal storytelling in a safe, supportive environment.

Oral and poster sessions

These sessions provided fellows the opportunity to present their research ideas and findings and get critical feedback on strategies to enhance the quality of their work. The sessions also fostered peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and identified priority areas for intervention. Presenters highlighted critical risk factors for depression among adolescents and young women such as smartphone addiction and dysmenorrhoea, while demonstrating the efficacy of various localised interventions. The collective body of work challenged attendees to address common gaps, such as low health literacy and persistent stigma, and warned against uncritical AI use.

Key Findings and Observations

Consensus Points

- Women and girls face various pressures across the life course — the "double burden" of professional and domestic responsibility, marriage and childbearing timelines, first-born or first-daughter expectations — that warrant dedicated attention in mental health programming. Gender-based violence, adolescent bullying, child marriage, and workplace harassment are widespread issues affecting women and negatively impacting their mental health.
- Mental health outcomes among adolescents and young women are consistently shaped by structural and psychosocial determinants — school environments, socioeconomic stratification, family expectations, and gender norms — rather than by isolated individual factors.
- Smartphone overuse, inattentional blindness, AI reliance, social media comparison, and cyberbullying are all aspects of digital life that have significant consequences on youth and women's mental health.
- Rigorous applied modelling, whether statistical, machine-learning, or spatial, gains legitimacy from being explainable, collaborative, and transparent about its limitations, not from technical sophistication alone. Transdisciplinarity is essential in the process of creating research that matters, and methodologists should be incorporated into research teams from the outset.

"Methodologists are central to the entire transdisciplinary research process as they facilitate decision-making about different aspects of the research enterprise"

– Prof. Tolulope Sajobi (Plenary Speaker)

- Narrative, creative expression, and lived experience, through creative writing, literary analysis, and personal testimony, were affirmed as legitimate, complementary sources of insight alongside quantitative research. Furthermore, the importance of the active participation of adolescents and people with lived experience in research was emphasised.

Gaps and Challenges Identified

- Stigma and low mental health literacy continue to suppress help-seeking even where prevalence and severity of distress are high, including a specific, persistent stigma around postpartum depression.
- Large-scale national surveys, such as the Demographic and Health Surveys, remain under-equipped with validated mental health measurement items, limiting what advanced analytic methods can support.
- Cross-cultural and cross-national transfer of models and assumptions remains a persistent methodological challenge, requiring an explicit validation process rather than direct importation of models from one context into another.
- Women remain under-represented as methodologists in mental health research. Capacity building programmes like WEALTH address this under-representation.

Recommendations and Call to Action

To Governments and Policymakers

1. Expand and standardise mental health measurement within national surveys and routine health information systems, while institutionalising mental health services across all levels of care, including integration into maternal, sexual and reproductive health services.
2. Enact and enforce policies that prevent bullying, gender-based violence, femicide, and other forms of abuse, supported by effective reporting mechanisms, survivor-centred services, trauma-informed care, and accessible support systems.

"Ending Gender-Based Violence (GBV) requires healing the mind, not just the body… Survivors need comprehensive care, including mental health care." – Prof. Olufunmilayo I. Fawole

3. Review institutional policies and social structures that contribute to psychological distress among adolescents and women, and prioritise sustained investment in women's and girls' mental health as a national development and prevention strategy.

To Researchers and Academics

1. Strengthen methodological rigour by using appropriate study designs, validating modelling assumptions with clinicians and subject experts, adopting harmonised outcome measures where appropriate, and ensuring transparent reporting of research methods and AI-assisted outputs.
2. Promote transdisciplinary collaboration and meaningful engagement with policymakers, clinicians, communities, and other stakeholders throughout the research process to ensure that findings are relevant and translatable into policy and practice.

To Institutions and Universities

1. Establish accessible mental health services, trained peer support systems, and campus-wide mental health promotion programmes for students and staff. Integrate digital wellbeing, responsible technology use, and mental health literacy into institutional programmes.

To Parents and Families

1. Foster open, supportive, and non-judgemental communication with adolescents while actively promoting healthy digital habits and monitoring online activities appropriately.
2. Promote healthy development by openly discussing puberty, reproductive health, emotional wellbeing, and help-seeking, while nurturing strong values, resilience, and positive relationships.

To Funders and Development Partners

1. Increase investment in research, capacity strengthening, and community-based interventions that improve mental health outcomes for adolescent girls, young women, and other vulnerable populations.
2. Invest in building capacity in modelling among under-represented groups so they can develop relevant models with policy impact.

Acknowledgements

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Convener