

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining my presentation. Thank you. The organizers, tutors, keynote speakers and fellows. My presentation is centered on the challenges of providing mental health care for teenagers and young adults in Nigeria. My name is Akinwoya Stephanie and the topic of my project and my presentation today is Safe Space, a website that provides accessible mental health education for teens and young adults in Nigeria. So for my presentation this afternoon, I will follow this part. I'll first of all talk about the background and rationale for choosing this project, the objectives of the project. I'll talk about the idea of the project and also give a brief walkthrough of the project's website.

Okay, so Nigeria is a country in West Africa with a population of over 206,000,000 people whose identity is deeply rooted in religion and of course, culture. Now, due to the high level of ignorance about mental illnesses, mental illness is culturally frowned at, as it is seen as a sign of a bad lineage or perceived as a sign of a spiritual attack. And as such, traditional healers, religious leaders and spiritualists are the first points of call. I like to show you a video that depicts the situation of mental health as been addressed in Nigeria. Please I want to warn you that some of the images in the video can be a little bit graphic. Thank you for watching the video.

From the video, we can see that presently mental health patients are treated in conditions that can be seen as inhumane in some parts of Nigeria. And that is also one of the rationale behind my starting this project. Another rationale is that 50% of mental health issues begin before the age of 14 and that's why I targeted my project for teenagers and younger adults between the ages of 13 and 29. Another rationale is that the ratio of mental health workers to people stands at two to 100,000 present in Nigeria. So accessing mental health care is almost impossible for young teenagers and young adults in Nigeria. Most young people can't afford the services of a mental health professional or they might not even have access to one.

And of course we have societal misconceptions about mental health as being a result of spiritual problem and as such, traditional healers, spiritualist religious leaders are usually the first point of call. In Nigeria, openly discussing mental health is seen as a taboo and young people are scared of being stigmatized as the society stigmatizes people who identify as having mental health challenges. Okay, so the problem, the problem I have observed based on statistics is that one fifth of the suicide cases in Nigeria of people aged 13 to 19, between January and June 2019, we had 49 students committing suicide, of which 30% were students and were between the ages of 15 and 29. So these are worrying figures that clearly show that people are not able to access the help they need concerning mental health issues.

Why safe space. What is my interest? I have been teaching in a secondary school for the past 16 years and I have seen first-hand how students are struggling with issues of mental health. One because it is a taboo to talk about it . Two you don't have access to counsellors or psychologists, Three even in an African setting talking about mental health issues. It is a no no. So that was one of the reasons why I took

interest in it. Some years back I had a student that fell into depression because she was raped by somebody in the Church who she had so much faith and believe in and she fell into deep depression and after some time she started behaving erratically. Now instead of the parents to take her to see a counsellor or a psychologist, she was actually taken back to the church for deliverance and her behaviour deteriorated to the extent that she had to be asked to withdraw from school. Early this year I lost another student, an ex student who for some years I've been looking for admission to the higher institution and he just got the admission and he was asked to just go and buy the things he needed for school and he came in and committed suicide and he died.

This is somebody that I would never have thought had issues with mental health. He's always smiling, he's always friendly. Early this year too, on Facebook, I noticed that one of my ex-students were posting comments that seemed suicidal and he also disabled the comment section. I had to talk to him via messenger and all that to reassure him that everything was going to be fine. So some of these issues have made me take interest in this aspect, in the aspect of providing mental health care, especially for teenagers and young adults.

About my project, my project is the team is innovation, innovation in that there is presently nobody organization that has a website that specifically created for students to access curated information on their own on mental health issues. However, we still have organizations in Nigeria that cater to the mental health issues. Some of them include MANI that is mentally aware Nigeria initiatives, she writes and safe places. But these organizations I'm talking about have a walk in center remember mental health illnesses are not things that we Africans in quote want to openly associate with and for these centers students may not have access that is one and two we don't feel comfortable enough to go to them and so that's why I created this project then what's the format. The format is the website is a website where we have curated information on mental health education

The objectives of my project:

The first one is to provide access to mental health education for young people and of course the second objective of this project is to provide a safe online hub where users can interact and voice out their fears, be heard and receive the necessary help on time. Okay so this is my home page the safe space home page and what is even safe space about safe space provides mental health education for teenagers and young adults using open educational resource and the form of easy to read culturally and age appropriate write-ups on the different kinds of mental health disorders. We have bit-size explainer videos on mental health as well as inspirational videos of people who have mental health issues and how they have been able to cope with it or overcome it.

It also has chatrooms where teenagers can get the necessary help they need. Okay so this is one of the feature of the website and on this page we have mental health awareness and in this page we have animations and one of the animation there is we all have mental health. I observed that teenagers and young people love animations so one way of passing information to them in such a way that they will

want to receive it is the use of animation there we also have another video and this video is a ted talk by set pits at soon and she's a celebrated Nollywood actor.

On this page which is actually a drop down under the mental health awareness where we have different mental illnesses and the first one here is depression and in this place we have right ups on depression, we have explainer videos, one of them is by the world health organization and the topic is depression lets talk and another one that talks about understanding of causes of depression.

You can see we also have write-ups on the page there the students can watch a video, students could read a write-up to and have understanding of what depression is. Okay we also said that there is a page dedicated to anxiety and on this page we have animations one of them by BBC talking about battling anxiety another one which is goods. We have write-ups and anxiety and other pages dedicated to stress we have animations of how teenagers can cope with stress and looking at stress with relation to health. We have a page dedicated for loneliness, we found out a lot of teenagers even in the midst of a crowd still feel lonely, so we are write-ups on loneliness. We also have write-ups on eating disorders I think that's one thing that young female students usually have issues with eating disorders so we have write-ups on the different eating disorders here.

We have a section for wellness and the section for wellness I built it into two one for talking about nutrition and another one talking about exercise. I included a nutrition section and an exercise session because I know that having a good diet or having a healthy diet or partaking in exercise contributes to our short time and long time health.

Okay so this is my page on nutrition we have videos on nutrition we have write-ups on nutrition on this page we have the exercise section, we have write-up s on exercise and we have a video on exercise that video talks about the effect of exercise on mental health so students can watch these videos students can read this write-ups and understand how to deal with and to handle mental health illness.

Okay so this is the beautiful part of the website and there is a chatroom we actually have to chatrooms one you have a chatroom directly with it counselor or psychologists it was built for that purpose. Another one a chatroom with other friends. On this place you can invite your friend on Facebook can invite your friends on Twitter and the beautiful thing about this is that you can join this anonymously if you look at this place it was actually a student who built this. When I had a talk with my students what will you want on this website and he mentioned having chatrooms where they could discuss about what they are passing through so this is actually built by a student for me and you can see you can use any name, you can use an icon you can use any name you like, you don't need to use your name to join the chat.

The next portion here is I placed a Google group here so every week you can place a topic probably depression and everybody talks about it talks about what they are passing through to talk about how they have been able to handle so this place is a Google. Another portion here is the inspirational stories students can look up at stories and videos of renowned people who have battled with mental illness a good example is J.K Rowlings the renowned author of harry potter novel so we have a video there about

her talking about from deep depression to the world's richest author. I also have on that a video from Selena Gomez who teenagers can identify with and she is a female singer and an actress that has also battled with depression and of course we have success story of Dwayne the rock Johnson a famous actor who most young guys like to identify with all these people had had mental health challenges at one time or the other. They have overcome it or they are managing it so students or young people can identify with these renowned people and know that they are not alone. So we have other videos other than this even on the inspirational story page.

What's my future plan? My future plan is to network with other organizations that are passionate about mental health, for example, I have reached out to Mentally Aware Nigerian Initiative and the plan was to get counselors and psychologists on board that would be available as volunteers to speak to some of the students or some of the young people that come in into the chatroom and be able to give them professional advice for whatever mental health challenges they are passing through, and of course, I want to add content into the website.

This is my reference page and my contact address in case you want to contact me my contact address, my email, my Twitter handle it's here, and this is the website for safe space that is the link for the websites so feel free to go in there and look at some of the things I have done and possibly give me a shout out for some of the things you want me to add or some of the things you feel I could improve on so any questions or comments can be posted on the comments section or the RSVP section of my presentation website and this is the link for my presentation website down here so thank you so much for listening to me today thank you so much.