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Examining The Relationship Between Occupational Conditions and Mental Health Challenges Among Nigerian Performers

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between industrial dynamics and mental health challenges among Nigerian performers, with particular focus on income volatility, contract formality, and social media exposure. A convergent mixed-methods research design was adopted. The quantitative component involved 300 performers drawn from music, film, theatre, and dance, while 20 performers participated in in-depth interviews to explore their lived experiences and coping strategies. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire, including measures of industrial dynamics and mental health outcomes, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple regression, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings showed that 83.3% of respondents agreed that income volatility was associated with mental health challenges. Pearson correlation analysis indicated significant positive relationships between income volatility and depression ($r = .46$), anxiety ($r = .42$), and stress ($r = .49$), all at $p < .001$. In addition, 82.7% of respondents agreed that contract informality was associated with reduced psychological stability and job security. Regression analysis showed that contract formality significantly predicted psychological distress ($\beta = -.32$, $p = .001$). Furthermore, 74.0% of respondents agreed that social media exposure was associated with mental health challenges, while regression analysis showed significant positive relationships with depression ($\beta = .28$, $p = .001$) and anxiety ($\beta = .25$, $p = .002$). A multiple regression model further showed that income volatility, contract formality, and social media exposure jointly predicted mental health outcomes, explaining 41% of the variance ($R^2 = .41$, $F = 68.74$, $p < .001$). Qualitative findings revealed emotional exhaustion, financial insecurity, contractual uncertainty, and online pressure, while peer support, spirituality, and creative collaboration emerged as major coping strategies. The study concludes that industrial conditions within the creative sector are significantly associated with the mental health of Nigerian performers. It recommends stronger contractual protections, income-support mechanisms, accessible mental health services, responsible social media practices, and institutional welfare frameworks to promote the psychological well-being and sustainability of the Nigerian creative sector.

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INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian creative industry has experienced substantial growth, particularly in music, film, theatre, dance, and digital entertainment. This growth has created opportunities for performers through live performances, film productions, streaming platforms, endorsements, digital content creation, and social media. However, creative work is also characterized by occupational demands that may affect performers' psychological well-being. Performing artists frequently operate within highly competitive environments, combine multiple occupational roles, work on freelance or project-based arrangements, and experience uncertainty

regarding employment and remuneration. A systematic review of performing artists found that organisational, social, and emotional occupational demands were associated with poorer well-being, while social support and engagement in performance-related activities could serve as important resources for well-being (Willis et al., 2019). The working environment of performers differs from that of many conventional employees because professional opportunities may depend on auditions, performances, productions, contracts, audience demand, reputation, and networking (Willis et al., 2019). Performers may therefore experience irregular work schedules, competition, public exposure, criticism, interpersonal pressures, and financial insecurity. These conditions are particularly important in understanding mental health because prolonged occupational uncertainty may contribute to anxiety, depressive symptoms, stress, and emotional exhaustion. International evidence among popular musicians similarly indicates that work insecurity and financial stress are important occupational concerns associated with psychological ill health.

Financial insecurity is particularly relevant to performers whose earnings may fluctuate according to the availability of shows, productions, recordings, endorsements, commissions, and other professional engagements. Income may therefore vary considerably from one period to another, with some performers experiencing periods of limited or no paid work. Nigerian evidence demonstrates the importance of financial conditions to psychological well-being. Ani et al. (2024), in a study involving Nigerians across the six geopolitical zones, found a significant association between financial scarcity and psychological well-being during the cash shortage associated with the naira redesign policy. Agberotimi et al. (2020) also reported important relationships between socioeconomic circumstances and mental-health outcomes among Nigerians during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although these studies did not focus on performers, they provide contextual evidence that economic circumstances can influence psychological vulnerability in Nigeria. Employment and contractual insecurity constitute another important dimension of performers' working conditions. Formal contracts can specify remuneration, responsibilities, duration of engagement, cancellation conditions, intellectual-property rights, and procedures for resolving disputes. In contrast, informal or verbal arrangements may leave performers vulnerable to delayed payments, changes in agreed conditions, cancellation of engagements, and other forms of occupational uncertainty. Broader occupational evidence indicates that precarious employment and job insecurity are associated with poorer mental health. Rönnblad et al. (2019), in a systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies, found evidence that job insecurity adversely affects mental health. Similarly, evidence from the performing-arts literature identifies remuneration, job security, career opportunities, competition, and occupational demands as important concerns for performers (Willis et al., 2019).

Social media has introduced another important dimension to contemporary creative work. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and X enable performers to promote their work, interact with audiences, build professional networks, develop personal brands, and obtain career opportunities. However, continuous online visibility may also expose performers to public criticism, social comparison, cyberbullying, trolling, and pressure to maintain professional relevance. Musgrave et al. (2025), in a qualitative study of professional popular musicians, found that social media provided opportunities for networking, career development, audience engagement, self-expression, and inspiration, but could also expose musicians to trolling, abuse, harmful social comparison, and pressure to continually produce content. The Nigerian context provides additional evidence concerning the relationship between social media and mental health. Awopetu et al. (2024), in a systematic review involving Nigerian university students, reported associations between problematic social media use and mental-health difficulties, including depression and anxiety. However, social media use should not automatically be regarded as harmful because performers may use these platforms as essential professional tools. The psychological implications may depend on the intensity and nature of engagement, including exposure to public evaluation, online criticism, social comparison, and pressure to maintain visibility.

Performance itself can also create psychological demands. Performers are expected to demonstrate technical competence, creativity, emotional expression, preparation, and consistency before audiences and professional colleagues. They may additionally have to manage auditions, rehearsals, travelling, networking, competition, and public evaluation. Willis et al. (2019) identified performance demands, interpersonal relationships, scheduling, public exposure, criticism, competition, and job context among the occupational pressures experienced by performing artists. At the same time, creative activity, music-making, performance, and social support may provide important resources for well-being. This indicates that creative work can simultaneously function as a source of occupational stress and a source of meaning, identity, satisfaction, social connection, and emotional expression. Despite the growing international literature on performers' occupational well-being, there remains limited empirical evidence concerning Nigerian performers as a distinct occupational group. Existing Nigerian research has examined financial scarcity, socioeconomic conditions, social media use, and mental health among other populations, while international studies have focused more extensively on musicians and performing artists. There is particularly limited evidence examining income volatility, contract formality, and social media exposure simultaneously in relation to depression, anxiety, and stress among Nigerian performers. There is also a shortage of mixed-methods evidence combining statistical relationships with performers lived experiences and coping strategies.

The present study therefore examines the relationship between industrial dynamics and mental-health challenges among Nigerian performers, focusing specifically on income volatility, contract formality, and social media exposure. The study examines how these industrial factors relate to depression, anxiety, and stress, while also exploring performers' lived experiences and coping mechanisms. By combining quantitative and qualitative evidence, the study seeks to provide context-specific evidence that can inform occupational protections, mental-health interventions, and policy development within Nigeria's creative industry.

Financial Scarcity, Socioeconomic Stress and Mental Health

Financial security is an important component of psychological well-being because individuals require adequate and predictable financial resources to meet basic needs, manage unexpected expenses, and maintain social and occupational functioning. Financial scarcity may generate persistent concerns about food, housing, transportation, healthcare, family responsibilities, and other essential needs. When such difficulties persist, they may contribute to psychological distress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and reduced well-being. Ani et al. (2024) examined financial scarcity and psychological well-being among 2,237 Nigerians during the cash shortage associated with the naira redesign policy. Their findings demonstrated a significant association between financial scarcity and psychological well-being, indicating that greater financial difficulties were associated with poorer psychological outcomes. Agberotimi et al. (2020) similarly examined socioeconomic status and mental-health outcomes among Nigerians during the COVID-19 pandemic and reported relationships between socioeconomic circumstances and psychological outcomes.

These findings are particularly relevant to performers because creative employment may expose them to greater financial uncertainty than occupations characterized by regular salaries. Performers may depend on shows, productions, recordings, auditions, endorsements, commissions, and other short-term engagements. A successful period may therefore be followed by weeks or months with limited professional opportunities. Delayed payments, cancelled performances, unsuccessful auditions, and changing production schedules may further increase financial uncertainty. Income volatility is therefore particularly important. Unlike simply having a low income, income volatility refers to substantial and unpredictable changes in the amount or timing of earnings over time. Such uncertainty may create persistent financial worry and make it difficult for performers to plan for essential expenses and future career decisions. Rönnblad et al. (2019) found that job insecurity adversely affects mental health, demonstrating that uncertainty concerning employment can have psychological consequences even when individuals are not immediately unemployed.

Evidence from popular musicians King et al., (2024), further illustrates the relationship between occupational insecurity, financial stress, and mental health. Research of Kenny et al (2024), has identified substantial occupational and financial stress among popular musicians, with work insecurity also associated with depression and anxiety. These findings are relevant to performers because uncertainty may concern not only the amount of money earned but also whether future professional engagements will be available. However, existing Nigerian studies have not adequately examined income volatility among performers as a specific occupational phenomenon. The present study therefore focuses on whether fluctuations in performers' earnings are associated with depression, anxiety, and stress. This approach extends existing research by examining financial instability within the particular occupational structure of Nigeria's creative industry.

Contract Formality and Psychological Stability

Contractual arrangements are an important aspect of employment security. A formal contract can provide clarity concerning remuneration, responsibilities, duration of employment, cancellation procedures, intellectual-property rights, and dispute resolution. Conversely, informal or verbal arrangements may increase uncertainty concerning payment, working conditions, and continuity of employment. For performers, contractual insecurity may be particularly important because many professional engagements are temporary, project-based, freelance, or negotiated for individual performances. A performer may therefore depend on a series of short-term agreements rather than a stable employment relationship. Where agreements are unclear or poorly enforced, performers may experience uncertainty about remuneration, workload, cancellation, and future opportunities. The broader literature on precarious employment provides evidence that employment insecurity is associated with poorer mental health. Rönnblad et al. (2019) reported that job insecurity has an adverse effect on mental health, while Willis et al. (2019) identified remuneration, job security, career opportunities, and competition among important occupational concerns for performing artists. Although direct Nigerian evidence linking contract formality with performers' mental health remains limited, the issue is important because contractual arrangements may determine the degree of security performers experience in their professional relationships. The present study therefore examines contract formality as an industrial factor that may be associated with psychological outcomes among Nigerian performers.

Social Media Exposure and Public Scrutiny

Social media has become an important component of contemporary creative work. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and X enable performers to promote their work, interact with audiences, build professional networks, and develop personal brands. For many performers, maintaining an online presence is increasingly part of professional activity rather than simply an optional promotional strategy(Ma et al. , 2026). Despite these benefits, social media may create psychological

pressures through continuous public evaluation. Performers may feel compelled to produce regular content, monitor audience reactions, respond to comments, maintain visibility, and demonstrate popularity through views, likes, shares, and followers. Negative comments, trolling, cyberbullying, and comparisons with other performers may further affect confidence and emotional well-being. Musgrave et al. (2025) found that professional popular musicians experienced both positive and negative consequences of social media use. While social media supported networking, self-expression, career development, and audience engagement, musicians also reported trolling, abuse, social comparison, and pressure to continually produce content. Similarly, Awopetu et al. (2024) reported associations between problematic social media use and depression and anxiety in their systematic review of Nigerian university students.

It is important, however, to distinguish occupational social media exposure from social media addiction. A performer may spend considerable time online because social media is necessary for professional promotion and career development. Therefore, exposure may involve frequency of use, online visibility, audience interaction, monitoring of public reactions, exposure to criticism, and perceived pressure to remain professionally relevant. The potential psychological impact of social media may consequently arise from the combination of professional necessity and continuous public scrutiny. For performers whose careers depend heavily on public recognition, online criticism and social comparison may contribute to anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and negative self-evaluation (Sun et al, 2026). Nevertheless, the existing Nigerian literature has focused largely on students and other populations rather than performers. The present study addresses this gap by examining social media exposure as an occupational factor associated with mental-health outcomes among Nigerian performers.

Performance Demands, Creative Work and Resilience

Performing requires technical competence, creativity, preparation, emotional expression, and interaction with audiences and other professionals. Performers may also manage auditions, rehearsals, travelling, networking, competition, and public evaluation. These demands can affect psychological well-being, particularly when they occur alongside financial insecurity and uncertain employment. Willis et al. (2019), in a systematic review of performing artists, identified organisational, social, and emotional occupational demands associated with performers' well-being. Performance demands, interpersonal relationships, scheduling, public exposure, criticism, competition, and job context were among the important occupational pressures identified. However, the review also showed that music-making, performance activities, and social support could serve as resources associated with better well-being. This dual nature of creative work is important. Performing can generate stress through public expectations, competition, criticism, and pressure to maintain professional standards, but it can also provide meaning, identity, satisfaction, emotional expression, and social connection. Support from colleagues, family, professional networks, and other members of the creative community may help performers manage occupational challenges. Evidence from the broader occupational mental-health literature also suggests that social capital, resilience, and job embeddedness can play important roles in promoting positive mental-health outcomes among workers (Ike et al., 2025).

Resilience is also relevant because performers may repeatedly encounter rejection, cancelled engagements, financial uncertainty, criticism, competition, and periods of limited professional activity. Resilience enables individuals to adapt to difficult circumstances and continue functioning despite setbacks. However, resilience should not be viewed as a substitute for supportive occupational structures. Addressing performers' mental-health challenges requires attention to both individual coping resources and the working conditions that generate psychological stress. For Nigerian performers, these factors may interact. A performer experiencing financial uncertainty, an insecure contract, intense competition, and negative online feedback while preparing for a major performance may experience a greater psychological burden than would be evident from any single stressor. Conversely, supportive colleagues, strong professional networks, creative collaboration, and effective coping strategies may reduce the impact of these pressures. The present study therefore considers both occupational stressors and coping mechanisms. This approach recognizes that Nigerian performers may experience significant psychological challenges while also demonstrating resilience through social support, creativity, professional relationships, and other coping resources. Structural limitations are further compounded by legislative and institutional delays in executing mental health policies across the country (Akanni & Edozien, 2024).

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian creative industry has expanded considerably across music, film, theatre, and dance, creating opportunities for performers to earn income, gain recognition, and develop their careers. However, many performers continue to work under unstable conditions characterized by irregular income, informal contracts, unpredictable engagements, intense competition, and increasing social-media pressure. These conditions may expose performers to anxiety, depression, stress, and emotional exhaustion. Income volatility remains a major concern because performers often depend on temporary engagements, shows, productions, and other project-based opportunities. Similarly, informal contractual arrangements may result in delayed payments, cancelled engagements, exploitation, and uncertainty about future employment. The increasing dependence on social media also exposes performers to public criticism, social comparison, cyber-pressure, and the constant expectation to remain visible and

relevant. Despite these challenges, there is limited empirical evidence specifically examining the relationship between these industrial conditions and the mental health of Nigerian performers. Existing research has largely focused on the general population, students, or workers in other occupational sectors, leaving performers relatively under-researched. In particular, there is inadequate evidence on the combined influence of income volatility, contract formality, and social-media exposure on performers' depression, anxiety, and stress.

This gap limits the ability of government, entertainment organizations, professional associations, and other stakeholders to develop appropriate welfare, contractual, and mental-health interventions for performers. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between industrial dynamics and mental-health challenges among Nigerian performers, focusing on income volatility, contract formality, and social-media exposure, while also exploring their lived experiences and coping mechanisms.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions;

1. What is the relationship between income volatility and mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety, and stress) among Nigerian performers?
2. How does contract formality or informality influence performers' psychological stability and sense of job security?
3. To what extent does social media exposure predict mental health challenges among Nigerian performers?
4. What lived experiences and coping mechanisms do Nigerian performers describe in relation to industrial stressors in the creative industry?
5. How can institutional and policy frameworks be strengthened to mitigate mental health challenges among performers in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between income volatility and mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety, and stress) among Nigerian performers.

H_{02}: Contract formality does not significantly predict psychological distress among Nigerian performers.

H_{03}: Social media exposure does not significantly predict depression and anxiety among Nigerian performers.

H_{04}: Income volatility, contract formality, and social media exposure do not have a significant combined predictive effect on the mental health outcomes of Nigerian performers.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a convergent mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how industrial dynamics influence the mental health of Nigerian performers. The quantitative component examined statistical relationships among measurable variables such as income volatility, contract formality, and social media exposure, while the qualitative component explored the lived experiences and coping strategies of performers. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled triangulation of data, enhanced validity, and provided both numerical and contextual insights into the phenomenon under study.

A total of 300 participants were selected for the quantitative phase using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across the four performance sectors, while 20 participants were purposively selected for in-depth interviews based on their professional experience, visibility, and willingness to share their experiences. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and an interview guide. The questionnaire measured income volatility, contract formality, social media exposure, and mental health outcomes using standardized instruments, including the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7). The interview guide contained open-ended questions on financial instability, contractual experiences, performance pressure, and coping strategies. The instruments were validated by experts in psychology, mental health, and performing arts research, while a pilot study involving 30 performers yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.86, indicating high reliability. Data were collected over six weeks through physical questionnaires, Google Forms, and interviews conducted face-to-face or via Zoom and WhatsApp. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis, whereas qualitative data were analyzed thematically using NVivo software. Ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate institutional research committee, and informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were ensured throughout the study.

RESULTS

Research Question 1:

What is the relationship between income volatility and mental-health outcomes (depression, anxiety, and stress) among Nigerian performers?

Table 1: Responses on Income Volatility and Mental Health Outcomes (n = 300)

Response Category	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	142	47.3
Agree	108	36.0
Disagree	34	11.3
Strongly Disagree	16	5.4
Total	**300**	**100**

Table 1 reveals that 142 respondents (47.3%) strongly agreed, and 108 respondents (36.0%) agreed that income volatility is associated with mental health challenges. Conversely, 34 respondents (11.3%) disagreed, and 16 (5.4%) strongly disagreed. Overall, 83.3% of respondents agreed that unpredictable income contributes to psychological strain among performers.

Qualitative Findings:

Interviews revealed that most performers viewed irregular payment schedules, delayed contracts, and unstable gigs as major emotional stressors.A few participants expressed the following:

> Sometimes, I can go two or three months without any show or film job. That alone makes me anxious about rent and feeding. Female stage actress, Lagos

> When your income depends on luck or who calls you next, you live in constant fear. Even when money comes, you don't rest because you don't know when the next one will come. Male musician, Abuja

> This industry is unpredictable. Financial stress leads to sleepless nights and depression among many of us. Comedian, Port Harcourt

Thematic Summary

Three major themes emerged:

Financial insecurity and emotional strain

Unstable workflow and psychological distress

Anxiety associated with unpredictable earnings

The qualitative findings complement the quantitative evidence by demonstrating how income uncertainty is experienced in the daily lives of performers.

Research Question 2:

How does contract formality or informality influence performers' psychological stability and sense of job security?

Table 2: Responses on Contract Formality and Psychological Stability (n = 300)

Response Category	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	126	42.0
Agree	122	40.7
Disagree	36	12.0
Strongly Disagree	16	5.3
Total	**300**	**100**

Table 2 reveals that 126 respondents representing 42.0% strongly agreed, while 122 respondents representing 40.7% agreed that contract informality negatively affects performers' psychological stability and job security. In contrast, 36 respondents representing 12.0% disagreed, while 16 respondents representing 5.3% strongly disagreed. In total, 82.7% of the respondents agreed that the absence of formal contractual agreements increases fear, uncertainty, and emotional instability among performers. This implies that formal contracts are important in promoting psychological security and reducing work-related stress within the creative industry.

Qualitative Findings:

Participants widely lamented the absence of formal contracts and the resulting exploitation, insecurity, and psychological tension in their work.

> "Most of the time, we work without written contracts. If the producer changes his mind, you have nothing to show." , Male actor, Benin City
> "I once shot a video and never got paid. Because it was all verbal agreement, there was nothing I could do." , Female dancer, Lagos
> "When there's no written contract, you're always scared, scared of being replaced, cheated, or ignored." ,Singer-songwriter, Asaba
Thematic Summary:
The major theme here nclude:
Fear of job loss and replacement due to informal agreements
Exploitation and non-payment by producers and managers
Psychological distress and reduced confidence
The qualitative findings provide contextual support for the quantitative evidence that contractual informality is an important source of insecurity among performers.

Research Question 3:
To what extent does social-media exposure predict mental-health challenges among Nigerian performers?

Table 3: Responses on Social-Media Exposure and Mental-Health Challenges (n = 300)

Response Category	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	118	39.3
Agree	104	34.7
Disagree	50	16.7
Strongly Disagre	28	9.3
Total	**300**	**100**

Table 3 indicates that 118 respondents representing 39.3% strongly agreed, while 104 respondents representing 34.7% agreed that social media exposure contributes to mental health challenges among Nigerian performers. Meanwhile, 50 respondents representing 16.7% disagreed, and 28 respondents representing 9.3% strongly disagreed. Altogether, 74.0% of the respondents agreed that excessive social media exposure contributes to anxiety, emotional pressure, and depressive symptoms among performers. This suggests that online scrutiny, competition, and public expectations have substantial psychological associated with individuals within the entertainment industry.

Qualitative Findings:
Interviews revealed that social media serves both as a platform for recognition and a source of psychological pressure and self-comparison. Many performers felt that constant exposure to online criticism and unrealistic expectations contributed to emotional distress.
> "Social media gives visibility, but the insults and pressure to look perfect are too much." ,Female influencer and singer, Lagos
> "Every post becomes a competition. When you don't get enough likes or views, it affects your confidence.",Male comedian, Port Harcourt
> "Sometimes I deactivate my account just to breathe. People think we are fine, but mentally we are struggling." ,Actress, Asaba
Thematic Summary:
Cyber-pressure and public scrutiny
Social comparison and emotional fatigue
Pressure to maintain online visibility
Temporary withdrawal as a coping strategy
The qualitative narratives strengthen the quantitative findings by showing how online visibility brings both fame and mental strain. Performers reported heightened anxiety and depression from social comparison and negative comments, confirming that social-media exposure is a significant psychological stressor for Nigerian entertainers.

Research Question 4:
What lived experiences and coping mechanisms do Nigerian performers describe in relation to industrial stressors?

Table 4: Overall Responses on Lived Experiences and Coping Mechanisms among Nigerian Performers (n = 300)

Response Category	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	132	44.0

Agree	110	36.7
Disagree	38	12.7
Strongly Disagree	20	6.6
Total	**300**	**100**

Table 4 shows that 132 respondents representing 44.0% strongly agreed, while 110 respondents representing 36.7% agreed that performers experience significant industrial stress but rely on different coping mechanisms to manage their emotional wellbeing. However, 38 respondents representing 12.7% disagreed, while 20 respondents representing 6.6% strongly disagreed. Overall, 80.7% of the respondents acknowledged experiencing stress arising from unstable income, performance pressure, and work-related uncertainty, while also adopting coping strategies such as peer support, spirituality, and creative collaboration. This implies that although performers face considerable emotional strain, they demonstrate resilience through social and personal support systems.

Qualitative Findings:

The participants expressed that working in the creative industry comes with pressure to remain relevant, frequent burnout, and unreliable support systems. However, they described several coping strategies rooted in social and spiritual connections.

> When the stress is too much, I talk to colleagues who understand the struggle. Male film director, Lagos

> I pray a lot and remind myself that my talent is from God. That keeps me strong. Female gospel artist, Port Harcourt

> We share jokes or collaborate on small projects just to ease tension and stay creative.Stage performer, Benin City

Thematic Summary:

Emotional exhaustion and burnout

Peer bonding and social support

Faith and spirituality as coping anchors

The qualitative evidence complements the quantitative findings by illustrating that while industrial stress is high, performers rely heavily on social relationships, collaboration, and spirituality to manage their emotional wellbeing. This underscores the resilience of Nigerian performers amid challenging working conditions.

Research Question 5:

How can institutional and policy frameworks be strengthened to mitigate mental-health challenges among performers?

Table 5: Overall Responses on Institutional and Policy Frameworks (n = 300)

Response Category	Frequency(f)	Percentage(%)
Strongly Agree	146	48.7
Agree	112	37.3
Disagree	30	10.0
Strongly Disagree	12	4.0
Total	**300**	**100**

Table 5 reveals that 146 respondents representing 48.7% strongly agreed, while 112 respondents representing 37.3% agreed that stronger institutional and policy frameworks are necessary to address mental health challenges among performers. Conversely, 30 respondents representing 10.0% disagreed, while 12 respondents representing 4.0% strongly disagreed. In total, 86.0% of the respondents supported the establishment of improved welfare policies, mental health support systems, and stronger union protection within the creative industry. This indicates that performers believe institutional reforms and policy interventions are essential for improving psychological wellbeing and professional stability in Nigeria's entertainment sector.

Qualitative Findings:

Participants voiced a strong desire for government and industry bodies to create structures that protect performers' welfare and mental health.

> There should be a performing arts council that handles welfare and insurance for artists. Male actor, Lagos

> We need policies that make producers respect contracts and pay on time. Female dancer, Abuja

> If unions take mental health seriously, people will speak up before breaking down. Comedian, Asaba

Thematic Summary:

Need for government and union involvement

Advocacy for fair contracts and payment systems

Call for structured mental health support and awareness

The qualitative findings reinforce the quantitative data by emphasizing that institutional and policy interventions are very important for sustainable mental wellbeing in the creative sector. Performers believe that union reform, government-backed welfare schemes, and mental health education would greatly reduce industry-induced stress.

Summary

By combining both quantitative and qualitative findings, the results show that industrial dynamics, income volatility, contract informality, and social media exposure, have direct and significant effects on the mental wellbeing of Nigerian performers. Despite these pressures, performers display resilience through social networks, faith, and creativity, while calling for stronger institutional frameworks to sustain mental health and professional stability.

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant relationship between income volatility and mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety, and stress) among Nigerian performers.

Table 6: Correlation between Income Volatility and Mental Health Outcomes

Variables	Depression	Anxiety	Stress	P<Value
Income Volatility	r = 0.46	r = 0.42	r = 0.49	p < 0.001

Table 6 shows that income volatility had a significant positive relationship with depression (r = 0.46), anxiety (r = 0.42), and stress (r = 0.49) among Nigerian performers at p < 0.001. This indicates that performers with unstable income are more likely to experience psychological distress. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was rejected.

Hypothesis 2:

Contract formality does not significantly predict psychological stability among Nigerian performers.

Table 7: Regression of Contract Formality on Psychological Distress

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Contract Formality	-2.13	0.62	-0.32	-3.44	0.001
Constant	15.84	1.12	—	14.14	0.000

Table 7 revealed that contract formality significantly predicted psychological distress among performers (β = -0.32, t = -3.44, p = .001). The negative beta value indicates that performers with more formal contracts experienced lower psychological distress. The model explained 16% of the variance in psychological distress (R^2 = 0.16). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was rejected. The negative beta coefficient indicates that higher level of contract formality are associated with lower level of psychological distress.

Hypothesis 3:

Social media exposure does not significantly predict depression and anxiety among Nigerian performers.

Table 8: Regression of Social Media Exposure on Depression and Anxiety

Dependent Variable	Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Depression	Social Media Exposure	2.01	0.58	0.28	3.48	0.001
Anxiety	Social Media Exposure	1.77	0.55	0.25	3.21	0.002

Table 8 showed that social media exposure significantly predicted depression (β = 0.28, p = 0.001) and anxiety (β = 0.25, p = 0.002) among Nigerian performers. This implies that increased social media exposure contributes to higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was rejected.

Hypothesis 4:

Income volatility, contract formality, and social media exposure do not have a significant combined predictive association with mental health outcomes of Nigerian performers.

Table 9: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Mental Health Outcomes

Predictor Variables	B	SE	β	t	p
Income Volatility	2.31	0.47	0.39	4.91	0.000
Contract Formality	-1.65	0.54	-0.26	-3.05	0.003
Social Media Exposure	1.48	0.43	0.22	3.43	0.001
Constant	9.12	1.85	—	4.93	0.000

Table 9 revealed that income volatility, contract formality, and social media exposure jointly predicted mental health outcomes among Nigerian performers. The predictors explained 41% of the variance in mental health outcomes ($R^2 = 0.41$), and the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 68.74$, $p < .001$). Income volatility had the strongest influence, followed by contract formality and social media exposure. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was rejected

Summary of results

The statistical analyses show that occupational conditions have a significant association with mental health of Nigerian performers. Performers with unstable incomes experience higher levels of depression and stress.Those with informal or unclear contracts face heightened insecurity and anxiety. High social media exposure increases vulnerability to public pressure and emotional exhaustion.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Findings is discussed according to the hypotheses.

Income Volatility and Mental Health Outcomes

The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between income volatility and depression, anxiety, and stress among Nigerian performers. This indicates that performers experiencing greater fluctuations and uncertainty in income are more likely to report poorer mental health outcomes. The finding is consistent with Ani et al. (2024), who found a significant relationship between financial scarcity and psychological well-being among Nigerians during the naira redesign period. It also agrees with Agberotimi et al. (2020), who reported relationships between socioeconomic conditions and mental-health outcomes among Nigerians. Similarly, Rönnblad et al. (2019) found that job insecurity was associated with adverse mental health. The present finding extends these observations to Nigerian performers, whose dependence on irregular shows, productions, endorsements, and short-term engagements may make income uncertainty particularly psychologically demanding.

Contract Formality and Psychological Stability

The study also found that contract formality significantly predicted psychological stability among Nigerian performers. Performers with more formal and clearly defined contractual arrangements appeared to experience less psychological distress and greater job security. This finding supports the broader evidence that employment insecurity and precarious work can negatively affect mental health (Rönnblad et al., 2019; Jaydarifard et al., 2023). It is also consistent with Willis et al. (2019), who identified remuneration, job security, competition, and organisational conditions as important occupational concerns among performing artists. The finding suggests that written contracts may provide more than financial protection; they may also reduce uncertainty concerning payment, duration of engagement, responsibilities, and job continuity.

Social Media Exposure and Mental Health Challenges

The findings further showed that social media exposure significantly predicted depression and anxiety among Nigerian performers. This supports Awopetu et al. (2024), who found an association between problematic social media use and mental-health difficulties among Nigerian university students. It is also consistent with Musgrave et al. (2025), who reported that professional musicians experienced both career benefits and psychological pressures from social media, including social comparison, trolling, abuse, and pressure to remain visible. For performers, social media is both a professional necessity and a potential source of psychological strain because online criticism, audience expectations, comparison, and pressure to maintain visibility may extend occupational stress beyond the actual performance environment.

Lived Experiences, Coping and Institutional Support

The qualitative findings showed that performers experienced financial uncertainty, contractual insecurity, performance pressure, and online scrutiny, but relied on peer support, spirituality, and creative collaboration to cope. This finding is consistent with Willis et al. (2019), who identified social support and engagement in performance activities as resources that can enhance performers' well-being. The strong support for institutional interventions also indicates that performers do not view mental-health challenges solely as individual problems. Their responses point to the need for stronger contractual protection, welfare systems, mental-health services, and professional associations. This is consistent with the broader Nigerian mental-health literature, which highlights limitations in access to and implementation of mental-health services (Fadele et al., 2024). This further aligns with observations by Akanni and Edozien (2024), who emphasized that recent legislative reforms such as the National Mental Health Act still require substantial operational capacity to effectively support vulnerable occupational groups.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the relationship between industrial dynamics and mental health challenges among Nigerian performers, with particular focus on income volatility, contract formality, and social media exposure. A convergent mixed-methods design was adopted, involving 300 performers from music, film, theatre, and dance, with additional qualitative interviews used to explore their lived experiences and coping mechanisms. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation, regression analysis, and thematic analysis. The findings showed that income volatility was significantly associated with depression, anxiety, and stress

among Nigerian performers. Contract formality also significantly predicted psychological stability, indicating that performers with clearer and more formal contractual arrangements experienced greater employment security and lower psychological distress. Social media exposure significantly predicted depression and anxiety, suggesting that continuous online visibility, public scrutiny, social comparison, and cyber-pressure may constitute important psychological challenges for performers.

The qualitative findings further revealed that performers experienced financial uncertainty, contractual insecurity, performance pressure, and social-media-related stress. However, they employed coping strategies such as peer support, spirituality, creative collaboration, and temporary withdrawal from stressful situations. The findings also showed strong support for institutional interventions, including improved welfare systems, fair contractual arrangements, mental-health services, and stronger professional associations.

Conclusion

The study concludes that industrial dynamics are significantly associated with the mental health of Nigerian performers. Income volatility, contract insecurity, and social media exposure constitute important occupational factors associated with depression, anxiety, stress, and psychological instability within the creative industry. Although performers demonstrate resilience through social support, spirituality, and creative collaboration, individual coping mechanisms alone may not adequately address the structural challenges associated with creative work. Sustainable improvement therefore requires interventions that address both the psychological needs of performers and the occupational conditions under which they work.The study further concludes that strengthening contractual protection, reducing income insecurity, promoting responsible social-media practices, and improving access to mental-health services can contribute to a healthier and more sustainable Nigerian creative industry.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Income Stabilisation: Government and entertainment bodies should provide welfare schemes, minimum payment standards, and financial-support mechanisms to reduce the effects of income volatility.
2. Formal Contracts: Professional associations should promote written and enforceable contracts to reduce job insecurity, exploitation, and psychological distress.
3. Mental Health Support: Accessible counselling and psychological support services should be provided for performers experiencing depression, anxiety, and stress.
4. Social Media Management: Performers should be trained to manage online criticism, cyberbullying, social comparison, and the pressure of constant online visibility.
5. Strengthen Support Systems: Creative organisations should promote peer support, mentoring, and other coping resources that enhance performers' resilience.
6. Policy and Institutional Support: Government and industry bodies should strengthen welfare policies, contractual protection, and mental-health programmes for performers.

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