

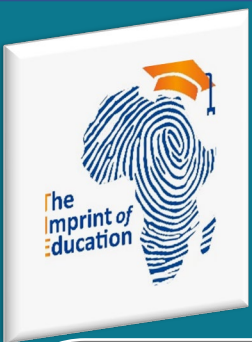


HSRC
Human Sciences
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"I Just Want to Die": Reflections on Mental Health from a Cohort of Young African Graduates at the Intersection of Pandemic

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A 5-year longitudinal cohort study of Scholar Alumni



Learning Activity (LA) 1: Tertiary and Secondary School Alumni Quantitative Tracer Study

3 Wave Survey

All Tertiary Alumni & sample of Secondary Alumni from 2017-19

Countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda & 'Diaspora'

Learning Activity (LA) 2: Research-as-Intervention Qualitative Study

Rapid Ethnography

Alumni Conference

In-depth Interviews

Keeping in Touch profiles

Key Informant Interviews

Social Network Interviews

Learning Activities (LA) 3-5: Contextual Learning

Academic and Organic Insights on Leadership and Identity

Hindsight on Reimagining the African University

Foresight on Youth Livelihoods

Aims of the Study



1. To understand the impact of the MSP on **recipients** over time, by measuring **Alumni impact on their worlds** (“transformative and ethical leadership”)
2. To understand **what works and why**, what can be improved to **maximise the impact of Scholars as agents** in the social and economic transformation of Africa
3. To examine the links between **socio-economic disadvantage, education and development.**
4. To provide evidence of **individual, structural, contextual and programmatic** factors that mediate outcomes, especially “**return**” and “**giving back**”

Context



- **1 in 8** worldwide live with a mental disorder (WHO, 2022)
- Few studies have explored the mental health of youth in the Global South (even fewer in Africa)
- “Little work has been done to consider mental health in more **challenged, resource-constrained, and “developing”** contexts” (Pendse et al., 2019: p.2)
- India, Sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa, Ghana, Tanzania), and South America (Colombia, Ecuador)
- High prevalence of **depression and anxiety** amongst youth

Mental Health triggers in TIE



- 1) Background
- 2) Discrimination
- 3) School pressure
- 4) Strained interpersonal relationships
- 5) Job searching/Unemployment

Overview



- 67 out of 117 alumni struggled with mental health
- 23 men, 44 women.
- Only 20 sought professional help
- Of the 20, 6 who sought professional help were men

- South Africa (14) and Uganda (12) high numbers
- Diaspora = most help seekers (7 professional help)
- Kenya and Rwanda, more didn't struggle
- Work/University vs Personal counseling
- One psychiatric intervention in Ghana



	Secondary Alumni	Tertiary Alumni
Networking opportunities	68%	90%
Give-back activities	80%	79%
Being part of a community of Scholars	57%	78%
Job search skills training	63%	75%
Leadership training	94%	75%
Career guidance	94%	71%
Mentorship	94%	70%
Using the Baobab Platform	41%	66%
An internship	35%	62%
Counselling	90%	60%
Africa Careers Network	18%	56%
Transitions programs	65%	51%
Tutoring	59%	51%
Conference travel	59%	48%
Research or project grants	21%	46%
The Baobab Summit	34%	40%
Bridging (or on boarding) programs	42%	38%
The Scholars Council	35%	33%
Learning Partnership Advisory Group	56%	32%

Activities that Alumni participated in

Top 5 activities that Alumni most appreciated

Lucia's Story



“At first, I was depressed, I was stressed being uncertain. Things are moving and then they stop, because one of the greatest fears of graduating is coming back to look for a job. The first emails I got back when I was applying for jobs, telling me that I’ve been short listed, were con artists...people asking for money, tech companies. You find this on a job website, and you think it’s authentic. And you apply and then they start asking for money. You look through and you don’t even find that company anywhere... So, it was really frustrating, I was like what does God want? But as time went on, I started accepting and I went back to applying again” (Lucia/Uganda_2020_F27_2020_III).

Pedro's Story



“...I think for me I really **became conscious about my mental health when I graduated**, and I wasn't finding opportunities. I wasn't finding career opportunities and graduate opportunities... **I was stressed**... even though I am doing a Master's programme, I am still thinking of 'well, I am on a Visa, I have one year to complete... I go back to searching for a job or do I continue with a PhD', so I feel I am – it is a relief that I am progressing in terms of my education, but in terms of the next steps, **I'm getting a little bit stressed about what the future looks**... I think last year when we spoke, **I was in a bad place. I was confused, I was disturbed** about the rate of progress after graduation but now I think I generally feel better about the progress that I have made so far...” (Pedro/Ghana_2018_M27_2022_III)

Charlottes Story



...I thought after my undergraduate I should be independent, I should have a job, but **it was not easy to get a job, so I became depressed**. By the time I was going to Ghana I **had even lost a lot of weight because I was stressed** because I'm the kind of person who wants to be independent, not ask for help, live in my own place, at least help instead of being helped. So, it was not an easy journey for me... I needed to do something, **staying without doing any kind of work stressed me out**... that's why I decided to volunteer and because you don't need to have a gap in your CV... it's a big issue when you are looking for jobs" (Charlotte/Kenya_2017_F29_2022_III)

Strategies



- Networks of wellbeing network
- Faith, religion and prayer
- Practicing gratitude
- Physical exercise
- Gaining knowledge
- 'Feeling your feelings'
- Changing one's environment
- Scholars Programme/alumni
- Managing finances
- Poverty being character building
- Agency
- Managing expectations
- Employment

State Fragility



“Oh, my goodness... it was a struggle. And one of the reasons was being able to find a job outside of my country of citizenship. Actually, towards the end I was contemplating moving back to Addis and just getting a job there. But the fact that it was really hard for me to get a job in my continent was very sad. I would understand maybe if I struggled to get a job in the States, but this continent that you call home, you come to realise we are actually just separate countries. Like this whole idea of a continent, ooh, Africa as one, it is just a lie. But ja, **it took a year and a half, and that was a brutal experience, just thinking about that time makes me so much nervous.**”
(Bathsheba/Ethiopia_2019_F29_2022_III)

PETER'S STORY



“I actually wouldn’t have wanted that you start with someone who doesn’t have good news for you because as I’m speaking to you, you are also listening and it can also have an impact on you which I wouldn’t want... **for the first time, suicide thoughts come to my mind.** You would not imagine but for the first time in my life, sometimes I just get up and go like what is it, where did I go wrong, or what should I have done better, and **does it make sense for me to be here...** I don’t know, I have no idea what is happening because you get up in the morning and you have bills to pay... three days ago they came, the electricity company came to disconnect my lights... **Sometimes I even want to hide because I can’t keep pretending and smiling when inwardly I’m burning,** so I want to hide from my children, I want to hide from my family when they see me, and there are a whole lot of things but what is keeping me moving is that I know I have a lot of people who are looking up to me, my family is looking up to me, my children, my friends, sometimes even programming at church... it’s not about me again, it’s about so many people, a community of people who think that they can learn something from me. I’m not just trying to be negative about anything, **I’m just giving you the honest answers, the truth, the true picture about the situation”** (Peter/Ghana_2020_M42_2021_III).