





Examining Factors Contributing to Mental Disorders Among Grade 12 Male Learners in Limpopo Province, South Africa

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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The introduction presents a valuable and urgent issue, but it requires greater clarity in linking the statistical data with the subsequent argument. Specifically, the claim that “Grade 12 learners are more than twice as likely to die by suicide than adults” (WHO, 2021, 2022) should be substantiated with a clearer explanation of the methodology or context behind the global suicide rates. How does this data specifically relate to South African Grade 12 learners, and what distinguishes them from adults in this context?

The paragraph introduces gender roles and their impact on male learners’ mental health but lacks citations to back up the claims. For example, the statement “male learners tend to bottle things up” could benefit from referencing studies that directly examine how these societal expectations manifest in male learners’ mental health behaviors. This would make the argument more robust and credible.

The phrase “Male learners’ ability to seek professional assistance about their mental health is impacted by a variety of problems” is vague. Can the author specify the key challenges that prevent male learners from seeking help? A more detailed breakdown of these factors (e.g., stigma, fear of judgment, lack of resources) would strengthen the argument.

While the discussion of societal expectations and the stigma around seeking help is valid, the connection between “crying” and the reluctance to seek help needs to be more nuanced. The statement that “Male learners feel that if they ask for help society will say they are not strong enough” could be expanded by discussing the role of emotional suppression, especially in academic settings, where vulnerability is often perceived as a weakness.

The mention of “toxic masculinity norms” could be better defined in the context of this study. The literature cited (e.g., Gough & Novikova, 2020) should be integrated more clearly into the text. For instance, how do these norms specifically shape help-seeking behavior in male learners? A brief theoretical discussion on toxic masculinity would add depth here.

While historical context is important, the phrase “The history of grade 12 learners’ mental health in South Africa has reached a turning point” is somewhat vague. What is the turning point? Is it an increase in awareness, changes in policy, or a rise in cases of mental illness among learners? Clarifying this would make the discussion more precise and insightful.

The impact of traditional gender roles on male learners is well articulated. However, the phrase “these stressors can seriously affect learners’ mental health and occasionally trigger addiction” requires more elaboration. Are there studies that demonstrate this connection between gender roles, stress, and addiction in the context of South African male learners?

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The phrase “Therefore, a learner would then start acting out” requires more specificity. It would be beneficial to explain what specific behaviors are meant here (e.g., aggression, withdrawal, academic decline) and how these behaviors are linked to mental health struggles. Additionally, the reference to “new approaches to research” needs further elaboration on what those approaches entail, particularly in the context of male learners’ mental health.

The assertion that “Male learners are allegedly less susceptible to mental health problems because society views them as the most resilient people on the planet” needs further clarification. It would be helpful to explain the evidence or studies that support this societal belief and its specific consequences on male learners’ willingness to seek help. A deeper exploration of how “resilience” is defined in the context of mental health would also add value.

The reference to “denial of emotions” is a significant point but is not adequately explained. How does this denial manifest among male learners? Including real-life examples or case studies would provide more tangible insight into how this denial leads to mental health struggles.

The discussion on “societal expectations and masculinity” would benefit from more academic sources that specifically address the link between masculinity and mental health. The paper would be stronger if it cited studies that investigate how male learners internalize these societal expectations and the psychological toll this takes.

The statement “learners are expected to be strong even when they are struggling because they need to hide emotions” could be expanded to include research findings that link the suppression of emotions to specific mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety. Providing evidence of this relationship would help underline the importance of addressing these issues in the study.

The discussion of common risk factors (employment and career issues) is relevant, but it could be more directly linked to Grade 12 learners. How does unemployment post-graduation specifically affect male learners in South Africa? Including more localized studies or data could strengthen the argument and make it more applicable to the study’s population.

The connection between family issues, such as divorce, and learners’ mental health is valuable, but it requires more evidence. The phrase “learners from divorced families are most likely to have suicidal ideas and substance abuse” would benefit from being supported by specific studies or data. Providing citations of studies that investigate this phenomenon would add credibility to the claim.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.