

Title:**RISE & REST: A SCHOOL-BASED SOUND THERAPY ROUTINE TO PROMOTE ADOLESCENT MENTAL WELLNESS AND NEURO-INCLUSION IN KENYA****Authors:**

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Abstract**Introduction:**

Adolescents in Kenya face an escalating mental health crisis, with up to 40% experiencing psychological distress. In rural and boarding school settings, access to mental health support remains limited due to stigma, low availability of trained personnel, and a lack of culturally relevant interventions. Neurodivergent students are particularly marginalized within mainstream education systems. This study presents *Rise & Rest*, a school-based sound therapy routine designed to enhance emotional regulation, learning readiness, and neuro-inclusion using low-cost, non-stigmatizing, and scalable tools.

Methods:

The *Rise & Rest* program integrates brainwave entrainment through isochronic beats into structured routines built on the “R.I.S.E.” model: Reset the Mind, Inner Awareness, Stress Literacy, and Evening Wind-down. Learners participate in daily and weekly activities involving breathwork, journaling, music therapy, and peer-led psychosocial support. The program was piloted in public and special boarding schools across Kenya with over 25,000 adolescents. Implementation utilized trained school health workers, student mental health ambassadors, and AI-assisted delivery tools. Data was collected using standardized surveys, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews. A mixed-methods approach enabled measurement of both quantitative outcomes and qualitative insights. A randomized controlled trial is planned to validate long-term efficacy.

Results:

Preliminary evaluation of the pilot phase indicated:

- 70% of participants reported improved emotional wellbeing
- 65% showed enhanced classroom focus
- 54% experienced improved sleep quality
- 81% expressed increased trust in trained non-teacher facilitators

Qualitative data emphasized the accessibility and acceptability of sound therapy across diverse student populations. Implementation challenges included device availability in remote settings and facilitator retention, which are being addressed through partnerships and training manuals.

Conclusions:

Rise & Rest offers a culturally grounded, cost-effective, and inclusive model for adolescent mental health promotion in resource-constrained school settings. Its alignment with Kenya's School Health Policy and the 2023 Persons with Disabilities Act positions it for integration into national education and health frameworks. The program also presents opportunities for mental health financing innovation by demonstrating how preventive, school-based care can reduce high-cost psychiatric claims. With its strong evidence base and scalability, Rise & Rest contributes to a holistic approach to youth mental health, empowering adolescents with proactive emotional regulation tools while building inclusive school environments.

Keywords: adolescent mental health, neuro-inclusion, sound therapy, isochronic beats, brainwave entrainment, school-based intervention, Kenya, inclusive education

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