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STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SECURITY OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION ZARIA, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined students' perceptions of the psychological security inside the school environment at the Federal University of Education Zaria, Kaduna State. A total of 360 NCE II students (240 males and 120 females) participated in the study. A self-created questionnaire, named the Psychological Security Scale, exhibiting a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.83, was employed for data collection in the study. The mean and standard deviation were employed to address the study issues; an independent sample t-test was utilized to evaluate the first hypothesis, while analysis of variance was applied to assess the second hypothesis. The results indicated a considerable disparity in psychological security between male and female students, whereas no notable differences were observed among other age groups in terms of psychological security. The government is advised to enhance security surrounding the college by deploying military and police forces to safeguard the safety of students and personnel. The security personnel assigned to the college must execute their responsibilities with utmost diligence, rather than compromising the oath they swore to serve their homeland. Students must adhere to all college directives for their own benefit, refraining from remaining on campus late if residing there, and returning to their respective homes promptly if living off campus, rather than staying out late at night.

Keywords: Perception, Psychological Security, Gender, Age, Metropolis

INTRODUCTION

The significance of quality education for national growth cannot be overstated. Consequently, governments, non-governmental organizations, religious institutions, private individuals, and others have focused significant attention on educational growth by establishing schools across all educational levels throughout society. The significance of quality education has been thoroughly examined (Nwanne-Nzewunwa, 2009; Ojukwu & Nwanma, 2015; Ojukwu & Onuoha, 2016; Ossat, 2012). The Nigerian government recognizes the significance of education for national development and has been financing the sector through various designated entities. The Federal Government of Nigeria established the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to oversee the education of children at the fundamental level. Its responsibilities include employing teachers, constructing school facilities, providing instructional materials, conducting research, and monitoring and evaluating the commission's effectiveness for the benefit of Nigerian children.

The government established the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND), responsible for staff training for postgraduate studies both domestically and internationally for masters and doctoral degrees, as well as the construction of facilities for various institutions nationwide, including staff offices and lecture halls. The fund is mandated by the government to sponsor lecturers for local and international conferences for personal development, provide research grants for institutional and national research, and allocate book development funds to Nigerian lecturers for writing and publishing books to enhance their growth and development. This significantly enhances the quality of education in the country. The effectiveness of these commendable government initiatives can only be realized in a favorable and secure environment.

When the security of the learning environment cannot be assured, fear, wrath, anxiety, and uncertainty will ensue. The Federal University of Education, Zaria, previously known as the Federal College of Education Zaria, was founded by the Federal Government of Nigeria to prepare educators for the Universal Basic Education Programme. The collegiate environment should be secure, safe, and tranquil to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Recent events

have demonstrated that the security of students and others within Zaria Metropolis is compromised. For example, there was the incident involving the abduction of the daughter of the former vice chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in the Zango Shanu region of the town. During the same timeframe, a female student from a tertiary institution in Zaria arranged to meet a male acquaintance from Facebook at the PZ area of the town at night, only to be fatally stabbed by unidentified assailants with a sharp object, succumbing to her injuries en route to the hospital. All this presented a significant psychological security concern to students throughout educational institutions in Zaria Metropolis, Kaduna State, including the Federal University of Education Zaria.

The notion of school environment has been delineated by multiple studies (Tapia-Fonllem, 2020; Harshita, 2024). Harshita (2024) characterized the school environment as the entirety of people and material resources present within the school, which a kid can perceive through sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, and emotional response. Harshita (2024) said that the school environment issue is multifaceted. They assert that it encompasses physical, social, and academic requirements. The physical dimensions encompass the aesthetics of the school building, classrooms, libraries, labs, hostels, athletic activities, and leisure amenities. The social dimension encompasses the quality of interpersonal relationships among students, teachers, and administrators; equitable treatment of students by faculty and staff; the level of competition and social comparison among students; and the extent of student and teacher involvement in the school's decision-making processes. Tapia-Fonllem (2020) stated that the academic dimension of the school environment encompasses the quality of education provided to students and teachers' expectations for academic excellence from them. The school environment pertains to the perceptions and sentiments of students and teachers regarding their daily experiences at school, (Ojukwu, 2017).

A sense of security is an essential ingredient for human survival. The primary concern of self-protection has led to the conceptualization of security as a human endeavor to attain safety from external threats. Psychological security is challenging to achieve, as researchers have posited that survival is linked to responses to personal risks (Madrigal, 2018). Psychological security is seen as a complex notion in psychology, as it is interconnected with and impacted by various other ideas, including happiness, comfort, and self-security. It is characterized as an individual's perception of being loved and accepted by others, alongside the satisfaction of the demand for an engaging social environment devoid of feelings of threat and anxiety (Shalaga 2025; Laursen & Collins, 2022). Psychological security is the primary factor that signifies the condition of well-being. It is a dynamic process that illustrates how individuals confront peril and real risks until well-being is achieved (Zotova & Karapetyan, 2018).

Age and gender are demographic factors that affect psychological security within educational institutions. Age is a crucial factor that influences psychological security. Young students remain oblivious to the dangers surrounding our campuses until educated and enlightened by their parents or relatives, whereas older, more mature students, having encountered life experiences, are aware of their environment. Consequently, older pupils generally exhibit greater awareness of their security compared to younger students. Gender is an additional demographic characteristic that affects the psychological stability of students. Societal expectations suggest that female students endure greater levels of anxiety and stress than their male counterparts. Their fragile character consequently results in greater psychological insecurity among female students compared to their male counterparts. This study examined the impact of age and gender on the psychological security of the school environment in Zaria.

Psychological security is a fundamental desire pursued by humans. In the absence of a reassuring environment, they will experience pervasive fear and a sense of menace. Psychological insecurity precipitates the development of personal and emotional problems. Various studies have examined psychological security and related variables; one such study by Musa, Meshak, and Sagir (2016) explored adolescents' perceptions of the psychological security within their school environments and its correlation with their emotional development and academic performance in secondary schools in Gombe Metropolis. A cohort of 239 secondary school students (107 men and 133 females), chosen through stratified random sampling from four

public and private secondary schools in Gombe Metropolis, participated in the study. A self-developed questionnaire entitled "Psychological Perspective of the Security of School Environment, Emotional Development, Academic Performance of Adolescents" was utilized for the study, exhibiting a Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.71. Simple percentage and multiple regression were employed to analyze the data. The findings indicated that adolescents regarded the psychological security of secondary school environments as inadequate; there are substantial correlations between environmental insecurity and the emotional growth and academic performance of adolescents. It was advised that government and school owners should enclose all educational institutions, school administrators should ensure sufficient protection for educators and kids through effective leadership, and parents should adequately educate their children. Ojukwu (2017) investigated the impact of environmental insecurity on the academic performance of secondary school students in Imo State, Nigeria. A total of 1000 students, comprising 500 males and 500 females, replied to a systematic, validated questionnaire prepared for the study. Two research questions and two hypotheses were established to direct the investigation. The mean and standard deviation were computed to address the study issues, and independent sample t-tests were employed to evaluate the hypotheses. Research indicated that the insecurity of the school environment substantially impacts the academic performance of secondary school students. Factors contributing to this insecurity include students' involvement in gangsterism, the use of Indian hemp, the abuse of other illicit drugs, cult activities, and related violence, which ultimately compel boys to abandon their education for trade and lead girls to drop out in favor of marriage. The findings urge that school owners and educational stakeholders take decisive measures to secure school premises against intruders to safeguard student safety.

Gazi and Shemal (2015) did a study on the psychological security of teachers at the Faculty of Pure Science, Ibn al-Haytham University, Baghdad. A sample size of 200 respondents, consisting of 120 male and 80 female lecturers, was utilized for the study. A verified structured questionnaire created by researchers was employed for data gathering. The findings indicate a slight decline in the sensation of security among teachers, with statistically significant differences in psychological security seen based on gender, particularly for females. It was advised to prioritize psychological security by ensuring justice and equitable treatment within the university, as well as to implement psychological security measures in the instruction of newcomers to assess their individual levels of psychological security. Alsharah, Alazam, Alhamad, and Al-Sharaah (2018) elucidate the correlation between religious devotion and psychological stability among a cohort of 156 female students at Irbid University College. The findings indicated that religious devotion substantially affected psychological security among the pupils.

Statement of Problem

Despite the critical role of education in human development and nation building, effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a chaotic and insecure environment. In such environment, the order of the day will be fear, anxiety, apprehension and dread as a result of killing, kidnapping, maiming and cases of missing persons, thereby affecting adequate concentration and assimilation of learning outcomes among the students and effective discharge of duty on the part of the lecturers. Different studies have been conducted on the psychological security of the school environment (Musa et al., 2016; Ojukwu, 2017; Gazi & Shemal, 2015; Alsharah et al., 2028) but a study of this nature have not been conducted in Zaria, which is considered as the center of learning in the country with several Federal tertiary institution. Therefore, this study examined the influence of age and gender on the psychological security of school environment in Zaria.

Purpos/e of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine gender difference on the psychological security of male and female students in Federal University of Education and to determine age difference on the psychological security of students in Federal University of Education Zaria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. Is there a significant difference between male and female students on psychological security in Federal University of Education Zaria?
2. Is there a significant age difference among the students on psychological security in Federal University of Education Zaria?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between male and female students on the psychological security in Federal University of Education Zaria.
2. There is no significant age difference among the students on their psychological security in Federal University of Education Zaria.

METHOD

Research Design

Cross sectional survey design was adopted in this study. Demographic variables of age and gender serves as the independent variables in the study while the dependent variable is psychological security.

Population

The targeted population for the study comprises all NCE II students in Federal College of Education Zaria comprising of 4, 894 students across the 7 schools in the college. Simple intact sampling method was used in selecting NCE II students of Economic Social Studies which stood at 378 students. At the time of data collection, only 360 students were available in the lecture hall where the researcher took them in EDU 214, Research Methodology.

Instrument

A self-structured questionnaire titled Psychological Security Scale (PSS) developed by the researchers was used to collect data for the study. The instrument has 17 items which was divided into 2 sections: Section A is on demographic variables these include age and gender of the respondents, section B on the psychological security of the school environment (15) items. During the scale development, content and construct validity were conducted with adequate validity measures. The inter-item correlation analysis, reliability statistics, PCA-principal component analysis and factor analysis were ascertained which the developmental procedures reduced the original 22-item generated to 15-items with the screening criteria. The remaining 15-item produced a reliability Cronbach's $\alpha=0.83$. The factor loading showed that the scale has one dimension using Eigen values greater than 1 as the indicator. The instrument was validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation as well as psychologists in the Department of Educational Psychology, Federal University of Education, Zaria. It has a Cronbach Alpha reliability of .83. The responses are strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and undecided. The instrument was self-administered and retrieved without mortality.

Method of data Analysis

Mean and Standard Deviation was used to answer the research questions; independent sample t-test was used to test hypothesis one while analysis of variance was used to test hypothesis two. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Version 25

RESULTS

The findings of the study are presented below;

Research Question One

Is there any significant gender difference on the psychological security among FUE Students?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Difference between Male and Female Students on the Psychological Security among FUE Students

Gender	N	Mean	SD
Male	240	48.50	2.06
Female	120	56.50	2.51

Table 1 above shows the results of the mean difference between male and female students on the psychological security in Federal University of Education, Zaria. The results show that male students have a mean score of 48.50 while female students had a mean score of 56.50. This implies that the female students had a higher mean score than the male students, implying that female students are more psychologically secured than the male students.

Research Question Two

Is there any significant age difference among the students on the psychological security in FUE, Zaria?

Table2: Mean and Standard Deviation difference among the age groups on the Psychological Security among FUE Students

Age Range	N	Mean	SD
Less than 18 Years	60	51.80	5.93
18-20 Years	108	51.00	5.68
21-25 Years	84	51.43	2.99
26 Years and above	108	50.78	2.31

Table 2 above shows the results of the age difference on the psychological security among students in Federal University of Education Zaria. The results indicated that there is no significant difference among the different age groups on the psychological security of students in Federal College of Education, Zaria. The mean score of 51.80 for students that are less than 18 years old, 51.00 for students within the age range of 18 to 20 years old, 51.43 for students within the age range of 21 to 25 years old and a mean score of 50.78 for students within the age range of 26 years and above.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant gender difference on the psychological security among students in Federal University of Education, Zaria.

Table 3: Independent Sample T-Test on the Difference between Male and Female Students on the Psychological Security among FUE Students

Gender	N	M	SD	T	df	P
Male	240	48.50	2.06	32.180	358	0.00
Female	120	56.50	2.51			

The t-test revealed a significant difference between male and female students on their psychological security among students in Federal University of Education Zaria. This is because the t-calculated value of 32.180 with a p value of 0.00 indicating a significant difference between male and female students on their psychological security in Federal College of Education Zaria. Consequently, the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference among the respondents on the psychological security among the different age range in Federal University of Education Zaria.

Table 4. Summary of one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the Psychological Security among Students in FUE Zaria.

Status	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F Calculated	Prob.	F critical
Between Groups	49.162	3	16.387	.853	.466	4.95
Within groups	6840.838	356	19.216			
Total	6890.000	359				

The test indicated that there is no significant difference in the opinions of respondents i.e F-ratio value (.853) at 3df 359 and at the level 0.05. The critical value (4.95) is higher than F ratio value (.853). The probability level of significance P (.466) is more than 0.05. This means that there is no significance difference in the opinion of the students with the different age range on the psychological security among students in FUE Zaria. Therefore, the null Ho is retained, meaning that there is no significant difference in the opinion of the respondents on the psychological security in Federal University of Education, Zaria.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' perception of the psychological security of school environment in Federal University of Education, Zaria, Kaduna State. The findings from this study revealed that there is a significant difference between male and female students on their psychological security in Federal University of Education Zaria. The results revealed that female students are more secured psychologically than male students in Federal University of Education Zaria. the findings of this study is consistent with that of Gazi and Shemal (2015) who found that female lecturers are more secured than male lecturers. The outcome of this study implies that female students are more psychologically secured than their male counterparts.

Also, the findings indicated that there is no significant difference on the psychological security of students in Federal University of Education Zaria based on the age groups. It implies that their different age groups notwithstanding, they have feeling of the same level of psychological security in Federal University of Education, Zaria. This sense of psychological security by the different age groups in this study is as a result of the efforts of the management of the institutions as well as that of the government who deployed personnel of different securities in the country to the institutions. The role of the Nigerian Police cannot be overemphasized, with the establishment of a police post to that effect.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of gender and age on the psychological security of NCE II students in Federal University of Education, Zaria. It is concluded that there was a significant gender difference between male and female students on the psychological security of the school environment in Federal University of Education, Zaria; and there was no significant age difference in the psychological security of NCE II students in Federal University of Education, Zaria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the government should beef up security around the college using the military and police to ensure the safety of the students and staff. The security men on duty in the college should discharge their duties with all diligence rather than compromising on the oath they to serve their father land. The students on their part should obey all instructions of the college in their own interest by not staying out the campus late for those staying on campus and for staying off campus; they should go back to their various homes on time rather than staying out late at night.

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