

SOCIAL ANXIETY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING OF MALE AND FEMALE UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated social anxiety and psychological well-being of university undergraduates in Anambra State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 39,000 university undergraduates (25,000 university undergraduates from Nnamdi Azikiwe University and 14,000 university undergraduates from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University) in the two public universities in the State. A sample of 1,000 university undergraduates were drawn using stratified random sampling technique. Two instruments were used for the data collection. These were Social Anxiety Questionnaire (SIQ) and Psychological Well being Questionnaire (PWBQ). The instruments were subjected to face validation. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach Alpha method. The result gave coefficient values of 0.75 for Social Anxiety Questionnaire and 0.75 for Psychological Well Being Questionnaire. The data were collected by the researcher with the help of four research assistants who were properly briefed on how to administer the instrument. The completed copies of questionnaire were collected on the spot. Data analysis were done using SPSS VERSION 25. The study found out that social anxiety was a weak correlate of psychological well being among university undergraduates in Anambra State. The findings also showed that there was weak positive relationship between social anxiety and psychological well being for both male and female students. The study concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being of male and female university undergraduates in Anambra State. The researcher recommended among others that the university environments should be made to be student friendly and that activities that are capable of bringing students face to face with one another should be encouraged. This may go a long way in improving the well being of students. The researcher would add as contribution to knowledge that students should be encouraged to make their voice be heard and ready to face life and its challenges.

Keywords: Social anxiety and Psychological well-being

Introduction

Schools all over the world are designed to be centers of learning and propagation of good conduct. School premises are expected to be places that are safe, serene, relaxed, tension free, and peaceful. When a child goes to school, one of the most critical things parents are concerned about is the safety and holistic formation of their children in school (James, 2019). Keeping schools serene, safe and a relaxed environment is a very important task that should not be taken lightly. But then, this is never all the time achieved because of social anxiety especially in the universities and it poses a lot of problem to student.

A person with social anxiety disorder has significant anxiety and discomfort about being embarrassed, humiliated, rejected or looked down on in social interactions. People with this disorder will try to avoid the situation or endure it with great anxiety. Common examples are extreme fear of

public speaking, meeting new people or eating/drinking in public. The fear or anxiety causes problems with daily functioning and lasts at least six months. The American Psychological Association (2022) defines social anxiety as “an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure”. It is also viewed as a cognitive and affective experience that is triggered by the perception of possible evaluation by others.

Social anxiety is the fear of being judged and evaluated negatively by other people, leading to feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, self-consciousness, embarrassment, humiliation, and depression (Thomas, 2023). If a person usually becomes (irrationally) anxious in social situations, but seems better when they are alone, then “social anxiety” may be the problem. Social anxiety is, equally, a feeling of being nervous or uncomfortable in a social situation. Maybe you have clammed up when meeting someone new or gotten sweaty palms before making a big presentation. Public speaking or walking into a roomful of strangers is not exactly thrilling for everybody, but most people can get through it. It is much more common for people with social anxiety to have a generalized type of this disorder. When anticipatory anxiety, worry, indecision, depression, embarrassment, feelings of inferiority, and self-blame are involved across most life situations, a generalized form of social anxiety is at work (Thomas, 2024).

Another issue that must be looked at is that of gender and how it is affected by social anxiety in relation to psychological well-being. Gender is a social and cultural construct, which distinguishes differences in the attributes of men and women or male and female, and accordingly refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women. Gender based roles and other attributes, therefore, change over time and vary with different cultural context.

Gender equality in basic education means that boys and girls have equal opportunities to participate in basic schools and high schools. It means, also, the right of both male and female to gain equal access and participation in education, as well as to benefit from gender-sensitive and gender-responsive educational environments and to obtain meaningful education outcomes that ensure that education benefits translate into greater formation of human person and having a mental well-being. Gender differences have been found in social anxiety. Social anxiety disorder is more prevalent in women than men (Asher, 2017) with a lifetime prevalence of 4.20% in men and 5.67% for women. Women are more likely to exhibit social anxiety symptoms than men. Thus, women with social anxiety report lower psychosocial functioning levels than men. Socially anxious women and men also differ in the situations they fear, with women reporting greater fears related to authority and workplace situations and men indicating greater fears of dating.

In general, the prevalence of social anxiety disorder is higher for females and this is more pronounced in adolescence (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Although women are more likely to have social anxiety, men with this disorder are more likely to seek treatment. However, women typically seek treatment more than men for disorder.

Psychological well being is viewed as important factor in students successfully adapting to college/university life. For this reason, this construct usually includes dimensions' such as self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth and purpose-in-life. Students attending university have to adjust to a new learning context and are under increased academic pressure. This stage is considered to be one of the highest anxiety and lowest psychological well-being phases in the life cycle, with high levels of psychological distress compared with the general population. Several studies have reported lower levels of psychological well-being in students attending university (Francisco, 2020).

In fact, it is in man's nature to always strive for a Psychological well being for an optimal achievement in one's endeavour. It is an obvious fact that things and even humans thrive more in a conducive atmosphere as well as in situations of calmness and tranquility. Thus, there are certain things that must come into play for one to enjoy such psychological well being, if not the reverse would be the case, especially among university undergraduates.

Statement of the Problem

Psychological well being is a condition that helps one to achieve one's aims or accomplish whatever one strives to accomplish. This is because it is a state in which one enjoys peace of mind and has not much to be worried about. It is a state in which one maintains a balance or equilibrium in one's life. But then, one who is in a state of mental illness emanating from school insecurity and social anxiety or having some psychological imbalance cannot attain to one's goals.

Social anxiety is being considered as one of the factors that pose hindrance in one way or the other to the attainment of psychological well-being. Social anxiety has been seen as a thing that always puts

students in a tensed situation and panic. The ministry of education and school administration that are supposed to make sure that schooling is tension free are not doing enough if at all they are doing anything. Meanwhile, it should be stressed that when schools have less social anxiety one would develop a psychological well being if not one would not function well psychologically. As a matter of fact, most of the university undergraduates are finding it pretty hard to actualize their goals in school due to anxiety therein. Under the current social anxiety in most of Nigerian schools and more especially in Anambra State to have a coherent mental alertness, effective teaching and learning, and a peaceful atmosphere pose more or less some problems to psychological well being.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine social anxiety and Psychological well being among university undergraduates in Anambra State.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the relationship between social anxiety and psychological well being among university undergraduates in Anambra State.
2. Determine the relationship between social anxiety and psychological well being of male and female university undergraduates in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the relationship between social anxiety and psychological well being among university undergraduates in Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between social anxiety and psychological well being of male and female university undergraduates in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.5level of significance:

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between social anxiety and psychological well being among university undergraduates in Anambra State.
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between social anxiety and psychological well being of university undergraduates in Anambra State.

Results

The results of the data collected and analysed are as follows in the tables below in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being among university undergraduates in Anambra State?

Table 1 Pearson's Correlation between Social Anxiety Scores and Psychological Well-being Scores

Variables	Social Anxiety Scores	Psychological Well-being Scores	Remark
Social Anxiety Scores	r 1	0.21	Weak Positive Relationship
	N 909	909	

Table 1 showed that the Pearson's correlation between social anxiety and psychological wellbeing scores was 0.21. This indicated that there was a weak positive correlation between the two variables. This implies that social anxiety was a weak correlate of psychological well-being among undergraduates of universities in Anambra State.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being of male and female university undergraduates in Anambra State?

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation between Social Anxiety Scores and Psychological Well-being Scores of Male and Female University Undergraduates in Anambra State

Sex		Social Anxiety Scores	Psychological Well-being Scores	Remark
Male	Social Anxiety Scores	r	1	Weak positive relationship
		N	306	
Female	Social Anxiety Scores	r	1	Weak Positive Relationship
		N	603	

Table 2 displayed the Pearson's correlation between social anxiety scores and psychological well-being scores on the bases of gender of the undergraduates. The correlation coefficient for the male group was 0.27 while the correlation coefficient for the female group was 0.21. This indicates that the relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being was weak among the two groups.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being among undergraduates in Anambra State.

Table 3: Significance of Pearson's Correlation between Social Anxiety and Psychological Well-being

Variables		Social Anxiety Scores	Psychological Well-being Scores	p-value	Decision
Social Anxiety Scores	r	1	0.21	.000	Significant
	N	909	909		

As shown in Table 3, there was a significant weak positive relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being among university undergraduates in Anambra State, $R = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being of male and female university undergraduates in Anambra State.

Table 4: Significance of Pearson's Correlation between Social Anxiety Scores and Psychological Well-being Scores of Male and Female University Undergraduates in Anambra State

Sex		Social Anxiety Scores	Psychological Well-being Scores	p-value	Decision
Male	Social Anxiety Scores	r	1	0.27	Significant
		N	306	306	
Female	Social Anxiety Scores	r	1	0.21	Significant
		N	603	603	

As displayed in Table 4, there was a significant positive relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being of male university undergraduates, $R = 0.27$, $p < 0.05$; and also of female undergraduates, $R = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Summary of the Major Findings:

1. Social anxiety was a weak correlate of psychological well being among university undergraduates in Anambra State.
2. That the relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being was weak among the two groups.
3. There was a significant weak positive relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being among university undergraduates in Anambra State.
4. There was a significant positive relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being of male university undergraduates in Anambra State, and also of female university undergraduates in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings were discussed in line with the research questions and hypotheses that guided this study.

The result of the findings of the research question one and the corresponding hypothesis one has it that there was a weak positive relationship between the social anxiety and psychological well being among university undergraduates in Anambra State.

The result of the findings of the study of research question two indicated that there was a weak positive relationship between the social anxiety and psychological well being of male and female university undergraduates in Anambra State. Whereas, the finding of its corresponding hypothesis two showed that there is a significant positive relationship between social anxiety and psychological well being of male and female university undergraduates in Anambra State.

Conclusion

In view of data analysis and interpretation of the results, the following conclusions were drawn. That social anxiety was a weak correlate of psychological well being among university undergraduates in Anambra State. That the relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being was weak among the two groups. That there was a significant weak positive relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being among university undergraduates in Anambra State. That there was a significant positive relationship between social anxiety and psychological well-being of male university undergraduates in Anambra State, and also of female university undergraduates in Anambra State.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have far reaching implications for Educational Psychology. One of such implications is that Educational Psychological programmes in Educational Institutions should be made strong enough to carry out activities that will help students get the best out of their school lives. Students sometimes get into severe problems because they lack support and help network. They lack services where to seek help when they are teased and depressed in making decisions. The findings of this study imply that lecturers, teachers, parents, government and the community at large have to effectively play their roles in bringing up university undergraduates to become responsible individuals. There is need to maintain equilibrium between the genders. It also implies that university undergraduates should be made to engage in social interactions.

Recommendations

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

1. The university environments should be made to be student friendly.
2. Activities that are capable of bringing students face to face with one another should be encouraged.
3. Students should be adequately enlightened during orientations about school challenges.
4. Parents should be encouraged to visit their children and find out how they are doing.
5. Students ought to be encouraged to be themselves.
6. There is need also to encourage students to have confidence in themselves.

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