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INDIGENT STATUS AS CORRELATE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL BEING AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

For a student to perform well in his/her academic endeavour, sound psychosocial well-being is paramount for handling academic stress, anxiety, frustration and tension. This study was carried out to determine indigent status as correlate of psychosocial well-being and academic engagement of undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. Correlational research design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised of all the 200 and 300 level students in the Faculty of Education from 2 selected universities in Anambra State. 351 students (139 males and 212 females) who accepted being challenged by poverty and indicated interest to participate in the research work through completion of questionnaire made up the sample size. Two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. Two different instruments were used for data collection namely: Personality Well Being (PWB) scale and Academic Engagement Scale (AES).Cronbach alpha reliability method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instruments and alpha coefficient of 0.74 and 0.77 were obtained for PWB and AES respectively. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Coefficient of Determination for answering the research questions while Regression Statistical Analysis was used for testing the null hypotheses. The result indicated high positive relationship between indigent status, psychosocial well being and academic engagement. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers' recommend among others that the university authority should engage the expertise/professional services of psychologists and counselors teach indigent students positive social-emotional skills vital for regulation of their emotions and feelings.

Keywords: Indigence, Psychosocial; Well-Being; and Academic Engagement.

Introduction

Nations all over the globe are currently witnessing economic holocaust and Nigeria is not an exemption. The economic crisis in Nigeria is so profound that virtually all sectors of the economy (industrial, social and education) are badly affected. To buttress this point, many industries have gone into extinction/grounded and out of production, social sectors are not stable while education sector is at the verge of collapse. There is heightened crime, social and behavioural problems ranging from killings, rituals, kidnapping and armed robbery among others as mechanism for survival. On the increase among others is cost of education, food, housing, essential commodities and raw materials for production of goods. This has

resulted in poverty, hunger, suffering, inflation and scarcity.

Giving credence to this assertion, Ogbonna (2024) observed that presently, Nigeria is undergoing economic hard time which is impacting on individuals with evident hardship and anger. Ashakah (2022) asserted that although Nigeria in time past despite her rich endowment with huge natural resources has been experiencing economic hardship prompted by reckless economic policies, leadership inefficiency and public fund embezzlement but currently things are out rightly out of place and many citizens are overwhelmed with poverty and hardship. Dewmi (2023) noted that poverty is a serious challenge to the social and economic growth of any country.

The outstanding hardship and suffering has put many undergraduates in tertiary institutions on the line of indigent thus affecting their psychosocial well being and academic engagement. Indigent in the context of this research work is a state of severe poverty, lack and want of basic needs for normal living. Indigent can also be explained as state of abject poverty where the individual is engrossed in suffering, hardship and loss of comfort in life. This of course is the situation some undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state presently find themselves. The aspects of indigent range from inability to pay school fees and other statutory fees, inability to pay for hostel accommodation, lack of food and vital items needed to sustain life, inability to attend lectures due to lack of transport fares, unable to meet with academic challenges such as buying of textbook, writing of assignment and quiz presentations among others.

The overwhelming impact of the various aspect of indigent on the concerned students includes stress, frustration, anger and depression thus wheeling a tremendous impact on their well being. Lee and Greig (2020) opined that poverty is hinders good mental health. Well being motivates the development of coping life skills such as social/relationship skills, cognitive skills and conflict resolution skills among others which enables an individual to understand, relate to his environment as well as navigate challenges thus living a healthy life. Put productivity in life. Honestly it is impossible for a student in such an emotional pain to cope with academic activities. Supporting this assertion, Kumar (2020) noted that well being of an individual includes adapting to the various stresses of everyday living and accomplishment of the full potential of an individual as a productive member of the society.

Indigent could affect one's psychosocial well being which is a great determinant of quality of a person's life. Psychosocial well being include all round wholeness and health namely physical, emotional, mental, social and behavioural. This implies that challenge in any of these aspects affect the well being of the concerned individual. Many authors and researchers have attempted explanation of psychosocial well being according to their different opinions. Eiroa-Orosa (2020) opined that psychosocial well is the state of all round health of an individual which include cognitive, emotional and social. He noted that it is a vast concept covering dimensions of human life such as personal growth, happiness, life actualization, self esteem, social functioning and sense of

purpose in life. Kumar (2020) explained psychosocial well being as a multifaceted psychological construct with various components which influence an individual's performance and accomplishment in life. Kumar observed further that physical, economic, social, cognitive and emotional health of an individual make up his psychosocial well being.

Okorobio (2023) explained psychosocial well being as condition of sound mental health and functioning covering emotional, cognitive and social state of an individual. From the foregoing definitions, it is evident that an indigent student has his/her psychosocial well being challenged. Physical health of the student is exposed to threat of sickness and diseases as poverty makes feeding impossible talk less of feeding well. The stress, anxiety, anger, frustration and depression he/she is passing through with the attendant consequences such as withdrawn behaviour, rejection, abandonment, low self esteem and negative self concept among others pose a problem to his/her social and emotional health. The cognitive health aspect is also challenged because it takes a relaxed mind to think, calculate, reason and arrive at logical conclusions.

Indigent could also affect the academic engagement of undergraduates in tertiary institutions. The researchers explained academic engagement in the context of this study to mean student's participation, commitment and completion of academic activities as well as achieving desired academic goals. Hughes (2021) explained academic engagement as the extent of student's relationship with others as well as commitment and completion of academic tasks. Oqab, Huy and Bing (2016) noted that academic engagement describes the student quality of participation, investment, dedication and identification with school and school-related activities.

Academic engagement therefore entails the student active commitment to both classroom and extra-curricular tasks with the aim of accomplishing desired goal. Some authors including Bowden, Tickle and Naumann (2021), Melissa and Nina (2020) outlined dimensions of academic engagement to include behavioural, emotional, cognitive and social. The behavioural component is expressed through regular attendance to class, completing assignments and active participation in class activities. The emotional aspect is about the student's feeling, appreciation and aesthetic values hold about their teacher, classmates, school leaders and school authorities. The student's rate of understanding, retention, remembrance, application and transfer of knowledge depict the cognitive dimension of academic engagement while the social aspect explains the extent of the student's relationship/interaction and collaboration with others.

For a student to perform well in his/her academic endeavor, sound psychosocial well being is paramount for handling academic stress, anxiety, frustration and tension. Unfortunately, indigent students are already bedeviled with physical, behavioural, emotional and social problems that affect their ability to handle academic challenges. Supporting this assertion are Johnson (2022), Ryan (2022) and Kendra (2019) who observed that poverty is a hindrance to academic activities at all levels of education.

The assertions of the researchers' concerning association of psychosocial well being, academic engagement and students' indigent status could vary with gender.

There seem to be paucity of research on the impact of gender on students' academic engagement. Ojo, Agara and Pojwan (2017) asserted that male students were more affected by poverty than their female counterparts. Most research is carried out using men and women and there has been consistency on the impact of gender on their well being. For instance, Azcona and Bhatt (2023) observed that poverty has an increased impact on women. Rodriguez (2021) argued that woman do not have as many opportunities with men such as education, work and owing of properties and such there is extreme impact of poverty on women.

A research like this will help to resolve some assumptions by the researchers and thus this study intend to investigate whether a student psychosocial well being and academic engagement is predicted by indigent status with a view to proffering measures of empowering the psychosocial well being of indigent undergraduates to enhance the actualization of their academic ambitions. The following research questions and null hypotheses to be tested at 0.05 level of significance will guide the study.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between psychosocial well being and the indigent status of male and female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state?
2. What is the relationship between academic engagement and the indigent status of male and female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state?

Hypotheses

1. The indigent status of male and female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state will not significantly relate to their psychosocial well-being.
2. Academic engagement of male and female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state will not significantly relate to their indigent status.

Research Method

The study adopted correlational research design. This type of design is aimed at establishing the relationship existing between the variables in the study (Nworgu, 2015). This is considered to be an appropriate research for this study since the researchers' are trying to establish the extent of relationship existing between indigent undergraduates', their psychosocial well being and academic engagement. The study was carried out in Anambra state using two (two) universities (1 State Government and 1 Federal Government owned). These two tertiary institutions were selected using purposive random sampling technique. The population consists of all undergraduate students in 200 and 300 levels of study in the Faculty of Education in the chosen institutions. An instrument of 10 items titled "Indigent Status of Undergraduates" was randomly administered on the students. The instrument contains such questions like:

1. I could hardly afford to pay my school fees.
2. I often attend lectures on empty stomach (without food).
3. Doing my academic tasks such as assignment is difficult because of lack of resources among others.

The researchers' deemed it necessary to administer this instrument because of the desire to get only indigent students to participate in this study because as mentioned earlier we need to establish the reality and resolve assumptions and thus "He that wears the shoe knows where it pinches him".

At the completion of the questionnaire, 351 students accepted being challenged by poverty and indicated interest to participate in the research work. Therefore the sample of the study is 351 students (139 males and 212 females). Data for the study were collected using two different instruments namely: "Psychosocial Well Being" (PWB) Scale adapted from the works of Ruff and Keyes (1995), measuring six (6) aspects of psychosocial well being (Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Personal growth, Positive relations with others, Purpose in life and Self acceptance). The instrument consists of 18 items which was structured on a 7-point rating scale ranging from:

1- Strongly Agree
2- Somewhat Agree
3- A Little Agree
4- Neither Agree nor Disagree
5- A Little Disagree
6- Somewhat Disagree
7- Strongly Disagree

The second instrument used for the study is "Academic Engagement Scale" (AES), an 18 item scale adapted from the work of Hart, Stewart and Jimerson (2011). The instrument was structured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree to Strongly Disagree. Three experts in Education validated the instruments (Two from Educational Psychology and one in Measurement and Evaluation). Cronbach alpha was used to ascertain the reliability of the instruments and alpha coefficient of 0.74 and 0.77 were obtained for PWB and AES respectively. Direct delivery approach was employed in administration of the instrument. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Coefficient of Determination for answering the research questions while Regression Statistical Analysis was used for testing the null hypotheses at significance level of 0.05.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between psychosocial well-being and indigent status of male and female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state?

Table 1: Pearson r on the Relationship between Psychosocial Well Being and Indigent Status of Male and Female Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State.

Gender	Source of Variation	N	r	Remark
Male	Psychosocial Well Being Indigent Status	139	0.70	High Positive Relationship
Female	Psychosocial Well Being Indigent Status	212	0.72	High Positive Relationship

Result in Table 1 above shows that a high positive relationship exist between psychosocial well being and indigent undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state with the r value = 0.70 for males and 0.72 for females.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between academic engagement and the indigent status of male and female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state?

Table 2: Pearson r on the Relationship between Academic Engagement and Indigent Status of Male and Female Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State.

Gender	Source of Variation	N	r	Remark
Male	Academic Engagement Indigent Status	139	0.71	High Positive Relationship
Female	Academic Engagement	212	0.72	High Positive Relationship

Result in Table 2 above shows that there is a high positive relationship existing between academic engagement and indigent undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. This is proved with the r value of 0.71 for males and 0.72 for females.

Hypothesis 1: The indigent status of male and female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state will not significantly relate to their psychosocial well-being.

Table 3: Test of Significance of Pearson Correlation between Psychosocial Well Being and Indigent status of Male and Female Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions

Gender	Source of Variation	N	r	p-value	Remark
Male	Psychosocial Well Being Indigent Status	139	0.70	0.00	Significant
Female	Psychosocial Well Being Indigent Status	212	0.72	0.00	Significant

From the result in Table 3 above, the calculated r (0.70 for males and 0.72 for females) had p. values<0.05. Therefore null hypothesis one which state that the indigent status of undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state did not correlate with their psychosocial well-being was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Academic engagement of male and female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state will not significantly relate to their indigent status.

Table 4: Test of Significance of Pearson Correlation between Academic Engagement and Indigent Status of Male and Female Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State.

Gender	Source of Variation	N	r	p-value	Remark
Male	Academic Engagement Indigent Status	139	0.71	0.00	Significant
Female	Academic Engagement Indigent Status	212	0.72	0.00	Significant

Results in the above table revealed that the academic engagement of undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state correlated with their indigent status. Therefore null hypothesis two was rejected because the calculated r (0.71 for males and 0.72 for females) had values<0.05.

Discussion

Findings of the study revealed that indigent status is a correlate of psychosocial well-being of undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. The researchers wish to state that the findings agree with their personal experience as teachers. Psychosocial well being simply means having all round wholeness and health but unfortunately poverty denies one access to basic needs of life, happiness, relationship and comfort. Giving credence to this assertion is Dewmi (2023) who observed that poverty guarantees lack of access to basic human needs such as water, shelter and clothing. Dewmi further opined that indigent students suffer social withdrawal, discrimination, increased stress and mood distortions.

This finding align with Kendra (2019) that indigent students are more likely to experience emotional, social and mental health challenges in their daily life. Findings of this research work also agree with Lee and Greig (2020) that mental health problems, stress and stigma are consequences of poverty.

Findings of the study further revealed that academic engagement correlated with the indigent status of undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. The finding of this study corroborate with Johnston (2022) who asserted that poverty affects the victim's lifestyle and health thus hindering their ability to learn, relate with classmates and in the extreme quit school out of frustration. Ryan (2022) giving credence to the finding of this study noted by the education prospects of a student is affected by poverty. Ryan explained further that indigent students encounter challenge in doing their academic tasks such as assignment, homework and projects because of lack of resources and this makes it impossible for the student to succeed academically.

Conclusion

The researchers' conclude as follows:

1. Psychosocial well being of male and female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state correlated with their indigent status.
2. Indigent status is a correlate of academic engagement of male and female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Indigent students have challenge of concentrating in academic activities because of distorted mindset. It is therefore imperative that the university authorities should engage the services of proven psychologists and counselors to teach indigent students social-emotional learning skills/strategies that will help them regulate and manage their thoughts, feelings and emotions.
2. Various unions in the university like ASUU, NASU and SSANU among others in partnership with philanthropists and charity organizations should include in their yearly plan/budget scholarship scheme to alleviate the suffering of indigent students. This will improve their academic performance and future opportunities.
3. Indigent students are advised to build resilience capacity. A wise saying proffers "What you do not want, you do not watch". They should rise up with their talents and God-given gifts and fight against poverty.
4. University authorities should give coping loans to indigent students. The students should be engaged in doing menial jobs like cleaning, dispatch of mails and secretarial jobs as means of paying off the loan.

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