

EMOTIONAL ANXIETY AS CORRELATE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN WUKARI EDUCATION ZONE, TARABA STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study investigated Emotional anxiety as correlate of psychological adjustment of secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives and two research hypothesis. The study employed correlational research design. Questionnaire labeled emotional anxiety inventory (EAI), and psychological adjustment inventory (PAI) were used as instrument for data collection. The population of the study comprised of 4,254 in Wukari Education Zone. The sample used was 354 students drawn from the selected secondary school students school in Wukari Education Zone comprising both male and female. The simple random sampling questionnaires were validated and trial tested giving a reliability coefficient of 0.989, 0.889. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation to test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The finding revealed that there was a significant inverse correlation between Emotional Anxiety and Psychological Adjustment. The study recommended that, Counselors should watch or observe on psychological adjustment of secondary school students especially in crisis prompt area and Counselors should encourage students with poor psychological adjustment to improve their coping strategies.

Keywords: Emotional Anxiety, Psychological Adjustment

Introduction

Human beings have had the problem of living together peacefully since the inception of time. This is because the society contains diverse groups of individuals with different beliefs, values and lifestyles. One of the reasons for the lack of peaceful co-existence among the members of this group have been attributed to the lack of understanding and respect of one another's beliefs and way of life (Baim et al., 2022). This disregard for what people hold

dearly is manifested in the form of discrimination, prejudice and marginalization, and have hindered nation building and efforts of establishing peace, thereby leading to rifts between members of different groups and causing physical and psychological harm through conflict and violence. In recent years, global attention has increasingly focused on the mental health impacts of conflict and violence, especially in areas where these disruptions are prolonged and pervasive. Conflict situations are known to place immense psychological strain on individuals, often resulting in elevated levels of anxiety, stress, and other mental health challenges.

In Nigeria, particularly in Taraba State, various forms of conflict, including communal clashes, insurgencies, and ethno-religious violence, have disrupted the lives of many residents, with the effects being especially pronounced among adolescents and young people. Secondary school students in these conflict zones face unique challenges as they navigate the dual pressures of academic life and the emotional toll of living in unstable environments. As such, their psychological adjustment and ability to cope become critical areas of study to understand and support their mental health and overall well-being (Gillis, 2023). Coping strategies are the techniques and behaviors that individuals use to manage stress and emotional challenges. Among students in conflict zones, coping strategies play a crucial role in moderating the impact of stressors, helping them deal with anxiety and facilitating psychological adjustment. Adolescents tend to employ a variety of coping strategies, which may range from adaptive methods, such as seeking social support and engaging in problem-solving, to maladaptive strategies, such as avoidance or substance use (Ibrahim, 2017). Examining the coping strategies that students in conflict areas use offers valuable insights into the effectiveness of these methods in promoting resilience and adaptation in the face of adversity.

Therefore, secondary school students with access to appropriate coping strategies would be able to manage emotional anxiety, thereby playing critical roles in fostering psychological adjustment. Most existing literature was conducted in the Western world and may not fully capture the unique socio-demographic factors influencing students in Wukari Education Zone. There is, therefore, need for a research that considers the specific challenges faced by Nigerian students especially those adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, and the coping mechanisms they employ be carried out. This study aims to bridge the gap in literature by investigating the relationship between emotional anxiety, coping strategies, and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone of Taraba State, Nigeria, face a lot of emotional anxiety, which can adversely affect their psychological adjustment and academic performance. Despite the importance of coping strategies in mitigating these effects, there is limited understanding of how various coping mechanisms influence emotional anxiety and overall

psychological well-being among these students. Consequently, this research aims to find out the relationship between emotional anxiety, coping strategies, and psychological adjustment of secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Students in Nigeria have been exposed to diverse persona-social problems that increase the intensity of emotional anxiety. These problems are violence, conflict, and hardship with unimaginable consequences that affects the mental well-being of the students. The students are exposed to emotional anxiety, due to their experiences during crises, and due to the absence of health or medical facilities, cases of rape or sexual abuse, lack of food, and water as well as unnatural death of families and friends also constitutes high level of emotional anxiety on these students. Emotional anxiety or distress are disturbing and may have effect on adjustment and even affect the individual's mental health. Fear, depression, anxiety could cause emotional exhaustion, and overwhelm the ability to cope, but may also affect social function and may hinder the ability to perform, adjust or cope with different emotional anxieties.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to examine Psychological adjustment as correlate of coping strategies and emotional anxiety of Secondary School Students in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are as follow:

1. To determine the relationship between emotional anxiety and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone.
2. To determine gender difference in the relationship between emotional anxiety and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone.

Hypotheses

This study has the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant relationship between emotional anxiety and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone.
2. There is no significant gender difference in the relationship between emotional anxiety and psychological adjustment and among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone.

Research Methodology

This research adopted correlational design to examine Emotional Anxiety, Psychological adjustment among Secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone Taraba State

Nigeria. Four thousand two hundred and fifty four (4, 254) male and female secondary school students in Wukari Education zone, Taraba State. The sample used for this study is 354 students drawn using multi-stage simple random sampling technique from the ten selected schools in Wukari Education Zone comprising of both males and female students. This sample was drawn from the entire population of 4,254, which was supported by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Questionnaire labeled emotional anxiety inventory (EAI), and psychological adjustment inventory (PAI) were used as instrument for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) were used to test the hypotheses. All the hypotheses was tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between psychological adjustment and emotional anxiety and among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone.

Table 5: Correlation analysis on significant relationship between psychological adjustment and emotional anxiety and among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone.

		Emotional Anxiety	Psych, Adjust.
Emotional Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	.682
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	337	337
Psych, Adjust.	Pearson Correlation	.682	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	337	337

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result of the Pearson Correlation in table 2 above shows a significant inverse correlation between Emotional Anxiety and Psychological Adjustment, ($r = .682$, $n = (335)$ and $p = .000$). This indicates a strong association, where increased Emotional Anxiety is closely linked with lower levels of Psychological Adjustment in this context. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Emotional Anxiety and Psychological Adjustment among secondary school students in the Wukari Education Zone is rejected suggests a strong relationship between emotion-focused coping Strategy and psychological adjustment.

Discussion of Findings

The study aimed at determining emotional anxiety as correlate of coping strategies and psychological adjustment of secondary school students in wukari education zone in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Based on this, the study focused on some constructs which included: to determine the relationship between emotional anxiety and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Wukari Educational Zone, to determine the relationship between the emotion-focused coping strategy and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone, to determine the relationship between problem-focused coping strategy and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in wukari Education Zone, to determine the relationship between proactive coping and psychological adjustment among secondary students in wukari Education Zone.

From the first construct which indicate whether there is relationship between emotional anxiety and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Wukari Educational Zone, the findings from the research question one (1) which was shown in table 1 and 5, indicated the mean rating of 50.78, 54.67 and hypothesis of no significant relationship. This finding suggests a strong relationship between emotional anxiety and psychological adjustment; because students with emotional anxiety are so afraid that they become easily confused, and it helps students avoid thinking about problems to reduce emotional distress. This finding coincided with Smith and Sigal (2015) who in their opinion says that emotional anxiety is a disorder that can develop following an emotional event that threatened one's safety or makes one feel helpless. Also (Rutkowski, Vasterling, Proctor & Anderson, 2013), says emotional anxiety is associated with working memory, attention, poor concentration, hyper vigilance to threat in the environment and other cognitive defects that could adversely influence individuals performance on standardized tests. According to Shaffer (2010) as referenced in Shaffer (2016), that psychological adjustment as a means or reaction to the demands and pressures of environment impose upon an individual's coping with maintenance of both internal and external equilibrium of individual personality. Therefore, (Mallinckrodt 2012) open that, psychological adjustment is the maintenance of psychological equilibrium in the face of internal and external stressor, this is facilitated by cognitive process of acceptance and adoption such as maintaining psychological control and coping behavior in the face of an identity crisis.

The result of the Pearson Correlation in table 2 above shows a significant inverse correlation between Emotional Anxiety and Psychological Adjustment, ($r = .682$, $n = (335)$ and $p = .000$). This indicates a strong association, where increased Emotional Anxiety is closely linked with lower levels of Psychological Adjustment in this context. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Emotional Anxiety and Psychological Adjustment among secondary school students in the Wukari Education Zone is rejected.

From the second construct which indicate whether there is relationship between emotion-focused coping strategy and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone, the finding from research question two which is shown in table 2 and 6 shows the

mean rating of 34.80, 54.67 and hypothesis of no significant. This shows that there is strong relationship between emotional-focused coping strategy and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone. The finding reveals, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between emotion-focused coping and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone is rejected, in the sense that emotional focused-coping improves students' relationship with peers and teachers and help student spent some time by them self to think of ways of improvement. This finding is related to (Renk and Creasey, 2013) who offers their opinion that when you have a problem (or just a bad day), is your first thought to talk to a friend or partner to help ease those feeling of anxiety; if so, you are using emotion-focused coping. Women tend to use the strategy of seeking social support more than men do. According to (Smith, Lumley, Longo, 2013) says that some emotion-focused coping strategies are effective ways to deal with some anxiety, especially if the coping strategy involves a positive, active approach rather than a passive one or a negative view.

Therefore, Pearson Correlation in table 4 above shows a significant positive correlation between Emotion-Focused Coping Strategy and Psychological Adjustment, ($r = .469$ $n = (335)$ and $p = .000$). This indicates a strong positive correlation, where increased Emotion-focused Coping strategy is closely linked to higher levels of Psychological Adjustment in this context. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Emotion-focused Coping strategy and Psychological Adjustment among secondary school students in the Wukari Education Zone is reject.

Conclusion

The finding in this study indicated that, there was positive correlation between emotional anxiety and psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the result of the study the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. Councilors should watch or observe on psychological adjustment of secondary school students especially in crisis prompt area.
2. Councilors should encourage students with poor psychological adjustment to improve their coping strategies.
3. The findings of the study should be made known to councilors, psychologies, teachers, religion leaders, parents and other stakeholders through siminals workshops, conferences and so on, so as to be able to use coping strategy to improve psychological adjustment in secondary school students, especially in crisis prompt area.

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