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Collaborative Learning Indicators as Determinants of Social Well-being among Female Undergraduates in North-Central, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated collaborative learning indicators as predictors of social well-being among female undergraduates in the University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria. The study employed correlational research design. A sample of 250 female students was randomly selected within Faculty of Education. Three reliable instruments were used for data collection. Three research questions were generated and tested with Pearson's' Product Moment Correlation and multiple linear regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The research discovered that there was a significant relationship between social acceptance, information-seeking behaviour and social well-being. At prediction level, it was discovered that social acceptance and information-seeking behaviour jointly predicted 30% increase in female undergraduates' social well-being. Social acceptance was the strongest predictor of female students' social well-being, followed by information-seeking behaviour. The research recommended that students should always make effort to consult lecturers or the library for any information needed rather than keeping quiet. The counselling units in various universities need to improve on their campaigns within the school premises so that students will be aware that they can help in meeting their information needs. Students' affairs office is to intensify their orientation programmes so that fresh female undergraduates will develop the mind-set of social acceptance.

Key Words: Social acceptance, Information-seeking behaviour, Social well-being, Female undergraduates.

Introduction

Post-secondary education is often referred to as a new world of academic learning to fresh undergraduates, because transiting to a higher stage of learning often comes with different demands and the need to adjust to the demands. To an undergraduate, the university setting is new; there are demands about how to relate with other students and lecturers, academic requirements, assignments, presentations and examinations.

The clinical tradition tends to operationalize well-being through measures of depression, distress, anxiety, or substance abuse (Thoits, 2002). Well-being is the absence of negative conditions and feelings, the result of adjustment and adaptation to a hazardous world. The psychological tradition operationalizes well-being as the subjective evaluation of life via satisfaction and affect (Gurin, Veroff, & Feld, 2008) or personal functioning (Ryff, & Keyes, 1995). According to this view, emotional well-being is an excess of positive over negative feelings; personal psychological functioning is the presence of more positive than negative perceived self-attributes, such as personal growth. Although the existing models emphasize private features of well-being, individuals remain embedded in social structures and communities, and face countless social tasks and challenges.

Social health, or at least its absence, is a preeminent concern in classical sociological theory. In addition to the importance of anomie and alienation, Durkheim and Marx also discussed several dimensions of positive social health. Among the potential benefits of public life are social integration and cohesion, a sense of belonging and interdependence, and a sense of shared consciousness and collective fate (Albanesi, Cicognani, & Zani, 2006). The benefits of social life provide a foundation for a global definition of a social version of well-being. Social well-being is the appraisal of one's circumstance and functioning in society. Social wellness is the evaluation of the quality of one's relationship to society and community. Socially healthy undergraduates feel that they are a part of campus. Social well-being in the context of this study is the extent to which fresh undergraduates feel they have something in common with others who constitute their social reality (neighbourhood), as well as the degree to which they feel that they belong to their residential halls, departments, colleges, faculties. Various studies have been carried out on undergraduates' psychological well-being but only few have investigated their social well-being (Corey, 2008; Klar & Kasser, 2009).

Social well-being, according to Corey (2008) and Klar (2009), draws on conceptions of social cohesion, cultural estrangement and social isolation, and class consciousness. Social coordination and health reflect individuals' connections to each other through norms and indicate their fondness for society. Nevertheless, many of these studies did not consider variables like information-seeking behaviour and social acceptance. Corey (2008) noted that cultural estrangement is the separation of self from society. Estrangement is the rejection of society or the realization that society does not reflect one's own values and lifestyle. Social isolation is the breakdown of personal relationships that provide meaning and support.

In recent times, there has been an unprecedented increase in academic frustration, psychological loneliness, distress, and isolation among undergraduates who scored low on social well-being scale (Klar & Kasser, 2009). This has led to increase in drop-out rate, increase in carried over courses, decline in students' cumulative grade points,

lecturer-student conflict and student-student conflict. Several attempts have been made by researchers to investigate predictors of undergraduates' well-being, although such attempts have often been towards their psychological and emotional well-being at the expense of their social well-being. This has created inconsistency among studies on university students' well-being. The university is a social point where knowledge is acquired through social means and techniques to enhance students' general and social well-being. Therefore, it is imperative to consider indicators of collaborative learning as determinants of undergraduates' social well-being.

Collaboration is working together to accomplish shared goals. Collaboration learning involves a situation in which students work together cooperatively and interdependently in small groups towards a group goal. Within cooperative activities, individuals seek outcomes that are beneficial to themselves and to all other group members. Collaborative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and one another's learning. Collaborative learning refers to an instructional method in which students of all levels of performance work together in small groups towards a goal (Slavin, 1992). Cooperative learning is an instructional technique in which students work in groups towards a common goal, and rewards depends not on 'doing better than someone else' but on 'doing well with someone else' Class members are organized into small groups after receiving instructions from the lecturer and this facilitates learning together (Gokhala, 1995). The empirical literature has shown that collaborative learning improves students' social well-being, but there is no empirical evidence on the relationship between some collaborative learning variables, such as social acceptance and information-seeking behaviour, on students' social well-being. This gives rise to the question: Would social acceptance and information-seeking behaviour of university students in anyway influence their social well-being?

Information-seeking behaviour of students can be conceptualised as active or purposeful seeking of information resulting from the need of students to participate in class discussions, seminars, workshops or conferences or to write final-year research paper. Every fresh student seeks to be fully integrated into the university setting and culture. In this wise, they seek information on how to act and react to stimuli and responses within the university system. Student's access to this information makes them have sense of belonging and also consider themselves as members of the university. They become informed on the appropriate time for lectures, visit their lecturers at their visiting hour, submit assignments, make presentations as it is demanded and expected. At times, when fresh students find it difficult to demystify the stupendous nature of an educational system, they might begin to feel rejected and frustrated at anything thrown at them. Information-seeking behaviour is essential to students' social well-being and adjustment on campus.

Many studies have evaluated the factors affecting the relationship between students and information-seeking behaviour. Qureshi, Iqbal and Khan (2008), while investigating the information-seeking behaviour of students in the university, found that strong educational and cultural background, enabling environment and effective student participation had positive impacts on the information-seeking behaviour of graduates. Also, higher correlation has been found to exist between conducive environment and awareness of resources. If the environment is helpful, then the desired knowledge

would be easily created and the curiosity towards the awareness of resources would vanish (Bhatia & Venkata, 2011).

Undergraduates need to seek information from human members of the campus in order to be fully integrated into the university environment. The human members of the campus are fellow students, non-academic staff and lecturers. They can also source for information from the library; this will make the students get acquainted with textbooks, student manuals and the Internet. Khan and Shafique (2011) established that most of the undergraduates sought information to pass their examination and to update their knowledge, but the graduates needed the information for writing articles and projects. Graduates prefer to use textbooks, reference materials and journals, mostly using the method of discussion with their colleagues and their seniors. They later discussed with their lecturers on both academic and non-academic issues. However, they are often troubled when there is no human assistance to satisfy their information need.

Social acceptance is the construing of society through the character and qualities of other people as a generalized category. Individuals who demonstrate social acceptance trust others, think that others are capable of kindness, and believe that people can be industrious. Socially accepting people hold favourable views of the human nature (Ryan & Deci, 2001) and feel comfortable with others (Haynes, 2002). Social acceptance is the social analogue to personal acceptance: People who feel good about their personalities and accept both the good and the bad aspects of their lives exemplify good mental health (Ryff et al., 1995). Therefore, social acceptance of others might be the social counterpart to self-acceptance. University students can become socially healthy by accepting reasonable social activities on campus without bias. Social acceptance is a two-way direction: accepting others and being accepted by others. Undergraduates who have low social acceptance easily pick faults in people, relationships and activities; they believe only in their own opinions without considering the opinions of others, and trust themselves at the expense of others and beliefs.

Helliwell and Putnam (2004) argued that interactions with families, friends and neighbours are associated with higher levels of social well-being, with friends being more important than families and other students on campus. The trustworthiness of others, not only friends and families but also lecturers and university authority, plays a critical role in social well-being. That is, people who believe they are living in a trustworthy environment tend to show higher social well-being. With regards to the predictive examination of undergraduates' social well-being, there is a paucity of research on the relationship between identified collaborative learning indicators (information-seeking behaviour and social acceptance) and social well-being. Therefore, this study investigated collaborative learning indicators as determinants of undergraduate female students' social well-being.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this paper was to examine collaborative learning indicators of undergraduates' social well-being. Specifically, the study examined:

- i. the relationship that exists between collaborative learning variables (information-seeking behaviour and social acceptance) and social well-being of undergraduates;
- ii. the joint contribution of collaborative learning variables (information-seeking behaviour and social acceptance) to the prediction of social well-being of undergraduates;
- iii. the relative contribution of collaborative learning variables (information-seeking behaviour and social acceptance) to the prediction of social well-being of undergraduates.

Methodology

This study adopted correlational research design. It was an examination of the relationship between two or more variables and their predictive effects on a criterion variable. It did not involve the manipulation of the variables in the study.

The population for this study comprised all the three thousand, five hundred and twenty-one (3,521) female undergraduates (in 100 and 200 level) in the Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria (Population size source: www.uniabuja.edu.ng).

This study adopted multistage sampling in the selection of participants for the study. The first stage involved a random selection of three departments (Guidance and Educational Psychology, Science and Environmental Education, and Educational Management) from the entire departments in the Faculty of Education. The second stage involved the selection of forty-five 100-level female undergraduates from each of the departments. The third stage involved the selection of forty 200-level female undergraduates from each of the departments. On the whole, two hundred and fifty-five (255) participants randomly selected for the study. All participants were 100 and 200 level female undergraduates (all fresh and stale) of the selected institution.

Social Well-being Scale (SWS): This is a 13-item scale developed by Livia (2009). It measures the social wellness of undergraduates since the time they arrive on campus. The scale is an extraction of social-emotional well-being scale. It adopts a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from SA=5 to SD=1. High score on SWS depicts high social well-being, while low score implies low social well-being. In this study, the internal consistency reliability recorded through pilot study was good (Psychological Well-being $\alpha = .76$)

Information-seeking Behaviour Scale (ISBS): This is a 15-item scale developed by the researcher. It measures undergraduates' information need and their ability to make request and seek direction from colleagues and other lecturers. It adopts a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from SA=5 to SD=1. High score on ISBS depicts high information-seeking, while low score implies low information-seeking. In this study, the internal consistency reliability recorded through pilot study was good (Information-seeking Behaviour Scale $\alpha = .77$)

Social Acceptance Scale (SAS): This is a 12-item self-report scale that was designed by Asher (2004) to measure how well a student accepts humans and activities within the campus as well as how he/she is accepted. It adopts a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from SA=5 to SD=1. High score on SAS depicts high social acceptance, while low

score implies low social acceptance. In this study, the internal consistency reliability recorded through pilot study was good (social acceptance $\alpha = .84$)

Copies of questionnaires were administered to the participants in their various departments. This was made possible with the help of the university management whose permission was sought. The participants were adequately briefed on the need to cooperate with the researcher. They were also assured of confidentiality of their responses. The data collection spread over three weeks, during which two hundred and fifty-five (255) copies of the questionnaire were administered. However, only 250 were properly filled and considered useful for the research. These were scored and the data obtained were subjected to analysis.

The data collected were analysed with the aid of Pearson product moment correlation, and multiple linear regression analysis to test the three research questions at 0.05 levels of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between collaborative learning variables (information-seeking behaviour and social acceptance) and the social well-being of the female undergraduate students?

Table 1: Correlation matrix showing the relationship between study variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3
Social well-being	55.4560	5.74282	1.000		
Information seeking behaviour	50.1320	12.13754	.275**	1.000	
Social acceptance	55.6440	4.90280	.505**	.102	1.000

*Correlation is significant at 0.05(2-tailed)

Table 1 reveals the relationship that exists between the independent variables (information-seeking behaviour and social acceptance) and the dependent variable (social well-being). Social well-being positively correlated with social acceptance ($r = .505$, $P < 0.01$) and information-seeking behaviour ($r = .275$, $P < 0.01$). This implies that the higher the social acceptance and information-seeking behaviour of undergraduates are, the healthier their social well-being.

Research Question 2: What is the joint contribution of collaborative learning variables (information-seeking behaviour and social acceptance) to the social well-being of female undergraduate students?

Table 2: Summary of regression for the joint contributions of the independent variables to the prediction of social well-being of the female undergraduate students

R = .553						
R Square = .305						
Adjusted R square = .300						
Std. Error = 4.80540						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2508.328	2	1254.164	54.312	.000 ^b
	Residual	5703.688	247	23.092		
	Total	8212.016	249			

Table 2 shows significant joint contribution of the independent variables (information-seeking behaviour and social acceptance) to the prediction of the social well-being of the female undergraduate students. The result yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions $R = 0.553$ and multiple R-square = 0.305. This suggests that the two variables combined accounted for 30.0 % (Adj.R2= .300) variance in the prediction of the social well-being of the female undergraduate students. The other factors accounting for the remaining variance were beyond the scope of this study. The ANOVA result from the regression analysis showed that there was a significant effect of the independent variables on the psychological well-being of the undergraduates, $F(2,247) = 54.312, P < 0.01$.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of collaborative learning variables (information-seeking behaviour and social acceptance) to the social well-being of the female undergraduate students?

Table 3: Relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of social well-being of undergraduates

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	18.693	3.587		5.211	.000
	Information seeking behaviour	.107	.025	.226	4.246	.000
	Social acceptance	.564	.062	.482	9.036	.000

Table 3 shows that the two predictor factors (social acceptance and information-seeking behaviour) are potent predictors of social well-being. The most potent factor was social acceptance (Beta = .482, $t = 9.036, P < 0.01$), followed by information-seeking behaviour (Beta = .226, $t = 4.246, P < 0.01$). This implies that a unit increase in

the standard deviation of social acceptance and information-seeking behaviour will increase the tendency for better social well-being among undergraduates.

Discussion of Findings

This study discovered a significant relationship between social acceptance, information-seeking behaviour and social well-being. This indicates that increase in undergraduate students' social acceptance and information-seeking behaviour will improve their social well-being. This result is consistent with Rollero and De Piccoli (2010), who investigated the connection of city and neighbourhood attachment to the five dimensions of social well-being. They found a positive correlation of city acceptance to all dimensions of social well-being. This connection of place acceptance with social well-being shows that a place is not only a physical area; people also ascribe meanings to it and become attached to the meaning. Thus, social acceptance plays a role in fostering social well-being of the selected participants.

Social acceptance was found to be the strongest predictor of undergraduate students' social well-being. In other words, if undergraduates are not socially accepted, they might not be socially healthy. This result further corroborates Rollero and De Piccoli (2010), who found that a direct association of social acceptance to social integration, actualization and coherence exists with a positive relation to social integration and social actualization and a negative connection to social coherence. This indicates that social acceptance might enhance a positive estimation of the society's future development (social actualization), but it does not indicate full comprehension of the world around (social coherence) (Rollero et al. 2010).

The results of this study also revealed that information-seeking behaviour significantly correlated with students' social well-being. This is an indication that increased information-seeking will improve social well-being. This result is in tandem with Ryan and Deci (2002), who confirmed that there was a significant relationship between information help-seeking and well-being. This might be a justification that most undergraduates are found frustrated or with suicide intention might have low information-seeking behaviour, because help only comes to the one that seeks it. Students who find it difficult to make enquiry or make a request might be found frustrated. Similarly, Albanesi et al. (2006) asserts that students who satisfy their information needs get healthier than those who could not satisfy their information need.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

- i. Students need to always make effort to consult lecturers or the library for any of their information needs rather than not consult.
- ii. The counselling unit in various universities should make adequate campaign within the campuses so that students might be aware that they can help in meeting their information needs. The students' affairs Offices should intensify their orientation programme so that fresh female undergraduate students might develop the mindset of social acceptance.
- iii. Students should always feel free to relate with fellow students that appear approachable within the campus. Similarly, they need to build some trust in people so that they might be trusted in return.

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