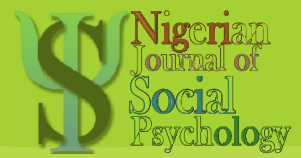


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The Role of Resilience and Gender in Predicting Spirituality among Nigerian Students.

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Abstract

The study examined the role of resilience and Gender in predicting spirituality among Nigerian students. Two hundred and eighteen (218) students participated in the study. They included 93 males and 125 females aged 18-30 years (mean age: 21.90; std: 2.03). A mixed sampling design involving simple random and incidental samplings was used to select the departments and students that participated in the study. Two instruments (spirituality scale and resilience scale) and demography were used to collect data for the study. The study adopted a correlational design and simple linear regression statistics for data analysis. The result of the first finding showed that resilience positively correlated with spirituality but was not significant ($r = .070$, $P \leq .153$). The result further showed that resilience did not significantly predict spirituality ($\beta = .070$, $p = .313$). The second finding revealed also that gender positively correlated with spirituality but was not significant ($r = .011$, $P = .433$). The result further showed that gender did not significantly predict spirituality ($\beta = .001$, $P = .984$). This indicated that spirituality is culturally sensitive when it comes to gender and resilience. This cultural sensitivity may be the reason for the differences in findings between this present study and previous studies. The results may instigate understanding, planning and designing programmes for further studies in understanding spirituality.

Keywords: *Cultural sensitivity, gender, resilience, spirituality and students*

Introduction

There is high evidence of spirituality as a possible resource in coping with economic and health problems (Bussing et al., 2009). The economic situation in Nigeria has turned Nigeria into a spiritual nation. The evidence of churches, mosques and African Traditional Religion shrines is enormous (Mikail, 2017; Ellis, 2008; Olusegun, 2020). Every day most especially on Sundays and Fridays' Nigerian Christians and Muslims in urban, semi-urban and rural cities and communities go to churches and mosques to pay homage to their creator to better their conditions (economic and health) through spirituality (Kaitause & Achunike, 2013). The African traditional religious group pours libation to their god through kola nut, and drinks like gin, whisky or rum daily for better conditions through spirituality (Ellis, 2008). These constant efforts these different religious groups make to have contact with God to get their problems solved seem to increase the level of spirituality of most Nigerians as a coping strategy. Nigerian youths nowadays go the extra mile spiritually to solve both economic, health and other pressing needs (Melvin, & Ayotunde, 2011; Tade, 2013)

Therefore, owing to these high incidences of spirituality in our society as a coping strategy (economic and health), there is a need to explore predictive factors that are related to spirituality. Knowing the factors that are related to spirituality will help in understanding spirituality as a coping strategy. This is because evidence from transformational learning theory (Mezirow, et al. 1990 as cited in Fleming, 2018) suggests that we are meaning-making beings. This shows that the meaning we attach to a particular variable determines the level of coping one will derive from that variable. Therefore, transformational learning theory thinks that learning is a process of utilizing prior interpretations to construe new or modified understandings of the meanings of one's experiences and using this as a guide to action (Mezirow, et al. 1990 as cited in Fleming, 2018).

Spirituality

Paloutzian and Ellison (1979) conceptualised spirituality as a person's relationship with God (Religious Well-Being) and life satisfaction, experience of life, meaning and purpose (Existential Well-Being). In more in-depth studies in the social field, spirituality is a human motivation to achieve meaning for oneself and the world (Canda & Furman, 1999). As noted earlier spirituality is a major contributing factor to numerous human problems in Nigeria. However, there are other risk and preventable factor such as gender and resilience which may predict (gender and resilience): the onset of spirituality. These two variables are considered in the present study as predictive factors respectively.

Gender

World Health Organization (2023) refers to gender as socially constructed roles and status of man, woman, girl or boy. This includes a set of cultural specific characteristics defining the social norms, behaviours and roles related with either being a man, woman, boy or girl as well as associations with each other. Gender being social constructed roles varies from society to society and can change over time as regards to current transgender issues. It includes the social, psychological, cultural and behavioural aspects of being a man, woman, or other gender identity (Haig, 2004)

Resilience

American Psychiatric Association (2000) defines resilience as bouncing back from challenging experiences. Resilience is capacity to recover from extremes of trauma and stress (Truffino, 2010). Masten, et al., (1990) distinguish three main aspects within the concept of resilience: the ability to achieve positive results in high risk situations, the ability to function competently in situations of acute or chronic stress and the ability to recover from trauma.

Gender and spirituality

Rassoulilian, et al. (2021), Studies on the role of religion and spirituality in medical patients documented that women are more into religiousness and religious/spiritual practices and more frequently use religious/spiritual coping strategies than men. In another study, (Bussing et al., 2005) findings in chronically ill patients revealed that women regard themselves as spiritual more than men and that spirituality and/or religion help them to cope with their disease. Munoz, et al. (2015) reported higher levels of religiosity in female cancer survivors

in an American cross-sectional study among 9000 cancer patients. A study by (Schnabel et al., 2018) reported that the majority of studies revealed higher levels of women in religiosity and religious/spiritual practices conducted in Christian populations. Therefore, in contrast (Schnabel et al., 2018) argued that in Muslims and Orthodox Jews, men participate more frequently in religion and religious practices than women. Schnabel et al (2018) argued further that Christian churches could be seen as a place for women, while Jewish synagogues are a place for men.

Resilience and spirituality

Smith et al, (2013) research with adult respondents showed a very strong correlation between spirituality and resilience. Dewi and Hamzah, (2019) reported that Participant's spiritual well-being, and their relationship with their God, drove their behaviours and connections that act as protective factors leading to enhanced resilience.

Methods

Participants

Two hundred and eighteen (218) participants were selected using a mixed sampling technique (random and incidental) from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka Campus. The selected participants comprised 93 (42.7%) males and 125 (57.3%) females. The ages of the participants ranged from eighteen (18) to thirty (30) years, and the mean age was 21.90 years (SD = 2.03).

Instruments

Two instruments were used for the study; the spirituality scale developed by Delaney, (2003) and resilience scale developed by Smith, et al. (2008). The gender of the participants was determined using demography.

Spirituality Scale (SS)

Delaney, (2003) developed and validated the spirituality scale (SS) to measure a holistic assessment instrument that focuses on the beliefs, intuitions, lifestyle choices, practices, and rituals that represent the human spiritual dimension. SS is a 23-item scale scored on six Likert format – 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The items were directly scored so that a higher total score reflects high spirituality. Delaney, (2003) reported .82 internal consistency of SS. SS is reliable and valid for use in this study.

Resilience scale (RS)

Smith, et al. (2008) developed and validated a resilience scale to measure resilience. RS is a six (6) items scale scored on five Likert format – 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The score of a respondent is the total score divided by 6. Smith, et al. (2008) reported .77 internal consistency of RS. RS is reliable and valid for use in this study.

Procedure

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Thereafter, informed consent and assent were obtained from the school authorities. The researchers randomly selected five out of ten faculties in the main campus of the university and a department from each of the selected faculties was selected and used for the study. Afterwards, fifty (50) participants were incidentally selected from each of the five departments but only

two hundred (218) participants completed their measuring instruments (questionnaires) accurately and were used for the analysis. The two instruments; the spiritual scale and resilience scale were administered to the consented participants at their lecture halls and the administered instruments were collected immediately after about 40 minutes.

Design and Statistics

Survey research was used in the study. The study adopted a correlational design which permitted the use of multiple linear regression statistics for data analysis.

Result

Table 1: Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of Youths' spirituality, resilience and gender

S/N	Variable	Means	SD	1	2	3
1	Spirituality		11.94	1		
2	Resilience	19.31	3.42	.070	1	
3	Gender	1.57	1.92	.011	.017	1

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables. As can be observed from Table 1, resilience is positively correlated with spirituality but not significant ($r = .070$, $P = .153$), and Gender is positively correlated with spirituality but not significant ($r = .011$, $P = .433$)

Table 2: Multiple Linear regression analysis result of resilience and gender on Spirituality

Variable	Std Error	B	T	Sig
Resilience	5.05	.070	1.012	.313
Gender	1.66	.001	.021	.984

Dependent Variable: Spirituality

Table 2 above shows the results of the multiple linear regression analysis which predicted youths' spirituality from resilience and gender. The result showed that resilience and gender are not significant predictors of spirituality ($\beta = .070$, $p = .313$, $\beta = .001$, $P = .984$)

Discussion

The present study examined the role of resilience and gender in predicting spirituality among Nigerian students. The correlation result revealed that resilience positively correlated with spirituality but was not significant. Table 2 regression result revealed that resilience did not predict spirituality significantly. Theoretically, this result is in agreement with transformational learning theory (Mezirow, et al., 1990 as cited in Fleming, 2018) which suggest that we are meaning-making beings. This shows that meaning youth's attachment to resilience is not enough to influence spirituality. Empirically, Smith et al, (2013) research with adult respondents showed a very strong correlation between spirituality and resilience. Dewi and

Hamzah, (2019) reported that Participant's spiritual well-being, and their relationship with their God, drove their behaviours and connections that act as protective factors leading to enhanced resilience. The variations in the findings of Smith et al, (2013) and Dewi and Hamzah, (2019) and the present study may be as result of the participants in their studies. The present study participants were undergraduates while Smith et al, (2013) and Dewi and Hamzah, (2019) participants were adults. Again, the present participants are Nigerian undergraduates while Smith et al, (2013) and Dewi and Hamzah, (2019) are non-Nigerians which is likely to affect the result findings culturally.

The second finding of the study revealed that gender did not significantly correlate with spirituality. Table 2 result revealed also that gender did not significantly predict spirituality among Nigerian undergraduates. Theoretically, this result is in agreement with transformational learning theory (Mezirow, et al., 1990 as cited in Fleming, 2018) which suggests that we are meaning-making beings. This shows that the meaning Nigerian undergraduates attach to gender is not enough to influence spirituality. Empirically, (Rassoulilian, et al.,2021; Munoz, et al., 2015; Schnabel et al.,2018) studies with medical patients revealed higher levels of women in religiosity and religious /spiritual practices than men. The difference between these present studies and that of (Rassoulilian, et al.,2021; Munoz, et al., 2015; Schnabel et al.,2018) studies may be a result of participants' health status. The present participants are healthy undergraduates who are free from any sickness while Rassoulilian, et al.,2021; Munoz, et al., 2015; Schnabel et al.,2018) were medical patients. Again the present participants are Nigerian undergraduates participants while Rassoulilian, et al.,2021; Munoz, et al., 2015; Schnabel et al.,2018) participants were not Nigerians.

Implication of the study

The findings of the present study have some practical implications. First resilience and gender are not significant factors in spirituality among undergraduates. This shows that spirituality is culturally sensitive when it comes to resilience and gender. This cultural sensitivity may be the reason for the differences in finding between this present study and studies of (Rassoulilian, et al., 2021; Munoz, et al., 2015; Schnabel et al.,2018) as regards gender and spirituality; and (Smith et al., 2013; Dewi and Hamzah, 2019) as regards to resilience and spirituality. The practical implication of this study is that gender predicted spirituality only among participants who have clinical problems while resilience predicted spirituality only among adults and not undergraduates.

Limitation of study and suggestion for further research

One of the limitations of the present study is that participants were selected from one public University in an urban area (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka) and all the participants are Christians. Also, this study utilized only self-report measures for resilience and spirituality; these may not correspond with behaviour. Moreover, the study is cross-sectional and correlational and therefore causality cannot be inferred. The population size is small and caution should be taken in the interpretation of the results. Therefore, further studies could select samples from clinical patients and adults and may consider other predictor factors such as hardship, economic status and insecurity. Also, Nigeria has six geopolitical zones and samples could as well be selected from them so that the result can have more external validity.

Conclusion

The results have implications for policymakers who work with youth development, welfare and management. This implies that resilience and gender are not important factors related to spirituality among undergraduates. Therefore, resilience and gender are not good predictors of spirituality among Nigerian undergraduates. Finally, the results showed the contributions of the study variables; the roles of resilience and gender on spirituality. These research findings are hoped to encourage researchers to explore other possible related variables that will contribute positively or negatively to understanding spirituality. This is because understanding variables that are related to spirituality will widen the understanding of spirituality and give an edge to those who are interested in studying spirituality.

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