

The Influence of Self-esteem, on Students' Deviant Behaviours in Federal Universities, Nigeria

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Received 30 July 2018; Accepted 1 September, 2018

This study was conducted in Federal Universities situated in Southern Nigeria to determine the influence of self esteem on student's deviant behaviours. Research questions and hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of study was 69,152 students as at the time of study (2009/2010 Academic Session). The sample size was made up 1,524. The research instrument utilized for data collection—was questionnaire which was constructed by the researcher, validated and administered to students. After retrieval and screened, 1,491 copies of the questionnaire were utilized. Data were analyzed using independent-t test to test the hypothesis at 5% level of significance. The findings show that

there was no significant influence of self esteem on student's deviant behaviours. However, there was a significant influence of students' self esteem on their sexually related deviant behaviours. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made which includes the use of collaborative efforts in curbing sexually related deviant behaviors.

Keywords: Students self esteem, deviance, bullying, truancy, deviant behaviours

INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades (precisely 1998 to 2018), Nigerians have witnessed an unprecedented display of moral decadence which is manifested in students' deviant behaviour within the educational institutions and the society in general (Una, 2014). As opined by Udoh (2010), deviant behaviour is a complex individual development with social implications involving the interaction of many factors and forces. According to Schaefer (2011), deviance is socially constructed, and it is subject to different social interpretations over time and across cultures. Schaefer, (2011) further defined deviance as behaviours that violate the standards of conducts or expectations of a group or society. Deviant behaviours can simply range from bizarre or odd behaviours to bad behaviours. According to Wikipedia (2012), self-esteem is a term used in psychology to explain individual's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth." As opined by Emler (2000), studies into self-esteem have no "unanimity over definitions. However, it has remained fairly close to the dictionary or common-sense definition of the opinion a person has of him or herself. The main point of difference is whether this opinion is primarily a general feeling (positive or

negative) or a set of judgments as to whether and in what degree one has the various qualities one desires; good looks, moral virtue, social competence, artistic talents, intellectual skills.

Theoretical framework

Emile Durkheim's (1983) functionalist model

Emile Durkheim belongs to the functionalist school of thought. According to Twynham (2009), this perspective is built upon twin emphases: application of the scientific method to the objective social world and use of an analogy between the biological organism and society. Durkheim sees the society as a system composed of interrelated and interdependent components which harmoniously perform the function essential for the survival of the entire society. These functions which are carried out by the intricately interconnected parts such as the family, economic, religion, education, the polity and other parts keep the society alive (Asuquo *et al.*, 2001). Durkheim asserted that, before the various parts of the

society can work harmoniously together, there must be an established culture base within which they operate. However, it is the value and worth of the beliefs and goals of a society for the people that determine whether they will conform or disobey the culture of the society (Haralambos and Holburn, 2009). According to Macionis *et al.* (2010), Durkheim emphasis is on group and the impact of social phenomena on an individual, which are what he called "social facts". These are external to any one individual, they are the realities of society and they constrain or coerce an individual either to obey or disobey the rules of a given society. Examples of social facts are patterned behaviour or relationships associated with the family, religion, education and public morality. Thus, Durkheim's dual aspects of social facts are "exteriority and constraint". Durkheim stressed social facts and more particularly moral rules, which become effective guides and control of conduct only to the extent that they become internalized in the consciousness of individuals while continuing to exist independently of individuals. In Durkheim's view, constraint is no longer a simple imposition of outside controls on individual will, but rather a moral obligation to obey a rule. In this sense, society to Durkheim is "something beyond us and something in us". Social facts thus, outlives the individual, they endure in spite of the life or death of any individual (Udoh, 2010).

Durkheim rightly observed that under certain social conditions, social institutions lose their authorities over behaviour resulting in a state of normlessness. According to him, during periods of rapid social change and disorder, such as a economic recession, people become more aggressive and depressed and this result to deviant behaviour this he termed anomie. Durkheim opined that social problems like deviant behaviours have social origins .Findings from his study of deviance revealed that suicide rate is high under condition of lawlessness (Otiye and Ogionwo, 2006).

Statement of problem

The controversy surrounding the effects of self esteem on deviant behaviour of youths is one of the reasons that motivated me to conduct this study. It has been established that self-esteem is potentially linked to behaviours in complex ways. The simplest possibility is that self-esteem has its own direct effect on deviant behaviour. But this is only one of many. And these include the possibilities that self-esteem is either consequence rather than cause or that self-esteem and the behaviour of interest are both influenced by something else. However, a school of thought argued that, there are multiple dimensions of low self-esteem, and that it is not plausible to expect a high correlation between self-esteem and deviant behaviour (Emler, 2000; Wikipedia, 2012). They further argued that, self-

esteem can be both a cause and effect of deviation and that it can lead to deviance if one is confident in being able to engage in risky behaviours without devastating circumstances. Whatever the case may be, empirical researches such as a study conducted by Imhonde (2013), which examined the role of personality traits in deviancy, results of the multiple regression analysis revealed that only self-esteem, independently predict aggressive tendencies. Also in the work carried out by Okon *et al.* (2011), in which the findings revealed that self-esteem predicts aggressive tendencies. Similarly, Cornelius-Ukpepi *et al.* (2012) investigated correlates of examination malpractice. The study result suggested that students with low esteem will find it difficult to resist deviant behaviour when faced with difficult tasks such as examination.

The purpose of study

The purpose of study was to investigate the influence of self esteem on students' deviant behaviours in the federal universities in Southern Nigeria. The research question posited is to what extent does students' self-esteem influence their deviant behaviours?

Statement of hypothesis

There is no significant influence of students' self esteem on their deviant behaviours.

Significance of studies

- (i) It will enlighten the people on students' deviancy.
- (ii) It will enable all stake holders to understand the effects of self esteem on students' deviant behaviour.
- (iii) It will assist the school authorities to know the underlying issues behind the measures of control of students' deviancy.

The study was design to cover students of the federal universities located within the south-south geo political region of Nigeria. In view of this, any generalization of the research findings should be restricted to the region or to other areas whose features are homogeneous. One of the limitations of this study is that deviance is a relative concept. In this study, the sociological perspective of the concept was applied. Secondly, since it is the federal universities that were utilised for the study, the result may not apply to both private and state universities.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Federal Universities situated in the Southern Nigeria. The population of this

Table 1. Distribution of population of undergraduate students of Federal Universities in south-south geo-political zone, by gender.

University	Population		Total	Percent (%)
	Male	Female		
University of Male Benin	8,522	11,767	20,289	29.34%
University of Calabar	10,969	6,170	17,139	24.79%
University of Port Harcourt	6,406	9,608	16,014	23.16%
University of Uyo	7,384	8326	15,710	22.72%
Total	33,281 (48.13%)	35,871 (51.87%)	69,152	100.00%

Source: Academic Standard Department, NUC (2009).

Table 2. Description of the respondents' variables with the percentages.

Variables	Group	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Males	723	48
	Females	768	52
	Total	1491	100
Marital status	Married	55	4
	Singles	1436	96
	Total	1491	100
Age	17 – 22 yrs	774	52
	23 – 29 yrs	663	44
	30 yrs and above	54	4
	Total	1491	100
School	UNIBEN	432	29
	UNICAL	395	27
	UNIPORT	332	22
	UNIUYO	332	22
	Total	1491	100

study was 69,152 students (33,281 males and 35,871 females), 20,289, 17,139, 16,014 and 15,710 from the Universities of Benin, Calabar, Port Harcourt and Uyo respectively (Table 1). The sample size was 1,524 students. This consisted of 732 males and 792 females randomly sampled from four federal universities located in the study area. Four faculties each were sampled from these four universities giving a total of 16 faculties sampled for the students. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire designed by the researcher. The face validity and content validity were determined by experts. After which the instrument was administered with the assistance of some research attendants, a total number of 1,491 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and processed. The statistical analysis technique deployed was independent t-test tested at 5% level of significance.

RESULTS

General descriptions of research variables

The variables of the study and the variables about the respondents are in two categories; the ones as

categorical variables, and the ones as continuous variables. The categorical variables are described with frequencies and percentages in (Table 2). Analysis of results in (Table 2) indicated that 48% of the respondents were males, and the remaining 52% were females. Majority of them (96%) were single, while 4% of them were married. On age, 52% were aged 17 – 22 years, while 48% of them were aged 23 years and above. Concerning school attended, 29% of them were drawn from University of Benin, 27% from University of Calabar, 22% from University of Port Harcourt, and 22% from University of Uyo.

Hypothesis: There is no significant influence of students' self-esteem on their deviant behaviours.

In this hypothesis, the independent variable is students' self-esteem, while the dependable variable is students' deviant behaviour, which are five in this study, namely sexually related deviant behaviour, assault/bullying, examination malpractice and truancy. On the independent variable, the respondents were classified into two groups based on their scores on the variable of students' self-esteem. Those who scored below the mean

Table 3. Result of independent t – test analysis of the influence of students’ self – esteem on their deviant behaviours.

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	T-value	Sig. level
Sexually-related deviant behaviour	Low self esteem	563	9.72	2.077	-2.342*	0.019
	High self esteem	928	9.99	2.254		
Assault/bullying	Low self esteem	563	9.86	2.380	0.438	0.662
	High self esteem	928	9.80	2.063		
Drug abuse	Low self esteem	563	9.52	2.153	-1.089	0.276
	High self esteem	928	9.65	2.188		
Examination malpractice	Low self esteem	563	9.74	2.035	-0.549	0.583
	High self esteem	928	9.80	2.012		
Truancy	Low self esteem	563	8.86	1.918	- 1.757	0.079
	High self esteem	928	9.03	1.784		

*Significant (p <.05); critical t = 1.96; df= 1489.

(12.41) were grouped under “low self-esteem” while those who scored above the mean were grouped under “high self-esteem”. The statistical analysis technique deployed to test this hypothesis was independent t-test, and the results of the analysis are presented in (Table 3), and it showed the group sizes, mean values and standard deviations for students with low self-esteem, and for those with high self-esteem. The comparison of the two groups’ mean values in each of the sub-variables of deviant behaviour using independent t-test yielded t-values of -2.342, 0.438, -1.089, -0.549 and -1.757 respectively for sexually-related deviant behaviour, assault/bullying, drug abuse, examination malpractice and truancy. Out of these five calculated t-values, only one (that of sexually-related deviant behaviour) was significant at 0.05 levels (that is its absolute value was higher than the critical t-value of 1.96). The other four are not significant. This implies that; “students with low self-esteem and those with high self-esteem were not significant in their deviant behaviours, except in the case of sexually-related deviant behaviour where students with high self-esteem are significant more deviant than students with low self-esteem.” Thus, there was no significant influence of students’ self-esteem on their deviant behaviours in the aspects of assault/bullying, drug abuse, examination malpractice and truancy. However, there was a significant influence of students’ self-esteem on their sexually related deviant behaviour. This constitutes the answer to the research question.

DISCUSSION

The study showed that there was no significant influence of students’ self-esteem on their deviant behaviour in the aspects of assault or bullying, drug abuse, examination malpractice and truancy. However there was a significant influence of students’ self-esteem on their sexually related deviant behaviour. The implication of this is that, students with low self-esteem and those with high self-esteem are not significantly different except in the case of sexually related deviant behaviour where students with

high self-esteem were significantly more deviant than students with low self-esteem. Specifically, deviant behaviours were classified, into five subgroups namely: sexually related deviant behaviour, assault/bullying, drug abuse, examination malpractice and truancy; while the respondents were classified into two groups based on their scores on the variable of students’ self-esteem. Those who scored below the mean were grouped under “low self-esteem” while those who scored above the mean were grouped under “high self-esteem”. What account for the findings may be that, self-esteem can lead to sexually related deviance if perpetrators are confident in being able to engage in risky behaviours without minding the consequences. This may result to the situation where students with high self-esteem morally loose.

The findings is in agreement with results reported in the literature such as Udoh and Akpan (2014), Wikipedia (2012), and Emler, (2000) whose results showed that individuals with high self-esteem were not significantly different from those with low self-esteem in the deviant behaviours they engage in. Similarly, McCarthy and Hoge,(1984) having investigated the influence of self-esteem on delinquency, arrived at the conclusion that the link between self-esteem and delinquency is uniformly weak. Conclusively, about half the effects were positive and the other half were negative.

The findings on the contrary, with the views of Okon *et al.* (2011), Imhonde *et al.* (2009) who found out that high self-esteem was an important factor which strengthens disciplined/positive behaviours in students, only self-esteem independently predict aggressive tendency and that low self-esteem is correlated with drug use in adolescents.” Also Cornelius-Ukpepi, *et al.* (2012), investigated correlates of examination malpractice and academic performance as influenced by self-esteem. Their study result suggested that pupils with low esteem will find it difficult to resist cheating when faced with difficult tasks such as examination.

However, a school of thought argued that there are multiple dimensions of low self-esteem, and that it was not plausible to expect a high correlation between self-

esteem and deviant behaviour (Emler, 2000; Wikipedia, 2012). They further argued that self-esteem can be both a cause and effect of deviation and that it can lead to deviance if one was confident in being able to engage in risky behaviours without devastating circumstances. As rightly observed by Emler, (2000) that simple correlations can by themselves reflect a number of different possibilities, including the influence of a third variable, and the best available option to distinguish between the possibilities is longitudinal research.

Conclusion

Conclusively, there is no link between self esteem and students' deviant behaviours except in sexually related deviant behaviour in which students with high self esteem could lead to deviancy if one is being confident in being able to engage in risky behaviours not minding the consequences.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need to develop sound, efficient and sustainable systems of large scale data collection for both the prevention and intervention program in each institution of learning. This can be done by the establishment of an agency with the sole responsibility for formulating policies and mechanisms for the control of deviance in institutions of learning.
2. To curtail sexually related deviant behaviour, institutions of learning should enforced codes against indecent dressing by female students on campuses.
3. There should be monitoring agencies, manned by people of high integrity. Efficient checks and punishments on corruption, favouritism and other delinquent acts should be built into arbitration mechanisms so as to ensure the confidence of Nigerians; and make the laws explicit.
4. Enlightenment in the form of seminars, conferences, talks and workshops should be organized for counsellors, school management staff, students as well as parents occasionally, in other to expose them to causes, effects, dangers, and ways of curbing deviant behaviour.

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