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Contents

1. **Parenting Factors Influencing Parent-Adolescent-Conflict in Ibadan** – *Peace N. Ibeagha* 1
2. **Cognitive-Behavioural Training in the Management of Arthritic Patients** - *B.L. Ajibade & Helen O. Nwagwu* 17
3. **HIV/AIDS Prevalence, Control and Management Strategies** – *Christiana A. Adeyoju & F. Olabisi-Olorunfemi* 27
4. **Perceived Individual and Organizational characteristics influencing Career Aspiration of Junior Civil Servants** – *Catherine O. Chovwen* 39
5. **The History and Foundation of Special Education** - *G.B. Ojo* 49
6. **Extra Ministerial Administrative Programme and Poverty Alleviation In Nigeria** - *A.D.O. Adesina & B.A. Adeyemi* 69
7. **Retirement and its Consequent Psychological Problems** – *B. O. Ehigie* 79
8. **A Causal Model of Teacher Factors and Time on Learning Facilitating-Tasks During Senior Secondary School Biology Lessons in Oyo State Nigeria** - *E.O. Sodipo & N.P.S Okpala* 95
9. **Teaching Manpower Factors and Students' Academic Performance in Economics in Ibadan South West Local Government Area of Oyo** - *F. S. Akinwumi & A. O. Ayeni* 109

Self Esteem, Life Satisfaction, Stressful Life Event as Correlates of Inner Meaning Fulfilment Among Students University of Ibadan

By

Rachel B. Asagba* & Helen O. Nwagwu**

Department of Psychology, rbasagba@yahoo.com*

Department of Guidance and Counselling**

University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

The study investigated the interrelationships between psychological variables such as Stressful life event, Self-esteem, Life satisfaction and Inner meaning fulfilment (IMF) among students of the University of Ibadan. There were eight hundred and eight five (885) participants with 449 (50.7%) males and 436 (49.3%) females. The mean age for the participants was 26.2 years with a standard deviation of 6.0 and age range from 15 - 60 years. The IMF scale (Logotest), which is in form of a questionnaire, was used for the data collection. Inter - correlation of the variables was conducted using the Pearson product correlation to test the three predictor variables which were significantly related to inner meaning fulfilment except the life satisfaction, ($r = .06$) was not significant. Self-esteem had a positive significant correlation with IMF ($r = .18$) although a negative relationship was expected while in life stressful event ($r = -.13$) a negative correlation was found with IMF scale. Based on these findings a further research with those predictor variables with inner meaning fulfilment needs to be conducted in order to verify those issues raised in this study.

Introduction

Inner meaning fulfilment scale has been raised by many scholars and practitioners as one of the important issues among psychological

variables that is predisposed mental health. Therefore, several researchers and clinicians have used inner meaning fulfilment scale or Logotest to measure inner meaning fulfilment worldwide by translating it into many languages and also standardized the logotest. For instance, Starck (1983) discovered high rate of "existential vacuum" which is the lack of "inner meaning fulfilment" among her patients in the nursing practice. While Long (1982)'s findings indicated the presence of existential vacuum among the group of disabled individuals.

The result of the study of Seaman and Seaman (1983) revealed that inner meaning fulfilment correlated highly with responsibility, psychological and emotional well-being whereas helplessness/lack of inner meaning fulfilment has high correlation with "morbidity and mortality, as in the case of incarcerated individuals in concentration camp (Frankl, 1963). Also, Addad (1987) and Frankl, 1978)'s studies on the college students found existential vacuum among those students who lack inner meaning fulfilment in Vienna, Austria.

Maslow (1968) was among the earlier researchers on life satisfaction by identifying and studying psychologically healthy people who are mostly satisfy with their lives in terms of the need for self-actualisation. He interviewed many important people like Albert Schweitzer, Albert Einstein, Thomas Jefferson, Eleanor Roosevelt and gathered all the common characteristics among which had made them to attain sense of meaning and personal satisfaction in their lives. Roger (1961) also had indicated that the good life is a process, not a state of being but it is a direction, not a destination. He emphasized that one naturally strives to reach optimal sense of oneself. Since the good life is not a static state, one needs to be "fully functioning"

Baiyewu and Jegede (1992) administered Life satisfaction Index Z to 945 elderly populations within the age of 60 years and above among both the rural and urban Community in Ibadan and discovered significant correlation with those variables on self-assessed health, loneliness, location and sex especially women who scored higher mean than men. While other variables that measured social contact such as mental status, proximity of nearest child and frequency of seeing close friends were not significantly correlated. Self-esteem is another psychological variable that is pertinent in this study. Although, difficulties had been faced in measuring self-

esteem over the years because of the variability of self-esteem today and tomorrow due to daily hassles. Heatherston and Polivy (1991) examined this variability by looking at the state and trait aspect of self-esteem. A relatively stable level of self-esteem in most people were found, that is, some individuals are prone to more positive self-evaluation than others even when they have bad days or disappointments in life. But in general, they like themselves and feel good about themselves.

Another issue in self-esteem is the global esteem versus domain specific self-esteem, which are needed to be aware of because not everyone feels entirely good or bad about himself or herself. Therefore, it is necessary to break self-esteem in the specific area such as "family, physical, social, normal, and personal part of their lives (Marsh and Richards, 1988).

Wells and Malzwell (1976) noted that the issue of validity is another concern which many researchers had raised because of the nature of self report and what they report may be different from what they actually feel at that time. Also, the difficulty of separating causal from the effect is another issue in the measurement of self-esteem. For instance, Myer's (1992) study revealed that self-esteem, as a predictor of happiness did not tell us what was the cause or effect of a particular level of self-esteem, which makes people happy.

Despite all these difficulties in measuring self-esteem, many studies such as Pillow, West (1991) and Wylie (1979) had confirmed that individuals with low self-esteem tend to develop emotional psychological disorders and psychosomatic symptoms. Other psychological disorders include anxiety, depression insomnia unhappiness and aggressiveness. Also, Check and Buss (1981) found high correlation between shyness and low esteem. While Rosenberg (1985) discovered the feeling of social backwardness and self-consciousness among low esteem respondents.

Another variable in this study is the stressful life event. It is commonly believed that stress is bad to health but Selye (1976) had made it known that a little bit of stress is not only tolerable but good for health. Generally, some events are more likely to be stressful than others. For instance, police officer or pilot suffers from high rate of stress related diseases. This had made Holmes and Masuda (1972) discovered that

stressful event could reduce the body's natural defences against disease. As a result of this concept, a stress life event scale was developed to estimate health hazards when one faces changes in life event, which are expressed in units. According to Holmes and Masuda (1972), there is high chance of illness or accidents in future when the unit is more than 300. In confirming this view, Rahe (1972) found consistency report from the study of U.S. Navy personnel that those with high units had developed illness within six months after their rating on the scale. Grandall, Preisler, Ausprung (1992) discovered that University students faced with much life's stressful event such as entering university, changing courses or breaking up a steady relationship. Furthermore, several studies had shown the correlation between stressful life events and various psychological and psychosomatic disturbances in adults. Others had also worked on adolescents and children. For instance, Godington (1972a, 1972b) modified the Social Readjustment Rating Questionnaire of Holmes and Rahe (1967) for the elementary school children and adolescents and found high correlation between their life stressful events and medical problems. Other studies like Le Bow (1975) on life event such as transition from junior to senior high school as well as leaving the high school are altogether two extremely stressful periods in the lives of young individuals. Yeaworth, York, Hussey, M, A. Ingle & Goodwin (1980) designed life change scale and the result was found also to be a high correlation between life event and medical problems among adolescents. While Lazarus (1981a) revealed that stresses such as hassles or micro stressors which range from long queuing for fuel, traffic jams, arguments with colleagues or boss are better predictors of emotional and physical health than life events among his subjects who recorded their daily micro stressors and filled questionnaire for a year. Finally, Moos and Swindle (1990) postulated that other variables like personal resources are always correlated to stress. The problem that still remains with all those studies mentioned above is how to identify life events that stressful to individuals. As a result, some scholars such as Feuerstein, Lable and Kuezmierczk (1990) study, raised questions on whether positive life events are always stressful. This review had generated the following hypotheses that were tested

- 1) There will be a negative significant relationship between the scores on IMF, self-esteem and life satisfaction.
- 2) There will be a positive relationship between IMF scale and stressful life scale.

Method

Design

The study considered the relationship between these predictor variables such as Self-esteem, Life satisfaction and Life stressful event and Inner meaning fulfilment of students of the University of Ibadan. The cross sectional survey utilized an Expost-facto design. This was because the survey method for data collection from the field was employed.

Participants

The study was conducted by using 885 students from the University of Ibadan in different levels (from undergraduate and postgraduates levels) who belonged to various faculties. Four hundred and forty nine (449) or 50.7% were males while the remaining four hundred and thirty six (436) or 49.3% were females with their mean age of 26.2 years and standard deviation of 6.0. The age ranges from 15 - 60 years.

Measures

Data collection was done by using a questionnaire, which is in five parts.

Section A comprises of the socio-demographic information of the participants.

Section B comprises of the inner meaning fulfilment scale, which was designed by Lukas in 1984 and the English version by Lukas and Preble in U.S.A. 1989. It has 18 items to measure inner meaning fulfilment with

four parts. The part I contains demographic variables. The part II consists of nine questions to be answered with Yes or No. While the part III contains reactions to existential the problems stated in the section, which was based on the Likert format rating technique using three parts response format as follows;

(I) 'Often (II) "Once in a while" (III) "Never".

The part IV had two sections to be answered by the participants. The first section of the part IV contains three cases which two answers to any of the stated three cases must be given. That is "who suffers most" and who is the happiest among those three cases. While the second part of the part IV shows empty box where the participants are able to write their own life cases inside the box. The participants were encouraged to write as long as they could and if they required extra sheet they were allowed to write.

The content analysis of the box according to the manual were calculated by the researcher together with other scores in other parts of the text as total score for each participants which were used to compare with the other respondents on the diagnostic table. In overall, it had a co-efficient alpha of $r = .60$ and spearman Brown reliability co-efficient of $r = .61$.

Section C consisted of 15 items on the self-esteem, which was measured by Adanijo and Oyefeso (1986). On the Self-esteem scale, a high score indicates low self-esteem and a low score indicates a high self-esteem. The authors reported a test-retest reliability of 0.70

A Cronbach co-efficient alpha of 0.70 and 0.68 0. Spearman-Brown half co-efficient of were obtained in the present study.

Section D is a 39 items of Yes or No for the respondent. The test was developed by Holmes and Masuda (1972) and it was designed to measure quantitative assessment of the stressful event experiencing at a particular time. The test has been used for many projects and other studies in the department of psychology. In this present study, the pilot study showed a co-efficient of alpha of $r=0.93$ and a split-half reliability of 0.89.

Section E is a life satisfaction scale developed by Bayiewu and Jegede (1986). The scale consists of 13 items. The authors reported on internal reliability of co-efficient of the items of 72. the response format is 5 points Likert format rating scale ranging from (1-5 Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). In the present study, the reliability co-efficient, co-efficient alpha from the pilot study showed $r=0.51$ and a split-half of reliability of 0.49.

Procedure

The questionnaires were administered to the students who were selected through a stratified random sampling technique. Students from the various faculties, halls of residence, and those hostels around the Agbowo environ, participated in the study. After obtaining permission from all the relevant authorities in the University and outside the campus, accident-sampling technique was utilized. All the pertinent information about the purpose of the study such as the contents of the questionnaires as well as the confidentiality of the participants was given to the participants. And they were assured of their anonymity because they were not required to indicate their name or faculty. The questionnaires were administered after the students had given their consent in participating in the study. The completed questionnaires were subjected to statistical analysis using the Pearson product moment correlation.

Results

Based on the analysis of data collected and the testing of the stated hypotheses the data revealed the following results: -

Table 1: Pears on Product Moment Correlation Showing. The Relationship each Independent Variables Self-esteem, Life satisfaction and Logotest (IMF scale)

Variable	Esteem scale	Life stressful event scale 1	Life satisfaction index	Logo test (IMF scale)
Self-esteem scale				
Life stressful event Scale	-.01			
Life satisfaction	-.02	.07		
Logotest (IMF scale)	.18**	-.13**	.06	

* *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)*

** *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)*

The first hypothesis started that there will be a negative significant relationship between the scores on IMF, self-esteem and the satisfaction. On the contrary, the results revealed that a positive correlation was found between self-esteem scale and IMF Scale Scores ($r = .18$), which is a reversal of the expected direction. Furthermore, there was no significant relationship between the life satisfaction scale and on IMF Scale Scores ($r = .06$). This implies that the higher the IMF, the higher the self-esteem and life satisfaction, which also indicates that no support was found for the first hypothesis (See the above Table.)

The second hypothesis stated that there would be a positive relationship between the scores on the IMF scale and life stressful event. A negative relationship was found in the life stressful event scale $r = -.13^{**}$ with IMF scale. This also indicates that no support was found for hypothesis. A perusal of table 1 revealed the predicted correlation variables (See the above Table.)

Discussion and Conclusions

It was hypothesized that a negative significant relationship would be found between the scores of IMF self-esteem, and life satisfaction. However, our findings from a sample of students of the University Ibadan did not indicate this trend. On the contrary, positive correlation was found between self-esteem and IMF scale Scores ($r = .18$), which is a

reversal of the expected direction. From the result, it was observed, that as self-esteem and life satisfaction increase, inner meaning fulfilment decreases. This implies that a student's inner meaning fulfilment is related to his or her self-esteem or life satisfaction. In other words, the higher the self-esteem or life satisfaction of a student the lower the likelihood of experiencing meaningful fulfilment. This present result is consistent with the view of, Heartherton and Polivy (1991) {on the state and trait aspect of self-esteem} and Marsh and Richards (1988) {on global self esteem views vs. domain specific self-esteem}. This finding also confirmed several studies on the reliability and validity of the self-esteem scale. For instance, Wells and Malzwell (1976) and Weiten and Lloyd (1997) doubted the validity of the self-esteem scale because of the majority of the scales are self reporting questionnaires and also most of the studies are correlation studies in which the cause and effect are difficult to separate. In addition to this, some self-esteem scale may not tap all the four major components highlighted by Weiten & Lloyd (1997), which are social, emotional, academic and physical. Therefore, it could be deduced that self-esteem is a very difficult concept to measure. Despite this difficulty, many researchers found positive correlation between low self-esteem and psychological problems. Furthermore, there was no significant relationship between life satisfaction and IMF scale score ($r = .06$). Probably the life satisfaction scale that was developed for the elderly people by Baiyewu & Jegede (1992) might not be the adequate instrument for the population of the University students.

As found in the present study, the second hypothesis stated that there would be a positive relationship between the scores on the inner meaning fulfilment scale and life stressful event, instead, a negative correlation was found. This implies that the university students who scored low on the inner meaning fulfilment scale would also score low on the life stressful event scale. However, a negative correlation was found. This finding of positive correlation between inner meaning fulfilment supports Selye's (1976) opinion that a little bit of stress is not only tolerable but also good for health. The findings also supports the questions raised by some scholars such as Feuerstein, Lable and Kuezmierczk (1990) on whether or not positive life events are always

stressful These questions were raised despite the consistent studies on the positive relationship between stressful life event and various psychological disorders as reviewed by {Holmes and Masuda (1972); Rahe (1972); Godington (1972a) & (1972b); Holmes and Rahe (1967); LeBow (1975); Yeaworth; (1980); Lazarus (1981); Moos and Swindle (1990)}.

Summary

This study has led to some important findings that shed light on aspects of student's inner meaning fulfilment, which other researchers had not looked into. The dearth of literature on the inner meaning fulfilment on those three variables - Life satisfaction, Self-esteem and Life stressful event in Nigeria had not given this study much credence it required. For instance, there is need to further investigate whether life satisfaction, self-esteem and stressful life event variables each dependently or jointly correlate highly with inner meaning fulfilment. That is, would individuals who considered themselves experiencing meaning fulfilment have higher self-esteem and (also high) life satisfaction. These issues require further research to confirm the impact of other variables that may significantly affect life satisfaction, self-esteem, stressful life event and inner meaningful fulfilment. This is because adequate information has not been gathered on this area. The findings of this study also have implications for all the researches geared toward promoting mental health and specifically inner meaning fulfilment in all the tertiary institutions in the country. Most especially, a critical review of the self-esteem measure is necessary and should also be in line with literature highlighted in the present study. Additionally, some items in the life satisfaction scale need to be modified when utilized by cross sectional population across life span.

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