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Abstract: Researches on Higher Education in Nigeria have been focusing mostly on the problems of finance, efficiency, equity, quality and governance. Besides these issues of financing and equity, moral quality of university graduate is an issue that should bother parents and lecturers who are involved indirectly and directly in University system. This study investigates the effect of self esteem on undergraduates and suggests ways of moulding their self esteem for learning outcomes that University education should produce in developing countries.

Background to the Study

RESEARCHES ON HIGHER Education in Nigeria have been focusing mostly on the problems of finance, efficiency, equity, quality and governance (Saint, Harnett, & Strasseur, 2003). These issues challenged government in Nigeria to involve private institution in Higher education. Although, with the participation of private institutions, enrollment seems to have increased, the problem of access continues to affect university education. Besides, the issues of financing and equity, moral quality of university graduates is an issue that should bother parents and lecturers who are involved indirectly and directly in University system.

Moral quality goes beyond teachers' manpower development, infrastructural facilities and instructional materials that the 'society' expect Universities to have. While it is impossible to deny a continuing degeneration of personal moral values among most members of the Nigerian society, it is still astounding to find out that there is a high level of substance abuse, prostitution, homosexuality and theft among undergraduates. There are considerations that level of poverty and strong peer influence are causes of moral problems among undergraduates, but studies show that self esteem is closely associated with moral behaviours. It has been found that there is a high correlation among self esteem, self efficacy, ego strengths hardiness, optimism, and maladjustment, and these constructs were significantly related to health and academics (Alavi, 2007).

Self Esteem

Self means the conscious reflection of one's own being or identity, which separates an individual from others or from the environment. Self concept and self esteem are two of the most widely used terms of thinking about self. Self concept refers to the cognitive (thinking)

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aspect of self related to one's image, learned beliefs, attitude and opinions that individuals hold about his or her personal existence. Self esteem is what we think and believe about ourselves and no matter what anybody says or does, we will always act according to our own self belief. Self esteem and esteem for others are based on the intrinsic worth and dignity of individuals, not on academic ability or physical prowess. (Elliot, 2004)

Some authors like Franden, 1994 and Huitt, 2004 use self concept and self esteem interchangeably, but then, self esteem can be considered as somewhat more measurable in behaviour than self concept. Perhaps, this is why self esteem has been related to personality, task performance, socio-economic status and various aspects of health and health related behaviour. One's self esteem is something more fundamental than the normal thinking process influenced by situations and associations with others. People with good basic self esteem may experience temporary fluctuations in what they think and feel about themselves, but only to limited extent. Conversely, people with poor basic self esteem are controlled by any situation they find themselves. Situations that are bound to come in everyday living make all the difference in their world (The Counseling and Mental Health Centre, 1999).

Problem of the Study

It appears that Unlike the 1970s to early 1990s when university graduates were seen by the Nigerian society as those belonging to an elitist class having been trained intellectually and morally, undergraduates in these twenty first century are no longer conforming to an acceptable standard of behaviour. Nigerian undergraduates dress like people of low morals and behave in ways that make concerned individuals ask: What is the effect of University education? What makes the situation very disturbing is the growing number of religious associations on campuses with many adherents who are not positively influenced by basic moral tenets of these religious groups.

With the incidence of moral degeneration particularly among undergraduates, the fact that character education significantly improves academic achievement and career prospect suggests that much more than increasing enrolment by establishing more Universities everywhere in Nigeria and financing higher education, moral education should be part of university education. These moral values are reflected in the 'motto' of some Universities such as 'learning and character' but the gap between the motto and reality is wide apart. Therefore, something drastic has to be done particularly in designing University curriculum that promotes moral education. It is generally believed that students in the University should enjoy some freedom because they are regarded as adults, but then should freedom not go with some measures of responsibilities?

Social Identity Theory and Self Esteem

Social identity theory was originally developed by Tajfel and Turnel in 1979 to understand the psychological basis of inter-group discrimination. Social identity theory is applicable to undergraduates in the University environment because they acquire a peculiar way of life in University especially by their peer groups and courses of study. Students' membership of the University community distinguishes them from their age groups outside campus. Students' identification with the peer groups in the university bolsters their self esteem. With the kind of life and way of dressing in the university, undergraduates would want to imitate

their colleagues when they get to school. Identity crisis is likely to set in their lives, since these ways of behaviour are different from what their homes and larger society approve.

Review of Empirical Study

In a study carried out by Baumeister, Hutchinson & Lavin 2003, it was shown that self esteem has association with risky behaviour. It was suggested that self esteem tends to foster experimentation possibly leading to early initiation of sexual activity and drinking. Twenge and Campbell, 2001 in a cross temporal meta – analytical review showed that young adults behaviour worsened in increases of teen pregnancy, increase in adolescent crime rates with rising self esteem seriously impaired academic, job performance and led to under achievement as well as increased vulnerability to drug and alcohol abuse.

In another study conducted by Alavi, 2007 among prisoners in Kerman, the result showed that substance abuser and prostitutes have lower self esteem as compared with ordinary individuals.

Objectives of the Study are to:

1. Find out the level of self esteem among university undergraduates based on gender, course of study, sponsors, and type of home.
2. Examine how self esteem influences socio-moral behaviour such as examination malpractices, substance use, prostitution, and cultism.

Research Questions asked include:

1. How would sponsorship (who is responsible for education), course of study, gender, and type of home determine self esteem.
2. Would level of self esteem influence socio-moral behaviour like sexual immorality, cultism, examination malpractices, and substance use?

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is a descriptive design which is capable of explaining the level of self esteem of respondents and their characteristics as well as the socio-moral problems they are likely to be susceptible to. It is preferred to other designs because the study aims at describing the students' characteristics as well as the levels of self esteem. The sample of this study is two hundred and ten (210), 300 level undergraduates purposively and conveniently selected in five departments of Adekunle Ajasin University. Two departments each were randomly selected from the Faculty of Arts and Education, Faculty of Management and Social Science, Faculty of Sciences and Faculty of Law. These were categorized as Humanities (Philosophy and Law), Education, Social Sciences and Sciences.

Instrument

Rosenberg's self esteem scale, 1965 was adopted for this study. It was titled 'Undergraduates Self Esteem Scale' (USES) which was divided into three sections namely: Section A, B and C. Section A comprised of Sex, Department, Who is responsible for education, and type of

home. Section B consisted of the self esteem scale of Rosenberg such as: I feel I am equal with others, I have a number of good qualities, I am inclined to think that I am a failure, I am able to do valuable thing even better than others, I don't have much to be proud of, I love myself, I am satisfied with myself, I wish I am a better person, I feel useless at times, at times I think, I am not good at all. These question items are on the scale of Yes or No. The scale ranges from 0-30. Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self esteem. Section C measured prostitution, cultism, cheating and substance abuse with the following question items: poverty is the cause of offering sex for money; a poor student may have to seek financial help from men or women who pay for sexual acts; opposite sex are better friends to live with than the same sex; having sexual relationship with someone of the same is not really bad; it is not impossible to say no to sexual advances from those in authority who determine ones future; peer groups can give one assurance of security and success on campus; advice from peer group is preferable to that of parents; everybody cheats at one time or another during examinations; it does not matter how one makes his/her money, what matters is making the money anyhow; if I have the brains of those who cheat through internet, I will do it; at times one is in a condition whereby taking what belongs to others is the way out; there is nothing bad in taking a substance that makes one feel cool and high in order to perform at a high level; it is a free world one should do anything to make it. These question items are also on the scale of Yes or No. The questionnaire was found reliable through test and retest method.

Data Analysis

This study adopts inferential statistics of analysis of variance to identify the most dominant variable among sex, who is responsible for education, type of home and course of study for research question one. A descriptive statistics of multiple classification analysis was used to identify which of the variables determined the level of self esteem most than the others and t test statistical tool was used to test the difference between low self esteem and high self esteem

Research Question 1: Would gender, who is responsible for education, type of home and course of study determine self esteem in undergraduates

Table 1: Analysis of Variance Showing Determinants of Self Esteem

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig of F.
Gender	2.486	1	2.486	1.794	.182
Who is responsible for Education	8.370	2	4.185	3.020	.052
Type of Home	.000	1	.000	.000	.997
Course of Study	115.991	3	38.664	27.901	.000

The table above shows that gender and type of home (intact or separated) are not significant in determining self esteem among university undergraduates, while who is responsible for their study and their course of study are significant in determining self esteem.

Table 2: Multiple Classification Analysis of Students' Educational Sponsorship and Course of Study, *Grand Mean = 16.12*

Variable + Category	N	Unadjusted Dev'n Eta	Adjusted for Independents Dev'n Beta	Contributions of Variables
Mother	62	-.32	-.23	15.89
Father	91		.15	16.17
Others	57		.10	16.3
Sciences	61	.07	.09	16.21
Social Sciences	64	.58	.59	16.71
Education	24	1.04	1.00	17.16
Humanities	61	-1.09	-1.10	15.03

Table 2 shows that fathers sponsorship of education determine the level of self esteem among undergraduates. Undergraduates in education related courses contributed most to the determination of self esteem among undergraduates. A minimum of fifty respondents were sought in Faculty of Education, but the table shows that only twenty four (24) students instead of fifty identified themselves with the course of their study. Other students in education preferred the faculties where they chose their teaching subjects such as Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities. This could be because education students preferred Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities to Education courses.

Research Question 2: Would Level of Self Esteem influence sexual immorality, cultism, examination malpractices and substance abuse among undergraduates?

Table 3: T-Test Analysis Showing Levels of Self Esteem and Antisocial Behaviours

Anti-Social Behaviour	Level of Self Esteem	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t	df	Sig (2 tailed)
Sexual immorality	Low	79	3.8734	.9250	-3543	208	.000
	High	131	4.3206	.8617			
Cultism	Low	79	2.3671	.6029	-5.026	208	.000
	High	131	2.8550	.7245			
Examination malpractices	Low	79	4.7848	1.0582	-5.861	208	.000
	High	131	5.7481	1.2970			
Substance abuse	Low	79	2.4177	.6526	-3.207	208	.002
		131	2.7786	.8619			

Table 3 above shows there is a difference between level of self esteem and antisocial behaviour among undergraduates. 37.6% of the respondents have low self esteem while 62.4% have high self esteem. The findings show that those with high self esteem are more susceptible to negative moral behaviour. This negative behaviour is more pronounced in sexual immorality and examination malpractices.

Determinants of Self Esteem among Undergraduates

Though this study has a relatively small sample for one to generalize with, nevertheless, the under listed points can still be made from the data collected. Sponsorship of education and course of study are significant in determining student's self esteem. Hence, students' self esteem can be moulded through creating more opportunities for parents to access fund for the training of their children. Courses in the universities need to be more integrative with elements of entrepreneurship for students to adapt easily in life after school without endangering their areas of specialization. Graduates need to have general and employable skills that will make them fit into their jobs regardless of their course of study

Self esteem was found associated with antisocial and moral behaviour of students. Those with high self esteem appear more susceptible to antisocial and moral behaviour probably as self defence mechanism for their deficiencies. This result negates the findings of Alavi (2007). The reason for the result in Nigeria could result from the environmental factors such as high level of poverty and the experience of undergraduates who have to depend on self effort in funding their education.

Conclusion

That gender is not significant in determining self esteem portends that access to University education can be used by governments in Africa, where there is dominance of male over female, to promote girls and women empowerment and more participation of women in public affairs. Family life is still very strict in African countries and children born out of wedlock and those not brought up by their parents do have a sense of loss. This study shows that type of home does not determine self esteem among University undergraduates. This means that university education could be used to build relationships in individuals that would allow them to have requisite self esteem for normal life. This does not suggest however that there is a substitute for the African value for family life.

Perhaps the justification for promoting family life in Nigeria is the result that the person responsible for students study is significant in determining self esteem. Although this study was not meant to show whether those whose fathers were responsible for their study have more self esteem than those whose mothers were responsible for their study, the social system in Nigeria favours males more than females. Hence fathers, when they are still living, should appreciate the duty they have to train their children rather place the burden of paying school fees on women.

Most of the undergraduates in education came into the faculty as a last resort to have university education. The result shows that the few who identified with education had the highest contributions in self esteem. This shows that education as a course of study has components that can engender self esteem in Nigeria. It behooves the Nigerian society to give due respect to teachers and encourage applicants to select education as their first choice when seeking admission into universities.

Recommendations

The University education should provide an environment where there is fairness and equity in admission process as well as academic rating. It should be a place where students can be

moulded to disregard the socio economic and political status of parents and relations but rather search for knowledge, career and moral development especially in an age where character development has been categorized as an employability skill.

Nigerian governments' effort in eliminating cultism has been shown by this study to be commendable. Cultism is no longer as prevalent as sexual immorality and examination malpractices. Through the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), the government can design disciplinary actions and social welfare services for students caught cheating especially during public examinations that have linkages with admissions into Nigerian universities.

Finally, government and university administrators need to design ways of curbing and eliminating sexual immoralities and examination malpractices in Nigerian universities in order to enhance the moral quality of the students. Parents and lecturers also have their roles to play by living exemplary lives for their children and students to emulate.

Considerations for Further Research

There are different types of institutions based on the owners and specialisation that provide and organize higher education in Nigeria. Further researches can investigate the difference in self esteem of undergraduates in public and private universities. Self esteem and sexual immorality or examination malpractices can also be studied. More researches can also be conducted on the content of the courses of study that can mould students' self esteem and minimize their propensity for antisocial behaviour in university system.

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