

Sense of Community and Personality Determining In-session Psychological Well-being of off-campus Resident students of a Tertiary Institution in Lagos State

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Abstract: *Tertiary institutions play critical roles in shaping the future of students. During school sessions, students experience challenges associated with their studentship such as academic pressures, social adjustments and psychological stressors. These challenges become more profound for off-campus resident students who shuttle to and from the campus daily, and experience lack of social interaction characteristic of on-campus living arrangement. The psychological well-being of these students may be in doubt. This study explores sense of community and personality traits as determinants of in-session psychological well-being of off-campus resident students. Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted to obtain data across diverse characteristics of off-campus resident students. Therefore, the population under review was undergraduate students at Lagos State University in the district of Ojo, Lagos state Nigeria where at the time of the study, all students resided outside the university campus. The participants consisted of one hundred and ninety-three (193, 48.3%) males and two hundred and seven (207, 51.8%) females selected through convenience sampling method. The age of the participants indicated that thirty-five (8.8%) were aged 16 and 17 years, one hundred and seventy-seven were aged 18-21 years (44.3%), one hundred and fifty-five (37.8%) were aged 22-25 years and thirty-seven (9.3%) were aged 26 + years. Participants who reported high score on agreeableness and neuroticism reported significant in-session psychological well-being ($\beta = .731, p < .01$; $\beta = .327, p < .01$ respectively). Sense of community did not predict students' in-session psychological well-being ($\beta = .102, p > .05$). These results have implication on intervention strategies and planning of student's welfare by management of tertiary institutions who are currently embroiled by provision of student's residents and ultimately the well-being of students.*

Keywords: In-session psychological well-being; off-campus resident students; tertiary education, sense of community

INTRODUCTION

Tertiary education, marked by significant intellectual and personal growth offers opportunities for knowledge acquisition, skill development, and social interaction. However, it is also a period associated with numerous challenges, including academic pressures, social adjustments, and psychological stressors. In-session psychological well-being during this phase is paramount, as it not only affects students' academic performance but also has long-lasting implications for their overall quality of life. According to Thorley (2017), in every five students in tertiary institutions, one of them experience in-session psychological well-being concerns over the years. Barkham et al. (2019). Hughes and Spanner (2019) affirmed that students expressed poorer well-being associated with personal bias towards their life satisfaction and fulfilment compared to the general population. Vaez & Laflamme (2008), reported that such students experience low performance or drop out of school (Thorley, 2017). The outcome of these studies reveals the state of the psychological well-being of students in tertiary institutions and calls for efforts towards intervention. Moreover, prior studies (Siddique, 2023; Muslim et al., 2012) investigated off-campus student's mental well-being, and challenges off-campus students encounter respectively. In this study, we aim to add to literature by investigating sense of community and personality traits determining psychological well-being of students in a Lagos tertiary institution who live outside of their school environment.

The pursuit of holistic educational experiences that promote not only cognitive development, but also psychological well-being has gained increasing attention. For instance, tertiary educational institutions represent critical settings where students engage in academic, social, and personal growth endeavors (Chukwuedo et al., 2021). As these institutions play critical roles in shaping the future of students, understanding the intricate interplay between personality, sense of community and in-session psychological well-being becomes paramount. Student's In-Session Psychological Wellbeing (SI-SPW) refers to the mental and emotional state of students during the academic session; that is when schools are in session and not on vacation. The study of SI-SPW is germane because students often experience heightened stress, anxiety, or depressive symptoms during active school periods especially during periods prior to end of semester exam (Pascoe, 2020). Additionally, social isolation may impact emotional well-being when social interaction, social dynamics and peer relationship is at stake (Baumeister, & Leary, 1995). The change in the world order in the post COVID-19 era brought with it economic hardships globally that has affected educational institutions who resorted to charging higher fees to stay afloat and keep students in institutions of learning. Hence, students have had to cope with high fees and other educational expenses to keep themselves in school. To some students, combining work with studies was inevitable, but the consequences of this is poor time management in the midst of steady academic demands. This may lead to continuous academic demands without break that may lead to emotional exhaustion. Gross (2015) affirms that students with better emotion-regulation strategies report lower anxiety during school sessions. The aforementioned situations require investigations into the factors determining SI-SPW with the objective of assisting students to achieve psychological well-being.

Sense of community (SOC) is a psychological concept that describes the relationship between a person and a location, and according to Plys and Qualls (2019), SOC has a link with positive

psychological outcome, and is an important concept in the education literature (Gentry 2023). Empirical evidence abound to show that SOC increases well-being, community identity, civic responsibility and mental health (Mahmoudi, 2016). Glynn (1981) reported that the ability to function well in a community is positively correlated with sense of community. In a related study by Prati et al. (2018), a high score on sense of community at the school level was correlated with higher well-being scores. Thus, SOC is pivotal for student's well-being at individual or school level. Despite the potential benefits of the investigation on SOC and psychological well-being among students, there is scarcity of studies on the SOC and in-session psychological well-being of students living outside the university campus in Nigeria. Studying in a tertiary institution may present several problems which may influence students' mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. For example, newly admitted students on the university campus and with different personality traits may experience adjustment challenges and their psychological well-being may be affected (Osamika et al., 2021; Malomo & Opadoja, 2018). Also, students residing outside the university environment in neighborhoods with different characteristics such as crowded urban settings (Muslim et al. 2012) or noisy neighborhoods, may experience environmental stressors that negatively impact their in-session psychological well-being. Similarly, some students' personality traits may not align well with the characteristics of their SOC. With reference to the influence of personality traits, an introverted student living in a bustling, social environment may struggle to find privacy and quiet space, potentially hindering the student's in-session psychological well-being. Vora and Kinney (2014) reported that sense of community is reported to be correlated with academic satisfaction and wellbeing among students.

Personality traits are inherent characteristics that influence how individuals perceive and respond to the world around them. Personality traits, such as neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and agreeableness, play a pivotal role in shaping an individual's in-session psychological well-being. However, few studies have explored the combined influence of personality and sense of community on in-session psychological well-being among tertiary students in Lagos State (Ivantchev & Stoyanova, 2021).

Brimblecombe, (2021) explained how sense of community can affect in-session psychological well-being. It highlighted that familiar places such as home, work, school, and even social contexts can have a significant impact on mental well-being. Identifying the sense of community that can affect you psychologically can shed light on whether the locations you frequent are contributing to or distracting from your mental wellness. Parental socioeconomic status, parenting practices, peer relationships, romantic relationships, and work experiences are five important environmental predictors of personality trait development. The associations between these factors and personality traits are modest (Ayoub & Roberts, 2020).

Brooker and Woodyatt (2019) affirm that at the commencement of university education, students become prone to poor psychological wellbeing. At that point, the campus environment is unknown and would require adaptation to social life and academic activities (Brougham et al., 2009). First and second level students are likely to feel psychological distress, social anxiety (Malomo & Opadoja, 2018) and depression (Farrer et al., 2016; Ibrahim et al., 2013). School

management need take a serious attitude towards ameliorating these experiences by taking appropriate steps to improve the quality of life of the students.

Students who are introverted and living in a bustling, social dormitory may struggle to find privacy and quiet space, potentially hindering their in-session psychological well-being. The financial burden of housing and living expenses in certain areas may contribute to stress, especially for students with financial constraints wherein some students may resort to substance use as a coping mechanism. Students also undergo a pivotal phase of personal, academic, and social development. However, this period can also be marked by increased stress, anxiety, and challenges as they navigate academic demands, social interactions, and personal growth (Caligiuri, et al., 2020). While the influence of the educational environment on students' psychological well-being is widely recognized, there is a need for a deeper understanding of how specific personality and sense of community within the educational setting impact students' in-session psychological well-being (Balderas, 2016).

Sense of community may influence the well-being of individuals by changing brain structure and function. In the study of Huang et al. (2023), children who were socialized in adverse environments were reported to experience impeded brain development; a situation that heightened the risk of memory challenges, learning problems, and behavioural hurdles. Therefore, sense of community can affect in-session psychological well-being in the way they impact individuals psychologically. The school environment presents a setting with social space and cues where learning and personality development of students take place as a community responsibility. A conducive atmosphere where students enjoy learning culminates in better academic achievement.

Components of psychological wellbeing according to (Gilavand, 2016) include a tidy, clean, calm, peaceful and comfortable environment with like-minded right individuals. This therefore spells out the need for conscious planning of a conducive environment for learning as a priority of stakeholders in the educational sectors whose goal should be targeted towards ensuring adequate condition, lighting, and noise control for proper learning (Murugan & Rajoo, 2013). Additionally, the location where learning can influence psychological well-being can be enhanced by the structure of classrooms, presence of facilities and accessories, all of which are lacking outside of the university environment. Duruji et al. (2014) espoused the view that a conducive learning environment inspire expected learning that encourages good academic performance. Waldman (2016) reiterated that a feeling of safety is a precursor to a successful academic performance because a feeling of safety ensures maintenance of mental balance, both physically and mentally. Studies show that having a safe environment involves the feeling of being welcomed, supported, and respected (Sayfulloevna, 2023).

Psychological well-being refers to positive psychological performance and is recognized as emotional reactions to personal attributes and achievements, effective interaction with the world, social coherence, and positive progress over time (Agrawal et al., 2020). High levels of psychological well-being are essential for growth, maintaining health, and preventing many psychological disorders. Additionally, psychological well-being not only produces a good feeling but also reduces the likelihood of illness (Babaei et al., 2021). Given the importance of psychological well-being, a plethora of investigations have been undertaken to investigate the

factors that influences the variable. For example, Tabik (2016) reported in a study that personality traits can predict psychological well-being. Each personality trait has its special importance, such as those who score low on neuroticism are emotionally stable, calm, and able to cope effectively with stressful situations (Tabik, 2016). A recent meta-analysis (Anglim et al., 2020) showed that neuroticism was negative, and the other traits were positively associated with psychological well-being, with the influence level ranging from weak to strong.

Another factor is extraversion, which is based on the affinity for social life, an interest in being in a large crowd, confident, sexual arousal, excitement, and optimism. Investigators have increasingly focused on studying personality and its dimensions as a significant factor in psychological well-being. In addition, there is an unparalleled relationship between the big five personality factors and dimensions of psychological well-being (Khan, 2020).

Available literature suggests scarce empirical data on the influence of personality characteristics on in-session psychological wellbeing among undergraduate Nigerian sample. The few empirical studies is found in Nwosu et al. (2018) and focuses on either secondary school students or teachers. Evidences abound that there are no consistencies in the outcomes of these investigations. Examples are Reza, et al (2015); Ullah, (2017); Skomorovsky and Dursun, (2018); Poropat (2016). This dearth in knowledge points to the need to conduct further investigations between personality traits and psychological well-being among Nigerian undergraduates living outside the campus environment during academic session.

Statement of Hypotheses

1. There will be a positive influence of personality factors on students' in-session psychological well-being.
2. There will be a significant positive influence of a sense of community on students' in-session psychological well-being.
3. There will be a joint and independent influence of personality and a sense of community on students' in-session psychological well-being.

METHOD

A cross-sectional survey research design sufficed to obtain data across diverse characteristics. A questionnaire survey was conducted through physical contact with students in their classrooms immediately after lecture hours. Consent to participate was embedded in the questionnaire, and option to refuse or withdraw from the survey was also allowed. The participants consisted of one hundred and ninety-three (193, 48.3%) males and two hundred and seven (207, 51.8%) females selected through convenience sampling method from across diverse demographic characteristics such as gender, age, level of study, residence type and faculty. Thirty-five (35, 8.8%) of the students were 18 years and below, one hundred and seventy-seven aged (127, 44.3%) were between 18-21 years one hundred and fifty-five (15, 37.8%) were between 22-25 years and thirty-seven (37, 9.3) were aged 25 years and above. The setting was a tertiary institution where at the time of the study, all students resided outside the university campus. Therefore the population under review was undergraduate students at all levels. To obtain data, the Ryff psychological well-being scale (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) was

adopted for this study. Specifically, the short version 18 items scale of the Ryff psychological well-being scale consisting of 6 dimensions namely self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth made up of 3 items each with Cronbach's α reliability value of between 0.87 and 0.90. The personality dimensions were measured with 11 items designed to measure personality (neuroticism & agreeableness). The instrument was adopted from the Big Five Inventory (BFI) created by John et al. (2008). The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from (1 = disagree strongly to 5 = agree strongly). The reliability coefficient of the entire items is $\alpha = 0.78$. an 8-item Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS; Peterson, Speer, & McMillian, 2008)). The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale response ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The Cronbach's alpha for the overall BSCS is 0.92.

RESULTS

Table 1: Summary table of simple linear regression showing the influence of personality traits on students' in-session psychological well-being.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	23.358	2.756			8.475	.000
AGREEABLENESS	.731	.090	.329		8.132	.000
NEUROTICISM	.327	.084	.187		3.875	.000

$R^2=.253$; $R=.503$; $p<0.01$

From Table 1, it can be observed that agreeableness significantly predicted students' in-session psychological well-being ($\beta = .731$, $p < .01$), and neuroticism significantly predicted students' in-session psychological well-being ($\beta = .327$, $p < .01$). The results are in partial agreement with the stated hypothesis.

The second hypothesis stated that there will be a positive influence of sense of community on students' in-session psychological well-being was tested using the simple linear regression. The result is presented in the table below:

Table 2: Summary table of simple linear regression showing the influence of sense of community on in-session psychological among undergraduates.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	51.413	4.921			10.447	.000
SENSE of Community	.102	.140	.037		.732	.465

$R^2= .001$; $R=.037$; $p<0.01$

From table 2, it can be observed that sense of community did not predict students' in-session psychological well-being ($\beta = .102$, $p > .05$). The results run contrary to the stated hypothesis. The stated hypothesis is hereby rejected.

In hypothesis three, it was predicted that there will be joint and independent influence of personality traits and sense of community on students' in-session psychological well-being was tested using the multiple linear regression. The result is presented in the table below:

Table 3. Summary table of multiple regression showing the joint and independent influence of personality factors and sense of community on in-session psychological well-being among undergraduate

Model	R	R ²	F	P	B	T	Sig.
	.491	.241	63.089	.326			
Personality Traits					.490	11.202	.326
Sense of Community					.043	.984	.000

From table 3, it could be deduced that there was a significant joint influence of personality and sense of community on students' in-session psychological well-being ($R = .491$, $F = 63.09$, $p < .01$). The predictor variable accounted for 24.1% variance in the dependent variable. It could be further revealed that personality factors ($\beta = .490$, $t = 11.20$, $p < .01$) had a significant independent influence on students' in-session psychological well-being while sense of community ($\beta = .043$, $t = .984$, $p > .01$) had no significant independent influence on students' in-session psychological well-being. The stated hypothesis is hereby partially accepted.

DISCUSSION

This study explored sense of community and personality as determinants of in-session psychological well-being of off-campus resident students of a tertiary institution in Lagos State. The findings revealed that the agreeableness and neuroticism personality traits predicted in-session psychological well-being among students living off-campus. This results are supported by (James et al., 2012; Steel et al., 2008). The personality trait of agreeableness reflect behaviors that can be described as ability to positively adapt, become satisfied and gratified with the environment a person belongs. These behaviors are synonymous with the attitude of people who express trust in others, appreciate balance in their life and highly cooperative of peoples' opinion and actions (Graziano & Tobin, 2019). Negative emotions typifies people who possess high traits of neuroticism therefore their reaction to an environment that lacks essential ingredients to their comfort can be distasteful to the extent of affecting their psychological well-being. This may translate to negative influence on their psychological well-being. The results obtained in this study on personality traits and psychological well-being is a pointer to the relevance of personality in student's ability to live a life of positive well-being. Cultural factors associated and consistent with environmental influences may inform explanation for the outcome in this study. The type of environments majority of the students can afford to live may be typified by similar houses, aesthetics, size and population density which ordinarily may not be adequate for standard living arrangements in Nigeria. The awareness of this situation could have prepared students for such environments which is in accordance with their financial capability, hence their ability to agree with it.

Additional findings revealed that sense of community did not have a significant influence on the in-session psychological well-being of the students. In agreement with our study, and after an extensive search of literature, only Martin and Kilgo (2015) did not find a significant difference in the psychological well-being of on-campus and off-campus students. Contrary to the findings in this study, Lindberg et al. (2023) confirmed that neighborhood influences mental wellness which can be associated with psychological well-being. Franzoi et al. (2023) in a systematic review identified housing as an aspect pivotal to well-being of emerging adult students in tertiary institutions. In the study, outcomes associated with student's housing context were identified as homesickness and adaptation to college life, overall health and distress, sleep, depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, tobacco use, internet addiction, eating disorder, and sexual behaviours. In Lefkowitz and Walters (2022), increased alcohol intake was associated with off-campus students. Contrary to our study, on-campus students reported a higher mental health probability score on the average. Though this current study investigated psychological well-being of off-campus students, the study of Siddiqui (2023) could be interpreted as a close behavioural pattern with psychological well-being. Additionally, Lau et al. (2013) investigated the psychological well-being of on- and off- campus students and the influence of chronotype on their well-being. The findings suggests that on-campus students reported more sleep periods, significant productive sleep, better sleep quality, and low feeling of stress than off-campus-living students. There was however a significant joint influence of personality and sense of community on students' in-session psychological well-being. Only personality traits independently determined Psychological well-being.

Data on gender was analysed though gender was not part of our objectives. It was revealed that male undergraduates reported greater in-session psychological well-being than the female participants. In support of this finding is the outcome of the study of Adeniyi and Onadiji (2016). On the contrary, Joshanloo (2022) found that a high level of social well-being was associated with females with higher extraversion and conscientiousness than their male counterparts. However, other researchers like Soto (2015) found significant correlations between baseline levels in female rates of change in subjective well-being and rates of change in their male counterparts in personality traits. Thus, there is evidence that changes in well-being, in general, can lead to trait change over time in males than in females.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, conclusion can be drawn that personality traits of agreeableness and neuroticism significantly influences psychological well-being of students. Hence university administrators can expect that students' emotional health and overall functioning will be affected by the personality types of their students. This also means that they may utilize the personality assessment to determine the behavior of potential students.

With emphasis on student's residence during their time at school, sense of community did not predict in-session psychological well-being of students. This has implications for university administrators in terms of decision-making on the provision or non-provision of residential

accommodations for students. It meant that having off-campus accommodation may not negatively harm students' academic performances as this study has revealed.

Furthermore, the influence of gender differences on psychological well-being from this study revealed that male students are more stable than female students which implies that male students maybe more resilient compared to their female counterparts. The takeaway from this study's result for university administrators is to pay more attention to female students in matters of students' well-being generally. Additionally, the result of the current study showed that there was no combined prediction of in-session psychological well-being due to the personality trait and sense of community.

Limitation and Suggestion for Further Study

The current study was limited in terms of sample size and scope. Aside from these, there is a need to expand the frontier of knowledge in this area by evaluating other narrower psychological well-being aspects such as neuroticism and narcissism on the behavior of students. This study did not differentiate environments such as urban versus rural areas to understand differences on the psychological well-being of students.

Based on the enumerated limitations of the study, other investigators who desire to replicate this study should endeavor to increase the sample size and study areas. Future studies can consider urban versus rural environment dichotomy as these allow for results from different locations of the country and other dependent variables. Future interests could also focus on differentiating between institutional ownership by looking at private versus public institutions, and even consideration of state versus federal government ownership of higher education institutions.

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