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ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLES AND SELF-ESTEEM AS PREDICTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The psychological well-being of undergraduate students has become a matter of utmost concern to stakeholders in the education sector given the concerns occasioned by increasing rate of depression and suicide in the country. This unsavoury trend has made inroads into the university system given that university education comes with attendant challenges such as having to live away from family, depression, suicidal ideation, dropout rate/dropout tendency, drug abuse and a host of others. Hanging on students' consistent evaluative judgement on their academic issues and their self-esteem, the purpose of this study was to investigate attributional styles and self-esteem as predictors of psychological well-being of undergraduate students in Anambra State. Three research questions were raised for the study while three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the 18,326 second year undergraduate students for the 2021/2022 academic session in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and Chukwumeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam in Anambra State. The sample for the study comprised 720 second year undergraduate students for the 2021/2022 academic session obtained through multi-stage sampling procedure. Three sets of questionnaire 'Psychological Well-being Questionnaire (PWQ), Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ) and Self-Esteem Scale (SES) were used for data collection. The instruments for data collection were validated by three experts, two from Measurement and Evaluation, the other from educational psychology all in the Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instruments were established using Cronbach Alpha Method and the alpha co-efficient got were 0.82, 0.80 for and 0.84 for ASQ, SEQ and PWQ respectively. Statistical procedure used for data analysis was multiple regression analysis. The findings of the study revealed that attributional styles and self-esteem significantly predicted psychological well-being of undergraduate students. However, self-esteem accounted for a greater proportion of variance in the students' psychological well-being more than attributional styles. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that Federal Government should ensure the employment and deployment of counsellors and psychologists to universities of the Nigerian federation. Such a step will help ensure that the psychological needs of undergraduate students are attended to especially as it concerns their self-esteem and attributional styles. Additionally, suggestions for further studies were made.

KEYWORDS

Attributional styles, self-esteem, predictors of psychological, undergraduate students, Anambra State



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INTRODUCTION

The university as an institution provides students who have transited from secondary school new learning opportunities and experiences which are necessary for their psycho-social growth. However, life as an undergraduate student could be challenging. This can be gleaned from the fact that students have to go through the rigorous process of adapting or adjusting to a new socio-cultural environment. University life could even be more challenging given the added stress of having to meet up with high social, economic and academic expectations. Consequently, undergraduate students are likely to suffer adjustment problems and psychological distress due to inadequate social support or financial constraints (Panahi et.al, 2016). Panahi et.al added that in such a situation, students are expected to apply effective psychological strategies and resources to cope with these pressures, enjoy optimal level of psychological well-being and continue their academic life satisfactorily.

Psychological well-being is an integral part of education to the extent that a student has to be in a good mental state to be amenable to what he/she is being taught. Psychological well-being refers to the ability to discover all talents of a person which usually arises from the balance between positive and negative emotions and satisfaction with life (Durayappah, 2011). It is a state of mental satisfaction that is a consequence of health, happiness and achievement. Put differently, psychological wellbeing is not unconnected with feelings of happiness, emotional satisfaction and capacity to function and achieve success in one's area of endeavour. Interestingly, psychological well-being seems to be related to improved physical, emotional and mental health. Students' life during undergraduate programme is considered to be one of the highest anxious and lowest psychological well-being phases in the life cycle of a student (Stallman, 2010). Stallman added that it has high levels of psychological distress compared with the general population. There is a high tendency for undergraduate students with positive psychological wellbeing to be cognitively active and emotionally stable to record successes in their academic pursuit.

Psychological well-being includes dimensions such as self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth and purpose in life (Diaz et.al, 2006). According to Diaz et.al, self-acceptance is the individual's attempt to feel good about themselves; positive relationships - the capacity to love, where social relationships are stable and trustworthy; autonomy- self-determination, independence and personal authority; environmental mastery- management of the demands and opportunities of the environment to satisfy one's own needs and capacities; personal growth- deliberate effort to develop one's capabilities and maximize them; and purpose in life captures the need to set goals and define objectives to give life meaning. In other words, an undergraduate student who feels accepted and has a positive relationship with others will, in all likelihood, be determined to master his/her environment towards the achievement of academic success. More so, a student with a strong feeling of acceptance and stable social support will likely be psychologically healthier than those with weak feeling of acceptance and unstable social support. According to Singh et al. (2011), low psychological well-being among undergraduate students creates academic stress and depression among undergraduates. Worse still, it could lead to suicidal ideation, dropout rate/dropout tendency, drug abuse among others.

The psychological well-being of undergraduate students has been a source of concern to stakeholders in the university education such as parents, educational psychologists and university authorities. This may not be utterly separated from the fact that there has been low levels of psychological well-being among students attending university (Sandoval, Dorner and Véliz, 2017). The foregoing could be attributable to the fact that the transition to university culminates in gaps in social contact and by extension, support from family. These difficulties and relative stressors that trail such transition can lead to poor academic performance and increased psychological distress (Tajalli, SobhiandGanbaripanah, 2010). There could be a difference in the psychological well-being of undergraduate students occasioned by factors such as self-esteem, attributional life styles among others.

Self-esteem is a construct which depicts the manner in which individuals see themselves and measure their real emotions in comparison to their ideal self. Self-esteem is a defence mechanism that helps in protection of individuals from depression during challenging periods by maintaining their positive self-perception and having a good psychological well-being (Sowislo and Orth, 2013). In the attitudinal definition, Nwankwo,

Okechi and Nweke (2015) asserted that self-esteem involves positive or negative cognitive, behavioural, and emotional reactions. Nwankwo, Okechi and Nweke added that when individuals base their self-esteem on discrepancy, they are measuring the difference between what people see as their ideal self and their perceived self. The closer these two percepts are, the higher their self-esteem is posited to be. Self-esteem, which is one of the important and influential factors in the development of an advanced personality, is achieved in a particular social and cultural context and has implication for people's lives (Orth and Robins, 2014). Self-esteem could exert palpable influence on personal attributes of undergraduate students including their attributional styles.

Attributional styles can be defined as an individual's assessment of causes of actions and behaviours (Galvin and Cooper, 2006). Attributional style refers to an individual's consistent manner of evaluating the causes or effects of the positive and negative events that transpire in their life. In other words, attributional style could be positive or negative (Weiner, 2010). Weiner added that a positive or negative attributional style is one that tends to habitually explain the pleasant or unpleasant events due to a trait of the individual. Indeed, attributional styles manifest in the formal education process. The academic performance of students is believed to be greatly influenced by the probability and causes of their success and failure (Basturk and Yavuz, 2010). This is so, given that some students have the habit of linking their failures and successes to sundry factors which are not without attendant consequences. For instance an undergraduate student who performs poorly in a test is likely to link his/her poor performance to various factors ranging from the teaching style of the course lecturer, to test anxiety, poor motivation and even poor self-concept. The effect of such a poor performance in the test could either be a re-sit of the course or worse still, withdrawal from the programme. Most of the reasons that students attribute to their successes or failures can be classified along three casual dimensions viz: locus of causality, stability and controllability (Weiner, 2010). Buttressing the afore-mentioned point, attributional style can be defined along three continuums of internal vs. external factors (locus of control), stable vs. unstable factors (stability), and global vs. specific factors (controllability).

Locus of causality refers to the extent to which the cause of an event is triggered by an either internal or external factor (Weiner, 2010). The stability dimension considers causes in terms of their durability. A stable factor is one that survives the vagaries of time; one that is constant. Conversely, an unstable factor is a variable; one that changes with time. An example of a stable factor is ability while effort and luck are unstable factors. The last dimension, controllability, refers to the level of control a person has over a cause. Controllability can either be global or specific. A cause is said to be global if it is generalized by the person to affect him/her across situations over time. On the contrary, a cause is specific, if it is limited by the person to affect him/her in a particular situation. Attributional styles of undergraduate students may be a function of their performance in university courses such as General Studies (GS).

General Studies is a university requirement that must be satisfied before a student can be awarded his/her degree. The aim of the General Studies Programme is to expose students to courses of liberal education through which they can develop and expand their awareness of their social, cultural and natural environments. With the addition of this programme to the specialized courses being taken by the students, it is expected that the graduates of a university would go out better prepared to function in the society. General Studies cover a range of courses in Nigerian universities such as English language, logic and philosophy, Nigerian people's and culture among others. High achievement of student in these courses may make for their psychological well-being as it is a compulsory course students have to credit in the universities.

Ensuring the psychological well-being of undergraduate students is a critical concern of higher education sector. Improving psychological well-being is essential since the variable has been associated with other important variables such as self-esteem and attributional styles (Ameri and Bagheri, 2015). Some researchers (Sohrabi and Dizaji, 2019; Zhang et.al, 2013) examined the relationship between attributional styles and well-being. Some [Heigel, Stuewig and Tangney, 2010; Nwankwo et.al, 2015; Bruce and Larweh, 2017; and Onah, 2019] ascertained the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being. However, none of these researchers tried to predict psychological well-being of undergraduate students using the dual variables of attributional styles and self-esteem; it interests the researcher to accomplish that. Against this backdrop, the

researcher seeks to determine if attributional styles and self-esteem predict the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in Anambra State.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the nature of the regression equation for predicting psychological well-being of undergraduate students using attributional styles and self-esteem?
2. What is the proportion of variation in psychological well-being of undergraduate students that is accounted for by their attributional styles and self-esteem?
3. Which of the predictors better predicts psychological well-being of undergraduate students?

Hypotheses

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. The regression model does not significantly predict psychological well-being of undergraduate students.
2. Attributional styles does not significantly predict psychological well-being of undergraduate students.
3. Self-esteem does not significantly predict psychological well-being of undergraduate students.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg Transition Theory

The theory was propounded by Nancy Schlossberg in 1981. According to the Schlossberg Transition Theory, an individual transition can be categorized into three phases, namely (1) moving in, (2) moving through, and (3) moving out. Moving in is the process of leaving behind one's comfort zone and entering into a new one. Expectedly, this stage requires self-esteem. Moving through comes in the wake of the moving in process and this is where the day-to-day management begins. This process may be short (a two week seminar) or long (four years in the university) or it may be a lifetime (marriage). Additionally, the moving through process may necessitate the completion of and decision-making, as well as a developmental process. Again, this stage requires self-esteem. Moving out can be associated with the passing or end of the change or transition. In generic sense, the moving out process marks the beginning of a new moving in process. For example, graduation may indicate the moving out of phase from the university and starting a new job may be beginning of the moving in phase. Schlossberg identified four major sets of factors that influence a person's ability to cope with a transition known as the "4 S's": situation, self, support, and strategies. Interestingly, the afore-mentioned factors are attributional in nature.

During moving in, the undergraduates will try new things they experienced such as taking responsibility especially with regards to self-management and finance. They need to build new relationships with people they barely know. In the moving through a phase, the students will still be looking around and will try to adapt to new things. If the student feels comfortable with the new things that are experienced, the moving through phase will be 'traveled' positively and so on. At the moving through phase, the undergraduates are considered to have the ability (self-esteem) to adapt to the initial challenges. They are undergoing life and keeping up with the demands of the university. However, they are still experiencing various changes and challenges such as to maintain the dynamic relationships with other surrounding communities (peer, lecturer, etc.). The undergraduates will bring the knowledge, skills, and values gained through the first two-phase challenge into the moving out phase (attribution). In this phase, the undergraduates are no longer burdensome with the problems of the moving in and the moving through phases, rather, the self- preparation phase to graduation. When they enter the labour market, the phase moving in phase repeats in the context of new life.

This theory is of essence to this study given that a lot happens in these phases of life transition which could really affect the psychological well-being of undergraduate students. There is usually this belief that students will always find a way around whatever that comes their way, as a consequence, very little effort is put in to support and guide them through. Schlossberg's four major sets of factors that influence a person's ability to cope with a transition known as the "4 S's": situation, self, support, and strategies are attributional in nature. In the light of this, predicting psychological well-being of undergraduate students using attributional styles and

self-esteem emphasizes looking inwards to students' travails during the process of transition (albeit in their undergraduate level) in order to answer questions about their psychological well-being.

Varying Attributes of Psychological Wellbeing

Psychological well-being has been a subject of empirical investigation and theoretical evaluation. According to Hicdurmaz and Oz (2010), initial understanding of psychological well-being provided a depiction of the difference between positive and negative affect. In the assertion of Stallman (2017), psychological wellbeing is a diverse multidimensional concept, with exact components still unknown. In contrast, Kone (2014) posited that psychological well-being is a diverse multi-dimensional concept which develops via a combination of emotional regulation, personality characteristics; identity and life experience. In other words, the psychological well-being of a person is a blend of the extent to which one controls his/her emotions; his/her personality traits and by extension, the extent to which he/she has emerged victorious from life events. Interestingly, life events could be positive or negative. However, a healthy mental disposition towards life events in line personality characteristics could be a precursor to psychological well-being.

Psychological well-being is a person's capacity to make a discovery of all talents of a person which are derivable from the balance between positive and negative emotions and satisfaction with life (Durayappah, 2011). Psychological wellbeing is about individuals being happy and well, it is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively (Gude, 2009). Psychological wellbeing refers to a healthy mental state that is born out of one's satisfaction with the statusquo or acceptance of it. Psychological well-being of an undergraduate student can predispose them to function well as a student; a student that has attained psychological wellbeing is likely to go about his/her studies with a sense of satisfaction and happiness and improved academic performance will likely be a fait accompli. In the context of the current study, psychological wellbeing is the ability of a student to overcome feelings of depression, anxiety and stress so as to function well in school. Psychological wellbeing has often been used interchangeably various terms such as mental health, happiness, mood, affect, subjective well-being, quality of life, satisfaction with life, mental health, emotional health and well-being (Akin et al., 2009). However, the terms mental health and psychological well-being are ambiguous with varied measures and definitions (Gartoulla, Bell, Worsley and Davis, 2015). Positive psychology has advanced understanding by acknowledging that a mentally or psychologically healthy person is not just an individual who merely presents with an absence of negative psychological symptoms such as anxiety or depression. But rather, it recognizes that mental health or psychological well-being also encompasses protective factors and positive functioning such as high levels of resilience, high levels of social connections, and increased levels of hope (Cvetkovski, Reavley and Jorm, 2012, Sarkar and Fletcher, 2014, Roffey, 2015)

While psychological well-being is considered as the presence of protective factors beyond the mere absence of psychological ill health symptoms, psychological distress is generally considered as the presence of psychological symptoms indicative of poor mental health (Trpcevska, 2017). Psychological distress has been linked to increases in symptoms of anxiety, depression, substance use and personality disorders. These symptoms have to be experienced above a certain level in order to be considered as psychological distress. As such, symptoms of depression and anxiety in response to stress with a limited perceived ability to cope with the stress could be considered to be the characteristic of psychological distress (Deasy, Coughlan, Pironom, Jourdan and McNamara, 2014).

In order to better understand psychological well-being and distress, Antaramian (2015) used a dual factor mental health model, taking into consideration both psychopathology and psychological well-being to determine overall mental health. The dual factor model suggests that psychological well-being and psychological distress are two separate and distinct constructs which are highly correlated. Antaramian (2015) used the model to assess whether students differed in mental health profiles and academic success. She explored both psychological symptoms and psychological well-being in order to better understand college student performance. To arrive at this study, subjective well-being was defined as a combination of positive and negative affect (emotional components of subjective well-being) and life satisfaction (cognitive components of subjective well-being). On the other hand, psychological distress was defined as internalising symptoms (depression) and externalising symptoms (aggression). On the other hand, students' educational outcomes were

measured by a self-reported GPA score and a student engagement survey which involved subscales of academic engagement, peer engagement, faculty engagement, intellectual engagement, beyond class engagement of social connectedness and a feeling of connection to the wider university community. Antaramian (2015) found that participants fit into four distinct groups on the dual factor model of mental health. The first group, who were called well-adjusted consists of students indicating low levels of psychological symptoms and high levels of subjective well-being. On the other hand, the second group called “distressed” comprises of high levels of psychological symptoms and low levels of subjective well-being. The third group who displayed high levels of psychological symptoms and high levels of subjective well-being was called ambivalent. This goes to show that the psychological distress or negative psychological symptoms alone do not necessarily indicate an incapacity for life satisfaction and subjective well-being. This implies that negative psychological symptoms can co-occur with protective factors and positive well-being. The final group called the at-risk group showed low levels of psychological symptoms and low levels of subjective well-being. The observation of Stallman (2010) indicated that psychological distress is associated with lower levels of academic achievement. In the study, Stallman (2010) observed that the factors linked to psychological well-being and distress among American undergraduate psychology students showed that optimism was the main predictor of positive psychological well-being and decreased levels of psychological distress, followed by health as a value. This goes to show that the more an individual values their health, the more likely they are to engage in health promoting behaviours and the less likely they are to engage in health compromising behaviours. In due consideration of the foregoing, ascertaining the psychological wellbeing of students has become a worthwhile venture.

Attributional Style and Psychological Wellbeing of Undergraduate Students

According to Weiner (1985, 2010), attributional styles for success and failure vary along the dimensions of stability, locus of causality (internal/external), and controllability (global/specific). Weiner added that that causal dimension (locus of causality, controllability, and stability) is central to expectancies of future occurrences and is therefore, the most vital element in the use of attribution process to predict psychological wellbeing.

The locus of causality dimension relates to the difference between factors inside an individual and factors outside the individual (environment factors). Locus of causality was defined as referring to whether the cause was something about the attributor (internal) or outside the attributor (external). Illustratively, an undergraduate student who has a good mastery (ability) of English language and prepared well (effort) for an English language test read extensively may record failure in the test. Here, the internal factors (ability and effort) ought to have led to success in the test. However, his/her failure in the test could be attributed to external factors such as the behaviour of the examiner, difficulty of the exam or the marking scheme of the examiner. Internal and external factors are capable of affecting his psychological wellbeing. It can be deduced that success and failure are great influencers of psychological wellbeing of an average undergraduate student.

The dimension of stability speaks to the extent to which the cause is constant overtime. If the cause of an event remains the same overtime, such an event is said to be stable; otherwise, it is considered unstable. For example, ability as previously noted is normally considered as stable overtime while effort is seen as unstable, although they are all internal factors. Among the external causes, difficulty of the test may be perceived as unstable since it changes overtime while or the marking scheme could be seen as a stable cause as it is relatively constant. If an undergraduate student attributes success to stable or constant causes, he/she will have a high expectation of future success. In the same vein, attribution of failure to unstable or variable causes will sustain expectancy of future success. On the contrary, if an undergraduate student attributes success to unstable causes (good luck) and failure to stable causes (inability), it will have the opposite impact on their expectations and by extension, their psychological wellbeing. Stable or unstable causes of failure in a test could either enhance psychological wellbeing or otherwise.

Controllability represents the extent to which a cause is under the control of a person. In other words, a controllable cause is subject to change by someone, either the actor or other people. It could be global or specific. A cause is global if it is open to generalization by the individual as it affects him/her across situations over time. In contrast, a cause is specific, if it is narrowed down to the individual as affecting him/her in a particular situation. For instance, if an undergraduate student records poor performance a spelling test and

adopts a global attribution, he/she will attribute his/her poor performance to lack of ability. On the other hand, if this same student was to adopt a more specific approach, he/she may appreciate that his/her performance in the spelling test was poor, yet he will attribute his/her performance to lack of spelling ability.

Self-Esteem and Psychological Wellbeing of Undergraduate Students

During the formative early years of a child's life, parents have a significant influence on self-esteem and can be considered a main source of positive and negative experiences a child will have. Unconditional love from parents helps a child develop a stable sense of care and respect. These feelings translate into later effects on self-esteem as the child gets older (OrthandRobbins, 2014). One can conjecture that students in university who have high self-esteem tend to have loving and supportive parents who care for them and factor in their opinions and feelings in the decision-making process.

Much as some individuals may outwardly exhibit great self-esteem, the underlying reality may be just the opposite: the apparent self-esteem is indicative of their heightened fear of anti-feats and the fragility of their self-esteem (Hicdurmaz, 2011). More so, they may try to blame others for the poor self-esteem. Chavez and Heatherton (2014) noted that for a person whose "self-esteem is contingent", success is "not extra sweet", but "failure is extra bitter".

The levels of self-esteem in the academic/professional, social and physical areas have been found to have a direct relationship with all psychological well-being dimensions (Morales-Rodríguez et al, 2020). Therefore, Morales-Rodríguez et al. added that university students who have a good concept of themselves, both physically and in their studies and social relationships, appear to have a higher level of psychological well-being. According to Sánchez-López et al. (2015), self-esteem constitutes one of the elements that determines the so-called emotional intelligence profile and it is determined that positive relationships existed between self-esteem and subjective psychological well-being and material psychological well-being. Likewise, Fernández-Zabala et al. (2015) observed direct correlations between some self-concept dimensions and the satisfaction with life variable in university students.

According to Nwankwo et.al (2015), undergraduate students with low self-esteem, fear success and gratifications even when they love them because it contradicts their self-image and exposes them to situations in which they have to test themselves over and over again. Nwankwo et.al added that this explains why students with high self-esteem and good psychological well-being are desirous of success while those with low self-esteem are focused on their fear of failure. Low self-esteem among undergraduate students can however be improved upon via the development of their personality. That way, their psychological wellbeing can be enhanced. It can be inferred that high self-esteem has the tendency of improving the psychological well-being of a student. High self-esteem can put a student in good stead to study hard with the greater conviction that success will be the logical consequence. On the other hand, low self-esteem has a way of limiting the motivation of an average student to strive towards success and worse still, their psychological wellbeing will be at the receiving end.

METHOD

The present study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of all the 18, 326 second year undergraduate students for the 2021/2022 academic session in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam in Anambra State. The sample for the study consisted of 720 second year undergraduate students for the 2021/2022 academic session obtained through multi-stage sampling procedure. Three sets of questionnaire 'Psychological Well-being Questionnaire (PWQ), Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ) and Self-Esteem Scale (SES) were used for data collection. PWQ was adopted from Ryff (1989) Scales of Psychological Well-Being. It consists of 18 items made up of series of statements reflecting the six areas of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Respondents will rate statements on a scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. ASQ was adapted from Vispoel and Austin (1991) success/failure attribution scale. ASQ is a 16-item questionnaire that measures

students' explanatory style (positive versus negative) about their success or failure in a particular course. Imitating Weiner (2010), categories of internal and external dimensions were given as the reason underlying their success or failure in that course. These include: luck, task difficulty, teacher and parents (external factors) and ability, effort, interest and strategy used (Internal factors). SES was adopted from Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale. Self-Esteem Scale is a 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be uni-dimensional. All items will be answered using a 4-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The range of score for positive statements were weighted as 4, 3, 2, and 1 for SA-SD respectively, while negative statements were weighted 1, 2, 3 and 4 for SA-SD respectively. The instruments for data collection were validated by three experts, two from Measurement and Evaluation, the other from educational psychology all in the Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instruments were established using Cronbach Alpha Method and the alpha co-efficient got were 0.82, 0.80 for and 0.84 for ASQ, SEQ and PWQ respectively. Direct delivery approach I hope of retrieving a greater chunk of the distributed questionnaires. However, after the questionnaire distribution, only a total of 635 questionnaires were retrieved and onwardly used for data analysis. Statistical procedure used for data analysis was multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

The bivariate correlations are presented in table 1. The size of the correlations shows that the data meets the assumptions of noncollinearity among predictors. As suggests by Field (2018), the correlations between the predictors should not be greater than 0.80.

Table 1 Pearson's Correlations of Predictors (Attributional Styles and Self-esteem)

		Success Attribution (External)	Success Attribution (Internal)	Failure Attribution (External)	Failure Attribution (Internal)
Success Attribution (External)	Pearson Correlation	1	.665**	.446**	.573**
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	653	653	653	653
Success Attribution (Internal)	Pearson Correlation	.665**	1	.376**	.448**
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	653	653	653	653
Failure Attribution (External)	Pearson Correlation	.446**	.376**	1	.626**
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	653	653	653	653
Failure Attribution (Internal)	Pearson Correlation	.573**	.448**	.626**	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	653	653	653	653

Research Question One: What is the nature of the regression equation for predicting psychological well-being of undergraduate students using attributional styles and self-esteem?

Table 2 Coefficients of Equation for Predicting Undergraduates’ Psychological Well-being Using Attributional Styles (n=653)

Model	Unstandardized B	Std Error	Standardized β
Constant	40.124	1.921	
Success Attribution (External)	0.013	0.074	0.010
Success Attribution (Internal)	0.001	0.051	0.002
Failure Attribution (External)	0.051	0.045	0.056
Failure Attribution (Internal)	0.090	0.063	0.079
Self-esteem	0.129	0.057	0.089

The data in table 2 displays the coefficients of the multiple regression equation using attributional styles and self-esteem as predictors of psychological well-being.

The nature of this equation can be described as shown below:

The equation indicates that for every one unit increase in each of the undergraduates’ attributional styles [External Attribution of Success (X_1), Internal Attribution of Success (X_2), External Attribution of Failure (X_3) and Internal Attribution of Failure (X_4)], psychological well-being (Y) increases by 0.013, 0.001, 0.051 and 0.090 respectively. Furthermore, for every one unit increase in undergraduates’ self-esteem, their psychological well-being increases by 0.129.

Research Question 2: What is the proportion of variation in psychological well-being of undergraduate students that is accounted for by their attributional styles and self-esteem?

Table 3 Model Summary of Proportion of Variance in Undergraduates’ Psychological Well-being accounted for the Variance in their Attributional Styles and Self-esteem (n=653)

Model	R	R ²	% of Variance	Std. Error
1*	0.137	0.019	1.9%	2.953
2**	0.163	0.027	2.7%	2.943

*Attributional Styles only *Attributional Styles and Self-esteem

Table 3 presents the summary of two models of multiple regressions. The first model included only the attributional styles while the second model had both attributional styles and self-esteem as predictors of psychological well-being. The R² for the two models were 0.019 and 0.027 respectively. When converted to percentage, the 1st model using only attributional styles accounted for 1.9% of the variance in undergraduates’ psychological well-being while the 2nd model using both attributional styles and self-esteem accounted for 2.7% of the variance in psychological well-being.

Research Question 3: Which of the predictors better predicts psychological well-being of undergraduate students?

The result for answering research question 3 was drawn from Table 2.

Table 2 Coefficients of Equation for Predicting Undergraduates' Psychological Well-being Using Attributional Styles (n=653)

Model	Unstandardized <i>B</i>	Std Error	Standardized β
Constant	40.124	1.921	
Success Attribution (External)	0.013	0.074	0.010
Success Attribution (Internal)	0.001	0.051	0.002
Failure Attribution (External)	0.051	0.045	0.056
Failure Attribution (Internal)	0.090	0.063	0.079
Self-esteem	0.129	0.057	0.089

As displayed in the table, the standardized coefficients for attributional styles ranged from 0.001 to 0.090 indicating that among the attributional styles, internal attribution of success was the worse predictor of psychological well-being among the undergraduates whereas external attribution of failure predicted psychological well-being better.

From the perspective of the whole model, self-esteem was a better predictor of psychological well-being among undergraduates than any attributional styles as shown by its unstandardized coefficient = 0.129 which was greater than all the coefficients.

Hypothesis One: The regression model does not significantly predict psychological well-being of undergraduate students.

Table 3 Test of Significance of Multiple Regression Analysis with Undergraduates' attributional styles and self-esteem as Predictors of their Psychological Well-being

Model	<i>R</i>	R^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i> -value	Decision
2	0.163	0.027	5.110	.024	Significant

As shown in Table 3, undergraduates' attributional styles and their self-esteem significantly predicted their psychological well-being, $F= 5.110$, $p<0.05$. Considering that the *p*-value was less than .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Attributional styles does not significantly predict psychological well-being of undergraduate students.

Table 4 Test of Significance of Regression Coefficients of Undergraduates Attributional Styles and Self-esteem as Predictors of their Grades in Psychological Well-being

Model		Unstandardized <i>B</i>	Std Error	Standardized β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value	Decision
Constant		40.124	1.921				
Success (External)	Attribution	0.013	0.074	0.010	0.173	0.863	NS*
Success (Internal)	Attribution	0.001	0.051	0.002	0.029	0.977	NS
Failure (External)	Attribution	0.051	0.045	0.056	1.118	0.264	NS
Failure (Internal)	Attribution	0.090	0.063	0.079	1.419	0.156	NS
Self-esteem		0.129	0.057	0.089	2.260	0.024	S*

*NS = Not Significant; S = Significant

The results presented in Table 4 show that all undergraduates' attributional styles were not significant predictors of their psychological well-being, *t*-values = 0.173, 0.029, 1.118 and 1.419; and *p*-values (0.863, 0.977, 0.264 and 0.156) were greater than 0.05 level of significance. Since the *p*-values were greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis 3: Self-esteem does not significantly predict psychological well-being of undergraduate students. **The result for answering research question 3 was drawn from Table 4.**

Table 4 Test of Significance of Regression Coefficients of Undergraduates Attributional Styles and Self-esteem as Predictors of their Grades in Psychological Well-being

Model		Unstandardized <i>B</i>	Std Error	Standardized β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value	Decision
Constant		40.124	1.921				
Success (External)	Attribution	0.013	0.074	0.010	0.173	0.863	NS*
Success (Internal)	Attribution	0.001	0.051	0.002	0.029	0.977	NS
Failure (External)	Attribution	0.051	0.045	0.056	1.118	0.264	NS
Failure (External)	Attribution	0.090	0.063	0.079	1.419	0.156	NS
Self-esteem		0.129	0.057	0.089	2.260	0.024	S*

*NS = Not Significant; S = Significant

Table 4 presents the relevant results for reporting hypothesis 3. As shown in Table 4, undergraduates' self-esteem was a significant predictor of their psychological well-being, $t = 2.260$, $p < 0.05$. Since the p -value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that of the two variables of attributional styles and self esteem, self esteem accounted for a greater percentage of variance in undergraduate students' psychological well-being and as such is a better predictor of undergraduate students' psychological well-being. This was ascertained from the revelations in the data analysis which indicated the unstandardized coefficient of self esteem to be 0.129. This coefficient supersedes other coefficients obtained for the varying attributional styles. As indicated by the regression equation, this implies that for every one unit increase in each of the undergraduates' self esteem, psychological well-being increases by 0.129 units. Accordingly, the psychological well-being of undergraduate students is best enhanced when they have positive self esteem. This is then followed by attributional styles. In comparison with self esteem, the unstandardized coefficients for attributional styles ranged from 0.001 to 0.090. While external attribution of success has 0.013, internal attribution has 0.00; external attribution of failure has 0.051 while internal attribution of failure has 0.090. However, self-esteem was a better predictor of psychological well-being among undergraduates than any attributional styles as shown by its unstandardized coefficient = 0.129 which was greater than all the coefficients in the attributional styles. The findings of the study further concurs with Nwankwo et.al (2015) who averred that perceived self-esteem and psychological well-being were more related. In the light of this, self esteem thus seems to be of high relevance to students' psychological well-being. Under this consideration, undergraduate students with low self-esteem could fear success and gratifications even when they love them because it contradicts their self-image and exposes them to situations in which they have to test themselves over and over again. This explains why students with high self-esteem and good psychological well-being could be desirous of success unlike their counterparts who could be gripped with fear of failure.

The findings of the study further revealed that undergraduates' attributional styles and their self-esteem significantly predicted their psychological well-being. The deduction from the foregoing is that as far as undergraduate students' psychological well-being is concerned, self-esteem and attributional styles are significant predictors. The findings of the study agree with Zhang et.al (2013) who in his study revealed that both dispositional optimism and attributional styles were significantly correlated with subjective well-being. Sohrabi and Dizaji (2019) who in their study found out that attributional style, as an internal dimension, had a significant relationship with general health in the good metabolic control group of their study. This explains the import of attributional styles to general health and well-being. On the other hand, Nwankwo et.al (2015) who in his study showed that perceived self-esteem and psychological well-being were related and student athletes with high self-esteem have high psychological wellbeing while their counterparts with low self-esteem have low psychological wellbeing. This was earlier affirmed by Heigel, Stuewig and Tangney (2010) who in their study indicated that impaired autonomy was negatively associated with low self-esteem and deteriorated physical health concerns upon entry to jail and prior to release or transfer. They also revealed that inmates could develop better capacity to demonstrate more flexible and adaptive thinking than inmates that are pessimists as they would be able to pay more attention to the most useful information available and show evidence of greater flexibility.

The findings of the study revealed that external attribution of failure in relation to other attributional styles accounted for a greater percentage of variance in undergraduate students' psychological well-being. This is visible in the regression equation which indicated that for every one unit increase in each of the undergraduates' external attribution of success (X1), psychological well-being increases by 0.013 units while for internal attribution of Success (X2) psychological well-being increases by 0.001 units. On the other hand, for every one unit increase in each of undergraduate students' external attribution of failure (X3), psychological well-being increases by 0.051 unit while for internal attribution of failure (X4), psychological well-being (Y) increases by 0.090 units. This indicates that among the attributional styles, internal attribution of success was the worse predictor of psychological well-being among the undergraduates whereas external attribution of failure

predicted psychological well-being better. The deduction thus here is that when undergraduate students' attribute their failure to external factors; it tends to reflect more on their psychological well-being. This idea explains the fact that people find it difficult to blame themselves for whatever that befalls them as they are quick to ascribe it to external factors. It is in this ascription of failure to external factors that they maintain a certain level of sanity and psychological well-being. The findings of the study further revealed that attributional styles on its own does not significantly predict the psychological well-being of undergraduate students. Put differently, as far as the psychological well-being of undergraduate students is concerned, attributional styles is not a significant predictor. The finding of the study contradicts the observation of Zhang et al (2013) who averred that that both dispositional optimism and attributional styles were significantly correlated with well-being. This is not to distance the effect of attribution to students' academic pursuit as it is a given that students do make attributions regarding their success or failure in academic pursuits. In the light of this, students' attribution of their failures is of essence in their academic pursuit. However, as regards their psychological well-being as the given of this study reveals, attributional style is not a significant predictor.

The findings of the study revealed that for every one unit increase in undergraduates' self-esteem, their psychological well-being increases by 0.129 units. This stood to be the highest recorded coefficient of the variables of study. The hypothesis testing further revealed that undergraduates' self-esteem was a significant predictor of their psychological well-being, $t = 2.260$, $p < 0.05$. The deduction of the above is that students stand a higher chance of maintaining psychological well-being when they have a positive self esteem. Self esteem as a wholesome defence mechanism thus helps in protection of individuals from depression during challenging periods by maintaining their positive self-perception and having a good psychological well-being. The findings of the study aligns with Azad, Shariat, Farhadi and Shahidi (2018) who revealed among other things that the components of academic self-esteem can significantly predict the psychological well-being of the disabled caregivers. Evidently, self-esteem being a fundamental psychological need serves as a 'psychological buffer' against debilitating circumstances. The findings of the study further concurs with Bruce and Larweh (2017) who in their study revealed that a significant positive correlation exists between self-esteem, needs satisfaction and psychological well-being among prison inmates. This is understandable given that psychological well-being revolves around various dimensions such as self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth and purpose in life. As such in the academic sphere, there is a high tendency for undergraduate students with positive psychological wellbeing to be cognitively active and emotionally stable to record successes in their academic pursuit.

Conclusion

The psychological well-being of undergraduate students has become a matter of great attention. Students' psychological well-being has been called to question in recent times owing to increasing cases of depression and suicidal ideation, dropout rate/dropout tendency, drug abuse and a host of others. These situations could also be posing a number of questions to the self esteem of undergraduate students even as they do make consistent evaluative judgement on issues surrounding their academic success or failures. The outcome of these judgements could possibly influence the psychological well-being of students necessitating an inquiry into the prediction of psychological well-being using attributional styles and self-esteem. Based on the analysis of data, it was concluded that attributional styles and self-esteem significantly predicted psychological well-being of undergraduate students. However, self esteem accounted for a greater proportion of variance in the students' psychological well-being more than attributional styles. Additionally, of all the attributional styles, only external attribution of failure in relation to other attributional styles accounted for a greater percentage of variance in undergraduate students' psychological well-being. Therefore, the better undergraduate students can manage their self esteem and external attribution of failure, the better their psychological well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Undergraduate lecturers should be conscious of students' expression of their self esteem and attributional styles. Paying such attention will help identify those that may need further attention and psychological need services.
2. Federal Government should ensure the employment and deployment of counsellors and psychologists to universities of the Nigerian federation. Such a step will help ensure that the psychological needs of undergraduate students are attended to especially as it concerns their self esteem and attributional styles.
3. Special care should be taken by school administrators to ensure that external factors militating against students' psychological well-being are taken care of. The students should also be heard when they make inputs or complaints to the school management. Such a step will enhance their self esteem and n turn their psychological well-being.
4. University administration should also ensure that conducive school environment is provided for the students, including classroom, laboratories, libraries etc. Such a step will ensure students' psychological well-being.
5. Undergraduate students should be encouraged to seek psychological help from lecturers and counsellors when necessary. This will aid psychotically well-being.

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