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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Nigerian Youth and Safety Consciousness: Does Level of Education and Sense of Self Matter?

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Abstract

The study was conducted to determine safety consciousness among Nigerian youth based on educational level and individual's sense of self. The purpose was to ascertain whether the level of youth education and how the youth's subjective perception of themselves will influence how the youth respond to insecurity situations. A total of two hundred respondents drawn from the general public completed the Security Consciousness Questionnaire and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. Multiple regression analysis was conducted on the data, and the result showed that sense of self significantly predicted safety consciousness while educational level failed to influence the dependent variable. Implications and recommendations are discussed.

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Introduction: -

Over the years, the world has witnessed a disturbing rise of security challenges, and Nigeria as a Nation is not left out. Security situations and safety issues are topical issues in today's Nigeria (Eme & Onyishi, 2011), as almost every day, the media reports a case of insecurity (Yusuf, 2019). The global community is currently bedeviled with the experience of a disturbing trend of insecurity implicated in the continued rise in violent attacks on individuals, religious, and government institutions. Research suggests that these crimes are mounted by a broad range of lawless persons motivated by ethnic, religious, tribal, political, and personal interests (Ugwuegede et al., 2019). The security problems in many parts of Nigeria are destroying existing infrastructure and preventing a peaceful environment for developing other infrastructure and a safe environment for economic activities by individuals (Umana, 2019). Onokhuru (2010) noted that the scope of insecurity covers ethnic militia activities, kidnapping, vandalism, boundary and land disputes, armed banditry, bombing, and political violence. Furthermore, Adeyemi and Olotu (2020) stated that some of these insecurities include socio-economic vices that are prominent among the youth and students in tertiary institutions.

The youth account for a large percentage of Nigeria's population figure, representing a vital and dynamic force in Nigerian society (Olaleye, 2010). However, young people have mostly been the victim of violent situations in Nigeria and beyond. The impact of violent crime among children and young people supersedes that of infectious disease, cancer, or congenital disabilities (Michigan Medicine, 2019). These youngsters regularly find themselves in a violent virtual space that negatively influences their daily real life (Tripathi, 2017). Indeed, individuals within the youth age bracket are always at the center of violent situations. Violence is not a virtue, but there is little or nothing that deters the youth from it in many African states

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Previous studies have implicated young people in the scourge of insecurities (Otabor & Olaniyi, 2011). Accordingly, Ukoha (2013) noted that many violent acts are already taking place in our society, and youths are involved in most cases. In other words, the youth are at the center of violent activities, which means that younger individuals are readily caught up in the violent situation as perpetrators or victims. In several instances of violent events, people within the youth age have been implicated as actors, and in most occasions, they act willfully, while in most, they are used or coerced.

Safety consciousness in this study refers to the state of being aware, knowing, and the ability to recognize and avoid acts capable of causing harm to one's self and others. In other words, a lack of security consciousness means that one is not aware of the insecurities in our society or that he/she is ignorant of the consequences, punishments, or the after-effects of willfully indulging or being used to perpetuate a violent crime against innocent people. However, elements of security consciousness such as being vigilant, reacting immediately to threats, identifying strangers with a threatening look, detecting abduction plans, and taking appropriate decisions (Yusuf, 2019) are among the expected responses capable of saving the youth from becoming the victim of violent events. However, Adeyemi and Olotu (2020) noted that most youths have low-security consciousness.

The sense of self is a psychological concept referring to how individuals think about and view their personality, beliefs, and purpose within their socio-world. According to Ylvisaker (2006), the sense of self includes the roles, attributes, behaviors, and associations that people consider most important about themselves. In this study, a sense of self is operationalized as an individual's appraisal and perception of him or herself in a positive or negative direction. Therefore, a sense of self refers to one's self-esteem. Every individual has a certain belief about who they are and what they can do. However, behavioral responses and emotional expression are subject to an individual's evaluation of the totality of the self. For instance, people who are used or hired to commit violent acts have certain judgments about who they are and their purposes. Baumeister et al., (2003) associated poor self-evaluation with aggression and general negativity towards others. Kernis (2000) linked a high sense of self with an adaptive and secured feeling of self-satisfaction.

Furthermore, level of education denotes one's academic qualification ranging from Master's degree holders down to no educational background. It is suggested that individuals with lower educational levels may be more prone to violent situations than those with a higher level of education. For example, the level of one's education may be significant in measuring violent actions and unsecured unawareness regarding insecurities within. The present study assumed that how a person perceives him or herself together with one's educational background determines how a person responds to insecurity around him or her. The insecurity in Nigeria is increasing rapidly, and the younger citizens are perceived to be at the center of the violent situation as victims and perpetrators. We explored the sense of self and an individual's educational level as probable factors that could influence safety consciousness among the youth.

Research question

The primary objective of the study is to provide the answer to the following questions:

1. Would sense of self influence the safety consciousness of the youth
2. Would level of education influence the safety consciousness of the youth

Hypothesis

In this study, we formulated two hypotheses

Firstly, we hypothesized that individuals with a high sense of self would be more safety-conscious than those with a low sense of self. Secondly, we assumed that level of education would predict safety consciousness among the youth.

Method: -

The research adopted a cross-sectional survey. The population of this study includes young people within the age range of 18 – 35. A total of two hundred (n = 200) youth were randomly selected as the research participants.

Measures: -

Safety consciousness was assessed using a 15-item Security Consciousness Questionnaire (SCQ) designed to determine an individual's level of security consciousness with demographic information. The instrument is answered

in a four-point Likert response format scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree with the higher scores determining high-security consciousness and lower score meaning low-security consciousness. Also, sense of self was measured using the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (R-SES)

Result: -

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the influence of sense of self and level of education on youth's safety consciousness. It is discovered from the analysis that the sense of self significantly predicted youth's safety consciousness. $F(1,212), 61.036, P<.000$. This result indicates that those with a high sense of self show more safety consciousness than those with a low sense of self. The result, however, confirms the first hypothesis that individuals with a high sense of self will be more safety-conscious than those with a low sense of self academic. However, the analysis did not favor our second assumption that education level will predict safety consciousness among the youth. $F(1,207), 31.232, P>.146$. Meaning that youth's academic status does not influence safety consciousness.

Table 1: - Table showing the result of the multiple regression analysis conducted to determine the influence of sense of self and level of education on safety consciousness.

	B	95% CI for B		SEB	β	R^2	t	Sig
		LL	UL					
Constant	2.357	2.086	2.610	.134			17.587	.000
Sense of self	-.476	-.596	-.396	.061	-.476	.222	-7.831	.000
Level of education	-.088	-.208	.32	.061	-.088	.230	-1.448	.146

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = Confident Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination. * $P<.000$. ** $p>.146$

Discussion: -

The present study was conducted to determine the influence of the sense of self and educational level on the safety consciousness of individuals within the youth age bracket in Nigeria. The data were analyzed using a multiple regression model, and the findings implicated a sense of self in youth safety consciousness. This revelation indicates that perception of one's trait, belief, and purpose in life significantly predicts one's consciousness towards safety and insecurity. The result correlates with a previous study (e.g., Ugwuogede et al. 2019), which found a correlation between self-esteem and security consciousness. This outcome could be attributed to the relevance associated with a high sense of self. A positive sense of the self permits an individual to examine their surroundings and the things they encounter carefully. An individual's sense of self is directly associated with subjective feelings and personal identity. Youth's overall perception of themselves is essential because it lays the foundation for all other parts of their lives. A positive sense of self increases self-confidence and determination, while a negative sense of self produces weakness and negativity. Perhaps, a disrupted sense of self is thought to represent a platform for the experience of psychiatric symptoms, social cognitive deficits, and other abnormalities of consciousness (Moe & Docherty, 2014).

On the other hand, the multiple regression analysis found no statistical significance between educational level and youth safety consciousness, which means that the young person's academic learning exposure does not matter in safety awareness. This entails that whether educated or not is not a vital factor in observing safety measures.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study indicate that the trend of youth involvement in violent acts and the youth position as the victim is rooted among all other factors, the individual's perception of the totality of their self and excepting educational background. The study's findings also have implications for the security agencies, policymakers, non-governmental agencies, and other stakeholders interested in understanding the factors responsible for youth participation in violent acts. Furthermore, it enables youth advocates to develop strategies aimed at strengthening youth belief about themselves.

Conclusion and Recommendations: -

The study has established that youth's appraisal of who they are and their purpose in life has implications in their response to Nigeria's insecurities. The study concludes that the sense of self is an essential psychological phenomenon capable of shaping the youth's alertness to their safety relating to violent acts. The study recommends that policies and decisions aim to enhance youth's sense of self as a strategy for reducing involvement in violent situations. Also, government and relevant bodies should constantly reach out to the youth, irrespective of their educational background. Also, youth empowerment programs should be restructured or redesigned and focused on actions capable of adjusting and maintaining youth's belief about themselves. This is helpful as our sense of self is not inborn but develops over time through series of causes which include our interactions with the social environment.

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