

SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A PREDICTOR OF SOCIAL WELL-BEING AMONG FINE ARTS STUDENTS IN ENUGU STATE

Romanus E. Nebo*

Department of Fine Arts Federal College of Education, Eha Amufu

***Corresponding Author: -**

ABSTRACT

Students' well-being has attracted considerable attention in the past few decades. The present study examined the variation in social well-being among fine arts students in Enugu state based on social support. Three hundred and twenty-seven students enrolled in three public tertiary institutions in Enugu State, Nigeria, participated in the study. The respondents were randomly pooled from the fine arts departments in the selected institutions. The respondents completed a self-report measure of the Social Well-being Scale, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). The regression model showed that social support statistically significantly predicted social well-being, $F(1, 325) = 32.305, p < 0.05$. Furthermore, the R^2 indicated that the predictor variable contributed 24.9% of the variance in the social well-being of fine arts students in Enugu state. The study concludes that social support is an essential determinant of social well-being.

KEYWORDS: *Social well-being, social support, fine arts, students*

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Research in the modern education system is geared towards mental health issues and students' overall well-being. Numerous studies in different contexts have underscored the importance of mental health in students, with well-being being an essential component in students' academic success. Indeed, the social environment is described with increasing social issues in diverse contexts. Indeed, students are trapped in the growing social challenges experienced in every society. The concern for the trend has triggered the quest for the development of programs and research to address the well-being of young individuals. Thus, research on social well-being has increased considerably (Alkire et al., 2020).

However, research has indicated that various variables contribute significantly to the variations in the social well-being of individuals. Thus, the present study was propelled to investigate the role of social support on the social well-being of fine arts students in Enugu state.

Social well-being is an aspect of well-being reflecting a multidimensional construct describing an individual's capacities and social competencies. Social well-being encompasses a person's cognitive, evaluative dimension reflecting social satisfaction and an emotional evaluation characterized by positive and negative affect. Positive social well-being has been linked to significant life outcomes. For example, evidence suggests that contented individuals are more likely to experience more significant social rewards, better work outcomes, better coping abilities, better immune systems, more cooperative, pro-social, and charitable, and live longer than not contented individuals. Poor social well-being has been generally linked to a wide range of adverse consequences in adolescence and adulthood. For instance, undesirable child-rearing and reduced quality parenting or school relationships place youngsters at risk of poor mental health. Based on the positive outcomes associated with social well-being, it is crucial to understand the factors that influence well-being.

Some intimations suggest that close contacts and a personal sense of social relationships are essential for well-being (Feeney & Collins, 2015; Poots & Cassidy, 2020). In particular, individuals with close social relationships are likely to report higher levels of well-being and flourishing (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Gerson, 2018). Thus, perceived social support contributes to people's perception of themselves and their world. According to research, not having a network of meaningful interactions throughout life predicts mortality more than other lifestyle choices like smoking or physical exercise. (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). Literature abounds that provides strong evidence of the relationship between social support and social well-being. It helps individuals reduce the amount of stress experienced and acts as a buffer for individuals facing stressful life situations.

Social support could serve as a defensive

factor and play an essential role in social well-being among adolescents (Emadpoor et al., 2016). Thus, social support provides the capacity needed for adolescents for social well-being in later adulthood (Ratelle et al., 2013; Tian et al., 2013). Social support entails the perception of being cared for by others and having a reliable network of friends in everyday situations or specific moments of crisis. It can be perceived from three sources: friends, family, and significant others. Social support is also discussed as the frequency of support actions provided by others (Santini et al., 2015), which can be understood as the subjective feeling of being supported (Santini et al., 2015). Additionally, the type of support can be emotional, instrumental, evaluative, and informative.

According to research, there is a positive relationship between perceived social support and social well-being, making it an effective protective mechanism that can increase social well-being by preserving pleasant emotional feelings and alleviating stress. (Chu et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2014; Thoits, 2011). The different facets of hedonic well-being (life satisfaction, positive and negative effects) can be predicted by various aspects of perceived social support (Siedlecki et al., 2014). Also, perceived social support mediates the relationship between stress and social well-being (Poots & Cassidy, 2020).

Research has linked perceived social support to well-being measures. Some researchers have found negative or no consequences of perceived social support on well-being (Lakey et al., 2010; Lepore et al., 2008). Differences in outcomes can be derived from how perceived social support and well-being are conceptualized and operationalized (Siedlecki et al., 2014). Research on these issues has also focused on cross-sectional measures. For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate how the student's perception of social support affects their social well-being, considering the process that they undergo during university entry and the empirical evidence that newly admitted students have the lowest levels of social well-being (Brandy et al., 2015; van der Zanden et al., 2018).

The field of fine arts in Nigeria's educational system describes a discipline that uses skill or imagination to create aesthetic experiences. There are insinuations that fine arts students are generally married to their artistic creations, suggesting a possible decline in social connectedness. Importantly, social well-being has important implications for their creativity and lifestyle. For example, fine arts students encounter peculiar social challenges relative to social isolation. This situation might impact their social well-being. As such, educators need clear empirical evidence of the association between social support and social well-being of the fine arts students in Enugu state.

Hypothesis: *Social support will significantly predict the social well-being of fine arts students.*

Method

Participants

The participants for the present study were students enrolled in the fine arts department in three public tertiary institutions in the Enugu State of Nigeria. The participants comprised male and female students in the five major fine and applied arts domains encompassing painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry.

measures

The social well-being scale

The social well-being scale by Keyes (1998) measured social well-being. The scale includes 33 items measuring social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social coherence, and social actualization. It is scored on a 7-point scale, from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. In this research, only the overall score of social well-being was considered. Keyes (1998) reported a Cronbach alpha of .90 for the total scale using the Italian sample and .88 using the American and Iranian samples. Perhaps, the scale has been modified, validated, and previously used in the Nigerian context, and a reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained (Effiong et al., 2017). Thus, the present study adopted the modified version of the scale.

The multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS)

The multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al., 1988) is quantitatively evaluating an individual's perception of the social support obtained from three principal avenues, namely: Family, consisting of items 3, 4, 8, and 11; Friends, consisting of items 6, 7, 9, and 12; and Significant others, consisting of items 1, 2, 5, and 10 (Zimet et al., 1988). The scale is a subjectively completed brief instrument composed of 12 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The total score ranges from 12 to 84, with higher scores reflective of more excellent perceived social support. The scale has been previously validated and used on Nigerian samples (e.g., Akosile et al., 2018; Aliche et al., 2020; Aloba et al., 2019; Eze et al., 2021; Folayan et al., 2020; Mohammad et al., 2015; Nwoke et al., 2017; Ogunbajo et al., 2020; Vincent-Onabajo et al., 2015; 2016).

Procedure

Fine arts students in Enugu state were recruited as participants from various departments in three tertiary institutions located in the state. The researcher sought permission from the departmental authorities, including the representatives of the departments used for the study. The researcher approached many male and female undergraduates between February and April 2022 and asked whether they were current students of the department. The 342 individuals who identified themselves as current students of the University of Nigeria, the institute of management and technology, and the Enugu state college of education technical were considered qualified for the study. These students (342) were then asked to participate in a survey to understand their social well-being and predicting factors. Of the 342 students, 336 consented to participate and were thus handed a questionnaire that included the Social Well-being Scale and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). All the three hundred and thirty-six (336) copies of the questionnaire were completed and collected on the spot. However, only adequately completed questionnaires (i.e., 327) were subjected to statistical analysis. The remaining 14 were discarded due to inappropriate completion. In all, the response rate was 95.86%.

Result

A cross-sectional research design was adopted in the present paper. The statistical package for social sciences SPSS version 17.0 was used for data analysis. Simple linear regression was run to test the main hypotheses to predict social well-being from social support. The regression model showed that social support statistically significantly predicted social well-being, $F(1, 325) = 32.305, p < 0.05$. The independent variable added statistically significantly to the prediction, $p < .05$. The result indicates that the predictor variable contributed 24.9% of the variance in the social well-being of fine arts students in Enugu state.

Table 2:

Table showing the multiple regression results of the effect of social support on social well-being

	B	SEB	β	ΔR	t	Sig
Model				.249		
Constant	6.38	.19			32.61	.000
Social support	-.19	.05	.05	-.13	-4.04	.000

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination, $\Delta R = Adjusted R^2$. * $P < .000$.

Discussion

This study investigated the role of social support on the social well-being of fine arts students in Enugu state. The findings showed that social support is a significant positive predictor of social well-being. The hypothesis, which stated that social support would play an essential role in the social well-being of undergraduates, was affirmed. This finding is consistent

with previous empirical research findings (Adyani et al., 2019; Brajša-Žganec et al., 2018; Ekas et al., 2010; Ermer & Proulx, 2020; Karademas, 2006; Saputra & Setyo Palupi, 2020; Seagle et al., 2021; Thomas, 2010; Wang et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2020) indicating that social aid and positive contributions from the community is an essential determinant of social well-being. Thus, an unhealthy social comfort awaits those deprived of support from their significant others, especially those growing up in communities deficient in assets that promote social support. Thus, a social environment that provides opportunities for support to young people, especially undergraduates, fosters positive social well-being.

Social support from family, peers, and significant others has been recognized as a protective factor for fine arts students. Similarly, academic performance has been correlated with the student receiving support from significant others (Leite et al., 2021; Ogbeide & Ugwu, 2016). Thus, supports given to fine arts students might enhance their social well-being and improve their artistic creativity. The finding is very relevant to our present society, especially the Nigerian setting. It is shown that social support, which involves all kinds of positive support given to undergraduates, enhances social well-being. Research has affirmed that better well-being is linked to people with adequate social support, while adverse outcomes were associated with those without such support (Sharma & Sharma, 2018).

Conclusion

The present paper examined the variation in the social well-being of fine arts students in Enugu state based on social support. Three hundred and twenty-seven fine arts students from different institutions in Enugu state were recruited for the study. The paper hypothesized that social support would significantly predict social well-being. The simple linear regression model conducted on the data established a positive relationship between social support and social well-being. Thus, it is revealed that social support is a significant predictor of social well-being. The current study's finding offers an additional and exciting insight into the role of social support on the well-being of fine arts students. Thus, the study provides evidence that social support has a positive effect on the well-being and creativity of the students.

Consequently, a study of this nature always poses inherent limitations that are needed to be reported. Thus, the outcome of the present study must be interpreted in light of these limitations. For instance, the study adopted a cross-sectional design such that the role of social support on social well-being was tested in only one direction. Thus, the mechanism through which the independent variable interacts with the dependent variable remains unclear. Also, data for the study was based on only self-report measures. Hence, raising the issue of common method variance. Nonetheless, the findings of the study call for future research to investigate the role of other potential prevailing variables, including but not limited to educational level, creative self-efficacy, and economic status and social well-being of the undergraduates in a more representative sample of not just university students but also secondary school students.

The findings of this research imply that social support is a significant predictor of social well-being. This means that adequate social support from different sources, including family, friends, peers, and the general society, can foster one's life balanced and fulfilling, thus giving more meaning to a person's social life and becoming inherently rewarding. In the context of this research, consistent social support from significant others could provide the pathway to improving learning among the students. Also, since social support is linked to good mental health, it is evident that giving social support to undergraduates would positively impact their cognitive state. Thus, the current study advocates for adequate support for students at the tertiary education level.

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