

# **Influence of Psycho-Demographic Variables on Psychological Well-Being of Undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State**

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## **Abstract**

The study investigated the influence of emotional intelligence on psychological well being of undergraduates as well as determined influence of demographic variables on psychological well being of undergraduates. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The sample consisted of 480 undergraduates selected from six selected faculties out of the thirteen Faculties in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, using convenience sampling technique. Two adapted instruments titled “Ryff’s Scale of Psychological Well-Being (RSP)” and “Questionnaire on Students’ Emotional Intelligence (QSEI)” were used to collect information from the students. The reliability tests of the instruments used were Spearman Brown Coefficients and Spearman Brown Split-half reliability tests for RSP yielded results of 0.81 and 0.90 while that, of QSEI had 0.85 and 0.80. Descriptive statistics and chi-square statistics were employed to analyse the data. The results showed that 95% of the undergraduates had high level of psychological well being. There was a significant influence of levels of emotional intelligence on psychological well being of undergraduates ( $\chi^2 = 0.577$  at  $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, the results showed a significant influence of each of sex ( $\chi^2 = 0.786$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and place of residence ( $\chi^2 = 0.624$  at  $p < 0.05$ ) on psychological well being of undergraduates. However, there was no significant influence of age range on psychological well being of undergraduates ( $\chi^2 = 0.365$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). It was concluded that most undergraduates possessed high level of emotional intelligence and that had predisposed to high psychological well being.

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**Keywords:** Psycho-demographic variables, well being, undergraduates, Osun State

## **Introduction**

In the modern society, life is becoming very complex and conflicting day by day. This is because we are in technological age. One of the major challenges facing those living in technologically advanced societies is the need to adjust to various, and sometimes conflicting, social systems such as the family, friendship networks, work or school groups. At adolescence, the conflict among the demands of several groups is likely to be particularly acute, as increasingly autonomous children struggle to gain freedom from parents, to meet teachers' demands for academic performance, to make and maintain friendships, and to find a place for themselves in the society. If a student is psychologically well positioned only then can he/she survive the rigour of university life.

University students which constitute the bulk of adolescents and youths develop many habits, patterns of behaviour and relationships that affect their future quality of life. As a result, they are faced with challenges and difficulties that may throw them into confusion and troubles. At the colleges and universities, academic demands increase and new social relations are established. However, students are often not sure of their abilities to cope with these demands (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001). Most at times, it is the unexpected experiences of university life that make the transition from adolescence to adulthood more dramatic. Although, Gall, Evans and Bellerose (2000) and Wintre and Yaffe (2000) believed that some students find the university experience quite interesting. However, scholars like Sennett, Finchilescu, Gibson and Strauss (2003) opined that while it is an exciting experience for some students; it is an overwhelming and stressful experience for others. While corroborating this, Wintre and Yaffe (2000) confirmed that it can be frustrating and overwhelming for many students, leading to psychological trauma such as emotional maladjustment and depression, which may, in turn, negatively affect students' performance in their academics. Also, Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie (2007) believed that difficulties in handling the stressors/challenges associated with the transition may lead to decreased academic performance and increased psychological distress.

World Health Organisation (W. H. O., 2001) defined positive mental health as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. This is why Schneider (2011) provided perspective that perhaps genuine happiness is not something you aim at, but is a by-product of a life well lived. Therefore, in a bid to understand what makes a wholesome development of adolescents' health status; is pertinent to understand the constituents of psychological well-being. To this end, psychological well-being is a

construct that emphasizes the quality of life and it consists of meaningfulness and satisfaction, emotional stability and happiness in life. This quality of living is manifest in the behaviour of an individual and it connotes such habits of work and attitudes towards people and things that bring maximum satisfaction and happiness to the individual.

Bar-On (2005) saw psychological well-being as a state that emerges from feeling of satisfaction with one's close interpersonal relationships and with one's occupation and financial situation. To Huppert (2005), it is the degree of feeling good about oneself and to be able to function effectively. Huppert further explained that feeling good need not necessarily mean presence of positive emotions like contentment and happiness but also presence of affection, confidence, interest and engagement. In their own reaction, Compton (2005) and Khramtsova, Sarrino, Gordeeva and Williams (2007) opined happiness is an emotional state whereas life satisfaction addresses a more global cognitive evaluation of one's life.

Meanwhile, emotional intelligence can have an important impact on everyday life. It is referred to as the ability to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and others (Goleman, 2001). It is likely that emotional intelligence will assist students having low happiness and low satisfaction and high depression in developing appropriate behaviours and attitudes in respect of their academic work. A study conducted by Palmer, Donaldson, and Stough (2002) has indicated high emotional intelligence to predict life satisfaction. It is, therefore, expected that emotional intelligence will moderate the relationship of psychological well-being with students' behaviours and attitudes. Also, Bar-on (2004) found that there was moderate yet significant relationship of emotional and psychological health.

Similarly, Pellitteri (2002) submitted that people higher on emotional intelligence are likely to use an adaptive defense style and thus to exhibit healthier psychological adaptation. Higher level of emotional intelligence was also associated with an increased likelihood of attending to health and appearance and positive interactions with friends and family. Mayer, Caruso and Salovey (1999) found higher emotional intelligence to be significantly correlated with parental warmth and attachment style and Rubin (1999) found it linking with positive interpersonal relationships among children, adolescents, and adults. Notwithstanding, the study is designed to establish the kind of influence that levels of emotional intelligence can have on psychological well-being of undergraduates.

Investigating gender differences in psychological well-being is important as not all people are identical. There were many differences between men and women. Sex differences were found in sense of coherence, hardiness, personality, and psychological well-being. Generally, it was thought that anxiety sensitivity was mainly related to the three factors of

physical, psychological and social consequences of anxiety, with the physical concerns factor being the dominating factor to women and the social and psychological concerns factors the dominant factors of men (Stewart et al, 1997). It was reported that women preferred to express the unbearable pressures more than men do. Gender difference was also found in the anger expression with women more apt to choose such approaches as recent studies on gender differences in psychological well-being have yielded contradictory findings (Ryff & Singer, 1998; Abbu-Rayya, 2005) which underscores the need to study more on the impact of gender on important well-being outcomes.

Also, a body of research for instance, Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) has indicated a significant decrease in women's happiness leads researchers to believe that men are happier than women. Part of these findings could be due to the way men and women differ in calculating their happiness. Women calculate the positive self-esteem, closeness in their relationships and religion. Also, Reid (2004) Men calculate positive self-esteem, active leisure and mental control. Therefore, neither men nor women are at greater risk for being less happy than the other. Earlier in life, women are more likely than men to fulfill their goals (material goals and family life aspirations), thereby increasing their life satisfaction and overall happiness. However, Plagnol and Easterlin (2008) confirmed that it is later in life that men fulfill their goals, are more satisfied with their family life and financial situation and, as a result, their overall happiness surpasses that of women. Contrarily, Saranya and Velayudihan (2008) revealed that there was no significant difference in gender and psychological well being of students.

Many theorists today see personality in terms of flexible adaptation over the life course (Moody 2000) and suggest that people bring positive resources to aging, such as a feeling of selfworth, a personal sense of meaning, or a belief in the controllability of the environment. Psychological well-being is viewed as a fundamental aspect of positive aging and an indispensable component of life-span development and adaptability (Ryff 1989). Previous studies, for instance, Keyes, Shmotkin and Ryff (2002) emphasized the significance of particular life challenges in the move from young adulthood through middle age into late life. However, despite this conceptual emphasis on life course development, previous studies of age-related changes in psychological well-being have been based overwhelmingly on cross-sectional data.

Evidence suggests most people generally become happier with age, with the exception of the years 40 - 50, which is the typical age at which a crisis might occur. Researchers specify people in both their 20s and 70s are happier than during midlife, although the extent of happiness changes at different rates. For example, feelings of stress and anger tend to decline after

age 20, worrying drops after age 50, and enjoyment very slowly declines in adulthood but finally starts to rise after age 50 (Grinde 2002 and Alok 2008). These findings are based on decades of data, and control for cohort groups; the data avoids the risk that the drops in happiness during midlife are due to populations' unique midlife experiences, like a war.

Other studies have found older individuals reported more health problems, but fewer problems overall. Young adults reported more anger, anxiety, depression, financial problems, troubled relationships and career stress. Also, Plagnol and Easterlin (2008) suggested that depression in the elderly is often due largely to passivity and inaction - they recommend people continue to undertake activities that bring happiness, even in old age.

Finally, it is of worth note to ascertain if students living on and off campus differed in their psychological well being. Adams *et al.* (2000) remarked that, the environment in which students live has a direct impact on the student's overall adjustment. According to Dinger (1999), students who lived in environment that is conducive to learning and provided ample study space and opportunities for growth and interaction tend to have an easier time adjusting than students who live in other environment. The results has shown that campus residents exhibited longer sleep duration, greater sleep quality, and less feeling of stress than off-campus students. The above results notwithstanding, a study of this nature will help to unravel the influence of psycho-demographic variables (emotional intelligence, sex, age and place) on psychological well being of undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to

- a. ascertain the level of psychological well being of undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State;
- b. investigate the influence of emotional intelligence on psychological well being of undergraduates; and
- c. determine influence of demographic variables (sex, age and place of residence) on psychological well being of undergraduates.

### **Research Question**

What is the level of psychological well being of undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State?

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant influence of emotional intelligence on psychological well being of undergraduates.

2. There is no significant influence of each of sex, age and place of residence on psychological well being of undergraduates.

## Methodology

The descriptive survey design was employed for this study. All the undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State were the population of the study. A total of six faculties out of the thirteen faculties in the school were selected using simple random sampling technique. From the six faculties, 480 students were selected using convenience sampling technique. Two adapted instruments titled “Ryff’s Scale of Psychological Well-Being (RSP)” and “Questionnaire on Students’ Emotional Intelligence (QSEI)” were used to collect information from the students. RSP comprised 20 items that requested information on the students’ psychological well-being. Also, QSEI was divided into two sections. Section A comprised four items on demographic variables such as student’s faculty, sex, age range and place of residence. Section B comprised 20 items that sought information on the undergraduates’ level of emotional intelligence. The instruments were duly validated through expert judgment and the reliability tests carried out. The Spearman Brown Coefficients and Spearman Brown Split-half reliability tests conducted on the instruments showed that RSP yielded results of 0.81 and 0.90 while, QSEI had 0.85 and 0.80. Both at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square statistics were employed to analyse the data.

## Results

### Research Question

What is the level of psychological well being of undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State?

The data collected on the levels of psychological well being of undergraduates were analysed using simple percentage statistical analysis. The results are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Simple Percentage Analysis of Levels of Psychological Well being of Undergraduates

Levels of Psychological Well being	Frequency	Percentage %
Moderate	24	5.0
High	456	95.0
Total	480	100

Table 1 showed that 95% of the undergraduates had high level of psychological well being, while the remaining 5% of students possessed moderate level of psychological well being. From the results of the above, it can be concluded that most of the undergraduates sampled possessed high level of psychological well being.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant influence of levels of emotional intelligence on psychological well being of undergraduates.

Table 2: Chi-Square Statistical Analysis of Influence of Levels of Emotional Intelligence on Psychological well being of Undergraduates

Levels of Emotional Intelligence	Psychological Well being		$\chi^2$	p
	Moderate	High		
High	15	298	0.577	< 0.05
Moderate	9	158		
Total	24	456		

Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Table 2 showed the influence of levels of emotional intelligence on psychological well being of undergraduates. From the results,  $\chi^2 = 0.577$  at  $p < 0.05$  indicated a significant influence of levels of emotional intelligence on psychological well being of undergraduates.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant influence of each of sex, age and place of residence on psychological well-being of undergraduates.

Table 3: Chi-Square Statistical Analysis of Influence of Sex, Age and Place of Residence on Psychological well-being of Undergraduates

Sex	Psychological Well being		$\chi^2$	p
	Moderate	High		
Male	13	268	.786	< 0.05**
Female	11	188		
Total	24	456		
Age Range	Moderate	High	0.365	> 0.05*
15- 20 Years	15	232		
21- 25 Years	9	192		
26 Years and above	10	22		
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>446</b>		
Place of Residence	Moderate	High	0.624	< 0.05**
Campus	17	251		
Off Campus	7	205		
Total	24	456		

\*\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$

\* Not Significant at  $p > 0.05$

From Table 2, the influence of sex on psychological well-being of undergraduates was discovered to be significant with  $\chi^2$  yielded 0.786;  $p < 0.05$  level of significant. Thus, the result nullified the null hypothesis. Therefore there is a significant influence of sex on psychological well being of undergraduates.

It was revealed that age range was not significant at  $\chi^2 = 0.365$ ;  $p > 0.05$  level of significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is upheld.

Also, the Table above, showed that  $\chi^2$  yielded 0.624 at  $p = < 0.05$ . This result showed that there was a significant influence of place of residence on psychological well-being of undergraduates. The result negated the null hypothesis.

## Discussion

The present study examined the influence of psych-demographic variables on psychological well-being of undergraduates. Most undergraduates in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife have been found to possess high level of well being. The findings supported the work of previous researchers, Gall *et.al* (2000) and Wintre and Yaffe (2000) who expressed that some students find the university experience quite interesting because they easily adjust to new environment. However, scholars like Sennett *et.al* (2003) opined that some students may find the experience as uninteresting. A possible explanation could be that some students believed that they were confident and that they were capable of handling any academic, social or personal-emotional challenges that they faced as students on campus.

Also, the findings from hypothesis one indicated that emotional intelligence greatly influenced psychological well being of students. While supporting the findings, Palmer, Donaldson and Stough, (2002) indicated high emotional intelligence to predict life satisfaction. In his own submission, Bar-on (2004) found that there was moderate yet significant relationship of emotional and psychological health. Thus, it is expected that emotional intelligence could moderate the relationship of psychological well-being with students' behaviours and attitudes.

Again, the present study showed that undergraduates male and female of Obafemi Awolowo University were different in term of psychological well-being. Specifically, the findings revealed that there was a significant influence of sex on students' psychological well-being. Although, the findings of Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) has supported the result emanated from this studies by revealing that men are happier than women. Also, Plagnol and Easterlin (2008) confirmed that it is later in life that men fulfill their goals, are more satisfied with their family life and financial situation and, as a result, their overall happiness surpasses that of women. Contrarily, Gibson and Cook (1997), Ryff and Singer (1998) and Abbu-Rayya (2005) contradicted results studies found that there was no apparent difference between sex and psychological well being.

Moreover, the findings of the study revealed that students' psychological well being is not age related. The findings contradicted the earlier position of Grinde (2002) and Alok (2008) that feelings of stress and anger tend to decline after age 20, worrying drops after age 50, and



enjoyment very slowly declines in adulthood but finally starts to rise after age 50. While corroborating the above position, Plagnol and Easterlin (2008) that young adults are more anger, anxiety, depression, financial problems, troubled relationships and career stress.

In conclusion, it was revealed that there was a significant influence of place of residence (campus and off campus) on psychological well being of undergraduates. Adams *et al.* (2000) remarked that, the environment in which students live has a direct impact on the student's overall adjustment. The inference that can be made from this is that the environment where a student finds himself places a significant role in molding his life style. Therefore, it is an undisputed fact that most students who live on campus will have better opportunity to interact well with their colleagues in halls of residence, recreational/social centres, and religion centres. The inference from this is that campus students will have the opportunity to relieve themselves of stress than off-campus students.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Arising from the above findings, it can thus be concluded that most undergraduates possessed high level of emotional intelligence. Besides, it was established that their level of emotional intelligence had predisposed to having high level of psychological well-being. Also, findings indicated that out of the three demographic variables considered, it was only the students' age that could not positively influence their psychological well-being. In view of the above, it is recommended that universities should provide more accommodation and other enabling environment for undergraduates so that they can have the opportunity to interact well among their colleagues for a balanced psychological well-being.

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