

2021

NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY



Online ISSN: 2682-6151
Print ISSN: 2682-6143
Volume 4, Issue 1
2021

Published by
Nigerian Association of Social Psychologists
www.nigerianjosp.com

Editor-in-Chief
Prof. S.O. Adebayo
Managing Editor
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SOCIAL
PSYCHOLOGY

Relationship Between Shyness and Sense of Belongingness among Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness among undergraduate students. A total of 200 participants comprising 100 male and 100 female undergraduate students, between the ages of 19 – 30 years, with a mean age of 20.68 and a standard deviation of 2.56 were selected. They were selected making use of simple random sampling technique from population of Faculty of Applied Natural Sciences and Faculty of the Social Sciences, ESUT. A 13-item Shyness questionnaire with an established Alpha Coefficient of .57 and 18-item Sense of belongingness questionnaire with Alpha Coefficient of .78 was obtained by the researcher in a pilot study. A Correlation design was adopted based on survey research method; and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Statistic was applied to analyze data. The result yielded a significant negative relationship $r = -.30, P < .01$ between shyness and sense of belongingness among undergraduate students. This implies that as the sense of belongingness increases, shyness will decrease. This finding will help counsellors provide therapy for young people especially those who are withdrawn and socially alienated because of their inability to express skills for association amongst their peers.

Keywords: *affiliation, belongingness, interpersonal relationship, shyness*

Introduction

The desire for social bonds and connections with others has a long history in psychological research. It has been referred to as the need for affection between people (Murray, 1938), the need for positive regard from others (Rogers, 1951), belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Goodenow, 1993b; Maslow, 1954), affiliation motivation (McClelland, 1987), and the need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1993; Vallerand, 1997). Deci and Ryan (1991) suggested that the need for relatedness encompasses a person's striving to relate to and care for others, to feel that those others are relating authentically to one's self, and to feel a satisfying and coherent involvement with the social world more generally. Vallerand (1997) suggested that the need for relatedness involves feeling connected (or feeling that one belongs in a social milieu). Goodenow (1992) proposed that a sense of belonging at school reflects the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment.

Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggested that the need to belong is characterised by a need for regular contact and the perception that the interpersonal relationship has stability, affective concern, and is ongoing. In their seminal article on the importance of sense of belonging to wellbeing, they proposed the 'belongingness hypothesis', suggesting that "human

beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships”. Failure to have belongingness needs met may lead to feelings of social isolation, alienation, and loneliness. Thus, a sense of belonging can be seen as a precursor to social connectedness. In their detailed analysis of the relevant research, Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that the need for belongingness is more than the need for social contact. It is the need for positive and pleasant social contacts within the context of desired relationships with people other than strangers. That is, the need for belongingness is satisfied by an interpersonal bond marked by “stability, affective concern, and continuation into the foreseeable future”. This relational context of interactions with other people is essential for satisfying the need to belong. They also propose that people who are well-enmeshed in social relationships should have less need to seek and form additional bonds than people who are socially deprived. As their need for belonging has been met, and is no longer such a significant drive, they do not express or display the need for belonging as strongly as those for whom this need has not been met. Importantly, however, individuals differ in the strength of their need to belong. As Kelly (2001) points out, some people with lower need to belong may be satisfied by few contacts, while others with greater need to belong may need many such contacts. It is the lack of satisfaction with personal relationships relative to their need to belong that puts the individual at risk of loneliness.

The need for belonging can contribute to explaining a variety of human behaviour, cognitive, motivational processes, and emotions. For example, individuals explain the reasons of their behaviours in association with the need for belonging. The satisfaction of this need leads to the experience of positive emotions such as happiness and joy, whereas deficiency can cause the experience of negative emotions such as anxiety, jealousy, depression, high level of stress, and loneliness. Many negative behavioural, psychological, and social outcomes, including mental illness, criminal tendency, and social isolation are explained by lack of sense of belonging. Maslow (1968) indicated that beneath most emotional breakdowns lies a need for belongingness, being loved, and respected.

However, Shyness (also called diffidence) is the feeling of apprehension, lack of comfort, or awkwardness experienced when a person is in proximity to, approaching, or being approached by other people, especially in new situations or with unfamiliar people. Shyness may come from genetic traits, the environment in which a person is raised and personal experiences. There are many degrees of shyness. Stronger forms are usually referred to as social anxiety or social phobia. Shyness may merely be a personality trait or can occur at certain stages of development in children. The primary defining characteristic of shyness is a largely

ego-driven fear of what other people will think of a person's behaviour, which results in the person becoming scared of doing or saying what he or she wants to, out of fear of negative reactions, criticism, or rejection, and simply opting to avoid social situations instead (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2012). Shyness also has strong cultural aspects, for example in China, if a student or a peer is shy then that student is looked up to and praised while in North America they will be seen as being a coward (Stefan, 2001).

From a practical point of view, the importance of shyness derives from its consequences. Shy persons, for example, are often excessively uncomfortable and anxious in social situations. Moreover, because of such discomfort, chronic shyness often leads to failures to capitalize on the occupational and interpersonal opportunities available to the shy person. Scientifically, shyness affords the opportunity to observe the complex interplay of personal and situational context factors in the evolution of social interactions. Therefore based on the above observation the researcher is interested to investigate the relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness among adolescents.

Statement of the Problem

Belongingness is the human emotional need to be an accepted member of a group. Whether it is family, friends, co-workers, a religion, or something else, people tend to have an 'inherent' desire to belong and be an important part of something greater than themselves. This implies a relationship that is greater than simple acquaintance or familiarity. The need to belong is the need to give and receive attention to and from others. Belonging is a strong and inevitable feeling that exists in human nature. To belong or not to belong can occur due to choices of one's self, or the choices of others. Not everyone has the same life and interests; hence not everyone belongs to the same thing or person. Without belonging, one cannot identify themselves as clearly, thus having difficulties communicating with and relating to their surroundings. The researcher intends to find if there be a relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness among undergraduate students?

Shyness and Sense of Belongingness

Shyness is most likely to occur during unfamiliar situations, though in severe cases it may hinder an individual in his or her most familiar situations and relationships as well. Shy people avoid the objects of their apprehension in order to keep from feeling uncomfortable and inept; thus, the situations remain unfamiliar and the shyness perpetuates itself. Shyness may fade with time; e.g., a child who is shy towards strangers may eventually lose this trait when

older and become more socially adept. This often occurs by adolescence or young adulthood (generally around the age of 13). In some cases, though, it may become an integrated, lifelong character trait. Longitudinal data suggests that the three different personality types evident in infancy easy, slow-to-warm-up, and difficult tend to change as children mature. Extreme traits become less pronounced, and personalities evolve in predictable patterns over time. What has been proven to remain constant is the tendency to internalize or externalize problems (Janson & Matheisen, 2008). This relates to individuals with shy personalities because they tend to internalize their problems, or dwell on their problems internally instead of expressing their concerns, which leads to disorders like depression and anxiety (Coplan et al., 2012). Humans experience shyness to different degrees and in different areas. In addition, shyness may manifest when one is in the company of certain people and completely disappear when with others— one may be outgoing with friends and family, but experience love-shyness toward potential partners, even if strangers are generally not an obstacle.

Shyness can also be seen as an academic determinant. It has been determined that there is a negative relationship between shyness and classroom performance. As the shyness of an individual increased, classroom performance was known to decrease, and vice versa (Chisti, 2011). The condition of true shyness may simply involve the discomfort of difficulty in knowing what to say in social situations, or may include crippling physical manifestations of uneasiness. Shyness usually involves a combination of both symptoms, and may be quite devastating for the sufferer, in many cases leading them to feel that they are boring, or exhibit bizarre behaviour in an attempt to create interest, alienating them further. Behavioural traits in social situations such as smiling, easily producing suitable conversational topics, assuming a relaxed posture and making good eye contact, may not be second nature for a shy person. Such people might only affect such traits by great difficulty, or they may even be impossible to display.

Those who are shy are actually perceived more negatively, in cultures that value sociability, because of the way they act towards others (Paulhus, & Morgan, 1997). Shy individuals are often distant during conversations, which may cause others to create poor impressions of them. People who are not shy may be too up-front, aggressive, or critical towards shy people in an attempt "to get them out of their shell." This may actually make a shy person feel worse, as it can draw attention to them (making them more self-conscious and uncomfortable) or cause them to think there is something very wrong with themselves.

The term shyness may be implemented as a lay blanket-term for a family of related and partially overlapping afflictions, including timidity (apprehension in meeting new people),

bashfulness and diffidence (reluctance in asserting oneself), apprehension and anticipation (general fear of potential interaction), or intimidation (relating to the object of fear rather than one's low confidence). Apparent shyness, as perceived by others, may simply be the manifestation of reservation or introversion, character traits which cause an individual to voluntarily avoid excessive social contact or be terse in communication, but are not motivated or accompanied by discomfort, apprehension, or lack of confidence. Shy people may fear such situations and feel that they "should" avoid them (Whitten, 2001). This generally poor reception of shyness may be misinterpreted by the suffering individual as aversion related to his or her personality, rather than simply to his or her shyness. Both conditions can lead to a compounding of a shy individual's low self-confidence.

Both shyness and introversion (unsociability) can be classified as personalities that lead to socially withdrawn behaviours (behavioural tendencies to avoid social situations, especially when they are unfamiliar). A variety of research has been done suggesting that these two personalities possess clearly distinct motivational forces and lead to uniquely different personal and peer reactions and therefore cannot be described as theoretically the same (Coplan, et al., 2012; Asendorpf, & Meier, 1993; Chen, Wang, & Cao, 2011). Research done suggests that no unique physiological response, such as an increased heartbeat, accompanies socially withdrawn behaviour in familiar compared with unfamiliar social situations. But unsociability leads to decreased exposure to unfamiliar social situations and shyness causes a lack of response in such situations, suggesting that shyness and unsociability affect two different aspects of sociability and are distinct personality traits (Asendorpf, & Meier, 1993) In addition, different cultures perceive unsociability and shyness in different ways, leading to either positive or negative individual feelings of self-esteem. Collectivist cultures view shyness as a more positive trait related to compliance with group ideals and self-control, while perceiving chosen isolation (introverted behaviour) negatively, as a threat to group harmony. Because society accepts shyness and rejects unsociability, shy individuals develop higher self-esteem than introverted individuals (Chen, Wang, & Cao, 2011). On the other hand, individualistic cultures perceive shyness as a weakness and a character flaw, while unsociable personality traits (preference to spend time alone) are accepted because they uphold the value of autonomy. So, in contrast, shy individuals develop low self-esteem in Western cultures while unsociable individuals develop high self-esteem (Coplan, et al., 2012). Psychological methods and pharmaceutical drugs are commonly used to treat shyness in individuals who feel crippled because of low self-esteem and psychological symptoms, such as depression or loneliness. According to research, early intervention methods that expose shy children to social

interactions involve working team work, especially team sports, decrease their anxiety in social interactions and increase their all around self-confidence later on (Findlay & Coplan, 2008). Implementing such tactics could prove to be an important step in combating the psychological effects of shyness that make living normal life difficult for anxious individuals.

Shyness and Gender Differences

Research consistently indicates that existing gender differences impact degree of shyness (Garcia et al., 1991; Eisenberg et al., 1991). Gender-specific consequences have been noted as a result of these differences (Asendorpf, & Wilpers, 1998; Berman & Sperling, 1991). The resulting behaviors range from delayed romantic involvement and physical aggression in boys and men, to difficulty concentrating as a result of socially triggered anxiety in girls and women (APA, 2011; Eisenberg et al., 1991). Research has indicated that shy boys are more prone to depression as they transition from the end of high school to the end of the first semester at college than girls (Berman & Sperling, 1991). This is generally due to their difficulty adjusting to the demands of college and being more preoccupied with their parents compared to girls. Furthermore, as discussed, physiological differences have been identified between male and female preschoolers, specifically in brain reactivity to unpleasant emotions (Theall-Honey & Schmidt, 2006).

In another study, the authors asked that participants engage in an unstructured conversation, recorded on videotape, and then complete a self-report questionnaire (Garcia et al., 1991). Participants viewed their own videotaped conversations and completed a thought-feeling measure about the conversation and the extent to which each participant enjoyed the interaction. Finally, independent evaluators examined the videotapes.

For both genders, shy individuals viewed thoughts and feelings concerning social skills more negatively than the non-shy controls (Garcia et al., 1991). Specific negative social cues included a closed body posture and decreased amounts of eye contact compared to the non-shy sample. Women tended to assume more of a shy role in same-sex interactions compared to men, who likely felt more societal pressure with initial heterosocial interactions. The women's shyness was related more to dynamic, nonverbal behaviors, such as the amount of eye contact, displaying a pleasant affect (e.g., smiling and laughing), and the amount of active listening.

As with women, male shyness was related to both verbal and nonverbal behaviors (Garcia et al., 1991). This specifically included both eye contact and thoughts and feelings of how they were perceived by women. Secondly, the shyer a male participant, the less frequently he spoke and the less amount of time he spent speaking. Shy men tend not to initiate and tended

to discourage eye contact with their partners. While reviewing thoughts and feelings of the shy man, it was found that he was overly concerned about his anxiety and stress while interacting with a partner. Consequently, he devoted less energy to the conversation, which induced anxiousness in his partner. When compared to the women in the study, men reported less positive self-talk.

Another study examined gender differences in shyness with 82 male and 82 female college students (Eisenberg et al., 1991). Each student was required to complete several measures on shyness and desire for social ability. In addition, each completed measures on the believed ability to control temperament (e.g., concentration, focusing, and inhibition), emotions, and interpersonal stressors. A designated peer was also required to assess the participant using similar measures. Shy participants, regardless of gender, exhibited lower levels of constructive coping techniques (Eisenberg et al., 1991). This included taking additional actions to solve problems, planning, and seeing positives in a situation viewed as negative. Also, both genders displayed a greater degree of physiological reactions, negative cognitions, and levels of anxiety and personal distress. In addition, women had a strong correlation between attention shifting (characterized by multi-tasking and difficulty concentrating) and shyness. A negative correlation was found between the degree of shyness and acceptance coping, which was defined as the ability to accept present reality and trusting in a higher power. Through measures completed by friends, the researchers found that shyer men tended to conceal their emotions, and thus, they were more emotionally restrictive and likely to hide feelings if upset. Secondly, shy men were high in measures of inhibition control, which resulted in hindering emotional experiences. Behaviourally, inhibition control resulted in shy men being less likely to interrupt others while speaking. Consequently, shy men had difficulty contributing to a conversation.

Male shyness has been linked to consequences of varying severity, including difficulty initiating romantic relationships (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998). It is important to acknowledge and study shyness in men despite a potential unwillingness due to the vulnerability of previously discouraged self-disclosure. More critically, research has indicated a type of cynical shyness in men. In cynical shyness, men displayed a strong desire for social involvement but lacked social skills and, consequently, were repeatedly rejected by peers. As rejection re-occurred, the unexpressed emotional pain intensified, resulting in anger and hatred. Men with cynical shyness who lacked coping skills and/or resilience have been found to be more likely to commit acts of violence (APA, 2011).

Sense of Belonging among Students

Proper, adequate, and timely satisfaction of the need for belongingness leads to physical, emotional, behavioural, and mental well-being (Maslow, 1968). In a set of three consecutive studies, Sheldon et al. (2001) asked college students to remember the most satisfying events in their lives and to rate the needs that had been satisfied through experiencing those events. The ratings in all three studies revealed that relatedness was one of the four major psychological needs that students felt most satisfied when they experienced it. It is important to indicate here that although in some contexts the need for relatedness and the need for belongingness have been conceptualized differently, given that “the need for relatedness is the need for experiencing belongingness” (Osterman, 2000) relatedness and belongingness were used interchangeably throughout this section.

Many educational researchers agree that the need for belonging is one of the most important needs of all students to function well in all types of learning environments (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1991; Finn, 1989; Osterman, 2000). The feeling of belonging may have a direct and powerful influence on students’ motivation (Goodenow, 1993). For example, perceived support and the sense of belonging are expected to increase students’ beliefs in their success and accordingly to increase their academic motivation. Goodenow (1993) stated that one of the reasons that there is a poor fit between the opportunities provided by middle school environments and the developmental needs of adolescents is that middle school environments do not respond adequately to students’ need for belonging and support, which leads to a decrease in student academic motivation.

Goodenow (1992) suggested that belonging and support may be especially important for academic motivation, engagement, and performance of adolescents coming from ethnic minorities and economically less advantaged families. In a review, Becker and Luthar (2002) support Goodenow’s assertion, revealing that one of the key factors affecting economically disadvantaged minority students’ academic motivation and classroom engagement in middle schools is the sense of belonging. In fact, studies consistently reveal that students who experience a sense of belonging in educational environments are more motivated, more engaged in school and classroom activities, and more dedicated to school (Osterman, 2000). Moreover, existing research suggests that students who feel that they belong to learning environments report higher enjoyment, enthusiasm, happiness, interest, and more confidence in engaging in learning activities, whereas those who feel isolated report greater anxiety, boredom, frustration, and sadness during the academic engagement that directly affects academic performance (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Satisfying the need for belongingness in

educational environments takes on a greater importance during early adolescence. Students within that developmental period start going to peers and adults outside their family for guidance (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998) and their “sense of personal ‘place’ is still largely malleable and susceptible to influence in both positive and negative directions” (Goodenow, 1993). If this need is not adequately satisfied in educational environments, students will look for other ways and people to get that satisfaction. For example, a link has been found between a lack of sense of belonging and delinquency (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Perceived sense of belonging decreases the experience of stress and school-related anxiety as well as the experience of self-consciousness, especially in early adolescent years (Boekaerts, 1993; Goodenow, 1993; Roeser et al., 1996). Increased self-consciousness in adolescence may negatively affect students’ classroom engagement due to a heightened feeling of public exposure, which stimulates the experience of negative emotions, such as embarrassment and shame. On the other hand, a sense of belonging in the learning environment may balance students’ increased sense of public exposure (Goodenow, 1993). Additionally, research supports that sense of belonging mediates the relationship between contextual variables of the learning environment (e.g. teacher-student relationships and classroom goal structures) and self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents (Roeser et al., 1996; Roeser et al., 1998). Studies also report positive associations between adolescents’ feelings of belonging and academic achievement, academic help-seeking behaviour (Newman, 1991), and avoidance of self-handicapping behaviours (Dorman & Ferguson, 2004). The sense of classroom belonging leads to the formation of sense of school community, which increases students’ positive behavioural, psychological, and social outcomes such as achievement motivation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, academic and social intrinsic motivation and competence and decreases negative outcomes such as delinquency and drug use (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997).

Based on an extensive review of the literature, Osterman (2000) indicates that satisfaction of the need for belonging in educational environments is significantly associated with students’ academic engagement and involvement in school and classroom activities, academic and social behaviours, motives and attitudes, expectancies, values and goals, emotional functioning, and the development of fundamental psychological processes (e.g. intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, internalization, and autonomy), and psychological outcomes like self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Supporting this argument, in a three-year longitudinal study involving 248 students, Flook, Repetti, and Ullman (2005) found that lack of peer acceptance reported in the fourth grade predicted lower self-concept and internalizing symptoms (e.g. shyness, loneliness, negative emotions such as sadness and

anxiety) in the fifth grade and, in a longer period, predicted lower academic performance in the sixth grade, when fourth grade academic performance was controlled. Path analysis on the same data revealed that almost 25% of the variance in students' academic performance in sixth grade was explained by lack of peer acceptance in the fourth grade.

Finn (1989) suggested that perceived feelings of belonging may decrease at-risk students' alienation from school and their decision to drop out of high school. The participation-identification paradigm, explained by Finn, emphasizes that the lack of sense of belonging leads to adolescents' physical withdrawal from school-based activities and results in academic failure, which provokes non-identification with the school (emotional withdrawal) and alienation.

In several related studies Goodenow (1993) examined the association between adolescents' sense of belonging and their expectancies, values, motivation, effort, and achievement. In the first study, involving the development of The Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) Scale, Goodenow investigated the relationship between sense of school membership, expectancy of success, value, and effort for 1,366 fifth through eighth grade students from one suburban middle school and two urban junior high schools. Findings revealed that the sense of school membership was significantly associated with expectancies for school success and educational value but not statistically significantly related to academic effort or behaviour. Goodenow suggested that motivation might be mediating the relationship between the sense of school membership and academic effort and achievement.

In a follow-up study, Goodenow (1993) investigated the relation between adolescents' sense of belonging/support, academic motivation, academic effort and achievement. Three hundred fifty-three sixth- through eighth-grade students in a suburban middle school responded to a questionnaire measuring their domain specific motivation (expectancy of success and educational value), feelings of belonging, and personal support in four domains: math, social studies, English, and science. To assess students' academic effort and performance, English teachers were asked to rate students' potential final grade and academic effort. Classroom belonging and support emerged as the most powerful and significant predictor of adolescents' educational values and expectations of success. The most powerful single factor associated with students' effort and achievement was students' perceptions of teachers in terms of teacher interest, support, and respect to students.

A similar age group was also the focus of Roeser et al., (1996) in an investigation of the relationship between the contextual factors of school environment and students' motivational, emotional, and academic outcomes. Two hundred and ninety-six eighth-grade

students participated in this study. Students' responses to self-report questionnaire revealed that students' perceived sense of school belonging was one of the most powerful predictors of their perceived academic self-efficacy. The sense of school belonging showed a small but significant positive relation to the academic outcomes. Students who reported a high sense of belonging in the school environment reported less self-consciousness (e.g. nervousness and embarrassment) in their task-related engagements in the class and school than those who reported less belonging to the school. The feelings of school belonging was also significantly associated with the positive school affect (e.g. good mood and happiness).

From an internal experience, cognitive dysfunctions in shy individuals result in a tendency to be self-conscious, uncomfortable, and anxious while socially engaged (Honey & Schmidt, 2006; Bruch & Pearl, 1995; Manning & Ray, 1993; Mallinckrodt, 1992). Shy individuals tend to focus excessively on making a positive impression others. In addition, negative self-talk plays a role in shyness (Beer, 2002). One clear cause of shyness has not been identified, but it is believed to be the result of a combination of genetic and environmental factors. It is important to remember that physiological differences have been documented in shy and non-shy individuals. (Canli et al., 2001; Theall-Honey & Schmidt, 2006; Rickman & Davidson, 1994).

Shy persons' internal discomfort results in external behaviours that can impact long-term functioning, including difficulty acknowledging success, difficulty expressing oneself socially, and increased likelihood of experiencing periods of loneliness, anxiety, and/or depression (Teglasi & Hoffman, 1982; Garcia et al., 1991). External behaviours may be more subtle and include a closed body posture and decreased amounts of eye contact (Garcia et al., 1991). The culmination of both internal and external experiences creates potentially complicated adjustment to social milestones. As an example, negative self-talk, uncomfortable physiological sensations, and behavioural inhibition can impact an entire college experience (Booth et al., 1992). As clearly established in the literature, shyness is much more complex than the common use of the term implies. It is an often frustrating condition with roots in attachment and attribution theories, although biology, physiology, and cognitive factors also contribute. Despite the roots of shyness, the results of the unseen manifest throughout the life of the individual and result in both internal discomfort and external consequences.

Hypothesis

There will be a significant relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness among undergraduate students.

Method

Participants

A total of 200 undergraduates comprising 100 males and 100 females, between the ages of 16 – 30 years, with a mean age of 20.68 and a standard deviation of 2.56 participated in the study. They were drawn using the simple random sampling technique from the population of Faculty of Applied Natural Sciences and Faculty of Social Sciences of the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT).

Instrument

Two sets of instrument were used in the study which are Shyness questionnaire and Sense of belongingness questionnaire.

Shyness Questionnaire

Shyness questionnaire is a 13 questionnaire design by the researcher to measure the degree of shyness in an individual. Thus, the items of the questionnaire were worded positively and negatively with positive items scored as follows, 4 points for strongly agree, 3 points for agree, 2 points for disagree, and 1 point for strongly disagree, while reverse is the case for negative worded items. The positive worded items are items 3, 6, 9, and 12. On the other hand the negative worded items are 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 13. A highest possible score of 52 and a least possible score of 13 is expected by any given respondent. Examples of items in shyness questionnaire are: I feel tense when I'm with people I don't know well; I do not find it difficult to ask other people for information; and have trouble looking someone right in the eye. An established Alpha Coefficient of .57 was obtained by the researcher in a pilot testing using 100 participants from the population of University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, Enugu State.

Sense of Belongingness Questionnaire

Sense of belongingness questionnaire is an 18-item questionnaire designed by the researcher to measure the extent, to which one feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the social environment. Thus, the items of the questionnaire were worded negatively and positively with negative worded items scored as follows; 1 point for strongly agree, 2 points for agree, 3 points for disagree and 4 points for strongly disagree. A highest possible score of 72 and a least possible score of 18 is expected by any given respondent. An example of items in sense of belonging questionnaire are: I often wonder if there is any place on earth where I really fit it; generally feel that people accept me; and I don't feel that there is any place where I really fit into this world. An established Alpha Coefficient of .78 was obtained by the researcher in a pilot study using 100 participants from the population of University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, Enugu State

Procedure

A total of 250 pairs of copies of the questionnaire (125 copies for each faculty) on shyness questionnaire and sense of belongingness questionnaire were distributed within a period of two weeks across the target population. The administration of the questionnaire took the form of group testing in their respective lecture rooms. Thus, 218 copies of the questionnaire were

returned and 200 copies that are correctly filled were scored, tabulated and analyzed; and only 18 copies based on incorrect responses were discarded.

Design /Statistics

A Correlation design based on Survey method was adopted. This is because copies of the questionnaires were administered to the target population without manipulation of experimental variables. Also, the primary objective of the study is to examine the relation between the study variables (shyness and sense of belongingness). Thus, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Statistic was applied to analyze the data in order to test the hypothesis.

RESULTS

Table 1: Summary table of means on the relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness among undergraduate students

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Shyness	200	32.00	13.00	45.00	18.97	4.73	22.40
Sense of belongingness	200	25.00	47.00	72.00	65.02	5.45	29.75
Age	200	14.00	16.00	30.00	20.68	2.56	6.55
Valid N (listwise)	200						

From table 1 above, participants obtained a group mean of 18.96 and a standard deviation of 4.73 on shyness questionnaire, while a group means of 65.02 and a standard deviation of 5.45 were obtained on sense of belongingness questionnaire. Hence, this individual deviation from the mean seem to be inappropriate to the means indicating possibilities of opposite rise in variation of scores. This relative inequality means that they are either increasing or decreasing in opposite direction. However, a correlation summary is needed to ascertain whether it is really a negative relationship.

Table 2: Summary table of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient on the relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness among undergraduate students
Correlations

		Shyness	Sense of Belongingness
Shyness	Pearson Correlation	1	-.30**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	4456.76	-1555.86
	Covariance	22.40	-7.82
	N	200	200
Sense of belongingness	Pearson Correlation	-.30**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-1555.86	5919.92
	Covariance	-7.82	29.75
	N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 above indicates a significant negative relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness, $r = -.30$, $P < .01$. This means that shyness and sense of belongingness are either increasing or decreasing in opposite direction. Hence, the hypothesis which stated that “there will be a significant relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness among undergraduate students” was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The outcome of the study revealed that the hypothesis tested which stated that “there will be a significant relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness among first year undergraduate students.” was accepted. This means that there is a significant negative relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness among first year undergraduate students. This is based on the fact that the alternate hypothesis stated was accepted. However, there is an existing relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness among first year undergraduate students. This shows that shyness was found to correlate negatively in relation to sense of belongingness among undergraduate students. In relation to the outcome of this investigation shyness was confirmed to be significantly negatively related to sense of belongingness. Hence, first year undergraduate students that scored high on shyness were observed to experience low sense of belongingness.

On the other hand undergraduate students that experience high sense of belongingness tend to score low on shyness. A sense of belonging dictates our level of confidence. Try as we might, we cannot function without others, as we are social beings. The moment we are born and bonded with our parents, the social cycle of inclusion begins. Family, relatives, schools, friends, relationships, societies and work become a part of us. Other people confirm our being

and reinforce our culture and identity. Others act as mirrors, which reflect our presence. When this image is unclear, or does not match with our own self-perception, it leads to withdrawal or an identity crisis. Other people's attention, recognition, praise, and love are lifelines to our endeavours. They reinforce who we are and give us the purpose to continue with our lives. When people whom we care about reject us, we are likely to reject ourselves too. We may internalize hate and spew it back on the family and community in the form of deviant, selfish conduct.

In fact, studies consistently reveal that students who experience a sense of belongingness in educational environments are more motivated, more engaged in school and classroom activities, and more dedicated to school (Osterman, 2000). Moreover, existing research suggests that students who feel that they belong to learning environments report higher enjoyment, enthusiasm, happiness, interest, and more confidence in engaging in learning activities, whereas those who feel isolated report greater anxiety, boredom, frustration, and sadness during the academic engagement that directly affects academic performance (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Satisfying the need for belongingness in educational environments takes on a greater importance during late adolescence period.

Implications of the Findings

In view of the outcome of the study, one may observe that shyness only did correlate with sense of belongingness. There may be other factors like personal experience and personality type that may have link with the study variables. The outcome of the study also indicates that unless we are attached to a group, unless we can identify ourselves with one another, we cannot break out from the shell of shyness, individualism and self-centeredness, that which both protects as well as isolates us! We require that external validation to exist, as a stranger never belongs to any group. Also, the high degree of shyness is an indication of low sense of belongingness and vice versa which may have implication to what extent a person interacts or moves away from others.

Limitations of the Study

One major short coming of this study was that the participants were reluctant in responding to the copies of the questionnaire but the researcher established rapport and generated confidentiality which motivated the participant towards the objective in completion of the questionnaire.

Suggestions for further Study

In view of the above finding, the researcher hereby suggests that future researchers should carry out similar study by searching out other factors that may correlate with shyness and sense of belongingness and also increase the sample size in order to cross validate the outcome of this study.

Summary and Conclusion

The outcome of the study is summarized below:

A significant negative relationship was observed between shyness and sense of belongingness among undergraduate students. Based on the outcome of this study the researcher hereby

concludes that there is an existing negative relationship between shyness and sense of belongingness among undergraduate students.

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