

**INVESTIGATION OF UNDERGRADUATES'
DISPOSITION TOWARDS THE CULTURE OF
PEACE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES.**

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An Empirical Investigation of University Undergraduates' Disposition Towards the Culture of Peace in Selected Nigerian Universities in South-Western Nigeria.

Abstract

This study gathered empirical data on university undergraduates' disposition to culture of peace from 2,083 university undergraduate cross-culturally spread across 6 public universities in South-Western Nigeria. These universities and corresponding sample size are: Obafemi Awolowo University 471, University of Ibadan 407, University of Lagos 549, Olabisi Onabanjo University 356, Adekunle Ajasin University 307, Ekiti States University 283. Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered on students' actual disposition to campus peace from all the respondents sampled in this study. The instrument used to gather data is a 14 item

undergraduates Disposition to Culture of Peace (UDCP) certified as possessing adequate psychometric properties.

The result of the findings of this study revealed that undergraduates were adequately disposed to culture of peace on their campuses. The Result also indicated that majority of respondents were indisposed to being hired by politicians as agents of violence on university campuses. Majority of respondents found unilateral increase in school fees as important factor affecting their disposition of peace on university campuses. Lack of dialogue and adequate communication between university and undergraduates are also found as important factors affecting their disposition to peace. Lastly, Adequate provision of municipal services like water, electricity and campus transportation system as important determinants to the culture of peace. The major trend however, is that safe guarding and protecting students' welfare are important barometers in measuring whether school policies and regulations promote peace or violence on university campuses production.

Keywords: *Culture of Peace, Undergraduates', Disposition, University.*

Introduction

Disposition as a concept is emotional preparedness for action. Disposition unlike perception is a step preceding action. In psychological palace, disposition is like the action component of attitude. This study therefore is like investigating the action component of students' attitude to

peace. In practical terms, one's emotional disposition to any issue determines the action component that follows.

The study therefore seeks to gather data on undergraduates' disposition or action component as regards several parameters and ramifications of the culture of peace on university campuses. Matters relating to maintenance of peace on university campuses are so germane and important that action-oriented researches like this study, are perhaps needed to prevent Nigeria from losing hours of productivity on periodic crisis on university campuses.

Literature Review

Review of Literature indicated dirt of action-oriented researchers on culture of peace in Nigeria Universities. Studies such as Denga 1982, Alabi 2005 presented data on episodic cases of crisis and violence. Some other studies provided information on approaches to maintenance of peace in Nigeria Universities. Studies such as Aluede, Jimoh, Ageinede and Omoreghe 2005, Tayo 2006 fall into this category. Studies also provided rationale for the inclusion of peace education in Nigeria Universities' curriculum as a way of impacting peace ((NUC 2004). From the length and breadth of literature reviewed, creating a culture of peace requires a fundamental change in knowledge, attitudes, behavior and worldview which enables the learners to take action for a more peaceful world. Peace education thus seeks to play a role in the societal transformation especially among university undergraduates which is the focus of this study. The desire, hope and need for peace according to Albert

2009 are universal and transcend all ages and places. Unfortunately, humanity has never established a clear culture of peace where everyone without exception is able to live in peace. If culture is being looked at as a way of life, it implies that a culture of peace means a peaceful way of living. The key challenge being faced is how to establish a global model of living in peace where all people live in peace with one another. Corroborating this assertion as noted in the above sub-theme is the belief that peace education seeks to address this challenge. According to Freire (2002), the reason why peace education is such a difficult task is the continuous war education that youngsters and adults have been receiving since the beginning of humankind. Parents teach their children with the notion that primary purpose of life is to ensure one's own survival, security and success in a dangerous conflicted and violent world. The problem compounds when also in school children and undergraduates alike are introduced to these conflicted-based views through the actual experience of school life with its culture of conflict, competition, aggression, bullying and violence. Danesh (2006) argues that we teach our children that the world is a jungle, that life is the process of survival in this jungle and that power is the essential tool to emerge victorious in this highly conflicted and violence-prone world. It is therefore not surprising that every new generation matures with much greater familiarity, certainty and comfort with the ways of conflict, competition and violence than those of harmony, cooperation and peace. A culture of peace among university undergraduates should integrate concepts of both negative and positive peace and involves the

transformation of society from the current culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence. Negative peace according to Galtung (1964) is the absence of violence while positive peace is the presence of social justice and equality and the absence of structural or indirect violence. It is pertinent to note that no known study makes a strong case for a skill-based approach to campus peace as this study. A study of this nature on undergraduates' disposition to campus peace is a skill-based investigation about actual disruptors of peace on university campuses.

In today's world, a culture of peace should be seen as the essence of a new humanity, a new global civilization based on inner oneness and outer diversity. The flourishing of a culture of peace will go a long way in transforming university undergraduates from the culture of violence to a culture of peace. Culture of peace will provide the bedrock of support to a stable, progressing and prospering world for all. This according to Gastro and Galace (2008), will generate the mind-set in us (especially the university undergraduates) that is a prerequisite for the transition from force to reason, from conflict and violence to dialogue and peace. Culture of peace will provide the bedrock of support to a stable, progressing and prospering world for all.

The task therefore of educating university undergraduates to find non-aggressive means to relate with the school authorities and with one another is of primary importance. And for all educational institutions to have a strong mechanism for peace, putting into consideration that the

gap between promise and reality should not be too wide so as to sustain the culture of peace is also very crucial.

Quite evidently, student's age is the crucially important period which enriches one's personal life, nurtures social adjustments, fosters friendship and understanding and affects one's whole life pattern. Seen from this perspective, one could very well understand the critical necessity of teaching students, youths and young leaders the art of living together in mutual respect, justice love and peace. Whitehead (2009) calls education 'the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge'. It is therefore of utmost importance to tell our students and young leaders about our world and its problems. There is the need to explain to them their part in the solutions, the need to instill in them a genuine appreciation of and a profound liking towards our humanitarian traditions and values such as non-violence, tolerance, understanding, cooperation and of course peace. In conclusion, Wells (2006) opined that human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe and hence the need to educate the youth for peace.

Methodology

This study collected data from 2,083 university undergraduates in 6 public Nigerian universities in South Western Nigeria. They are: Obafemi, University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Adekunle Ajasin University, Ekiti State University. The instrument used to collect data is a 14-item detailed questionnaire with a 4 response Likert scale with test-re-test reliability co-efficient of 0.05.

The instrument was also found to have adequate construct and validity properties. Pilot study data was also employed to enhance the psychometric properties used in this study.

The instrument was pilot-tested using the test re-test, reliability method among similar respondents in an institution outside the selected schools for this study. The results obtained from the test- re-test were subjected to Cronbach alpha test. The pilot sample size was excluded from the actual study.

Findings

Table 1.1: RESPONSE of students' disposition to culture of peace

S/N	Culture of peace	Disposition Status		Mean	Rank
		Disposed	Indisposed		
		Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)		
1	Whenever I'm on the university campus I am generally happy and at peace with myself.	1617 (77.6)	466 (22.4)	2.93	1
2	The transportation system in this school is too stressful for students.	1030 (49.4)	1053 (50.6)	2.49	6
3	Secret cult activities are so prevalent in this university that in future peace and order may be compromised by cult activities.	742 (35.6)	1341 (64.4)	2.15	10
4	The inclusion of peace education in university curriculum would enhance the culture of peace in my university.	1530 (73.5)	553 (26.5)	2.88	2
5	Personally, I do not feel too much worried whether there is peace or not in my university	601 (28.9)	1482 (71.2)	1.99	13
6	If I deem it necessary, I will actively participate in violent students' protest against the university authorities.	649 (31.2)	1434(68.8)	2.02	12
7	It is the duty of students to protect the Nigerian masses by protesting against perceived injustice in the policies and	1207 (58.0)	876 (42.0)	2.57	4

	operation of government outside the university.				
8	Where there is lack of fairness, equity and justice in school policies, I will not hesitate to participate in violent agitation against the university authorities.	824 (39.6)	1259(60.4)	2.25	9
9	When school fees are increased without adequate consultation, students' violent agitations are just and necessary and I would actively participate in such agitations.				
10	If I am hired by people or politician outside or inside the university to cause crisis in the university and the price offered is alright, I may cooperate.	563 (27.0)	1520 (73.0)	1.89	14
11	Personally, I do not feel too much worried whether there is peace or not in my university.	711 (34.1)	1372 (65.9)	2.09	11
12	If I deem it necessary, I will actively participate in students' protest against the university authorities.	972 (46.7)	1111 (53.3)	2.34	8
13	Increase in school fees without adequate consultation and dialogue with students is usually a necessary source of crisis on university campus.	1325 (63.6)	758 (36.4)	2.69	3

14	I personally do not believe in peace when university policies and administration do not exhibit fairness, equity and justice on students' matters.	1121 (53.8)	962 (46.2)	2.50	5
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Interpretation and Discussion

The results presented in the table 1.1 revealed that students were averagely disposed to the culture of peace items presented. The results showed that the item “whenever I’m on the university campus I am generally happy and at peace with myself” was ranked highest with mean score of 2.93. This was followed by the item “The inclusion of peace education in university curriculum would enhance the culture of peace in my university” with score of 2.88. This perhaps is in line with Albert’s (2009) finding which confirmed the desirability of peace education as part of the university curriculum.73.2% of the students sampled in Albert’s study favored the inclusion of peace and conflict studies in the general elective curriculum of the university generally. The next item was “It is the duty of students to protect the Nigerian masses by protesting against perceived injustice in the policies and operation of government outside the university” with mean score of 2.69. Further, some students believed the item “It is the duty of students to protect the Nigerian masses by protesting against perceived injustice in the policies and operation of government outside the university” with mean score of 2.57. The next item on the list was “I personally do not

believe when university policies and administration do not exhibit fairness, equity and justice on students' matters" with mean score of 2.50. This was followed by item "The transportation system in this school is too stressful for students" with mean score of 2.49. Also, the item "when school fees are increased without adequate consultation, students' violent agitations are just and necessary and I would actively participate in such agitations" has mean score of 2.3. The next item was "If I deem it necessary, I will actively participate in students' protest against university authority." This item was scored 2.34. In addition, students were also disposed to item "where there is lack of fairness, equity and justice in school policies, I will not hesitate to participate in violent agitation against the university authorities". This was scored 2.25. Also, students were disposed to the item "Secret cult activities are so prevalent in this university that in future peace and order may be compromised by cult activities" with mean score of 2.15. Students were slightly disposed to item "Personally, I do not feel bothered whether there is peace or not in my university with mean score of 2.09". Furthermore, item "If I deem it necessary, I will actively participate in students' protest against university authority" with mean score of 2.02. Among the items that students were indisposed about was item "Personally, I do not feel too much worried whether there is peace or not in my university with mean score of 1.99." Students were indisposed about the item "if I am hired by people or politician outside or inside the university and the price offered is alright, I may cooperate" with mean score of 1.89. On the disposition to increase in school fees without consultation, 44.6% of students were prepared to be

involved in violence protest against the university authorities. This is a major signal for all policy makers that increase in school fees must be preceded by adequate consultation by almost all stakeholders in the university environment. A large section of the students would not mind joining violent protest in matters pertaining to school fees. The history of violent protest in universities would also reveal that hike in school fees is usually a major causative factor. The profile of responses of students to other items reflects that the pursuit of peace on university campuses is not a battle that has been completely won. The percentage of students indisposed to items that have implications for maintenance of peace is still high enough for disquiet on most items. This implies that the pursuit of peace is a dynamic process that should be continually ongoing. Peace is perhaps too precious to be taken for granted among a virile population of young adults that constituted the major sample of the study. This view is corroborated by Ghosn (2005) who asserted that the rationale for bringing peace education to the classroom is strategically based on general aims of education. Albert (2009) also made an important remark that for any meaningful peace education curriculum to be introduced into Nigerian universities, there should be skill-based and attitude changing rather than being primarily knowledge-based. This is what the transformative theory (Mezirow 1997) adopted for this study emphasized- attitude changing. Mezirow believed that transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously implementing plans about new ways of defining their

worlds. Transformative learning is absolutely critical to the process of peace education vis a vis the culture of peace. If peace education is considered as a practice for transforming society from a culture of war to a culture of peace then it is implicit that our current worldview is embedded in the culture of war. Our knowledge, behaviors and actions are influenced by this worldview and must change in order to shift towards a culture of peace. Therefore, transformative learning is a necessary part of peace education (Ogunrin 2016).

Findings from the analysis of the qualitative data support the quantitative analysis as well. The students' union leaders as well as the chief security officers of the students' union that were interviewed at various times were of the opinion that the line of communication and dialogue between student union and management is always not good enough. They all opined that university management must improve the culture of dialoguing and communicating with the students. For instance, rules and regulations of universities should be brought into awareness of majority of students. All the student union leaders interviewed are of the opinion that students' unions are the natural vehicles for achieving this awareness. For the sake of sustaining peace therefore, there should be more synergy and cooperation between university administration on the one hand and the Student Union on the other. In order to create and maintain consensual peace, relationships among relevant parties must be dominated by cooperation and not competition. This issue of cooperation is perhaps the underpinning factor of the social interdependence theory — one of the theories adopted for this study. The theory embraces

cooperation and believes that for understanding the culture of peace, the issue of cooperation is fundamental to the ways and patterns of behavior that exist among university undergraduates in southwestern Nigeria. The premise of the theory is that the way in which goals are structured determines how individuals interact which in turn creates outcomes that ultimately leads to a culture of peace.

Recommendation

A major trend in undergraduates' Disposition to Culture of peace is the identification of some factors as potentials threats to maintenance of peace on university campuses. These include as indicated in this study unilateral increase in undergraduates' fees, poor provision of municipal services and lack of adequate communication and effective dialogue between school authorities and university undergraduates and negative factors predisposing them to campus violence .

It is hereby recommended for policy makers and university administrators to make adequate provisions for these identified threats highlighted in this study. university policies and practice must be seen covertly and overtly as safeguarding and promoting undergraduates' welfare and progress. Perhaps nothing prepares and disposes undergraduates to sustainable peace more than this policy. Ultimately there seems to be no substitute for peace.

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