SELF-ESTEEM AS A PREDICTOR OF SECURITY CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG YOUTHS IN ABIA AND ANAMBRA STATES OF NIGERIA

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Abstract
The main purpose of this paper was to examine whether self-esteem would predict security consciousness among a large sample of youths in Abia and Anambra States of southeast Nigeria. Basically, this paper determined whether self-esteem would predict youths’ involvement in behaviors that are capable of causing harm to lives and properties. In addition, gender as a factor was assumed to influence youths’ security consciousness. The participants for the study were made up of 800 youths randomly selected from Abia and Anambra States in the southeast Nigeria. 400 youths were drawn from 4 local governments in Abia State (Umuahia South, Ohafia, Aba North and Obi Ngwa) while another 400 youths were drawn from 4 local governments in Anambra State (Awka North, Anyamelum, Aguata and Onitsha South) The sample included 476 males and 324 females whose age ranges from 18-36 years. The research instruments included the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES) and the Security Consciousness Inventory Scale (SCI). The study had a cross-sectional design and a 2x2 Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for data analysis. The result revealed no significance influence of self-esteem on youth security consciousness but a significance influence of gender on youth security consciousness was established. Conclusions and recommendations were thereafter itemized.

Keywords: security consciousness, youth, self-esteem, gender, insecurity
Introduction
Nigeria and the world in general are experiencing a disturbing trend of security challenges that are ruthlessly demonstrated by the rise in violent attacks on individuals, religious and government institutions mounted by a broad range of lawless persons who are motivated by ethnic, religious, tribal, political and personal interests. Among the security challenges facing Nigeria are ethnic militia activities, ethno-religious conflicts, vandalism, boundary and land disputes, armed banditry, bombing, kidnapping and political violence (Onokhuru, 2010).

The term ‘security’ has been assigned different meanings by many authors. Security has been seen as a situation where a person or thing is not exposed to any form of danger or risk of physical or moral aggression, accident, theft or deterioration (Anyadike, 2005). For Nwagboso, (2012) security is the act of being safe from harm or danger, the defense, protection and preservation of values, and the absence of threats to acquired values. Security is about survival and the condition of human existence.

Nigeria is currently caught in the web of crime dilemma, manifesting in the convulsive upsurge of both violent and non-violent crimes (Okechukwu, 2011). Researchers have studied the pace and dimension of violent crimes in Nigeria ranging from insurgency, kidnapping, armed robbery and violent protests (Attoh, 2012; Okafor, 2011; Adebayo, 2013; Ajufo, 2013; Azizi, 2012; Okonkwo, 2009; Eso, 2011; Walker, 2012; Awonyemi, 2012; Bassey and Dokubo, 2011; NDDC, 2004). Many states in Nigeria experience high incidence of violent crime. For instance, Abia and Anambra States have been characterized by prevalence of kidnapping, arm robbery and human insecurity (Nwadinobi, 2013; Oparaku, Nwaneri, & Egbe, 2017).


Researches have shown that several cases of crime have held the youths responsible for either being used to perpetrate crime or their willfully indulging in crime. These youths are within the age brackets of 14 years to 48 years (Boniface, 2011; Banjoko, 2011; Otabor & Olaniyi, 2011; Olaniyi, 2010; O’neil, 2010, as cited in Ogba, 2012). The CLEEN foundation survey (2011) and the AOAV (2013) reports indicate that the youth
are central to violent crime within the South-east region. Studies have attributed the cause of youth involvement in violent crime to poverty, unemployment, drug use, peer pressure and rebellion, broken home and lack of education, multiple adverse social, economic and family conditions (Prior & Paris, 2005; Maseko, 2009; Erickson, 2001; Ojo, 2012; Agbor, Taiwo, &Smith, 2012; Salagaev, 2003; Muhammad, 2008). The present researchers are of the opinion that the involvement of youths in criminal activities may likely be attributed to how the self is evaluated.

Security consciousness refers to extreme awareness and sense of safety. In this study, security consciousness is referred to as the state of being aware, having knowledge and the ability to recognize and avoid acts capable of causing harm to oneself and to others. In other words, a lack of security consciousness means that one is absolutely not aware of the insecurities in our society that have, without doubt, brought sorrow, agony, hatred and loss to innocent citizens and which also have militated against the economic growth and social development of Nigeria, or that one is ignorant of the consequences, punishments or the after effects of willfully indulging or being used to perpetrate violent crime against innocent people. In Nigeria, where insecurity is on the increase, it is important to understand the influence of how one perceives the self in predicting one’s consciousness about the dangers of violent crime.

Self-esteem, on the other hand, is the degree to which people perceive themselves positively or negatively. It refers to the way that people feel about themselves, which reflects on and affects their ongoing transactions with their environment and the people they encounter in it (Kernis, 2003). Self-esteem is the positive or negative attitude which an individual has towards his or her own self and is shaped by the individual’s relationships with others, experiences, and accomplishments in life (Ogba, 2012).

Previous studies suggest that individuals who score high on self-esteem scales exhibit behavior that aid achievement, are more goal oriented, utilizes effective coping strategies, and avoid antisocial behavior and substance abuse (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, &Vohns, 2003; Trzesniewski, Brent, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005; Silverstone &Salaby, 2003; Rosenberg &Owen, 2001; Flory, Lynam, Milich, Leukefeld, & Clayton, 2004; Harter, 1998; McGee & Williams, 2000). Baumeister, Brad, & Keith (2000) noted that people with low self-esteem are confused and uncertain about whom they are, whereas aggression is likely to be an attempt to defend and assert a strongly held opinion about oneself.
Some researchers found no significant relationship between self-esteem and violent behavior (Xiaoru, Kaplan & Risser, 1992); hence, self-evaluation, for them, does not necessarily predict security consciousness. Baumeister, Smart, and Boden (1996) found that in some situations, positive self-esteem is linked to violent behavior. They suggested that murderers, rapists, wife beaters, violent youth gangs, aggressive nations, and other categories of violent people are all marked by strongly held views of their own superiority. However, Kreidler and Slan, (1996) found that criminality is not a consequence of low self-esteem.

Following from this background, therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the influence of self-esteem on the security consciousness of the youth in Abia and Anambra States of South-East Nigeria. The researchers focused on the youth following our observation that young people are always involved as perpetrators or victims of violent crime and the rational for studying youth in these states is attributed to the perceived high incidence of violence in the area. More also, previous studies have indicated the mediating effect of gender on violent crime, especially in the South-east of Nigeria (Ogba, 2012; AOAV, 2013).

**Statement of Problem**

Insecurity in Nigeria is rapidly increasing, and the youth are perceived to be used in perpetrating these crimes. These youth, despite having a sense of their self-worth and being aware of the implication of crimes, still indulge in such unwanted behaviors. In view of the many issues that have been identified as the motivating factors for youth involvement in violent crime, this study investigated the influence of positive or negative evaluation of oneself in predicting security consciousness. In the study, gender was assumed to play a role in security consciousness. Specifically, this study will provide answers to the following questions: Will self-esteem predict security consciousness among youths in Anambra and Abia States of Nigeria? Will gender differences predict security consciousness among youth in Anambra and Abia states of South-East Nigeria?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the following:

i. Whether self-esteem will predict security consciousness among youths in Abia and Anambra States of South-East Nigeria, and
ii. Whether gender differences influence the prediction of security consciousness among youths in Abia and Anambra States of South-East Nigeria.

**Hypothesis**

The following hypotheses were tested.

H$_1$: Self-esteem will not predict security consciousness among youths in Abia and Anambra States of South-East Nigeria.

H$_2$: Gender differences do not influence the prediction of security consciousness among youths in Abia and Anambra States of South-East Nigeria.

**Methodology**

**Participants**

The participants for the study were made up of 800 youths randomly selected from Abia and Anambra States in south-east Nigeria. We were concerned about these two states due to the high incidence of violent crime in the area and also because they are more accessible to us. 400 youths were drawn from 4 local governments in Abia State (Umuahia South, Ohafia, Aba North and Obi Ngwa) while another 400 youths were drawn from 4 local governments in Anambra State (Awka North, Anyamelum, Aguata and Onitsha South). The sample included 476 males and 324 females whose age ranges from 18-36 years.

**Instruments**

The research instruments included the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES) and the Security Consciousness Inventory Scale (SCI). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale consisted of 10 items measuring self-esteem of participants. These 10 items were designed and scored in a four-point response scale ranging from: Strongly Agree = 1, Agree = 2, Disagree = 3 and Strongly Disagree = 4. It also has both direct scoring pattern (for items like 1, 3, 4, 7, and 10); and reversed scoring patterns for the remaining items (2, 5, 6, 8 and 9). The scale was scored by summing up the total scores for the 10 items and the higher the scores, the higher the self-esteem.

The Security Consciousness Inventory (SCI) by Ogba (2012) consisted of 26 item scale developed to measure security consciousness of the participants. This instrument was designed in a four-point response option of: Agree Strongly = 1, Agree = 2, Disagree = 3 and Strongly Disagree = 4. It has a direct scoring pattern.
**Reliability and Validity of the Instruments**

An item analysis was done on the scales after a pilot study was conducted on 200 participants. 100 participants were randomly drawn from the Department of Psychology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, while another 100 participants were randomly selected from the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu. The Cronbach alpha revealed .70 reliability index for the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and .90 reliability index for the Security Consciousness Inventory.

**Procedure**

The researchers employed and trained research assistants in all the local governments from which participants were drawn. The researchers obtained authorization letters from the chairmen of the concerned local government areas of the states. The questionnaires were administered and collected by the researchers and assistants. While administering the questionnaire, the research assistants provided the respondents with a verbal and written explanation of the study, including the purpose of the study, an assurance of total anonymity and confidentiality, and a discussion of the importance of respondents understanding that they participated in the study voluntarily. Respondents were counseled that they could opt out or withdraw from the study at any stage of the process. Respondents were encouraged to answer all questions, but were asked to disregard questions to which they did not feel comfortable responding. The participants were also told that there was no time limit in responding to the question in the questionnaire.

Consequently, the researcher had no access to any personal records such as names, addresses or phone numbers of the participants. Participants were instructed that the completed questionnaire should not be returned by proxy or with any identifying marks. A total of 800 questionnaires were distributed to the study participants, unfortunately, only 732 out of the 800 questionnaires distributed were returned. Out of the 732 returned questionnaires, 26 questionnaires were not properly filled and, therefore, were discarded. The study relied on the 706 completely filled questionnaires for data analysis.

**Design/ Statistics**

The study used a cross-sectional design and a 2x2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for data analysis.
Results

Table 1: Summary Table of Means on the Influence of Gender and Self-esteem on Security Consciousness among Youths in Abia and Anambra States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Self-Esteem</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Low Self-Esteem</td>
<td>175.6418</td>
<td>36.71438</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Self-Esteem</td>
<td>176.7368</td>
<td>39.53130</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>176.2840</td>
<td>38.33718</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Low Self-Esteem</td>
<td>183.6894</td>
<td>36.37929</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Self-Esteem</td>
<td>182.6063</td>
<td>36.80506</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>183.0628</td>
<td>36.58222</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Self-Esteem</td>
<td>180.0339</td>
<td>36.68980</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Self-Esteem</td>
<td>179.8929</td>
<td>38.15531</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>179.9518</td>
<td>37.52367</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1 above, males obtained a total mean of (X = 176.28) while females obtained a total mean of (X = 183.06). On the same note, youths with low self-esteem obtained a total mean of (X = 180.03) while those with high self-esteem obtained a total mean of (X = 179.89) respectively on security consciousness.

Table 2: Summary Table of Two-way Anova on Influence of Gender and Self-Esteem on Security Consciousness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>8259.491a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2753.164</td>
<td>1.963</td>
<td>.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>22014101.746</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22014101.746</td>
<td>15698.819</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>8255.374</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8255.374</td>
<td>5.887</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender * Self Esteem</td>
<td>202.216</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>202.216</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>984398.871</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>1402.278</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23854820.000</td>
<td>706</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>992658.363</td>
<td>705</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 2 above, the calculated value of $F(1, 702) = .00, P>.99$ level of significance, revealed no significance influence of self-esteem on youth security consciousness. This indicated that self-esteem had no remarkable influence on youth’s security consciousness, meaning that low or high self-esteem of youths had nothing to do with their level of security consciousness.
Also, from the same table, the calculated value of $F(1, 702) = .589$, $P<.02$ level of significance, revealed a significant influence of gender on youth security consciousness. This indicated that gender had a remarkable influence on youth’s exhibition of security consciousness. Meaning that, there is a remarkable difference between male and female on their level of security consciousness.

**Discussion of Findings**

The main purpose of this paper was to examine whether self-esteem will predict security consciousness among a large sample of youths in the south east states of Abia and Anambra, Nigeria. Basically, this paper determined whether self-esteem will predict youths’ involvement in behaviors that are capable of causing harm to lives and properties. In addition, gender as a factor was assumed to influence youth’s security consciousness. From the result of this study, it was observed that all the participants obtained a higher means above the norms, meaning that they all scored high on security consciousness regardless of their self-esteem.

In keeping with the hypotheses of this study, the assumption that self-esteem will not predict security consciousness among youths in the south east states of Nigeria was supported by this result. In other words, self-esteem (whether high or low) is assumed not to account for the reason why young people are involved in behaviors that are ultimately injurious to themselves and others. It was also observed that females in the study sample showed more security consciousness than their male counterparts. This entails that females irrespective of their self-esteem are more security conscious than males. This explains why the number of males involved in criminal behaviors is often larger than female.

This result is in agreement with earlier studies of Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs (2003) which found self-esteem not to be a major predictor or cause of behaviour. The result also agreed with the findings of Xiaoru, Kaplan and Risser (1992) which showed no relationship between security consciousness and self-esteem regardless of the level of esteem. This finding contradicts a similar cross-sectional study conducted by Ogba (2012) which found self-esteem to influence youth involvement in criminal behaviors.
Conclusion
This present study was aimed to examined the role of self-esteem in predicting security consciousness among the young people. The result found no association between self-esteem and security consciousness among the samples. Thus, young people’s involvement in harmful behaviors could be attributed to other factors other than one’s attitude towards the self. Social learning is more adequate in explaining why young people engage in violent crime. According to Bandura (1971) social behavior is mostly acquired through vicarious reinforcement. Certain behaviors such as armed robbery, kidnapping and other forms of criminality tend to persist when it is reinforced. In other words, young people engage in violent crime when it is thriving and when the various agents of socialization and the law enforcement agents fall short in their responsibilities. On the contrary, young people are likely to desist from violent behavior when it is constantly punished.

Also, social cognition may help explain young people’s involvement in violent behaviors. How an individual respond to risky situations depends to large extent on how the individual perceive the situation, which ultimately is a consequence of an individual’s cognitive process. Social information processing skills enable an individual to encode information, interpret and weigh gains and loss of a particular action in order to determine the appropriate response based on the situation. Definitely, it is not suggested that a problem with cognitive capabilities leads to violent crime but rather that the way people process social information determine how they respond to sociopolitical, ethno-religious or personal pressures towards violent behaviors.

The findings of the current study also provide evidence of gender differences in security consciousness. Thus, the female seems more security conscious than their male counterpart and this means that the females are less likely to participate in violent crime. This does not mean that females are entirely free from crime but it does suggest that the female are more careful about insecurity than the male.

Recommendations
Given the foregoing, this study suggests as follows:
1. Assessment tool which measures domains of social cognition should always be applied to assess and monitor youths’ view towards security consciousness.
2. Stringent punishment should be given to perpetrators of violent crime, to serve as a disincentive to youths capable of imitating such behavior.
3. Those in leadership positions should be made to understand that they serve as role models to some of their followers. Therefore, they should be mindful of their actions because youths as leaders of tomorrow are good observers and learners.

4. This study is limited to youths in the south east states of Abia and Anambra, Nigeria, which comprise youths of same socio-ethnic and religious orientation. Therefore, further research should encompass youth of different social, ethnic and religious background.

Acknowledgment
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