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**AFFECTIVE ORIENTATION AS A DETERMINANT OF SOCIAL WELL-  
BEING OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study assessed the levels of social well-being and affective orientation of Nigerian university students; and determined the influence of affective orientation on the social wellbeing of the undergraduate students. Five hundred students were selected from a Nigerian university using multi-stage sampling procedures. Data was collected using a scale on social well-being and affective orientation. Data collected were analysed using frequency, percentage, and regression analysis. The results revealed that the levels of both social well-being and affective orientation of respondents were moderate. The results further revealed that there was a significant influence of affective orientation on the social well-being of undergraduate students at  $p < 0.05$  level of significance ( $F = 75.214, p = 0.000$ ). This showed an increase in social well-being with an increase in affective orientation. It therefore brought to the fore the need to channel the students' emotions toward improving their social well-being as well as the need for the university to put up programme of activities that can improve social interaction and communication among students.*

Keywords: Affective orientation, Mental health, Social support, Social well-being,

### INTRODUCTION

Some events in the life of today's youth and young adults have raised a lot of concerns on the level of their well-being, particularly mental and social well-being. A lot of vices as well as life-threatening activities such as suicidal ideation and attempts, drug use, internet addiction, depression, and so on, are on the increase among the young ones and this raises a lot of concerns among researchers and stakeholders. For instance, a report has it that suicide rates have increased by 60% worldwide in the last 45 years and it is currently among the three leading causes of death among people aged 15-44, both male and female (Befriend Worldwide, 2021). Incidentally, Nigeria with a population of over 200 million is one of the epicentres of suicide in the world with a suicide estimate of 17.3 per 100000, which is higher than the global (10.5 per 100 000) and Africa (12.0 per 100000) estimates (WHO, 2020). Meanwhile, poor social interaction, low social support, and low emotional resilience have been associated with an increase in suicidal ideation and attempt (Akintomide, 2021) also found to have played a significant role in suicidal ideation among Nigerian undergraduate students.

On another note, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime - UNDOC (2020, 2018) reported a global increase in substance addiction among people aged 15 to 64 years. In Nigeria, Aduloju (2021) said that recent NDLEA statistics revealed that over 40% of Nigerian adolescents aged 18-35 years are heavily involved in substance addiction. Other researchers, such as Adamson, Ogunlesi, Morakinyo, Akinhanmi, Onifade, and Olaitan (2015), discovered that substance misuse was frequent among university undergraduates across the country's geopolitical zones. Akintomide and Ogedengbe, 2023 also found some level of substance abuse among Nigerian university students and some of the drugs the students mostly abuse include caffeine, cocaine, alcohol, kolanut, and marijuana. This has led to different forms of health problems, (including psychotic disorder), social problems of rejection, and different academic problems (Akintomide & Ogedengbe, 2023; Olivia, Rand, Emilio & Richard, 2015).

Another issue of concern among adolescents and young adults is internet use and addiction. Omoyemiju and Popoola (2021) found out that 14% of undergraduate students of a Nigerian University exhibited severe levels of internet addiction with a higher rate among male than female students. All these incidents were considered by these researchers as big threats to the academic as well as the general well-being of the students particularly undergraduate students in Nigerian universities.

Meanwhile, well-being is generally considered a state of happiness and contentment, with low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health and outlook, or good quality of life (American Psychological Association, 2023). Michaelson, Mahony, and Schifferes (2012) described well-being as how people feel how they function both on a personal and social level and how they evaluate their lives as a whole. It is the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy. It could be said to mean being well; being in good condition; being comfortable; being happy; and being adjustable in the domains of human existence such as physical, mental, social, and so on. Some of the dimensions of well-being include social well-being, health, education and learning, employment and the quality of working life, time and leisure, command over goods and services, physical environment, social environment, and personal safety (Christchurch City Council, 2005).

Sinclair (2021) defines social well-being as the sharing, fostering, and maintaining meaningful relationships with others. This gives you a sense of connection and belonging while making you feel genuine and cherished. It refers to the overall quality of life experienced by individuals within a society. It encompasses various aspects of people's lives, including their relationships with others, their sense of belonging and community, and their overall satisfaction with their social environment. One of the key components of social well-being is the strength of social connections and relationships. Strong social bonds are essential for individuals to feel supported, cared for, and valued. These relationships can come in many forms, such as family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. When individuals have strong social networks, they are more likely to experience higher levels of happiness, better mental health, and improved physical well-being. Another important aspect of social well-being is a sense of belonging and connectedness to a community. When someone has a high level of social well-being, some of the challenges and issues of life may not really have a debilitating effect on such a person because there is a presence of networks of support around.

In addition, according to the World Health Organization viewpoint, social well-being is an important dimension of health along with physical and mental aspects. It plays an effective role in improving the quality of life, social efficacy, and social performance (Breslow, 2017). Social well-being contains five domains which include social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social actualization, and social coherence which includes a concern for knowing about the world (Keyes & Martin, 2017). Dunaeva (2018) also identified social support and social adjustment as two key components of social well-being. Social adjustment is the ability to fulfill social roles and experience personal fulfillment in relationships. Social support refers to the caliber of one's social network's connections and the sense of security those connections provide.

Meanwhile, one of the factors that could affect social well-being is one's affective orientation, which is a significant variable in interpersonal relationships. Affective orientation is a personality attribute that claims some people are more likely to be aware of their emotions and even utilize them as a guide when interacting with others (Otuuchi et al, 2021). Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1997 in Otuuchi et al, (2021) described affective orientation as the tendency to deliberately examine, take into account, and then use one's feelings as information for making decisions. Individuals who are high in Affective Orientation tend to attend to their emotions and act on them. Emotions are a necessary part of the human system, however, people who are high on Affective Orientation could be said to relate more to their feelings and emotions than other sources of information or impulses. This might be due to experiences. Individuals who score high in Affective Orientation were found to have their feelings guide them in most cases, even to overeating (Goodboy & Booth-Butterfield, 2008). University students who might be high in Affective Orientation may ignore valid sources of information from experienced students and university counsellors, but rather depend on their emotions to guide them through choices. This can be a risky strategy for navigating the academic life maze.

Affective orientation can influence how individuals interact with others, how they handle stressful situations, and how they perceive and experience the world around them. It is an important aspect of personality and can have significant implications for mental health and well-being. It can have a

significant impact on social well-being in a variety of ways such as response to emotions in their relationships, an individual's ability to empathize and understand the emotions of others, and impacting an individual's ability to seek and provide social support.

The majority of the students who fall victim to some life-threatening events didn't show evidence of good social well-being and social connection. For instance, some students commit suicide without the knowledge of their peers (Adebowale & Omotehinse, 2023, Ajibola & Agunbiade, 2022) some go into depression when they see their results not going the way they think (Peltzer, Pengpid, Olowu & Olasupo, 2013), while some engage in drug abuse to suppress depression (Adegboyega, Oniye & Adigun, 2015). Several studies have investigated lots of factors associated with social well-being which include social support (Zeenat & Neshmia, 2018), and social integration (Salehi, Marzban, Sourosh, Sharif, Nejabat & Imanieh (2017), but scarcely are their empirical studies well establishing the association between social well-being and affective orientation. This study is therefore conceived to fill the gap.

The objectives of this study are therefore to:

- i. assess the levels of social well-being and affective orientation of Nigerian university students; and
- ii. determine the influence of affective orientation on the social well-being of the undergraduate students

### **METHOD**

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprises all undergraduates in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria is one of the First generation Federal universities in Nigeria. It houses students from all over the country as well as foreign students from within and outside Africa. It has the attribute of a typical university whose data can be used to generalize for other university students. From the university, a sample size of five hundred (500) was selected using the multistage sampling procedure. From the 16 faculties in the university, 10 faculties were selected using a simple random sampling technique. From each of the selected faculties, two departments were selected using a simple random sampling technique and from the selected departments, 25 students were randomly selected.

An instrument titled 'Social Wellbeing and Affective Orientation Questionnaire' was used to elicit the required information from the respondents. The instrument has three sections. Section A consists of socio-demographic information of the respondents; Sections B and C consist of items on the social well-being and affective orientation of the respondents respectively based on the projective rating scale of 'Always' (A), 'Sometimes' (S) and 'Never' (N). After explaining the purpose of the study to the respondents the researchers administered the instrument to the respondents through the help of trained research assistants. Data collected were analyzed using frequency, percentage, and regression analysis through the application of Statistical Packages for Social Science (IBM SPSS V20).

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

*Social Well-being of University Students*

With a mean score of 27.56 and a standard deviation of 2.93 calculated from the responses to the section on the scale on social well-being and also minimum and maximum scores of 16 and 40, levels of social well-being were calculated. On the measure, those who had scores from 16 to 23 were regarded as having a low level of social well-being, those with scores ranging from 24 to 31 were taken as moderate while those who had scores from 32 to 40 were tagged high level of social wellbeing. These were subjected to descriptive analysis and it is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: level of social well-being of undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State

Level	Frequency	Percent
Low	32	6.4
Moderate	427	85.4
High	41	8.2
Total	500	100.0

The table shows that 6.4% of the students had a low level of social well-being, 85.4% had a moderate level of social well-being and 8.2% of them had a high level of social well-being. We can conclude from the finding that the level of social well-being of the undergraduates was moderate.

### *Affective orientation of the undergraduate students*

Similarly, the level of affective orientation of the undergraduate students was determined from the students' responses to the items of the scale on affective orientation. On the scale, a mean score of 27.47 and a standard deviation of 3.68 were obtained. The minimum score obtained was 13 and the maximum score obtained was 40. Arising from these, those who had scores from 13 to 21 were regarded as having a low level of affective orientation, those with scores between 22 and 30 were taken as moderate while those who had scores from 31 to 40 were taken as high level of affective orientation. These were subjected to descriptive analysis and the results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: level of affective orientation of the undergraduate students

Level	Frequency	Percent
Low	26	5.2
Moderate	388	77.6
High	86	17.2
Total	500	100.0

The table shows that 26 (5.2%) of the students have a low level of affective orientation, 388 (77.6%) of them displayed a moderate level of affective orientation and 86 (17.2%) of them displayed a high level of affective orientation. Hence, we can conclude from the finding that the level of affective orientation of the undergraduate students was moderate.

*Influence of Affective Orientation on the Social well-being of undergraduates*

It was hypothesized that affective orientation would not significantly influence the social well-being of undergraduate students. Linear regression was therefore used to determine the influence of affective orientation on social well-being. The result is presented in Table 4.5

Table 4.5: Influence of affective orientation on the social well-being of the undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	547.060	1	547.060	75.214	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	3614.848	497	7.273		
Total	4161.908	498			

a. Dependent Variable: wellbeing

b. Predictors: (Constant), affective orientation

The table shows that there was a significant influence of affective orientation on the social well-being of the undergraduate students at  $p < 0.05$  level of significance ( $F = 75.214$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), we therefore reject the null hypothesis that was earlier stated.

Affective orientation has been suggested to have a crucial role to play in shaping how individuals navigate social interactions, form relationships, and maintain their overall well-being in a social context. Developing emotional awareness, regulation, and empathy can contribute to healthier and more fulfilling social connections, ultimately enhancing social well-being. These are part of the motivation for this study, particularly now that there are lots of issues challenging the social well-being of adolescents and youths. This study investigated the level of social well-being and affective orientation of students in a Nigerian university to determine how affective orientation affects the social well-being of this category of respondents. Invariably, the results of the findings showed that the level of social well-being of the undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University was moderate. The students said that they mostly experience positive feelings whenever they think about themselves. They have persons who they engage with like friends and family. This finding agrees with the findings of Saleh, Marzban, Sourosh, Sharif, Nejabat, and Imanieh (2016) who found that the social well-being score of the students in the area where they carried out their study was at an average level. They found out that the students had a well-being score of 50 out of 100. They however concluded that the students had an unsatisfactory level of wellbeing and the evaluation of the social wellbeing of the students should be done from time to time to provide

adequate help to them. Although, Sabiha, Mahvish, and Salma (2022) in their research found that the level of social wellbeing of students in their study was high which is contrary to the findings of this study.

The finding of this study also showed that there was a moderate level of affective orientation of undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. This was because the students agreed that they hated being disrespected, rather they wanted people to address them with respect and courtesy, most of them preferred staying alone, and so they draw back whenever they are not feeling the right vibe. They also felt that school stress has reduced their attention to people around them. This shows the assertion of Otuuchi, Adeniyi, Enyi, and Akinojo (2021) who said that the affective orientation of students is either low or high. Whereas this study shows that the students have moderate affective orientation. This however is not in agreement with the findings of Shin and Kim (2011) who found that 75% of the students in their study area had high emotional orientation scores.

The study further showed that there was a significant influence of affective orientation on the social well-being of the undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State. This shows that the higher the affective orientation of the students, the higher they tend to have good social well-being. This might be because the students perceived that they needed to do things on their own to draw self-fulfillment. This agrees with the findings of Ozdogan (2021) who found that there was a significant relationship between the variables of well-being and emotional loneliness. They further discussed that emotional loneliness significantly predicted the well-being of the students in the study area. Likewise, the findings of Otuuchi, Adeniyi, Enyi, and Akinojo (2021) showed that there was a significant relationship between affective orientation and roommate relationship at Obafemi Awolowo University. They further said that the affective orientation is a factor that determines the level of relationship of the students with their roommates and colleagues which in turn has a significant influence on the social wellbeing of the students.

### **CONCLUSION**

It could be concluded from the study that affective orientation has a direct influence on social well-being of the respondents. The better the affective orientation, the better the social as well as mental well-being of the respondents.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given that the study indicates a moderate level of affective orientation among the students, it is recommended that the university invests in programmes and initiatives that focus on improving emotional and social connections among students. This could include workshops, counselling services, and activities that foster a positive and supportive campus environment. Emphasizing the importance of empathy, understanding, and emotional intelligence can contribute to higher levels of affective orientation. To enhance social well-being, it is crucial to improve interpersonal communication skills among students. The university should consider implementing communication training programmes, workshops, and courses that help students develop effective communication skills. This can include both verbal and non-verbal communication, conflict resolution, and active listening.

Since the study identifies a significant influence of affective orientation on social well-being, integrating emotional intelligence and affective orientation concepts into academic curricula could be beneficial. Incorporating these elements into various courses and educational activities can contribute to a more holistic development of students, positively impacting their overall well-being.

Creating supportive communities within the university environment is crucial. The institution should facilitate the formation of clubs, groups, or forums where students can engage in meaningful conversations, share experiences, and provide mutual support. This can contribute to a sense of belonging and strengthen the social fabric among undergraduates.

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