

Criteria Measure of Evaluation Apprehension and Distraction-Conflict Attribute in Nigerian Youths

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ABSTRACT This study sets out to assess the level of Evaluation Apprehension and Distraction - Conflict attribute in Nigerian Youths. University Undergraduates between the ages of 19 and 25 years constitute the subject of the study. 600 samples were randomly drawn from this target population. The data collected were subjected to the appropriate statistical analysis and the findings reveal that subjects display a moderate rather than an abnormal level of Evaluation apprehension and Distraction - Conflict attribute thus leading to the rejection of the first hypothesis. The second hypothesis was confirmed in favour of the fact that males measure higher on Evaluation apprehension and Distraction Conflict attribute scale than females. The implications of the findings were highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

Zajonc (1965) proposes that social facilitation effect occurs because the presence of others increases an individuals' level of arousal, which in turn makes some behaviours easier and others more difficult. Ordinarily, Zajonc believes that human and other animals have an innate tendency to be aroused by other members of their species. Researches arising from this proposition (Geen, 1991) have pointed to two underlying factors namely; evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict.

Evaluation apprehension is the extent to which our social performance is affected by the presence of others whose opinion we value. For example, as you walk past a group of people, you may suddenly be concerned about whether you look out of shape, for this reason, you may subconsciously pull in your stomach and step up your pace. One research (Rosenberg, 1969) confirmed that the presence of others who can judge us produces evaluation apprehension. And that this apprehension changes our performance in the way predicted by social facilitation theory. Bartis *et al.* (1988) also demonstrated that apprehension can improve per-

formance on simple aspects of a task and hinder it on complex aspects of the same task.

There is also the believe that if you expect to succeed at a task (either because it is easy or it involves an accessible response, or you have succeeded at this task in the past), you will do better when you are observed, while the opposite is true if you expect to fail (Sonna and Shotland, 1990). Other researchers (e.g. Allen *et al.*, 1999) have provided evidence that evaluation, not mere presence, is the critical factor that affects behaviour. For example, the presence of actively supportive non-evaluative observers - human or even pets - neither provokes arousal nor interferes with performance (Smith & Mackie, 1995).

There is also the Distraction - Conflict phenomenon which emphasizes that the presence of others can also affect our performance by creating distraction. Such a distraction as this can, in fact, cause us to think about others, react to them or monitor what they are doing, thus deflecting attention from the task at hand (Guerin, 1986; Baron, 1986). It has also been proved that there are certain categorization to the effect caused by evaluation apprehension, can then improve performance on simple tasks and interfere with it on difficult ones.

The combined effects of evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict are especially significant in such task performance as obtains in sport where athletes must perform at their very best in front of demanding and noisy audiences. Elegbeleye (1993) carried out a study in which social skill training was used as a major technique employed to reduce fear of negative evaluation in Nigerian adolescent females. After a specified experimental training period, subjects assigned to the treatment groups showed a significant level of boldness to contribute positively to an interpersonal social encounter which was not the case with the control group.

Elegbeleye concluded in the study that conscious effort should be made by teachers, youth handlers, social welfare workers, Educational policy makers etc. to factor into their various training programmes a form of social skill-inducing formats that would prepare adolescents, particularly females, for the social responsibilities of adulthood and mothering roles.

Excessive display of evaluation apprehension attribute in a youth may inhibit active involvement in pro-social engagement. This may lead to withdrawal from social settings and eventual incompetence in becoming socially effective with all its attendant negative results. Also an abnormal level of distraction - conflict attribute in a youth would predispose him to avoid activities that require social skill to achieve success. Where he is forcefully made to participate in social encounters with his group or unfamiliar audience, he is likely to perform poorly.

Nigerian Youths have won as prestigious a laurel as an Olympic Gold Medal in football at the under 23 years (in 1996) level. This feat definitely requires proficient skill in foot balling and deep concentration for success to be achieved. To this extent, Nigerian Youths may be predicted to score low on Evaluation apprehensive and Distraction - Conflict measuring Scale, particularly when considered against the background of the impressive singular performances of other Nigerian Youth Olympic Media lists like Ajunwa, Onyeali (Long jump gold medalist and 200 metres sprint silver medalist respectively in the 1996 Olympic) etc. But when juxtaposed against a very often reported antisocial activities of University cult members, one begins to wonder if there is not a problem of a mix-up somewhere. The question that impresses itself upon one's mind is; why

would University trainee youths regress into clandestine cult activities which involve killing; blood-sucking, cannibalism and meeting in caves etc. in this age of technology? The need therefore arises to research into what the social profile of Nigerian Youth is in matters that concern achievement and social refinement. It is this need that has prompted this study.

To measure Evaluation Apprehension and Distraction Conflict attribute in Nigeria Youths therefore, two hypotheses were formulated to the effect that; (a) the degree of susceptibility of Nigerian youths to Evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict attribute shall not be adjudged to be moderate, (b) and that response to attributes of evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict shall provide significant evidences of gender disparity.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The design for the study was essentially survey and comparative in mode. It employed the use of Quantitative data analysis to interpret the data collected.

Subject

University undergraduates between the ages of 19 and 25 years constitute the subject of the study. Six hundred (600) samples were randomly drawn from the target population. Of this number 320 were male while 280 were female. The locale of the study was south western Nigeria.

Instrument

The major psychological instrument adapted

APPENDIX

Table 1: Percentage level of FNE and distraction conflict level in subjects

Variable	N	X	SD	Highest Score Possible	Lowest Score Possible	Percentage Level of Evaluation Apprehension and Distraction Conflicts Levels in Subjects
Proneness to Evaluation Apprehension and Distraction Conflict	600	61	10.0	90	30	52%

Table 2: Gender comparison of subjects when measured on FNE and distraction - conflict attribute level

Variable	Gender Types	N	X	SD	df	t	P
Level of Exhibition of Fear of Negative Evaluation and Distraction - Conflict Attribute	Male	320	58	10.7	598	2.39	*0.05
	Female	28	62	9.7			

t-table = 1.64

* = Significant difference

to tap responses from the samples, (fear of negative Evaluation (FNE) Scale was originally developed by Watson and Friend (1969) and reported as a simple research study in a *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 33, (4) 448-457.

The scale FNE was reported as having a very high index of homogeneity and at the same time possessing sufficient reliability. It was reported that those who were high in FNE tended to become nervous in evaluative situations and worked hard either to avoid disapproval or gain approval. For homogeneity, it was reported that the Mean Biserial correlations of each item was done with its own scale as a result of which the Mean biserial correlation of the selected FNE items corrected for presence of item in the total score was $r = .72$. The test-retest reliability gathered after one month interval for FNE scale at the first administration was $r = .78$ and at the second administration was $r = .68$.

The mean score for males in FNE was found to be 13.97 and for female 16.10. The difference between the two figures was found to be statistically significant ($t = 1.76$, $P < .01$). In this case, it was found that women reported more Fear of Negative Evaluation than men. When adapted for the need of this study the pilot study carried out on Nigerian Youths ($n = 40$) revealed a content validity of $r = .68$, and a two week test retest reliability of $r = .74$.

Procedure

The questionnaire (FNE) was a paper and pencil exercise with appropriate instructions that guided administration and response. The format was a True and False type. With 28 items.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using simple percentages to describe the level of subjects proneness to evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict while t-test statistics was used to compare gender - induced evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict attributes in male and female respondents.

RESULTS

In testing the degree of susceptibility of Nigerian Youths to evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict attribute, the following results were obtained. The mean score was $(\bar{x}) = 61$, where the highest possible was 90 and the least possible was 30, in which case, a mean $(\bar{x})$ of 90 would have attested to a morbid level of Evaluation apprehension and acute distraction conflict. And this will be an obvious evidence of social immobility. A score of 30 also, would have suggested an absolute non inhibiting freedom from the measured attributes. Both scores, however, suggest two extreme points on the Evaluation apprehension and Distraction - conflict continuum. It is therefore normally expected that subjects' score would be located somewhere between these two points. A Mean $(\bar{x})$ score of 61 therefore constitute 53% susceptibility to both Evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict attribute. The result is presented in table 1 see the appendix.

The above result puts subjects evaluation and apprehension Distraction - conflict level at the average. Subjects, therefore, display a moderate rather than an abnormal level of Evaluation Apprehension and distraction - conflict attribute, the first hypothesis is therefore rejected.

The second hypothesis was stated in the direction that response to attributes of Evaluation apprehension and distraction-conflict shall provide significant evidence of gender disparity.

When tested, the data analysis revealed the following result; the mean score for male stood at $(x) = 58$, and for female stood at $(x) = 62$, Standard Deviation (SD) for male was $SD = 9.7$ and for female $SD = 10.7$. The computed t test ($t = 2.39$, $P < 0.05$) showed a significant gender difference in the measured criterion (E.A. and Distraction - conflict attribute). Table Two (see the appendix) will illustrate the result further.

In the light of the above result, the hypothesis is upheld, thus signifying that males measure higher on Evaluation Apprehension and Distraction Conflict scale than females. This result deviates slightly from the findings reviewed in the literature.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Evaluation apprehension and distraction attribute suggest a serious social indictment, particularly when an individual is found to be susceptible to them without reason. If Zajonc's (1965) proposition to the effect that social facilitation effect occurs because the presence of others increases an individual's level of arousal which in turn makes some behaviours easier and others more difficult, is anything to go by, then it should follow that lack of confidence in one's social engagements would imply social incompetence, and in turn, evaluation apprehension coupled with increased level of distraction-conflict.

The understanding generated by the above is anchored on the fact that since humans and other animals have an innate tendency to be aroused by other members of their species, a fear or distraction arousal cannot therefore justify a welcome description of an organism that is basically believed to possess an endowed social tendency. However, the Nigerian Youths confessed to a moderate level of both evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict attribute. This result is not unexpected in the sense that an assumed high level would suggest a likely case of social immobility. And if too low, it would imply a lack of social etiquette, that is, a situation

where the display of both social competence and incompetence carry no penalty, hence the outcome of evaluation would matter very little to social actors.

Another important finding, based on the testing of the second hypothesis, devolve on the significant difference observed between the measurement of both male and female subjects on the Evaluation apprehension and distraction-conflict level scale. The finding is considered important largely because of its deviation from the popular findings in the literature. The common trend has always presented female sexes as being generally more prone to Evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict than their male counterparts (Friend and Watson, 1969). But when using two strategies of reducing Fear of Negative Evaluation in Adolescents, Elegbeleye (1991) discovered that males scored higher on the FNE scale when compared with females after a thirteen treatment week in participant modeling and social skill training techniques respectively. This translates to mean that; remove the cultural barrier that imposes on females to be heard and not be seen, teach them to make requests, start conversations, talk before a group, initiate dates, give and receive negative feed back with equanimity (which was the presumed goal of participant modeling employed by Elegbeleye, 1991), they would definitely outdistance their male counterparts in displaying a reduced level of Evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict attribute. But it remained to be seen in this study why male Youths would report more Evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict attribute than their female counterparts. Particularly when they have not been subjected to contrived experimental situation. Never - the - less the answer could be located in Erickson's (1968) phenomenon of Negative moratorium a terminology employed to describe a growth period between adolescence and adulthood (19 - 25 years) in which Youths grope energetically for a career-induced identity status. Where the individual succeeds, he becomes well adjusted, able to take initiatives and become psychologically adjusted.

But where he is unable to achieve this much needed identity, he enters into a period of negative moratorium, a period characterized by

ambivalence, frustration and disillusionment.

Even though Erikson did not establish a gender dimension to this principle, the variation along gender lines which is culturally recognized suggests there just might be the need to. For example, in a paternalistic society where males are conditioned to typical traditional sex stereotypes as opposed to psychological androgyny (Elegbeleye, 1992) the pressure to attain a social identity that could be used as a leverage of adjustment to a prescribed societal sex role may be overwhelming as to induce a level of anxiety not likely to be generated by fear of Negative Evaluation which is a common phenomenon in a drifting socio-economic and political environment.

A possible fear of failure in a developmental age (Youth) where many life goal foundations (career, family, esteem etc.) are supposed to be laid for an adult future to build upon, may predispose males to report more Evaluation apprehension and subscribe more to Distraction - conflict attribute. One observes importantly that in this times it is out of fashion to be a "Closet queen" female youths are probably eager to distance themselves from any form of imposition and characteristic patronage from a world they consider "Men's world", hence the identification with less symptoms of evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict attribute than their male counterparts.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of this study provides an insight into the extent to which Nigerian Youths can be influenced by environmental variables, particularly the human environment. That youths exhibit less attributes of evaluation apprehension and distraction conflict suggests social competence and task consciousness that would allow for proper adjustment and social learning opportunities.

Also in competitive assignments, there is a fair certainty that Nigerian Youths will perform fairly well without giving in to inhibition from external social cues such as the presence of bystanders or assessors. The most important implication of this study is that the more socially competent Nigerian Youths are to operate in a

healthy social environment, the more they are likely to abhor the alternative of regressing into cultism, a phenomenon that is anti-social in all its ramifications. Youth handlers in various fields such as counsellors, programme planners, policy makers, curriculum designers, sport experts, etc. would benefit tremendously from the outcome of this study.

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