




Differences in Teacher Locus of Control by Religion, Tolerance, Age, Gender, and Teaching Experience

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a secular country with majority of the population being Muslims 53.5%, Christians 45.9% and others 0.6% (Central Intelligence Agency also known as CIA, 2022). An indication that above 95% of Nigerians are adherents of the two largest monotheistic world religions. Expectedly, religion should promote peace, discourage violence and serve as a uniting force among Nigerians. Unfortunately, the polytheistic and minority group; adherents of the African traditional religion, appeared more tolerant than the two major monotheistic religions – Islam and Christianity. To a large extent, the minority groups have been able to coexist peacefully with other religious groups without major conflicts over the years, while there had been incessant conflicts among adherents of the monotheistic and largest religious groups –Christianity and Islam. The incessant religious conflicts have caused tremendous harms to individuals and Nigerian society at large (Sulaiman, 2019). The religious extremists have continued disturbing the peace and harmony of Nigerian communities. Since 2008, a particular 4th most dangerous global ranking religious terrorist group named Boko Haram (Gbenda, 2006) has continued unleashing terror through killing, maiming, raping and destroying properties of Nigerians. The abduction of the 276 adolescent girls from Chibok secondary school by Boko Haram cannot be quickly forgotten (Habila, 2016). Recently in Igangan, a village in

Oyo state, many Nigerians lost their lives to a group of bandits who invaded the village (Adejumo, 2021).

In addition, in recent times apart from the challenges of economic hardship and the activities of Boko Haram terrorist organization, there have been reports of constant kidnapping, killing, raping and maiming of Nigerians by Fulani herders and a group of individuals who either kidnap for ransom or for rituals (Habila, 2016). Most Nigerians now live in terrible fear. Recently gunmen attacked and blew up a train on track between Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria and Kaduna city, where about 168 people were abducted and eight killed (Ewokor, 2022). The governor of Kaduna state suspected that the perpetrators were the Boko Haram terrorist group and a kidnapping gang (Ewokor, 2022). In 2021, 949 people were kidnapped in the state according to the government. On 5th June 2022, 38 Nigerians lost their lives to the Owo church massacre. Unknown gunmen attacked a catholic church in Owo, Ondo state during service, many were injured and 38 killed (Mayaki, 2022). Global terrorism index for Nigeria in 2021 was 8.23, an annual average increase rate of 1.56% against 7.24 index of 2012 (Knoema, 2022). Reactions to the vices could be, anger, frustration, agitation, suspicion, aggression and or depression.

Since counsellors are always concerned about individuals' wellbeing and teachers are vehicles of behavior modification and change, it is pertinent to examine the coping strategy of Nigerians through teachers. Will having internal LoC facilitate tolerance, the ability to endure, accept situation and deal with it effectively and not react negatively? More importantly since some adherents of one of the religious groups –Islam is involved in the vices, will teachers and by extension Nigerians be able to tolerate people from this religious group? Tolerance is being patient, understanding and accepting of anything different, the ability to endure. Tolerance is important to facilitate peace and harmony and to build LoC.

The choice of teachers as sample for this study was on the premise that they are role models, the vehicle of change, they could teach and as well model tolerance and LoC, which could facilitate understanding and positive adjustment. Ahluwalia & Preet (2017) assert that teachers are role models, educators, facilitators, counsellors, mentors, preachers and guides. Teachers do not only inspire learning but they also teach many life skills. They have the ability to change the lives of not just students but other individuals around them. Teachers are creators of all other professions. Theoretically (Bandura et al., 1999), teachers are role models who will model as well as teach values such as understanding, tolerance and LoC in the classroom and society. Bandura asserts that vicarious or direct learning experience are performance standards, which once learned becomes basis of self-evaluation. The intrinsic reinforcement that comes from self-evaluation is much more influential than the extrinsic reinforcement dispensed by others. Hence, perceived self-efficacy and locus of control play major role in self-regulated behaviour and moral code develops through interactions with models (Bandura et al., 1999).

Locus of control is a psychological construct used to describe individuals' ability to take control of situations and circumstances in their life, the degree to which people believe that they have control over the outcome of events, issues in their lives, as opposed to external forces beyond their control (Rotter, 1966). Individuals who believe that they have control over situations in their life have an internal locus of control, while those who believe that factors or situations outside their reach have more control over their life, exhibit external locus of control.

Internal LoC is pivotal to positive adjustment, a predictor of success and general wellbeing. Internals exhibit two basic features (1) high achievement motivation and (2) low outer-directedness (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973). Research (Arnaud et al., 2012; Cheng, 1994) have shown that internals, usually believe in their ability to manipulate their environment and bear consequences of their actions while externals do not believe in their ability to manipulate their environment, hence, they

attribute consequences of their actions to external factors. Rotter (2016) stated that internals are wise, happy, healthy and wealthy with a higher sense of personal well-being. Cook (2012) added that internally oriented teachers more than externals were guided by inner sources; faced challenges with more persistence; sought new information with regard to innovations; and used new information to induce change in the classroom. That is, internal teachers were more flexible and by extension more tolerant. Generally, studies affirmed that internals are able to relate more effectively with problems than externals (Nowicki & Duke, 1974).

On sex and locus of control, research suggested mixed outcome, some found men to be higher in internal LoC than women and vice versa, while some found no significant difference. The study of Staats et al. (1974) found males to be more internal than females, reverse were the case in the study of Kucukkaragoz (1998), while some researchers (Cheng, 1994; Halpin et al., 1985; Taş & İskender, 2017) found no significant gender difference.

Studies on LoC and age revealed mixed reports, while some of the studies (Iles-Caven et al., 2020) were of the opinion that age have significant effect on locus of control, others found no significant effect (Cheng, 1994; Halpin et al., 1985). Cheng (1994) found no significant difference between externals and internals on gender, marital status, and other demographic factors.

Years of working experience was also found to have strong influence on internal locus of control (Melekeowei, 2015; Sherman & Giles, 1981). Individuals with more years of work experience were internals while those with less work experience were externals. Akkaya & Akyol (2016) study revealed job satisfaction for internals when compared to externals. Melekeowei (2015) aver that internals are driven by intrinsic reward as such, they tend to be more responsive to their work than the challenges of work.

Religious affiliation or religiosity is also a good indicator of internal locus of control. Individuals who were religious or were affiliated to a religion had internal locus of control. Religious belief had been associated with internal locus of control for men and women (Iles-Caven et al., 2020). Individuals who attended a place of worship were more internal than those who did not attend at all and individuals who were from other religious affiliation were more internally orientated than nominally. Respondents who had a belief in a divine power were internals while the non-believers were externals (Iles-Caven et al., 2020). According to Sulaiman (2019; 2020), forgiveness is one powerful religious tool that could facilitate tolerance and internal locus of control. Both Christianity and Islam preache forgiveness, adherents of these religions as a result of their religious belief could be forgiving and let go of unhealthy anger, thereby replacing anger with hospitality and tolerance.

Rationale of the Study

Motivation for this study stemmed from lack of recent studies on locus of control coupled with incessant religious conflicts and social vices in Nigeria, which is unbecoming and infuriating. More importantly, some adherents of a religious group are alleged to be involved in the killings and maiming. One is therefore curious about the level of tolerance of Nigerians towards this religious group, and the efficacy of locus of control in ensuring positive adjustment. Theoretically (Bandura et al., 1999) perceived that self-efficacy and locus of control play major role in self-regulated behaviour and moral code develops through interactions with models, hence the choice of teachers' locus of control.

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the level of locus of control and tolerance among teachers in secondary schools in Lagos state, Nigeria, and to determine the differences of various

factors such as religious affiliation, tolerance, age, gender, and work experience on their locus of control.

METHODS

Research Design

The study was a cross-sectional survey design which was typically concerned about observing and reporting the influence of some demographic factors on locus of control of teachers and not manipulating variables.

Participants

The sample for the study were 600 teachers, 353 females, 247 males, aged between 22 and 60 years, 475 Christians and 125 Muslims randomly selected from 20 senior and junior secondary schools from four Education Districts; Agboju, Agege, Ikoyi, and Maryland in Lagos State. The choice of the four districts was to ensure adequate demographic representation, high/low population, high/low socioeconomic status, and religious background. In each school, 30 teachers were willing to participate in the study. It is obvious that there are more females than male teachers and more Christians than Muslims teachers in Lagos state secondary schools.

Instruments

Locus of Control

Two instrument; Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External control scale (ANSIE) (Nowicki & Duke, 1974) and Tolerance Scale (TS) were employed for use in this study. ANSIE is a 40 items questionnaire which required respondents to describe their locus of control by ticking either 'yes or no'. The total score of ANSIE is 40, the lower the score of respondents the more internal their locus of control. Any score from 0 – 8 depicted internal locus of control, that is, respondents perceived themselves as responsible for their success and failures. Scores from 9 – 16 was average locus of control, partially in control of their lives. Scores from 17– 40 was external locus of control, life is seen as a game of chance and success as a matter of luck. In this study, 0-16 was internal while 17– 40 was external locus of control. Test-re-test reliability of .83 over a period of six weeks was established for ANSIE. The choice of ANSIE over other locus of control measures was its suitability for general assessment of locus of control of individuals of all ages.

Tolerance

Tolerance Scale (TS) is a self-developed 12 items questionnaire divided into two sections: section A measured demographic data; age, sex, religious affiliation, and year of experience while section B measured tolerance; teacher's ability to remain calm and relate effectively with others amidst religious and social crises. Questions such as "the enormous challenges of teaching are reducing my love for the profession", "my commitment to assisting students of other religion have reduced", "most of the killings and kidnapping are not perpetuated by Muslims", "respecting and appreciating other's religion is not important" were raised. Respondents were to choose either 'yes or no' as applicable. The total score of TS was 12, the lower the score of respondents the more tolerant they were. A score between 1- 4 is high tolerance while 5-12 is low tolerance. Content validity index (CVI) of .79 and .80 test-re-test reliability of two weeks interval was established for the instrument.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed with simple frequency count, mean and independent t-test. Results were held at .05 level of significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The first question was to ascertain the level of tolerance and locus of control of teachers in Lagos state secondary schools. The results, as presented in Table 1, indicate that a high percentage (64.2%) of the teachers in Lagos state had a high level of tolerance, while a lower percentage (35.8%) had a low level of tolerance. Additionally, a majority (96.5%) of the teachers had an internal locus of control, while only a small proportion (3.5%) had an external locus of control.

The results of the independent t-test on the influence of religious affiliation, tolerance, age, gender, and teaching experience on the locus of control of teachers in Lagos state are presented in Table 2. The results revealed that there were statistically significant differences of age ($t(3.25) = p .01 < .05$), work experience ($t(2.31) = p .21 < .05$), and tolerance ($t(3.25) = p .00 < .05$) on teachers' locus of control. However, no significant differences were found for gender ($t(.16) = p .87 > .05$) or religious affiliation ($t(.88) = p .38 > .05$).

Discussion

The results of this study revealed a high level of tolerance (64.2%) and internal locus of control (96.5%) among the teachers in Lagos state. This was a surprising finding, as it was expected that the majority Christian respondents would have a low level of tolerance due to the negative impacts of activities by some individuals of the Islamic faith, and an external locus of control due to economic hardship. However, the high level of tolerance and internal locus of control among the respondents can be linked to their age and years of working experience, which were found to have a significant impact on their locus of control.

Table 1. Respondents' level of locus of control and tolerance

Variables		N	%
Locus of control	Internal	579	96.5
	External	21	3.5
Tolerance	low	215	35.8
	high	385	64.2
Total		600	100.0

Table 2. t test of demographic factors on locus of control

Variables	LoC	N	Mean	M diff	t	df	Sig
Age	Internal	579	1.5199	.51986	3.248	598	.001
	External	21	1.0000				
Sex	Internal	579	1.4286	.01752	160	598	.873
	External	21	1.4111				
Religion	Internal	579	1.2055	.08019	888	598	.375
	External	21	1.2857				
Work experience	Internal	579	1.2971	.29706	2.307	598	.021
	External	21	1.0000				
Tolerance	Internal	579	2.0000	.37133	3.516	598	.000
	External	21	1.6287				

As Bandura (1999) suggests, older adults tend to have a sense of mastery over their abilities, which is reflected in the finding that age had a significant effect on the locus of control of the respondents. This finding is in line with previous research by Iles-Caven et al. (2020), Cheng (1994), Cook (2012), and Staats et al. (1974), who assert that internal locus of control increases with age. Additionally, the results of this study support the findings of Ahluwalia & Preet (2017), Melekeowei (2015), and Sherman & Giles (1981) that years of working experience have a strong influence on internal locus of control. Those with more years of work experience tended to have an internal locus of control, while those with less experience demonstrated an external locus of control.

The results suggest that the teachers' experiences and exposure through their years of work, combined with their increase in age, have made them more understanding, empathetic, and tolerant of others. They may have come to realize that not all individuals of the Islamic faith are perpetrators of negative actions, and that there is minimal religious discrimination between Muslims and Christians in Lagos. Overall, the findings of this study provide insight into the influence of various factors on the locus of control and tolerance of teachers in Lagos state.

The results of the independent t-test showed a significant difference in age, work experience, and tolerance on the locus of control of teachers in Lagos state, as presented in Table 2. However, no significant difference was found for religious affiliation or gender. The lack of a significant difference in religious affiliation indicates that Nigerians and teachers in particular have come to realize that they are all victims of economic hardship, ritual killings, kidnapping, and other vices, regardless of their religious group. This finding is supported by the work of Ewokor (2022), who found that victims of attacks and kidnappings in Nigeria come from a variety of religious backgrounds. Similarly, the lack of a significant difference in gender suggests that both males and females are facing similar challenges in Nigeria and are willing to adopt positive coping techniques to adjust to these crises, as confirmed by previous studies (Cheng, 1994; Tasi & Iskender, 2018).

The high level of tolerance and internal locus of control displayed by the teachers in this study is a confirmation of the reason they were selected as a sample for the study. According to Bandura (1977), teachers are role models who should display and teach values such as understanding, tolerance, and locus of control in the classroom and society. Teachers are the creators of all other professions (Ahluwalia & Preet, 2017) and the learning experience they provide becomes the basis for self-evaluation, which enhances the development of a moral code and intrinsic reinforcement guided by positive interactions with models.

The high level of internal locus of control among Lagos teachers in the face of challenges supports Cook's (2012) assertion that internally oriented teachers are more persistent in the face of challenges, seek out new information, and use it to induce change in the classroom. Internally oriented teachers are also more flexible and, by extension, more tolerant. According to Zee et al. (2016), the internally oriented teachers in this study can be considered wise, happy, and healthy with a higher sense of personal well-being.

Implications

The findings of this research have several implications for counselors working with teachers in Lagos state. Firstly, age, work experience, and tolerance were found to have a significant impact on the locus of control of teachers, which suggests that these factors should be taken into account when working with teachers. Secondly, there was no significant difference found between religious affiliation and gender, meaning that religious beliefs and gender are not significant factors in the locus of control of teachers. Thirdly, the high level of tolerance and internal locus of control among teachers suggests that they are well-suited to be models and teachers of values such as understanding, tolerance, and locus of control in the classroom and society. Fourthly, the finding that

teachers with an internal locus of control tend to be more flexible, persistent, and effective at relating to problems has important implications for counselors, who can help teachers develop their internal locus of control, which could lead to higher levels of personal well-being, happiness, and wisdom. Lastly, this research can provide guidance for counselor education programs, which can focus on developing the skills and knowledge needed to work with teachers and help them develop their locus of control.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it was found that there were significant differences between age, teaching experience, and tolerance towards the LoC of teachers in Lagos state, Nigeria. However, no significant differences were found between religious affiliation and gender. The level of LoC and tolerance of the participants showed a high level respectively. The implications of these results are the importance of considering the factors of age, teaching experience, and tolerance when working with teachers in Lagos state, and to help them develop their internal LoC.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author conducted the study and wrote the article.

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