

An Assessment of the Onset of Extremism Among Students of Federal College of Education Pankshin

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ABSTRACT

The cultural diversification of the Nigerian educational environment is a direct reflection of the Nigerian state. Issues of disenfranchisement, marginalisation and denial has led to the formation of gang groups even in institutions of learning. Gang groups are posing significant threats to safety and tranquillity in these institutions and challenging the fundamentals learning. Youths in general and students in particular are becoming easy targets to these extreme groups. This study sought to investigate the factors associated with student's gang membership in the Federal College of Education Pankshin, north central Nigeria. This study employed the disproportional stratified sampling technique to select the 196 students that responded to 4-point Likert structured questionnaire that was used to generate data. SPSS version 23 was used for data analysis. This study found out that dysfunctional families and depression are the major reasons for seeking the embrace of gang groups. Ensuring that the learning environment is conducive, accommodating and supportive reduce the prevalence of gang groups and students' affiliation with groups with extreme ideologies. Counselling and peer mentoring, informed conflict resolution mechanism and engagement in academic, entrepreneurial and extracurricular activities can be mounted and utilised to provide workable support systems for the students thereby capacitating them with life support skills for productive contribution to national building

Keywords: students, extreme behaviour, achievement, participation, college.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Youths, and especially students, are important group of any nation. Their state of mind and patriotism is a major indicator to the growth and development of any society. The economic wellbeing, social stability and technological progress of any country depends extensively on the participation and patriotism of citizens and the student population play fundamental roles.

The cultural categorisations of Nigerian nation have placed sharp divides on its socio-economy. Religion, cultural diversification, and organisational affiliations/identification are important parameters to its nationhood as they play significant roles in policy implementation.

The educational sector is a major driver of national development (Jahantab, 2021). Countries around the world have strategized the development of educational institutions in order to position them for global competitiveness. In Nigeria, one level of education established for this purpose is the College of Education. The basic mandate of the colleges of education is to train and award National Certificate in Education (NCE) to primary and junior secondary school teachers (Suleiman, Dass, Inuwa, & Saleh, 2020). This the colleges have been doing since 1973.

The contribution of education to national growth and development cannot be overemphasised. However, in recent times, the Nigerian education has suffered systemic neglect leading to steady intellectual erosion and bankruptcy (Odewumi, Sarki, Hembra & Yakse, 2023). Reasons for falls in the standard of education are not

farfetched (Maigemu & Adamu, 2024). Nigerians are reported as lacking in basic skills required to push forward the development of the country (Odewumi, Sarki, Hembra & Yakse, 2023).

Educational activities, programmes and endeavours are characteristically participatory. However, the manner and extent to which such are planned and accrued out have often undermined peaceful coexistence (Maigemu & Adamu, 2024). Demonstrations, protest and rioting are not new among students of higher institution (Aluede, Jimoh, Agwinde & Omoregie, 2005). Societal issues leading to discontentment are many as much as they are varied (Hanson & Robkin, 2015). Pressure groups have driven home issues surrounding rights and privileges (Crank & Calderon, 2017). However, the right to association has often been abused to the extent that groups with extreme ideologies have sprung up (Maigemu & Adamu, 2024) even in institutions of learning (Maigemu & Adamu, 2024, Song et al., 2006, Travis, 1998). The perceived social benefits that gang groups provide have broadened its significance among students thereby winning them over as members (Maigemu & Adamu, 2024). This turn in the educational environment is responsible for many ills in the society (Anderson, 2022).

In order to address the growing instances of extremism in higher institutions of learning, the current study physically engaged the students of the Federal College of Education Pankshin through discussion and administration of self-made structured questionnaire with the aim to assess the students' vulnerability and involvement or affiliation with gang groups.

LITERATURE

In a study to assess the rationale for youth's involvement with Boko Haram, Aghedo and Osumah (2012) identified the drive to 'end bad leadership' and the abolition of 'western education' as motivational. This was seen to suggestively highlight the failure of the Nigerian government and its institutions to provide responsive leadership in the northern part of the country. Issues of marginalisation and lopsided distribution of resources and amenities among citizens were identified to be responsible for the poor state of basic infrastructure and increasing poverty and alms seeking.

The study by Sloan and Hendrickson (2010) earlier found that socioeconomic factors like poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunities are closely linked to solicitation for acceptance and relevance in gang groups. A study that corroborated this finding was that of Barcena and Miller (2017) which pointed out the influencing contribution of institutional failure to insecurity.

Campus violence has been noted to be on a daily increase in public sector university of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where students are reported to be polarised along linguistic, political and sectarian lines. Violence was found to be an easy means to drive home dissatisfaction. The study identified gun running and drug peddling as dangerous developments on campus as such social extremes were used as motivation and incentives by desperate politicians to recruit students to perpetuate and achieve their aims. The study further blamed poor monitoring by school authorities as responsible for the escalation of animosities among students.

Deterioration in family values have led to observable decadence in morality and decorum in the society. By investigating the consequential effects of a dysfunctional family, Kelly and Reynolds (2017) discovered that students from dysfunctional homes that are characterised by neglect, abuse and lack of parental guidance and supervision were more likely to seek the embrace and security of gangs.

Psychological health status of students has been advanced to play significant roles in mental stability and academic achievement. Out of the 33000 college students that were surveyed in the United State by Eisenberg, Ketchen, EdM and Heinze (2020), 50% were found to be depressed or anxious or both. Factors advanced for include increasing workload and reduced rest and extracurricular time, opportunity and exposure (Mohamad Sari & Esa, 2017). This was seen to have very negative effect on students' relationship and association.

The academic achievement of students is very important to world's political, scientific, and technological growth and development and when the academic achievement of children or learners decreases, it has damning consequences on the generality of the populace. In students, depression may show up in some specific ways that are not quite so obvious at first. For example, a student with depression might suddenly avoid meeting up with

friends when previously they were social. This, when displayed, affects the socio-educational disposition of the student, hence, affects educational goal. Hence, this study intends to look at the influence of depression on students' academic achievement at the tertiary level of education, especially at the Federal College of Education, Pankshin and how counselling can serve as a mitigating factor in curbing its impact on the students

It has been reported by Omorogbe (2021) from existing literature on Nigeria that one in six young people aged 15 to 24 often feel depressed, have little interest in doing things, or is worried, nervous or anxious. The report further emphasised that a median of 1 in 5 youth aged 15 to 20 of the proximately 20,000 children and adults in Nigeria and 20 other countries that were surveyed indicated that they often feel depressed or have little interest in doing things.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

In this study, the Cross-Sectional Quantitative Survey Design was employed. A sample of 196 students from NCE I, II and II in Federal College of Education, Pankshin (FCEP) was used for the study. The Disproportional Stratified Sampling Technique was used to select the students since each level has different number of students. Data was generated using a 4-point Likert structured questionnaire that divided section A (students' demography) and section B (students' opinions and responses). This was done by examining the statement of problems, research questions and hypotheses to ascertain the adequacy of the items side-by-side each variable relevant in the study. To determine the degree of consistency of the items, the split-half method of test of internal consistencies was used by the researcher for the instruments. The rationale was to help the researcher gauge a reliable Cronbach coefficient for the study. 0.84 coefficient was obtained. The data collected was analysed using the descriptive and inferential methods. Therefore, any response with mean value from 2.5 above stood accepted whereas an item with a mean score below 2.5 was rejected for the research questions.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What is the influence of family dysfunctionality in belonging to a gang group in FCEP?

Table 1: The influence of family dysfunctionality on gang membership in FCEP

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Means	Remarks
1.	It can bring feelings of sadness, failure, emptiness and hopelessness on students	129	66	1	0	3.65	Accepted
2.	There can lead to loneliness and loss of interest in academic activities	104	71	21	0	3.42	Accepted
3.	Students can have worry and seek assistance any where	92	102	2	0	3.46	Accepted
4.	Students become disappointed and insecure	60	134	1	1	3.29	Accepted

Source: Field Study, 2025

Based on Table 1 above which sought for the influence of family dysfunctionality on gang membership in FCEP, item 1 with reactions based on SA, A, D, and SD had scores of 129, 66, 1, and 0 respectively having mean score of 3.65, hence, stands accepted for the study. Meaning that the students affirmed that dysfunctional families impact them to the extent that they have feelings of sadness, failure, emptiness and hopelessness. Item 2 based on SA, A, D, and SD had scores of 104, 71, 21 and 0 respectively on a mean coefficient of 3.42, accordingly stands accepted for the study. Implying that dysfunctional families have impacted the students to loss of to becoming lonely and loo interest in most or of all their academic activities. Additionally, item 3 showed the reactions of the students based on SA, A, D, and SD corresponding to 92, 102, 2, and 0 respectively with mean score of 3.46, therefore, stands accepted for the study. Inferring that the students could become lonely and loss interest and not being able to concentrate in academic activities. Lastly, item 4 had scores of 60, 134, 1, and 1 based on SA, A, D and SD respectively with an average score of 3.29, hence, stands accepted and impliedly

means that the students do become disappointed and insecure due to the family dysfunctionality. Accordingly, dysfunctional families have negatively impacted the NCE students in Federal College of Education, Pankshin.

Research Question 2: Which student gender is mostly affected by dysfunctional families in FCEP?

Table 2: The gender of NCE students in FCEP that is mostly affected by a dysfunctional family

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Means	Remarks
1.	Female students suffer mostly with depression	91	61	43	1	3.23	Accepted
2.	Male students suffer mostly with depression	38	60	97	1	2.69	Accepted

Source: Field Study, 2025

Table 2 which sought for the gender mostly affected by dysfunctional families in FCEP, showed that item 1 with reactions based on SA, A, D, and SD had scores of 91, 61, 43, and 1 in that order with mean score of 3.23 stands accepted for the study. Meaning the female gender suffers is mostly affected dysfunctional families. On the other hand, item 2 based on SA, A, D, and SD had scores of 38, 60, 97 and 1 respectively on a mean coefficient of 2.69, accordingly stands accepted for the study. Impliedly meaning that the male gender too is affected by dysfunctional families. However, based on degree of difference, it can be said that the female gender could be affected the most since the mean difference between the two sexes showed a 0.54.

Research Question 3: What is the degree of severity of depression on NCE students FCEP?

Table 5: The degree of severity of depression on NCEe students FCEP

S/N	ITEMS	Highly Severe	Severe	Moderately Severe	Not Severe	Means	Remarks
1.	My feelings of sadness, failure, emptiness and hopelessness.	65	62	57	12	2.92	Accepted
2.	My incidences of anger outbursts, irritability, frustration on trivial matters.	28	111	42	15	2.78	Accepted
3.	Feeling of loneliness and loss of interest normal activities	63	61	59	13	2.89	Accepted
4.	Becoming disturbed and restless.	66	52	53	25	2.81	Accepted
5.	Being tired and disappointed.	62	70	43	21	2.88	Accepted

Source: Field Study, 2025

Table 3 sought to find out the degree of severity of depression on NCE students in FCEP, it showed that item 1 with reactions based on Highly Severe, Severe, Moderately Severe and Not severe had scores of 65, 62, 57, and 12 respectively on a mean score of 2.92, thus, stands accepted for the study. Meaning that the students have a highly severe to moderately severe feelings of sadness, failure, emptiness, and hopelessness. Item 2 based on Highly Severe, Severe, Moderately Severe and Not severe had scores of 28, 111, 42 and 15 respectively on a mean coefficient of 2.78, accordingly stands accepted for the study. Implying that they have severe incidences of anger outbursts, irritability, frustration on trivial matters. Moreover, item 3 showing the reactions of the students based on Highly Severe, Severe, Moderately Severe and Not severe responded to in the scores of 63, 61, 59, and 13 aggregately have an average value of 2.89, therefore, stands accepted for the study. Inferring that the students have moderate to severe degree of depression which has caused a feeling of loneliness and led to

loss of interest normal activities of their lives. Item 4 had scores of 66, 52, 53, and 25 based on Highly Severe, Severe, Moderately Severe and Not severe respectively with an average score of 2.81, hence, stands accepted and impliedly means that students could become disturbed and restless are quite severe amongst the students. Item 5 lastly, had scores of 62, 70, 43 and 21 based on Highly Severe, Severe, Moderately Severe and Not severe respectively with an average score of 2.88 stands accepted and impliedly means due to the degree of depression the students have expressed feelings of being tired and disappointed. Consequently, it could be said that the students, largely have from highly severe, to severe as well as moderately severe degree of depression, which has largely impacted their academic achievement and could lead to wanting to join gang groups, the average score for the research question is 2.86.

Research Question 4: How can counselling serve as a mitigating intervention for NCE students having depression?

Table 4: The counselling mitigating strategies for students

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Means	Remarks
1.	Counselling through the provisions of options of developing coping skills can go a long way to help depressed individuals	149	47	0	0	3.76	Accepted
2.	A counsellor offering options of regular exercise, getting enough sleep and spending quality time with people: friends, family members, etc can go a long way to help depressed people	122	73	1	0	3.62	Accepted
3.	Offering options for referral in more severe and critical symptoms by the counsellor to other professionals could have long-lasting impact for depressed individuals	69	121	6	0	3.32	Accepted
4.	Engaging depressed individuals whether on individual or group basis can go a long way to help them come out of their depressed challenges	104	81	11	0	3.47	Accepted

Source: Field Study, 2025

Conclusively, Table 4 sought for the counselling mitigating strategies for students and revealed that item 1 with reactions based on SA, A, D, and SD had scores of 149, 47, 0, and 0 respectively having mean score of 3.76, therefore, stands accepted for the study. Meaning that the students affirmed Counselling through the provisions of options of developing coping skills could go a long way to help depressed individuals. Item 2 based on SA, A, D, and SD had scores of 122, 73, 1 and 0 respectively on a mean coefficient of 3.62, accordingly stands accepted for the study. Inferring that counsellors during counselling sessions offer options which are therapeutic in nature, such as regular exercise, getting enough sleep and spending quality time with people: friends, family members, to mention a few which could go a long way to help depressed people (students) overcome their depression. Additionally, item 3 depicting the reactions of the students based on SA, A, D, and SD responded to in the scores of 69, 121, 6, and 0 on an average value of 3.32, therefore, stands accepted for the study. Suggesting that offering options for referral in more severe and critical symptoms by the counsellor to other professionals could have long-lasting impact on depressed individuals or students. Lastly, item 4 had scores of 104, 81, 11, and 0 based on SA, A, D and SD respectively with an average score of 3.47, hence, stands accepted and impliedly means that the students believed that engaging depressed individuals whether on individual or group basis could go a long way to help them come out of their depressed challenges. For the reason as deduced, and going by the research question as raised, it can be said that counselling has almost all it takes to help depressed students find solutions to their challenges, psychologically and emotionally, hence, helping the students attain academic excellence in Federal College of Education, Pankshin.

DISCUSSION

In view of the outcome of the responses from the students, and in line with research questions which sought for

the extent of dysfunctional families on students opinion on gang groups in Federal College of Education, Pankshin, it is revealed that the students seemed to affirmed that dysfunctional families impact them to the extent that they have feelings of sadness, failure, emptiness and hopelessness; that the depression has impacted the students where at times have loss of interest or pleasure in most or of all their academic activities. Additionally, it revealed that the students have been lonely and seemed to appear disturbed. And that the students do get frustrated. Some of the factors which contribute to depression include lack of social support from family, peer pressure, and financial strain, stress due to family economic status. The analyses have indicated that most students have faced depression due to stressful experience of trying to balance social life and class work, uncertainty about money, leaving one's family, poor sleep habit, alcohol drug abuse, eating disorder and socialization problems.

On gender, all students appeared to be affected by depression in the college. It showed that both female and male students are suffering from it even though, that of the female seems to be a bit severe as compared to that of the male students. This assertion was supported in the study of Karmakar and Behera (2017) who revealed that there is no significant difference existing between gender (Male and Female) in respect of depression. As well, Muhammad, Terna and Saanyol (2018) in their study posited that females were more likely to get depressed than males.

On counselling mitigating strategies for students, it revealed that the students affirmed that Counselling through the provisions of options of developing coping skills could go a long way to help depressed individuals; that counsellors during counselling sessions offer options which are therapeutic in nature, such as regular exercise, getting enough sleep and spending quality time with people: friends, family members, to mention a few which could go a long way to help depressed people (students) overcome their depression. Additionally, that offering options for referral in more severe and critical symptoms by the counsellor to other professionals could have long-lasting impact on depressed individuals or students; and lastly, that the students believed that engaging depressed individuals whether on individual or group basis could go a long way to help them come out of their depressed challenges. Muhammad, Terna and Saanyol (2018) in their support to this recommended that educators, counsellors, psychologists, and researchers are to develop strategies to reduce psychological problems like depression among students and to develop intervention programs to enhance students' psychological well-being which may help to increase their academic performance.

Conclusively, in regards to situational, biological, psychological, and existential components of depression which the students are faced with, the hypotheses results revealed that there is significant mean difference between situational depression and the academic achievement of students across all the levels; there is significant mean difference between biological depression and the academic achievement of students across all the levels; and there is significant mean difference between psychological depression and the academic achievement of students across all the levels. As well, there is significant mean difference between existential depression and the academic achievement of students across all the levels and there is significant mean difference between counselling mitigation strategies and the academic achievement of students across all the levels. These standpoints were proven by Khan (2020) who averred that the causes of depression in students are due to complicated interactions between social, physiological, developmental, and psychological factors

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Depression among students has become phenomenal and its consequential impacts have become increasingly disturbing and physiologically, mentally, emotionally as well as academically challenging. The fact that the economy is excruciatingly difficult as each day passes by, the insecurity, coupled with issues around kidnapping and banditry are more than enough to heighten or cause students to fall into depression. In fact, going by the components as expounded in the study, which included situational, biological, existential, and psychological depression, in one way or the other, the students might have passed through or are still passing through either or some of them. Thus, in as much as no one cannot escape from either of them, the study has been able to proffer mitigating strategies to help students cope or deal with the challenge. This study found out that dysfunctional families and depression are the major reasons for seeking the embrace of gang groups. Ensuring that the learning environment is conducive, accommodating and supportive reduce the prevalence of gang groups and students' affiliation with groups with extreme ideologies. Counselling and peer mentoring, informed conflict resolution

mechanism and engagement in academic, entrepreneurial and extracurricular activities can be mounted and utilised to provide workable support systems for the students thereby capacitating them with life support skills for productive contribution to national building.

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