

Psychological Sense of Community in Four Neighbourhoods in Lagos Metropolis

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Abstract: Psychological Sense of Community (PSC) and its relationships with mental health indices (Psychological well being -PWB- and psychological distress -PD-) were investigated in four neighborhoods in Lagos metropolis (FESTAC town, 104 Estate, Ikeja barrack and Abalti barrack). Finding revealed that the four neighbourhoods significantly differed in the level of PSC expressed by residents ($F(3/446) = 10.58$, $p < 0.01$). The four neighbours also significantly differed on PWB ($F(3/446) = 6.99$, $p > 0.01$) and PD ($F(3/446) = 7.9$, $p < 0.01$). No significant relationship was, however, observed between PSC and PWB on the one hand ($r(448) = 0.07$, $p > 0.05$) and PSC and PD on the other hand ($r(448) = 0.012$, $p > 0.05$). Further analysis revealed significant difference among males and females on PSC ($F(1/442) = 4.95$, $p < 0.01$). Findings were discussed in light of previous findings in the literature.

Key words: Psychological sense, PWB, PD, neighbourhoods, metropolis

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country in the throes of development. This is evident in the fast pace at which many of her hitherto rural towns and villages have sprung up to become cities.

Howbeit city life has obvious social and economic advantages, it has attendant negative psychological consequences too. One of these is the stress characteristic of urban life. Milgram (1970) has linked urban stress with information or stimulus overload, a phenomenon he claimed is characteristic of the experience of city dwellers. Coping with urban stress is likely to reduce social interaction in of city dwellers to a superficial level.

Milgram (1970), Merrens (1973), Korte and Kerr (1975) have demonstrated that city dwellers are less likely to help each other when in trouble, are less trustful of one another and less helpful to strangers in need of help.

More grievous consequence of urbanizations, perhaps is the attendant destruction of primordial loyalty characteristic of rural communities. As labour becomes more mobile and towns and villages become more urban one-to-one interaction characteristic of village life gives way to urban anonymity and new cities, hitherto owned by indigenes, become no man's land.

In spite of the above, city dwellers may occasionally engage in pleasant interactions with other residents who are contiguous in time and space and thus develop some form of attachment and feelings to either the whole or some part of the city that promotes such interaction.

Perhaps the most fertile locus, in time and space, for urban interaction and expression of attachment is the neighbourhood (Warren, 1969; Sarason, 1972, 1974; Riger *et al.*, 1981).

In an attempt to study attachment and feelings of belongings to a place or people psychologists have developed a concept, Psychological Sense of Community (PSC) (Sarason, 1974; McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

Sarason (1974) has described the concept as an overarching 'value' in community psychology. Newbrough and Chavis (1986) define it as the personal knowing that one has about belonging to a collectivity. Buckner sees PSC as the sense of belongingness, fellowship, we-ness, identity, etc, experienced in the context of a functional (group) or geographically based collective. MacMillan and Chavis (1986) define sense of community as a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together.

Mc Millan and Chavis' definition emphasise four elements; membership, influence, interaction and fulfillment of needs and emotional connection. Buckner listed some, group-level variables that may promote the experience of high sense of community. These are group size, existence of common goal, clear criteria for group membership, existence of an external threat and a shared set of values.

Literature on PSC has revealed interesting findings, implicating the beneficial effects of PSC. Doolittle and Mc Donald (1978) observed an inverse relationship

between pro-urbanism (behaviour favouring privacy and anonymity) and PSC and a positive relationship between safety and PSC and a negative relationship between pro-urbanism and perception of safety.

Glynn (1981) compared two American communities (Greenbelt and Hyattsville in Maryland) with an Israeli Kibbutz (Kfar Blum) based on the fact that these three communities differ in geography, patterns of interaction, historical origin, function and degree of autonomy. His findings supported his hypothesis that residents of Kfar Blum would exhibit a greater PSC than residents of the two American communities in Maryland. Glynn further found that PSC could be predicted by expected length of community residency, satisfaction with the community, number of neighbours one could identify by first name and ability to function competently in the community.

Buckner in an attempt to validate an instrument to measure PSC studied three American neighbourhoods that were known to differ in cohesion. These were Old Green belt, Lake side North and Hollywood. Findings revealed that Old Greenbelt known to be highest in cohesion also has the highest mean score on PSC followed by Hollywood while Lakeside had the lowest score. He further reported that neighbourhood residence single-handedly predicted over 40% of the variance in subjects' score on PSC. This demonstrates that neighbourhood residence is an important predictor of an individual's sense of community.

Riger and Lavrakas (1981) found that two important factors are responsible for neighbourhood attachment. These are what they referred to as 'social bonding factors and behavioural rootedness. The former is made up of elements like ability to identify neighbours, feeling part of the neighbourhood and number of neighbourhood children known while the latter include elements like years of community residency, type of home ownership and expected length of residency.

Riger, Le Bailly and Gordon attempted to demonstrate the relationship between community involvement (an indicator of PSC) and fear of crime. He found that communal feelings are more likely to reduce fear of crime than communal behaviour.

Ahlbrant and Cunningham (1979) have also found that PSC is a good indicator of an individual's commitment to and satisfaction with one's neighbourhood. Thus people with high PSC scores are more like their neighbourhood as a small community within the city and are more likely to be loyal to the neighbourhood than to the rest of the city. They are also more likely to believe that their neighbourhood is beneficial to them because of the peculiar activities it provides them are residents.

Bachrach and Zautra (1985) have corroborated the above findings. In their own study they found that high PSC enhances problem focused coping behaviour when residents are faced with potential environmental hazards.

The above review has demonstrated clearly and unequivocally that promotion of PSC may help urbanites to cope with everyday urban hassles. This has made Sarason (1974) to propose that it is the task of community psychologists to enhance PSC of members of the community settings in which they work. This lofty goal may be far-fetched in Nigeria because Nigerian psychologists have not begun to examine and understand the nature of the phenomenon (PSC), how can they then do community intervention that will promote PSC when they have not come to understand it.

Perhaps the neglect of PSC as a worthwhile concept in Nigerian psychology is because community participation, involvement and identification are *Sin qua non* in traditional rural agrarian towns and villages. Not so, however, in the cities where old allegiances are breaking down and giving way to pro-urbanism in form of value for privacy and anonymity.

It is on the basis of the above that the present study is conceived to correct the anomaly. It is therefore the aim of this study to find out whether like Glynn (1981) and Buckner PSC will vary along neighbourhoods of different geographical location, patterns of interaction, history, function and degree of autonomy whether PSC will be influenced by sex of residents. Previous studies (Davidson and Cotter, 1993) have reported no relationship between sex and PSC will be related to mental health. The third aim is borne out of the inference we have drawn from previous studies that have demonstrated the impact of PSC on the reduction of fear of crime, promotion of problem-solving coping behaviour, community support for public school taxes, satisfaction and community involvement of neighbourhood residents.

Neighbourhoods of concern in the present study are drawn from Lagos metropolis and include FESTAC town, 1004 Estate, Ikeja and Abalti military barracks. These four neighbourhoods are different on a number of variables; they differ in location, differ in homogeneity of residents, the military barracks being apparently more homogenous than either the owner-occupiers of FESTAC towns and the civil servant residents of 1004 Estate. These neighbourhoods also differ in architecture; 1004 Estate being most vertical (ten and twelve storey buildings) followed by FESTAC town (with predominance of four storey buildings) and followed by Ikeja barracks (with two, three and four storey types) and Abalti barracks (with predominance of one storey buildings).

Hypotheses:

- There will be significant different in scores on PSC of the residents of the four neighbourhoods.
- There will be significant difference in scores on psychological wellbeing and psychological distress of residents of the four neighbourhoods.
- There will be significant positive relationship between PSC and Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) on the one hand and significant negative relationship between PSC and Psychological Distress (PD) on the other hand.
- There will be significant difference in the mean scores of male and female respondents on PSC.
- There will be significant interaction effect between neighbourhood and sex in influencing respondents scores on PSC.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants: Four hundred and fifty research participants, using stratified sampling method, were drawn from Abalti, FESTAC, 1004 and Ikeja barrack. Two hundred and thirty five were females while 215 were males, 65 females and 55 males from FESTAC town, 55 females and 55 males from 1004, 55 females and 50 males from Ikeja barrack and 60 females and 55 males from Abalti barrack adding up to total of 120, 110, 105 and 115 subjects, respectively.

Measure: Psychological Sense of Community (PSC): The Neighbourhoods Cohesion Instrument (NCI) developed by Buckner was used to measure PSC. It is capable of measuring neighbourhood cohesion at the community level and psychological sense of community at the individual level. The instrument has acceptable psychometric properties and has been discussed elsewhere. Five alternative responses are provided for each item; strongly agree, agree, neither agree/nor disagree, strongly disagree and are rated 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, respectively framed items.

Psychological Well Being (PWB) and Psychological Distress (PD): These were measured with the aid of Mental Health Inventory (MHI) developed by Veit and Ware (1983). It is a 38-item scaled containing two main factors. The PD factor contains 24 items that measure factors like anxiety, depression and loss of emotional behaviour control. The PWB contains 14 items that measure factors like general positive affect and emotional ties. The two sub scales have acceptable psychometric properties and have been reported in Veit and Ware (1983).

Procedure: Respondents were each given a copy of the questionnaire containing (NCI, PWB and PD items) together with biographic information-eliciting items. On the whole 655 questionnaires were distributed and 450 properly filled. These were analysed for this study. Instruction on the PWB and PD items required respondents to respond to the questions about how they felt mostly within the past month by endorsing one of the six or seven alternatives provided at the end of each question. On the PSC they were instructed to respond to the items according to how they felt about their neighbourhoods vis-à-vis each item by endorsing one of the five response-categories provided.

Research design and data analysis: Two-way ANOVA (4×2) was used to analyse the main and interaction effects of neighbourhoods and sex of respondents on PSC. One-way ANOVA was used to analyze the difference in PWB and PD of the four neighbourhoods. Furthermore Pearson’s correlation was used to test the relationship between PSC and PWB on the one hand and PSC and PD on the other hand.

RESULTS

Table 1 revealed that hypotheses 1 and 2 were confirmed. Mean scores of residents of the four neighbourhoods differed on PSC, PWB and PD, 1004 residents scored highest on PSC followed by Ikeja, FESTAC and Abalti. Ikeja residents had the highest mean score on PD followed by 1004, Abalti and FESTAC in that order.

Correlational analyses revealed that the relationship between PSC and PWB is not significant, $r(448) = 0.079$, $p > 0.05$, PSC and PD are not also significantly related, $r(448) = 0.0012$, $p > 0.05$.

Table 2 and 3 show that female respondents significantly had a higher mean score ($M = 3.88$) on PSC than male respondents ($M = 3.66$) $F(1, 442) = 9.49$, $p < 0.01$. They further revealed that sex significantly interacted with neighbourhood to influence respondents’ score on PSC, $F(3, 442) = 4.95$, $p < 0.01$ these confirmed hypotheses 3 and 4.

Table 1: Results of analyses of variance among FESTAC 1004 estate, Ikeja and Abalti barracks on psychological sense of community, psychological well being and psychological distress

Variable	M				df	f	p
	Festac	1004	Ikeja	Abalti			
PSC	3.77	3.97	3.86	3.6	3/446	10.58	<0.01
PWB	59.6	55.4	54.5	56.5	3/446	6.99	<0.01
PD	67.5	71.7	76.1	68.3	3/446	7.9	<0.01

Table 2: Mean score of respondents on PSC along gender and neighbourhood

Sex	Neighbourhood				Total
	Festac	1004	Ikeja	Abalti	
Male	3.65	3.44	3.87	3.68	3.66
Female	4.06	3.55	4.87	3.85	3.88

Table 3: A 4x2 ANOVA summary table showing the main and interaction effects of neighbourhood and gender on Psychological Sense of Community (PSC)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	
Total	2289	449	5.1		
Neighbourhood	146.17	3	48.721	10.59	<0.01
Sex	43.66	1	43.66	9.49	<0.01
Interaction	68.28	3	22.76	4.95	<0.05
Residual	2034.6	442	4.6		

DISCUSSION

The present study has found that neighbourhood varies in the degree to which they promote PSC in the residents. This is in support of previous research (Glynn, 1981; Bucker, 1988). Although it was not predicted which of the four neighbourhood in the present study would promote highest level of PSC it was however found that 1004 estate did. This was closely followed by Ikeja barrack. Although it is not so easy to place our hands on the factors that led to 1004 estate promoting highest PSC two factors, however, readily attract attention.

First, residents of 1004 estate may actually be the most homogenous. This is because they are top federal civil servants who belong to similar interests. Although residents of the military barracks seem homogenous by profession but the military peck order may have compromised the seeming homogenous life of military barracks. As for FESTAC residents cut across social and professional strata.

Second, 1004 estate has the most unique architecture being high rise buildings. This uniqueness may trigger off feelings of belong ness. Besides architecture have been known to promote pattern and level of social interaction in the occupants of housing projects (Festinger *et al.*, 1950; Clarke, 1952; Adebago, 1993).

The present study also found that PSC is neither related to PWB nor PD, the two indices of mental health taken into consideration. This is contrary to our expectation. We have thought that because previous studies have reported negative relationship between fear of crime and PSC and positive relationship between PSC and neighbourhood satisfaction, problem solving coping behaviour and level of neighbourhood participation therefore PSC will be related to mental health. Our expectation may not be totally wrong, however, PSC may not directly promote mental health but it may be related to

a third intervening factor that may directly impact on mental health. Further research will need to unearth such intervening variables.

Further to the findings of this study is the observation that gender of residents predict PSC. Female residents significantly scored higher on PSC than male residents. This is contrary to previous studies that have reported lack of predictive power of gender on PSC (Davidson and Cotter, 1993). It is important to note that these studies were done in the United States of American whose women may be psychologically different from Nigerian women. Furthermore Nigerian women as care givers to husbands and children are more likely to explore the neighbourhood for the fulfillment of their familial needs, pick the children from school and be more alert to the type of friendship their children keep in the neighbourhood. Women are also more likely to explore and exploit the myriad of opportunities that the neighbourhood provides for self economic improvement. This perhaps explains why women have been found to express higher PSC than men.

The implication of this exploratory study is that more research efforts should be geared towards understanding the nature and benefits of PSC. As our towns and village become more pro-urban we may need to promote PSC to ameliorate urban stress and its attendant consequences. Except we understand it and the variables that promote it we shall be at sea in exploiting its benefits.

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