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# The state of psychological wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates and the factors contributory to their wellbeing

Ernest K. Okpako <sup>a</sup>, Kehinde Clement Lawrence <sup>b</sup> and Ajibola O Falaye <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department Of Guidance And Counselling, University Of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria; <sup>b</sup>Department Of Educational Psychology And Special Education, University Of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa, South Africa; <sup>c</sup>Department Of Guidance And Counselling, University Of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria

## ABSTRACT

The concern of this study was to determine the current state of psychological wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates in Nigeria and some of the factors that contributed to their wellbeing. The results revealed that the psycho-logical wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates was moderately high and positive. The collective impact of the factors yielded a coefficient  $R = 0.497$  and  $R^2 = 0.247$  variance in the prediction of a positive state of psychological wellbeing. Further, the contribution of resilience was the highest at 26.6% ( $\beta = .266$ ,  $t = 2.428$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); followed by religiosity 17.5% ( $\beta = .175$ ,  $t = 1.266$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); openness 16.1% ( $\beta = .161$ ,  $t = 1.476$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); agreeability 15.9% ( $\beta = .159$ ,  $t = 1.495$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and neuroticism 12% ( $\beta = .120$ ,  $t = 0.864$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) towards their positive psychological wellbeing.

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## Introduction

The increasing unemployment rate has remained a fundamental developmental challenge facing the economic growth of most African countries, and has remained a rising trend over the past decades. Although developed nations are not outright excluded from this frightful social problem, the increase in the unemployment rate is more prominent in the developing countries, particularly in Africa. For instance, Balogun (2018) pointed that there are over 669 universities in Africa, with an estimated 10 million graduates every year; of which nearly half of that number are unemployed. Worse still in Nigeria is the situation where its economic circumstance is critical, and daily attacks by the Boko Haram sect are creating civil unrest (Nwankwo & Ifejirofor, 2014). In a recent study by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2018), the labour force in the country was estimated at 69%, while the employment-to-population ratio was 66.6%, accounting for a 33.4% unemployment rate in the labour force. Recently Aminu (2019) lamented the categorization of graduates of tertiary institutions alongside post-secondary education graduates (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018:34); the group with the highest unemployment rate in Nigeria.

The authors of this current study are concerned that the unemployment incidence has not excluded university graduates who performed well in the pursuit of their tertiary education. Contrary to the 1980s' Nigerian practice, high-achieving university graduates are no longer rewarded with an abundance of employment opportunities (Longe, 2017; Mahlangu & Fraser, 2017; Mellroth, 2014). Individuals who graduated with distinction(s) are now being caught in the web of this social menace that is unemployment; a situation capable of subjecting its victims to psychological and mental frustration, as well as non-conforming behaviours such as terrorism, internet fraud and other

criminal activities (Longe, 2017). Considering the recent #ENDSARS protests that rocked Nigeria between October and November 2020, particularly in the southern part of Nigeria, in which the youths united and demanded an end to the internal dehumanization of youths and re-enslavement, and a reduction in youth unemployment and better living conditions for all Nigerians (Orabueze et al., 2021). Obviously, the continued upswing in the unemployment rate in the country contributed to the emergence of the protests. These protests are an indication of an eminent revolution, and if the fundamental root causes are not addressed it may become inevitable. These root causes include youth unemployment, especially when highly intelligent youths who are and have graduated with distinctions from the various institutions across the country are not gainfully employed and their skills and knowledge leveraged to improve the situation in the country.

With this in mind, the behavioural, emotional and psychological challenges that accompany the transition of youths to adulthood are already multidimensional (Lawrence, 2021). These challenges are often triggered by some social and environmental forces including unemployment, social rejection and injustice, dehumanization, and a lack of social and family support, among others. These forces sometimes put the youths at risk of developing negative behaviours and mental health problems such as criminality, aggression, disruptiveness, and depression, and they may even become suicidal (Konaszewski et al., 2021). Consequently, long term unemployment has been documented to increase not only social and economic decadence, but also psychological wellbeing and mental health problems (Achdut & Refaeli, 2020). Ample studies in the past have examined several issues related to unemployment in Nigeria; (Adawo and Atan, 2013; Akeju & Olanipekun, 2014; Aminu, 2019; Longe, 2017; Nwankwo & Ifejiiofor, 2014). However, it should be emphasized that studies focusing on the state of psychological wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates and its contributory factors such as resilience, religiosity and personality characteristics (agreeability, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and neuroticism) have not yet been conducted. Hence the justifications for this present study.

## Concepts, empirical studies and research questions

### *Psychological wellbeing*

Psychological wellbeing, as defined by the World Health Organization (Organization, 2001), is a condition of wellness in which every individual can cope with the normal stresses of life, recognize his or her own potential, work efficiently and productively, and is able to make a positive contribution to her or his immediate environment. That is, a state of complete emotional, mental, physical and social wellbeing where a person is able to live healthily and be productive enough to add values to his or her society. Essentially, employment can be one of the main determinants of positive psychological wellbeing. Bhat and Joshi (2019) allude that employment serves as a vital nexus between the employed individual and his or her society, and it enables the employed to contribute to society and achieve individual fulfilment. An individual's psychological state may be dependent to a large degree on their employment status. The WHO (Organization, 2001) noted that employment relates with the mental health of an individual (Marmot, 2003). Crowe and Butterworth (2016), on the other hand, aver that long term unemployment may be associated with socio-economic deprivation, low quality of life and psychological distress. A recent study by Bhat and Joshi (2019) warned that the possibility of unemployed people without any underlining illness dying at a younger age is higher than that of the general population.

Studies that focus specifically on the psychological wellbeing of young unemployed distinction graduates have not been found, as commonly studies focus attention on the psychological wellbeing and mental health of other unemployed population groups such as women, adolescents and children (Amisssah & Nyarko, 2017; Suleman et al., 2018; Weiss, Westerhof and Bohlmeijer, 2016). Specifically, Amisssah and Nyarko (2017) investigated the psychological effects of unemployment among Ghana's youths, and they found that poorer psychological health amongst the unemployed

was significantly predicted by the duration of their unemployment. A recent study by Bhat and Joshi (2019) examined and compared the mental health state of the employed and unemployed youth of Kashmir. The outcome of their study showed that youth unemployment led to anxiety, depression, a loss of emotional control, and psychological distress; meanwhile the life satisfaction and the psychological wellbeing of the employed youth was high. More recently, Achdut and Refaeli (2020) found that unemployment was largely associated with greater psychological distress; while perceived trust, optimism, and a sense of mastery increased psychological wellbeing. Hence, the psychological wellbeing of unemployed youths can be dependent on resources and contributory factors.

Similarly, Omoniyi (2016) and Omotosho et al. (2009) revealed that unemployed youths in Nigeria suffer from an array of problems ranging from health related issues to psychosocial issues. There is no known study that sheds light on the psychological wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates, which is the main concern of this study. Factors that may contribute to their psychological wellbeing include social supports, the family's socio-economic status, self-esteem and resilience (Oskrochi et al., 2018). For the purpose of this study, the authors considered resilience, religiosity and five personality characteristics (agreeability, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience) and their roles towards the psychological wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates. In order to determine the state of psychological wellbeing of the unemployed distinction graduates, a number of research questions (RQ) were formulated and investigated in terms of these characteristics, as discussed below.

RQ1: What was the state of psychological wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates?

### *Resilience and psychological wellbeing*

The significance of the role that resilience plays in determining the psychological wellbeing of an individual cannot be overemphasized, and its conceptualization varies. For example, Luthar et al. (2000) view resilience as an individual's distinct feature that helps them to mitigate the negative consequences of stressful events and minimize episodes of depression. The American Psychiatric Association (2004) describes it as a process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress. Also, in the opinion of Bonanno et al. (2012) resilience is a process that encompasses positive adaptation within the context of adversity. More recently, Craparo et al. (2018); Magnano et al. (2016) also recognize resilience as the competence and the capacity to undertake responsibility and to handle certain changes rebounding from adversity and negativity and bring about positive changes from uncertainty. In this study, we understand resilience as the unemployed distinction graduates' developable capacity to thrive in the time of adversity and lessen the negative effects of its related stress. The relationship between resilience and psychological wellbeing have been proven to be positive over time (Aiena et al., 2015; Downie et al., 2010; Windle, 2011), as it increases optimism, gratitude, self-discipline, self-esteem, wellbeing and life satisfaction (Jain & Cohen, 2013; Konaszewski et al., 2021).

It has been established that those youths who demonstrate high levels of resilience experience fewer emotional, mental and psychological health problems (Sood et al., 2013). Tempiski et al. (2015) pointed out that the risk of psycho-emotional and behavioural problems among adolescents is reduced when resilience is strengthened. It should be emphasized that the state of wellbeing of an individual is determined by resilience, either directly or indirectly, based on the ability of the person to cope with stress. The study of Akanni and Otakpor (2016) revealed a negative association between resilience and the psychological distress of school going adolescents in Benin, Nigeria. Other studies have demonstrated a positive and significant correlation between resilience and reduced task-based stress (Harms et al., 2018; Konaszewski et al., 2019; Memarian et al., 2015). Conversely, some other studies have shown that resilience also correlated negatively with some factors such as avoidance/denial, distraction, self-blaming, and chronic depression (M. M. Smith et al., 2016; Stratta et al., 2015). Thus, the relationship between the psychological wellbeing and the resilience of unemployed distinction graduates has not been confirmed.

### *Personality dimensions and psychological wellbeing*

Personality dimensions/traits are one of the important constructs that can determine the state of psychological wellbeing of an individual. Generally, it is believed to be what makes people different and unique to others, and determines how individuals evaluate events as harmful, threatening, or challenging (Pollak et al., 2020). Similar to this, Fauziah et al. (2018) aver that one aspect of humanity that is quite complex is personality. In describing personality, several researchers have made various interesting contributions, such as the Five-factor Model (McCrae & Costa, 1987); the Five-alternatives Model: neuroticism–anxiety, aggression–hostility, activity, sociability and impulsive non-socialized sensation seeking (Zuckerman et al., 1993); and recently the Six-factor HEXACO Model (Ashton et al., 2014). However, the Big Five model is considered to be the most universal, basically because it integrates and orders other dimensions of personality traits which are supported by cross-cultural research (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007; Pollak et al., 2020). For the purpose of this study, the Broad/Big Five dimensions (extraversion, agreeability, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) of personality traits were adopted.

McCrae and Costa (2003) described extraversion as an individual's tendencies to be energetic, joyful, sociable and self-confident. That is, the social functioning and quality of an individual's social interaction, level of activity, as well as their ability to sense positive emotions. A positive association was established between extraversion and assertive behaviours, self-assurance and excitement seeking (Deniz and Satici, 2017). Openness to experience involves cognitive curiosity and an individual's tendency to seek life experience and become a highly intelligent person. It is believed that individuals who possess this kind of trait have critical thinking abilities and creativity. Bakker et al. (2002) submitted that individuals with high openness to experiences are more flexible, imaginative, and intellectually curious when approaching stressful situations. Past studies by Patterson et al. (2009); Yesil and Sozbilir (2013) asserted that openness to experience was the only personality dimension that positively related to individual creativity and innovative behaviour.

Neuroticism is characterized by aggression, anger, anxiety, emotional instability, irritability, a bad temperament, and moodiness (Yesil & Sozbilir, 2013). People with neurotic tendencies are prone to negative emotions, which often tend to linger for a long time. Consequently, such persons evaluate life events as a loss or a threat, and do not appreciate their own potentials; hence, they have difficulties in coping with stress (Moreira et al., 2015; Pollak et al., 2020). Studies affirmed that neuroticism, happiness and psychological wellbeing are negatively related (Moreira et al., 2015; Yesil & Sozbilir, 2013); whereas, a low level of neuroticism relates to a high positive wellbeing. Another dimension of the broad five personalities as postulated by McCrae and Costa (1987; Marmot (2003)) is agreeability, which describes a person as interpersonally orientated with a good-nature, forgiving, courteous, helpful and altruistic. A highly agreeable person will be sensitive to others, trust, and be willing to co-operate with them, while a less agreeable individual will demonstrate a lack of trust and be competitive. Studies have shown that agreeability correlated with job performance and success in life (Matzler et al., 2011; Yesil & Sozbilir, 2013). Conscientiousness is the last dimension of the big five personalities which describe a person as being dependable, a perfectionist, responsible, organized, hardworking and goal-oriented (Barrick & Mount, 1991). It has been argued that highly conscientious persons often perceive events to be stressful, however, instead of avoiding it they undertake direct measures to manage it (Pollak et al., 2020; Włodarczyk & Obacz, 2013). Kumar and Bakhshi (2010) stressed that conscientious people are dutiful, self-disciplined, persistent, and have a strong sense of purpose and obligation. Matzler et al. (2011) found that high conscientiousness positively related to high achievement.

Empirical evidence abounds on the relationship between the five dimensions of personality and psychological wellbeing. Among such evidence is that by Garcia (2011), who found negative associations between happiness, neuroticism and psychological wellbeing; and positive associations between neuroticism and negative affect; openness and positive affect; and conscientiousness and life satisfaction (Salavera et al., 2020). Extraversion was found to be positively related to positive affect, happiness and to loneliness; and neuroticism was negatively correlated to

happiness (Cheng and Furnham, 2002). In a study by Lampropoulou (2018), the five broad dimensions of personality traits were found to predict subjective wellbeing, which suggests a significant relationship between these personality traits and psychological wellbeing. Neuroticism, which includes characteristics such as emotional instability, anger, anxiety, and aggression, seems to have a significant correlation with the negative aspect of subjective wellbeing. Extraversion includes characteristics such as being sociable, outgoing, talkative and energetic, and is also related to the positive aspect of subjective wellbeing. Pollak et al. (2020) established that an openness to experience negatively predicted primary stress appraisal, while conscientiousness positively predicted it. In general, there seems to be a significant relationship between the big five personality dimensions and psychological wellbeing (Kokko, Tolvanen and Pulkkinen, 2013). However, the contributory role of personality dimensions on the psychological wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates has not been documented. This present study intended to fill this gap.

### ***Religiosity and psychological wellbeing***

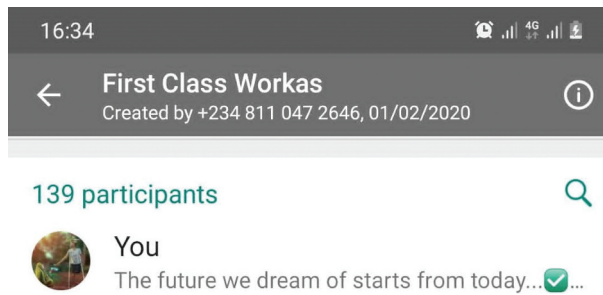
Central to the lives of many Africans' attitudes, actions, beliefs, moral values and judgements is religion. Goldberg (2006); Iqbal and Khan (2020) opined that religion is a significant force behind peoples' behaviour. Iqbal and Khan (2020) noted that religion varies with culture. His assertion reflects the nature and culture of the Nigerian populace who are well known to be religious. Religiosity was described as one's devotion to certain beliefs and ritual practices connected with the worship of God or a system of gods (Mattis and Watson, 2008, p. 92; Reed & Neville, 2014). Zenevicz, Moriguchi and Madureira (2013) viewed religiosity as relevant to human existence and life situations or challenges, which explains faith in divinity that gives strength to individuals when experiencing depressing or difficult situations. Several studies have established the explicit connection between religiosity and psychological wellbeing (Aflakseir, 2012). A highly religious person is found to be positively and significantly related to other parameters of wellness including happiness, optimism and life satisfaction (Ebimgbo, Agwu and Okoye, 2018). In a study conducted by Kim-Prieto and Miller (2018) on the effect of religiosity on the subjective wellbeing of the elderly, it was revealed that religiosity is positively and significantly associated with it.

RQ2: Were there any significant relationships between the psychological wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates and its contributory factors (religiosity, personality and resilience)?

RQ3: Which factor contributed to the present state of the psychological wellbeing of the unemployed distinction graduates?

### **Methodology and participants**

To achieve the aim of this study, the quantitative research design of the correlational type was adopted. The study participants included were unemployed youths who had graduated with distinctions or first-class passes from various universities across Nigeria between 2015 and 2020. To understand the current state of psychological wellbeing and its contributory factors, a Google form was used to collect data from a WhatsApp group comprising of unemployed youths (see Figure 1), who graduated with distinctions/first-class passes in their various disciplines. A total of 107 youths responded to the online survey which lasted for a month. Previously developed instruments for each of the constructs were adapted, with a few modifications and rewording, and this was done to ensure cultural compatibility. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section gathered information regarding the demographical characteristics of the respondents and the second section contained the scale of the constructs.



**Figure 1.** WhatsApp group of youths with distinctions.

## **Measures**

All of the factors were measured using five response options ranging from (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

### **Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWS)**

Psychological wellbeing was measured with Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). The original scale consisted of 43 items, from which 11 items were adapted for the purpose of this current study. The scale determined six theoretical dimensions of psychological wellbeing, including autonomy, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, personal growth, positive relations with others, and purpose in life. The reliability of the full scale was reported as .86. The total summated score on the measure indicated that the psychological wellbeing with high scores indicated a higher level of psychological wellbeing.

### **Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)**

The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) developed by B. W. Smith et al. (2008) was adopted. It consisted of six items with items one, three, and five being positively worded, and items two, four, and six being negatively worded. Its internal consistency was satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha score of .85. Higher total scores reflected higher resilience levels.

### **Personality Scale (PS)**

The NEO-PI-R of Costa and McCrae (1992) was adopted to assess the personality dimensions of the big five model. A short version of the scale that consisted of 60 items was adapted for use in this study; 3 for each one of the 5 personality factors which were neuroticism (Cronbach's alpha = .73), extraversion (Cronbach's alpha = .69), openness to experience (Cronbach's alpha = .40), agreeableness (Cronbach's alpha = .69) and conscientiousness (Cronbach's alpha = .78).

### **Religiosity Scale (RS)**

Religiosity was assessed using Joseph et al.'s (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007) scale. The scale had four subscales; preoccupation, guidance, conviction, and emotional involvement. Each of the subscales consisted of five items, totalling twenty. The overall reliability coefficient of the scale was satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93.

## **Data analysis**

The study made use of descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse the data of the study. This included multiple regression and Pearson product moment correlation. A frequency count was used to analyse the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to determine the respondents' current state of psychological wellbeing. A multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the joint



contribution and the relative effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable; all at a 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

### RQ1

The first research question sought to determine the current state of psychological wellbeing of the respondents. The findings, shown in [Table 1](#), established that the current state of psychological wellness of the respondents was moderately high, with six items rated above the average mean estimate of 1.9 and only five items scoring a mean below the average mean. Specifically, item ten: 'I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life' yielded the highest score (mean = 2.3), followed by item eleven: 'I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future', with a mean = 2.28. This was followed by item nine: 'I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future' (mean = 2.24), and then item eight: 'Some people wander aimlessly through life but I am not one of them' (mean = 2.14). Next was item one, 'I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions' with a mean = 2.10, and then item seven: 'People would describe me as a giving person willing to share my time with others' (mean = 2.03). However, item five: 'I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how I think about myself and the world' had the lowest mean value (mean = 1.41), followed by item two: 'The demands of everyday life often get me down' with a mean = 1.45. Next was item six: 'Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me', with a mean value of 1.52, followed by item four: 'For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing and growth' (mean = 1.68) and item three: 'In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live' (mean = 1.76). This implied that despite the unemployed status of these distinction graduates, their psychological wellbeing was still positive.

Key: SD, strongly disagree; D, disagree; A, agree; SA, strongly agree; M, mean; St.d, standard deviation.

### RQ 2

The second question sought to determine if there were significant relationships between the psychological wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates and its contributory factors of religiosity, personality and resilience.

[Table 2](#) contains the descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the study variables. As shown in the table, psychological wellbeing is significantly correlated with extraversion ( $r = .341$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), agreeability ( $r = .219$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), conscientiousness ( $r = .204$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), neuroticism ( $r = .342$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), openness ( $r = .281$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), resilience ( $r = .410$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and religiosity ( $r = .302$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

### RQ 3

Which factor contributed to the present state of psychological wellbeing of the unemployed distinction graduates?

The results in [Table 3](#) in page 14 show that all of the proposed factors contributed jointly to the prediction of the psychological wellbeing ( $R = .497$ ,  $R^2 = .247$ ,  $F(7, 92) = 4.312$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This implies that the big five personalities, resilience and religiosity accounted for 24.7% of the changes observed in the self-reported state of psychological wellbeing among unemployed distinction graduates, while the remaining 75.3% could be attributed to different factors by chance not considered in this study. Further, the [Table \(3\)](#) establishes that resilience made the highest contribution of 26.6% ( $\beta = .266$ ,  $t = 2.428$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) to the prediction of positive psychological wellbeing of the respondents; followed by religiosity with 17.5% ( $\beta = .175$ ,  $t = 1.266$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); openness to experience at

**Table 1.** Simple percentages showing the responses of the participants to the psychological wellbeing items.

S/N	Items	SD%	D%	A%	SA%	M	ST.d
1.	I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions	55(51.4)	2(1.9)	35(32.7)	15(14.0)	2.09	1.18
2.	The demands of everyday life often get me down	85(79.4)	4(3.7)	9(8.4)	9(8.4)	1.45	0.96
3.	In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live	69(64.5)	2(1.9)	28(26.2)	8(7.5)	1.76	1.07
4.	For me, life has been a continuous process of learning changing and growth	76(71.0)	2(1.9)	16(15.0)	13(12.1)	1.68	1.12
5.	I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how I think about myself and the world	87(81.3)	4(3.7)	8(7.5)	8(7.5)	1.41	0.92
6.	Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me	82(76.6)	0(0)	19(17.8)	6(5.6)	1.52	0.97
7.	People would describe me as a giving person willing to share my time with others	55(51.4)	6(5.6)	33(30.8)	13(12.1)	2.03	1.14
8.	Some people wander aimlessly through life but I am not one of them	45(42.1)	10(9.3)	43(40.2)	9(8.4)	2.14	1.07
9.	I live one day at a time and don't really think about the future	37(34.6)	18(16.8)	41(38.3)	11(10.3)	2.24	1.04
10.	I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life	31(29.0)	22(20.6)	43(40.2)	11(10.3)	2.31	1.00
11.	I live one day at a time and don't really think about the future	31(29.0)	26(24.3)	39(36.4)	11(10.3)	2.28	0.99

Average weighted mean value = 1.90



**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the variables.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
PWB	107	20.9	6.42	1							
Extraversion	107	11.1	4.24	.341**	1						
Agreeability	107	8.40	5.36	.219*	.347**	1					
Conscientiousness	107	4.74	1.64	.204*	.213*	.377**	1				
Neuroticism	107	5.02	1.69	.256*	.343**	.201*	.718**	1			
Openness	107	4.42	1.49	.281**	.183	.100	.461**	.371**1			
Resilience	107	13.0	2.1	.410**	.485**	.115	.204*	.277**	.363**	1	
Religiosity	107	12.3	4.76	.302**	.741**	.171	.108	.225*	.033	.361**	1

\*correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-Tailed); \*\*correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-Tailed)

16.1% ( $\beta = .161$ ,  $t = 1.476$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); agreeableness at 15.9% ( $\beta = .159$ ,  $t = 1.495$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); and neuroticism at 12% ( $\beta = .120$ ,  $t = .864$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). But extraversion ( $\beta = -.025$ ,  $t = -.162$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) and conscientiousness ( $\beta = -.084$ ,  $t = -.653$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) had negative and no significant contribution to the psychological wellbeing among unemployed distinction graduates.

**Table 3.** Summary of the multiple regressions showing the predictors of psychological wellbeing among unemployed distinction graduates.

Factors	B	T	P	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F(7,100)	P
Extraversion	-.025	-.162	.872				
Agreeability	.159	1.495	.004	.497	.247	4.312	<.01
Conscientiousness	-.084	-.563	.575				
Neuroticism	.120	.864	.000				
Openness	.161	1.476	.005				
Resilience	.266	2.428	.017				
Religiosity	.175	1.266	.009				

DV: Psychological wellbeing

## Discussion of the findings

The present study was concerned with the state of psychological wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates and the possible factors that could be responsible for it. The findings established that the state of psychological wellbeing of the respondents was positive. This means that individuals who were unemployed could still attain a state of positive psychological wellbeing and cope with the stresses and frustration associated with unemployment, recognize their personal potential and be positive about contributing to their immediate environment. The reason for this finding could be that the majority of the respondents were still dependant on their family for their livelihood or perhaps that they were highly hopeful for a better future based on their past academic achievement and possessed some enduring traits (Singh et al., 2012). Thus a positive state of psychological wellbeing, as found herein, could be associated with other factors such as a high level of resilience, religiosity and personality dimensions. This finding was aligned with those of previous studies, including those by Achdut and Refaeli (2020), Bhat and Joshi (2019), Eiroa-Orosa (2020), Fredrickson and Losada (2005), and Seligman et al. (2005), and Singh et al. (2012) who perceived that optimism, a sense of mastery, past achievement and some enduring aspect of personality increased psychological wellbeing.

The outcome of the second research question revealed that all of the factors were related to the positive state of psychological wellbeing of the respondents. This implied that resilience, religiosity and the Big Five personality dimensions had a significant relationship with a positive state of psychological wellbeing. This was surprising, especially for a personality type such as neuroticism which involves aggression, anger, anxiety, emotional instability, irritability, and the usual attachment

of negativity with events (Pollak et al., 2020; Yesil & Sozbilir, 2013) to be positively correlated with a positive state of psychological wellbeing. The only plausible reason for this kind of result could be that the level of neuroticism of the participants was low, thus supporting the position of McCrae and Costa (1987); Moreira et al. (2015) that low levels of neuroticism related to a high degree of positive wellbeing. Resilience, religiosity and other dimensions of personality also related positively and significantly with a positive state of psychological wellbeing in this study. This finding was along the lines of other studies including those by Aflakseir (2012); Aiena et al. (2015); Ebimngbo, Agwu and Okoye (2018); Downie et al. (2010); Kim-Prieto and Miller (2018); Windle (2011) that resilience, religiosity and an enduring aspect of personality increased wellbeing and life satisfaction (Jain & Cohen, 2013; Konaszewski et al., 2021).

The last research question was concerned with factors that contributed to the prediction of the positive state of psychological wellbeing of the respondents. The findings revealed that resilience was the most important factor responsible for the positive state of psychological wellbeing, followed by religiosity, openness to experience, agreeability and neuroticism. Thus, it could be said that as an individual's resilience, religiosity, openness to experience and agreeability increased with a low level of neuroticism, the positive psychological wellbeing also increased. It means that resilience is the capability and courage to handle certain changes, assume responsibility, and rebound from adversity, negative or positive changes and the uncertainty of life (Magnano et al., 2016). It is a potent factor that determines a positive state of psychological wellbeing. Therefore, when an individual is resilient, he/she will be able to approach life events with the courage to face any form of challenge or adversity (M. M. Smith et al., 2016; Magnano et al., 2016; Stratta et al., 2015; Suresh et al., 2013).

The contribution of religiosity was also significant to a positive state of psychological wellbeing. Religiosity, which is directed towards one's devotion to certain beliefs and ritual practices connected to the worship of God (Iqbal & Khan, 2020), has great impact on a positive state of psychological wellbeing. Being a way of life in Nigeria, religiosity is connected with beliefs and moral values towards life situations, society and the economy (Vitell et al., 2016). It therefore follows that as the religiosity commitment of an individual increases, their emotional, mental, physical and social wellbeing increases as well, as does their ability to live healthily and be productive (Ivtzan et al., 2013; Zenevicz, Moriguchi and Madureira, 2013).

In this study, the combination of openness to experience, agreeability and low neuroticism contributed positively and significantly to the prediction of a positive state of psychological wellbeing of the unemployed distinction graduates. Openness to experience, which is characterized by cognitive curiosity, flexibility, imagination, intelligence and the tendency to seek life experience; and a high level of intelligence potentially predicted a positive state of psychological wellbeing (Bakker et al., 2002; Patterson et al., 2009; Yesil & Sozbilir, 2013). In the same vein agreeability also has an impact on psychological wellbeing (Patterson et al., 2009). According to McCrae and Costa (1987), Marmot (2003), and Moreira et al. (2015), agreeability describes people's interpersonal orientation, their ability to forgive, courteousness, helpfulness and altruistic behaviours.

Other studies have also reported that a low level of neuroticism contributes to positive wellbeing, increases subjective vitality and reduces stress (Deniz and Satıcı, 2017; Pollak et al., 2020; Samarein et al., 2013). Specifically, we found that neuroticism emerged as the fourth strongest predictor of psychological wellbeing, which opposed the normal logic of a neurotic person as it seemed to adversely affect psychological wellbeing. This finding concurred with the arguments by Furnham and Petrides (2003); Singh et al. (2012) who found that neuroticism, in a negative sense, was positively related to happiness.

## Conclusion and limitations

In this study the authors were concerned with the state of psychological wellbeing of unemployed distinction graduates in Nigeria and the factors that contributed to their wellbeing. This concern emerged because of the continuous rise in unemployment of university graduates who, despite

academic stress, had achieved distinctions and belonged to the First-Class Honour Division. Being a quantitative research design, a correlational method was adopted to understand the current state of psychological wellbeing of these respondents and the contributory factors. A Google form was used to collect data from a WhatsApp group comprising of unemployed youths who had graduated with distinctions during the last five years from various universities in Nigeria. Three research questions were asked, and answered using the data gathered which was analysed using descriptive, regression and correlation statistical tools. The results from the analysis established a positive state of psychological wellbeing among the unemployed youths. All of the factors considered in this study (resilience, religiosity and the Big Five Personality Dimensions) were found to have a significant relationship with a positive state of psychological wellbeing. Resilience was found to be the most important contributor to a positive state of psychological wellbeing, followed by religiosity, openness to experience, agreeability and low neuroticism. The importance of this study emphasizes the fact that being resilient, religiously devoted and possessing an enduring personality characteristic helps promote a positive state of psychological wellbeing. Hence, the unemployed youths who are wrongly channelling their intelligence into various antisocial vices such as internet fraud, cybercrime or terrorism due to their unemployment should take into consideration the enduring factors of their potential mentioned in this study.

### **Limitations**

This present study was not without its limitations. First, the sample size was small and potentially not big enough to generalize the findings. A larger sample size would improve the ability of the results to be generalized. This study took into account resilience, religiosity and the Big Five Personality Dimensions as the only contributory factors to a positive state of psychological wellbeing. However, future studies may consider other factors such as self-esteem, family socio-economic status, age and social support. This study can also be replicated in another country. The findings of the study revealed that resilience had the greatest impact and was highly significant on the positive state of psychological wellbeing of the unemployed distinction graduates.

### **Recommendations**

Given the outcomes of this study, the following recommendation were suggested.

- Youths especially those who are high-academic achievers or graduated with distinction (s) should use their resilience, religious and enduring personality characteristic to promote personal positive state of psychological wellbeing.
- The majority of youths who are unemployed should remain resolute in their search for jobs, while shunning any form of social vices, internet fraud and criminal activities.
- Government should develop and immediately implement policies that will encourage and reward high-achieving or distinction(s) university graduates with immediate employment opportunities and provide scholarships funds for those who desire to further their education abroad.
- Private corporations in Nigeria should also be involved in developing academically exceptional individuals in Nigeria society and not only social talented people as it is being practiced now.
- Future studies should carry out experimental studies using resilience as an intervention to negate psychological distress among unemployed youths.

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The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

## Notes on contributors

**Dr Ernest Ochuko Okpako** is currently a Doctoral student in the Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

**Dr Kehinde Clement Lawrence** is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand, South Africa. He obtained his Doctoral degree from the Department of Guidance and Counselling University of Ibadan in 2019, with research interest in child and adolescents traumatic experiences as well as its consequences on education, career and psychological wellbeing. He has published over 23 articles in peer reviewed Scopus and World of Science Journals. Dr Lawrence has also reviewed articles for internationally recognized journals such as Community Mental Health Journal, Journal of Trauma, Journal of Community Psychology among others.

**Dr Ajibola Omolola Falaye** is a Professor of Counselling and Developmental psychology in Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She has mentored academicians some of who are now professors and senior Lecturers in their fields. Professor Falaye has Supervised well over 25 and still supervising doctoral students. She is a pioneer HOD of the Department of Guidance and Counselling Tai Solaring University of education Ijebu-Ode Ogun state, Nigeria. she is also a formal HOD of the Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Ibadan, Nigeria among other leadership positions she has held.

## ORCID

Ernest K. Okpako  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4775-0602>

Kehinde Clement Lawrence  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4740-4630>

Ajibola O Falaye  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9467-8415>

## Availability of data and materials

The data used in this work is not available publicly but could be provided by the author on reasonable request.

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