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PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND SELF-PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS FROM ZIMBABWE STUDYING IN POLAND

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Due to the growing interest of foreigners in education in Poland, the issue of how foreign students function in our country is an interesting area of research. One of the numerous groups choosing to study in Poland are Zimbabweans. The aim of the article is to determine the psychological well-being and self-esteem of Zimbabwean students studying in Poland, as well as to establish the relationship between the mentioned variables.

Method: The research was based on a quantitative research paradigm. It was conducted using a diagnostic survey method among 224 students from Zimbabwe studying in Poland. Subjects were selected for the study using the snowball method. To diagnose psychological well-being, the Psychological Well-Being Scales questionnaire by Caroll D. Ryff and to diagnose self-esteem the Self-Esteem Scale (SES) by Moriss Rosenberg.

Results: Based on the study, a significant relationship was found between well-being and students' self-esteem. The respondents are satisfied with their lives and have a high level of self-esteem.

Discussion: In the context of the research conducted, it can be concluded that students, despite functioning in a different cultural environment, find their way around Poland well and cope with the challenges of everyday life. The obtained results of the research show Polish universities as places that meet the challenges of internationalisation. However, it should be borne in mind that the adaptation of foreigners is conditioned by many factors, both academic and non-academic.

KEYWORDS: *psychological well-being, dimensions of well-being, educational migration, self-esteem, students, Africans, universities*

INTRODUCTION

A characteristic feature of the modern world is educational migration, which involves taking up education outside the home country (Boichuk, 2023, p. 141-142). In recent years, an increase in interest in education in Poland has been observed among foreign students (CSO, 2020, p.12). As part of the idea of barrier-free education, people from various African countries are increasingly coming to Europe, including Poland, for higher education, the most numerous group being Zimbabwean students. An analysis of the structure of the countries of origin of foreign students in Poland shows that in 2023 they were the fourth largest nationality group studying in Poland. Their share in the total number of foreign students in Poland was 4%.

(Countries of origin ..., 2023). These are usually students graduating from schools in their country where English was the language of instruction, and therefore they most often choose English-language courses because they have the opportunity to be educated in that language. Among other reasons, they make such a decision for financial reasons, as Poland is in competition with other countries in this respect, as well as for the quality of education and preparation for their future profession (Boichuk, 2023, p.146). Given the increasingly higher internationalisation rate of Polish universities, it seemed reasonable to undertake a study aimed at finding out how international students, especially those from African countries, function in Polish society, as undertaking studies in a culturally different environment, differing in religion, values, language, standard of living, is associated with a number of challenges regarding adaptation and social integration (Nikitorowicz, Sobecki, Misiejuk 2001, p. 7; Kozula 2018, p. 94-95) including the phenomenon of racism and experiencing violence (Omeni 2016; Balogun, Pędziwiatr 2023).

The aim of this study is therefore to determine the psychological well-being and self-esteem of Zimbabwean students studying in Poland, as well as to establish the relationship between the aforementioned variables. It was assumed that the psychological well-being of Zimbabwean students in a culturally different environment may be at risk and condition their functioning. It may also affect self-evaluation and, consequently, decisions made, relationships with others and goals achieved.

THEORETICAL EMBEDDING

The present study adopts the multidimensional well-being model of Caroll D. Ryff (1989). The author bases her concept on the eudaimonist theory understood as the feeling accompanying the realisation of human potential and living in accordance with human nature. Well-being in this theory is defined through six dimensions. The first of these is *self-acceptance* (*self-acceptance*) expressed in self-respect and a positive attitude towards oneself, maturity, awareness of one's own faults and advantages. Purpose *in* life (*purpose in life*) is the second dimension of well-being. It is expressed through the ability to find meaning in life and

the realisation of important life goals, which often result from coping with adversity. Another dimension is personal *growth*, which manifests itself in the ability to permanently fulfil one's potential, develop one's abilities, improve one's skills and seek out new opportunities for development, as well as an openness and readiness to take on challenges. The next dimension is *environmental mastery*, understood as the ability to create and organise the environment to best serve the individual and the community in which he or she functions. This skill is associated with a sense of agency, taking initiative in life and coping with the environment. The fifth dimension of well-being is *autonomy*, meaning the independence of the individual, the feeling of freedom, not yielding to external pressures, following one's inner convictions even when they deviate from existing standards. The last dimension of well-being is *positive relations with others* based on friendship, empathy, trust and intimacy. Thus, well-being, in this conception, refers to an active attitude towards the challenges of life, representing an important aspect of one's health and life (Ryff, Singer, 2002). It is in this context that research was undertaken to determine the wellbeing of Zimbabweans undertaking education in Poland. A person's functioning in a culturally different environment can affect the degree to which they realise their own potential, how they cope with life's adversities and difficulties, their sense of meaning in life, their relationships with others, and their self-perception reflected in their self-esteem.

Self-assessment diagnosis seems to be particularly important in the context of foreign students' adaptation to Polish conditions both at the stage of receiving education and in the further perspective of starting work. The best-known concept of self-esteem is the one developed by Moriss Rosenberg (1965). According to this author, self-esteem is a conscious, generalised attitude towards oneself, and the point of reference for self-evaluation is one's own person and not other people. A person with high self-esteem respects and accepts himself, wants to develop, grow and overcome his own weaknesses, notices his own imperfections, limitations and at the same time believes that he will be able to overcome and change them (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 30 – 31). In the research presented here, self-esteem is treated in a global rather than a specific dimension, referring to different areas of human functioning. It is understood as a relatively constant human trait over time (Brown, Marshall, 2006).

METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF OWN RESEARCH

The aim of the research was to diagnose the psychological well-being and self-esteem of Zimbabwean students studying in Poland, as well as to establish the relationship between the aforementioned variables. Thus, the research problems to be empirically verified are contained in the questions: How do Zimbabwean students studying in Poland assess their psychological well-being in the general dimension and in its subscales such as autonomy, mastery over the environment, personal development, positive relationships with others, life purpose, self-acceptance? What is the self-esteem of the students surveyed? Is there, and if so, what is the relationship between psychological well-being and self-esteem of Zimbabwean students studying in Poland?

Conducting scientific research requires, in addition to formulating research problems, defining working hypotheses. These are especially necessary when researching relationships between variables (Łobocki, 2010). The basis for the hypothesis was an analysis of the existing state of research in the field of psychological well-being and self-esteem (Ryff, 1989; Karaś, Ciecuch, 2017; Diener, 2000; Czapiński, 2005; Diener, Heintzelman, Kushlev, Tay, Wirtz, Lutes, Oishi, 2017). The following hypothesis was put forward: There is a directly proportional relationship between psychological well-being and self-esteem.

The study was conducted using a diagnostic survey method. To diagnose psychological well-being, the Psychological Well-Being Scales questionnaire by Caroll D. Ryff measuring psychological well-being from a eudaimonistic perspective. The study used a shortened version of the scale containing 18 items to which the respondent responds on a six-point scale. Scores are calculated by adding up the points obtained for the answers to all questions. Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15, 16 are scored in reverse order. The minimum score obtained is 18 points and the maximum score is 108. The tool also allows for the calculation of scores on 6 subscales: autonomy, mastery of the environment, personal development, positive relationships with others, life purpose, self-acceptance. Each subscale consists of three statements (Ryff, Keyes, 1995 after Karaś, Ciecuch, 2017). In turn, one of the world's most popular methods of examining this variable, the Self-Esteem Scale (SES) by Moriss Rosenberg (1989), was used to diagnose the self-esteem of the

students surveyed. It allows to measure the overall level of self-esteem, i.e. the belief in one's own worth, revealed in the self-report and treated as a relatively fixed property of the person. This scale is a method of measuring global self-esteem. It is constructed from 10 diagnostic statements. The range of possible scores is from 10 to 40. The higher the score, the higher the self-esteem. In the case of positively worded statements: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, the value assigned to the answer given should be reversed so that a higher score is given for answers expressing a higher level of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1989). Statistical calculations were performed using the IBM SPSS IMAGO PRO version 29.0 package.

The research was conducted from April to November 2024, combining traditional and online forms. Nowadays, this model of conducting research is used quite frequently (Kubicek, 2016; Davies et al., 2020). Given the issue addressed, the study used purposive sampling, which involved surveying Zimbabwean students studying in Poland. The selection of individuals for the study was done using a snowball method called chain sampling or referral sampling (Frey, 2018). This method involves recruiting participants for the study by other participants. A request for help with the research project was made to academics teaching foreigners. In this way, research material was obtained from 456 students from different countries, of which 224 Zimbabweans were selected for the study. The age of the subjects ranged from 18 to 46 years, with a mean age of 25.44 (SD = 6.48). Seventy males (31.25%) and 154 females (68.75%) participated in the study. All participants in the study were educated in medical subjects.

FINDINGS

The analysis of data on the *psychological well-being* of Zimbabwean students began with the calculation of the *Psychological Well-Being Scales* reliability coefficient for the total score and its happiness dimensions. A similar procedure was applied to the *Self-Esteem Scale*. This procedure was undertaken because of the need to check the internal consistency of the tools used

Table 1. *Reliability coefficients of the scales: psychological well-being and self-esteem*

Scales analysed		Cronbach's alpha	Scale items
Dimensions of well-being	Autonomy	.326	15, 17, 18
	Self-acceptance	.578	1, 2, 5
	Life goal	.707	3, 7, 10
	Positive relationships with others	.398	6, 13, 16
	Controlling the environment	.421	4, 8, 9
	Personal development	.521	11, 12, 14
Well-being - overall result		.753	All scale items (18 statements)
Self-esteem		.829	All scale items (10 statements)

Source: own research

The psychometric analysis of the Psychological Well-Being Scales by Carroll D. Ryff and the Self-Esteem Scale by Morris Rosenberg in terms of measurement reliability, as determined by the Cronbach's α coefficient, showed that both questionnaires used in the study are reliable measurement tools. The value of the Cronbach's α coefficient for the full Psychological Well-Being scale was $\alpha = 0.753$ and for the Self-Esteem Scale $\alpha = 0.829$. In contrast, the internal consistency coefficients of Cronbach's α for the five dimensions of well-being: autonomy ($\alpha = 0.326$), mastery over the environment ($\alpha = 0.421$), personal development ($\alpha = 0.521$), positive relationships with others ($\alpha = 0.398$), and self-acceptance ($\alpha = 0.578$) are not satisfactory for any of them. Only the dimension – life purpose ($\alpha = 0.707$) obtained an acceptable Cronbach's α coefficient value (George, Mallery, 2016, p. 240). Therefore, in the analyses undertaken, only the overall level of well-being will be analysed and not its distinguished dimensions.

The first step in the statistical analysis to determine the wellbeing of the students surveyed was to verify the assumptions regarding the normality of the distribution.

The significance level of the Shapiro-Wilk test ($W(224) = 0.980$; $p < 0.01$) for the overall well-being score of the Zimbabwean students surveyed indicates that the assumption of normality of the distribution is not met. On the other hand, analysis of the measures of asymmetry of the distribution: skewness = -0.475 and kurtosis = 0.381 indicate that the distribution of the results does not deviate significantly from normal (Józefacka, Kolek, Arciszewska-Leszczuk, 2023).

Assuming, therefore, the relative normality of the distribution of the results of the study, further analyses used the mean as a starting point to determine the levels of the analysed variable.

Table 2. *Measures of asymmetry of distribution with the Shapiro-Wilk test concerning the well-being of the students surveyed*

Well-being	S-W	df	p	sk	kr
	.980	224	<.01	-.475	.381

Source: own elaboration. Symbols: sk-slant, kr-curvature, S-W – Shapiro-Wilk test

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Table 3. *Psychological well-being scores of Zimbabwean students surveyed*

Well-being	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Level	N	%
	82.02	10.97	38	104	Low	37	16.52
					Average	146	65.18
					High	41	18.30
					Total	224	100

Source: own study.

The welfare score obtained for the Zimbabwean students surveyed can be considered satisfactory, as the mean score was above 82 points on a scale of up to 108 points. Considering the distribution of the well-being scores of the surveyed students as not deviating from normal, it was decided to extract the levels of the variable under study in the next step of the statistical analysis. In order to identify students with a low level of well-being, a value of 1 standard deviation $SD = 10.97$ was subtracted from the mean value $M = 82.02$,

thus obtaining a score of 71.05 below which all scores were considered low. On the other hand, in the case of a high level, a value of 1 standard deviation $SD = 10.97$ was added to the mean value $M = 82.02$ and a value of 92.99 was obtained, above which the results obtained were considered high. Results between 71.05 and 92.99 were defined as average. The results obtained in relation to the respondents' level of well-being indicate that 16.52% of the students achieved low well-being scores, so they feel that they are not fulfilling their potential, experience difficulties in relationships with others, and have a low sense of agency. On the other hand, 18.30% of the students scored high on well-being indicating that they believe they are realising their life purpose, using their personal potential, developing themselves, striving for self-realisation, coping with complex environmental conditions, actively participating in life, being independent, not succumbing to external pressures and their relationships with other people are based on friendship and trust, accepting themselves. The largest group, 65.18%, were those with average levels of mental wellbeing. These are people who function relatively positively in terms of mental wellbeing and thus it can be concluded that they do not experience major mental health problems.

In the next step, the self-assessment of the surveyed students was diagnosed. The analysis of the study began by checking the assumptions regarding the normality of the distribution of the data obtained.

Table 4. *Measures of asymmetry of distribution with the Shapiro-Wilk test concerning the Self-esteem of the students surveyed*

Self-esteem	S-W	df	p	sk	kr
	.954	224	<.001	-.624	.009

Source: own elaboration. Symbols: sk-slant, kr-curvature, S-W – Shapiro-Wilk test

The level of significance of the Shapiro-Wilk test ($W(224) = 0.954$; $p < 0.001$) for the self-report score of the Zimbabwean students surveyed indicates that the assumption of normality of the distribution is not met. Similarly to the welfare outcome, analysis of the measures of asymmetry of the distribution: skewness = -0.624 , kurtosis = 0.009 indicate that the distribution of the scores

does not deviate significantly from normal, which allowed further analyses to be conducted based on the mean scores obtained by the respondents.

Table 5. *Self-esteem scores of surveyed Zimbabwean students*

Self-esteem	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Level	N	%
	32.86	5.08	15	40	Low	33	14.73
					Average	145	64.73
					High	46	20.54
					Total	224	100

Source: own study.

The analysis of the data in table 5 shows that the mean score of the students' self-esteem was $M = 32.86$ and the value of standard deviation $SD = 5.08$. Considering the maximum score possible in the SES Scale (40 points), the mean score achieved by the students can be considered relatively high. In order to distinguish levels of the analysed variable, as in the case of the variable well-being, the low level was distinguished by subtracting from the mean $M = 32.86$ the value of one standard deviation $SD = 5.08$, thus obtaining a result of 27.78, below which all results were considered low, while adding one standard deviation to the mean resulted in a result of 37.94, above which the obtained results were considered high. Results between 27.78 and 37.94 were considered average.

On the basis of the survey, it can be concluded that relatively few respondents achieved the score defined as low in comparison to the group – 14.73%. These people can be described against the background of the surveyed group as less satisfied with themselves, not very willing to undertake activities and challenges and more critical of themselves. One in five respondents had a score indicating high self-esteem. High self-esteem, as defined by Moriss Rosenberg (1965), means that a person feels valuable, has self-respect, accepts himself/herself, does not feel inferior to others, although he/she knows his/her limitations and strives to overcome them and develop. Among the respondents, the largest group – 64.73% – were students who obtained results described as average. These persons in the overall assessment of themselves do not negate their own value, are inclined to believe that they are rather successful in life, are usually satisfied with themselves, are mostly inclined to recognise that they have many positive qualities.

The next stage of the research conducted was to find out whether there was, and if so what, a relationship between wellbeing and the self-esteem of the students surveyed.

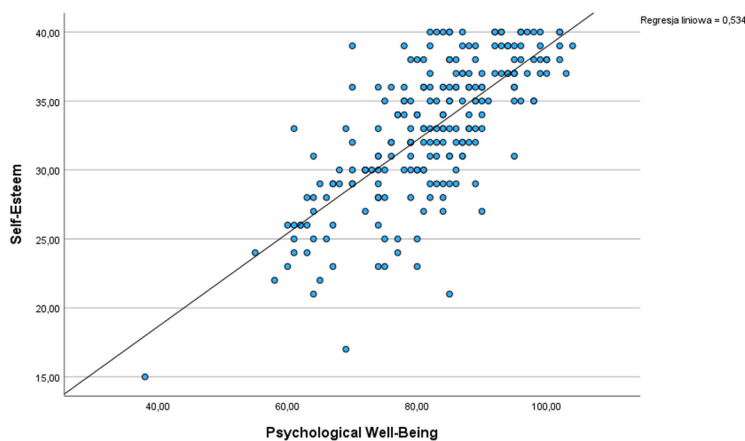
Table 6. *Relationship between psychological well-being and self-esteem of surveyed students*

Variables	Correlations	p
Well-being	.731	.001
Self-esteem		

Source: own study.

Based on the statistical analyses carried out, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant correlation between well-being and self-esteem. The sign of the correlation coefficient indicates a positive direction of the relationship between the analysed variables, which means a directly proportional relationship and its value: $r=0.731$ is described as very high. The data obtained are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Scatter plot of psychological well-being and self-esteem*



Source: own study

Analysing the data in the graph, one can see a clear slope in the regression line indicating a significant strength of correlation between wellbeing and self-esteem of the Zimbabwean students surveyed. Thus, the higher the well-being score the higher the score, and also the lower the wellbeing score the lower the self-esteem score

CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted among Zimbabwean students studying in Poland presents interesting data, which shows that the respondents positively assess their functioning in a culturally different environment such as Poland. This is evidenced by the results obtained in the area of well-being, which may be a good predictor of the educational success of the respondents. The ability to cope with the challenges of everyday life, to form good relationships with others, to feel empowered and to be able to realise life goals makes these individuals very well placed to realise themselves. This is particularly important as these individuals, when undertaking their studies in a distant country, far from home, on the one hand cannot count on the direct support of those closest to them, while on the other hand they want to fulfil the expectations placed in them. Therefore, a high level of well-being seems to be important for them to achieve their goal of obtaining a university degree and consequently the chance to find a job and advance in society.

Nowadays, Polish society is not homogeneous in terms of nationality and culture, however, despite the noticeable opening up to multiculturalism since 1989, there are still prejudices and stereotypes related to the perception of people from other cultures. Particularly in the case of people from Africa, there are factors such as a relational barrier (poor attitudes in Polish society), a cultural barrier (large cultural differences) and a communication barrier (lack of language skills, differences in non-verbal communication) (Danecka, Jaroszevska, 2013, p. 167). In such a situation, the self-perception of African students may not be favourable, as one of the determinants of self-esteem is learning about oneself through social interaction. Based on the information obtained from other people, humans incorporate their opinions about themselves into their own notion of self. Positive feedback from others is an indispensable condition for

building self-esteem. Self-reflection also plays an important role in the process of forming self-esteem (Wosik-Kawala 2007). A person's attitude towards oneself determines one's relations with people, influences one's life goals and assessments of the rightness of actions taken (Wosik-Kawala 2020, p. 246). The obtained results of the research on the self-esteem of the surveyed Zimbabwean students studying in Poland are very positive, as the majority of the respondents obtained results indicating a high level of self-esteem. Therefore, it can be assumed that these individuals know their capabilities in various areas of functioning, are convinced of the rightness of the chosen life path, have their own worldview and hierarchy of values, undertake tasks responsibly, are kind towards others, and manifest high social effectiveness.

The final aspect of the research conducted was the description of the relationship between well-being and self-esteem of the students surveyed. The present research, like that conducted by Ed Diener (2000), showed the existence of such a correlation. The correlation coefficient between well-being and the self-esteem of the students surveyed indicates a strong relationship between these variables. Therefore, it can be assumed that they feel quite comfortable in the environment in which they function in Poland, and that their psychological well-being indicates healthy psychological development linked to positive self-assessment. A high level of well-being, as Ed Diener (2000) notes, makes people happy and thus more socially active, positive towards work and manifests many positive traits. Similar findings are presented by Maria Banaś (2022), indicating that migrant students, after gaining education and a variety of experiences, embark on professional careers with more courage and, in many cases, contribute to its development and modernisation after returning to their country of origin.

When undertaking further research on the functioning of foreign students in Poland, it would be advisable to take into account, among other things, their motivation for undertaking education in our country, their sense of national identity, their personal resources and plans for their careers and their realisation. It also seems important to undertake research taking into account aspects such as: the support foreign students receive from educational institutions, including the attitude of teachers, relations in the student community, opportunities for personal development, financial support.

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