**ASSESSMENT OF SENSATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN FCT, ABUJA.**

**BY**

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**BAZE UNIVERSITY, ABUJA**

**OCTOBER, 2022**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY**

**TO THE**

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**BAZE UNIVERSITY, ABUJA**

**OCTOBER, 2022**

# DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research project entitled “ASSESSMENT OF SENSATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN FCT, ABUJA” has been

undertaken by me under the supervision of Dr. Damian D. Osa-Afiana. I further certify that this work has not been previously submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree certificate elsewhere. All ideas and views are products of my research, and where the views of others have been expressed, they have been duly acknowledged.

Homachi Excel Solomon Date

BU/19A/BS/3653

# CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work “ASSESSMENT OF SENSATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN FCT, ABUJA” by

HOMACHI EXCEL SOLOMON, BU/19A/BS/3653 has been approved by the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Baze University, Abuja, Nigeria.

Dr. Damian D. Osa-Afiana Date

Supervisor

Dr. Damian D. Osa-Afiana Date

Head of Department, Psychology

Prof. Osita Agbu Date

Dean, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences

External Examiner Date

# DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my family, friends, colleagues and teachers who keep me going in the toughest of times.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my gratitude to my parents for striving to provide a great foundation for me. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Damian Osa-Afiana for giving me the necessary direction in my studies. I would also like to express my sincerest gratitude to the entire Department of Psychology for believing in me enough that I started to believe in myself.

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# ABSTRACT

*Sensation seeking is a personality trait that motivates individuals to indulge in risky behaviours to achieve novel experiences regardless of the danger involved. The aim of this study was to assess the sensation seeking trait among Nigerian university students in FCT, Abuja. Forty-five students from Baze University, Nile University and The University of Abuja in FCT were sampled for this study with fifteen (15) participants per University. Data was collected with the Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS), a test developed by Marvin Zuckerman in 1979. The total mean of scores was reported (M= 18.20) which showed that the average score of the students was below the threshold of (25) of a maximum sensation seeking score of (40). Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the scores of the universities and the results showed that there was no significant difference between the scores of the universities F(2)= 0.12, p= 0.988. This study contributed to the knowledge of sensation seeking in a west African setting as most research done on the construct has been in more western settings. For further research, a large-scale study is recommended to determine the predominance of this trait in the Nigerian society.*

# CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

* 1. **Background of Study**

Sensation seeking describes a behaviour of individuals in which they persist in an engagement of outwardly experiences which may incur a more than usual amount of risk to be involved.

This behaviour or trait places the individuals in situations where they can be more exposed to higher levels of stimulation. These individuals may find themselves in excitement-driven careers, illicit drug usage, reckless driving etc.

The Sensation Seeking trait is “characterised by the pursuit of a variety of unique, complex, and intense feelings and experiences and by a readiness to accept risks in the physical, social, legal, and financial spheres in pursuit of such experiences” (Zuckerman, 1994).

Individuals with this trait may find themselves involved in more dangerous activities. Thus being more susceptible to sustaining damage, be it physical, psychological, emotional or otherwise. They may choose to abuse drugs and alcohol to satiate their need for stimulation and most of their decisions are steered towards higher states of arousal. (Janssen, Cox, Stoolmiller, Barnett & Jackson, 2018)

These individuals can be found willing to accept higher risks and find less resistance in themselves to being in those dangerous situations. They may acknowledge the danger involved but still take the risks to reach their desired level of stimulation.

Individuals with this trait develop with a desire to fulfil this desired level of stimulation and may pursue that in different sections of their life endeavours.

There are several ways to satisfy a preference for stimulation through actions, pursuits, and attitudes (Arnett, 1991; Irwin & Millstein, 1986; Zuckerman, 1985, 1994; Zuckerman & Neeb, 1980). Among them are things like career choice, leisure, lifestyle decisions, sports, and social interactions.

Danger is acknowledged by sensation seekers as a potential side effect of achieving this stimulation, but the risk is not pursued for its own reason (Zuckerman, 1994).

In taking risks, individuals may be forced to leave their comfort zone and find more confidence in embarking on newer endeavours.

In general, adolescents take a lot of risks, regardless of their gender, age, or socioeconomic status. status and ethnicity. Being curious in their environment makes them more susceptible to the dangers that come with unnecessarily risky behaviour.

Risk-taking is a part of healthy development in youth. It could be seen as a requirement for the advancement of self-hood and youth’s developing consciousness of personal decisions.

More extreme levels of sensation seeking in recent times may be a cause for concern among many parents, educators and researchers. This sensation seeking trait may help to explain the connection between perceptions of danger and persistent participation in risky behaviours (Ofole, 2019).

The researcher sought to inquire as to whether the sensation seeking trait is predominant among university students in FCT, Abuja, as an investigation with the goal of bringing awareness to the problem and its significance.

* 1. **Statement of Problem**

With respect to human behaviour, certain groups of people are found to be more likely to endanger themselves. One phenomenon of behaviour that is pointed out as a psychological reason is the personality trait of Sensation Seeking which was first recognized by psychologist Marvin Zuckerman in 1979.

The sensation seeking trait was found to be one reason that explains why humans may endanger themselves more. It involves the pursuit of an experience that satiates an individual's level of desired stimulation. Human beings who engage in sensation seeking behaviours have a high disposition for seeking stimulation in spite of the dangers that may come with their acts.

This trait motivates individuals to act in ways that may be dangerous to themselves and others around them. They are likely to engage in “dare-devil” behaviours to accomplish their aims of higher stimulative experiences and so also endanger their well-being and the well-being of others. High sensation seekers are likely to engage in a variety of risky behaviours such as gambling, risky safety decisions and risky sexual conduct as a result of their urge to get exciting results (Knorr, Jenkins & Conner, 2013; Palmgreen, Donohew, Lorch, Hoyle & Stephenson, 2001; Quinn & Harden, 2013; Steinberg, 2008).

In more recent assumptions and the advent of grand advancements in information technology, the sensation seeking trait may be found to thrive more expediently as most available media such as television, serve to be sources of arousal and stimulation to high sensation seekers (HSS) (Perse, 1996). Most of these developments encourage high sensation seekers to indulge in those sensation seeking behaviours.

It is of great concern that this behaviour is assumed to be prevalent among the adolescent and youth population as these groups are more inclined to adopt behaviours that may be hazardous to their welfare and the welfare of their peers. Early adulthood and adolescence are seen to be a period where the likelihood of substance abuse, high sensation seeking and impulsivity are high. This period of their lives is when youth are most likely to be initiated into marijuana, alcohol and drug usage (Palmgreen, *et al.*, 2001; Quinn & Harden, 2013).

Most studies that have been conducted to assess the sensation seeking trait have been conducted in non-African contexts. This study seeks to bring more light to a Nigerian context.

This study looks to determine the levels of sensation seeking to be found among university students within FCT, Abuja.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1.3** |  | **Objective of Study** |
|  | 1. | To ascertain the levels of sensation seeking in Nigerian university students in FCT. |
|  | 2. | To highlight the sensation seeking behaviour among the university students. |
| **1.4** |  | **Research Question** |
|  | 1. | What are the levels of sensation seeking in Nigerian university students in FCT? |
|  | 2. | To what degree is the sensation seeking trait prevalent among the university students in  FCT? |
| **1.5** |  | **Hypothesis** |
| H0:  H1: |  | The levels of sensation seeking among the university students is normal  There is a high level of sensation seeking among the university students in FCT |

* 1. **Significance of Study**

The rising concern that this behaviour may be prevalent among adolescent and youth groups of society results in the call for researchers to look into the problem and proffer solutions.

In more western contexts, there is an abundance of literature on the problem and the understanding of its causes is established to some degree. The researcher has found that the level of research developed on this subject in an African context has been insufficient. This has prompted this research to investigate whether the personality trait has predominance in youth groups of the Nigerian society. This research investigated the sensation seeking trait among students in the universities of FCT, Abuja.

The findings of this study will fill in the vacuum of knowledge about this sensation seeking trait among the university students in Nigeria’s Federal Capital Territory and will give psychological researchers and psychotherapists more insight into this behaviour and its implications.

Most studies on this trait have been conducted in a non-African context. Due to this fact, a generalisation of the behaviour in our local setting is unknown. It is expected that the outcomes of studies into the behaviour would be different due to cultural differences.

With the premise that there have been consistent associations between sensation seeking and adolescent and youth groups, there is a need to determine its significance in our society today.

This study will expand the scope of research done in the construct of sensation seeking, furthermore, increasing the knowledge of it by giving an assessment of Nigerian students.

* 1. **Scope of Study**

This study focuses on assessing Sensation Seeking behaviour in university students in FCT, Abuja.

Its main aim is to examine the levels of Sensation Seeking among the students.

* 1. **Operational Definition of Terms Sensation Seeking (SS)**

The trait of personality that motivates the individuals' indulgence in novel experiences.

**High Sensation Seekers (HSS)**

These are individuals exhibiting higher levels of sensation seeking.

**Low Sensation Seekers (LSS)**

These are individuals exhibiting lower levels of sensation seeking

**Trait**

A specific characteristic of personality.

**Stimulation**

A catalyst to an activity or a sensation that promotes certain activities.

**Arousal**

This is an excited state that usually implies the presence of a stimulus.

**Risk**

The probability of something going wrong that is usually considered before carrying out an activity.

**CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW**

* 1. **Theoretical Framework**
     1. **Sensation Seeking**

The concept of sensation seeking has changed over the years. Since 1979 the term has been described as “a trait defined by the seeking of varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks for the sake of such experience” (Zuckerman, 1994). A person who seeks out innovative, complex, and varied feelings and experiences in order to maintain an optimal level of arousal is known as a sensation seeker. For a person high in sensation seeking, the repetition of an experience is assumed to cause the high sensation seeker to be bored and become less responsive to that stimulus (Zuckerman, Bone, Neary, Mangelsdorf & Burstman, 1972). A person with a high sensation seeking tendency is thought to be more perceptive of internal feelings and less obedient to outside pressures (Schneider, Butryn, Furst & Masucci, 2007). Sensation seeking behaviour might be viewed as the result of a struggle between anxiety states that change depending on novelty and assessed danger (Yates, 1992). Sensation seeking frequently accompanies related concepts like novelty seeking, which results in variations of behaviour that resemble those of addiction, such as alterations in craving and risk perception (Bardo, Donohew & Harrington, 1996; Zimmermann, 2010).

There are two different forms of the idea of sensation seeking: trait and state. High sensation seekers have a tendency to perceive less risk than others in a range of unique scenarios, which encourages them to engage in these unusual situations. When entering unfamiliar environments,

people who are in the condition of sensation seeking typically feel good (Zuckerman, 1979). Although it has been described as both a trait and a state, sensation seeking is most frequently thought of as a personality feature.(Zuckerman, 1994).

**Sensation Seeking as a Personality Trait**

People range in their levels of sensation-seeking; those with low levels can engage in a given activity on a different level than those with high levels. According to Buss (2012), A person with a low sensation seeking trait does not always require much thrill or adventurous stimulus. They appear not to get bored easily and like to feel at ease in familiar environments. Regardless of how much they crave stimulation, everyone needs excitement in some manner in order to function. This is due to the brain's need for stimulation. According to Zuckerman (1994), the goals and values of low sensation seekers differ from those of high sensation seekers.

Individuals classified as having a high or low level of sensation seeking exhibit distinctly different behavioural patterns. Danger aversion and higher levels of anxiety in reaction to risk and threat are more common in low sensation seekers (Lissek, Baas, Pine, Orme, Dvir, Rosenberger & Grillon, 2005). High sensation seekers, on the other hand, have a tendency for risky situations and may think they are more intrinsically fulfilling or place an excessive value on them (Zuckerman *et al*., 1972; Huskey, Craighead, Miller, Weber, 2018). High sensation seekers may choose certain activities as a result of this bias and a need to seek out highly exciting situations (Norbury & Husain, 2015).

Due to their desire for thrilling outcomes, high sensation seekers are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior, risky business decisions, health/safety decisions (e.g., drug abuse, smoking), recreation decisions (e.g., sky diving versus bowling), social decisions (e.g., confronting family members), ethical decisions (e.g., cheating on a test), and non-suicidal self- injury (Knorr *et al.*, 2013; Palmgreen *et al*., 2001; Quinn & Harden, 2013; Steinberg, 2008). Risky personality traits evaluate the psychobiological bases that accurately predict a variety of risk-taking behaviours as a result of their desire for dramatic outcomes (Zuckerman, 2007). The effectiveness of therapy addressing these behaviours might be improved by a deeper knowledge of sensation seeking and the incorporation of individual variations into treatments.

**An analytical viewpoint on sensation seeking**

The construct of Sensation Seeking and the Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS) was created by Marvin Zuckerman, a renowned researcher and pioneer in the field (Buss, 2012). Four distinct subscales on the scale—experience seeking, thrill and adventure seeking, disinhibition and boredom susceptibility, and experience seeking—are used to evaluate a person's level of sensation seeking. The final results show which aspect of sensation seeking a person does best in. Each subscale concentrates on a distinct aspect of sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1994).

**Thrill and adventure seeking (TAS).**

Thrill and adventure seeking involves “the intent or desire to engage in physical activities or sports involving unusual sensations,”. These activities usually provide "unusual sensations of speed or defiance of gravity", as stated by Zuckerman (1994). Activities within this category are diving, mountaineering, skiing and white-water rafting (Zuckerman, 1994).

**Experience seeking (ES).**

Experience Seeking comprises the intent or desire to have novel experiences and sensations. Typically, the senses and the cognition are used to do this. Activities include listening to music, eating, travelling, and engaging in social oddities like joining an unconventional social group (Zuckerman, 1994).

**Disinhibition (Dis).**

Disinhibition is described as “seeking excitement through other people” (Zuckerman, 1994). Disinhibition refers to social events like gatherings, drinking with friends, and having sex (Zuckerman, 1994). Studies that examine sensation-seeking frequently use student alcohol consumption to gauge the extent of the students' sensation-seeking.

**Boredom susceptibility (BS).**

Boredom Susceptibility includes a dislike of routine and sameness in things and people, as well as restlessness when there is little variety. It can also refer to how tolerant a person is to boring or repetitive activities. High sensation seekers steer clear of monotonous pursuits. Repeated encounters with people and activities, for example, are typically what make up Boredom Susceptibility (Buss, 2012; Zuckerman, 1994).

* + 1. **Theoretical Models**

More recent research has suggested that sensation seeking may also be influenced by psychobiological, psychophysiological, and social learning factors. The concept of approach and retreat may have provided an evolutionary underpinning for sensation seeking (Schneirla, 1959).

A species' survival may have depended on how it chose to approach or withdraw from a prospective source of feeding.

**The Psychobiological Model**

The psychobiological model is based on this evolutionary theory (Zuckerman, Buchsbaum, & Murphy, 1980). According to this idea, greater levels of sensation seeking may have been advantageous to any species because it afforded them greater chances to access sources of food and mating partners. Members of a species that were less of a sensation seeking trait may have been hesitant to go on this possibly dangerous quest for fresh food and mates (Jacobs & Koeppel, 1974; Winchie & Carment, 1988).

On the other side, a lack of a tendency for sensation seeking would have been considered beneficial because it minimised the dangers connected with trying out new meals. To guarantee the continued existence of the species, high sensation seeking and low sensation seeking needed to be balanced.

The need for feeling in humans may have some roots in this evolutionary theory within a species. When it came to certain social positions like fighters and explorers, society frequently needed individuals possessing greater levels of sensation seeking, whereas routine, low-risk vocations frequently required low sensation seekers (Zuckerman, 1994). The equilibrium between the risk- takers and the more cautious individuals may determine how society as a whole turns out.

**The Psychophysiological Model**

Another theory suggests that physiological aspects might play a role in sensation seeking as well. In a psychophysiological model, Zuckerman *et al*. (1988), proposes that chemical reactions in the brain explain sensation seeking. This model suggests that dopamine activates the exploration of

social and physical environments. When these new social and physical environments are explored, the chemical norepinephrine is produced in the brain which results in arousal (Zuckerman, 1994). This model also considers serotonin to be involved with inhibition in low sensation seekers (Zuckerman, 1994). When an individual experiences a threatening or intense situation, serotonin is produced in the brain which results in an avoidance of sensation seeking. In support of this theory, Sensation seeking was found to be associated with high levels of dopamine (Stuettgen, Hennig, Reuter & Netter, 2005), while higher levels of serotonin have been associated with lower levels of the sensation seeking trait (Wiesbeck, Wodarz, Mauerer, Thorne, Jakob & Boening, 1996).

**The Social Learning Model**

A theory of sensation seeking has also been proposed using the social learning model. A biological model and a social learning model resemble each other greatly despite their apparent differences. The social learning model and the psychobiological and psychophysiological theories stated earlier both showed that a person might be inclined to sensation seeking (Bandura, 1986; Horvath & Zuckerman, 1993). According to this model, a person may be inclined to pick up sensation-seeking behaviours. In this perspective, a person's personal experiences or even the results of other people's experiences might have an impact on their amount of sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1994).For example, if a pleasant consequence is experienced, people may learn to imitate particular sensation-seeking behaviours, or they may decide not to continue with the behaviour if a negative effect is experienced. If the person has witnessed others' favourable or negative results from engaging in particular sensation seeking behaviours, this effect might be the same in their case.

* 1. **Review of relevant literature**
     1. **Theories of Stimulation and Arousal**

Sensation seeking emerged out of the assumption that there are constant individual differences in arousal and stimulation. This paved way for the Optimal Level of Stimulation and Optimal Level of Arousal theories. Marvin Zuckerman applied these theories as well as newer models of sensation seeking (psychobiological, psychophysiological, and social learning models) in constructing a questionnaire with the aim of assessing individuals’ sensation seeking trait.

Everyone seems to be looking for the right level of arousal or stimulation. That degree of arousal might be extremely high or low depending on the individual. When Zuckerman started researching sensory deprivation and sensation craving, the idea was not novel. In general, sensory deprivation causes a rise in anxiety, bodily discomfort, and problems with thinking and focus. Many of the participants also reported having both auditory and visual hallucinations. There was no correlation between any of the effects of sensory deprivation and any personality traits (Zuckerman, Kolin, Price & Zoob, 1964). These significant impacts of sensory deprivation led Zuckerman to focus on the underlying factor that determines an individual's ideal degree of arousal.

**Theory of Optimal Level of Stimulation**

The "optimum stimulation level" (OSL) hypothesis, which was first presented in the psychology literature, contends that a person's conduct is affected by an intrinsically motivated desire to achieve that amount of stimulation (Berlyne, 1960). Consumer studies revealed that each person requires a different amount of optimal stimulation (Raju, 1980). People will want to boost stimulation if the environment's level of stimulation is too low (Orth & Bourrain, 2005).

When stimulation levels are too high, people will want to reduce them. According to Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1992), psychological pleasantness is highest at the OSL, the level of stimulation at which a person feels most at ease. Behaviours involving adjusting stimulation in the environment to suit the OSL has been referred to as "exploratory behaviour".

The individual has a spectrum of motivational and sensory strength according to the theory of the optimal degree of the stimulus. An incentive was most pleasurable to an individual inside this range, and anything above or below this ideal level makes the incentive seem unappealing or uninteresting to the individual (Zuckerman, 2008).

**The Arousal Theory of Motivation**

The arousal model of motivation states that people are motivated to seek out activities or environments that will keep or increase their level of arousal. Low arousal levels are often associated with boredom and higher arousal levels are associated with worry, arousal may be thought of as a spectrum (Nickerson, 2022).

Arousal levels are considered important in measuring a person's amount of motivation, as asserted in the psychological theory, Arousal Hypothesis of Motivation. This theory expresses that when arousal levels are low, people are driven to seek out stimulation, and when arousal levels are high, people get bored and unmotivated.

Arousal Theory of Motivation was first asserted by Henry Murray in 1938. Murray formed this idea from his personal observations of people's aspirations for fame, influence, and affiliation. He believed that these demands were being driven by the urge to reduce arousal levels. Subsequently, psychologists like Robert Zajonc (1965) and John Atkinson (1957), have improved upon the theory over time.

While Atkinson contends that everyone has a different "arousal threshold" and that some people require more stimulation than others in order to perform at their best, Zajonc holds that there is an appropriate level of arousal for task performance, and when this level is not met, people will seek stimulation.

The hypothesis of the optimal level of arousal was founded on the idea that the body's reticular activating system regulates the level of stimulus experienced by humans. Any degree of arousal that is higher than this ideal level makes it necessary to avoid sensations by the declining stimulus. Any arousal below this optimum level induces a demand for further stimulation, which promotes sensation seeking (Hebb, 1955).

In his article on sensation seeking from 1984, Zuckerman discussed the hypothesis of optimum arousal. He believed it to be a character based on individual differences, where individuals vary in the amount of stimulus needed to be motivated and aware. This means that they need more stimulation than the average person does to be engaged and interested, and sensation seekers have a greater arousal threshold. According to this argument, people who seek sensations more intensely might be inadequately aroused and need extra stimulation to reach their ideal level of arousal. As a result, individuals who are not appropriately excited may engage in sensation- seeking behaviours to reach their desired degree of arousal (Zuckerman, 1984;1979).

* + 1. **Related Factors Age and gender**

Evans-Polce *et al*. (2018), noted that age, gender and other socio-factors are connected to the sensation seeking trait. However, these findings are inconclusive. Breivik and Sookermany

(2017) and Zuckerman (1994), pointed out concerning gender, a higher level of sensation seeking in men than women. Similarly, Jensen *et al.* (2011), reported that boys at the age of seven or older exhibited higher sensation seeking than the girls the same age. Zuckerman (1979); Steinberg, *et al*. (2008), opinionated that proponents of gender differences argue that the disparity to changes in developmental phases and they proposed that the need for sensations rises from childhood into adolescence, peaks between the ages of 16 and 19, and then levels off or stabilises in late adolescence or early adulthood.

In another research, sensation seeking was reported to rise between ages 9 and 14 (Russo, Stokes, Lahey, Christ, McBurnett, Loeber & Green, 1993), spiking at age 20 and then receding (Zuckerman, 1969). People become more careful as they get older. This might be brought on by experience gained with age (social learning model) or modifications in the brain's chemical composition (psychobiological model) (Zuckerman, 2007).

Additionally, a study which utilised a significant sample of twins showed a steady decline in sensation seeking for both sexes as time proceeds, indicating that sensation seeking declines over the course of a person's life. (Zuckerman *et al*., 1978). From a more recent study, data from a varied sample of 935 people which was collected, revealed a similar trend over the lifespan, with sensation seeking increasing between the ages of 10 and 15 and diminishing afterwards.(Steinberg *et al*., 2008). Not everyone experiences these changes over time; there is evidence that some people's scores remain consistently high or low while others see shifts as time passes (Lynne-Landsman, Graber, Nichols & Botvin*,* 2011).

**Cultural Differences**

Geographical variations on the Sensation Seeking Scale were also discovered, along with other demographic variables. Students from Western nations typically scored higher than students from Asian nations on the sensation seeking scale (Zuckerman, 1979). The cultural disparities between Western and Asian nations may have had an impact on this outcome. Compared to Western societies, Asian countries appear to uphold their traditions with more rigidity. Compared to pupils from the more western nations like the United States, Canada, and Australia, students from Spain also scored less well on the thrill seeking scale (Zuckerman, 1979). This finding might be explained by the more traditional Catholicism that is common in Spain (Zuckerman, 1994).

Smoking initiation has been linked to sensation seeking in non-native groups.(Clayton, Segress & Caudill, 2007), this could be because smoking appeals to high sensation seekers; female participants with high sensation seeking are more likely to participate in daily smoking and alcohol consumption (Mrug, Gaines, Su & Windle, 2010; Spillane, Muller, Noonan, Goins, Mitchell & Manson, 2012). Sensation seeking clearly explains the risk-related behaviours a person would engage concerning significant amounts of risk (Steynberg & Scholtz, 2004).

**Sensation Seeking and Risk Taking**

Sensation seekers frequently exhibit behaviours that increase their exposure to stimulus. Such actions (such as a preference for stimulating careers, drug usage, careless driving, etc.) entail arousal seeking. The level of danger involved in the various activities that are used to achieve the desired arousal varies. Although it is correlated with sensory seeking, taking risks is not the main

driving force behind behaviour. Individuals who are looking for a sensation accept risk as a potential side effect of achieving this arousal, but they do not actively seek out risk (Zuckerman, 1994).

Jonah (1997), looked at sensation seeking as a moderator of the influence of other factors as well as an influence on risky driving and its repercussions. Additionally, it looked at the connection between sensation seeking and unsafe driving (such speeding, following too closely, and driving while intoxicated) as well as its effects (e.g., collisions, violations). The assessment also looks for mounting proof that drivers' reactions to other circumstances, like impairment from alcohol and perceived risk, may be moderated by sensation seeking. The great majority of the 40 research that were examined revealed connections between driving recklessly and seeking sensations.

**CHAPTER THREE METHOD**

* 1. **Participants**

The participants were students of various undergraduate levels from (3) universities located in FCT. The universities were; Baze University, Nile University and the University of Abuja.

The age range of participants was between (18) and (25) years of age.

The total number of University students who participated in the study was (45). A number of (15) students were selected from each university.

* 1. **Sample Techniques**

The sampling technique used was convenience sampling and snowball sampling.

* 1. **Instruments**

**Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS)**

A score for Sensation Seeking was determined using the Sensation Seeking Scale Form V (Zuckerman, 1979) (see Appendix 1).

(SSS) is a 40-item forced-choice scale. There are four subscales on the scale (10 items per subscale). They are:

* + 1. Thrill and Adventure Seeking (TAS)
    2. Experience seeking (ES)
    3. Disinhibition (Dis)
    4. Boredom Susceptibility (BS)

**Scoring**

Participants indicate their agreement with each item by choosing A or B in the scale which yields a total score of (40) from the four subscales.

Total scores above (25) indicate greater levels of sensation seeking.

**Validity and reliability of Instrument**

Correlations among the subscales recorded was (*r*= 0.48). Which suggests good internal validity. Social desirability accounted for less than .5% of variance, indicating discriminant validity (Zuckerman, 1979).

The scale has high internal reliability with a Cronbach alpha score total (*a*= .86) (Zuckerman, 1979).

* 1. **Procedure**

The data collection involved two stages of collecting data.

The initial stage involved conveniently selecting (5) participants from each university.

The subsequent stage collected data through a snowball sampling method through said initially selected participants where each participant referred (2) other participants.

Data collection undertook a few conditions to ensure a lack of bias in the results. These conditions were:

* + 1. Participation was voluntary.
    2. The name of the questionnaire was withheld so as to avoid bias of demand characteristics.
  1. **Design of the Study**

An online survey design was used to collect data from the participants.

The online questionnaire was preferred because of the bulky nature of the instrument. The instrument is a questionnaire which had (5) pages of 40 questions and would be too expensive and inconvenient to carry out the data collection in a hard copy form.

The online questionnaire format used the Google Forms application which is an easy method for collecting test responses from respondents.

Utilising an online questionnaire version proved to be a more convenient and less expensive alternative. The online survey method ensured more engagement from students as it was easy to share in the form of URL World Wide Web (WWW) Links. This increased the reach of the survey and its accessibility.

* 1. **Data Analysis**

The data collected was analysed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), a statistical analysis software commonly used for the presentation of statistical interpretations of psychological data. A quantitative analysis was done and inferences were drawn from the data.

The means of the scores of each university were analyzed and reported.

Then an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to report any significant differences between the scores of each university.

**CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS**

**4.1 Presentation of Results**

The study investigated if there will be a high level of sensation seeking among the university students.

The results indicated that the level of sensation seeking among the students was normal as the average total level of sensation seeking to be found was below the threshold of (25) for a higher sensation seeking value, of which the highest score to be obtained was (40).

The table below shows the scores of the students in each subscale.

**Table I**

*Means of Subscales*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **University** | **TAS** | **ES** | **Dis** | **BS** |
| **University of Abuja** | 4.20 | 4.60 | 4.00 | 5.13 |
| **Nile University** | 3.93 | 4.53 | 4.80 | 4.93 |
| **Baze University** | 4.80 | 3.87 | 4.33 | 4.87 |
| **Total** | **4.31** | **4.33** | **4.37** | **4.97** |

**Table II**

*Total Sensation Seeking Scores*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **University** | **Mean** |
| **Baze University** | 18.40 |
| **Nile University** | 16.80 |
| **University of Abuja** | 19.40 |
| **Total** | **18.20** |

**Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)**

An Analysis of Variance was carried out to see if there was any significant difference between the Sensation Seeking levels of the three universities.

An ANOVA was conducted with the Independent Variable (IV) as (SS) Scores and the Dependent Variable (DV) as the Universities.

The results showed no significant difference in the levels of sensation seeking between Baze University, Nile University and the University of Abuja. *F*(2) = 0.12, *p*= 0.988

**CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION**

* 1. **Discussion of findings**

The aim of this study was to assess the sensation seeking levels of university students in FCT, Abuja.

The findings discovered that the levels of sensation seeking among the students did not exceed the norm. The total results analyzed from the research led to the alternate hypothesis being rejected.

The study emerged as a result of the researchers' observations of consistent associations between sensation seeking and youth behaviour. Furthermore, examinations of the sensation seeking trait have been carried out in previous research studies, of which few have offered a perspective from an African setting.

The study was determined to shed some light in our Nigerian setting to ascertain whether the trait may be predominant among this group of students who were all within the age group of (18) and

(25) which is a suitable age range for youth groups.

In the context of youth and their relationship with risk, the sensation seeking personality trait helps to explain a persistent participation in risky behaviour.

On higher extremes of the behaviour associated with higher sensation seeking levels, high sensation seeking youth may become addicted to alcohol and usage of illicit drugs to satiate their need for arousal. They may also indulge in excessive gambling as a route of social exacerbation.

They may choose to drive while under the influence for an exciting experience. These instances of risky youth behaviour have been causes for concern in our society.

The premise of this study presented an inquiry to ascertain through a direct determinant which is the Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS) whether the levels of sensation seeking among the selected students were of a higher degree. To which the alternative hypothesis “There is a high level of sensation seeking among the students in FCT” was rejected.

In supposition, the researcher attributes the findings of this study to a difference in culture norms and childhood developments that differ greatly from the western setting. The researcher proposes that a scale more suitable to an African environment may help in a more precise illumination of the sensation seeking trait in an African setting.

The researchers intention of this study was to bring more awareness of the personality trait to psychologists and psychotherapists who may encounter cases involving the object of this inquiry.

The study expanded the scope of this construct of sensation seeking by analyzing the results in a different setting than the western setting.

* 1. **Limitations**

This study had a number of limitations which affected the significance of its results.

Its first limitation was in its sample size as the sample size was barely representative of the population. The population of each university was above (200) students but the sample size was

(15) students in each university. The cause for this limitation was that assessing larger sample

populations which would meet a fair representation of the population would be more expensive and time-consuming to execute.

Also, the data collection through the instrument was subject to a sampling bias because it excluded many extremes of the total population.

Another limitation of the study was in its instrument. The instrument was a robust (40) item questionnaire which limited the responsiveness of participants as it was too demanding of their time and attention. Many participants complained that it was inconvenient.

Further limitations of the study involved its scope and further relationships to more significant aspects of modern youth behaviour. For instance, the relationship of sensation seeking behaviour with drugs and alcohol may prove to be more significant in making contributions to solutions to social problems. Another instance would be its correlation with modern advertisement campaigns in media and its causal relationship.

* 1. **Recommendations**

For recommendations on further research, many aspects of this study could be investigated more intently. Such as the assessment of risk perception and more correlations and causal factors of sensation seeking.

Also, further research should exercise a more inclusive sample size which has a fair representation of the population.

Furthermore, the instrument administration may be improved upon. The researcher would advise utilizing larger disposal of resources for large-scale studies and experiments.

* 1. **Conclusion**

The study made an assessment of the sensation seeking trait in university students in FCT, Abuja.

The sensation seeking behaviour has been one explanation of how youth may endanger themselves by indulging in risky behaviour.

Risk-taking is explained to be a fact of normal human behaviour especially in making decisions and youth development.

However, high sensation seekers put the well-being of themselves and others around them at risk by overindulging their tendencies to seek stimulation from risky activities.

This study sought to make a psychological investigation in a more localized setting as most studies on the behaviour have been in more western contexts.

The researcher determined to assess university students in FCT, Abuja, through the Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS) to determine the average levels of sensation seeking among the students.

The findings of the study suggested that the levels of sensation seeking were normal as they did not cross the threshold of higher sensation seeking levels.

The study contributes to the mass of literature on this topic and also sheds light on an important factor in further understanding youth behaviour and human behaviour in general.

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