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Psychological entitlement and intellectual humility as nexus of moral tolerance among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have emphasized the importance of moral tolerance in preventing political, ethnic, and religious conflicts. However, the current knowledge of individual differences that predict such behavior is rudimentary. To address this gap, a study was conducted to examine the influence of psychological entitlement and intellectual humility on moral tolerance among students of Nasarawa State University. The study collected data from 316 randomly sampled students using a quantitative survey research method. Three standardized instruments were used to measure both the independent and dependent variables. We hypothesized that both psychological entitlement and intellectual humility would independently and jointly predict moral tolerance. The findings indicated that intellectual humility predicted moral tolerance, while psychological entitlement did not have a significant influence on students' moral tolerance. Moreover, both psychological entitlement and intellectual humility jointly and significantly predicted moral tolerance. The study recommends the introduction of an intervention to the school curriculum to promote moral tolerance among students.

Introduction

Every human being is a member of multiple social groups. Typically, these groups can be distinguished by a shared characteristic, such as gender, religion, ethnicity, country, language, or ideology. As a result, people may inevitably encounter opinions, attitudes, or behaviors that they disagree with when living in a society that is culturally, religiously, and ideologically diverse. Groups can respect and acknowledge one another as fellow citizens with the same rights and liberties despite having extremely distinct cultural and religious beliefs and practices. The ability to respect others as equal citizens without valuing or endorsing the ideas and behaviors of other groups is called tolerance [1]. Emphasizing the significance of tolerance for harmonious coexistence and the need to raise awareness of the importance of tolerance in society, the United Nations Assembly proclaimed November 16 as the International Day of Tolerance in 1995 [2].

Moreover, research suggests that tolerance is associated with economic benefits. According to Florida, societies that exhibit a more tolerant attitude towards outgroup members are likely to attract individuals who possess characteristics such as self-expression and openness to experience, which are key traits of entrepreneurial behavior [3]. This claim is supported by empirical studies conducted by Ruck and his associate, which found that individuals who believe in treating everyone with equal respect and consideration, regardless of their citizenship status, tend to have higher future GDP per capita [4]. Similarly, a study by Berggren and Nilsson revealed that societies that display greater tolerance towards homosexuals, communists, and atheists are more likely to experience future economic freedom [5]. On the contrary, a lack of tolerance is linked to negative outcomes such as related to prejudice, particularly towards immigrants, women, and homosexuals, as well as likely to cause national disintegration [6,7].

Despite the benefits of tolerance, evidence suggests that intolerance persists on a global scale. For instance, compared to ten years ago, more respondents from France, Belgium, Hungary, and Italy believe that their fellow countrymen have become less accepting of people from diverse backgrounds [8]. Africa is also not exempt from this issue, as six out of ten Africans perceive religious conflict as a significant problem in their respective nations, with Christians holding less favorable opinions about Muslims compared to how Muslims view Christians [9]. Additionally, in Nigeria, a democratic country with diverse tribes, local dialects, faiths, philosophical systems, and religious interpretations, divisions seem to have deepened since 2018, with ethnicity, political affiliation, and religion identified as the primary causes [10]. The African Pollin institute discovered a significant decline in measures of equality, trust, and identity among its members, dropping from 44% to 39.6%, indicating a weakening bond and trust among citizens [10].

In a society characterized by prevalent social division, inequality, and exclusion, individuals may experience a diminished sense of connection and develop a narrow moral perspective [11]. This is evident in the ethnic and religious conflicts fueled by intolerance and extremism within the country. According to data from the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (n.d.), there were 289 deaths nationwide from January 2021 to June 2022, with 65 attacks on churches and 12 attacks on mosques. While moral intolerance affects all groups in Nigeria, there appears to be a recent surge

within academic institutions. A majority of parents and teachers oppose students wearing hijabs in government schools with Christian names, leading to school closures [12]. Furthermore, outside the campus, a different student was lynched to death for blasphemy, and the perpetrators were able to evade punishment due to their affiliation with the elite [13]. Consequently, it is necessary to examine the causes of tolerance in tertiary institutions in light of the issues raised above. This study, grounded in cognitive theory, aims to investigate how psychological entitlement and intellectual humility affect moral tolerance among students at Nasarawa State University. Preliminary research suggests that psychological entitlement may have an impact on moral tolerance. According to Campbell and his associates, psychological entitlement refers to the belief that one deserves more and better things than others, regardless of effort or achievement [14].

Aligned with cognitive theory, individuals with high levels of psychological entitlement may possess schemas that promote a self-centered perspective, limiting their ability to understand the perspectives of others [15]. This may result in a strong adherence to their moral code and the perception that their ideas and ideals are superior, more truthful, or more honorable than those of others. Empirical evidence from Anastasio and Rose supports the notion that such cognitive biases lead to prejudice against gays, a lack of support for gender equality among male participants, and contemporary racism towards African Americans [16]. Furthermore, a study found that entitled individuals expressed more negative sentiments towards hotels abroad when they were not provided with luxuries from their home culture [17]. Similarly, Renström discovered that entitled individuals exhibited more hatred, aversion, or prejudice against women [18]. However, a study by Anderson and Cheers did not find a connection between narcissism, which is associated with entitlement, and hostility towards asylum seekers [19]. It is likely that intellectual humility will help people make less internal judgments of others in a range of situations. Intellectual humility is the personal awareness that one's understanding of the world could be wrong, coupled with a willingness to investigate information that may counter one's personal opinions. Intellectually humble persons feel less able to evaluate others for their traits or behaviors because they recognize their perspective is restricted [20,21]. As a result, the fundamental attribution error and its detrimental effects should be less likely to occur. According to Porter and Schumann, IH is associated with more openness to learning about opposing viewpoints and giving more polite attributions for disagreements on frequently contentious issues (such as same-sex, divorce, and polygamous marriage) [22].

For the sake of this study, moral tolerance is defined as the idea that people shouldn't criticize other people's moral actions or try to change their opinions when moral disagreements cannot be reasoned through [23]. Even though there is a ton of research on moral tolerance, the majority of these studies were done in Western countries [24-26]. Findings from these studies cannot be transferred to Nigerian situations because Nigeria's social and cultural conditions are very different from those of industrialized nations. Only one study looked at tolerance in Nigeria, and that study focused on the influence of corrupt tolerance on psychological distress among employees [27]. There is a paucity of studies examining predictors of moral tolerance studies in Nigeria among students. This study attempts to fill in the gap by examining the contributions of intellectual humility and psychological entitlement. The current study will expand the existing theoretical comprehension of the issue, opening up promising research avenues for the academic community. Information materials can educate stakeholders on the adverse impact of entitled and proud students on the academic community. Understanding the state perspective will open avenues for intervention to dampen the adverse effect of morally intolerant students.

Research questions

The following research question was generated to guide this research direction.

1. To what extent will the independent variables (psychological entitlement and intellectual humility) relatively and jointly relate with the dependent variable (moral tolerance) among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

Methodology

This study is purely a correlational research design. It studied the phenomenon without any form of manipulation. Three hundred and sixteen students were randomly drawn from the Network of students at Nasarawa State University Keffi. They consist of one hundred and fourteen males and one hundred and eighty-six females (sixteen persons did not indicate their gender), with 81.6% ranging from 19 to 24 years. With respect to marital status, 44.9 % of the study population was married, while 42.4% were single, and the rest were either widowed or divorced. Their religious affiliation status showed that 70 % were Christians, 29% were Muslims.

Measures

The participants responded to serialized self-report questionnaires. Section 'A' sought information on their socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, and religion. Sections 'B', 'C', and 'D' obtained information on the respondents' intellectual humility, psychological entitlement, and moral tolerance level, respectively. The details of the instrument are as follows:
The General Intellectual Humility Scale created by Leary et al. was utilized. Between three separate samples, Leary and his colleagues found a dependability index of .84, 85, and .87. As expected, the GIHS and openness (r=.33), the interest component of epistemic curiosity (r=.35), existential quest (r=.35), need for cognition (r=.34), dogmatism (r=-.49), intolerance of ambiguity (r=-.32), and self-righteousness (r=-.35) exhibited convergent evidence of validity, according to Leary et al, 2017 [28]. The instrument was pilot-tested for this study's purposes utilizing a sample of students from Federal University Lafia in Nasarawa state. The dependability index was found to be r=.71. The dependability index for this investigation was 0.80.

The psychological entitlement scale created by Campbell and his associates was used as a benchmark for measuring psychological entitlement. "I genuinely feel I'm just more deserving than others" is one example item. The scores for each item range from 1 (strong disagreement) to 7 (strong

agreement). With test-retest reliability of r=.72 over 1 month and r=.70 over 2 months, and Cronbach's alpha of more than 80 in two samples, the scale has good internal and external validity [14]. Ugwu and Okafor adapted the in Nigeria and obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77 [29].

The Moral Tolerance Scale (MTS) was used to gauge the participants' level of moral tolerance [30]. The Moral Tolerance Scale is a self-report tool that has ten items with response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a 5-point Likert-like scale. High dependability was shown by this scale (r=0.90). The moral relativism scale and the moral tolerance scale showed good convergence, with a correlation coefficient of 0.56. However, the instrument was pilot-tested to make sure it was culturally appropriate for the study's target demographic. The reliability coefficient was r=0.703 when calculated. However, this study's dependability index was 0.83.

Procedures

The random sampling technique, a probabilistic method where every student has an equal chance of being selected, was utilized in this study. Two research assistants, who were trained in data collection, were employed to distribute copies of the questionnaire. Only students of Nasarawa State University Keffi were included, while staff, parents, and visitors were excluded from participating. The students were provided with a thorough explanation of the process and given ample time to complete the questionnaire. After two and a half hours, when it was evident that the protocol had been followed, the questionnaires were collected. Participants did not receive any form of compensation for their involvement in the study. The acquired data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency count was employed to analyze the respondents' demographic data, while multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the hypotheses.

Ethical considerations

A letter of introduction was obtained from the Department of Psychology at Nasarawa State University Keffi and shown to the relevant authority to obtain permission. The participants were assured of full confidentiality and instructed not to provide their names at any point in the questionnaire. They were issued a consent form and informed of their freedom to discontinue participation at any time without providing an explanation. Only participants who signed the consent form were allowed to participate, and their involvement in the study was voluntary. Respondents were also informed of their right to opt out if they felt dissatisfied with the process. Additionally, personal information such as names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses, which could potentially link their responses to them, was not included in the questionnaire. The researcher assured them of the confidentiality of their responses and reiterated that the outcomes of the study would be used solely for academic purposes.

Results

Table 1 shows that only intellectual humility has a linear relationship with the dependent variable (moral tolerance). There is a positive relationship between intellectual humility and moral tolerance r(316)=.629, p<0.05. Meanwhile, Psychological Entitlement r(316)=.001 p>0.05, as it did not significantly correlate with moral tolerance. The implication is that the higher the level of intellectual humility, the more likelihood that the individual would be more morally tolerant of other people's points of view.

Research question one: To what extent will the independent variables (Psychological Entitlement and Intellectual Humility) relatively and jointly relate with the dependent variable (Moral Tolerance) among students of Nasarawa State University). The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Correlation matrix showing the relationship among the study variables.

	Mean	Standard deviation	Psychological Entitlement	Intellectual Humility	Moral Tolerance
Psychological Entitlement	5.0615	.95778	1		
Intellectual Humility scale	3.2932	1.41701	.032	1	
Moral Tolerance	3.3797	.72179	.001	.629**	1

**Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed).

Table 2. Summary of regression for the joint contributions of independent variables to the prediction of subjective well-being.

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	65.007	2	32.504	102.657	.000
	Residual	99.103	313	.317		
	Total	164.110	315			

R = .629; R Square = .396; Adjusted R square = .392; Std. Error = .56269

Table 2 reveals a joint contribution of the independent variables (Psychological Entitlement and Intellectual Humility) to the prediction of moral tolerance. The result yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions R=0.629 and multiple R-square=0.396. This suggests that the three factors when combined, accounted for 39.2% (Adj.R2=.392) of variance in the prediction of moral tolerance of students in Nasarawa State

University Keffi. The remaining 60.3% may have been accounted for by other variables beyond the scope of this study. The ANOVA result from the regression analysis shows that there was a significant effect of the independent variables on moral tolerance, F (2, 316)=102.657, P<0.05. It could be inferred from these results that the independent variables have a goodness of fit with the dependent variable. This result

suggests that the two variables can accurately predict moral tolerance.

Table 3 shows that the most potent factor in predicting moral is evident. Tolerance was intellectual humility (β=.321, t=14.329, P<0.05). This value reveals that the beta weight of .321

in the dependent variable was a result of one standard deviation unit in intellectual humility. However, psychological entitlement made the least contribution to the prediction of moral tolerance (β=-.015, t=-.439, P>0.05). The beta weight of -.015 in the dependent variable is a result of one standard deviation unit in psychological entitlement.

Table 3. The relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of subjective well-being.

N Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta T		
(Constant)	2.397	0.184		13.05	0
Psychological entitlement	-0.02	0.0033	-0.019	-0.439	0.66
Intellectual humility	0.321	0.0022	0.63	14.33	0

Discussion

In this paper, we looked at how psychological entitlement and intellectual humility affect moral tolerance. The findings showed that psychological entitlement and intellectual humility mutually predicted moral tolerance. This suggests that these variables might interact to affect how students form diverse opinions. This supports the claim made by Anderson and Cheers that personality factors affect tolerance for human variation [19]. Students may be encouraged to approach differences with improved openness and respect for other perspectives, lessen polarization by encouraging intellectual humility, and lower unjustified expectations.

Contrary to what we expected, the results of this study suggest that there isn't a clear linear relationship between psychological entitlement and moral tolerance. However, it is important to note that research in this area yielded mixed results, with some reporting negative associations while others reported negative associations. For instance, in Anderson and Cheers's research, findings showed no link between being an entitled narcissist and being hostile to refugees [19]. In contrast, Renström's study discovered a link between entitlement and misogynistic attitudes [18]. This implies that other personality traits not included in this study might moderate the relationship between entitlement and tolerance. For example, one study found that highly entitled people reject norm-breakers when doing so poses a serious threat to their social standing [31]. That is, entitled people may only be inclined to be ethically intolerable when doing so threatens their inflated sense of self-worth. In addition, the study's sample has a high level of psychological entitlement, which limits the data's range of variation. Limited variability can make it challenging to find a meaningful link.

The results also demonstrated that only intellectual humility has a significant, moderately positive association with moral tolerance. This suggests that people with high intellectual humility scores are more likely to have a tolerant moral outlook. This finding is in line with the cognitive theory that emphasizes that greater levels of tolerance may result from people's open minds, willingness to examine different viewpoints, and ability to appreciate and respect others' differences. According to Krumrei-Mancuso and colleagues, intellectually modest people are more willing to evaluate other people's motivations for acting unethically [20]. This is consistent with other research

showing that intellectually modest people prefer to refrain from passing judgment on those who violate their moral principles. The intellectually humble person will be more likely to make complex attributions (i.e., avoid the correspondence bias or fundamental attribution error) and thus be less likely to blame an individual's immoral transgression as the result of his or her disposition [32]. This suggests that intellectually humble individuals will be generally less likely to stigmatize, discriminate, and desire revenge after a transgression.

Conclusions and Implications

This study contributes to the growing field of literature on the role of entitlement and humility in shaping moral behavior and provides insight into potential interventions and strategies for promoting greater moral tolerance. This study validated a measure of moral tolerance and intellectual humility scales in Nigeria, paving the way for future researchers to conduct more studies. Since the study did not establish a strong relationship with psychological entitlement, it contributes to the existing body of literature by highlighting the complexity and variability of the relationship between psychological entitlement and moral tolerance. Intervention targeted at reducing entitlement might not necessarily lead to an improvement in moral tolerance. Rather, interventions focused on promoting critical thinking, empathy, and perspective-taking may be more effective. Teachers can use classroom activities to increase students' awareness of their intellectual limits by using the Socratic style of questioning and encouraging open dialogue.

Limitation and recommendation

Despite the literature's innovative contributions, some limitations of the present study must be noted. Data was first collected from a sample of Nasarawa State University students. Findings cannot, therefore, be generalized to other cultures or academic institutions. Future research could be conducted using a larger sample of individuals with varied cultural backgrounds. Second, it is impossible to determine causality since the study was correlational. Future research could test the effectiveness of intellectual humility training on moral tolerance. Thirdly, we relied on self-reported data, which might be biased because of social desirability. Future research could employ external assessments of intellectual humility and moral tolerance. Huang hypothesized that the psychological entitlement scale is uni-dimensional and may be assessing a

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less maladaptive type of psychological entitlement [14,33]. Therefore, subsequent researchers could consider utilizing a scale that measures multiple dimensions of psychological entitlement. Lastly, a more multi-dimensional tool that captures the full facets of intellectual humility and psychological entitlement should be utilized.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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