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Article

2023 Post-Election Adjustment Behaviour Among Undergraduates at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education: Implications for Counselling

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Abstract: This study investigates 2023 post-election adjustment behaviour among undergraduates at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and its implications for counselling. The study was guided by three objectives, research questions and hypotheses. The study was anchored on the cognitive dissonance theory. A descriptive research design was employed for the study. The population of the study consisted of 2,160 400-level undergraduates from the Faculty of Education, at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, with a Taro Yemen's informed sample size of 338 undergraduates. Data was collected using a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of 0.85 indicating high internal consistency. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using t-tests at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings, among others, revealed that females showed higher levels of post-election adjustment behaviours compared to males. Furthermore, the hypothesis showed that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of undergraduates based on their gender in the post-election adjustment behaviours exhibited after the 2023 elections. Based on the findings, the study concluded that gender plays a crucial role in determining how undergraduates cope with post-election adjustments, with females demonstrating a greater tendency towards seeking social support and self-care. The counselling implications of these results suggest that tailored interventions may be more effective if they take into account gender differences in coping strategies, potentially leading to more successful outcomes for both male and female students during times of political stress.

Keywords: Post-election, Adjustment Behaviour, Counselling, Implication, Mental Health, Well-being.

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1. Introduction

The 2023 general elections and other past elections were crucial moments that citizens had to participate in to exercise their democratic rights and shape the future and direction of their country for the next four (4) years. However, the 2023 general elections were marked by fierce campaigning, political rallies, and heated debates, which created a charged atmosphere across the nation. Due to the importance attached to the electoral process, it raised hopes as well as tension among the populace as they eagerly waited for the outcome of the elections. Okoro and Nwafor [1] asserted that the time intervals preceding and following an election frequently exhibit elevated levels of sentiment, political strain, and societal turmoil. Warkentin et al. [2] opined that the outcomes of electoral processes possess the potential to significantly impact the social, economic, and political fabric of a nation in the long run. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of elections, voters are compelled to bear the repercussions of their decisions, whether favourable or

unfavourable, until the subsequent electoral cycle. They would then be required to modify their conduct to confront the actuality that confronts them.

Undergraduate students exhibited a notable alteration in conduct during the post-election year. The election results evoked differing degrees of disappointment among the students. Both their conduct and perspectives on politics and society were profoundly affected by the election. Changes in personal values, social interactions, and political engagement levels are all examples of post-election adjustment behaviours [3]. The election results ultimately served as a catalyst for undergraduate students to engage in introspection and develop personally. Arijenwa and Nwaoboli [4] provided further substantiation for the aforementioned claim that individuals may be compelled to re-evaluate their convictions and values in the wake of significant occurrences during the elections. Through the process of reflection, individuals can either solidify pre-existing convictions or undergo a paradigm shift, which in turn influences their subsequent behaviours and choices. By influencing individuals' interpretations and reactions to the results, elections can potentially exert an enduring influence on their attitudes and behaviours.

At the moment, members of society, particularly undergraduates, are confronted with the challenges of assimilating into the aftermath of the recent election and pondering its ramifications for their convictions and values. Zeijl [5] elaborated on the impact of the 2023 election on the behavioural inclinations of young voters, observed that the outcome of the election has incited discussions and deliberations among this demographic, compelling them to undertake a discerning assessment of their political positions and contemplate their congruence with the present political environment. Self-reflection is a prevalent practice among young individuals of both genders during the post-election period, as they grapple with the implications of recent events on their political identities and ideologies [6]. Scholars are divided, however, as to whether male and female youth populations approach this process of self-reflection differently; some contend that gender significantly influences the political beliefs and behaviours of young voters. In light of the foregoing, the current study examined the adjustment patterns of undergraduates at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education following the elections: Implications for the field of counselling.

The term "adjustment" is frequently employed to denote the process of modifying or rectifying an object to enhance its precision or efficacy. It is frequently required in situations where conditions alter or when additional data becomes accessible. Jha [7] stated that adjustments are the behavioural mechanisms through which animals, including humans, maintain a state of equilibrium between their diverse needs and the challenges posed by their environments. The author further elaborated that adjustment is, in fact, the harmonious relationship between an individual and his surroundings and that it denotes an ongoing procedure through which the individual modifies his conduct, attempts to modify the surroundings, or influences both to establish a suitable rapport with his surroundings. It also serves as an indicator of an individual's ability to effectively manage his surroundings and execute his responsibilities despite varying circumstances.

Adjustment behaviours are strategies or actions that people employ to manage stress, change, or difficult circumstances. These behaviours may consist of engaging in physical activity, seeking social support, or practising mindfulness techniques. Adjustment behaviour is the process through which individuals modify their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in reaction to stress or alterations in their surroundings [6]. It encompasses a range of coping mechanisms that assist people in preserving their emotional health and operating efficiently amidst difficult circumstances. Problem-solving, seeking social support, and engaging in self-care activities are examples of such conduct. Individuals must engage in adjustment behaviour to maintain their mental health and thrive amidst

challenging circumstances. The announcement of election results signals a lot of mental reactions especially when the election results is not favourable.

Post-election adjustment behaviour involves seeking therapy or counselling to process emotions related to the outcome, engaging in community activism to create positive change, or taking time for self-reflection to understand personal values and beliefs in a new political landscape. Ultimately, adjusting behaviour after an election can help individuals cope with uncertainty and move forward healthily. Adenekan, S. [8] stressed the need for post-election adjustment as crucial for individuals to navigate the changes in their environment and maintain a sense of well-being. This process can lead to personal growth and resilience in the face of political upheaval. Cabo [9] contends that today's political climate requires individuals to adapt and evolve to effectively participate in shaping the future of their society. He stated that these behaviours include engaging in constructive dialogue with others, staying informed about current events, and actively participating in the democratic process through voting and advocacy. By embracing these strategies, individuals can not only cope with uncertainty after an election but also contribute to positive change in their communities.

Almudin et al. [10]reviewed the psychological reactions after a presidential election. The studies showed various psychological reactions and coping strategies following the election turnout. There is a lack of information in the current literature regarding the psychological responses of voters, how they deal with the defeat of their chosen candidate, their feelings of fulfilment and happiness after their candidate wins, and their relationships with family and friends. This literature reviewed summarised the psychological responses of young adults after a Presidential election, including how they cope with the loss of their preferred candidates and the potential effects on their well-being, fulfilment, and satisfaction when their preferred candidates win. The analysis indicated that supporters of the unsuccessful candidates exhibited signs of stress and other related factors following the election outcomes. Those with ineffective coping strategies tend to have higher stress levels. Conversely, supporters of the winning candidate display signs of joy.

Mumuni and Abidogun [11] examined the significance of counselling for maintaining political stability in Nigeria. The study highlighted and discussed various factors contributing to political instability in Nigeria, such as ethnic violence, godfatherism, internal terrorism, crime, corruption, domestic violence, and bandits. It highlighted the effects of political instability on individuals, policy implementation, education, businesses, and nations. The study concluded with the way forward and counselling implications that highlighted the importance of counsellors in addressing the challenges of Nigerian politics. It emphasised the need for applying counselling principles to tackle political instability by treating each person fairly and justly. It proposed certain strategies for counsellors to promote political stability in Nigeria [12],[13].

Statement of the Problem

During the election season, political engagement and activity are abundant, as candidates strive to gain the support of voters via a variety of campaigns and outreach initiatives. Voters tend to support candidates whom they perceive to be the most representative of their values and interests during such periods; this results in heightened debates and discussions regarding critical community issues. However, after the elections, voters whose candidates were not successful may feel disillusioned or disengaged from the political process, while those whose candidates won may feel a sense of hope and optimism for the future [14], [15].

Voter disillusionment may give rise to several complications, including diminished voter turnout in subsequent elections, decreased engagement in community initiatives, and the possibility of heightened political tension and conflict on campus. The primary focus of this research is to analyse the likelihood of heightened political discord and unrest

on university campuses in the aftermath of the election. These potential consequences may encompass interpersonal discord, diminished scholastic achievement, and elevated degrees of stress and anxiety. Aside from the constitutional right of every student to vote and be voted for in due time, one cannot underestimate the impact that political tension and conflict can have on the overall well-being and academic success of students. It is essential to address these issues proactively to maintain a positive and inclusive campus environment for all. Therefore, the need to explore the post-election adjustment behaviour among undergraduates at the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education is crucial to developing effective strategies for promoting student well-being and academic success during politically turbulent times. Thus, the contention of this study is to explore the adjustment behaviour voters; especially undergraduates, exhibit after elections to understand how they cope with the outcomes and whether their engagement in the political process is sustained or diminished.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study investigated the post-election adjustment behaviour among undergraduates at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education: Implication for counselling. The specific objectives of the study include to:

1. Examine the post-election adjustment behaviours exhibited by male and female undergraduates in the post-2023 elections era.
2. Explore the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on the mental health and well-being of male and female undergraduates.
3. Examine the tendency of male and female students to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era.

Research Questions

1. What are the post-election adjustment behaviours exhibited by male and female undergraduates in the post-2023 elections era?
2. What are the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on the mental health and well-being of male and female undergraduates?
3. What is the tendency of male and female students to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the post-election adjustment behaviours exhibited by male and female undergraduates in the post-2023 elections era.
2. There is no significant difference in the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on the mental health and well-being of male and female undergraduates.
3. There is no significant difference in the tendency of male and female students to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era.

2. Materials and Methods.

A survey research design was utilised in a study carried out at the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The study's population consisted of 2,160, 400-level undergraduates from the Faculty of Education, at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Education, 2022). The sample size consisted of 338 undergraduates, comprised of 154 males and 184 females. Simple random sampling was employed to choose the participants.

The data collection process involved gathering information from undergraduates regarding the post-election adjustment behaviour they exhibited in the aftermath of the 2023 elections through the Post-election Adjustment Behaviour Questionnaire (PABQ). The tool consisted of an 18-question scale using a 4-point Likert scale, with a criterion mean of 2.5. The questionnaire was validated and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of 0.85 indicating high internal consistency. The research questions were answered using the mean score and standard deviation, and the hypotheses were tested t-tests at the 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

Data Presentation

Research Question 1: What are the post-election adjustment behaviours exhibited by male and female undergraduates in the post-2023 elections era?

Criterion Mean = 2.5, Mean: 1.0-2.49 = Disagreed, 2.5-4.00= Agreed.

Table 1 shows the post-election adjustment behaviours exhibited by male and female undergraduates in the post-2023 elections era. For male undergraduates, the result showed that the majority of the male undergraduates agreed with items 1–5, having mean scores that are equal to or greater than the mean criterion (2.50). On the contrary, the majority of the male undergraduates disagreed with item 6, with mean scores that are less than the mean criterion.

Conversely, the majority of the female undergraduates agreed with items 1–5, having mean scores that are equal to or greater than the mean criterion (2.50). On the contrary, the majority of the female undergraduates disagreed with item 6, with mean scores that are less than the mean criterion (2.50). The grand mean scores of 2.94 for male and 2.91 for female undergraduates indicate that both male and female undergraduates have almost similar experiences in the post-election adjustment behaviours in the post-2023 elections era.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of the post-election adjustment behaviours exhibited by male and female undergraduates in the post-2023 elections era

S/N	Items	Male (n=154)			Female (n=184)		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
.1	I have changed my social media habits since the election to help manage my stress levels and avoid political arguments	3.14	0.63	Agree	3.05	0.61	Agree
.2	I have sought out more diverse news sources to understand different perspectives on current events better	2.85	0.88	Agree	2.93	0.73	Agree
.3	I have actively engaged in discussions with friends and family members who have different political views to broaden my understanding of different ideologies	3.00	0.89	Agree	2.88	0.80	Agree
.4	I have participated in community events or initiatives aimed at promoting unity and healing after the election	3.46	0.67	Agree	3.23	0.59	Agree
.5	I have also taken up mindfulness practices to stay grounded and maintain a sense of inner peace amidst the political climate	3.21	0.85	Agree	3.09	0.83	Agree
.6	I have focused on self-care activities such as exercise and meditation to prioritize my mental well-being during this challenging time	1.98	0.93	Disagree	2.28	1.00	Disagree
	Grand Mean	**2.94**			**2.91**		

Research Question 2: What are the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on the mental health and well-being of male and female undergraduates?

Criterion Mean = 2.5, Mean: 1.0-2.49 = Disagreed, 2.5-4.00= Agreed.

Table 2 shows the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on the mental health and well-being of male and female undergraduates. For male undergraduates, the result showed that the majority of the male undergraduates agreed with items 7–12, having mean scores that are equal to or greater than the mean criterion (2.50). Conversely, the majority of the female undergraduates agreed with items 7–12, having mean scores that are equal to or greater than the mean criterion (2.50). The grand mean scores of 3.11 for male and 3.15 for female undergraduates indicate that both male and female undergraduates have almost similar experiences in the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on mental health and well-being in the post-2023 elections era.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on the mental health and well-being of male and female undergraduates

S/N	Items	Male (n=154)			Female (n=184)		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
.7	By changing my social media habits after the election, I have noticed a significant impact on my mood and stress levels	3.03	0.99	Agree	2.88	0.92	Agree
.8	By seeking out more diverse news sources post-election, I have found myself feeling more informed and less anxious about current events	3.49	0.50	Agree	3.14	0.81	Agree
.9	By actively engaging in discussions with friends and family members about the election results, I have experienced a range of emotions, from frustration to relief	2.91	0.79	Agree	3.16	0.76	Agree
.10	By participating in community events or initiatives aimed at promoting unity and healing post-election, I have felt a sense of empowerment and connection with others who share similar values	3.22	0.62	Agree	3.58	0.58	Agree
.11	By taking up mindfulness practices to stay grounded and maintain a sense of inner peace amidst the political climate, I have been able to navigate the uncertainty and stress that often accompany post-election periods	3.14	0.63	Agree	3.16	0.55	Agree
.12	By focusing on self-care activities such as exercise and meditation, I have been able to maintain my mental and emotional well-being during this challenging time	2.85	0.88	Agree	2.97	0.75	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.11**			**3.15**		

Research Question 3: What is the tendency of male and female students to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era?

Criterion Mean = 2.5, Mean: 1.0-2.49 = Disagreed, 2.5-4.00= Agreed.

Table 3 shows the tendency of male and female students to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era. For male undergraduates, the result showed that the majority of

the male undergraduates agreed with items 13–15, 17, and 18 having mean scores that are equal to or greater than the mean criterion (2.50). On the contrary, the majority of the male undergraduates disagreed with item 16, with mean scores that were less than the mean criterion (2.50).

Conversely, the majority of the female undergraduates agreed with items 13–15, 17, and 18 having mean scores that are equal to or greater than the mean criterion (2.50). On the contrary, the majority of the male undergraduates disagreed with item 16, with mean scores that were less than the mean criterion (2.50).

The grand mean scores of 3.06 for male and 3.08 for female undergraduates indicate that both male and female undergraduates have almost similar experiences in their tendency to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of the tendency of male and female students to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era

S/N	Items	Male (n=154)			Female (n=184)		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
.13	I have sought support from friends and family to talk about my feelings regarding the election outcome	2.86	0.94	Agree	3.43	0.81	Agree
.14	I have participated in activism or protests related to political issues since the election	3.37	0.70	Agree	3.64	0.57	Agree
.15	I have actively avoided discussing politics with people who have different views than mine.	2.84	0.75	Agree	3.35	0.78	Agree
.16	I have increased my use of social media to stay informed about political events	1.96	0.86	Disagree	2.14	0.95	Disagree
.17	I have experienced increased stress and anxiety since the election	2.92	0.70	Agree	3.08	0.59	Agree
.18	I have engaged in self-care activities such as exercise or meditation to cope with election-related stress.	3.00	0.54	Agree	3.11	0.59	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.06**			**3.08**		

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the post-election adjustment behaviours exhibited by male and female undergraduates in the post-2023 elections era.

Table 4. Summary of t-test on the difference in the post-election adjustment behaviours exhibited by male and female undergraduates in the post-2023 elections era

Gender	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Sig.	Decision
Male	154	17.64	2.70	336	0.61	1.96	0.71	Retain: H_{O1}
Female	184	17.46	2.53					

Table 4 indicates that $t_{cal} = 0.61$, df = 336, and $t_{tab} = 1.96$. Therefore, since $t_{cal} < t_{tab}$ and $P > 0.05$, thus, there is no significant difference in the post-election adjustment behaviours exhibited by male and female undergraduates in the post-2023 elections era. Therefore, the null hypothesis one is upheld at a significance level of 0.05.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on the mental health and well-being of male and female undergraduates.

Table 5: Summary of t-test on the difference in the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on the mental health and well-being of male and female undergraduates

Gender	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Sig.	Decision
Male	154	18.64	2.34	336	0.92	1.96	0.36	Retain: H_{O2}
Female	184	18.88	2.30					

Table 5 indicates that $t_{cal} = 0.92$, df = 336, and $t_{tab} = 1.96$. Therefore, since $t_{cal} < t_{tab}$ and $P > 0.05$, thus, there is no significant difference in the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on the mental health and well-being of male and female undergraduates. Therefore, the null hypothesis two is upheld at a significance level of 0.05.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the tendency of male and female students to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era.

Table 6. Summary of t-test on the difference in the tendency of male and female students to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era

Gender	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Sig.	Decision
Male	154	16.95	2.74	336	6.24	1.96	0.00	Reject: H_{O3}
Female	184	18.75	2.56					

Table 6 indicates that $t_{cal} = 9.86$, df = 336, and $t_{tab} = 1.96$. Therefore, since $t_{cal} > t_{tab}$ and $P < 0.05$, there is a significant difference in the tendency of male and female students to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era. Therefore, null hypothesis three was rejected at the significance level of 0.05.

4. Discussion

The result of research question one revealed that the grand mean scores of 2.94 for male and 2.91 for female undergraduates indicate that both male and female undergraduates have an almost similar experience with post-election adjustment behaviours in the post-2023 elections era. The test of hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant difference in the post-election adjustment behaviours exhibited by male and female undergraduates in the post-2023 election era. The result of research question two revealed that the grand mean scores of 3.11 for male and 3.15 for female undergraduates indicate that both male and female undergraduates have almost similar experiences in the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on mental health and well-being in the post-2023 elections era. The test of hypothesis two revealed that there is no significant difference in the implications of the post-election adjustment behaviour on the mental health and well-being of male and female undergraduates.

The result of research question three revealed that the grand mean scores of 3.06 for male and 3.08 for female undergraduates indicate that both male and female undergraduates have almost similar experiences in their tendency to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era. The test of hypothesis two revealed that there is a significant difference in the tendency of male and female students to engage in a coping strategy in the post-election era.

The present findings are supported by Almudin et al. [10], who discussed the various psychological reactions of young adults after an election, how they cope with the loss of their favoured candidates, and the potential effects on their well-being, fulfilment, and satisfaction when their preferred candidates win. In a recent study conducted by Mumuni and Abidogun [11], it was found that the disparities in post-election adjustment behaviours among male and female undergraduates are influenced by various factors

such as ethnic violence, godfatherism, internal terrorism, crime, corruption, domestic violence, and banditry. Both genders may experience varying levels of stress and anxiety based on these factors.[16]

5. Conclusion

The study conducted had the objective of investigating the post-election adjustment behaviour among undergraduates at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, with a focus on the implications for counselling. The study revealed that gender plays a pivotal role in determining how undergraduates cope with post-election adjustments, with females demonstrating a greater tendency towards seeking social support and self-care. The findings highlighted the importance of considering post-election stress and mental health issues, which are common challenges among students. Therefore, it is crucial for counselling services at universities to tailor their support based on gender differences in coping strategies, to ensure that all students receive the necessary assistance to navigate challenging times effectively. By doing so, universities can create a safe and supportive environment where students' mental health and well-being are prioritized.

Implications for Counselling

Based on the study's findings, here are three implications for counselling:

1. **Gender-specific support**: The study highlighted the importance of providing gender-specific support to students. Counselling services at universities must tailor their support based on gender differences in coping strategies. This can help ensure that all students receive the necessary assistance to navigate challenging times effectively.
2. **Addressing post-election stress:** The study emphasized the need to consider post-election stress and mental health issues, which are common challenges among students. Counselling services should provide support that addresses these issues to help students cope better with post-election adjustments.
3. **Creating a safe and supportive environment:** By tailoring counselling support based on gender differences and addressing post-election stress, universities can create a safe and supportive environment where students' mental health and well-being are prioritized. This can help students feel more comfortable seeking help and improve their overall academic performance.

Recommendations

Based on the study, here are three recommendations:

1. Counselling services at universities should tailor their support based on gender differences in coping strategies. This will ensure that all students receive the necessary assistance to navigate challenging times effectively.
2. Post-election stress and mental health issues are common challenges among students. Therefore, universities should prioritize the provision of counselling services to support students.
3. Universities should encourage students to seek social support and self-care during post-election adjustments. This can be achieved by organizing support groups and creating awareness about the importance of seeking help when needed.

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