

# AWARENESS AND PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL PREPAREDNESS FOR SEASON OF EXILE IN SEARCH OF GREENER PASTURES BY SS-III SCIENCE STUDENTS

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10824507>

Published Date: 16-March-2024

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the awareness and psycho-spiritual preparedness for the season of exile in search of greener pastures by SS-III science students in Owerri Zone (II) local government area of Owerri Imo-state Nigeria. To achieve a comprehensive study, descriptive survey research design was employed. The study population consisted of all three thousand, two hundred, and seven (3207) public senior secondary school three (SS-III) students in Owerri Zone (II) from which a sample of four hundred and two (402) science students was drawn using cluster random proportionate sampling technique. The instrument for data collection themed Awareness and Psycho-Spiritual Preparedness in Overcoming the Challenges Encountered during the Search for Greener Pastures (APSPCESGP) was validated by experts from the Measurement and Evaluation Department, Guidance and Counselling Department, and Christian Religious Studies. The instrument had two clusters, A and B with Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients 0.87 and 0.85. Simple percentages, mean and standard deviations were used to analyze the research questions while the Z-test statistical tool was used to test for significances at 0.05 conformity level. The findings revealed amongst others that in as much as the students were lowly aware (2.3) of the challenges encountered in exile as well as poorly prepared (2.4) to overcome them, a majority (72%) will migrate from home in search of greener pastures after graduation. Equipped with these discoveries, the researchers concluded that stakeholders in science secondary education; should put in more effort towards improving students' awareness of the various life challenges associated with the season of exile in search of greener pastures and best practices for overcoming them.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Greener Pastures, Preparedness, Psycho-Spiritual, Season of Exile, Science Students.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education has been a very powerful instrument for individuals' and national development. Hence, the majority of individual and national problems such as socio-cultural, economic, or both could easily be solved through education, formally or informally. The knowledge, skills, and values necessary for citizens to become agents of change in the journey toward sustainable development, are all inculcated and acquired through education (Ogidi & Ejim, 2016) which over time, has formed the bedrock for an individual's progress and suitable life on earth.

## International Journal of Novel Research in Interdisciplinary Studies

Vol. 11, Issue 2, pp: (19-27), Month: March – April 2024, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

Various approaches to education for sustainable development encourage people to understand the complex synergies between their values, those of the wider society, and those threatening the sustainability of life on earth. Therefore, education can be viewed as the means through which individual members of the present and future generations can be positively endowed with the essential knowledge accumulated by the collective experiences of countless past generations towards enhanced solutions to the digital divide, increased interest in engineering and science courses amongst prospective university candidates as well as improved cognitive reasoning (Okafor et al., 2019) (Ogidi et al., 2016). This implies that; it is through education that both present and future individuals can be made useful to themselves and the society at large.

The education obtainable in various countries is categorized into certain levels. Hence in Nigeria, the levels of education are organized into three (3) broad categories according to Uwaifo and Uddin (2009) which include;

- ❖ Basic Education (BE; Primary & Junior Secondary Education).
- ❖ Post-Basic Education (PBE, Three years of Senior Secondary Education)
- ❖ Career Development (PBECD)/Tertiary Education (TE; Undergraduate, Graduate, Vocational & Technical Education)

Secondary School Education comprises Junior Secondary School Education (JSSE) and Senior Secondary School Education (SSSE), which fall under the categories of BE and PBECD respectively. It is the education that primary school students proceed to on graduation. Hence, it can be viewed as the edge or relationship existing between the two vertexes, primary and tertiary education respectively (Okafor et al., 2023).

The objectives of SSE which is seen in the PBECD according to Seyi et al. (2024) include;

- i. To provide holders of Basic Education Certificates and Junior Arabic/Islamic Studies Certificates with the opportunities of higher-level education irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background.
- ii. A diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, dispositions, opportunities, and future roles.
- iii. To provide trained manpower in applied sciences, technology, and commerce at sub-professional levels.
- iv. To provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance
- v. To make room for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic developments
- vi. To develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage.
- vii. To inspire students with desires for self-improvement and achievement of excellence.
- viii. To foster patriotism, national unity and security education with emphasis on the common ties in spite of the nation's diversities.
- ix. To raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour.

The above objectives, clearly shows that education at this level has two main goals, first to prepare students for tertiary education and second to prepare them for living successfully in the society especially those who may not be able to proceed for tertiary education.

Season of exile as the graduate of SSSE move into the world for greener pastures either in pursuit of higher education, learning of trade or working as stipulated in the National Policy on Education has become truly inevitable. Season of exile could be referred to as a period where one finds himself in exile (Rafa et al., 2020).

This movement in search of greener pastures can lead to increased cultural diversity in a host community. However, movers or migrants may experience forms of segregations, discrimination cultural clashes. Those who travel may have challenging academic and moral standards, they may graduate with degrees that prepare them for responsible citizenships, further learning and productive employment. On another hand, they may equally face challenges that may adversely affect their education and social mobility such as cultural barriers like languages and communication. They may also induce social, economic and political problems in receiving (host) environment such as increases in the population with adverse effects on existing social amenities, goods, services, healthcare, housing, education, employment, easy targets for abuse, extortion and exploitation.

It is therefore expected that by the time Christian senior secondary school science students graduate, they should have gotten sufficient knowledge on what is obtainable in the search for greener pastures. Some of them who may not continue to pursue tertiary education deviates to trade or skill acquisition usually outside their homeland. Those who intend furthering their education to tertiary levels, may be expected to seek such outside their homes and sometimes may have to travel to far areas for such ventures. As a Christian student, it is expected that wherever they find themselves, they should continue to do only what is right at all times not withstand the consequences or environmental challenges faced. To be able to adequately achieve this, these student graduates require counseling on the best ways to overcome challenges faced during the season of exile in search for greener pastures.

Guided by these discoveries and challenges, the researchers sought to determine the proportion of Owerri Educational Zone II Christian senior secondary school science students, who will migrate from home after graduation in search for greener pastures, the extent of awareness of the accompanying challenges and the preparedness to overcoming them.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions propagated the actualization of the aim of this study;

1. What proportion of Christian SS-III science students will migrate from home in search of greener pastures after graduation?
2. To what extent are the students aware of the associated challenges in exile?
3. To what extent are the students psycho-spiritually prepared to overcome the associated challenges?

### **Hypotheses**

1. The proportion of Christian SS-III science students who will migrate from home in search of greener pastures is not significant at 0.05 conformity level.
2. The extent to which the students are aware of the associated challenges in exile is not significant at 0.05 conformity level.
3. The extent to which the students are psycho-spiritually prepared to overcome the associated challenges is not significant at 0.05 conformity level.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Spiritual Awareness**

The meaning of spirituality has developed and expanded over time, and various meanings can be found alongside each other. Traditionally, spirituality referred to a religious process of re-formation that aims to recover the original shape of man, oriented at the image of God as exemplified by the founders and sacred texts of the religions of the world. The term was used within early Christianity to refer to a life oriented toward the Holy Spirit and broadened during the late Middle Ages to include mental aspects of life.

In modern times, the term both spread to other religious traditions and broadened to refer to a wider range of experiences, including a range of esoteric and religious traditions. Modern usages tend to refer to a subjective experience of a sacred dimension; and the deepest values and meanings by which people live, often in a context separate from organized religious institutions (Alaribe & Okafor, 2010). This may involve belief in a supernatural realm beyond the ordinarily observable world, personal growth, a quest for ultimate or sacred meaning, religious experience, or an encounter with one's inner dimension.

The Ancient Greek aphorism "Know Thyself" invites us to self-reflect; to look at ourselves and to understand our true nature, and having done so, to live our true nature. But what is our true nature? Are we simply the body that we come into this world with, that ages with time and withers away after death? Are we the mind that grows astute with intellectual pursuits only to evaporate at the time of death? Are we our emotions that change as frequently as the weather? Or is there much more to our "selves"? Is there something more constant, more powerful that defines our true self?

According to Alaribe and Okwuosa (2021), saints and spiritual masters since time immemorial have come to remind us that we are much more than the body that we see with our physical eyes, much more than our mind or emotions. They tell us that our true self is the spirit or soul. They tell us that the soul is a part of God, the Creator and that it is the Power that enlivens the body, that animates us, that makes us tick. When this Power leaves us, the body becomes motionless, and we are proclaimed dead. Saints also tell us that there is a way for each of us to experience our true nature. It is not an intellectual pursuit, but one of practice, wherein we can have a direct experience of our true self. Therefore, to become spiritually aware is to awaken to our true nature as spirit in order to experience our true self.

### **Psychological Preparedness**

Psychology is the study of mind and behavior. Its subject matter includes the behavior of humans and nonhumans, both conscious and unconscious phenomena, and mental processes such as thoughts, feelings, and motives. Psychology is an academic discipline of immense scope, crossing the boundaries between the natural and social sciences. Biological psychologists seek an understanding of the emergent properties of brains, linking the discipline to neuroscience. As social scientists, psychologists aim to understand the behavior of individuals and groups.

A professional practitioner or researcher involved in the discipline is called a psychologist. Some psychologists can also be classified as behavioral or cognitive scientists. Some psychologists attempt to understand the role of mental functions in individual and social behavior. Others explore the physiological and neurobiological processes that underlie cognitive functions and behaviours. Psychologists are involved in research on perception, cognition, attention, emotion, intelligence, subjective experiences, motivation, brain functioning, and personality. Psychologists' interests extend to interpersonal relationships, psychological resilience, family resilience, and other areas within social psychology and also the unconscious mind (Alaribe & Okafor, 2010). Research psychologists employ empirical methods to infer causal and correlational relationships between psychosocial variables. Some, but not all, clinical and counselling psychologists rely on symbolic interpretation.

While psychological knowledge is often applied to the assessment and treatment of mental health problems, it is also directed towards understanding and solving problems in several spheres of human activity. By many accounts, psychology ultimately aims to benefit society. Many psychologists are involved in some kind of therapeutic role, practicing psychotherapy in clinical, counselling, or school settings. Other psychologists conduct scientific research on a wide range of topics related to mental processes and behavior. Typically, the latter group of psychologists work in academic settings (e.g., universities, medical schools, or hospitals). Another group of psychologists are employed in industrial and organizational settings. Yet others are involved in work on human development, aging, sports, health, forensic science, education, and the media

Psychological preparedness is a heightened state of awareness, anticipation, and readiness for uncertainty and emotional arousal in expectation of the occurrence of a threat. Psychological response to the unfolding situation and the ability to manage the demands. It is a process of turning a person's inner resources into the coming situation.

### **Season of Exile**

Vasanthakumar (2021) defined exile in two ways. First, as a situation in which an individual is forced to leave his/her country or home and go to live in a foreign country or distant place, and second as a period in which someone lives in exile. According to Udeani (2024), an exiled is someone who was forced out of their home country and is now living somewhere else. The above definitions of exile appear to negative connotation to the person in exile. However, exile may not be an altogether negative experience, might indeed be an urgent necessity in life. Perhaps, now and again, life invites us to leave our comfort zones, and travel far to a terrain not completely under our control. To journey far into the uncharted territory calls for depth of faith, and the willingness to reconceived us beyond the strictures of our self-creations. In this sense exile connotes the possibility of a fresh start: "exile means beginning again-elsewhere- an existence filled with ambition, anxiety, and occasional reward, in the midst of new friends or adversaries". Based on the foregoing, season of exile is still taken as a period in which someone is living in another place other than his/her home not necessarily in another country where he//she begins or countries life.

Japa loosely translated to runaway or escape overtime, found its way into Nigerian slang for escaping, fleeing or disappearing quickly from a situation often in a hasty or urgent manner. Okafor (2015) associated such escape mechanism

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as a trend in the adolescent developmental stage where they sort for an identity as a result of being neither a child nor an adult which drives them to seek identifies with who they truly are. Earlier, the term exile connoted leaving one’s comfort zone to a foreign land for political reasons, banishment, or expulsion. In recent times, the authors see this exile as one of a choice, through forced to do so by self as a result of circumstances beyond him/her but not as demanded by the norms or values of the environment.

The Bible contains many object lessons of people who have had successful life in exile. Typical examples were Jacob (Gen 27:41-45); Joseph in Egypt (Gen 39:45); Daniel in Babylon as seen in the book of Daniel in the Bible. Owing to their experiences and the way they lived their life in exile some authors have made some insightful comments. Faithful people do faithful things, right? Daniel pushes me to get moving by making peace with being different, learning on others, becoming a self-feeder, doing good work and elevating my vision beyond myself. It is the only way to survive, even thrive in this exile (Shaul, 2023).

Specific challenges for the exiled Christian senior secondary school science graduates may include but not limited to communication difficulties, cultural differences and anxieties. The effects of the cultural shaping of symptoms and illness behavior on diagnosis, coping treatment, differences in family structure and process affecting adaptation and acculturation that may be caused on exposure to a new physical and social environment and the need to navigate unfamiliar cultural experiences. The authors envisage that the Christian students on exile develop a deep connection of their psychological insight with their spiritual wisdom, which offers them a wholistic approach to their personal growth and self-realization (Vazir, 2022).

**2. METHOD**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised of all public senior secondary school three (SS-III) science students in Owerri Educational Zone II for the 2022/2023 academic session totaling three thousand, two hundred and two (3207) persons. Sample size of four hundred and two (402) SS-III science student was drawn from the population using cluster random proportionate sampling technique. The instrument for data collection themed Awareness and Psycho-Spiritual Preparedness in Overcoming the Challenges Encountered during the Search for Greener Pastures (APSPocesgp) comprised of two (2) main sections A and B. Research question one was structured on a YES/NO proportions while two and three took the following format; Very High Extent (VHE, 4 points); High Extent (HE, 3 points); Low Extent (LE, 2 points) and Very Low Extent (VLE, 1 points).

Simple percentages, mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions while Z-test statistical tool used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. Values greater than two-point five (>2.5) were viewed as positive contributors whereas those less than two-point five (<2.5) were perceived negative contributors. Finally, the null hypothesis were accepted when the z-calculated value is less than the z-tabulated value ( $z_{cal} < z_{tab}$ ), else rejected ( $z_{cal} > z_{tab}$ ).

**3. RESULTS**

**Research Question One:** What proportion of Christian senior secondary school science students will migrate from home in search of greener pastures after graduation?

**Table 1: Proportion of Christian SS-III Students that will Migrate from Home in Search of Greener Pasture**

ITEM	YES	NO	TOTAL
I intend to migrate immediately after my senior secondary education to another state/country outside my current residence in search for skills/further studies/employment	289 (72%)	113 (28%)	402 (100%)

From table 1, two hundred and eighty-nine (289) students indicated interest to migrate from home after their senior secondary education in search for greener pastures whereas one hundred and thirteen (113) of them showed no interest. The frequency of the students intending to migrate was seventy-two percent (72%) while those not intending to migrate was twenty-eight percent (28%). Based on this discovery, it can be deduced that 72% of Christian SS-III students will migrate from home in search of greener pastures after their graduations.

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**Hypothesis One (H<sub>01</sub>):** The proportion of senior secondary school science students who will migrate from home on graduation in search of greener pastures is not significant at 0.05 conformity level.

**Table 2: Z-test Report of Research Question One**

Category of Proportion	Proportion	P	Q	z-cal	SL	z-tab	Decision
Observation P1	0.72	0.72	0.28	8.33	0.05	1.96	Rejected
Expected Proportion P2	0.50						

Table 2 showed that the z-calculated value (8.33) is greater than the z-tabulated value (1.96), the hence null hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) is rejected. This implies that the proportion (72%) of senior secondary school science students who will migrate from home on graduation in search of greener pastures is significant at 0.05 conformity level.

**Research Question Two.** To what extent are the students aware of the associated challenges in exile?

**Table 3: Extent of Awareness**

SN	ITEM STATEMENT	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Inadequacies of favorite meals and changes to time of feeding	35 140	110 165	55 220	202 202	402 727	1.8	LOW EXTENT
2.	Being influenced into immoralities, idolatry & difficulties in finding Christians of the same faith for worship	42 168	50 150	190 380	120 120	402 818	2.4	LOW EXTENT
3.	Suffering from diseases and ailments, peculiar to the place of exile	65 260	107 321	193 386	37 37	402 1004	2.5	HIGH EXTENT
4.	Threats to life, properties & being hated or intimidated due to ethno-religious beliefs	106 424	129 387	114 228	53 53	402 1042	2.6	HIGH EXTENT
5.	Language barriers and inabilities of getting decent accommodations	99 396	115 345	101 202	87 87	402 1030	2.6	HIGH EXTENT
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>2010 4621</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>LOW EXTENT</b>

The analysis on table 3 showed that to a low extent, the students were aware that inadequate meals (1.8) and been influenced into immoralities (2.4) could arise from migrating from home in search of greener pastures. The analysis also revealed that to a high extent, they were aware that suffering from ailments (2.5), threat to life (2.6) and language barriers (2.6) could also be associated with being in exile. With a cumulative mean of 2.3, the researchers conclude that to a low extent, students were lowly aware of the associated challenges in exile.

**Hypothesis Two (H<sub>02</sub>):** The extent to which the students are aware of the associated challenges is not significant at 0.05 conformity level.

**Table 4: Z-test Report of Research Question Two**

Category of Mean	X	SD	z-cal	SL	z-tab	Decision
Observed	2.3	0.334664	27.49026	0.05	0.012743	Rejected
Expected	2.5					

Table 4 showed that the z-calculated value (27.4902) is greater than the z-tabulated value (0.0127), hence the null hypothesis (H<sub>02</sub>) is rejected. This implies that the low extent (2.3) to which the students are aware of the associated challenges of being in exile is significant at 0.05 conformity level.

**Research Question Three:** To what extent are the students psycho-spiritually prepared to overcome the associated challenges?

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Table 5: Extent of Psycho-Spiritual Preparedness

SN	ITEM STATEMENT	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Inculcating the habit of self-discipline such as fasting and praying for self and others	12 48	110 330	201 402	79 79	402 859	2.1	LOW EXTENT
2.	Avoiding the influence of hard drugs, alcohol while constantly meditating on the words of God	42 168	120 360	185 370	55 55	402 953	2.4	LOW EXTENT
3.	Practicing self-control, cultivating the habit of regular medical checkups.	65 260	167 501	103 206	67 67	402 1034	2.6	HIGH EXTENT
4.	Prioritizing the welfare of the exile city, living a humble, honesty and hard-work life.	101 404	113 339	114 228	65 65	402 1036	2.6	HIGH EXTENT
5.	Making peace with being different	42 168	115 345	158 316	87 87	402 916	2.3	LOW EXTENT
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>2010 4798</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>LOW EXTENT</b>

The analysis on table 5 showed that to a low extent, the students were psycho-spiritually prepared to inculcate the habit of self-discipline (2.1), avoid the influences of hard-drugs (2.4) and make peace with being different individuals. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that to a high extent, they were prepared to practice self-control (2.6) as well as prioritizing the welfare of the exiled city (2.6). With a cumulative mean of 2.4, the researchers conclude that to a low extent, the students were lowly prepared psychologically and spiritually for the associated challenges.

**Hypothesis Three (H<sub>03</sub>):** The extent to which the students are psycho-spiritually prepared to overcome the associated challenges is not significant at 0.05 conformity level.

Table 6: Z-test Summary Report on Research Question Three

Category of Mean	X	SD	z-cal	SL	z-tab	Decision
Observed	2.4	0.189737	50.5964	0.05	0.01489	Rejected
Expected	2.5					

Table 6 showed that the z-calculated value (50.5964) is greater than the z-tabulated value (0.0149), hence null hypothesis (H<sub>03</sub>) is rejected. This implies that the low extent of 2.4 to which the students were psych-spiritually prepared for the challenges associated with being in exile in search for greener pastures is significant at 0.05 conformity level.

4. SUMMARY

The results have shown that a greater number (72%) of the science students currently in SS-III, will leave their homes and migrate to different locations in search of greener pastures after their graduation. Some will leave to learn trades and skills as related to their scientific studies while others may gain employments with their qualifications (WAEC and/or NECO Certificates). Some others may migrate from home to further their studies at tertiary levels within or beyond the country. This implies that only a few (28%) are likely to continue staying at home with their parents after graduation. This revelation can be viewed as a wake-up call to educational stakeholders to adequately prepare students with the required core Christian values and psychological guidance required to succeed in exile.

The findings of the study also showed that to a low extent (2.3), students were aware of the various life challenges, associated with living in exile in search of greener pastures. This lack of sufficient knowledge may trigger ill-preparedness for the journey ahead. In the same vein, the study further revealed that to a low extent (2.4), students were psycho-spiritually prepared to overcome the challenges associated with season of exile in search of greener pastures. These revelations pose serious challenges to science secondary educational stakeholders hence, the urgent need to modify the curriculum to inculcate necessary resources and structures, required to expose these challenges to the students and the best approaches to overcoming them psychologically and spiritually.

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**5. CONCLUSIONS**

The goal of this study was to determine the awareness and psycho-spiritual preparedness of SS-III science students for the season of exile in search of greener pastures. The survey results indicated that a high number of SS-III science students would migrate from home in search of greener pastures after their graduations. Based on this finding, the researchers conclude that stakeholders in science secondary educations, should put in more effort towards improving students' awareness of the various life challenges associated with the season of exile in search of greener pastures and best practices for overcoming them.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are made from this study;

- i. Christian religious bodies where students worship should constantly inculcate positive habits and values in their daily teachings such as self-discipline, fasting and praying.
- ii. Schools through the guidance and counselling units, should expose the consequences of hard drugs and alcoholic abuse to students and the best means to avoiding them.
- iii. Moral instructions in schools should encourage students to constantly practice self-control, humility, honesty and hard-work as means of being valuable members of the society.
- iv. School administrators and proprietors should routinely organize seminars and workshops for SS-III science students on life after graduation as means of preparing them for possible seasons of exile.
- v. Parents should inculcate core Christian values to their wards so that when they depart from home, they will succeed wherever they go.

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