



Predictors of Persecutory Ideation: Impact of Hell Anxiety and Demonic Struggle among 100 level Accounting Students of Nasarawa State University Keffi

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Abstract

Religion has been linked to mental health over the years, but its connection to persecutory ideation remains unclear. In this study, Nasarawa State University students' persecutory ideation is examined in relation to religious characteristics as predictors. A cross-sectional survey design was used in the study. In the study, a sample of 162 individuals was chosen at random from the student body. Both the independent and dependent variables were measured with three standardized tools. The use of multiple regression analysis was used to formulate and test two hypotheses. However, the researchers discovered that students' thoughts of being persecuted were jointly and significantly predicted by both hell anxiety and demonic conflict ($F = 4.598, p=0.013, R^2 = 0.105, r=0.325$). Individually, that demonic struggle had significant contributions to the prediction of persecutory ideation. ($R^2= 0.342, t=2.844; P < 0.05$). Hell anxiety did not significantly predict persecutory ideation. ($R^2= -0.043, t=-0.360; P > 0.05$). These findings recommended that religious authorities consider minimizing satanic and hell themes in their sermon and focus on angels, heaven, forgiveness, and other positive concepts that promote a favorable perspective of God thereby improving the mental health of its congregation. Additionally, psycho-spiritual therapy on the guidance of one's life by good supernatural beings like angels may assist lessen religiously-induced persecutory thinking.

Keywords: Hell, demon, paranoia, religion, anxiety

Introduction

Trust is indisputably one of the most crucial elements in developing relationships with others and has a significant effect on how well an individual adapts to its surroundings. Trust is the conviction, anticipation, and belief that the other person will behave in accordance with

their words, deeds, and decisions. For people to cooperate with one another, they need to have faith in our leaders, our institutions, and each other.

Trust in each other, public institutions, and leaders is an essential prerequisite for people to work together. The United Nations has recognized the declining trust in the world and warned that lack of trust could lead to conflict (UN, 2021). The current deterioration in domestic security means that today's citizens find it difficult to trust each other for fear of harm. When this lack of trust is based on reality, it is called mistrust. Mistrust is a distrust of people's purpose, integrity, and competence.

There is also another form of mistrust that is not based on reality. Such people can experience thoughts of persecution. Persecution ideations are thoughts when you think someone is trying to harm you. (Zayed, 2023) PI is thoughts that a person is experiencing or will experience as a result of physical, psychological, or social harm to the conscious intentions of others (Freeman & Garety, 2000). People with high persecutory ideation (PI) believe they are the target when there is no target. Minor accidents are interpreted as intentional injuries. Such people are always on guard, believing that others are trying to harm them. Such traits are characterized by signs of worry, anxiety, and avoidance of behavior. They may think that if they go outside, someone might attack them, or that someone is spying on them. Victims interpret message as threatening from the most innocent comments. For example, they may perceive unfamiliar harmless glance as a threat. Studies have shown that high levels of PI lead to a range of psychopathological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, loneliness and insomnia, as well as risky behaviors such as delusions, psychosis schizophrenia aggression, alcohol and substance abuse (Oghenekwe, 2017).

In recent years, PI has been the subject of much research due to its high prevalence. About 10-15% of the general population experiences thoughts of persecution each year (Freeman 2007). An 8% incidence was found in Brazil (Soares, DosSantos, Dottino & Elkis 2017). A prevalence of 10% has been identified in African Americans (Bazargan, Bazargan & King 2001).

As a result of its prevalence, revealing factors that may influence PI is undoubtedly of great importance. Religious conflict may be viewed as a causal factor of persecutory ideation. A particular religious tension that may be associated with intentional beliefs is demonic struggles. Demonic struggles are expressed as the fear that problems are caused by demons or devils, and the feeling of being attacked or tormented by demons. People who are plagued with satanic thoughts believe in the existence of evil spirits powerful enough to cause personal harm, and tend to attribute negative events in life, such as poor academic performance, to the devil or demons (Exline and Wilt,2022). They feel that demons are out there, powerful enough to embrace them and influence and harm other people. This means that people who try to blame the devil for terrible events feel mistrust and fear towards others. Satanic attribution can lead to hostility towards other out groups (O'Donnell (2020). This makes such believers so suspicious of others that even the slightest remark of theirs is interpreted to the influence of the devil. The struggle against the devil has shown to be closely related to conspiracy theory beliefs (Exline & Wilt 2022).The people who get high scores in demonic struggle believe that secret groups of powerful forces are trying to control and manipulate the world, and they tend

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to refuse to be vaccinated against the novel coronavirus (Exline & Wilt 2022) because they believe that demonic warfare vaccines contain the "Mark of the Beast". A surveillance microchip to keep one from going to heaven.

Moreover, fear of hell can also cause persecutory thinking. Fear of hell is the fear of the possibility of going to hell after death. Sufferers exhibit repetitive thoughts about problems that could lead to hell. Focusing on things that can lead a person to sin and lead him to hell. The problem becomes devastating and interferes with one's activities and suffering. People who score high on hell show extreme discomfort when they hear the word "hell." In extreme cases, people panic when presented with objects related to hell. Fear of hell can lead to religious obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), an obsession with committing sins, not being just enough, and pleasing God (methodism). Negative self-esteem causes fear, a dissonance of how we exist in God's mind. The contradiction between the perceived self and God's overestimated social standards is the result of denial. It increases the fear of being judged negatively and increases the fear of going to hell. This fear causes people to fear that they will not meet God's standards. Negative feelings about oneself can lead to feelings of being different, marginalized, inferior, and even weak. Persecutory ideation can spread when individuals perceive themselves as potentially vulnerable. Studies have shown that negative thoughts about self predict sustained paranoia (Vorontsova, et al, 2013). Such people tend to remember their past sins against God and those who led them to such sins. So they will distrust them, fearing that they will be tempted into further sin. Anxiety has been repetitively found to be related with paranoia (e.g. Freeman & Garety, 1999)

A survey found that 32.8% of college students believed others intended to harm those (Timmons 2016). The current insecurity is also affecting universities, where students live in fear. For example, gunmen incessant attacked on state university students across the country is worrisome (Adeola, 2023; Benson 2022). Schools are currently unsafe because students sleep with their eyes open when they should be worried about their grades. However, there is paucity of research on the persecution ideation of students in Nigeria understanding the factors that can influence a student's persecutory thoughts is important for improving student performance.. There is no verified research that combines the persecutory ideation in the world with predictions of hell anxiety and demonic struggles. Therefore, the relevance of these factors should be further investigated to fill the gaps that have arisen in research efforts. Against this background, the present study investigated the anticipation of fear of hell and the devil's struggle according to the idea of persecution among Nassarawa State University students.

The purpose of the investigation is to determine:

- i. What are the interactive effect of hell anxiety and demonic struggles on persecution ideation among Nasarawa State University Keffi students?
- ii. What are the significant independent predictions of hell anxiety and demonic struggles on persecutory ideation among Nasarawa State University students?

Our findings will influence prevention, treatment, and treatment options for school students with PI, and suggest that they can become more active and responsible individuals. Finally, the results of this study serve as a reference for further research in this area.

Literature review

Persecution Ideation

The terms “persecutory ideation”, “persecution delusion” and paranoia are used interchangeably by some authors (Bentall, et al., 2001). Historically, authors used to focus more broadly on defining delusions. Today, new models of delusions focus on specific classifications of each belief such as grandiose belief and persecutory belief. (Buck, et al, 2023). The first notion of the concept of persecution comes from paranoid literature. Paranoia refers to a distrust or mistrust of others and a negative belief in other people's thoughts and intentions. Affected individuals tend to misinterpret harmless behavior as threatening, and social withdrawal and aggression. Freeman and his colleagues (2005, quoted by Timmons, 2016) suggest understanding paranoid ideas as hierarchies. The most common example of paranoia in the general population is fear or perception of social judgment or rejection, followed by the topical feeling of being watched. Somewhat less frequently, perceptions of mild threats (e.g. intentional provocation) or moderate threats (e.g. intentional targeting) occur. In some of the rarest cases, we may perceive a serious threat of physical, social, or psychological harm. This hierarchical nature was further corroborated by Bevington, and colleagues (2013) who found that the subcategory of paranoia most commonly experienced by the general population is interpersonal hypersensitivity, characterized by distrust of normative beliefs, followed by persecutory beliefs. The term persecutory ideation is typically used in non-clinical settings. (Freeman, and associates).

Oghenekwe (2017) defined the persecutory ideation in another way as an irrational belief in a conspiracy against one's intentions or intentions. This means that a reasonable belief about an individual does not count as a persecution ideation. Some authors (Buck, et al, 2023) argued that some persecutory ideation could be dysfunctional in some situation and adaptive in other situation. Freeman and Garety (2000) disputed that for a thought to be considered persecutory, an individual must both believe that they are being injured or that harm is imminent and that the persecutor actively intends to cause harm or distress. It is the second component that distinguishes paranoid thoughts from socially anxious ones (Freeman & Garety, 2000).

When these beliefs are based on incorrect inferences of reality and sustained despite the beliefs of others, they are referred to as persecutory delusions (World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) Persecutory delusions can lead to emotional distress, hospital admission and social withdrawal (Freeman, 2016). For this work, the term persecutory ideation will be used to capture the range of clinical and nonclinical experiences that encompasses persecutory beliefs and paranoid delusions.

Demonic Struggle

Demonic struggle originates from the spiritual and religious struggle literature (Exline, et al (2014). Exline and Rose, (2013) highlighted three areas of spiritual struggle. Supernatural struggles involve tensions with higher powers (eg, gods or goddesses) or perceptions of demonic or

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evil forces. Intrapsychiatric struggle is manifested by internal conflicts over moral questions, questions of ultimate meaning, and doubts about the truth of religious beliefs. Additionally, tensions regarding spiritual topics with other persons or institutions are seen as interpersonal struggles. Concerns that the devil or evil spirits are to blame for issues and sensations of being attacked or tormented by the devil are examples of demonic struggles, which are a subset of spiritual struggles. These difficulties are best understood as emotions of oppression or persecution by hostile spiritual entities, dark spiritual beings, or evil powers, according to Exline and Rose (2013). Some conflicts are based on conceptions of evil. Demonic struggles is found higher in participants who saw the devil as having less power and influence than God, but still a substantial amount—and more than human spirits and capable of influencing human to do their bidding. Furthermore, those who see the devil as being highly active in the world and having sufficient power and intention to affect events and doing so often, are more likely to experience demonic struggle. Some individuals believe that the devil or bad spirits both directly and through the deeds of others are the source of their temptations, attacks, or unfortunate events in life (Exline et al., 2014). Aggression, psychotic experiences (Huguelet 2020), and emotional distress (Abu-Raiya, Pargament, Krause & Ironson, 2015) might result from such disputes. The Krumrei group (2011)

Hell Anxiety

Literature on horrors of hell is sparse and is often embedded in death anxiety and religiously-based OCD (Dideriksen, 2023; Suhail & Akram, 2002). The terms hell anxiety, infernal terror, underworld phobia, and phobia are all used interchangeably in the literature. (Transformation psychology, n.d). The term "hell" refers to a place of punishment for sins committed during life. This is based on the religious belief that after death there is a "real place" where one is literally punished. Anxiety is “anticipation of future threat “and is often associated with “vigilance in preparation for future danger and cautious or avoidant behaviors” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 189) Anxiety disorders cause people to react to particular things or circumstances with dread and terror in addition to bodily symptoms like perspiration and a fast heartbeat. Therefore, hell anxiety is a personal terror experienced because of the conviction that hell poses a threat to the individual. A person cannot experience hell worry unless several requirements are satisfied: (1) they must believe in hell; (2) their conception of hell must be frightening; and (3) they must believe that there is a possibility they or a loved one may end up in hell. (Cranny, Leman, Fergus, & Rowatt (2018). Individuals experiencing such fears may exhibit excessive anxiety in response to relatively harmless behaviors, such as laughing at vulgar jokes or lustfulness (Abramowitz et al., 2002; Deacon & Nelson, 2008). In this case, individuals with hell anxiety may feel severe guilt over invoking the wrath of the creator who might send them to hell for trivial act laughing at holy jokes, which may, in turn, evoke neutralizing responses to suppress or alleviate the obsessive thoughts and feelings of wrongdoing. Mundane images such as crosses, fire, and religiously-themed movies can evoke images of hell and prompt prayers for forgiveness, leading to OCD. Those who suffer the horrors of hell stay up late so as not to "die" in their sinful state. In addition, fear of hell can cause depression, anger, rumination, low self-esteem, among others (transformation

psychology is outdated). The thought of dying is equally likely to evoke fear when one believes in the possibility of going to an afterlife of eternal suffering.

Cognitive Theory of Persecutory Ideation

The work was examined using a cognitive model of persecution ideation. (Freeman et al 2002). As humans, we try to make sense of circumstances around us that are incomprehensible (Oghenekwe, 2017). This model hypothesizes that individuals prone to persecutory thoughts are trying to make sense of the strange emotions caused by central cognitive dysfunction. People with persecuting thoughts have a negative self-image that deviates from their ideal self. Information about threats creates a discrepancy between who they really are and who they want to be. Thus, to reduce our perception of this contradiction, they tend to blame others for negative events.

Religious books provide members with a guide to an ideal life free of sin and immorality. Small sins can make one judge oneself below the ideal self mentioned in the book. However, this leads to an increased awareness of personal threats by people leading to thoughts of seduction and persecution (Bentall et al., 1994). Furthermore, Freeman et al. (2002) found that negative pictorial representations of oneself (e.g., vulnerable or helpless to demonic and supernatural forces) and others (e.g., hostile) develop from adverse interpersonal experiences. It suggests that it may remain accessible even in the current unfavorable environment. For example, a person may consider himself a sinner because he has committed a minor sin anxiety usually comes from the fear that someone will go to hell or that the devil will punish them for immoral acts. It is believed to be fear. The inclusion of the fear of hell plays a central role in the threatening (miss) interpretation of inner events. The final piece of the puzzle is the discussion in reasoning, such as reduced data collection (“hasty conclusions”), is likely to reinforce perceptions of persecutory content (van Dael, Versmissen, Janssen, Myin-Germeys, van Os, Krabbendam, 2006) and disregarding alternative explanations (Freeman et al. 2004).

In addition, worry has been identified as a possible factor in the development of persecutory thinking (Freeman et al., 2012). Fear of hell is an emotion that arises from over-worrying about the threat of hell and may be an emotion in the formation and maintenance of PIs. Those who display an undue fear of the teachings of hell theology and worry about the effects of evil supernatural agents on their lives may have thoughts directly related to the content of the persecution idea, such as thinking of themselves as villains. It is subjected to the eternal punishment of sin, others are subject to hostility. Places of external locus of control (the feeling that one's life is largely determined by external factors) have been found to mediate the relationship between experiences of helplessness and victimhood and perceptions of persecution (Mirowsky & Ross, 1983, cited by Timmons 2016). This means that people who are more likely to attribute undesirable events in their lives to external forces such as demons are more likely to score higher on persecution ideation

Hell Anxiety and Persecutory Ideation

Studies have shown a positive association between fear of hell and psychological stress. Educating individuals to reduce their fear of hell can have a significant impact on their mental health. This is the conclusion of a qualitative study by (Sloan 2021). Their qualitative research

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shows that religious leaders preach not to say what their religion believes, those who disbelieve will go to hell, that God looks over the shoulders of all men, and that sinful thoughts, actions, and actions It was conducted with participants who believed themselves to be recording He hopes to punish sinners in hell. The results show that such participants suffer great mental anguish because of this theology, and that this "rigorous black-and-white ideology" makes them feel constantly uneasy and too close to being psychotic reported that it was They really believed that God was going to kill them for their sins. God wanted to rid the world of other God's children in order to protect them from sinners like them. This feeling of being persecuted by God for wrongdoing can be extended to other people and exaggerated into the idea of persecution.

Another study was conducted of Americans who changed their faith to atheism. Phillips (2015) found that those (n=35, mostly white men) who experienced fear of hell and guilt for doubting their faith during the apostasy were disgraced or shamed sinners. Stated. Many of them feared being judged for their unbelief. Phillips (2015) reported that participants experienced cognitive dissonance leading to 'avoidance techniques'. Experiencing "avoidance techniques" can lead to suspicion of a person and degenerate into thoughts of persecution.

Using a descriptive-quantitative study design, Shariff and Akin (2014) conducted a study investigating the impact of the association of beliefs in heaven and hell on subjective well-being. The authors compare the differences in subjective well-being across 63 countries with the country-specific proportions of belief in heaven and hell. Data on subjective well-being from 2005 to 2009. 55,555 455,104 respondents from 155 countries (at least 1,000 per country) participated in the study. The results showed that both Heaven and Hell are important but distinct predictors of happiness. More than anything,. Belief in Hell lowered life satisfaction rankings and decreased daily influence (b_{hell} =21.38, p.001). These data suggest that belief in heaven and hell is a strong predictor of well-being at the national level.

Ifeagwazi, hukwuorji, and Onu (2018) examined the effect of fear of death (DA) on multidimensional health-related quality of life (HRQoL) in a sample of Nigerians living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) was investigated. Use cross-sectional designs and available sampling methods. They analyzed 201 patients (male = 63, 31.3%, female = 138, 68.7%, mean age = 40.1, SD = 10.5) undergoing treatment for HIV/AIDS in a tertiary care facility in Nigeria selected. We used the Fear of Death Inventory-revised, patient-reported quality of life-HIV outcome to access the DA and her HRQoL, respectively. The dimensions of HRQoL were treatment effectiveness, physical health, relationships, and cognitive domains. Simple regression analysis showed that fear of death predicted the extent of treatment impact on HRQoL. However, DA failed to predict physical health, relationship and cognitive domains of HRQoL.

Oghenekwe (2017) studied the effects of charm phobia on assertiveness and persecutory thinking in 318 students from the Federal University of Oyeekiti. The post hoc study design included 159 men and 159 women with a mean age of 20.79 years (standard deviation = 2.7). Results showed that fear of charm was significantly associated with thoughts of persecution (r=0.27, p<0.05). Regression analysis showed that the charm proximity subscale

and charm object fear did not predict persecutory thoughts. Post-hoc comparisons with LSD showed that people with high glamor phobia scored significantly higher paranoid ideation scores than those with low glamor phobia.

Demonic Struggles and Persecutory Ideation

The relationship between Supernatural struggle and mental illness is well documented. Gutierrez, Chapman, Grubbs, Jennifer Grant (2020) Study 157 veterans who were admitted to an inpatient gambling treatment program between 5 years and 6 weeks between 2016 and 2017. and the prevalence of mental struggle and its effects. The results were: , an assessment of the Centers for Addiction and Mental Health Gambling Situation Survey (CAMH-IGS) found that measured demonic struggles were positively associated with increased likelihood of gambling. Satanic struggles are heavily and positively associated with gambling with negative emotions. Gambling may therefore be a mechanism for coping with the struggles of evil supernatural forces.

This finding was complemented by another study (Faigin, 2008) that investigated the link between spiritual conflict and addiction. The sample consisted of 90 of his students recruited from Midwest midsize colleges. His nonclinical sample consisted of 508 participants (39% male, mean age = 30.1 years). Researchers longitudinally investigated psychiatric conflict as a predictor of the development of addictive behavior in a sample of college freshmen recruited from colleges and general clinics, asking participants to name five names to the researchers. It was investigated by the provided "pyramid" sampling method. Ten of the 11 addiction scales potential participants were significantly associated with one or more of the mental struggle subscales.

In particular, higher scores on the sacred aspect of spiritual struggle were significantly correlated with higher scores on the 10 Addiction Scale: total SPQ ($\beta=.26$, $p<.01$), caffeine ($\beta=.23$, $p<.01$), nutritional deficiencies ($\beta= 0.22$, $p<0.01$), gambling ($\beta=0.32$, $p<0.01$), prescription drugs ($\beta=0.27$, $p<0.01$), recreational drugs ($\beta=0.18$, $p<.05$), gender ($\beta=.16$, $p<.05$), shopping ($\beta=.22$, $p<.01$), tobacco ($\beta=.22$, $p<.01$) , and jobs ($\beta = .26$, $p<.01$). These findings supported the core theory that mental struggle functions as a risk factor for the development of addictive behaviors in freshmen. This finding, is consistent with the theory that mental tensions and conflicts at this stage of development create an inner void that individuals fill with new forms of meaning: addictive behaviors.

Amerongen Muse, Joke, Sharp Jonker, Westerbrook, Brahm. (2022) explores the role of R/S in combating mental illness and which approaches are experienced as helpful. Thirty-five semi-structured interviews with clinical patients with mental illness in Christian (N = 15) and secular mental health clinics (N = 20) were narratively analyzed. Patients ranged in age from 18 to 65 years, with a mean age of 45.3 years (SD 12.6). Psychiatric diagnoses vary widely, and many patients had multiple diagnostic categories. The most common diagnoses were depression (51%), anxiety disorders (46%), personality disorders (46%), psychotic disorders (23%) and autism spectrum disorders (11%). In summary, patients experience R/S conflict as a lack of negative emotions (eg, loneliness, shame, distrust) and positive emotions (eg, hope and peace). The results show that demonic struggles are the fourth most common

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spiritual struggles experienced by patients, and can also be interpreted as hallucinations (past tense), or struggles between good and evil, truth and falsehood. was done. Fear of the devil plays a large role in acute psychosis, along with fear of non-religious mental health professionals. Participants with schizophrenia admitted that they did not trust non-religious mental health professionals. The judgments they receive on spiritual matters make them distrustful of people and offended. The authors recommended that medical professionals should listen to their problems without judging them.

A recent study of a national cross-sectional sample of people with and without personal illness found that spiritual conflict was associated with a wide range of psychopathologies. McConnell, Pargament, Ellison & Flannery, (2006). We investigated the impact of mental struggle, as measured by negative religious coping, on several measures of psychopathology. The results showed that mental conflict significantly increased anxiety levels ($R^2 = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$), phobic anxiety ($R^2 = 0.14$, $p < 0.001$), and social hypersensitivity ($R^2 = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$) and was shown to increase depression. ($R^2 = .33$, $p < .001$), paranoid ideation ($R^2 = .30$, $p < .001$), hostility ($R^2 = .20$, $p < .001$), obsessive-compulsive disorder ($R^2 = .001$). 17), $p < .001$) and somatization ($R^2 = .15$, $p < .001$). In another set of analyzes using the same dataset, mortality during follow-up was assessed as the most important outcome variable for the 596 participants in the original group. Most importantly, as a result, those who supported sentiment felt that the devil was involved in their illness ("decided the devil would make this happen") for two years. 20-30% more likely to die even in such cases. Controlling for physical and mental health and demographic variables (risk ratio for mortality 1.06; 95% confidence interval 1.01-1.11; $X^2 = 5.89$; $p = 0.02$) (Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar & Hahn, 2004). Thus, spiritual struggles affect not only quality of life, physical functioning and spiritual outcomes, but also mortality in a sample of medically ill elderly patients.

Hypotheses for the Study

The following alternative hypotheses were generated and tested for the purpose of the study:

1. There will be significant joint prediction of both hell anxiety and demonic struggle persecutory ideation
2. There will be significant independent prediction of both prediction of both hell anxiety and demonic struggle persecutory ideation

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, the researcher examines the prediction of hell anxiety, demonic struggle on persecutory ideation among 100 level accounting students. Therefore, the study is a quantitative in nature. The study independent variables are: hell anxiety and demonic struggle. While, on persecutory ideation is the study dependent variable.

Population and Sampling technique

The target population of the research consists of 100 level accounting students of the Nassarawa state university Keffi. The population of this study comprise both male and female 100 level accounting students of 100 level accounting students estimated to have total population strength. There are 228 students in the 200level department. The slovin method (1986) of sampling size calculator was ued. The formular $N = n / (1 + ne^2)$ wher

N = Sample Size n = Total population e = Margin of error

For this study, $n = 286$. $E = 0.05$ $N=162$

So About 200 Questioners are to be distributed

The sampling design used was accidental Sampling Technique in which the all students who were physically present during their lectures was used. From all the collected questionnaires there were 20 retrieved and 18 not well filled questionnaires which had to be considered as incomplete questionnaires. There were more male (52.47%, $n = 86$) than female (44.5%, $n = 74$) participants Most of the participants (33%, $n=54$) were between the ages of 16 and 19years while 38% ($n = 62$) were aged 19-21 years. It is observed from the analysis that 26(16%) of total respondent are between twenty two to twenty four years and 5.4% ($n = 15$) were aged 25 years and above. The proportion of participants who practiced Christianity (116, $n= 70.7$) was more than those who practice Islam (25.6%, $n = 42$) the rest opted not to indicate their religion.

Measures

Instrument four sets of structured questionnaires were employed as study instruments to collect data. **Section A** of the questionnaire contains the socio-demographic information of the respondents, which include: age, gender, marital status and religion. . **Section B** of the instrument is 9 – item Unidimensional hell anxiety scale constructed by Cranney, Leman, Fergus & Rowatt (2018). The validity and reliability were confirmed with factor loadings above .7 and a reliability of .93 (Cronbach’s alpha), indicating excellent internal consistency. This scale has been shown to have unique predictive characteristics independent of generic religious scrupulosity. Hell anxiety has also been identified to negatively correlate well with s belief in free will The scale ranges from 1 (Not at all true) to 5 (a great deal). The scoring of the scale is made by adding the responses in all the 9 items that yield a total score range of 9 to 45. The higher the score, the more the respondent indicates a high hell anxiety. The researchers conducted a pilot study among 100 level students of federal university lafia in order to revalidate the instrument and a coefficient alpha of 0.71. **Section C; the persecutory ideation questionnaire** was developed by Ryan, Robyn & Max in 2007(as cited by Oghenekwe 2017) to measure persecutory Ideation. All items were rendered in a single generic statement format with a 5-point likert scale format (0= very untrue, 1 = mostly untrue, 2 = half of the time, 3 =mostly true ,4= very true). it has proven to have outstanding reliability (internal consistency) and acceptable convergent validity as a appraisal of certain aspects of general paranoid ideation. Finally, the PIQ showed unique variance with severity of persecutory delusions in the clinical group, providing excellent criterion validity for the PIQ as a measure of specifically persecutory ideation, compared to paranoia in general. High score indicated high level of persecutory ideation. Internal consistency was reported at 88 (Oghenekwe A.G (2017) the

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influence of Fear of charm on assertiveness and persecutory ideation among students of Federal University ekiti.

For **Section D** which is **demonic struggle**. The demonic subscale of the The Religious and Spir iual Struggles Scale (RSS) was included (Exline et al., 2014) to gauge thoughts of oppression or persecution by harmful spiritual entities, dark spiritual beings, or evil forces.

This 4 item scale Participants rated their agreement with each statement on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*). Consistent with the proposed hypotheses and analytic plan, only the Divine, Demonic, and Interpersonal sub-scales were included in analyses. The instrument has a coefficient alpha of 0.93(Grubbs 2016). Demonic subscale predicted demonic attributions for a specific struggle, religious fear and guilt and instability as well as total religious and spiritual struggle thereby confirming its validity. The researchers conducted a pilot study among 100 level students at Federal University lafia in order to revalidate the instrument and a coefficient alpha of 0.74.

Procedure

The researchers randomly administered the measuring scales, with the support of three trained research assistants. The researcher went to the 1000 capacity auditorium in the Faculty of administration before the biology lectures on October 2022.. Comprehensive explanation of the test item to the participants was done to avoid obscurity and ensure quality of result. Respondents were allowed to ask question about items they do not understand. No coercion was used and respondents were informed of their freedom to withdraw at any time. Respondents were informed that their answer would be kept confidential. The administration of the questionnaires was carried out by the researcher with the help of course rep and some assistants. Comprehensive explanation of the psychological test items to the respondents was be done so as to ensure quality of results and avoid obscurity. Most of the questionnaire were collected by the researcher immediately after completion All respondents remain are to remain anonymous.

Analysis of Data

The data collected was analyzed using percentage and frequency counts for demographic information about the respondents. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance using Multiple and Linear Regression Analysis statistics.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic and Correlations among the Variables

Variable	S/N	Mean	S.D	Cron-bach	1	2	3	4	5	6
Religon	1				1					
Gender	2				-.12	1				
Age	3				.01	.07	1			
Demonic struggle	4	8.53	4.07	.875	-.19*	-.05	.06	1		

Hell anxiety	5	22.98	7.58	.837	-.002	-.13	.08	.46*	1	
Persecutory ideation	6	30.37	8.57	.781	-.17*	-.15	.06	.32*	.113	1

Note: = $P < 0.05$ (2 – tailed)

As shown in the table, persecutory ideation correlated with religion ($r = -0.17$; $P = 0.038$), and demonic struggle ($r = 0.322$, $P = 0.00$). A significant relationship was found between hell anxiety and demonic struggles ($r = 0.46$; $p = 0.00$). A negative significant relationship was found between religion and demonic struggles ($r = -0.19$, $p = 0.018$)

Results

Hypothesis 1: Which posited that there will be a significant combined contributions of hell anxiety and demonic struggle to the prediction of persecutory ideation

Table 2: Summary Table of Multiple Regression Analysis showing combined contributions of hell anxiety and demonic struggle to the prediction of persecutory ideation

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	892.786	2	446.393	4.598	0.013
Residual	7572.745	159	47.627		
Total	8465.531	161			

Significant @ 0.05

R = .325

R-Square = .105

Adjusted R-square = .083

Standard Error = 6.967

Table 2. shows that there is linear positive relationship between the predictor variables (hell anxiety and demonic struggle on criterion variable (persecutory ideation) among 100 level accounting students .selected. The result shows that hell anxiety and demonic struggle made 10.5% prediction of persecutory ideation. The standard error of 6.967 indicates that on the average, students deviated from true value by 6.967 limits of that measure. The analysis of variance for the multiple regression data yielded an F-ratio of 4.598 which was significant at $P < 0.5$. The implication of this result is that the combination of the two predictor variables (hell anxiety and demonic struggle) significantly predicted persecutory ideation.

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Hypothesis 2: Which states that there will be a significant independent prediction of psychological and organisational characteristics (staff training, self-efficacy and occupational stress) on job satisfaction among industrial workers.

Table 3: Summary table of Multiple Regression Analysis showing independent prediction of ((hell anxiety and demonic struggle) on Job satisfaction.

Predictor Variables	Unstandardized	Standard	t	P
	Coefficient	Coefficient		
	\hat{a}	SED	β	
Constant	26.873	2.556		10.512 0.000
Fear of hell	-.041	.115	-.043	-.360 .720
Demonic struggle	.610	.215	.342	2.844 0.006

Table 3 above shows that demonic struggle had significant contributions to the prediction of persecutory ideation. ($\beta= 0.342$, $t=2.844$; $P < 0.05$). Hell anxiety did not significantly predict persecutory ideation. ($\beta= -0.043$, $t=-0.360$; $P > 0.05$).

Discussions

The purpose of this study was to identify predictors of fear of hell and demonic struggle against persecution ideation among students at Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The first hypothesis showed that both hell anxiety and struggle with the devil predicted thoughts of persecution. This means that a strong adherence to certain religious beliefs that instill fear on members can lead to even worse mental health consequences.

This is a collaboration with other studies that have found increasing attention to religion as a possible symptom of mental illness. (Abel-Hamid et al (2019) Using individual predictions of predictor variables, demonic struggle were shown to significantly predict persecutory ideation. This means that participants who had higher scores in demonic struggle tend to have higher scores in Persecutory Ideation. These individuals believe that devil has sent human to attack them. This finding is consistent with that of O'Donnell (2020) who found that satanic attribution can lead to hostility towards others who do not share their views. A person who feels that the devil is after him and has enough power to influence and harm other people will doubt other people's motives towards him and will be suspicious of others... This discovery was also made by Amerongen-Meeuse, and colleagues (2022.). They investigated the role of struggle in mental illness, found that fear of demons was associated with distrust of secular mental health professionals. The reason they gave was that other group might judge them harshly.

Second, the study results explain the insignificant influence of hell anxiety and persecutory ideation among participants. The finding that fear of hell does not predict persecutory thoughts differs from that of Sharif and Akunin (2014), who linked fear of hell to subjective well-being. Fear of hell can be another cause of mental illness like anxiety but it is not a sign of persecutory thoughts. However, this study was consistent with the work of Ifeagwazi, and contemporaries (2018), who showed that existential anxiety does not affect the cognitive domains of physical health, relationships, and health-related quality of life.

Conclusions

Considering the purpose of this study, which aimed to investigate the role of hell anxiety and demonic struggles as predictors of persecution ideation among students at Nasarawa State University, Keffi? This means that the demonic struggle is good at predicting thoughts of persecution. The study also found that fear of hell was not a significant predictor of thoughts of persecution. Even the relationship found between the two variables was negative. This further illustrates the role that religion plays in determining persecutory beliefs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends the forts to train religious leaders to place more emphasis on positive preaching of the tolerant and loving nature of God, which helps parishioners to have a positive outlook on God and the universe. In addition, psycho-spiritual therapy about the role of benevolent supernatural beings, such as angels, in guiding life can help alleviate religiously-influenced notions of persecution. Fundamentally, students need to understand different mechanisms for coping with religion in order to have more positive attitudes and behavioral outcomes.

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