



Article

The Role of Universities in Promoting Intellectual Security: A Study on a Sample of University of South Africa Students

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Abstract: Intellectual security is essential for fostering critical thinking and independent decision-making, enabling students to effectively confront contemporary global challenges. This study aimed to explore the role of universities in promoting intellectual security. A descriptive research design was employed, using a random sample survey of 60 students from University of South Africa during the 2025 academic year. The findings revealed a high level of awareness of intellectual security among university students. Additionally, the results indicated no significant differences between male and female students in their levels of intellectual security. The study recommends conducting further research to develop social policies that support the advancement of intellectual security across various societal sectors. The undergraduate phase is particularly critical in shaping a student's intellectual and personal identity, as it is a period during which young people are exposed to numerous influences—including family, university environment, social media, and digital platforms—all of which play a pivotal role in strengthening intellectual security.

Keywords: Intellectual security, university students, critical thinking, society. Social values.

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1. Introduction

Educational institutions play a vital role in cultivating internal ideologies aligned with their organizational policies, which they disseminate through their students. Accordingly, such ideologies must be purposeful, constructive, and supportive of students' academic and intellectual development. They must also serve to protect students from misleading or harmful information that could distort their thinking or negatively influence their values and perceptions of society. In this context, *intellectual security* refers to safeguarding individuals from adopting ideas or behaviors that promote or incite violence.

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Intellectual security is a matter of national concern, as it is directly linked to the stability, cohesion, and development of society. It shapes the structure of social and informational values within every community. Moreover, the sustainable development of any society is strongly tied to the level of intellectual and informational security it maintains (Al-Fifi, 2020). With the rapid evolution of technology, concerns surrounding information security have become increasingly pressing. Technological tools such as the internet and digital communication platforms have direct implications for intellectual security, given the volume and speed of information exchange they enable (Al-Tamimi, 2020).

Schools and universities, in partnership with families, bear a shared social responsibility in the upbringing and education of young people. These institutions play a significant role in shaping students' personalities, behaviors, and ideologies over time. As transmitters of both knowledge and culture, educational institutions must be intentional about the nature of the content they deliver and ensure that it supports societal well-being and intellectual integrity (Al-Jahni, 2019).

During adolescence, the family serves as a supervisor for children, and the university replaces the family in many respects, as it is a place where students and employees from different places and ethnicities meet. Cultural diversity accelerates the socialization process for children, but within this diversity lies the fear of students deviating and being dominated by undesirable ideas. This is where teachers play a major role in guiding students toward their future goals, reminding them of their families and their ambitions, and helping them develop their skills and engage them in beneficial activities through workshops, conferences, and purposeful social activities (Al-Dubikhi, 2021). This paper seeks to provide insight into the level of intellectual security among students at

the University of South Africa by analyzing the literature and answering the research question: How do universities contribute to promoting balanced thinking, forming a positive identity, and protecting against harmful influences in a rapidly changing world?

1.2.Problem

Many societies have experienced breaches in security, particularly in the realm of ideological and intellectual safety. In response, nations have worked to establish comprehensive systems for safeguarding intellectual security, leveraging technological advancements to confront the rise of deviant ideologies and extremist thought that have proliferated in recent years. These disruptive ideas and belief systems have caused significant social unrest and posed serious threats to societal stability (Al-Amel, 2018; Ibn Jarash, 2018).

Given the spread of such harmful ideologies and their impact on societal values, there is a pressing need to emphasize the role of universities in countering destructive thinking and promoting constructive, value-based ideologies. Educational institutions must actively engage in reinforcing positive values through both academic curricula and extracurricular activities, thereby contributing to the development of well-rounded, ideologically grounded individuals (Al-Aazam, 2020; Al-Khawaja, 2022).

Universities bear a unique responsibility in confronting deviant ideologies by informing students of the risks and consequences associated with adopting such beliefs. Through awareness campaigns, value-based education, and interactive learning environments, faculty members can support students in building resilience against extremism (Abdul Rasul, 2020). At South Africa university, faculty members play a particularly strong role in disseminating intellectual security through curricula, mentorship, and student activities. Accordingly, the present study seeks to examine students' perspectives on the role of faculty members at University of South Africa in promoting intellectual security and awareness.

1.3.Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the role of University of South Africa in developing intellectual awareness from the perspective of its students.
2. To explore students' suggestions for enhancing the university's role in fostering intellectual awareness.
3. To determine whether statistically significant differences exist in perceptions of South Africa university's role in developing intellectual awareness based on gender.

1.4.Research Questions

1. What is the role of University of South Africa in the development of intellectual awareness from the perspective of its students?
2. What proposals can enhance the role of University of South Africa in fostering intellectual awareness among its students?

1.5.Research Hypothesis

There are no statistically significant differences in students' perceptions of South Africa university's role in developing intellectual awareness attributable to the gender variable.

2. Literature review

Several studies have examined intellectual security in Arab societies: Al-Khawaja (2022) conducted a study titled *A Forward-Looking Vision to Enhance Intellectual Security among Egyptian University Students*, using a descriptive approach with a sample of 400 students. The results highlighted weaknesses and threats affecting universities' ability to promote intellectual security. The study offered practical recommendations and implementation strategies. Al-Fawwaz (2021) examined the role of Saudi universities in enhancing intellectual security and the requirements of national dialogue through strategic planning. Using a descriptive survey method on 72 faculty members from Umluj College, Tabuk University, the study found moderate levels of institutional engagement. It recommended introducing an intellectual security course as a mandatory subject and enhancing cooperation with relevant authorities. Qazan (2021) studied the role of academic leaders at Tabuk University in fostering intellectual security among 920 students.

The findings showed a moderate level of actual engagement but a strong perception of the desired role of academic leaders. Recommendations included integrating intellectual security responsibilities into academic leadership roles. Al-Saleh (2020) analysed the role of university administration in fostering intellectual security at Al-Jouf University. With a sample of 274 faculty members and leaders, the study found no statistically significant differences in perceptions based on job title, gender, or academic qualification. It emphasised the importance of student awareness initiatives.

3. Theoretical Framework

Intellectual security is considered a cornerstone of societal safety and a critical component of national security. It shapes individual thought, beliefs, aspirations, and social behaviour (Al-Fadala, 2020). At its core, intellectual security involves the protection of minds from harmful ideologies and the promotion of critical, ethical thinking. It helps individuals distinguish between what is beneficial and what is harmful to themselves and their communities (Al-Hafiti, 2022).

It also entails protection against extremist ideologies, religious intolerance, and social deviance. A deviation from collective societal values and norms is seen as a breach of intellectual and societal security (Al-Saleh, 2020).

Intellectual security is the foundation for societal cohesion. It preserves national identity, protects minds from external influence, and reinforces unity against extremism and ideological threats. By anchoring communities in shared values, it ensures societal resilience and prevents the fragmentation of cultural and national identity (Al-Fawwaz, 2021).

Universities are vital institutions for intellectual growth. Faculty members are central in shaping students' worldviews, guiding them to differentiate between acceptable and harmful beliefs (Kazan, 2021). They play a key role in nurturing critical thinking, moral development, and balanced understanding. This not only protects students from ideological deviation but also prepares them to be informed, responsible citizens (Al-Fifi, 2020).

4. Methodology

This study adopts a **descriptive research approach**, which is appropriate for examining and documenting the current status of intellectual security awareness among university students. This method allows for detailed data collection and analysis of students' perceptions and suggestions.

4.1. Population and Sample

The study population includes all students at University of South Africa. A simple random sample of 60 male and female students was selected for the academic year 2023/2024.

Table 1. Distribution of the Study Sample According to Personal Variables

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Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	29	48%
	Female	31	52%
	Total	60	100%
Age	20–30 years	10	17%
	31–40 years	29	48%
	41–50 years	10	17%
	51 years and above	11	18%
	Total	60	100%
Marital Status	Single	16	27%
	Married	28	47%
	Divorced	10	17%
	Widowed	6	10%
	Total	60	100%
Family Size	Less than 4 members	11	18%
	5–8 members	37	62%
	9–12 members	8	13%
	More than 12 members	4	7%
	Total	60	100%

It is evident from Table 1 that 48% of the study sample were male students, while 52% were female. The highest percentage of participants by age group was 48%, falling within the 31–40 years category. The lowest percentage was 17%, observed among participants aged 20–30 years. Regarding family size, the largest proportion of respondents (62%) belonged to families with 5–8 members, whereas only 7% came from families with fewer than 4 members.

4.2. Tool

To achieve the objectives of the current study, a structured questionnaire was developed. It consisted of two main sections:

- The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, marital status, and family size.

- The second section comprised 10 items, distributed across two axes:

Axis 1: The Role of University of South Africa in Developing Intellectual Awareness (5 items)

This axis explored students' perceptions regarding the university's efforts, including:

1. Organising scientific seminars to counter deviant ideologies
2. Promoting moderation through student activities
3. Raising awareness of tolerance and coexistence
4. Implementing awareness programmes addressing the risks of cultural invasion
5. Encouraging values of dialogue and cooperation among students

Axis 2: Proposals to Enhance South Africa University's Role in Intellectual Awareness (5 items)

This axis captured student suggestions, including:

1. Establishing student forums on intellectual security
2. Integrating intellectual security into academic courses
3. Using teaching strategies that support dialogue and discussion
4. Developing student activities aligned with students' intellectual needs
5. Promoting openness to and discussion of diverse ideas

To ensure the validity of the study tool, the initial version of the questionnaire was reviewed by the research supervisor, who provided feedback on the wording and relevance of each item. Necessary modifications were made, and the tool was finalised accordingly. To verify the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal consistency for both axes of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficients obtained were deemed appropriate and acceptable for the purposes of this study. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Internal consistency reliability coefficient of the study instrument

Instrument Internal Consistency

Entire Tool 0.87

It is clear from Table 2 that the overall internal consistency coefficient of the instrument reached 0.87, which is considered acceptable and appropriate for the purposes of this study. The questionnaire responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree. Each response was assigned a numerical weight (from 5 to 1). The range of the scale was calculated by subtracting the lowest value (1) from the highest value (5), resulting in a range of 4. Based on this range, the levels of response were categorised as follows: Low agreement: 1.00 – 2.33, Moderate agreement: 2.34 – 3.67, High agreement: 3.68 – 5.00.

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5. Results

5.1. Findings Related to the First Research Question: What is the role of University of South African in the development of intellectual awareness from the perspective of its students?

To answer this question, the arithmetic means and standard deviations of student responses were calculated to assess the perceived role of University of South African promoting intellectual awareness.

Table 3. Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Items Measuring the Role of University of South African Developing Intellectual Awareness (from Students' Perspectives)

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Students are made aware of the values of tolerance toward others.	4.20	0.83	High
The university organises awareness programmes to discuss the risks of cultural invasion.	4.19	0.91	High
Universities organise scientific seminars to refute deviant ideas.	3.63	1.41	Moderate
The university promotes the values of dialogue and cooperation among students.	3.47	1.32	Moderate
The university emphasises moderation through student activities.	3.34	1.11	Moderate
Overall Score	3.68	0.94	High

It appears from Table 3 that the overall arithmetic mean for the role of University of South African developing intellectual awareness from the perspective of its students is 3.68, indicating a high level of agreement. The individual item means ranged between 3.34 and 4.20. Two statements

received high approval ratings, the highest being: *"Students are made aware of the values of tolerance toward others"*, with a mean score of 4.20,

followed by *"The university organises awareness programmes to discuss the risks of cultural invasion"*, with a mean of 4.19.

The remaining items were rated at a moderate level, with mean scores between 3.34 and 3.63. Among these, the highest was: *"Universities organise scientific seminars to refute deviant ideas"* (3.63), while the lowest was: *"The university emphasises moderation through student activities"* (3.34).

5.2. Results for the Second Research Question: What are the proposed actions to enhance the role of University of South Africa in developing intellectual awareness from the perspective of its students?

To address this question, the arithmetic means and standard deviations of students' responses were calculated for the proposed measures aimed at activating the university's role in intellectual awareness development.

Table 4. Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Proposals to Enhance South Africa university's Role in Developing Intellectual Awareness (from Students' Perspectives)

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Developing student activities in line with students' intellectual needs	4.32	0.86	High
Establishing student forums to raise awareness of intellectual security	4.23	1.16	High
Openness to others' ideas and discussing them	3.43	1.25	Moderate
Using teaching strategies that support dialogue and discussion	3.40	1.20	Moderate
Linking academic courses with intellectual security	3.12	1.14	Moderate
Overall Score	3.70	0.97	High

It appears from Table 4 that the overall arithmetic mean of the items related to proposals for enhancing the role of University of South Africa in developing intellectual awareness—according to students' perspectives—was 3.70, indicating a high level of agreement. The mean scores for individual items ranged from 3.12 to 4.32.

Two items received high approval ratings:

- *“Developing student activities in accordance with the intellectual needs of students”* scored the highest with a mean of 4.32.
- *“Establishing student forums to raise awareness of intellectual security”* followed with a mean of 4.23.

The remaining three items received moderate approval ratings, with mean scores ranging from 3.12 to 3.43. The highest among these was:

- *“Openness to others’ ideas and discussion”* with a mean of 3.43, while the lowest was:
- *“Linking academic courses with intellectual security”* at 3.12.

5.3. Hypothesis result: There are no statistically significant differences in students’ perceptions of South africa university’s role in developing intellectual awareness attributable to the gender variable.

To test this hypothesis, the researcher used one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of One-Way ANOVA Examining Differences in Perceptions of South Africa University’s Role in Developing Intellectual Awareness Based on Gender

Variable	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Significance Level (p-value)	
Gender	Between Groups	0.372	0.186	1.703	0.18	
	Within Groups	89.4	0.329			
	Total	88.81				

As shown in Table 5, the significance value ($p = 0.180$) exceeds the alpha level ($\alpha = 0.05$), indicating that the result is not statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is

accepted, confirming that no statistically significant differences exist in students' perceptions of South Africa University's role in developing intellectual awareness based on gender.

6. Discussion

The findings revealed that the overall mean for the perceived role of University of South African fostering intellectual awareness was high. Specifically, two items received the highest agreement ratings, notably:

- *“Students are made aware of the values of tolerance toward others”,* and
- *“The university organises awareness programmes to discuss the risks of cultural invasion.”*

Other items scored at a moderate level, with the highest among them being:

- *“Universities organise scientific seminars to refute deviant ideas”,*
while the lowest was:
- *“The university emphasises moderation through student activities.”*

These findings suggest that the university actively contributes to enhancing students' intellectual awareness through a variety of targeted activities and initiatives. This result aligns with the findings of Al-Fawwaz (2021), whose study reported that Saudi universities demonstrated a moderate role in promoting intellectual security and related national values.

Regarding the proposals to enhance the university's role, the overall responses reflected a moderate to high level of agreement, with the strongest support for:

- *“Developing student activities tailored to their intellectual needs,”* and

- *“Establishing student forums to raise awareness of intellectual security.”*

The lowest-rated suggestion was:

- *“Linking academic courses directly to intellectual security.”*

This suggests a clear desire among students for practical and interactive strategies to promote intellectual security. These findings resonate with the recommendations of Al-Saleh (2020), who emphasised the need to integrate intellectual development into student engagement and curriculum strategies.

Moreover, the study confirmed that no statistically significant gender-based differences were found regarding perceptions of the university’s role. This can be attributed to the university’s equitable approach, offering the same intellectual security programmes and activities to both male and female students. This result is consistent with prior findings from Al-Fawwaz (2021), Kazan (2021), and Al-Saleh (2020), which also reported no significant gender-based variation in the development of intellectual awareness.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study underscores the vital role that universities play in promoting intellectual security among students. The findings demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding intellectual security, highlighting the effectiveness of educational institutions in fostering critical thinking, tolerance, and resistance to deviant ideologies.

Despite the limited sample size and challenges in collecting in-depth responses, the study offers valuable insights.

Key recommendations include:

- Developing student activities aligned with intellectual needs
- Establishing student-led forums to promote awareness of intellectual security
- Encouraging openness to diverse viewpoints and fostering respectful dialogue
- Incorporating teaching strategies that prioritise discussion and critical thinking
- Integrating intellectual security themes into academic curricula

The study also recommends conducting future research to explore this topic across different universities and demographic groups, and to evaluate long-term outcomes of intellectual security initiatives in higher education.

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