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PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AS CORRELATE OF STUDENTS' ADJUSTMENT TO SCHOOLS IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

In this study, the researchers investigated parent-child relationship as correlate of students' adjustment to secondary schools in Imo State. Two research questions were posed and two corresponding hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted the correlational research design involving simple linear method. The population of the study was 94,963 students from 296 public senior secondary schools in Imo State. Taro Yamane formula was used to select 398 students from 18 sampled schools within the study using multistage sampling procedure. Two rating scales were used to elicit information from the respondents and they include Parent Child Relationship Scale (PCRS) and Students' Adjustment Scale (SAS) which contained 20 items and 15 items respectively. The scales were weighted using the 4 point Likert scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent. The instruments were validated by three research specialists in the Faculty of Education, Imo State University, Owerri. Reliability coefficients of 0.82 for PCRS and 0.79 for SAS were obtained using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Upon administration and collection of the filled copies of the instruments, the research questions were answered using Pearson "r" statistics while the hypotheses were tested using t-test of the significance of Pearson "r". The result found that parental involvement and parental-child communication has high and positive significant relationship with students' social adjustment (e.g., peer relationships, social skills) in school. It was also found that children with authoritative parenting styles (high warmth, high expectations) exhibit fewer behavioral problems and better psychological adjustment in schools in Imo State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that parents should encourage open communication, actively listening to children's concerns. Also, the parents should practice authoritative parenting in order to inculcate their children with warmth, high expectations and consistent discipline to foster positive adjustment in schools.

Keywords: Communication, Parent-child relationship, Parenting styles, Psychological adjustment and Social adjustment.

Introduction

Education is a vital instrument for societal development, and secondary education plays a crucial role in shaping students' future prospects. In Nigeria, secondary education is a critical stage where students develop essential skills, knowledge, and values that prepare them for adulthood. Furthermore, secondary education does not only provide knowledge and skill to the learner but also inculcate values, training of instincts, fostering right attitude and habits to him. It is believed that education is an avenue in which cultural heritage and values are transmitted to from generation to generation. This assertion is congruent with the assertion of the sociologists who opined that education is an instrument of cultural change that begins in the family. This means that the education of a child begins at home and the educational training of child is the most basic responsibility of the parents.

Parenting involves more than hard work, effort and self-discipline. An added benefit is the ability to have fun with each other, to enjoy being part of a happy family. Hence, family togetherness breeds peace and understanding. According to Baumrind (2007), effective parenting strikes a balance between setting clear boundaries and showing warmth. Parents should establish guidelines while demonstrating affection, fostering a nurturing environment. The parent-child relationship is a multifaceted and enduring connection, marked by emotional connection, mutual interaction, and lasting influence. This dynamic bond encompasses several key aspects, including emotional nurturing, open communication, guidance, and active involvement, all of which significantly impact a child's overall development, spanning physical, emotional, social, and cognitive growth. A nurturing parent-child bond is founded on reciprocal trust, respect, and empathy, creating a stable foundation for the child's sense of security, belonging, and self- discovery. This relationship thrives on parents' attentive responsiveness, engaged listening, consistent guidance, and transparent communication, which collectively shape the child's self- worth, resilience, and capacity to forge positive connections with others.

Parents' involvement, support, and communication with their children profoundly impact students' academic performance, self-esteem, and social skills. A supportive parent-child relationship fosters emotional security and stability, positive self-concept and confidence, effective communication, problem-solving skills, healthy coping mechanisms and stress management. Conversely, a dysfunctional parent-child relationship can lead to low self-esteem and anxiety, poor academic performance and motivation, social withdrawal and isolation, and increased risk of mental health issues. Parent-child relationship is dependent on the parenting styles adopted in the family. According to Oparaugo, Chukwuemeka, Ufearo and

Ezechinyerem (2023), parenting styles include authoritarian, democratic, permissive, laissez- faire, authoritative among others. Authoritarian parents are highly demanding and directive, with strict rules and punishments, but low warmth and nurturing (e.g., "Because I said so"). In contrast, democratic parents balance structure and guidance with warmth, encouragement, and open communication, fostering autonomy and decision-making skills (e.g., "Let's discuss this"). Permissive parents prioritize warmth and freedom, with minimal expectations and boundaries, often resulting in difficulties with self-regulation and responsibility (e.g., "Do what makes you happy"). However, the parenting styles adopted by the parents as well as parent-child relationship influence how the learner can adjust especially within the school environment.

Students' adjustment refers to the process by which students adapt and cope with the academic, social, and emotional demands of their educational environment. Effective adjustment involves developing positive relationships with peers and teachers, managing stress and emotions, and achieving academic success. According to Omoteso, Oyetoro and Banjoko (2020), it encompasses various dimensions, including social adjustment (forming friendships, participating in extracurricular activities), academic adjustment (meeting academic expectations, developing study habits), emotional adjustment (managing anxiety, self-esteem), and behavioral adjustment (following rules, exhibiting self-discipline). Successful adjustment is critical for students' overall well-being, motivation, and achievement, as it enables them to navigate school challenges, build resilience, and develop essential life skills, ultimately influencing their long-term educational and career outcomes. For this study, the two types of adjustment taken into considerations are the social and psychological adjustment.

Social adjustment is an effort made by a person to cope with standards, values and needs of a society in order to be accepted. Psychologists use the term adjustment of varying conditions of social and interpersonal relation in the society. Social adjustment is the achievement of balance in social relationships usually aided by the appropriate application of social skills in school setting. According to Hartup and Rubin (2013), adjustment process is a crucial process and differs from individual to individual, family to family and culture to culture. Social growth is the most important aspect of one's development and it is acquired through the relationship with others especially with the parents, peers and the teachers, and it is the assessing criterion of social growth related to the person's adjustment with him/herself and others.

The term psychological adjustment refers to the diverse aspects of psychological well-being. According to Lamb (2017), psychological adjustment is a broad umbrella term referring to personal characteristics which include the absence of psychological or psychiatric symptoms and the absence of behavioural problems that allow children, adolescents, and adults to function well in their everyday life. Lamb continued that well psychologically adjusted students have sufficient social skills to get along with others at school, in social settings, and at work. These acquisitions of sufficient skills enable these students to comply with rules and authority of the school. It also helps them to function well at school and in the workplace as well to establish and maintain meaningful intimate relationships with their parents and other people encountered in their various environments. According to Bisson and Sakhuja (2016), a well psychological adjusted student has the understanding of their personal strengths and weaknesses and a tendency to play up strengths while limiting the appearance of weaknesses.

Parent-child relationship which involves parenting styles, parents' involvement and their interaction or communication with their children cannot be overemphasized. Good parent-child relationship is a protective factor for elementary students' academic pressure, which can be interpreted as follows: a good parent-child relationship is conducive to the establishment of active parent-child attachment and promotes parent-child communication and family support (Shreedha, 2020). The more proactive the parents are to communicate with their children, the more helpful it is to reduce the children's academic pressure (Zhang & Deng, 2022). A supportive parent-child relationship from the family can significantly alleviate the negative effects of stress on emotional behavior adaptation (Wang, Xiong & Liu, 2018). Similarly, Marcos (2015) demanded from parents a caring process which ensures the children's protection from avoidable illness, harms, accident, abuse (sexual harassment, drunkenness, and unwanted pregnancy). It further demands a degree of parental control over the child, and an adequate knowledge of physical, emotional and social needs necessary for behavioral and social adjustment of adolescents to achieve societal values and responsibilities. With these demands, Nigerian parents need to address their parent-child relationship and their new orientation in pursuance of money, which has become the ultimate in many families, and to return to their children the love, care, attention and unity that exist before in the family. To the best of researchers' knowledge, there seems to be no documented empirical evidence on the parents- child-relationship as determinant of social and psychological adjustment of secondary school students in Imo State, Nigeria. This creates a researchable gap in knowledge, the gap which this study intends to fill by investigating parent-child relationship as correlate of students' adjustment to secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria.

Statement of problem

There is an apparent situation on ground that many students have been hindered from attaining the level in social and psychological adjustments due to some negative factors. These factors could be emanating from home which includes; lack of cordial parent-child relationship in areas such as poor parental involvement, lack of cordial communication among others. When certain negative factors are engraved in students' life from home, it becomes obvious that the student will be demoralized and eventually driven towards improper social and psychological adjustments. Consequently, the ways students adjust in the early adolescence stage can be dangerous in the quality of life the individual lives. Such adjustments may lead such students to life of violence, bullying, cultism, teenage pregnancies, examination malpractice, misuse of drugs and alcohol both in and outside school environment which may eventually affect their social and psychological adjustment. This adjustment may equally have negative effect on the family and the entire nation in the long run. Unfortunately, it appears little attention has been paid on how parent-child relationship can predict social and psychological adjustment of students in Imo State. Therefore, this study determined whether parent-child relationship influences social and psychological adjustments among students in Imo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked to guide the study;

1. What is the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and social adjustment in secondary schools in Imo State?
2. What is the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and psychological adjustment in secondary schools in Imo State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance;

Ho1: The coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and social adjustment in secondary schools in Imo State is not significant.

Ho2: The coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and psychological adjustment in secondary schools in Imo State is not significant.

Methods

The study adopted the correlational research design involving simple linear method. The rationale behind the choice of this design is that it is used to establish

the relationship between or among variables. Correlation design according to Onah (2023) examines the degree, patterns and strength of relationship between two or more variables being studied rather than explore causal relationship between them. Thus, the correlation design provides clues for the proper understanding of patterns of relationships between or among variables (parent-child relationship, social and psychological adjustments) in this study. The population of the study was 94,963 students from 296 public senior secondary schools in Imo State. A sample of 398 students from 18 sampled schools was selected from the entire population through Taro Yamane formula. From each of the three senatorial districts in Imo State, a sample of six schools was selected using simple random sampling technique. 66 respondents were selected from two senatorial districts namely; Okigwe and Orlu, and 68 respondents were purposively selected from Owerri senatorial district being the largest. Sample was drawn using multistage sampling technique because the technique was made up of purposive and simple random sampling. Two rating scales were used to elicit information from the respondents and they include Parent Child Relationship Scale (PCRS) and Students' Adjustment Scale (SAS) which contained 15 items and 20 items respectively. The scales were weighted using the 4 point Likert scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent. The instruments were validated by three research specialists in the Faculty of Education, Imo State University, Owerri. Reliability coefficients of 0.82 for PCRS and 0.79 for SAS were obtained using Cronbach alpha statistics. Upon administration and collection of the filled copies of the instruments, the research questions were answered using Pearson "r" statistics while the hypotheses were tested using t-test of the significance of Pearson "r".

Result

Research Question One: What is the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and social adjustment in secondary schools?

Table 1: Summaries of Pearson "r" statistics used to explain the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship (X) and social adjustment (Y) in secondary schools

V	n	∑	r	MR	DR	Remarks
X	398	5856				**High**
			0.67	High	Positive	**Positive**
Y	398	8675				**Relationship**

Size (n), Summation (∑), Pearson (r), Magnitude of Relationship (MR), Direction of Relationship (DR) and Remarks

Data in Table 1 presents the summaries of Pearson "r" statistics used to explain the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and social adjustment in secondary schools. A close look at the Table shows that the calculated coefficient of correlation is 0.67, which indicates that the magnitude of the relationship is high while the direction is positive. The positive sign shows that an increase in one variable could moderately lead to some measures of increase in the other variable. The answer to the above question is that there is a high and positive coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and social adjustment in public senior secondary schools in Imo State.

Hypothesis One

Ho1: The coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and social adjustment in secondary schools is not significant.

Table 2: Summaries of t-test of significance of Pearson "r" statistics used to test the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and social adjustment in secondary schools

V	n	∑	r	α	df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Decision
X	398	5856						
			0.67	0.05	396	**10.175**	**1.96**	**Reject Ho1**
Y	398	8675						

Sample Size (n), Summation (∑), Pearson (r), Alpha Level (α), Degree of Freedom (df) and t-test of Significance of Pearson 'r" statistics between two Variables

Table 2 shows the result for the test of coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and social adjustment in secondary schools. The result gave the degree of freedom as 396 and the t-calculated value as 10.175 and the t-tabulated value as 1.96. As the t-calculated value is greater than the t-tabulated value, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis; therefore infer that the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and social adjustment is significant in public senior secondary schools in Imo State.

Research Question Two: What is the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and psychological adjustment in secondary schools?

Table 3: Summaries of Pearson "r" statistics used to explain the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship (X) and psychological adjustment (Y) in secondary schools

V	n	∑	r	MR	DR	Remarks
X	398	6459				**High**
			0.65	Moderate	Positive	**Positive**
Y	398	8675				**Relationship**

Size (n), Summation (∑), Pearson "r", Magnitude of Relationship (MR), Direction of Relationship (DR) and Remarks

Table 3 presents the Pearson "r" statistics value indicating the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and psychological adjustment in secondary schools. A close look at the Table shows that the calculated coefficient of correlation is 0.65, which indicates that the magnitude of the relationship is high while the direction is positive. The positive sign shows that an increase in one variable could moderate lead to some measures of increase in the other variable. The answer to the above question is: there is a high and positive coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and psychological adjustment in public senior secondary schools in Imo State.

Hypothesis Two

Ho2: The coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and psychological adjustment in secondary schools is not significant.

Table 4: Summaries of t-test of significance of Pearson "r" statistics used to test the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and psychological adjustment in secondary schools

V	n	∑	r	α	df	tcal	ttab	Decision
X	398	6459						
			0.65	0.05	396	**11.381**	**1.96**	**Reject Ho2**
Y	398	8675						

Sample Size (n), Summation (∑), Pearson (r), Alpha Level (α), Degree of Freedom (df) and t-test of Significance of Pearson "r" between two Variables

Table 4 shows the result for the t-test of significance of Pearson "r" statistics used to test the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and psychological adjustment in secondary schools. The result gave the degree of freedom as 396 and the t-calculated value as 11.381 and the t-tabulated value as 1.96. As the t-calculated value is greater than the t-tabulated value, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis; therefore infer that the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and psychological adjustment is significant in public senior secondary schools in Imo State.

Discussion of the Findings

The result revealed that there is a high and positive coefficient of correlation between parent- child relationship and social adjustment in public senior secondary schools in Imo State. The high and positive coefficient of correlation is a proof that students with supportive, warm, and nurturing relationships with their parents tend to exhibit better social skills, peer relationships, and emotional regulation. The result further established that the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and social adjustment is significant in public senior secondary schools in Imo State. In corroborating the results, Adesokan, Saadu, Sadiq and Olarewaju (2022) found that there was significant relationship between parent-child-relationship and social adjustment. Similarly, Nwankwo and Oparaugo (2023) found that parent-child relationship is a significant predictor of in-school adolescents' psychosocial adjustment. The result strengthened the fact that the quality of the parent-child relationship significantly influences social adjustment among secondary school students, with supportive and nurturing relationships fostering healthy peer relationships, emotional regulation, and social skills, while dysfunctional relationships may lead to social withdrawal, aggression, or difficulties forming and maintaining friendships in schools.

The result also revealed that there is a high and positive coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and psychological adjustment in public senior secondary schools in Imo State. The high and positive coefficient of correlation is a proof that a positive and supportive parent-child relationship significantly influences psychological adjustment among secondary school students, fostering enhanced self-esteem, emotional resilience, and mental well-being, whereas dysfunctional relationships may contribute to anxiety, depression, and low self-confidence. The result further established that the coefficient of correlation between parent-child relationship and psychological adjustment is significant in public senior secondary schools in Imo State. In line with the results of the study, Oparaugo, Chukwuemeka, Ufearo and Ezechinyerem (2023) found that authoritarian parenting style influences students' psychological adjustment in

schools. Also, Shahamat, Sabeti and Rezvani (2016), assert that differences in psychological adjustment level of secondary school students could have something to do with their child's relationship with their parents. That means, according to Shahamat, Sabeti and Rezvani psychological adjustment of secondary school adolescents reflect to the parent-child relationship.

Conclusion

It was concluded that parent-child relationship (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive relationships) highly correlate with social and psychological adjustment of students in public senior secondary schools in Imo State. Therefore, this study provided information for families, government agencies, school administrators regarding the education of the parents on the importance of cordial parent-child relationship with their secondary school children. This will go a long way in enhancing the secondary school students' social and psychological adjustments in the school, home and society at large.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers made the following recommendations;

1. Parents should encourage open communication, actively listening to children's concerns.

Also, the parents should practice authoritative parenting in order to inculcate their children with warmth, high expectations and consistent discipline to foster positive social adjustment in schools.

2. Parents should endeavour to be on their guards on the parent-child relationship they establish with their children. They should by all means try to instill values in their children which will aid their psychological adjustment rather than diminish them.

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