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PARENTAL CONTROL ORIENTATION AS A PREDICTOR OF ADOLESCENTS' SOCIAL SKILLS IN NSUKKA EDUCATION ZONE OF ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between parental control orientation and social skills of adolescents in Nsukka Education zone of Enugu state, Nigeria. The design of the study was a correlation survey. The population of the study comprised 4,574 in-school adolescents in Nsukka Education zone. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the selection of 567 respondents. Two instruments were used for data collection: Parental Control Orientation Scale (PCOS) and Adolescents' Social Skills Questionnaire (ASSQ). The instruments were face validated by three experts. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, while the hypothesis was tested using regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that; there is a positive relationship between parental control orientation and adolescents' social skills. Based on the findings, it was recommended that: parents should be enlightened on the need to maintain effective control measures that could improve and sustain the in-school adolescents' social skills; within and outside the school environment. Intervention programmes should be organized for the in-school adolescents, on how to acquire good social skills that will boost their relationship with others.

Keywords: Parental Control Orientation, Adolescents, and Social Skills.

Introduction

The way parents exert control over their young ones, seems to be associated with the social skills of in-school adolescents in Nsukka education zone of Enugu state, Nigeria. Adolescents experience individual changes and growth at different rates;

with some moving through the adolescent phase quicker and more smoothly than others. Some adolescents have supportive families, others face this daunting period of their lives alone (Siegel, 2013). As adolescents continue their journey of self-discovery, adolescents continually have to adjust to new experiences as well as other changes happening to the adolescents biologically and socially (Marcia, in Berzonsky, 2011). This could be both stressful and anxiety provoking; leading to a decreased tolerance for change, difficulty in modulating behaviours, which are sometimes displayed by inappropriate mood swings and angry outburst (Geddard & Geddard, 2006). This situation would likely not promote social skills such as communication skills, leadership skills, conflict resolution skills, anger and stress management skills.

Social skills are skills facilitating interaction and communication with others; social skills are learned behaviours that allow people to achieve social reinforcement; the skills can be acquired through operant conditioning, modeling, coaching and social cognitive techniques; it is matter of dealing with the people around one's environs (O'Donoline, 2003). With a full repertoire of social skills, students are likely to have the ability to make social choices that will strengthen their interpersonal relationships and facilitate success in school. Some consequences of good social skills include: positive and safe school environment, child resiliency in the face of future crises or other stressful life events; which help to guide, improve, and sustain social relationships among adolescents, parents, teachers, and peers. Students with poor social skills experience difficulty in interpersonal relationship with parents, teachers, and peers; these students evoke high negative response from others that lead to high levels of peer rejection, show signs of depression, aggression, anxiety, and demonstrate poor academic performance as an indirect consequence (National Association of School Psychologists NASP, 2002). In this study, social skills are defined as those skills that help people to socialize, adjust and adapt effectively in their environment. Such skills are: communication skills, leadership skills, problem solving skills, conflict resolution skills, anger and stress management skills. Adolescents with few opportunities to socialize with others often struggle with social skills. This can often create a downward spiral for adolescents with conditions like depression. Due to their depression, these adolescents avoid opportunities to socialize, which impairs adolescents' social skills and make socialization even more unattractive to the adolescents (Romanczyk, White, 2005).

Adolescent students in Nsukka education zone show deficit or lack of good social skills in the course of their interactions with others. Evidence of this is seen in the way and manner most in-school adolescents talk and respond to issues, write, solve problems, resolve conflict, manage anger and stress. This may be attributed to some

factors or variables such as adolescents' lack of knowledge, negative peer group influence, drug or substance abuse, social media influence, and inferiority complex. Studies have been carried out on some of these factors like: adolescents' lack of knowledge (Garima, 2015), negative peer group influence (Gina et.al. 2012), and drug or substance abuse (Sigrid, Helve, & Merik, 2014), to investigate if they contribute to lack of social skills. In spite of these studies, in-school adolescents in Nsukka education zone still show lack of good social skills in their relationship with others. This lack of social skills seems to pose threat or challenges during interpersonal relationships. The researchers do not know if this lack of good social skills is associated with the kind of control measures adopted by parents. In an attempt to regulate adolescents' behaviours and provide them with appropriate guidelines for socialization, parents may resort to using certain control measures, known as parental control orientation.

Parental control orientation is defined as the claims parents make on their children to become integrated into the family as a whole; by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys (Baumrid, 2010). It has to do with parental rearing ideology, perception, practices and values as regards adolescents' training and upbringing. Parental control orientation could be internal or external. Parents with a strong internal control orientation believe that, events in their lives derive primarily from their own actions; while parents with external control orientation tend to attribute or blame external factors for their actions (Eileen & Maria, 2015). Parental control orientation could be demonstrated through a number of ways. The most common ones are: monitoring, disciplinary practices (consistent or inconsistent discipline), nurturing such as parental warmth and support, inductive reasoning, parent-child communication, and corporal punishment. Researchers (Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farell & Dintchef, 2006) defined parental monitoring as parental behaviours that regulate and provide awareness of their offspring's whereabouts, conduct and companions. During adolescence, parents' knowledge of their children's whereabouts and friends becomes important for reducing and preventing problem behaviour and poor social skills; since peers become an important socializing agent. The influence of parental monitoring differs from childhood to adolescence; since parents rely on their adolescents to inform the parents about their location and activities, when away from home. Therefore, effective parental monitoring relies upon effective parent-child communication.

Parent-child communication is an essential aspect of parenting. It could be defined as the act of having conversations between parents and their children; about different topics, such as drugs and alcohol, sex and/ or birth control, and personal problems or

concerns. High quality parent-adolescent communication is important because it is associated with positive adolescent outcomes (Steinberg, 2001). Therefore, establishing an environment that promotes effective parent-child communication is important because it can serve as a protective factor against adolescents' problem behaviour. Apart from parent-child communication, social learning theory asserts that a major influence on adolescents' behaviour is parents' use of consistent or inconsistent discipline. This theory also propose that if discipline is not applied consistently, and adolescents perceive that there is a chance that parental punishment can be eluded, they may be more likely to engage in transgressive behaviour (Bandura, 2001).

Consistent discipline is an important aspect of parenting. It is the act of maintaining a continual and regular practice of training adolescents, so as to ensure adolescents' compliance and conformity to the expected behavioural pattern. Whereas, inconsistent discipline has been defined as the lack of follow-through in maintaining and adhering to rules and standards of conduct for children's behaviours (Dwairy, 2008). Through consistent use of reward and punishment, parents teach adolescents what behaviours are considered acceptable versus unacceptable. This situation would likely create room for understanding and effective parenting practices; such as warmth and support.

Parental warmth and support can facilitate positive adolescent adjustment. Warmth is the degree to which the adolescent is loved and accepted usually measured by items as how often the mother or father listened carefully to their children's point of view and helped the children with something important (Steinberg, 2001). Parental support is seen as the presence of close, caring, and accepting relationship between an adolescent and their caregiver; higher levels of perceived parental support are associated with lower levels of adolescents' delinquency, aggression, depressive symptoms, and other adjustment problems (Skopp, McDonald, Jouriles, & Rosenfield, 2007). Whereas, depressive symptoms may occur in adolescents whose parents do not practice inductive reasoning.

Inductive reasoning is a form of parenting whereby parents clarify expectations, identify problems and possible consequences, supply explanations, and provide rationales by eliciting ideas from adolescents; rather than disciplining them in a coercive manner (Baumrind, in Grusec & Hasting, 2015). Inductive reasoning is an essential parenting practice that provides adolescents with important knowledge and fosters their ability to evaluate situations the adolescents may experience in life; with this approach, the adolescents are more likely to internalize the reasons for rules within and outside the home. This process allows the adolescents to learn from

the rules set by the parents and why different rules are set; so as to escape corporal punishment (Critchley & Sanson, 2006). Corporal punishment could be seen as the act of inflicting pains or using coercion to control an individual's behaviour. Researchers (Simons, Lin, Gordon, & Conger, 2000), have found that families living in poverty have increased use of corporal punishment, in which parents utilize physical punishment such as hitting with a belt, pushing or grabbing, when administering discipline. However, the consequences of corporal punishment may depend on how often parents exhibit effective parenting, the severity of the punishment, and the community's view on corporal punishment. Consequently, parental control orientation seems to be more influential in the lives of adolescents.

Adolescents are individuals preceding adulthood, or who have reached puberty but are not yet adults. This puberty occurs during adolescence – a period of maturation between childhood and adulthood; the term adolescence denotes the period from the beginning of puberty to maturity; it usually starts at about age 14 in males and age 12 in females; the transition to adult varies among cultures but it is generally defined as the time when individuals begin to function independently of their parents (Frank & Willams, 2009). Operationally, adolescents are people between the ages of 12 to 18 years, who are yet to attain adulthood. Thus, adolescence as a period upholds the adolescents systematically and it occurs in orderly sequential manner. When this order is violated, the in-school adolescents may experience depression, crisis in the home and may exhibit poor social skills while interacting with others (Pollack & Shuster, 2000). In the light of this background, it is plausible to assume that the control measures parents adopt or apply in bringing up their adolescents, could reflect the unique ways adolescents talk, write, respond to issues, resolve conflict, solve problems, manage anger and stress.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether parental control orientation predicts in-school adolescents' social skills.

Research question

The study was guided by this research question:

What is the relationship between parental control orientation and in-school adolescents' social skills?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{O1}: there will be no significant relationship between parental control orientation and in-school adolescents' social skills.

Method

The design of the study was a correlation survey research design. This design was fit for this study since none of the variables under investigation was controlled or manipulated. The study was carried out in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. Nsukka Education Zone is in Enugu North Senatorial district of Enugu State. It is made up of three local government areas namely: Nsukka, Igbo-Etiti and Uzo Uwani local government areas. The overall population numbered 4,574 SSII students in the 60 public schools that make up the education zone. Of this total, Nsukka had 3,061 SSII students, Igbo-Etiti had 992 SSII students, Uzo Uwani had 521 SSII students respectively (Post primary Schools Management Board Nsukka, 2014/2015). The data were suitable for the study because it was collected the same year the study was carried out. The reason for choosing SSII students was not just because the students are adolescents; but because these students are in the level of education capable of responding to the items of the instruments without bias.

The sample size for the study consisted 567 SSII students from Nsukka and Igbo Etiti education authorities. This number represents 14% of the total population drawn through proportionate stratified random sampling technique to ensure that at least three schools with the highest population were drawn from each of the education authorities.

Two (2) instruments were developed by the researchers and validated by three experts. The instruments are: Parental Control Orientation Scale (PCOS) and Adolescents' Social Skills Questionnaire (ASSQ). The (PCOS) sought information based on how frequent parents apply certain control measures. While the ASSQ sought information based on how frequent adolescents exhibit certain social skills. Each of the questionnaires consisted of 20 items developed by the researchers through the information derived from the literature review. The instruments were structured on a four-point rating scale of Always (4), sometimes (3), Rarely (2) and Never (1). Some of the items of the instruments are attached in the index. To determine the internal consistency of the items, the instruments were trial tested and the data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients. The reliability indices for the two instruments are; .96 for PCOS, and .92 for ASSQ respectively.

Data were analyzed using SPSS, and Pearson's product moment correlation co-efficient was used to answer the research question while the null hypothesis was tested using regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research question: What is the relationship between parental control orientation and adolescents' social skills?

Table 1_a: Mean scores, standard deviations, and correlation coefficient value (R) of parental control orientation and adolescents' social skills.

	N 567	X	SD	$\overline{R}$	R^2	% of R^2
Internal Parental control Orientation		**2.63**	**0.53**			
Affective understanding		2.59	0.49	0.20	0.04	4
Initiating interaction		2.38	0.68	0.22	0.05	5
Responding to Interaction		2.56	0.68	0.19	0.04	4
Perspective taking		2.69	0.66	0.19	0.04	4
Total relationship between Internal Parental control orientation and adolescents' social skills.		2.57	0.46	0.26	0.069	6.9

Data in table 1 shows that: internal control orientation predicts 4% of adolescents' affective understanding, 5% of initiating interaction, 4% of responding to interaction, 4% of perspective taking, and a total of 6.9 % of adolescents' social skills.

Table 1_b

	N 567	X	SD	$\overline{R}$	R^2	% of R^2
External Parental control Orientation		**2.96**	**0.39**			
Affective understanding		2.59	0.49	0.15	0.02	2
Initiating interaction		2.38	0.68	0.09	0.01	1
Responding to Interaction		2.56	0.68	0.19	0.04	4
Perspective taking		2.69	0.66	0.03	0.00	0
Total relationship between External Parental control orientation and adolescents' social skills.		2.57	0.46	0.15	0.022	2.2
Overall total relationship between parental control orientation and adolescents' social skills.		2.57	0.46	0.26	0.067	6.7

External control orientation predicts 2% of adolescents' affective understanding, 1% of initiating interaction, 4% of responding to interaction, 0% of perspective taking, and a total of 2.2% of adolescents' social skills as shown in table 1_b.

Therefore, parental control orientation predicts an overall total of 6.7% of adolescents' social skills.

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between parental control orientation and adolescents' social skills.

Table 2: Regression analysis of the relationship between parental control orientation and adolescents' social skills.

Model	Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	7.93	1	7.93	40.38	0.00
Residual	110.93		565	0.19	
Total	118.86		566		

Data in Table 2 indicate that the F-ratio is 40.38 and Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.00. This shows that sig. (2-tailed) is less than the level of significance (0.05). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between parental control orientation and adolescents' social skills as shown in the table 2 above.

Discussion

The findings of the study showed a positive relationship between parental control orientation and adolescents' social skills. This implies that, the poor social skills being exhibited by in-school adolescents in Nsukka education zone, is associated with both internal and external parental control orientation. This is in line with the findings of Crosswhite and Kerpelman (2008), who observed that adolescents engagement in deviant behaviours and exhibition of poor social skills, stem from parents' poor control measures. Moreover, Pelton, Gound, Foreland & Brody (2004), discovered that greater parental inconsistent discipline is related to more accepting delinquent-oriented attitudes in adolescents. In turn, more accepting delinquent-oriented attitudes would likely be associated with greater adolescents' participation in anti-social behaviours and less engagement in socially competent behaviours. Similarly, Durrant and Ensom (2012), pointed out that corporal punishment typically leads to more aggressive behaviour in adolescents and less long-term obedience. Other adverse effects such as depression, anxiety, anti-social behaviour, and increased risk of physical abuse, more often than not, are associated with the use of corporal punishment by parents. A study by Murray (2013), found that children across numerous cultures who were spanked, committed more crimes as adults than children who were not spanked; regardless of the quality of their relationship with their parents.

Lack of parental warmth and support is also linked with the poor social skills being exhibited by adolescents in Nsukka education zone. Parental warmth and support is the degree to which parents love and care for their adolescents. According to

Buchler (2006), adolescents who are closer to their parents are more likely to care about their parents' opinions regarding their friends. Coercive parenting, conflict, and unrealistic expectations can weaken this bond; and when this bond is weakened, there would be higher levels of adolescents' externalizing problem behaviours and poor social skills.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Since parental control orientation predicts in-school adolescents' social skills, it is credible to conclude that in-school adolescents who exhibit poor social skills are the ones whose parents' control measures are unbearable. Also, the control measures parents adopt, depends to a large extent on the quality of in-school adolescents' social skills. Therefore, parental control orientation and adolescents' social skills are directly related.

Based on the findings, it was recommended that government ought to sensitize the parents through seminars, workshops, conferences and media outreach, on the need to establish and maintain a cordial relationship with adolescents; through effective communication, warmth, and support. Schools should organize enlightenment programs to educate parents, teachers, students and communities on the implications of the different control measures parents adopt. Intervention programmes should be organized for the in-school adolescents on how to acquire good social skills that will boost their relationship with others.

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