

INFLUENCE OF PARENTING STYLES AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF UNDERGRADUATE WORKING ADULTS IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The transition of young adults from secondary school to higher institution is not usually easy task. Many undergraduate working adults are confronted with higher academic demands which in one way or the other are beyond their expectations mentally, emotionally, and socially. This has resulted in high level of depression, academic distress and frustration particularly Nigerian university undergraduates. This activated an investigation on the predictive influence of social adjustment and parenting style on psychological well-being of undergraduate working adults in three South-West universities. The correlational research design was adopted for this study. A sample of 218 was drawn from three universities. Data were collected with valid instruments having suitable reliability coefficient mean value of 0.7. The study revealed that social adjustment and parenting style jointly predicted undergraduate psychological well-being of undergraduate working students. The independent variables accounted for 33.9% variance in students' psychological well-being. Social adjustment was found to be the strongest predictor of students' psychological well-being, followed by authoritative, authoritarian and permissive style of parenting. It was inferred that an increase in social adjustment, authoritative parenting style and authoritarian parenting style will increase the tendency for students to display positive psychological well-being. Permissive parenting style will reduce the tendency for students to exhibit negative psychological well-being. It was recommended that parents should adopt authoritative and sometimes authoritarian styles, rather than permissive style of parenting. Parents are enjoyed to expose their children to the reality of life so that they might find it easy to cope outside their homes. Giving assignment of different sorts will also help build their personality and resistance to rigour.

Keywords: Psychological Well-being, Social Adjustment, Authoritative and Authoritarian Parenting Style.

Introduction

An individual's psychological state is crucial human learning. The transition of young adults from secondary school to higher institution is not always smooth. Many young adults are confronted with higher academic demands which, one way or the other, are beyond their expectations mentally, emotionally, and socially. This

has resulted in high level of depression, academic distress, and frustration commonly noticed among Nigerian University undergraduates. This state of unhealthy psychological well-being could have a multiplier effect on academic outcome, especially in the first two years of being in the university.

Evidence that suggests that university /students are vulnerable to mental health problems has generated increased public concern in many societies (Eisenberg, Spinrad, Fabes, Reiser, Cumberland, Shepard, Valiente, Losoya, Guthrie, Thompson, 2004). Previous studies suggest high rates of psychological morbidity, especially depression and anxiety, among university students all over the world (Elmore, Weinstein, & Ribeiro, 2002; Brown, & Iyengar, (2008)). Edwards and Holden (2001) found that, among college students seeking counselling services, anxiety and depression were ranked first and third as presenting problems, respectively; academic and work-related concerns were ranked second as the presenting problem. Brown and Iyengar, (2008) note that high levels of distress, concomitant with limited coping resources, render students less able to meet academic demands.

The demand of coping with the challenges of living outside their nuclear home, and friends, adjusting to the academic regimen, assuming responsibility for the tasks of daily living, and developing a new array of social relationships with peers and faculty members is worth discussing owing to the wide range of psychological trauma it creates. Visibility study has shown that the majority of the Nigerian university

undergraduates are adolescents (Edwards & Holden, 2001). Most of these adolescents are in their realization stage, whereby they are just getting to know that they are becoming adults. This stage is characterized by the adjusting to adulthood demand coupled with the campus demands, which can be quite tasking.

The Adolescent Health Survey (1992), which was conducted with a large number of schools in Melbourne, investigated both the physical and mental health of undergraduate students. The survey results revealed that adolescents are prone to high rates of depression, self-harm, risk-taking behaviour and substance abuse. These findings are supported by American research (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010) which found that as many as one in three adolescents suffer from emotional distress.

Parents' style of upbringing could have lasting effect on young adults. This is evident in research that claimed relationships that initiated during childhood affect how adolescents view their parents' availability and form relationships with others (Baumrind 2005; Chan & Chan, 2005; Santrock, 1990). A child's upbringing speaks when the child is left alone to face challenges, especially on campus. Parenting style has been conceptualized as the behaviors, attitudes, and values parents use to determine how

they interact with their children (Brown & Iyengar, 2008). As far back as 1979 Blatt revealed that psychoanalytic formulation suggests a vulnerability to depression, stemming from impaired relations with parents. To test these claims, researchers examined the incidence of parental loss among depressed people (Irfan, 2011). A different approach to examining the importance, in case of depression, of the quality of early parenting involves assessing the depressed individual's perception of their childhood experiences. Results in this area appear to be more consistent. In the same vein, Brown, and Iyengar, (2008) found that both unipolar and bipolar depressed patients reported unfavorable home conditions during their childhood.

Irfan (2011) reported that, out of various perceived parenting style, rejection and overprotection have been singled out to produce negative effects on a child's psychological well-being. High rejection and high protection hamper the clear perception and the knowing processes of children. Consequently, they tend to misperceive parents' behaviour. Such interactions produce confusion, conflicts and frustrations for the children. If they experienced this repeatedly during growth they tend to develop a number of misconceptions and a variety of

psychological problems, especially depression. This can be described as the cause of the high level of university drop rate and academic failure.

Social adjustment has been a major predictor of students' psychological well-being, which is common among undergraduates who have spent less than three years on campus. Students of higher level, such as 300 level and above are likely to display partial social adjustment also because, as they move from one academic level to another, they tend to meet a more difficult lecturer whose style could be very different from other ones previously experienced. Sometimes, it could be a lecturer who has given the students a very tough time at the previous session and now returning to take another compulsory course. Some students may find it very difficult to cope with such course. The lecturer may be the one with a very low voice and not all students are able to get what he/she is saying during lectures even when the public address system is used. Previous studies have shown that espouses such as anxiety and other range of symptoms, like irritability, impatience, loss of appetite, poor sleep, somatic and psychosomatic complaints, loss of self-esteem, depression, stress, pessimism, frustration, loneliness, homesickness, fear and alienation (Jang,

Reeve, & Deci, 2010), are common among undergraduates. This occurs mostly when examination is fast approaching.

Social adjustment can be defined as the ability of an individual to change in order to cope, fit in and to perform successfully in an environment where he finds himself/herself. Since an individual cannot exist in isolation, there is need to co-habit and co-exist with other human beings. Students cannot live in isolation while on campus. There is need to relate with others getting their colleagues, notes, asking questions, helping where they need help, help others and so on. Some researchers perceive social adjustment as the ability of a student to accommodate himself in order to satisfy his needs; at the same time, he strives to maintain happy relationship with others as he meets the demands of the environment (Eisenberg, Spinrad, Fabes, Reiser, Cumberland, Shepard, Valiente, Losoya, , Guthrie, Thompson, 2004: Fehintola, 2012). Doing this will lead to both physiological and psychological imbalance.

The degree of social interaction that the student establishes with the returning students on campus is also considered an important variable in adjustment, with stronger social interaction being engendering a more positive process of adaptation. The variables that affect the

likelihood of this occurring are many. Examples are verbal and non-verbal communication skills, campus cultural attitudes and stereotypes, cultural expectations and norms of friendship, anxiety and threat to self-esteem, and perceived status differences (Fehintola, 2012).

Learning can be very challenging in an unfamiliar social and cultural setting. Adjusting to such situation could make socialization difficult, such as asking for assistance and making friends. In other words, social balances appear to be a little bit difficult for students from different ethnic backgrounds who have also come to study in a totally different ethnic setting. Adjusting to such environment will be challenging; getting along with the language, food, style of greeting and dressing could affect their adjustment which, in turn affects their psychological well-being because it will bring about loneliness, frustration, stress, low self-esteem and psychological distress.

Much research effort has been invested in understanding the major predictors of students psychological well-being (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Whitmore & Norton-Meier, 2008; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Jeynes, 2007; Sirvani, 2007; Jeynes, 2007 ; Wilkinson, 2004; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Knoester,

2003). Little has been done on undergraduates generally, and especially in Nigeria considering the major predictors like parenting style and social adjustment. These predictors were chosen because other studies focused more on parenting style among high school and primary school students. Also, in most cases, socio-cultural adjustment was considered among international fresh students. This identified gap was what this study filled.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the influence of parenting styles and social adjustment on the psychological well-being of University undergraduate working adults in South-West Nigeria. Specifically it;

1. investigated the relationship that exists between parenting styles, social adjustment and psychological well-being of University undergraduate working adults.
2. examined the joint contribution of social adjustment and parenting styles to the prediction of undergraduate working adults' psychological well-being; and
3. determined the relative contribution of social adjustment and parenting styles to the prediction of undergraduate working adults' psychological well-being.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship that exists between parenting styles, social adjustment and psychological well-being of university undergraduate working adults?
2. What is the joint contribution of social adjustment and parenting styles to the prediction of undergraduate working adults' psychological well-being?
3. What is the relative contribution of social adjustment and parenting styles to the prediction of undergraduate working adults' psychological well-being?

Methodology

This study adopted the correlational research design. It was therefore, an examination of the relationship that exists between two or more variables and their predictive effects on a criterion variable. It did not involve the manipulation of variables in the study.

Study Population

The population for this study comprised Nigerian university students in the South-Western part of Nigeria.

Sample Selection and Sampling Techniques

Three universities (University of Ibadan, Ibadan; University of Lagos, Lagos and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-ife) were purposively selected from the Universities in the South-Western Nigeria. In each of the randomly selected institutions, participants were selected through a simple random technique. On the whole, two hundred and nineteen (219) undergraduates comprising 73 participants from each institution (36 male and 37 female participants) were used as respondents. All participants were 100 and 200 level undergraduate working adults of the selected institutions.

Instrumentation

Psychological Well-being Scale(PWS): This is a 41 item scale developed by Livia (2009). It measures the psychological state of undergraduates since the time they arrive on campus. It adopts a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from SA=5 to SD=1. In this study, the internal consistency reliability of the was good (Psychological Well-being $\alpha = .76$)

Parenting Styles Scale (PSS): This is an 18-item scale developed by Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen, and Hart (1995). It measures different parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and

permissive).It adopts a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from SA=5 to SD=1. In this study, the internal consistency reliability of the was good (Parenting styles $\alpha = .73$)

Social Adjustment Scale(SAS): This is a self-report scale designed by Asher (2004) to measure how well a student is adjusting to college, with higher scores on the SAS indicating higher levels of self-reported adjustment. Several studies have shown the SAS to have good content and predictive validity. In the present study, the internal consistency reliability of the scale was good (social adjustment $\alpha = .81$)

Procedure

The questionnaires were administered to the participants in their various universities.

This was made possible with the help of five research assistants and the Dean of Student Affairs of each school whose permissions was first sought. The participants were adequately briefed on the need to cooperate with the researchers. They were also assured of confidentiality of their responses. The data collection spread over three weeks, during which about three hundred copies of the questionnaires were administered. Only 219 were properly filled and considered useful for research purpose. These were scored and the data obtained were subjected to analysis.

Table 1: Correlation matrix showing the relationship between the variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	1	2	3	4	5
Psychological Well-being	47.8165	13.62409	1.000				
Social Adjustment	34.5963	10.45915	.512**	1.000			
Parenting styles authoritative	39.4404	14.50850	.348**	.254**	1.000		
Parenting styles authoritarian	40.5917	13.19521	.340**	.271**	.398**	1.000	
Parenting styles permissive	27.7798	5.32771	-.232**	-.174**	.059	.072	1.00

*Correlation is significant at 0.05(2-tailed)

adults to display high psychological well-being.

Table 1 revealed the relationship that exists between the independent variables ((social adjustment, authoritative parenting styles, authoritarian parenting styles and permissive parenting styles) and the dependent variable (psychological well-being); Psychological well-being positively correlated with social adjustment ($r = .512$, $P < 0.001$), authoritative parenting style ($r = .348$, $P < 0.001$) and authoritarian parenting style ($r = .340$, $P < 0.001$). But negatively correlated with permissive parenting style ($r = -.232$, $P < 0.001$). This implies that an increase in students' social adjustment, authoritative and authoritarian parenting style will increase the tendency for undergraduate students to display high psychological well-being. But an increase in permissive parenting style will reduce the tendency of undergraduate working

Research Question 2:

What is the joint contribution of social adjustment, authoritarian parenting style, authoritative parenting style and permissive parenting style on psychological well-being of undergraduate working adults?

Table 2: Summary of regression for the joint contributions of the independent variables to the prediction of psychological well-being of undergraduate working adults.

R =.592						
R Square =.351						
Adjusted R square =.339						
Std. Error =11.08002						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14129.343	4	3532.336	28.773	.000 ^a
	Residual	26149.317	213	122.767		
	Total	40278.661	217			

Table 2 revealed that there was significant joint contribution of the independent variables (social adjustment, authoritative parenting styles, authoritarian parenting styles and permission parenting styles) to the prediction of psychological well-being of undergraduate working adults. The result yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions $R = 0.592$ and multiple R-square = 0.351.

This suggests that the four variables combined accounted for 33.9 % (Adj.R2=.339) variance in the prediction of psychological well-being of undergraduate students. The other factors accounting for

66.1% variance in the prediction of psychological well-being was beyond the scope of this study. The ANOVA result from the regression analysis showed that there was a significant effect of the independent variables on the psychological well-being of undergraduates, $F_{(4,213)} = 28.773$, $P < 0.001$.

Table 3: Relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of psychological well-being of undergraduate working adults.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.861	4.764		1.440	.151
	social adjustment	.522	.077	.401	6.806	.000
	Authoritative	.167	.057	.178	2.909	.004
	Authoritarian	.156	.063	.151	2.460	.015
	Permissive	-.360	.143	-.141	-2.507	.013

Table 3 shows that the four predictor factors (social adjustment, authoritarian parenting style, authoritative parenting style and permissive parenting style) are potent predictors of psychological well-being. The most potent factor was social adjustment (Beta = .401, $t = 6.806$, $P < 0.001$); followed by authoritative parenting style (Beta = .178, $t = 2.909$, $P < 0.05$), authoritarian parenting style (Beta = .151, $t = 2.460$, $P < 0.05$), and permissive parenting style (Beta = .141, $t = 2.507$, $P < 0.05$). This further implies that an increase in social adjustment, authoritative and authoritarian parenting will increase the tendency of undergraduate working adults to enjoy sound psychological well-being. While an increase in permissive parenting style will reduce the tendency of undergraduate working adults to display sound psychological well-being.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that social adjustment was a significant predictor of undergraduate working adults' psychological well-being. This result is consistent with the findings of various researchers (Rotter, 1964; Tallent, 1978; Mouly, 1968; Fehintola, 2012) who found that a socially adjusted student will find it easy to relate with people; at the same time, he/she will strive to maintain happy relationship with others as he meets the demands of the environment. A student that has bad relationship with others might likely develop both physiological and psychological imbalance. This implies that an increase in students' display of social adjustment will increase their psychological health status.

The study also showed that authoritative parenting style was a significant predictor of undergraduates' student psychological

well-being. This result is in tandem with Kaplan, Bachorowski, Smoski and Hudenko (2002) who reported that parenting styles are patterns for children's training that are formed by the normative interaction of parents and how they response to children's behaviour. This result also supports Biougental and Grousis (2006) and Desjardines, Komulainen and Aro (2009) they asserted that authoritative parenting style make students to have better socio-emotional development and academic performance irrespective of their disability, and show higher organized and rational orientation. This is true because parents that maintain sound relationship with their children will make the children to pour out their minds as well as seek guidance when taking decision.

Moreover, the study also revealed that authoritarian parenting style is a significant predictor of undergraduate working adults' psychological well-being. This result is consistent with researcher Hartoup and Lawrence, (1993) and Barber (2000) who claimed that authoritarian parents often humiliate their children; give no explanation about the punishment exerted. They noted that giving strong discipline causes impairment to children's processing messages and parent talk and they are living in constant fear. In the same

vain Houston, and Vavak (1991) aver that adolescents with authoritative parents who consume less smoke and marijuana and drink less alcohol may experience less depression and psychological distress; therefore, they may possess higher adjustment to difficult situations.

Finally, the study found that permissive parenting style was a significant predictor of undergraduate's student psychological well-being. This result is in consonance with Bamarind (1971) who found that permissive parents had no control on their children; and these children showed the least amount of self-confidence, curiosity and displayed high level of depression, loneliness and low self-control in each group; they also had difficulty in controlling impulses, recognizing values and anti-values.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of parenting styles and social adjustment on psychological well-being of University undergraduate working adults in South-West Nigeria. It was discovered that both variables were good predictors of undergraduates' psychological well-being. It was further discovered that the most potent predictor was social adjustment, followed by authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style and

permissive parenting style. It was inferred from the study that students' psychological well-being can be improved most especially through social adjustment, authoritative parenting and authoritarian style of parenting. However, their psychological well-being level might moderately vary.

Recommendations

From the findings made so far, it could be inferred that authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles had positive impact on undergraduate working adults'

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