

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT AS A CORRELATE OF ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE OF ADOLESCENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UMUAHIA
NORTH EDUCATION ZONE, ABIA STATE.**

By

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Abstract

The study investigated psychological adjustment as correlate of academic performance of adolescents in secondary schools in Umuahia North education zone of Abia State. The study was guided by three research questions and three hypotheses. The population consisted of all the adolescents in JSSII and SSII in Umuahia North education zone. 276 students were randomly selected from six secondary schools. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Psychological Adjustment of Adolescents in Secondary School Questionnaire" (PAASSQ). The instrument was validated by two research experts in the department of Psychology and Counselling. Reliability co-efficient of (0.89) was ascertained through test re-test. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses. The result revealed that the adolescents who had proper adjustment and academic interest aroused from home did better in school. Based on the findings, recommendations made include arousing and sustaining the interest of school adolescents towards the pursuit of academic goal.

Keywords: Adjustment, Adolescent, Academic Performance and School.

Introduction

Every social system has its unique nature or characteristics and for one to survive and succeed in any social system, one must re-order one's life to be in harmony with the unique nature and characteristics of the social system. The school is no exception to this rule. Thus, successful academic career depends on how effectively one adjusts to school life. Adjustment to school life as used in this study is the process of bringing an individual's behaviours in conformity with the norms of the school setting. It is a continuous process that is geared towards the adaptation of the individual to school life and culture (Agbakwuru, 2009). School adjustment is a behavioural pattern that enables a student to get along with both academic and social demands of school settings (Dibia, 2009). Students' adjustment to school may be regarded as the ability to cope with the personal, academic, social and emotional problems in accordance with the expectations of teachers, psychologists, counsellors and classmates. According to Ugodulunwa and Anakwe, (2012), school adjustment can be viewed as comprising academic, social and emotional adjustment. They further saw school adjustment to mean the process the adolescents adopt in maintaining a balance between their academic, social and emotional needs and the school environment. The concept of adjustment is as old as human race. In the earlier years, the concept was purely biological. Biologists used the term adaptation strictly for physical demands of the environment, but psychologists used the term adjustment for varying conditions of social or interpersonal relations in the society (Dunapo, 2002).

Adjustment has been defined in various ways by psychologists to mean a process of maintaining harmonious relationships between a living organism and its environment (Rahamtulla, 2007; Agbakwuru, & Agbakwuru, (2012). Anakwe (2012) described adjustment process as a way in which the individual attempt to deal with stress, tension, conflicts and meet his or her needs while making efforts at the same time to maintain harmonious relationship with the environment. According to Nnachi (2003), adjustment is a psychological term that relates to adaptive capacity of the organism to an environment. He maintained that adjustment meant an adaptive change of an individual in response to the environment. He further explained that this adaptive change brings an individuals' behaviour into conformity with the norms of a social group, institution or set up. Inability of the individual to cope with his social and physical environment leads to maladjustment. Maladjustment behaviours which school adolescent embark upon include aggression, projection of self beyond proportion, reaction formation, rebelliousness, protests, fighting, assault, bullying etc (Dunapo, 2002). Thus, positive adjustment can be referred to as educational resilience, which Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, (2000) refer to as a process of positive adaptation in the face of significant stress or adversity, while negative or poor adjustment can be considered as inadequate adaptation with associated friction, tension or emotional and social disturbances. Adolescence has traditionally been viewed as a critical period in development when adjustment is necessary and inevitable (Dibia, 2009).

Adolescence is the period of transition that extends from the end of childhood to the beginning of adulthood. The period ranges approximately from age 12-21, although it varies from one socio-economic level to another and from culture to culture (Daniel, 2001). Being a period of transition, the adolescent is often confronted with a number of problems and the way these problems are handled goes a long way to determine what becomes of him in the future. Most of the problems experienced at adulthood is as a result of not being able to resolve or poorly resolved conflicts during adolescence period (Daniel, 2001). Adolescents could develop serious personality disorder because of the anxieties that accompany the resolution of the conflicts associated with this period. Proper school adjustment leads to academic performance. Academic performance is referred to as an impressive cumulative performance of a student in all his prescribed subjects. It is how well a student performed in his academic pursuit. Researchers have always attributed academic achievements of students to proper school adjustment (Nicholas, 2015; Kemjika, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on one of the theories of adjustment and learning developed by an American Psychologist called Edward Lee Thorndike in 1949. Thorndike propounded a number of adjustment laws to learning. They include law of readiness. This law proposes that depending on the learner's readiness, certain responses are more or less likely to be learned than others. The learner finds learning to be easy or difficult depending on his/her indices of readiness – attitude, emotion etc. If a student is not emotionally stable before entering the class or during the class, it will be difficult to learn. Law of exercise mean “practice makes perfect” in a layman's interpretation. This law states that constant exercise will ensure that what is learned will be retained for a long time and not easily forgotten. Law of multiple responses states that when individuals are faced with a difficult problem for which they have no ready solution, they in the attempt to solve the problem engage in a variety of different responses until one response produces a satisfying effect. This is to say that problem can be solved through trial-and-error (Croteau 2005).

Objectives of the study

This study investigated psychological adjustment as a correlate of academic performance of secondary school students in Umuahia education zone. In specific terms, the study examined:

- i. The extent to which early preparation and nurture relate with proper adjustment of JSSII & SSII students toward post primary education?
- ii. The extent to which early arousal of interest relate with proper adjustment of JSSII & SSII students towards post primary education?
- iii. The extent to which female and male JSSII & SSII students differ with regard to proper adjustment made towards post primary education?

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. To what extent does early preparation and nurture relate with proper adjustment of JSSII & SSII students toward post primary education?
- ii. To what extent does early arousal of interest relate with proper adjustment of JSSII & SSII students towards post primary education?
- iii. To what extent do female and male JSSII & SSII students differ with regard to proper adjustment made towards post primary education?

The following null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance were formulated to guide the study.

- i. There is no significant relationship between early preparation, nurture and proper adjustment of JSSII & SSII students towards post primary education.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between early arousal of interest and proper adjustment of JSSII & SSII students towards post primary education.
- iii. There is no significant difference between female and male JSSII & SSII students with regard to proper adjustment made towards post primary education.

Methodology

The design of this study is co-relational design which sought to find out the relationship between students early preparation, interest arousal and school adjustment. According to Papalia (2002), correlational study is an attempt to find a correlation or statistical relationship between variables or phenomena that can change or vary among people or event. The sample of this study consisted of 276 JSS II and SS II students randomly selected from six secondary schools in Umuahia North LG.A. The non-proportionate random sampling technique was used to select 46 students from each school, consisting, 16 JSS II and 30 SS II students. JSS I students were neglected because most of them are yet to enter into adolescence while SS III students are busy preparing for their senior school certificate examinations.

Data were collected using a questionnaire titled Psychological Adjustment of Adolescent in Secondary School Questionnaire (PAASSQ). The instrument was self-developed and validated by two experts in the field of counselling and psychology. It was subjected to test-re test method and was found to have reliability co-efficient of 0.89. The researchers administered the questionnaire to the students after permission was sought from the school principals of the sampled schools. Mean and standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to answer research questions while Z-test of significance of (r) was used to test the null hypotheses.

Result

Table 1: Result of Pearson Correlation Coefficient between adjustment and early preparation and nurture of JSSII and SSII students.

Group	N	X	SD	R	P level	Alpha level	Decision
Preparation Vs. Adjustment.	276	44.07 17.96	3.39 3.48	.061	.003	0.05	Significant

Table 1 has the mean scores of 44.07 and 17.96 respectively; and standard deviation scores of 3.39 and 3.48 respectively.

Table 2: Result of Pearson Correlation Coefficient between adjustment and interest arousal of JSSII and SSII students.

<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>P level</i>	<i>Alpha level</i>	<i>Decision</i>
Interest Vs. Adjustment.	276	37.03 22.04	2.93 3.21	.087	.001	0.05	Significant

Table 2 has the mean scores of 37.03 and 22.04 respectively; and standard deviation scores of 2.93 and 3.21 respectively.

Table 3: Mean rating and t-test analysis of male and female adjustment level.

<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t-cal</i>	<i>t-critical</i>	<i>Result</i>
Male	122	52.97	3.12	275	4.82	1.96	Significant
Female	154	54.81	3.37				

Table 3 has the mean scores of 52.97 and 54.81 respectively; and standard deviation scores of 3.12 and 3.37 respectively.

Discussion of result

Table 1 reports the result of descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation between preparation and adjustment of students. Their mean scores are 44.07 and 17.96 respectively; and standard deviation scores of 3.39 and 3.48 respectively. The result also shows a Pearson correlation coefficient (r value) of 0.61 (61%). This means that the relationship between early preparation and adjustment is considerably moderate. The correlation table also shows the probability level (p level) of 2-tailed as .003, which is comparatively less than the chosen 0.05 alpha level. This supports the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. This means that there is a significant relationship between early preparation and adjustment of students. This result is in tandem with findings of Agbakwuru (2009); Farmer and Heung (2006) that early preparation of students helps them to make appropriate adjustment required for post primary education.

Table 2 reports the result of descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation between interest and adjustment of students. Their mean scores are 37.03 and 22.04 respectively; and standard deviation scores of 2.93 and 3.21 respectively. The result also showed a correlation coefficient (r value) of 0.87 at probability value of 0.001 at two-tailed significant level. The result revealed that the relationship between the two variables is positive meaning that as parents and teachers try to motivate these students, their adjustment rate increases. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states there is no significant relationship between arousal of interest and adjustment is rejected while the alternate is accepted which states that there is a significant relationship between arousal of interest and adjustment. This result is in agreement with the findings of Dunapo (2002) on the same subject matter.

Table 3 shows the mean ratings of male and female adjustment level received as 52.97 and 54.81 respectively. The standard deviation of male and female students was 3.12, and 3.37 respectively. When looking at the mean score ratings, the female students had the greater mean score than their male counterpart. When the mean scores were subjected to t-test analysis, a t-calculated value of 4.82 was obtained which was greater than the t-critical of 1.96 at degree of freedom of 275 and 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate accepted which implies that there is a significant difference between the male and female students' level of adjustment. Again, this

result supports the findings of Luthar; Cicchetti and Becker, (2000); Adejuwon and Ibeagha (2005) that female students get adjusted to new environment easily than their male counterparts.

Conclusion

The study examined the various ways to facilitate proper adjustment among JSSII and SSII students. The researchers reviewed relevant available literature and came up with a balanced position to help these students achieve proper adjustment.

Recommendations

- i. Parents should ensure adequate preparation of their children at home before enrolling them in school.
- ii. School administrators should create enough stimulating environment that will enhance proper adjustment.
- iii. Government should provide adequate recreational facilities that will attract the interest of these prospective students.
- iv. There should be psychologists and counsellor in all the post primary schools that will help these students resolve that adjustment crisis.

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