

## ***Relationship between Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Academic Adjustment of Secondary School Students Living in Conflict Areas of Southern Kaduna, Nigeria***

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined the Relationship between Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and Adjustment of Senior Secondary School Students Living in Conflict Areas of Southern Kaduna. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study was nine hundred and eighty seven (987) students with post-traumatic symptoms in Godo-Godo and Kafanchan Zonal Educational Inspectorate Divisions, Kaduna State. The sample of the study was 272 Senior Secondary School II (SSII) Students with symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder drawn from twenty (20) schools. They were identified using Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist Civilian Version. Data was collected using posttraumatic stress disorder inventory (PTSDI) and Academic Adjustment Inventory. Posttraumatic stress disorder inventory (PTSDI) had reliability of .856 while Academic Adjustment Inventory has internal consistency of .779. Pearson product moment correlation statistics was used to test the three hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The finding shows that relationship exists between Anxiety and academic adjustment ( $r=.791$   $p=.001$ ), Aggression and academic adjustment ( $r=.859$   $p=.000$ ), and Depression and academic adjustment ( $r=.811$   $p=.000$ ). From the results of the findings, it was recommended, among others, that Kaduna state ministry of education should have functional psychological testing and counselling centres in assisting students with anxiety problem for proper academic adjustment.*

**Keyword:** post-traumatic, stress, disorder, academic, adjustment, student

## **Introduction**

Students are subjected to various devastating experiences which may be traumatic such as communal violence, public coercion, political violence, death of loved ones, which may go unnoticed thereby leading to psychological problems among the students. There are other major acts of violence confronting students today, especially at the secondary school level such as political crisis, farmer-herdsmen clash, religious crisis, bullying and public coercion, which may easily influence their social, emotional and academic adjustment (Shalev, 2012). Posttraumatic stress among students may be as a result of violent environment, death of loved ones, gun shooting, political issues which brought about the behaviour of anxiety, aggression and depression. Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) includes fear, anger, helplessness and the victims may need help from counsellors, teachers and the psychologist. Edebor (2015) conducted a research on relationship of posttraumatic stress disorder and Academic performance among junior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. The design adopted was correlational design and the population of the study was two thousand two hundred (2200) and sample size was three hundred and twenty seven (327) JSS III secondary school students. The selection of the school was purposively done based on areas where violence erupts frequently. Five schools (5) were selected. He reported a significant relationship and recommended that students who experience posttraumatic stress disorders should be given extra care and protection by their parents so as to enhance their Academic Adjustment.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2013), posttraumatic can be defined as a serious or critical bodily injury, wound or shock. Psychologically, posttraumatic can be defined as an experience that is emotionally painful, distressful or shocking, which often results in lasting mental, social and physical effects on individuals. Thus, in the aftermath of any communal violence or disaster, the affected victims are always left with social and emotional problems.

Shalev (2012) in his study found out that each year many students sustain injuries from violence, death of friends or family members, and various forms of students' abuse, community crisis, wars, exposure to automobile accidents where many people are killed including friends and relatives. The problem that students face are all indices of posttraumatic stress disorder in which students may exhibit a wide range of reactions, generally referred to as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which usually comes after the disaster. The Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) includes fear, flashback, anger and helplessness, and the victims may need help from counsellors, parents, teachers and psychologists. Davidson and Smith (2010), in their study provided a relationship data between several early posttraumatic and broad range of later disorders. The study showed that 22% of adult psychiatric out-patients received a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), with vulnerability to posttraumatic greatest during early studentshood and adolescence. In a related study, Brooks (2008) found that veterans with combat-related posttraumatic stress disorder were more likely to have a history of students' physical, social and emotional abuse than those without posttraumatic stress disorder. Perry (2013) also found out that the

survivor while still at arousal state finds it difficult to process information because of the alteration in the functioning of the neocortex. These findings showed that students who have been traumatized remain in a state of fear and will be encompassed with difficulty in processing verbal information.

Daniels and Adam (2010) examined the relationship of post traumatic resilience in extremely exposed students and adolescents in a sample of three hundred and thirty (330) former Ugandan students soldiers. The students soldiers here referred to students under 18 years of age associated with an armed capacity. During their time as soldiers, these youth were brutalized and cruelly abused by armed groups. Among the students soldiers as expressed in the study, post traumatic resilience was associated with lower exposure to domestic violence, lower guilt cognitions, less motivation to seek revenge, better socioeconomic situation in family and some of them received spiritual support, that is they were referred to religious leaders for support. The study further revealed that among the youth, many with symptoms extending beyond the criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder, in keeping with the emerging concept of developmental posttraumatic disorder spiritual support explained a substantial degree of variance in posttraumatic resilience over and above posttraumatic severity during abduction. Daniels and Adam (2010) emphasized on post traumatic resilience that describe posttraumatic survivor with positive post traumatic mental health outcome.

In schools today, many students are dying in silence as a result of exposure to various man-made disasters. They are victims of some unwanted behaviours or what is known as "behaviour excesses" which include aggression, anxiety, and depression which may lead to decline in their social and emotional adjustment as well as the academic adjustment. Winter, Agak and Ayere (2011) conducted a study on school adjustment which shows the girls were better adjusted as compared to boys. They also investigated the level of school adjustment and relationship with academic achievement in Kenya; secondary student's gender difference in school adjustment was also examined. Correlational method was used between school adjustment and academic achievement, and the sample consist of four hundred and fifty (450) secondary schools students. The result shows that there were no significant differences between boys and girls in school adjustment and positive correlation between school adjustment and academic achievement.

Moroz (2015) viewed posttraumatic stress as something that persists after a traumatic incident has ended and continues to affect the student's ability to self-regulate, both physically, socially and emotionally. Post traumatic symptoms in students and adolescent students may encompass one or more of a broad range of behaviours, including terrified responses to sights, sounds or other sensory input that remind the students of the traumatic experiences. Difficulty in sleeping, and concentrating, aggression, anxiety and depression are all triggered by posttraumatic stress.

Aggression refers to a quality of anger and determination that makes one ready to attack other people. It is applicable to male and female. This behaviour may cause

feeling of being misunderstood, being unlovable, feeling of discomfort with individual classmates who are always attacked; such aggressive boys and girls become angry with every individual around them and may refuse to conform to school authority. The emotional difficulties can incapacitate the students and prevent him or her from normal participation in class work. School students who exhibit aggressiveness are easily distracted by irrelevant sights and sounds, they are quick to anger, they shift from one activity to another without necessarily finishing the first one, and seem to get bored easily, they may appear forgetful and confused. Hutchinson and Renfrew (2012) defined aggressive behaviour as those actions carried out by an individual with the intention to cause injury or anxiety to others or even to oneself. This means that aggressive behaviour sometimes take the form of overreaction; the person may shout or become very agitated over minor incidents. Kowalski (2012) described anxiety as a highly unpleasant feeling of fear and apprehension. In the school, students are usually found having unnecessary worries when they are faced with school work or other life challenges.

Depression is a condition of great general interest; it is relatively simple to describe in clinical term but difficult to measure scientifically. Depression is a lowering of mood beyond the range of ups and downs encountered in normal life and sustained over time and to such a degree that the quality of life of such a person is significantly impaired (Nwankwo, 2010). Defining it scientifically is more difficult and has led to international agreement that it is present only when certain manifestation of behaviour is exhibited. Depression is an illness that affects the body, mood and thoughts. The risk of developing depression is increasing worldwide particularly among students and adolescent (Barlow & Durand, 2015).

Adjustment refers to an individual's general adaptation to his environment and the demands of life, such as the way he relates to other people (that is interpersonal behaviour), handles his responsibility, deals with stress and meets his own need and life satisfaction (Adhiambo & Mildred, 2011). The society is dynamic and change is the only constant thing, so the individual's ability to review his attitude and behaviour is an essential ingredient of adjustment. Social adjustment is an effort by an individual to cope with standards, values and needs of the society in order to be acceptable. It involves coping with new standards and values, getting along with the members of the society as best as one can be. Academic adjustment is a broad construct which consists of many different aspects such as academic achievement, school satisfaction, school engagement and pro-social behaviour. Well-adjusted students usually value what they are learning, are positively involved in classroom activities and perform well academically. But poor academic adjustment leads to poor academic outcome, behavioural problems, discordant educational aspirations and sometimes school dropout (Adhiambo & Mildred, 2011). Social adjustment is the achievement of goals that result in social integration as well as those that result in positive development outcomes for the self. It is also referred to social integrative goals as those outcomes that promote the smooth functioning of the social groups, social approvals and social acceptance, while the self-regulated goals are those outcomes that promote achievement of personal competencies, feeling of self-

determination, and feeling of social and emotional wellbeing. Academic adjustment, for the purpose of this study is defined in relation to a student's ability to develop social, emotional and academic competencies that facilitate the achievement of school success. It is characterized by quality social relationships with peers and teachers, feeling of emotional security, less aggressive behaviours, pro-social behaviours, longer retention in educational system and better academic adjustment. Academic adjustment refers to a students' ability to meet academic demands, to be attentive, to participate in class activities, and become an independent student, while social and emotional adjustments refer to a student's ability to establish meaningful and positive relationships with teachers and peers, and feel emotionally secure. Ali-Shinawi and Abdurahman (2013) had also defined academic adjustment as involving not only students' academic progress and achievement, but also their attitude towards school, anxieties, loneliness, social support and academic motivation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Students who experience community violence, political crises, religious crisis, farmers and herdsmen crisis, kidnapping, and shooting may develop feelings of depression, anxiety and aggressive behaviour. As a result of which students may resort to unwanted behaviour which may be contrary to societal norms and values. Individual students may exhibit different behaviour patterns due to personal experiences, and this may influence their social and emotional adjustment as well as the Academic Adjustment of students.

Some secondary School Students particularly in Godo-godo and Kanfachan zonal inspectorate divisions in Southern Kaduna are victims of communal violence, political crises, religious crises, kidnapping, which pose insecurity thus making students to live in perpetual fear and apprehension. The traumatic experience may bring about poor social, and emotional adjustment as well as academic adjustment, lack of concentration and anxiety among secondary school students. Some secondary school students may become aggressive due to the rate of community violence, kidnapping, shooting; they may also become anxious as they cannot cope with the violence in the environment they find themselves. There are cases of students who lost their parents, loved ones and relatives which is another traumatic experience in the secondary school students' life; they may go to school but keep re-experiencing the event even when lessons may be going on, thereby having depressed mood, aggression and anxiety; also students are transferred from one school to another to write their examination as a result of fear and frequent violence in the area that they live.

The decline of social, emotional and academic adjustment among secondary school students would be attributed to anxiety, aggression and depression among other factors; this is because anxiety in students affects their reflective thinking ability that is required for cognitive task, which may also affect the social and emotional wellbeing in the school environment. Due to the detrimental effect of anxiety, aggression and depression to the lives of secondary school students, it has become a matter of concern to psychologists, counsellors, school administration, parents and

teachers. Therefore the problem of the study is to find out if there is any relationship between posttraumatic stress disorder and social, emotional and academic adjustment of secondary school students living in conflict areas of southern Kaduna, Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To find out the relationship between anxiety and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of southern Kaduna.
2. To determine the relationship between aggression and academic adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of southern Kaduna.
3. To examine the relationship between depression and academic adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of southern Kaduna.

### **Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between anxiety and academic adjustment among secondary schools students living in conflict area of southern Kaduna.

**Ho2:** There is no significant relationship between aggression and academic adjustment among secondary schools students living in conflict area of southern Kaduna.

**Ho3:** There is no significant relationship between depression and academic adjustment among secondary schools students living in conflict area of southern Kaduna.

### **Methodology**

This research employed correlational design. According to Mitchell and Jolley (2007), when researchers want to find out the relationship between two or more variables, then correlation design should be used. This design is a form of descriptive research undertaken when dealing with systematic collection of data or information from a population through the use of personal interview, opinion scale, questionnaire and observation. This enables the researcher to make generalization in the end of the research. This study involved an investigation of entire population of people or items under the study by collecting data from sample drawn from the population and assuming that these samples are true representation of the entire population. Since the population of this study is large, and samples are to be drawn to represent the entire population, correlation method is appropriate to that effect.

The population of this study was made up of nine hundred and eighty seven (987) secondary school students with posttraumatic symptoms in two educational zones, Kafanchan and Godo-Godo. The process was carried out through the use of checklist to identify the respondents with posttraumatic problem.

Simple random sampling technique was used in the selection of 20 secondary schools out of 64 secondary schools in the two zones. According to Abdullahi (2015), simple random sampling is a method of selecting a portion of population such that each member of the population has equal chance of being selected. However, this could be done in various ways, including ballot method and use of

table of random numbers. Therefore, the researchers made use of ballot method in selecting the schools. In this method, the elements in the population are assigned numbers, which are then written on pieces of paper, folded so that the number on each paper is hidden. So the pieces of paper are put in a suitable container and shaken thoroughly so the required number of the respondents is picked from the container. The sample size of this study is 274 secondary school students with symptoms of posttraumatic from two Educational Zones of Godo-Godo and Kafanchan. This sample is drawn from an entire population of SSII secondary school students with posttraumatic symptom which is 987. This selection conforms to Research Advisor's (2006) table of specification. The researchers purposively target SSII students with posttraumatic symptom in Kafanchan and Godo Godo Educational Zones. Their level of aggression, anxiety and depression were determined and correlated with their Social, Emotional, and Academic Adjustment.

Two main instruments were used for this study. The instruments are posttraumatic stress condition which was adapted from Educational Media Solutions (2011), and Academic Adjustment inventory. The Posttraumatic stress condition comprises of five (5) Likert scale instrument and subdivided into three categories; Anxiety items consist of ten (10), Aggression items consist of ten (10) and depression ten (10). Academic adjustment inventory was adapted from Bell (2012); it consists of fifteen (15) items which seek to determine the aspect of academic outcome. The scoring guide is as follows: 0-30 - Mild adjusted individual; 30-60 - Average adjusted individual while 60 and above highly adjusted. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) ( $r$ ) was used for data analysis.

### **Presentation of results**

**Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between Anxiety and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern Kaduna.

**Table 1:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics on the relationship between Anxiety and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern Kaduna

| <b>Variables</b>    | <b>N</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>r</b> | <b>p</b> |
|---------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Anxiety             |          | 34.41       | 8.88      |           |          |          |
| Academic Adjustment | 272      | 49.95       | 11.66     | 270       | -0.791   | 0.001    |

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 indicated that Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics showed that significant relationship exists between Anxiety and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern

Kaduna. This is because the calculated p value of 0.001 is lower than the 0.05 level of significance. The table also shows that there is negative relationship between Anxiety and Academic Adjustment. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Anxiety and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern Kaduna, is hereby rejected.

**Ho2:** There is no significant relationship between Aggression and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern Kaduna.

**Table 2:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics on the relationship between Aggression and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern Kaduna

| <b>Variables</b>    | <b>N</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>R</b> | <b>p</b> |
|---------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Aggression          |          | 32.35       | 8.58      |           |          |          |
| Academic Adjustment | 272      | 49.95       | 11.66     | 270       | -0.859   | 0.000    |

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 indicated that Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics showed that significant relationship exists between Aggression and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern Kaduna. Reason being that the calculated p-value of 0.000 is lower than 0.05. The table also shows that there is negative relationship between Aggression and Academic Adjustment. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Aggression and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern Kaduna, is hereby rejected.

**Ho3:** There is no significant relationship between Depression and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern Kaduna.

**Table 3:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics on the relationship between Depression and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern Kaduna

| <b>Variables</b>    | <b>N</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>r</b> | <b>p</b> |
|---------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Depression          |          | 34.36       | 6.73      |           |          |          |
| Academic Adjustment | 272      | 49.95       | 11.66     | 270       | -0.811   | 0.000    |

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 indicated that Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics showed that significant relationship exists between Depression and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern Kaduna. Reason being that the calculated p-value of 0.000 is lower than 0.05 alpha level of significance. The table also shows that there is negative relationship between Depression and Academic Adjustment. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Depression and Academic Adjustment among secondary school students living in conflict area of Southern Kaduna, is hereby rejected.

### **Discussion of the findings**

The findings of this research indicated that significant relationship exists between anxiety and academic adjustment of secondary schools student. The finding is in line with that of Edebor (2015) who conducted a research on relationship of posttraumatic stress disorder and Academic performance among junior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria, and reported a significant relationship.

Another finding of this study indicated that significant relationship exists between aggression and academic adjustment of secondary schools students. The finding agrees with that of Winter, Agak and Ayere (2011) who conducted a study on school adjustment which shows the girls were better adjusted as compared to boys.

Research hypothesis three investigated relationship between depression and academic adjustment of secondary schools students; the result revealed that significant relationship exists between depression and academic adjustment of secondary schools students of Godo-Godo and Kafanchan. This finding agrees with that of Daniels and Adam (2010) who examined the relationship of post traumatic resilience in extremely exposed students and adolescents and emphasized on post traumatic resilience that describe posttraumatic survivor with positive post traumatic mental health outcome.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions can be deduced: anxiety disorder, aggression problems and depression are related with academic adjustment in secondary schools in the study area.

### **Recommendations**

1. Kaduna state ministry of education should have functional psychological testing and counselling centres in addressing students with anxiety, problem for proper academic adjustment.
2. Parents should pay more attention to their students with aggressive issues and refer them to school authority, for appropriate psychological intervention.
3. Teachers and school administrators should pay more attention to secondary school students with depression issues and refer them to testing and counselling centres for proper guidance; this will enhance good academic adjustment of students.

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