

Family Structure and Emotional Adjustment of Senior Secondary School Students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was carried out to examine the influence of family structure on emotional adjustment of senior secondary school students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. One null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. The ex-post facto design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised 5305 senior secondary school II (SSS 2) students in the zone. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 200 SS2 students as the sample. The instrument that was used in gathering data for this study is the Students' Family Structure and Emotional Adjustment Questionnaire (SFSEAQ). The reliability of the instrument was established by split-half method with a coefficient of .72. The statistical tool used to analyze the data was Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The finding revealed that there was significant influence of family structure on emotional adjustment of students in the study area. It was recommended, among others, that parents should for the sake of their children's upbringing adhere to their marital vows, so as to improve their emotional adjustment in the ever evolving and dynamic society.

Keyword: family, structure, emotional, adjustment, students

Introduction

Throughout childhood, children at home face changes which they carry to school as adolescents and to the larger society as adults. Abaji (2013) reveals that every individual from the time he or she steps out of the family and goes to school makes series of adjustments between the whole unique personality and the environment. Every individual must make one form of adjustment or the other in the course of development. These changes can be small and go unnoticed, or they can be life-changing and noticeable and can even be life threatening. During this trend, Agba (2016) reports that they gradually recognize their share of role in the society and find themselves in a constant contrast of their dream and reality, their thought and action, their prediction and practicality, their conjecture and experience, their expectation and commitment. But suddenly, when they discover themselves surrounded by these heaps of challenges and uncertainties that make them maladjusted in their social set up, they tend to adjust socially, emotionally and educationally. In the course of these different stages of human development, adolescence period is one of the most problematic period regarding social, emotional, sexual and academic adjustment. This stage coincides with the school age where the child is expected to learn, and unlearn when need be, through adjustment.

Emotional adjustment refers to personal adjustment or psychological adjustment (Egunsola, 2014). It is the maintenance of emotional equilibrium in the face of internal and external stressors. This is facilitated by cognitive processes of acceptance and adaptation. Amalu et al. (2023) reported that emotional adjustment is an important aspect of mental health because it can lead to a normal behaviour, whereas maladjustment leads to abnormal behaviour. It is therefore worthy of note that emotional adjustment is the maintenance of emotional equilibrium in the face of internal and external stressors. A good instance is the maintenance of emotional control and coping behaviour in the face of an identity crisis.

Adjustment is related with the mental set up of the children; how they think, behave and react to their environment. Society consists of several multidimensional complexities, and as a social being, every individual must perform some activities which will help them to cope with the social and cultural adjustment (Opo et al., 2019). The source stressed that in a simplified sense, it is the relationship that any organism establishes with respect to its environment. Thus, adjustment means reactions to the demands and pressures of social environment imposed upon the individual. In general, an individual who is well-adjusted will have an understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses and a tendency to play up strengths while limiting the appearance of weaknesses. Such an individual appreciates and aspires for hardwork by capitalizing on his/her strengths without being too far out of reach and setting up obtainable goals. Also, such individual must have positive attitude

and a tendency to find goodness in other people, objects and activities. A well-adjusted person will acknowledge others' weaknesses but not actively search for faults.

Adjustment, according to Adamu and Shehu (2017), is a behavioural process of balancing conflicting needs, or needs challenged by obstacles in the environment. People tend to regularly adjust to their environment to address these challenges such as when they are stimulated by their physiological state to seek food, they eat (if possible) to reduce their hunger and thus adjust to the hunger stimulus. However, adjustment disorder occurs when there is an inability to make a normal adjustment to a need or stress in the environment. This therefore called for measures to correct this disorder.

In adjustment, the two crucial factors are the individual and the environment. In the study of the individual, the considerations are the heredity and biological factors, the psychological factors, and the quality of socialization given to the child. According to Opoh et al. (2021), a successful emotional adjustment is crucial to having a high quality of life. Those who are unable to adjust emotionally well are more likely to have clinical anxiety or depression as well as experience feelings of hopelessness, difficulty concentrating, sleeping problems and reckless behaviour and general loss of memory.

However, this emotion could be stabilized in children through the feeling of confidence that comes from parents, teachers and significant others in their development. This comes in the form of encouragement and motivation given by these significant elements to help the growing child in achieving higher goals and in shaping destiny. This would enable them to know the response of handicapped students with regard to their involvement and with participation in their academic life. The importance of parents' involvement in their child's transition from home to school and to the society cannot be overemphasized. With the support of the family, this transition can be a positive experience for a child, giving him or her a sense of self-confidence and accomplishment.

The family atmosphere regulates the intimacy, cohesiveness, and flexibility of members and detects how they feel more positively about communication among themselves. Opoh et al., (2019) reveals that children learn about emotional regulation in the family through observation, parenting practices and behaviours and emotional climate of the family, as reflected in the quality of the attachment relationship, styles of parenting, family expressiveness and the emotional quality of the marital relationship. The child's family environment has a profound effect on his well-being. Beginning in infancy, a problematic home environment can disrupt the brain's stress response system, reduce the quality of caregiving a child receives, and interfere with social and psychological development. According to Opoh et al. (2024), children raised in different family contexts display

differential patterns of outcomes across a wide range of developmental domains. While family structure has been found to be associated with an array of adverse outcomes for children, does this also act on the child's emotional adjustment?

Sweeney and Bracken (2000) conducted a research on the influence of family structure and children's self-concept development. The research explored the relationship between students' multidimensional self-concepts as a function of students' family structure. Participants were 815 adolescent and preadolescent children, ages 9 to 19, selected from 17 sites across the four major regions of the United States. Students were classified into five family types: intact, reconstituted mother-headed, reconstituted father-headed, single parent mother-headed, single parent father-headed. Results indicated that the total self-concepts of students from single-parents families were significantly lower than the global scores of students from intact families. Family self-concepts of students from reconstituted families were significantly lower than students from intact families. This findings highlights the sensitivity of domain-specific self-concept. This implies that higher personal resilience, including coping, personal independence, and personal resilience was related to better academic performance.

Singh et al. (2017) studied the impact analysis of family structure on social and emotional maturity of adolescents. The study was designed and formulated to find out if types of family have any significant impact on social and emotional maturity of senior school adolescents of Pantnagar and to derive relationship between social and emotional maturity. 277 adolescents studying in class XI were taken randomly for the study. Self-designed socio-demographic questionnaire was used to study the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents of the study. Social and emotional maturity of the respondents were assessed through Rao's Social Maturity Scale and Emotional Maturity Scale, respectively. Results revealed that respondents from joint family were more personally, interpersonally and socially adequate and thus, socially mature than those from nuclear family. Similarly, they were significantly higher on emotional stability, emotional progression, and social maturity than those from nuclear family.

Azape (2010) studied family structure and emotional adjustment of students in secondary schools in Melbourne, Australia. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The entire population (census) of final year students in the study area was used as the study sample. Four research questions and hypotheses were used for the study with a 16-item questionnaire aimed at eliciting information from the respondents based on their personal perceptions. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to analyze the generated data. The results obtained showed that family structure has a significant relationship with students' emotional adjustments in secondary schools in the study area.

He concluded that family structure contributes to emotional adjustment of students generally.

In a similar way, Shabu (2011) carried out a study on family structure and secondary schools students' emotional adjustment in New York. Ex-post facto design was used for the study. Four hundred students were selected for the study via stratified random sampling technique. Three research questions and hypotheses were used in the study. A 12-item questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents on the basis of family structure and emotional adjustments of the students in secondary schools. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the generated data. The study revealed that family structure significantly influence the level of students' emotional adjustment in secondary schools in the study area. It was generally resolved that students' family structure significantly influences their emotional adjustment pattern. This study relate to the present study as family structure consists of the family variables that usher in students' emotional adjustment in schools. This implies that students' emotional adjustment is a product of a combination of family variables. The higher the occurrence of the family variables, the higher the level of students' emotional adjustment in schools.

In the same direction, Gor (2012) conducted a study on the impact of family structure and students' emotional adjustment in secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. Ex-post facto design was adopted for the study. A population of 700 students was used via stratified random sampling technique. Interview were granted to the respondents with a 16-items questionnaire aimed at eliciting information from the respondents on platform of family structure and students' emotional adjustment in secondary schools. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the generated data. The results obtained show that family structure of students had a significant impact on their emotional adjustment pattern. It was therefore concluded that family structure significantly influences the emotional adjustment of students in the study area. The study has a link to the present study as it conveys the principles of family variable via its structural perspectives. This implies that conducive family structure gives rise to good emotional adjustment of students. Thus, the pattern of family structure determines the mode of emotional adjustment of students generally.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to examine family structure and emotional adjustment of senior secondary school students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis formulated to guide the study is:

Ho1: There is no significant influence of family structure on emotional adjustment of students in Ogoja Education Zone

Methodology

The ex-post facto design was adopted for this study. The study adopted this design because it investigated a cause-and-effect relationship that could possibly exist between the two main variables under investigation by observing the existing conditions of the problem, obtaining data on the present status of the subject matter in relation to the variables and analyzing the data to establish the possible cause and effect.

The population of this study comprised 5,305 senior secondary school II (SSS 2) students in public secondary schools in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Two sampling approaches were used in selecting the sample for this study. These involved the use of stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The stratified sampling technique was used in view of the distinct sub-groups that are involved in this study like the local government areas that made up the research area and sex of participants used for the study. The simple random sampling was used for the randomization of students in the selected schools. The sample size for this study consists approximately 4% of the entire population. This gives a sample size of 200 SS2 students drawn from the selected schools. This sample comprised 108 male and 92 female students in the research area.

The instrument that was used in gathering data for this study is the Students' Family Structure and Emotional Adjustment Questionnaire (SFSEAQ). The instrument was made up of two sections, A and B. Section A was for demographic variables of the respondents indicating the structure of the family while Section B was a 15-item section to measure emotional adjustment using the 4-point Likert scale. To ascertain the validity of this instrument, the instrument was presented to two educational psychologists in Department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar, for scrutiny and modification.

To determine the reliability of the instrument designed by the researchers, a trial testing of the instrument was done using 30 students drawn from private schools in the research area who did not form part of the sample. The split-half method was adopted. The instrument was administered to the subjects and their responses split into two groups, one with odd numbers and the other with even numbers. The obtained data from the two groups was correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis and reliability coefficient of .72 was obtained.

The statistical tool used to analyze the data is Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) because family structure is categorized into married couple, co-habiting and separated couple.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant influence of family structure on emotional adjustment of students in Ogoja Education Zone.

To test this hypothesis, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used at 0.05 level of significance. Family structure was categorized into three groups including married, co-habiting and separated couples. The summary of the results is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the influence of family structure on emotional adjustment of students in Ogoja Education Zone (N = 200)

Family structure	N	Mean	SD			
Married couple	82	11.24	2.87			
Co-habiting	66	11.06	2.34			
Separated couple	52	11.00	2.83			
Total	200	11.29	2.57			
Source of variance	SS	DF	MS	F	Sig	
Between group	14.46	3	6.46			
Within groups	1587.563	197	7.51	.76	.419	
Total	1598.581					

Significant at 0.05 level; df = 3 and 197; critical f-value of 2.67

The summary of results presented in Table 1 shows that the calculated f-value of 0.76 was less than the tabulated f-value of 2.67 at 0.05 level of significance with 3 and 197 degrees of freedom. On this note, the null hypothesis was upheld. This means that, there is no significant influence of family structure on emotional adjustment of senior secondary school students in the study area.

Discussion of the findings

The hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of family structure on emotional adjustment of senior secondary school students. This null hypothesis was retained on the ground that the calculated F-values obtained from the analysis of data were statistically less than the critical F-value. The implication of this result is that the structure of the family is not a determinant of emotional adjustment of students in the research area. This

implies that there may be other factors influencing emotional adjustment of people outside the structure of the family they belong.

The finding of this hypothesis disagreed with the earlier finding of Shabu (2011) who studied family structure and secondary school student's emotional adjustment in New York using Ex-post facto design for the study. The study revealed that family structure significantly influences the level of students' emotional adjustment in secondary schools in the study area. It was generally resolved that students' family structure significantly influences their emotional adjustment pattern.

This finding further upturned the earlier finding of Azape (2010) who studied family structure and emotional adjustment of students in secondary schools in Melbourne, Australia. The results obtained showed that family structure has a significant relationship with students' emotional adjustments in secondary schools in the study area. The source concluded that family structure contributes to emotional adjustment of student generally by influencing the way and manner students respond to situations.

Conclusion

Though family is pivotal in the upbringing of the child and the child is a product of the family, the result of this study revealed that the structure of the family is not a significant influencer of emotional adjustment but may likely influence other attributes of the child. Students of this 21st century learning through social media can predict the emerging or evolving society and/or situations. Hence, the study concludes that there is no significant influence of family structure on emotional adjustment of students in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that parents should focus on the upbringing of their children rather than dwelling on circumstances surrounding the family. Hence, parents should not drag what affects their marriage to the life of their children.

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