

SELF-CONCEPT, FAMILY SIZE AND SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AS CORRELATES OF STUDENTS PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT AND STUDY BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

This paper describes a correlational survey study designed to investigate the influence of self-concept, family size and school learning environment on students' psychopathology and study behaviour. Six hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Stratified random method was used in selecting the subjects. Three psychological instruments: The Study Habit Inventory (SHI), the Adolescent Personal Data Inventory (APDI) and the psychopathology scale were ministered on 132 SS 3 students (71 girls and 61 boys) from eight secondary schools in Plateau State. The result of the ANOVA revealed that family size, self-concept were statistically significant for students' psychological adjustment while school location was statistically significant for study behaviour.

Keywords: Self-concept, family size, school learning environment, psychological adjustment, academic performance and study behavior.

Introduction

Background of the Study

Self-concept has been for many years, considered an educationally significant variable that posters the academic performance of the students. Self-concept is the conceptual understanding and persistent regard that sentient beings hold for their existence. In other words, it is the sum total of a person's knowledge and understanding of his or herself. Positive self-concept, for instance, is valued as a goal of education and socialization and is frequently regarded a potential facilitator of motivation and the achievement of desired outcome such as academic performance. Hence, self-concept attracts countless empirical studies in and outside Nigeria, According to Mustapha (2008) and Brass (2008) these studies have agreed with each other's conclusion that, self-concept is associated with many positive achievements and social behaviour including leadership ability, decreased anxiety, life ambition, career aspirations and improved academic and physical performance (Marsh, 2002).

Psychologists and educationists in behavioural sciences such as Piaget (1978) and Rogers (1980) have long been interested in the factors associated with differences in academic performance among learners. Gradually, they realized that academic

performance or failure did not hinge on intellectual ability only but also on the non-intellectual aspects of learner's personality. Of paramount importance, is the study habits construct because, its intrinsic characteristics have profound impact on students' academic performance as observed by Rolf (2007). A study habits constitutes all the skills and techniques put together in devotion to acquiring proper knowledge, or understanding of learning materials.

A study habits help the student develop an inner conviction -that he has the ability to practice, retain and recognize learning materials. However, failure to develop that inner conviction result in many students becoming academic casualties, which may not necessarily be attributed to low mental ability, teaching ineffectiveness, or inadequate instructional materials; but to their defective study habits. Eric, (2007) is of the view that, whenever a student adopts effective study habits his learning skills, his understanding of learning materials and his memory processing strategies as well as his general performance in academic subjects are improved appreciably.

A plethora of internal and external variables combined to create individual personalities, behaviours and psychopathologies supposedly unique to every human being. In the effort to improve students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor achievements in school learning, educational psychologists have continued to search for variables (internal and external) that could be manipulated in favor of students' academic gains. Of all the internal or personal variables, that have attracted researchers' attention and interest in the area of educational achievements, the self-concept seems the most popular. Turning to external or environmental considerations, the family size and school learning environment have also seemed highly correlated with academic achievement. Research has shown that students experience academic difficulties which are evidenced in their poor academic performance Bass (2008). This occurrence has been linked with the poor study habits of the students. Educational psychologists and researchers have long discovered that many students perform poorly in their academic work not because they do not possess the mental and cognitive ability to perform well but simply because they do not know or do not use the most effective methods of studying. Onyechi & Okere, (2007) observed that poor performance in school examination has been linked to a number of factors one of which is involvement in maladaptive behaviors. Malo (2010).

Statement of the Problem

The need to identify the factors that influence the study behavior of the secondary school students so that appropriate intervention strategies could be structured for them so as to modify their inefficient study habits. One of such factors from many investigations revealed a contrasting relationship between family size and students' academic achievement. According Rolt (2007) "poor housing and overcrowding home conditions affects child's reading, constructive play and his homework in general. This also have net-effect on the child study pattern. Mustapha (2008) also reported that the number of children of the same parents in the family was a significant predictor of achievement.

Also the number of children in a nuclear family affects the attention a child receives, academic motivation, and support from the parents. In his study Malo (2010) showed that family size is associated with educational aspiration of Nigeria; and that family size has effect on pupils' performance. Research on the relation between the structure of school learning environment and psychological adjustment has produced seemingly interesting results. A perceived stimulating environment affects positively the child's rate of growth and learning effectiveness. Various studies indicate that physical learning environment can affect self-development and academic performance. For example,

Akubue (2000) opined that physics students from schools that lacked the necessary laboratory facilities achieved very low in the SSSCE compared with their counterpart from schools with enriched laboratory facilities. Similarly, Malo (2010) pointed out that a beautiful scenery, clean and orderly environment and quiet surroundings are most likely to contribute to academic excellence among students. In line with this, US environmental agency declared that a healthy school environment is one of the keys to keeping young minds and bodies strong. Poor maintenance of school environment can cause or intensify illness among school children, resulting in higher rates of absenteeism, less time in the classroom and ultimately reduced academic achievement (US Environmental protection Agency).

Purpose of the Study

The present study was designed to investigate how students' disposition to maladaptive behaviour and their study habits are related to their levels of self-concept. It was also intended to find out the relationship between family size and the degree of psychopathology among Nigeria school children. The study also sought to examine if living and schooling in an urban or rural location has any impact on student's study habits and disposition to abnormal behaviour

Hypotheses

1. H₀₁: There will be no significant differences in the vulnerability to psychopathology between students from small size families and students from medium or large families.
2. H₁₂: Students from small size families will be less vulnerable to psychopathology than students from medium or large size families.
3. H₀₃: There will no significant differences between the mean scores on psychopathology scale for students with negative or positive self-concept.
4. H₁₄: Students with positive self-concept will be less vulnerable to psychopathology than students with negative self-concept.
5. H₀₅: There will be no significant differences between the mean scores on study behavior scale for students in urban and rural schools.

6. H₁₆: The study behavior scale for students living and schooling in an urban location will be statistically different from the mean scores of students living and schooling in a rural location.

Methodology

A correlational survey research design was employed in this study in which the researcher collected data from the respondents by means of rating scales administered to students to investigate the influence of self-concept, family size and school learning environment on students' psychological adjustment and study behavior of Nigerian secondary school children. The population comprises 1650 students drawn from eight different schools. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants. The sample specifically contained 132 secondary school students' made up of 71 girls and 61 boys from urban and rural schools were randomly selected from secondary schools in Plateau State.

Instruments

Three research instruments were used in this study. These were the Study Habit Inventory (SHI) adopted by Malo (2010) the Adolescent Personal Data Inventory (APDI) developed by the researcher and the psychopathology scale adopted by Akinbode (2013). The SHI has 45 items packaged in form of direct questions to which students were required to provide answers on a 5 point scale on how frequently they exhibited a particular study habit pattern. The SHI has been shown by studies (Malo 2010) to discriminate between groups of passing and failing students thereby attesting its validity. Using a test-retest technique, the SHI yielded a highly co-efficient ($r=0.83$) and has been construct validated. The APDI scale (A) consisted of 30 items designed to measure self-concept. Its internal consistency reliability using Alpha method ($r=0.78$). The validity was proven and its construct validity was established before it was used. The psychopathology scale consisted of 30 items measuring student's tendencies towards abnormal behaviour. The reliability index using test-retest approach yielded ($r=0.85$)

The SHI has a 5 point scale of "almost always" with a score of 5, to "almost never" with a score of 1. A score of 3,4,5 agonist each item indicated efficient study habit while a scale of 2 indicate a poor study habit.

The APDI also employed a 5 point scale from "least like me...1" to "most like me...5" with respect to each item on the scale.

Data Analysis

To assess the differences in the psychopathology and study habit pattern with respect to predictor variables, the rating given to items on each scales were summed up in accordance with the prescribed procedure in the manuals. The scores obtained were further coded and grouped into appropriate variables. on the basis of the predictor (independent) variables self-concept scores subject were grouped into positive and negative self-concept, family size into small, medium and large size families; learning

environment into rural urban. The data collected from the three instruments were analysis by a one way factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Table 1: Means, standard deviation and variance of the predictor variable (family size) and the criterion measure (students psychopathology)

Group	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Small size family	132	692	5.242424242	2.185056674
Medium size family	132		9.424242424	1.864445987
Large size family	132		19.59848485	10.79175341

The mean for small, medium and large families showed that the medium and large families have higher means than the small families, with the large families scoring higher.

Table 2: Summary of ANOVA for the small, medium and large families on psychopathology scale

Source of variance	SS	D F	MS	F	P-Value	F-CRIT	Decision p<0.05
Between groups	14392.36869	2	7196.184343	1454.631126	2.2473E-182	3.018684417	Reject
Within groups	1944.204545	39	4.947085357				
Total	16336.57323	39					

With reference to table 2, the one way ANOVA run on scores showed a significant effect of family size at .05 level of significant. The following deduction was therefore derived from the result analysis: that students from small size families show less psychological manifestation than students from medium, or large size families. Consequently, the first Ho could not be accepted

Table 3: Means, standard deviation and variance of the predictor variables (self-concept) and the criterion measure (students psychopathology)

Group	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Negative self-concept	132	3393	25.70454545	28.57616239
Positive self-concept	132	6554	49.65151515	136.9310664

A cursory look at the table revealed that students with high positive self-concept indicates higher mean than students with low negative self-concept

Table 4: Summary of ANOVA for negative and positive self-concept on psychopathology scale

Source of variance	SS	D F	MS	F	P. Value	F-CRIT	Decision
Between groups	37848.18561	1	37848.18561	457.3599097	2.12469E-59	3.877195933	Reject
Within groups	21681.44697	262	82.753614				
Total	59529.63258	263					

Table 4 shows a significant relationship between students’ self-concept and their vulnerability to psychopathology. The following findings revealed from the analyses that high positive self-concept students show less vulnerability to psychopathology than low negative self-concept student. Consequently, the second null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5: Means, standard deviation and variance of the predictor variables (school learning environment) and the criterion measure (students study habit).

Group	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Rural location	132	3281	24.85606061	25.71194772
Urban location	132	6801	51.52272727	65.88497571

Table 6: Summary of ANOVA for social learning environment on study habit scale

Sources of variance	SS	D F	MS	F	P. Value	F-CRIT	Decision
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Betwe en groups	46933.333 33	1 33	46933.333 33	1024.7796 89	1.56247E- 92	3.8771959 33	Reject
Within groups	11999.196 97	26 2	45.798461 72				
Total	58932.530 3	26 3					

Table 6 shows the ANOVA for the study behavior of students and the location of school. The effect of location was found to be statistically significant. In effect, the null hypothesis three could not be accepted. Living and schooling in an urban area have been found to exert a lot of influence on students' study behavior.

Discussions

There is considerable evidence from this research that students with positive self-concept were better adjusted than students with negative self-concept. The findings are in corroboration with the works of Mussin (1969) and Kagan (1974) who through their research came to conclusion that a favorable self-concept is essential to personal happiness, development and effective functioning of the child. Also the work corroborated with a majority of past research findings Onyechi & Okere (2007) without any controversy; students who possess high self-concept are sufficiently less vulnerable to psychopathology as compared to negative or low self-concept students. Positive self-concept no doubt leads to adequate psycho-social adjustment. Inversely, individuals who presented a negative self-image tend to perceive themselves as helpless and inferior, have difficulty in either giving or receiving love, and tend to feel isolated and alone, feel depressed and derogate their own potentials. Another finding of the study that students from small families are also supported by earlier research findings of Malo (2010).

The present findings have also found support in the work of Andrew (1976) who studied delinquent children and noticed a positive correlation between large families and psychopathology.

The findings that students in urban schools have better study behavior than their counterparts in rural schools is somehow revealing. Environment in which students live and learns have been found to correlate with achievement tests. A perceived stimulating environment affects positively the child's rate of growth and learning effectiveness. This is supported by the works of researchers. Their studies revealed that physics students from rural schools that lacked the necessary laboratory facilities achieved very low in the SSCE as compared with their counter part from urban schools with enriched laboratory facilities. It is most likely that students in the urban environment receive adequate psychological care and guidance.

Recommendations

1. Schools should be well equipped especially laboratories.
2. Students should be helped by educational psychologist and guidance counsellors to adjust properly in school.
3. Family should try to help their children to grow psychologically the fewer the children the better.
4. Students should be encouraged to be proud of who they are and where they come from
5. Good study habits should be encouraged in every child.

Conclusion

The study found that the level of students' perception of self has a lot of influence in psychopathological disposition. Students with high positive self-esteem and self-concept seem more psychologically adjusted than the low negative self concept students. Furthermore, the study found out that large size families are vulnerable to psychopathology. They are emotionally imbalanced and hence their attitude towards academic achievements. Students leaving and schooling in an urban area are better adjusted than rural students.

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