

Sibling Relationships as Correlate of Adolescent's Adjustment in Secondary Schools in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigated sibling relationships as correlate of adolescent's adjustment in secondary schools. The area of the study was udi education zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between sibling relationships and adolescent's adjustment in secondary schools. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The sample of the study was 420 senior secondary class two students drawn through multistage sampling technique from a population of 2446. One instrument Sibling Relationship and Adolescent's School Adjustment Questionnaire (SRASQA) in two clusters was used for data collection. Pearson's product moment correlation was used to answer the research questions while multiple regression was used to analyze the hypotheses. Major findings of the study revealed that the nature of adolescent's sibling relationship is positive. Adolescents adjust positively academically and negatively socio-psychologically. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in schools. Based on the findings, it was recommended that adolescent students be given orientation geared towards building healthy relationship with siblings through cooperation and support. Parents, guardians and the society at large should be sensitized on the need for the adolescents to have good school adjustment. They should be made to understand that how a child is reared goes a long way to determine the later adjustment in life. Children should be treated with equal love and care.

Key words: Sibling relationships, adolescents, adjustment and secondary school, cooperation, determine

INTRODUCTION

Adjustment is necessary in one's daily life. Life is full of challenging situations and individuals make frantic but sometimes forlorn effort to conquer it. Individuals struggle to get adjusted to the situation they find themselves in school. For instance, how to reconcile parent's and peer norms, whether to obey rules and regulations or not, whether to give in to peer pressure or not, to engage in risky behaviour, whether to continue schooling or drop out, whether to build a working relation with others or be isolated has to do with adolescent's adjustment. Adjustment could be seen as a process by which adolescents master and transcend the challenges of life by utilizing a variety of techniques and strategies (Steinberg, 2011). Steinberg maintained that human beings have an amazing ability to adapt to the demands of life. This ability if channeled well results in positive adjustment in one's life. Weiten and Lloyd (2003) defined adjustment as the psychological processes through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

Adjustment could therefore be seen as the individual's way of adapting to changing situations. According to Arkoff in Mangal (2002), there is nothing as satisfactory or complete adjustment which can be achieved once and for all time, it is something that is constantly achieved and re-achieved. Here, adjustment has no finality; the process cannot reach a static position. In other words, it is continuous both the individual and his environment are in a constant process of change. Haars (2000) maintained that maladjustment may result if the needs of the individual and the demands of the environment are not fully satisfied.

An individual is not born adjusted or maladjusted, but his physical, mental and emotional potentialities which are influenced and directed by the factors of environment in which he found himself determine his adjustment. Every individual from the time he steps out of the family and goes to school makes a long series of adjustments between himself and the school environment. The school being the child's first contact with the world outside the home poses a lot of challenges which the child has to struggle with in order to achieve his set

objectives of entering the school. School adjustment is the individual's ability to cope with the demands of school learning (Mangle, 2008). School adjustment is a multifaceted task involving adaptation to the intellectual, socio-emotional, and behavioral demands of the school (Chin and Yu, 2008; Liebkind *et al.*, 2004). School adjustment could be viewed as comprising academic, social and emotional adjustment. It could be taken to mean the process the students adopt in maintaining a balance between their academic, social and emotional needs and the school environment (Agbakwuru and Agbakwuru, 2012). A well-adjusted individual achieves harmony between himself and his environment. In other words, an adolescent who is well adjusted in school maintains some level of balance or rather achieves harmony between himself and his school or learning environment. Achieving harmony between self and the school environment include: adjustment to the buildings and school routine; adjustment to academic, co-curricular activities; psychological adjustment; adjustment to and or within the self; and social adjustment. A well-adjusted school adolescent possesses among others the following characteristics: goal-oriented, persistent in school tasks, high self-esteem, school connectedness, knows his strengths and weaknesses, respects people and obeys rules and regulations.

The adolescents in secondary schools are found all over Nigeria; hence how they adjust in school is a great concern.

Bonomo *et al.* (2004) maintains that adolescence is a time when adolescents undergo substantial changes whilst they explore their sense of identity and self-worth, gain intellectual maturity, adapt to society's imperatives and get ready for adult roles. Adolescents in school strive hard to continue their academic pursuit, therefore proper socialization, cooperation and support from significant figures especially from siblings may contribute to their adjustment in schools. Emerging findings from studies in family socialization seem to suggest that sibling relationship could result in positive or negative outcome (Pike *et al.*, 2005). Sibling relationship built on cooperation, commitment, responsiveness and warmth is a strong foundation for relationship with others outside the family. This relationship serves to promote peer interactions in other social contexts, strengthen adolescent's capacity to cope with stress, promote resiliency thus good school adjustment.

Sibling relationship is the friendship, warmth and caring brothers and sisters share. Sibling relationships have been described as the warmth and sibling's involvement in each other's lives, as well as conflict and rivalry (Deckard and Dunn, 2002). Sibling relationships

make up a child's first social life and are the basis for his interactions with people outside the family. The relationships provide an important and unique context for children's social, emotional and cognitive development (Brody, 2004). The Child Welfare Information Gateway in 2014 noted that through the relationships with siblings, children learn skills such as conflict resolution, negotiation and support. Siblings teach each other essential social skills. They model appropriate social behaviour for one another such as how to relate with each other, how to act at school and how to relate with peers. Research on adolescents suggests that positive sibling relationship can promote healthy and adaptive functioning while negative relationship can increase vulnerabilities and problem behaviours (Milevsky and Levitt, 2005). Sibling relationship could either be positive or negative. Positive sibling relationship is the cooperation and commitments among siblings. This relationship serves to promote peer interactions in other social contexts, strengthen children's capacity to cope with stress and thus can serve to promote resiliency. Positive sibling relationship is often a source of emotional support for one another. This support is often vital for siblings experiencing life's adversities. The relationship helps siblings realize that they are not alone. It also allows them to share disturbing information with trustworthy confidant. By so doing, they are building their social network through communicating and interacting with each other, they learn assertiveness which in turn leads to proper school adjustment. Positive sibling relationships are perceived to be important influences on adjustment in general and also serve to moderate the impact of negative experiences by adolescents. Siblings with positive relationship are more likely to be adjusted socially, psychologically and emotionally. Positive sibling relationships have been linked with the development of pro-social skills such as empathy and cooperation, development of psychosocial competence and adjustment (Pike *et al.*, 2005; Branje *et al.*, 2004; Teti, 2002). Studies have shown that adolescents tend to develop mature identity status that is necessary for school adjustment when their siblings provide them with warmth, support, intimacy, caring and encourage their quest for independence.

Also, siblings mutually promote negative relationship through deviant talk, when they reward one another with positive regard of antisocial behaviours and by imitation of stories and plans about risky and delinquent behaviours and activities (Bullock and Dishion, 2002). Possibly, adolescents learn undesirable behaviours like smoking, drinking and other delinquent acts from exposure to an older sibling's problem

behaviours. Younger siblings have been found to be at an elevated risk of drug use, risky sexual behavior and delinquency when their older sibling was engaged in these activities (East and Khoo, 2005). Again, when children perceive parental partiality, favouritism, comparing and typecasting, it increases feelings of competition, rivalry, conflict and jealousy among siblings. This conflictive, violent and unresponsiveness in sibling relationships are linked to adjustment problems during adolescence (Oliva and Arranz, 2005). They found out in their study that having supportive sibling relationship is related to adolescent's social and personal adjustment and that poor sibling adjustment in school is probably as a result of the negative effects of everyday situations of rivalry and conflict which outweighs the benefits of any support that may be provided. Despite all these, some of the adolescents may have adjustment problems in school which may accrue from unresponsiveness, lack of commitment, rivalry and conflicts from siblings. However, the potential of sibling relationships lie in promoting proper adjustment in school or adjustment problems during adolescence.

The psycho-sexual theory of development shares emphasis on early childhood experiences. The psycho-sexual theory maintained that early experiences shape one's personality for an entire lifetime and psychological problems in adulthood may have their origins in difficult or traumatic childhood experiences. Siblings play important roles in providing early childhood experiences. The nature of sibling relationships tends to have relationship with the adjustment of the individual during adolescence stage. However, it is not clear the nature of adolescent's sibling relationships and the relationship it has with adolescent's adjustment in secondary schools. It is against this background that the study sought to investigate what relationship exists between sibling relationships and adolescent's adjustment in secondary schools in Udi education zone.

Statement of problem: It has been observed in Udi education zone that adolescents face a number of adjustment problems in school such as poor academic achievement, lack of social competence and socialized aggression. Adolescents face lots of issues and they dissipate lots of energy trying to identify who they are. The search for identity extends to relationship with siblings where they can find answers. Unfortunately, competition, rivalry, conflict and jealousy and unresponsiveness among siblings instead expose them to varying degrees of social ills like substance use and abuse, prostitution, stealing, premarital sex, perverse sexual activities (gay, lesbianism), bullying

(cyber bullying), disobedience, smoking cigarette, alcoholism, truancy, lateness, examination malpractice, dropping out of school, social withdrawal and poor performance. Therefore, the problem of this study posed as questions thus: in what way do sibling relationships correlate with adolescent's adjustment in secondary schools in Udi education zone of Enugu State?

Research questions: The following research questions were used for the study:

- What is the nature of adolescent's sibling relationship
- What is the nature of adolescent's adjustment in school
- What is the relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school

Research hypothesis: The following hypothesis guided the study:

H₀: there is no significant relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a correlational research design and was conducted in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The population comprised all the 2446 Senior Secondary School Class Two Students. A multistage sampling technique was used to draw 420 secondary class two students from urban and rural schools in the area.

The instrument used for data collection for this study was a researcher's structured questionnaire titled Sibling Relationship and Adolescent's School Adjustment Questionnaire (SRASAQ). The instrument is made up of two sections A and B. Section A collected information on student's demographic variables while section B consists of 45 items in two clusters. Cluster A with 15 items elicited information on sibling relationships and cluster B with 30 items adolescent's adjustment questionnaire sort information in two dimensions academic adjustment and socio-psychological, respectively. Each questionnaire item was assigned a four point response scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2, 1 for positive response items and 1, 2, 3, 4, respectively for negative items. The instrument was face validated by two experts from educational foundations (educational psychology unit) and one from measurement and evaluation, all from

University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Cronbach alpha method was used to test for the internal consistency with a co-efficient of 0.64 for Cluster A which is items on sibling relationships and 0.77 for cluster B on items for adolescent's adjustment.

Research questions 1 and 2 were answered using mean and standard deviation while research question 3 was answered using pearson product moment correlation co-efficient. The null hypothesis was tested using multiple regression.

RESULTS

Research question 1 (what is the nature of adolescent's sibling relationship): Result in Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents on the nature of adolescent's sibling relationship. Result shows that the male adolescents had a mean score of 2.73 with a standard deviation of 0.36 while the female adolescents had a mean score of 2.81 with a standard deviation of 0.32. The total mean and standard deviation for both male and female adolescents are 2.78 and 0.34, respectively. Since, the mean responses were >2.50 set as criterion level, this means that there exists a cordial relationship among siblings. In other words, the nature of adolescent's sibling relationship is positive.

Research question 2 (what is the nature of adolescent's adjustment in school): Result in Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents on the nature of adolescent's adjustment in school. Result indicates that on academic adjustment, the mean score was 2.54 with a standard deviation of 0.39 while on socio-psychological adjustment, the mean score was 2.47 with a standard deviation of 0.36. Result indicates that the adolescents in school responded positively to academic adjustment. This is because their mean ratings are >2.50 set as criterion level. On socio-psychological adjustment, the mean rating was <2.50 , this means that socio-psychological adjustment of the adolescents in school is low. The result shows that adolescents in school adjust positively academically and negatively socio-psychologically.

Research question 3 (what is the relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school): In order to answer research question 3, the scores from the responses of the respondents on sibling relationship were correlated with the scores of adolescent's adjustment in school. The result shows that the correlation coefficient obtained between sibling

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the nature of adolescent's sibling relationship

| Variables | N | \bar{X} | SD | Remark |
|-----------|-----|-----------|------|----------|
| Male | 192 | 2.73 | 0.36 | Positive |
| Female | 228 | 2.81 | 0.32 | Positive |
| Total | 420 | 2.78 | 0.34 | Positive |

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the nature of adolescent's adjustment in school

| Variables | N | \bar{X} | SD | Remark |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----------|------|----------|
| Academic adjustment | 420 | 2.54 | 0.39 | Positive |
| Socio-psychological adjustment | 420 | 2.47 | 0.36 | Negative |

Table 3: Pearson's product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school

| Variables | \bar{X} | SD | N | R | R ² |
|----------------------|-----------|------|-----|------|----------------|
| Sibling relationship | 2.78 | 0.34 | 420 | 0.22 | 0.05 |
| School adjustment | 2.54 | 0.39 | | | |

$\alpha = 0.05$; R² = coefficient of determination

Table 4: Analysis of the relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school

| Variables | N | R | Sig. (2 tailed) | Remark |
|-------------------------|-----|------|-----------------|--------|
| Sibling relationship | 420 | 0.22 | 0.00 | S |
| Adolescent's adjustment | | | | |

$\alpha = 0.05$; S = Significant

relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school was 0.22. This means that there exist a positive relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school. Table 3 also shows that the coefficient of determination (R²) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.22 was 0.05. This coefficient of determination (R²) indicates that 5% of adolescent's adjustment in school is attributed to or predicted by sibling relationship. This means that 95% of the variation in adolescent's adjustment in school is attributed to other factors other than sibling relationship.

Hypothesis (there is no significant relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school): The result in Table 4 shows that the correlation coefficient between Sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school was 0.22 and the significant or probability value obtained from the relationship between the two variables was 0.00. This probability value of 0.00 was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found to be significant because 0.00 is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school is therefore rejected. Inference drawn therefore is that there is a significant relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school. This result shows that sibling relationship significantly predicts adolescent's adjustment in school.

DISCUSSION

The result of the study revealed that the nature of sibling relationship is positive. This means that there is cooperation, warmth, support, commitment and responsiveness among siblings. The findings of this study is in line with the study of Oliva and Arranz (2005) which revealed that having supportive sibling relationship is related to adolescent's social and personal adjustment. Also, in consonance with the findings of the present study is the postulation of Teti (2002) which say that sibling relationship plays a major role in the development of social skills since children spend the majority of time with their siblings and learn how to interact with others. Similarly (Pike *et al.*, 2005) inferred that sibling relationship have been linked with the development of pro-social skills such as empathy and cooperation, development of psychosocial competence of children and a host of better outcome. This means that sibling's commitment, co-operation and support to one another not only leads to positive relationship but also empowers the siblings and give them the necessary skills and capability to adapt to any situation in life. This could be achieved through the direction and guidance of parents and older siblings in the family.

As regards the nature of adolescent's adjustment in school, the present study found that adolescents have positive adjustment academically and negative adjustment socio-psychologically. The findings of this study disagree with the postulations of Chin and Yu (2008), Liebkind *et al.* (2004) that school adjustment is multifaceted task that involves adaptation to the intellectual, socio-emotional and behavioural demands of the school. Instead, the study revealed that adolescents in school have positive academic adjustment and negative socio-psychological adjustment. By all indications, it's not a proper adjustment because for adjustment in school to be complete, there should be balance in academic adjustment and socio-psychological adjustment. However, the nature of adolescent's adjustment in school should be such that encompasses balance in both academic and socio-psychological dimension and not just one sided.

The result of the study indicates that there is a positive relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school. The findings of this study is in tandem with that of Oliva and Arranz (2005) whose study revealed that having supportive sibling relationship is related to adolescent's social and personal adjustment and that poor sibling adjustment in school is probably as a result of the negative effects of everyday situations of rivalry and conflict which outweighs the

benefits of any support that may be provided. The findings of this study is also in agreement with the findings by Branje *et al.* (2004) which revealed that support from a sibling is mostly negatively related to externalizing problems; sibling problem behaviour is strongly related to internalizing problems. The adjustment adolescents develop over time is as associated with either sibling's support or problem behavior as the case may be. The result indicated that supportive sibling relationship is associated with good adjustment while problem behaviours among siblings is associated with poor adjustment. It can rightly be inferred from the postulations of Yeh that positive sibling relationship as regards to warmth, closeness, responsiveness and supportiveness were associated with good levels of school adjustment.

Since positive sibling relationship is necessary for adolescent's proper adjustment in school, Brody (2004); Milevsky and Levitt, (2005) reiterated that adolescents tend to develop mature identity status that is necessary for school adjustment when their siblings provide them with warmth, support intimacy, caring and encourage their quest for independence.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study revealed that the nature of sibling relationship is positive; results on the nature of adolescent's adjustment found that adolescents have positive adjustment academically and negative adjustment socio-psychologically; the result also showed that there is a positive relationship between sibling relationship and adolescent's adjustment in school. Counsellors/ educational psychologists, teachers, parents, significant adults and the society at large should help adolescent students understand the importance of positive sibling relationships in their life. Imperatively, such sibling relationship engenders positive outcomes which will lead to proper adjustment in school. Adolescent students should be enlightened through orientation geared towards building healthy relationship with siblings such as support and cooperation among siblings. Parents, guardians and the society at large should be sensitized on the need for the adolescents to have good school adjustment. They should be made to understand that how a child is reared goes a long way to determine the later adjustment in life. Children should be treated with equal love and care. Parents should avoid differential treatment and typecasting of their children which usually give rise to conflicts and rivalry amongst siblings. School counselors and educational psychologists should put in effort to inculcate in the adolescent students coping skills for adjustment both in school and at home.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have some educational implications for the parents, adolescent students, teachers and counselors/ psychologists. The findings of this study will assist parents to understand the need to be warm, supportive and responsive to their children. This will help the children to develop more positive attitude towards each other and others outside their home. The adolescents should devote more time to building close knit relationship with their siblings.

Teachers should put educational programmes that will help adolescents in schools understand the need to build commitment, warmth cooperation and responsiveness with their siblings. School counselors and educational psychologists should wake up to their responsibilities by offering proper guidance and orientation for the adolescents in schools. The guidance and orientation will enable the adolescents to understand how critical the adolescence stage is and help them make realistic decisions concerning their developmental stage.

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