

CHILD ABUSE AND PARENTAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND ON PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED ADOLESCENTS IN MAINLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

The study examined child abuse and parental socio-economic background on psychosocial adjustment among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State. To guide the study, three research hypotheses were formulated and tested. One hundred and fifty (150) respondents (SS II students) were selected as sample and multi-stage sampling process was employed for this study. A self-structured questionnaire titled: Child Abuse and Parents' Socioeconomic Status Influence on Adolescents' Psychosocial Adjustment Questionnaire (CAPSSIAPAQ) was used to collect data from the selected respondents. The instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.71. Independent t-test statistics tool was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that there was a significant difference between child abuse and students' self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents, there was a significant difference between peer pressure and violent behaviour among emotionally disturbed adolescents and there was a significant difference between occupation of parents and students' self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents. Based on the findings of the study, the study recommended among others that parents should not neglect and abuse their children. They should rather ensure that they are well treated and taken care of adequately. This is because child neglect has negative impact on social and psychological adjustment of such child. Also, professional counsellors should continuously orientate the adolescents during group counseling on the dangers of negative peer influence.

Keywords: Child Abuse, Emotional Disorder, Family Size, Parental Socio-Economic Status, Psychosocial Adjustment

Introduction

The pivotal role that parents play in a child's development is undisputed. The training given to a child, to a large extent, tend to determine his or her value orientation. The parenting styles of individual also determine how the child may adjust to the society. There are different parenting types. These parenting styles have a way of affecting the value orientation of individual adolescents and their adjustment in the society. The parenting styles, goes a long way in determining how an individual sees his or herself, perception concerning his or her physical, social and psychological aspiration and adjustment in the society in which he or she lives. It is therefore important to study the different parenting styles and ascertain how they determine the value orientation of the individual adolescent.

Parenting plays crucial roles in adolescents' transition to adulthood. Parenting has been recognized as a major vehicle in socializing the child (Utti 2016; Ihekoronye et al., 2020; Opara et al.; 2020). Parenting according to Okapko (2018) and Ofoegbu (2017) is the act of parenthood, the child upbringing, training rearing or child education. The training given to a child, to a large extent determines his or her self-concept. The parenting styles determine how the child will adjust to the society emotionally and in school academically. It is therefore important to study parenting styles and ascertain how these styles impact the psychosocial adjustment of the individual adolescent. Adolescence is defined by Santrock (2018) as a transition period between childhood and adulthood. Within this stage the child's energy level is high and exuberant. This predisposes them towards some maladaptive behaviours such as truancy, disrespect for elders (Ifeakor & Akujieze, 2018) drug abuse, cultism (Umeano 2016; Ogunode & Olofu, 2023), poor self-concept and other defeatist attitude, (Uzoezie 2016).

The word child abuse is sometimes used as child maltreatment. It is any form of physical, psychological, social, emotional and sexual maltreatment of a child whereby the survival, safety, self-esteem, growth and development of the child are endangered (Ngwoke & Eze, 2016; Ogunode et al., 2024). Child abuse has become an apparent endless and vicious cycle that hurts the image of the country and the dignity of those involved. There are four major categories of child abuse: neglect, sexual abuse, psychological and emotional abuse. Child maltreatment is any act or series of acts of commission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm, potential harm or threat to a child (Nja et al, 2025; Ibok et al, 2025; Inman, Howard, Beaumont & Walker 2017).

Child abuse has been recognised as a violation of the rights of the child through adoption of the convention on the rights of a child by many countries including Nigeria (Nwankwo, 2016). This convention recognises the significance of liberty, equality and nurturance as essential for the preservation of children's integrity as individuals. Some of these principles include respect for the dignity of children as members of the human community; family protection and assistance to sustain children in natural environment for their growth and well-being; state protection of children from exploitation and abuse.

Psychosocial development of a child is a function of the family size, socio-economic status of the parent, relationship between the members of the family and other factors not covered in this research work (Bessong et al, 2024; Bessong et al, 2025; Ajila & Olutola, 2015; Ebele & Olofu, 2020). This spells the influence the home exerts on a child. Naturally, every child misbehaves from time to time. This is always distressing to parents because they would like to be perfect parent of perfect children. Emotional adjustment of students is also one of the concepts that maybe affected by parents' income, educational level, educational and occupational level, emotional adjustment is a phrase used to denote positive mental health (WHO, 2015). The process conceptualization of emotional adjustment reflects whether an individual is able to cope effectively with the demands of the environmental context as well as with the stress created by these demands. Thus, as a process, emotional adjustment reflects the relative adaptation of an individual to changing environmental conditions. Emotional adjustment is a popular outcome measure in psychological research, and often measures such as self-esteem or the absence of distress, anxiety or depression are used as indicators of adjustment. It is against this background that this study examined child abuse and parental socio-economic background on psychosocial adjustment among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State.

Research Hypotheses

The followings hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. There is no significant difference between child abuse and students' self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State.
2. There is no significant difference between peer pressure and violent behaviour among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State.
3. There is no significant difference between occupation of parents and students' self-esteem emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research. The method was used because it provides the basic data needed from the respondents on their experiences and opinions on the issues for this study in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State which was one of the 20 Local Government Areas in Lagos State. It falls within the metropolitan Lagos and has a total population of 1,935,295 in the proportion of 893,684 for male and 1,041,611 for female residents (Lagos State Government, 2019). There are ten public senior secondary schools and 14 junior secondary schools making a total of 24 public secondary schools as at the time of carrying out this research. Mainland was chosen for this study because it was among the most populated areas of the state that inhabits people from different ethnic groups in the country. The population of this study consisted of all public senior secondary school in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. However, SS II students were considered most appropriate for the study because they were in the second terminal class and were not burdened with the pressure of preparing for external examinations.

Multiple stage process was used in this study. Firstly, stratification sampling technique was used to select 3 schools out of the 10 schools in the local government. These schools were coeducational (mixed) schools comprising both male and female students. Furthermore, fifty (50) comprising of male and female students were selected from SS II class in each school from the three departments (Science, Commercial and Arts/Humanities) using simple random sampling technique. Hence, the sample for the study comprised 150 SS II students.

The instrument used in the study for the collection of data from the respondents was a self-designed questionnaire titled "Child Abuse and Parents' Socioeconomic Status Influence on Adolescents' Psychosocial Adjustment Questionnaire (CAPSSIAPAQ)". The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Sections A and B. Section A was devoted to the respondents' bio-data such as gender, age and class arm. Section B specifically was designed to generate responses that enabled the researcher to test the hypotheses of the study. Section B took the format of the modified 4-point Likert scale. It had four optional responses vis-à-vis, Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D).

For the reliability of the instrument, a pilot survey was conducted on 20 senior secondary two (SS II) students in another school which was not included in the main study. Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis was employed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to determine the reliability coefficient of the research instrument. Hence, a coefficient value of 0.71 was obtained to show the reliability of the instrument.

Results

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis one states that there is no significant difference between child abuse and students' self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State.

Table 1:
Difference between child abuse and students' self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-calc	t-tab
Child Abuse	150	14.24	3.58	148	4.67	1.98
Self-Esteem	150	10.62	2.32			

Tabulated value of t at 0.05

Table 1 indicates that the value of $t_{(cal)}$ of independent sample t-test was calculated to be 4.67, which was significant in the light of the fact that is greater than tabulated $t_{(tab)}$ value of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance given 148 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, the results revealed that there is a significant influence of child abuse on students' self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State.

Hypothesis two states that there is no significant difference between peer pressure and violent behaviour among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State.

Table 2:
Difference between peer pressure and child abuse among emotionally disturbed adolescents

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-calc	t-tab
Peer Pressure	150	15.17	3.84	148	5.07	1.98
Violent Behaviour	150	14.24	3.58			

Tabulated value of t at 0.05

Table 2 indicates that the value of $t_{(cal)}$ of independent sample t-test was calculated to be 5.07, which was significant in the light of the fact that is greater than tabulated $t_{(tab)}$ value of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance given 148 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, the results revealed that there is a significant influence of peer pressure on child abuse among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State.

Hypothesis three states that there is no significant influence of occupation of parents on self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State.

Table 3:
Influence of occupation of parents on self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-calc	t-tab
Occupation of Parents	150	14.24	3.58	148	6.16	1.98
Self-esteem	150	18.17	4.13			

Tabulated value of t at 0.05

Based on inferential statistics, Table 3 indicates that the value of $t_{(cal)}$ of independent sample t-test was calculated to be 6.16, which is significant in the light of the fact that is greater than tabulated $t_{(tab)}$ value of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance given 148 degrees of

freedom. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. The results of inferential statistics evidently revealed that broken homes significantly impacted students' social adjustment.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant difference between child abuse and students' self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State. This finding was in line with Pandey (2017) who identified that child maltreatment was found positively related with lower level of motivation and aspiration among adolescents and abuse contributed favorably to heightened level of depression in children. Also, Soler (2018) reported that there is an inverse relationship between different types of abuses and neglectful behavior and various domains of self-esteem. Moreover, abusive treatments by their parents or care givers experienced by children exerted diminishing self-esteem. Likewise, Tyler (2016) asserted social self-esteem was predicted by physical neglect too. Furthermore, home & parents' self-esteem was also significantly predicted by three factors i.e. physical abuse, physical neglect and sexual abuse. Similarly, for school & academic self-esteem again physical abuse contributed negatively. In another study focusing on childhood mistreatment's long term psychological results, it is revealed that psychological abuse lowers self-esteem levels and creates tendency towards developing depression (Leslie & Brassard, 2017).

Hypothesis two found that there is a significant difference between peer pressure and violent behaviour among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State. This finding supported Rutter (2016) who asserted that sometimes willingly or unwillingly it is happening that parents/ teachers unable to care and console teenagers. This leads to more influence by their peers as they require some support being a human being. Also, Uzozie (2016) stated that many teenagers are not happy with dos and don'ts of their parents/teachers. They want to get some new experience which is different than the routine activities in life. They want to get more liberty and to live freely likewise some of their peers do. So, this gives more incline towards peer influence than parents/teachers. The effects of negative peer influence as noted by Onohwosafe (2017) on adolescents may be numerous and these could include alienation from the family, disobedience and total disregard for the opinions and values of their parents. Girls see themselves as "sexualized objects" that is, uses their sexual organs as weapon to conquer while boys exhibit their manhood through "sexual conquest that is, using their sex libido for sexual satisfaction. With misinformation those who choose to use condom during sex sometimes use them wrongly.

Hypothesis three found that there is a significant difference between occupation of parents and students' self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State. This finding was in line with Al-Matalka (2018) who noted that families with high occupation level are more likely to recognize and support their children with their homework and aspire to a good career. Also, Okafor (2018) asserted that parents with better work and higher education tend to have a higher education level and performance to their children. Obisesan (2017) also asserted that parent's occupation status and academic performance have a significant relationship, it is proved that higher income of parents can give better performance on students' performance (Bessong et al., 2024). Jeyenes (2016) also discovered that parental occupational status, and income level and health status of the family influence emotional adjustment of students. Also, Ebenebe and Unachukwu (2017) had noted that occupation and income level of parents predisposes them towards the capital input in child socialization. Similarly, Wilson and Herrnstein (2017) reported that parental background support in relation to occupation has relationship with students' psychosocial adjustment. Also, parental background support in relation to home environment has

relationship with students' psychosocial adjustment and academic performance. Ezeji (2016) noted that parents like their children to take to their occupations. Such parents include lawyers, doctors, and musicians among others. Uwoma (2006) in her study was also of the opinion that most vocational students were children whose parents were farmers or craftsmen, he therefore concluded that parental occupation significantly. Furthermore, Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates and Pettit (2017) pointed out that children from families with low socio-economic status are at a greater risk of hunger, homelessness, sickness, physical and mental disabilities, violence, teen parenthood, family stress and educational failure.

Conclusion

It was established through this study that there is a significant influence of child abuse and parental socio-economic background on psychosocial adjustment among emotionally disturbed adolescents in Mainland Local Government Area Lagos State. Based on the findings of the study, the study concluded that there is a significant difference between child abuse and students' self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents, there is a significant difference between peer pressure and violent behaviour among emotionally disturbed adolescents and there is a significant difference between occupation of parents and students' self-esteem among emotionally disturbed adolescents.

It is evident from the findings of this investigation that family background greatly influenced students' social adjustment. This is because the family forms the foundation for the child's first social environment. The child's education starts from the home and spills over to other institutions such as the school. The family therefore influences the child's social adjustment and education to a large extent. In Nigeria, the family still remains the dominant and significant group into which the child is biologically, psychologically and socially attached.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents should not neglect and abuse their children. They should rather ensure that they are well treated and taken care of adequately. This is because child neglect has negative impact on social and psychological adjustment of such child.
2. Professional counselors should continuously expose the adolescents during group counseling on the dangers of negative peer influence.
3. Parents should endeavour to provide basic facilities to their children as well as enforce discipline, when necessary, in order to enhance their moral development and not leave them to the prangs of delinquent.

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