PSYCHOSOCIAL PREDICTORS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ADJUSTMENT TO SCHOOL

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Abstract

The study investigates the psychosocial predictors of secondary school students adjustment to school in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State Nigeria. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted correlational design. A sample of 452 SS2 students was drawn from the population through stratified random sampling technique. Two instruments were used for data collection- Psycho-Social Predictor Scale (PPS) and School Adjustment Scale (SAS) which were developed by the researchers. The instruments were validated by experts in Educational Psychology, Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability coefficient of PPS subsections were 0.76, 0.68 and 0.71 respectively for self-concept, emotional intelligence and peer group while SAS had 0.82 reliability coefficient. All reliabilities were obtain via Cronbach Alpha technique. The results of the simple linear regressions and the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) show that self-concept significantly predicted secondary school students' adjustment to school while emotional intelligence and peer group do not. In terms of the relative effects of the psychosocial factors, self-concept was found to be most effective, followed by emotional intelligence and lastly peer group. Based on the findings, recommendations were made including that parents, teachers and counsellors should provide the students adequate orientation towards development of positive self-concept and self-confidence.

Keywords: Psycho-social, predictors and students' adjustment

Introduction

Students willingness to participate and adjust in school programme might be influenced by school environment and students experiences inside and outside school. Adjustment has been defined in various ways by psychologists to mean a process of maintaining harmonious relationships

between a living organism and its environment (Kulshrestha, 1979, Raju and Rahamtulla, 2007). Weiten and Lloyd (2003) defined adjustment as the psychological processes through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Kulshrestha in Ugodulunwa and Anakwe (2012) described adjustment process as a way in which the individual attempts to deal with stress, tension, conflicts and meet his or her needs while making efforts at the same time to maintain harmonious relationships with the environment. This implies that the individual and the environment are two important factors in adjustment (Ugodulunwa and Anakwe 2012).

School adjustment is the degree of school acculturation required or adaptations necessitated for maximizing the educational fit between students' unique characteristics and the distinct nature and requirement of learning environments. Agbakwuru and Agbakwuru (2012) defined school adjustment as the process of bringing an individual's behaviours in conformity with the norms of the school setting. It is a continuous process that is geared towards the adaptation of the individual to school life and culture. Gates and Jersild in Mangal (2008) see school adjustment as a continual process in which the students vary their behaviour to produce a more harmonious relationship with the school environment. School adjustment can be viewed as comprising academic, social and emotional adjustment. It can be taken to mean the process the students adopt in maintaining a balance between their academic, social and emotional needs and the school environment.

Indeed a students' school adjustment depends on the match between his or her competences and needs and the demands of the school environment. Richard in Adeyemo (2005:3) defined students' adjustment as "the ability to cope, to manage their emotions and anatomy to behave in socially appropriate and responsible way to meet up school challenges and responsibilities". This means that adjustment involves coping ability of physiological and emotional components to meet up the social demands of the environment.

Adjustment potentials enable students deal better with pressures of peers, school life, academic challenges and temptation of alcohol, drugs and sex. Students variables that are involved in school adjustment are numerous and include the individuals competencies e.g social behavioural, emotional, cultural and academic competences. Peer acceptance, motivation, school interest and so on contribute to their adjustment. Social and emotional competencies emerged as predictors of successful school adjustment. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) assert that adjusting to school entails the complementary processes of desocialization and socialization. Desocialization is the changing or discarding of selected values, beliefs and traits one brings to school in response to the school experience. Socialization

is the process of being exposed to and taking on some of the new values, attitudes, beliefs and perspectives to which one is exposed at school.

Various factors have been suggested as sources of influence on students adjustment to school. How one sees himself or herself aids to adjustment in any environment. A belief about who you are- that is self-concept. Weiten and Llyod (2003) defined self-concept as a collection of beliefs about one's own nature, unique qualities and typical behaviour. Nwankwo (2010) sees self-concept as the understanding you have about yourself or what you believed about yourself.

Emotional intelligence is one of the psychological factors that can predict students adjustment to school. Colman (2005) defined emotional intelligence as ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotion, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour. He further defined it as the ability to regulate one's own emotion to promote growth and well-being. Ramalingam (2006) sees emotional intelligence as the awareness of an ability to manage one's emotions in a healthy and productive manner. Emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor, access, express and regulate one's own emotions, the capacity to identify, interpret, and understand other's emotions and the ability to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Weiten and Lloyd 2003).

Bagwell, Newcomb and Bukowski (1998) found out that general peer acceptance also predicted adjustment outcomes. Recent studies with younger children consistently find that friendship status and general peer acceptance each seem to influence many adjustment outcomes. Children seem to be better adjusted overall when they are accepted by peers and have one or more close, supportive friendship (Criss, Pettit, Bates, Dodge and Lapp 2002, Ladd and Burgess, 2001). Akinade (2008:70) defined peer group as "close group of people who like themselves and share among themselves trust, affection, interests, acceptance, attitude and have similar personality". Berndt (1989) sees peer group as consisting of small number of cliques who viewed themselves as equal and were typified by intimate proper ties of affiliations such as trust, commitment shared interests and reciprocal likening. Peer groups are therefore informal primary groups of people who share similar and equal status and who are usually of roughly the same age and interest within the social aggregate. Based on this background the researchers deemed it necessary to investigate the extent some psychosocial factors can predict secondary school students adjustment to school.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the extent psychosocial factors (self-concept, emotional intelligence and peer group) can predict secondary school students' adjustment to school.

Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions were asked.

- To what extent does self-concept predict students' adjustment to school?
- To what extent does emotional intelligence predict students' adjustment to school?
- To what extent does peer group predict students' adjustment to school?

To guide the conduct of the study, the following null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 Alpha level were stated.

- Self-concept does not significantly predict students' adjustment to school.
- Emotional intelligence does not significantly predict students' adjustment to school.
- Peer group does not significantly predict students' adjustment to school.

Method

The study adopted correlational design because the study investigate whether there is relationship between psycho-social factors and students' adjustment to school. Nworgu (2006) opined that all predictive studies are correlational studies. The population for the study comprised all public senior secondary school 2 in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State Nigeria. A sample of 452 SS2 students was drawn from the population of 4,956 (source: Post primary school board zonal office Obio-Akpor Local Government Area) through stratified random sampling technique based on the schools. Two instruments were used for the study namely Psycho-social Predictor Scale (PPS) and School Adjustment Scale (SAS). The PPS has three sections measuring self-concept, emotional intelligence and peer group. The PPS has 12 items for each section making 36 items while SAS has 20 items. All the items were in four points Likert type with the following response options- Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Agree (SA). These response options were weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively for positive items and 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively for negative items. The instruments were developed by the researchers. The instruments (PPS and SAS) were face and content validated by experts in Educational Psychology, Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability coefficient of PPS sub-sections were 0.76, 0.68 and 0.71 respectively for self-concept, emotional intelligence and peer group which were obtained via Cronbach Alpha method. While reliability coefficient of SAS was 0.82. The researchers used the direct delivery approach for the administration of the

two instruments. After that, the items of the instruments were scored and data analysis was done using simple Linear Regression analysis.

Results

The result of data analysis for the research questions 1, 2, and 3 are presented together in table 1, that of hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 are presented in table 2, then the analysis showing the relative effects of the predictor variables (self-concept, (SC) Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Peer Group (PG) using beta and its associated t-value are presented in table 3.

Table 1: Summary of the simple linear regression of the prediction of students' school adjustment based on psycho-social factors.

Variables	$\bar{x}$	SD	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Self-concept	51.22	2.71			
School Adjustment	40.27	6.68	-0.12	0.015	0.013
Emotional Intelligence	47.94	2.82			
School Adjustment	40.27	6.68	-0.075	0.006	0.003
Peer Group	48.64	3.62			
School Adjustment	40.27	6.68	0.024	0.005	-0.002

Table 1 shows that the prediction of students adjustment to school based on self-concept yielded a linear regression coefficient of -0.12, R^2 of 0.02 and Adjusted R^2 of 0.013. This means that 1.3% of the variance in students adjustment to school can be attributed to the influence of self-concept. The table also shows that the prediction of students' adjustment to school based on their emotional intelligence yielded a simple linear regression coefficient of -0.075, R^2 of 0.006 and Adjusted R^2 of 0.003. This means that only 0.3% of the variance in students' adjustment to school can be attributed to the influence of emotional intelligence. Finally, it is also shown in table 1 that the prediction of students' adjustment to school based on peer group yielded a simple linear regression coefficient of 0.024, R^2 of 0.0005 and adjusted R^2 of -0.002. This means that about -0.2% of the variance in students' adjustment to school can be attributed to the influence of peer group.

Table 2: Summary of Analysis of variance for the regression

Variables	Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Sig	P
Self-concept	Regression	310. 739	1	310.739			
	Residual	19 842. 332	450	44.094	7.047	.008	P<0.05
	Total	20 153. 071	451				
Emotional Intelligence	Regression	114. 075	1	114.075			
	Residual	20 038. 996	450	44.531	2.562	.110	P>0.05
	Total	20 153. 071	451				
Peer Group	Regression	11. 796	1	11.796			
	Residual	20 141. 275	450	44.758	.264	.608	P>0.05
	Total	20 153. 071	451				

In table 2 it is revealed that the calculated F-value of 7.05 for self-concept was significant at 0.008 level which is lower than the chosen level of 0.05 (P<0.05). This indicates that self-concept can significantly predict students' adjustment to school. Table 2 also shows that the F-value of 2.56 obtained for emotional intelligence was not significant at 0.110 level which is greater than the chosen 0.05 level of probability. Hence emotional intelligence has no significant prediction on students' adjustment to school. Finally, the table showed that for peer groups, the calculated F-value of 0.264 obtained was greater than the chosen 0.05 level of probability (P<0.05). This therefore means that peer group does not have significant prediction of students' adjustment to school.

However, for more emphasis on the prediction of students' adjustment to school using their self-concept emotional intelligence and peer group, the relative beta values with their associated t-value were computed and summarized shown in table 3 below:

Table 3: Relative effects of the predictor variable using beta and its associated t-value

Variables	Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	T-value	Sig	P
		B	Std Error	Beta			
S.C	Constant	55.936	5.910		9.465	.000	P<0.05
	S.C	- 0.306	0.115	-0.124	-2.655	.008	P<0.05
E.I.	Constant	48.819	5.350		9.124	.000	P<0.05
	E. I.	- 0.178	0.111	-0.075	-1.604	.110	P>0.05
P. G.	Constant	38.099	4.241		8.984	.000	P<0.05
	P.G.	0.045	0.087	0.024	0.513	.608	P>0.05

Dependent variable: Students' school adjustment

Independent variables: Self-concept, emotional intelligence and peer group.

In table 3, the beta weights provide the independent effect of self-concept, emotional intelligence and peer group on students' adjustment to school. From the table, it could be deduced that the beta weights are -0.124, -0.075 and 0.024 respectively for self-concept, emotional intelligence and peer group. This shows that self-concept had the greatest predictive power on students' adjustment to school followed by emotional intelligence and lastly peer group. The values of t-ratio associated with the psycho-social factors show that the effects of emotional intelligence and peer group on the prediction of students' adjustment to school were not significant while that of self-concepts was significant.

Discussion

On of the results of the study revealed that prediction of students' adjustment to school from their self-concept was significant. This result was in line with Evans, Levy, Sullen-Berger and Vysa (1991) who reported that there was a significant relationship between self-concept and students' adjustment to school. Their study was carried out in Hong Kong while the present study was in Nigeria. Not minding the locality the results are the same.

Another result of the study had indicated that emotional intelligence had no significant prediction on the students' adjustment to school. This finding is not in line with that of Adeyemo (2005) who found that emotional intelligence significantly related with secondary school students adjustment to school. The difference could be the locality in which the two studies were carried out. The findings is not also in agreement with Salami (2011) who found that emotional intelligence significantly predicted first year students from colleges of education in Kwara State. The difference may be the type of students used in the two studies.

Finally, another results of the study indicated that peer group had no significant prediction on students' adjustment to school. The result is not in agreement with that of Noona, Kaisa, Jukka, and Jari-Eric (2007) who found that peer group significantly contribute to the prediction of students adjustment to school. The explanation to the disparity in the result of the present study and that of Noona et al (2007) could be attributed to the difference in locality and school. It is evident that peer attachment influences students life-styles in many areas e.g academics, morality etc.

Implications of the Study

The results of the study have some far reaching implications. For instance, the results indicated that self-concept has significant predictive power on students' adjustment to school while emotional adjustment and

peer group do not. This implies that students who have positive self-concept will comfortably adjust to the school environment. Those with negative self-concept should try to change.

The results of the study also imply that variation in the psychosocial factors of students influences their adjustment to school. Self-concept is a good predictor of students' adjustment to school, followed by emotional intelligence and lastly peer group.

Recommendations

Based on the implications of the study, the following recommendations are made;

- In order to impact positive self-concepts in students, parents, teachers and counsellors should provide the students adequate orientation towards the development of positive self-concept and self-confidence.
- Teachers and counsellors should try to enculcate high emotional intelligence in their students to facilitate their quick and smooth adjustment to school.
- Students should be encouraged to adopt positive self-concept and high emotional intelligence through interaction with their teachers and counsellors.
- Students should try to be careful in choosing friends for they can influence them positively or negatively.

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