



Self-Esteem as Correlate of Secondary School Students' Social Adjustment in Imo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This study examined self-esteem as correlate of secondary school students' social adjustment in Imo State, Nigeria.

Methodology: Three research questions were answered, and one null hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. Correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of 33,922 senior secondary school (SS2) students, with a total sample of 3,520 students drawn through multi-stage sampling procedure. The instruments used for the study were Hare Self-esteem Scale (HSS) and Fudah's Social Adjustment Scale (SAS). Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used for data analysis.

Findings: Results obtained from the study showed that majority of the students in Imo state have high self-esteem. The results equally revealed, that majority of the students in Imo state are socially adjusted. More so, the result indicated that there is a high positive correlation between secondary school students' self-esteem and their social adjustment.

Conclusion & Recommendations: The study recommended, among others that Counsellors and researchers should strengthen their efforts in creating programmes that will help in boosting students' self-esteem, so that they would feel worthy and able to relate well with other people around them.

Keywords: Secondary School, Students, Correlate, Self-esteem, Social Adjustment.

Introduction

For a long time in academia, there has been a common knowledge that human beings, by nature are social animals. As social species, all individuals inherently seek the companionship of others for survival. In this regard, Oguzie, Obi and Chigbu (2020) noted that every individual becomes human by interacting with others. Perhaps, through this interaction, people shape their lives and learn how to fit into their society.

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Hence, for individuals including students to thrive properly as productive members of any society, they must be willing and able to interact freely with their social environment. Since a school is a social cluster, all students should be interactive, lively and able to maintain good social relationships with their peers, classmates and teachers. However, the current researcher's observation during her practicum experience shows that some students find it difficult to interact freely with people around them. Such students rarely engage in social interactions with others possibly because they feel unworthy and incapable to handle social situations. Thus, they perform poorly in social activities, and as such are regarded as being socially maladjusted.

Social adjustment has been conceptualized and defined in a number of ways. For instance, scholars such as Ezunu and Nwankwo (2022) defined social adjustment as an attempt an individual makes to cope with standards, values, and needs of a society in order to be accepted. Social adjustment is simply defined as an individual's ability to function in different social roles (Forsgren & Sillanp, 2020). It is the ability of an individual to deal with conflicting situations around his or her environment without losing its true self in the process. According to Mehboob and Shahzad (2019), social adjustment is a psychological concept that involves meeting with the demands of the environment by balancing conflicting needs in order to adapt to different situations of the environment. Igbo, Nwaka, Mbagwu and Mezieobi (2016) defined social adjustment as a concept that involves the deliberate or unconscious effort that individuals make in meeting psychological, social and physiological demands depending on the situation they find their selves. It is the extent to which an individual maintains a cordial relationship with other people (Wentzel, 2013). Dhingra, Manhas and Thakur (2015) viewed social adjustment as a continuous process through which one changes to be in proper adjustment with his environment, others, and himself.

Correspondingly, Passer and Smith (2011) averred that social adjustment is a life-long process that involves the conditioning of an individual to his or her peers and the society in order to be accepted as a member of that peer group or society. It is therefore, the move made by individuals to cope with societal demands in order to be accepted by others. Social adjustment takes place when an individual is able to accept societal situations as they are without losing his or her sanity or value in the process. For the purpose of this study, social adjustment is defined as the deliberate effort made by individuals to develop skills and competencies needed to fit in properly and function effectively in their social environment. The current researchers' observation from daily encounters with students indicated that some students are able to adjust easily in their social environment while others are unable to do so, possibly as a result of lack of social capacity and competence.

Social adjustment is very necessary in students' lives because it enables them to meet up with their social needs (Chigbu, Oguzie & Obi, 2021). Awokiyesi, Makinde and Solademi (2014) noted that student's needs consist of social, physical, emotional, intellectual, moral and vocational needs. Identification of these needs will spur students to make the right choice of whom to relate with, in the school and society in order not to lose their sense of direction. This is why Sasikumar (2018) asserted that social adjustment is the process by which both male and female persons maintain a balance between their needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs. With this in mind, students with high social adjustment would have the capacity for self-regulation and self-awareness of his or her immediate environment in order not to suffer emotional, physical or mental stress. A study by Njoku and Akaninwor (2019) showed that socially adjusted students show enough capacity to successfully build close relationship with peers and always feel comfortable in meeting new people. This makes them feel worthy and capable in adapting to new social standards and values which encourages their acceptance by the society. Pollastri, Raftery-Helmer, Cardemil and Addis (2018) stated that social adjustment facilitates people's capacity to accommodate the demands, restrictions, and mores of society, including the ability to live and work with others harmoniously and to engage in satisfying interactions and relationships.

Conversely, students with social adjusted problem often get caught up with the wrong environmental lifestyles which may affect their overall wellbeing. They feel rejected, isolated and generally find it very difficult to relate with their peers. A study by (Romera, Gomez & Ortega, 2016) shows that socially

maladjusted students have low levels of social competence, acceptance and popularity. This is possibly because social maladjustment may inhibit positive social interactions and reduces social opportunities which could possibly lead to difficulties in interpersonal relationships among students.

Practically, socially maladjusted students manifest maladaptive behaviours such as persistent violation of social norms, truancy, substance abuse and impulsivity (Mariamma, 2020). This tends to dent the educational system with the suggestion that socially maladapted individuals are being churn out of schools, instead of well adjusted individuals which the stipulated lofty national educational goals and objectives were designed to produce. Therefore, the issue of social adjustment has remained a source of concern to a range of stakeholders, especially parents who are concerned with their children's welfare, teachers/school administrators who are concerned with retention rates, students striving to succeed, mental health professionals, such as counsellors and psychologists who help students overcome challenges in social adjustment and importantly, researchers who seek to examine factors associated with social adjustment of students.

Empirically, Nwosu and Chinweuba (2021) in their study observed that many secondary school students in south eastern Nigeria are finding it difficult to adjust socially. Chigbu, Oguzie and Obi (2021) in their study reported that social maladjustment is common among secondary school students. Consequent upon this, examining factors that are associated with students' social adjustment cannot be overemphasized because of its relevance in increasing the understanding of what is needed to improve their successes in adjusting to their social environment.

Extant researches indicate that one possible factor that may influence students' social adjustment is self-esteem. According to Nwokolo and Oguzie (2021), self-esteem is the belief, perception and opinion people have about themselves which influence their behaviours and consequently affects their performance and achievements in life. It is the judgment an individual makes about his own worth and the feelings associated with those judgments (Emeji, 2019). Succinctly, Courtney (2021) viewed self-esteem as a person's overall sense of his or her value or worth. In addition, Igbo, Ezegebe, Mbagwu and Odo (2016) described self-esteem as individuals' overall evaluation of their own worth. Okafor, Obi and Oguzie (2018) emphasized that self-esteem is a need and fulfillment of this need may be accompanied by feelings of self-confidence, self-worth, self-strength and self-capacity. However, for the purpose of this study, self-esteem refers to student's belief, attitude and opinion about themselves which in-turn influences their behaviours to themselves and others.

One can therefore infer that, self-esteem is an expression of approval or disapproval a person has about himself or herself. According to Mirzaei-Alavijeh, Rahimi, Matin and Jalilian (2018), there are four factors in measuring one's self-esteem, which are; the value that an individual receives from the others, the experience accompanied with success, in situations where one's sees his or herself in balance with the environment, and one's definition of success, failure and attitude towards criticisms. This implies within the education parlance, students can either have high or low self-esteem.

Available literature has shown that students with high self-esteem are intrinsically motivated to successfully achieve their desired academic and social goals (Ozuome, Oguzie, Mokwelu & Anyamene, 2020). In contrast, students with low self-esteem display characteristics such as excessive self-criticism and dissatisfaction, hypersensitivity to criticism with resentment against critics, chronic indecision and exaggerated fear of mistake, excessive willingness to please others, perfectionism, dwelling on the magnitude of past mistakes, pessimism and a general negative outlook (Shaffer, 2017). In this regard, it is understandable that students' self-esteem may influence their level of adjustment within their social environment.

Furthermore, existing researches have linked students' self-esteem to their ability to adjust to the social milieu. For example, Ezunu and Nwankwo (2022) in their study observed that self-esteem variables are correlated with students' social adjustment. Moreso, a study by Mohammadi, Ghasemi, Jafari and Rad (2014) with Iranian students concluded that students' self-esteem correlated with their social adjustment.

Given that student's social adjustment plays very important roles in their overall wellbeing, the problem of social maladjustment has raised a serious concern to parents, counsellors, and other stakeholders. Hence, establishing the relative influence of students' personal variable like self-esteem as per its relationship to their social adjustment will provide counsellors, educators and researchers with good knowledge of factors that predispose students to the problem of social maladjustment particularly in Imo state, and Nigeria in general. The present study therefore investigated the relationship between secondary school students' self-esteem and their social adjustment.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the self-esteem mean scores of secondary school students?
2. What are the social adjustment mean scores of secondary school students?
3. What is the relationship between secondary school students' self-esteem and their social adjustment?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between secondary school students' self-esteem and their social adjustment.

Methodology

Correlation research design was adopted for this study. According to Nworgu (2015), this type of study seeks to establish the relationship that exists between two or more variables. Okafor, Obi and Oguzie (2018) observed that correlation studies often indicate the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables. Researchers use correlation when they wish to discover if any relationship exists between two or more variables, how strong the relationships appear to be and whether one variable of primary interest can be effectively predicted from information on the values of the other variables (Oguzie & Nwokolo, 2021). The population of the study comprised 33,922 students, while the sample size consisted of 3,520 SS2 students drawn through multi-stage sampling procedure.

Two instruments were used for collecting data pertaining to this study. The first instrument is Hare Self-esteem Scale (HSS) developed by Hare in 1985. The instrument contains thirty items on a four point scales, ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The HSS instrument has two sections: A and B. Section A of HSS is an introductory part and section B is directed towards measuring students' level of self-esteem. Good psychometric properties has been attributed the Hare Self-esteem Scale (HSS). Hare in 1985 obtained 0.83 reliability coefficient by correlating Hare Self-esteem Score with Rosenberg Self-esteem, and a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.74 in an interval of three months. Secondly, Social Adjustment Scale (SAS) developed by Fudah in (2008) was used to measure the respondents' social adjustment. The instrument contains 33 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale: always, often, rarely and never. Social Adjustment Scale (SAS) was reported to have good psychometric properties (Fudah, 2008). The internal consistency of the instrument ranges from 0.70 to 0.84, with an overall reliability coefficient cronbach's alpha of 0.90.

The researchers administered copies of the instruments through direct delivery method. A letter of introduction was presented to the principals of the selected secondary school for approval. Then the researchers with the help of five research assistants presented copies of the instruments to the respondents and also retrieved the completed copies of the instruments immediately for scoring and analysis. The instruments completed for this study were scored following the scoring instructions, and the data collected were organized and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.

Results

Table 1: *Range of scores on students' self-esteem*

| Range of scores | N | % | Remarks |
|-----------------|------|------|------------------|
| 30-89 | 648 | 18.4 | Low self-esteem |
| 90-120 | 2872 | 81.6 | High self-esteem |

Table 1 shows that 648(18.4%) of the students who scored between 30 and 89 have low self-esteem, while 2872(81.6%) of the students with the scores ranging from 90 to 120 have high self-esteem.

Table 2: *Range of scores on students' social adjustment*

| Range of scores | N | % | Remarks |
|-----------------|------|------|----------------------|
| 33-82.5 | 572 | 16.3 | Socially maladjusted |
| 82.6-132 | 2948 | 83.7 | Socially adjusted |

In table 2 above, it was found that 572 (16.3%) of the students with the scores ranging from 33 to 82.5 are socially maladjusted, while 2948 (83.7%) students who scored between 82.6 and 132 are socially adjusted.

Table 3: *Pearson r on students' self-esteem and their social adjustment scores*

| Source of Variation | N | Self-esteem r | Attitude r | Remarks |
|---------------------|------|---------------|------------|----------------------------|
| Self-esteem | 3520 | 1.00 | 0.75 | High positive relationship |
| Social adjustment | 3520 | 0.75 | 1.00 | |

Table 3 shows that there is high a positive correlation of 0.75 between the secondary school students' self-esteem and their social adjustment.

Table 4: *Significant of Pearson r on the students' self-esteem and their social adjustment using probability table of r*

| N | Cal. r | df | P value | Cal. P Value | Remarks |
|------|--------|------|---------|--------------|---------|
| 3520 | 0.75 | 3519 | 0.05 | 0.01 | S |

S = Significant

Table 4 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance and 3519df, the calculated r0.75 has pvalue 0.01 which is less than the critical pvalue 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between secondary school students' self-esteem and their social adjustment is rejected.

Discussion

The results of this study showed that majority of the respondents (81.6%) have high self-esteem. This shows that despite the various life challenges encountered by the students at the course of their day to day life activities in this present society, many students still view themselves as unique, capable and worthy individuals. This finding is consistent with the reports by (Igbo, Ezegebe, Mbagwu & Odo, 2016; Okafor, Obi & Oguzie, 2018; Nwokolo & Oguzie, 2021) who found that majority of secondary school students have high self-esteem. However, this finding contradicts the findings of Iheawuchi and Iruloh (2017) and Emeji (2019) who reported that majority of secondary school students have low self-esteem. The finding also contradicts the report from the previous study conducted by Edeh (2019) who observed that many secondary school students experience low self-esteem especially those who are victims of domestic violence.

Also, the findings of this study revealed that majority of the respondents (83.7%) have high level of social adjustment. This finding signifies that most students in Imo state function optimally within their social environment. This finding to some extent is unexpected, considering the high prevalence of social unrest in Imo state and Nigeria in general currently. This finding is in accordance with the findings of previous

researchers (Ezunu & Nwankwo, 2022) who reported that many students are socially adjusted. This particular finding of the study shows that most of the secondary school students who indulge in social violence actually do not view the act as something worthwhile but found themselves in it possibly as a result of the strong pressure and frustration in the contemporary society.

However, the above finding contradicts the findings of previous researchers Nwosu and Chinweuba (2021) who in their study observed that many secondary school students in south eastern Nigeria are finding it difficult to adjust socially. The finding also contradicts the report by Chigbu, Oguzie and Obi (2021) that social maladjustment is common among secondary school students in the south east. The possible reason for the contradictions between the findings of the above researchers and that of the present study may be as a result of methodological differences in research or human error at the course their research.

Finally, the findings of the study revealed that there is high positive significant relationship between the students' self-esteem and their social adjustment. This implies that the greater the students' self-esteem, the higher their level of social adjustment. This finding agrees with the report by previous researchers (Mohammadi, Ghasemi, Jafari & Rad, 2014) who concluded that there is a high positive relationship between students' self-esteem and their social adjustment. In addition, Ezunu and Nwankwo (2022) observed that self-esteem variables are correlated with students' social adjustment. According to Ozuome, Oguzie, Mokwelu and Anyamene (2020), students with high self-esteem are intrinsically motivated to successfully achieve their desired academic and social goals. The implication of this is that students with high self-esteem will feel worthy and adequate enough to relate cordially with people around them, and therefore perform optimally in social situations. Hence, encouraging students' self-esteem would help to boost their social adjustment, and enable them to relate well with their classmates, peers, siblings, parents, teachers, and other people in the society.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study and the discussion that followed, the study concluded that majority of the secondary school students in Imo state have high self-esteem, and are also socially adjusted. The study also concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between students' self-esteem and their level of social adjustment. This means that, an increase in the student's self-esteem will result to a corresponding increase in their level of social adjustment. Hence, the way students value themselves impacts on the way they relate to other people around them.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents, care-givers, and siblings should avoid actions or behaviours that could mar students' self-esteem at home.
2. Peers and teachers should try to give students behaviour feedbacks that will help to increase their self-esteem and social relationships.
3. Counsellors and researchers should strengthen their efforts in creating programmes that will help in boosting students' self-esteem, so that they would feel worthy and able to relate cordially with other people around them.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors have no conflict of interest.

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