

Parental Socio-Demographic Factors and Psychological Adjustment of Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated parental socio-demographic factors and psychological adjustment among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses guided the study. Ex-post factor research design was adopted in the study. The population of the study comprised all the 30,528 senior secondary school II (SS II) students in the 261 senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The sample for the study comprised 3,052 SS II students determined through the simple random sampling technique, using 10% of the population. Data were collected using the researcher's constructed non-cognitive instrument of two sections titled 'students' Psychological Adjustment Questionnaire" (SPAQ) which was validated by experts in the area of Educational psychology and Measurement and Evaluation, University of Port Harcourt. Cronbach alpha method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yielded a value of .70. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while one-way ANOVA was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The result revealed that low income and low educational level of parents affect students' psychological adjustment negatively. It was therefore recommended among others that government and non-governmental organizations should frequent schools in order to give scholarship to students of low parental income status in order to boost their psychological well being.

Keywords: Income level, Educational level, Religious affiliation and Psychological Adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

Parents are known not only to be responsible in providing for the family but also significant contributors to the wellbeing and meaningful adjustment of children as members of the family. These parents in the process of raising their children display varying level of demandingness and responsiveness (Bruce & David (2011) as cited in Njoku & Amalu (2018). This demandingness involves the level of setting down rules and expectations for their children to comply while responsiveness has to do with the degree of sensitivity of these parents to the provision of their children's need, expression of love, warmth and concern for their children's welfare (Njoku & Amalu, 2018). This shows that the cognitive potentials, social skills, behavioural and psychological patterns a child exhibits during the early years so much depend not only on the quality of interaction with their parents but also on other parental factors which influence their mindset and psychological adjustment.

Human beings are largely controlled by the state of their minds. This makes one's mindset to be pre-determinant and strong predictor of his/her psychological disposition. Students like other human beings, desire to be in the right frame of mind and could also seek happiness. With the help of their parents, they often desire assessable or conveniently acquired things that give them comfort. This makes the psychological disposition of students very paramount for the actualization of the cognitive domain. These students are known to face academic subject anxiety, peer intimidation and parental frustration which could bring maladjustment in their

lives. Therefore, with psychological adjustment support there will be a high level of resolve in an individual student's state of mind.

Adjustment consists of those ways people cope with change which aims at achieving a stable state. It is defined as an organisms' reaction to demands of the social environment (Chauhan 2013 as cited in Nnadozie & Ofolehi, 2018). In another definition by Colman (2003) as cited in Ekeh (2014), it was described as a psychological concept with special behavioural adaptation to a particular environment or a set of circumstances. In this process, one resolves or learns to live with major conflicts of life such as handling conflicts, controversies, complexities and comfort for a functional living within an environment, in line with societal norms and values. This means organisms survive because they can adjust. According to Lopes and Salovey (2004) as cited in Ejikeuroko (2018), adjustment is described as the individual's ability to fulfill one's psychological needs and one's self-acceptance as well as enjoying life without any type of conflict. Since life is not constant, the ability to change one's attitude and behaviour appropriately is an essential ingredient of adjustment.

According to Seaton (2009), psychological adjustment is the relative adaptation of an individual to changing environmental conditions. Therefore, it deals with maintaining stability in an individual's state of mind (Ekeh, 2014). This view is rooted in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality which explains the ego as the agent of adjustment mediating between the id and super ego, to stabilize an individual's state of mind (Njoku, 2014). It is shown in the degree to which a student develops positive versus negative perceptions towards academic and social activities. Houben et al (2015) as cited in Oghenetega et al. (2024) described it as the presence of life satisfaction and the absence of psychological distress or symptoms in terms of self-esteem, social anxiety and depressive symptoms. This includes both the social and psychological environment. The American Psychological Association (2018) as cited in Wali et al (2024) defined psychological adjustment as one's ability to cope with and adapt to those challenges and demands of his or her social and psychological environment. With this, the psychological adjustment of students center on the process by which these students adjust, adapt, arrange, modify and harmonize all the changes they meet. They try to balance them with the corresponding responsibilities expected of them. In addition psychological adjustment as a process enables students to ensure their social, emotional and cognitive stability and at the same time cope with the demands of the environment. For the students, this period of adjustment is very crucial due to the rapid developmental changes and academic, social and personal challenges which go with this period. They try to manage their emotions, behaviours and social relationships to go through the period of adolescence effectively and achieve well-being. When this is achieved these students become free from challenges of stress, anxiety, social pressures, identity formation and mental health issues. This marks a successful academic achievement and personal success.

Encyclopedia Britannica (2017) further summarized the steps in psychological adjustment to include presence of persistent stimulus, non-fulfillment of this persistent stimulus, exploratory behaviour accompanied by problem-solving and reduction of initiating stimulus in order to complete the adjustment. These steps show that psychological adjustment is deeply involved in the moving away or emotional integration of environmental and school factors that create and initiate anxiety and depression. The moving away or emotional integration of adjustment in one's life depends on certain social and demographic determinants of life. With this, the paper focused on certain parental socio-demographic factors such as parental income level, educational level and religious affiliation. These factors have significant influence on students especially in their upbringing, academic performance and overall wellbeing as they shape the students' home environment and access to resources. They also play essential roles in determining parental involvement, expectations and support systems which impact a child's development and opportunities. Therefore psychologically it means that these factors have great influence in determining the students' psychological adjustment. It is against this background that income level, educational level and religious affiliation as constituents of socio-demographic factors are chosen for this study.

Parental income level is an essential tool in rearing and development of children. This is because it provides a solid framework that guarantees strong bond formation, growth monitoring and provision of stability in a child's life. Hence, the cost of rearing a child (student) in terms of income differs with children and parents' higher parental income which ensures that the child has access to good and nutritious food with better health

and psychological adjustments. Income is the money or its equivalent that is summarily received in a day, week, month, year or the amount of cash inflow before or after the completion of a task. Business Dictionary (2017) defined income level as the flow of cash-equivalents received from work (wage or salary), capital (interest or profit), or land (rent). Parental income is the income that parents spend on children in terms of goods and services provided to them (Basu, 2018). Higher parental income enhances provision of quality goods such as education, health care among others. Income level among Nigerian workers could be low, medium or high depending on the type of task. For the purpose of this study, income level will be considered as being low, medium and high. The minimum income or wage for Nigeria civil servants, who some are also parents is slated to be thirty thousand naira (N30, 000) only. This is considered very poor package for Nigeria workers especially the parents among them, as it cannot even purchase a bag of rice of One hundred and twenty- thousand Naira (N120, 000) only for the Nigerian household or cater for the children's education. This shows that parental income level can affect children's education and even their well-being (Davis, et al, 2018).

In a study by Abraham et al. (2013), it was revealed that psychological adjustment due to parental income level can influence the children's education. They further noted that the income level of parents ensures adequate or better family economy. However, when parents feel maladjusted due to their income level, it can generally impact on their children's behaviour and decisions in school. The study of Lucas-Thompson and Hostinar (2013) also showed that family income influences psychological adjustment. They noted it could be a threatening situation as the income of a parent when low, could predict a deregulated and potentially maladaptive pattern of behaviour for parents and the children. Students whose parents are distressed as a result of poor income, among other factors are more likely to be distressed themselves.

Parental education level is considered a very important influencing factor to students' psychological adjustment. According to Ekeh and Onyekuru (2013), the need for adjustment in a nations' purpose of education in most countries is to shape behaviour of citizens in line with the national aims and goals. Based on this, education is defined as modification of people's behaviour for proper adjustment in their nations. Therefore, parents' educational level reflects the highest level of education attained by any parent residing in the same household as the child. Parental educational attainment is associated with many measures of the children's wellbeing. In the view of Khan et al. (2015), parental educational level and its attainment is related to many parameters of children's well-being and adjustment. In order to certify the attainment of a particular educational level, an educational qualification is acquired by an individual at the completion of primary education, secondary education and tertiary education respectively. These educational qualifications in which certificates are awarded can be acquired under formal school setting or non-formal school setting. Formal school setting is where education occurs under the four walls of a classroom whereas non formal school setting allows education outside the four walls of a classroom. The higher the educational degree the parents obtained, the greater the support the students' will have from their parents to complete similar goals. Those parents who have not attended any college or secondary school on the other hand tend to have less direct knowledge of the economic and social benefits of a post secondary education.

Parental level of education could be seen as a larger constellation of both psychological and sociological variables influencing children's outcome. According to Misiko et al. (2023), parental education is referred to as a motivating force which paves the way for a child's future. Parents with higher level of education (tertiary education) are likely to believe strongly in their abilities to help their children learn and maintain stable wellbeing adjustment in secondary schools. In addition, a study revealed that parent's educational level when the child is below 8years old predicted a child's educational and occupational success at 48 years old (Khan, et al, 2015). In support of this, Zajacova and Lawrence (2018) asserted that adults who possess higher educational attainment have better health and life span compared to their less educated peers. Those parents who possess low educational attainment not only receive low income but suffer from poor health when compared to those with high educational attainment. This can only cause them stress and maladjusted behaviour which the entire family experiences. With this, higher educational attainment of parents is critical in influencing child mortality and life expectancy which if not taken care of, may directly impact in raising good and successful students' psychological adjustment. There is considerable evidence that low educational attainment could be strongly associated with many health risks as it affects health and mortality through a number of pathways such as lifestyle, health behaviour, problem -solving abilities, social relations, self esteem and stress management. This is so because parents not only affect children's learning behaviour but also their adjustment towards

maintaining stability in the individual's mind. Parental level of education may directly impact in child quality and also indirectly facilitate a higher quantity of other inputs through the effect of educational levels on household income (Lucas-Thompson & Hostinar, 2013).

Religion is an agency of devotional and ritual observances which involve a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs. Religion is the embodiment of set of beliefs, values and way of life that are spiritually inclined. This could mean an individual's religious identity, including the person's demonstration and or religions tradition. Hong and Espelage (2012) described religious affiliation as a person's connection or membership to a particular religious group or community which can be a risk or protective factor of the individual for or from bullying. Religions affiliation according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) is defined as the religious or spiritual beliefs and practices to which an individual adhere or the religious group to which one belongs. In an operational definition, it was further described as the religion to which an individual has an affiliation. This may include other spiritual beliefs or non- religious or spiritual beliefs. Religious affiliation involves the degree to which individuals participate in religious practices (Jensen et al, 2019). With this religious affiliation is the adoption of a particular religious practice according to faith. The various types of religious practices in Nigeria are Christianity, Islam and traditional worship.

With a closer view on parental religious affiliation and the psychological well being or adjustment of individual students, it will be interesting to understand that specific religious affiliation and their practices could influence different positive and negative psychological adjustment (Montero-marin et al, 2019; Dictionary.com, 2015 as cited in Ekechukwu & Amaeze (2016). Religious affiliation has a possible effect of healthy stable family life, strong marriages and well behaved children and it positively promotes the child's academic performance (Glanville, et al., 2008). In addition, persons with stronger religious faith have also reported higher levels of life satisfaction, greater personal happiness and fewer negative psychosocial consequences of traumatic life events (Joshi, et al., 2008). This enhances the child's religious affiliation as parents who are religiously affiliated enjoy a better relationship with their children. This relationship makes them to be more likely involved with their children's education. Pearce and Haynie (2004) noted that the greater a child's religious involvement, the more likely both the child and parent will agree about the quality of their relationship. Furthermore, they tend to enjoy more similar values and the greater their emotional closeness will be (Pearce & Haynie, 2004). This can enhance positive psychological adjustment among the children (students) and pave way for improved academic performance.

This shows that religious affiliation is positively related to a number of measures of psychological well being of students in secondary schools whether it is Christianity, Islam or traditional religions. However, some researches also revealed that religious differences within families can deter from the parent-child relationship and cause negative adjustment. Based on Self Determination Theory of Deci and Ryan (1985), Hackney and Sanders (2003) opined that religious beliefs and practices when driven by an internal motivation and thus based on ideology especially devotion, would be associated with positive well being- outcomes such as happiness or self actualization. It replaces maladaptive self schema with more adaptive conceptions of the self (Dahl et al 2015 and Lippelt et al 2014). In Bonelli and Koenig (2013) as cited in Montero- Marin et al, (2019) and Goncalves et al (2015), religiosity in association with a variety of psychological wellbeing outcomes seem to provide a protective function against mental illness. This is in line with 93 studies on religious affiliation and health which revealed that more religious people had fewer depressive symptoms and also seem to cope better with stress (Bonelli et al, 2012). This is possible because religious affiliation gives a sense of purpose and meaning in life that helps one make sense of negative things that happen to them. However in assessing the psychological adjustment by means of happiness, positive effect, depression, negative affect and emotional over-production, the study of Montero-Marin et al (2019) and Purnel et al (2009) respectively showed that religious beliefs and prayer seemed less relevant in explaining psychological adjustment. With this, it has been widely acknowledged by researchers and personal experiences that the issues of socio-demographic factors are posing greater havoc in the psychological adjustment of students hence this study tries to investigate the influence of parental socio-demographic factors on psychological adjustment of secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Students' adjustment revolves on the means by which these students adapt and harmonize changes they meet as they balance themselves with the corresponding responsibilities expected of them. Although it has been

widely acknowledged by researchers that learning occurs in the mind, students with unstable mind may be in the class where learning is taking place and may not be able to learn. This is shown in the degree to which students develop positive versus negative perceptions towards academic and social activities. Many have failed to deal adequately with problems of adaptation to physical, emotional, social, economic or occupational situations resulting to coping difficulties. Some of these students have not also been able to reason, behave acceptably or deal satisfactorily with other people in the society, resulting to maladjusted students with lack of concentration, low school motivation, underachievement, poor social relations, low self esteem among others. This state of mind of the students has contributed to underperformance in both internal and external examinations even with the qualified teachers and moderately acceptable teaching environment. This makes the mind and psychological wellbeing indispensable in the teaching and learning process. It is pertinent to note that individuals who live in a part of the environment remains under the influence of the environment. Therefore, students are also affected by their parents who provide for them as the foundation of an individual's development has so much to do with the relationship they enjoy with their parents. There is every tendency that greater part of psychological maladjustment may be coming from the heels of the families of these students. This might be determined by their parents' income, level of education, religious affiliation among others. And so, if these students who are at the receiving end of instruction are not psychologically adjusted or settled, the noble goals and objectives of education will be far from being achieved. Based on this gap, it is imperative to investigate the influence of parental socio-demographic factors on psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does parental income level (low, medium and high) influence the psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does parental educational level influence psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does parental religious affiliation influence psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

The following null hypotheses posed were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

1. Parental income level (low, medium and high) does not significantly influence psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. Parental educational level does not significantly influence psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in a in Rivers State.
3. Parental religious affiliation does significantly influence psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in a in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an ex-post facto research design. The population of the study is all the 30,528 senior secondary school II (SSII) students in the 261 senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The sample size of the study was 3,053 SSII students. The simple random sampling technique using 10% of the population was used to arrive at the sample size. A self-designed non-cognitive instrument titled "Students Psychological Adjustment Questionnaire" (SPAQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was designed into two sections of A and B. Section A contains the socio-demographic factors of parents (level of income, educational level and religious affiliation). Section B contains 20 items to measure psychological adjustment of students. The instrument SPQA was structured after the modified four points Likert rating options of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1) respectively. Face and content validities were ensured by experts in the areas of Educational Psychology, Test and Measurement in the University of Port Harcourt. The internal consistency reliability index was done using the Cronbach alpha statistics and the reliability of the instrument SPQA was .70. The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented as shown below:

Research Question One: To what extent does parental income level (low, medium and high) influence psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of parental income level influence on psychological adjustment.

Income Level	N	Mean	Std. dev.
High Income	1350	46.73	9.68
Mid- Income	935	42.57	7.29
Low Income	768	42.09	7.73
Total	3053	42.36	7.69

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics on the responses. It was revealed that parents with high income level to a large extent has influence on psychological adjustment with mean and standard deviation scores of 46.73 and 9.68, followed by mid- income level with mean and standard deviation scores of 42.57 and 7.29 and finally low income level with mean and standard deviation scores of 42.09 and 7.73 respectively.

Hypothesis One: Parental income level does not significantly influence psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 2: One Way Analysis of Variance of the influence of parental income level on psychological adjustment of students

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Result
Between groups	116.333	2	158.667	2.002	.068	Insignificant
Within Groups	28124.554	3050	58.719			
Total	28240.888	3052				

Table 2 presents One-Way ANOVA with between group=117.333, within groups=28240.554, df (2, 3050), F=2.002, p>0.05. The null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant influence of parental level of income on psychological adjustment of students in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent does parental educational level influence psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on the influence of parental educational level on psychological adjustment of students

Category	N	Mean	Std Dev
Primary Edu	650	39.33	13.41
Tertiary Edu	853	43.13	9.05
None at all	850	38.47	14.53
Secondary Edu	700	40.48	11.08
Total	3053	161.41	48.07

Table 3 shows that parents who have tertiary institution qualification to a large extent has the highest influence on psychological adjustment of students followed by parents with senior school certificate, first school leaving certificate and the parents who never attended schools.

Hypothesis Two: Parental educational level does not significantly influence psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 4: One Way Analysis of Variance of the influence of parental educational level on psychological adjustment of students

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Result
Between Groups	353.577	2	158.667	1.37	.509	Insignificant
Within Groups	311522.158	3050	58.719			
Total	311875.735	3052				

The ANOVA table 4 shows that df (2,3052), $F=1.37$ and $p>0.05$. The null hypothesis is accepted. By implication, there is no significant influence of parental educational level on psychological adjustment of students in Rivers State.

Research Question Three: To what extent does parental religious affiliation influence **psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State?**

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on the influence of parental religious affiliation on psychological adjustment of students

Category	N	Mean	Std Dev
Christianity	2506	56.73	6.69
Islam	440	38.58	9.29
Pagan	107	42.09	7.73
Total	3053	137.41	23.71

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics on the responses. It was revealed that Christianity to a large extent has influence towards the students' psychological adjustment with mean and standard deviation scores of 56.73 and 6.69, followed by traditional religion with mean and standard deviation scores of 42.09 and 7.73 and finally by Islam with mean and standard deviation scores of 38.58 and 9.29 respectively.

Hypothesis Three: Parental religious affiliation does significantly influence psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 6: One Way Analysis of Variance of parental religious affiliation on psychological adjustment of students

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Result
Between Groups	217.333	2	108.667	3.702	.668	Insignificant
Within Groups	39124.554	3050	58.719			
Total	29441.888	3052				

Table 6 presents One-Way ANOVA with between group=217.333, within groups39124.554, df (2, 3052), $F=3.702$, $p>0.05$. The null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant influence of parental religion (Christianity and Islam) on the psychological adjustment of students in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussions of findings are presented as shown below:

The result from hypothesis one revealed that parents with high income to a large extent has influence on psychological adjustment of students with mean and standard deviation scores of 46.73 and 9.68, followed by mid- income parents with mean and standard deviation scores of 42.57 and 7.29 and finally by low income parents with mean and standard deviation scores of 42.09 and 7.73 respectively. This finding was supported by Davis et al. (2011) who found out that family income can affect their children education in their early years. Moreso, Abraham, et al. (2013) found out low-income family affect their children education.

The result from hypothesis two revealed that parents who had tertiary institution qualification to a large extent has the highest influence on psychological adjustment of students, followed by parents with senior school certificate, first school leaving certificate and the parents who never attended schools. This study is corroborated to the view of Khan et al (2015) which showed that parental educational level and its attainment is related to many parameters of children's wellbeing and adjustment. Lucas-Thompson and Hostinar (2013) in the same vein noted that good and successful students' psychological adjustment occurs when parents' educational attainment is high. This can influence psychological adjustment.

The result from finding three revealed that Christianity to a large extent has influence towards the psychological adjustment with mean and standard deviation scores of 56.73 and 6.69, followed by traditional religion with mean and standard deviation scores of 42.09 and 7.73 and finally by Islam with mean and standard deviation scores of 38.58 and 9.29 respectively. The result revealed that religious affiliation is positively related to a number of measures of psychological wellbeing among secondary school students irrespective of their religious affiliation. This results is similar to Joshi et al (2018) who reported that strong religious faith have a higher levels of life satisfaction and fewer negative psychosocial consequents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it was concluded that socio-demographic factors of parents influence the psychological adjustment of senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria to a great extent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It was recommended that:

1. Government and non-governmental organizations should frequent schools in order to give scholarship to students from low parental income status in order to boost their psychological well being.
2. Guidance-counsellors in secondary schools should be able to inspire in the students the spirit of higher achievement more than the present educational levels of their parents.
3. The schools should bring moralist and perspective speakers to be able talk on morality other than religion to the students.

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