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Family Dynamics as Correlate of In-School Adolescents Academic and Social Adjustment: Counselling Implications in Owerri Municipal Council

Ohuakanwa, Chijioke Ephraim

Department of Educational Foundations and Counseling,
Faculty of Education, Imo State University, Owerri
chijiokeohuakanwa@gmail.com; 08035534503

Abstract

The present study investigated the variables in family dynamics, aligning to academic adjustment and social adjustment of in-school adolescents. The title of and purpose of the study is to determine family dynamics as correlate of in-school adolescents academic and social adjustment in Owerri municipal council. The researcher raised two research questions and formulated subsequently two hypotheses. The design of the study is a correlational survey design from a population of 19,575 in-school adolescents across eleven public secondary schools a sample of 387 in-school adolescents using multistage simple random selection process. Two instruments with reliability coefficients of 0.8 for FACEC and 0.74 guided the study. Data collected were duly analyzed in time with statistical applications revealing the magnitude and direction of the relation among family dynamics, academic adjustment and social adjustment. The findings were that there was a strong relationship between family dynamics, academic adjustment and social adjustment. The implication of this findings are that poor parenting may diffuse the cohesion existing in families hence the researcher recommended that parents should support the emotional, academic, social and physical needs of their children to form a strong bond fairly extending to their old age.

Keywords: *Family, Dynamics, Adjustment, Social, Academic, Adolescent.*

Introduction

Family dynamics refer to the complex, often unconscious patterns of interactions, behaviours, and emotional bonds between family members. These patterns dictate how a family communicates, makes decisions, and manages conflicts significantly influencing the long-term psychological and emotional wellbeing of individuals. Shaped by culture, history and roles, these dynamics create a unique environment that can be supportive and healthy or chaotic and stressful.

Communication styles in families involve how members of a family express emotions, needs, and affection. Roles of infants, specific functions members play, such as the “nurturer”, “hero”, “scapegoat” or peace maker”. According to Ibekwe (2023) power structure and hierarchy are decision making processes, such as how decisions are made in a family, who makes them and who holds authority. Support and cohesion also have strong role in family dynamics as the level of closeness, and physical emotional or financial support provided to one another reflects on member affection for one another. Support also promote strong bond and makes union relatively significant. According to Uwalaka (2023) through support and affection for one another, bonds of friendship are created giving every member a strong identity.

Just as parental styles are defined, family dynamics are assumed to align strongly to how children are raised in a family, suggestively, different parenting styles and cultural relationships. Ahyu (2020) asserts that family dynamics are rarely static and often evolve with time and environment. Authoritative type of parenting is similar in family dynamics. Bikah (2023) asserts that authoritative dynamics affords support, to members. It defines clear rules, and open communication. Members are aware of their limits in every matter, rules and regulation are clearly set out and members are open to one another. Cults are not created in the cycle of family members. Children are free to express their views to parents and receive cordial feedback parents can obtain information from their children with ease. Affection for growth and development of every member is integral to family relationship.

Less affection, rigid rules and barriers to communication, characterize authoritarian dynamics. It is a type of family relationship where children are stereotyped to who to talk to, when to talk and overlaps in affection especially towards parents. Authoritarian environment in the home, fractionalize loyalty based on perceived bond between different groups carried out from the larger family. While some children are free with their mother, others may align to their father where affection and care are fostered.

Some families live in collaborative environment providing support for one another. This is called communal dynamics in families. According Abubakar (2023) a communal family dynamic is a cooperative structure where members – related or not, share resources responsibilities, decision making and often child-rearing duties. It emphasizes equality, open communication, and collective well-being over individual gain. This approach strengthens interdependence and ensures all voices are heard. Key aspects of communal family dynamics include shared responsibility, open communication, collective decision making, share resources and cooperative living that focuses on teamwork to tackle challenges, thus reducing individual burden and fostering a strong sense of community. This dynamic is common in extended family setups or international communities.

In the opinion of Kirkly (2019), competitive type of family dynamics affects the mutual development of many homes. It is a system where members (siblings, parents, or both) are constantly pitched against each other, with interactions primarily focused on outdoing, outperforming or proving superiority over one another. In these households, personal worth is often tied to achievement making success, intelligence, or talents the primary measure of value. Ibekwe (2021) asserts family members are frequently compared to each other, leading to one person's success being celebrated at the expense of another's feelings. Competition creates unhealthy rivalry denying family members unconditional support. Siblings in competitive dynamics, become rivals instead of allies, competing for parental attention, love, and recognition hence creating high pressured environment in form of "Mini-Olympics", where accomplishments are show cased and "winning or prizes or awards" are the goal.

The impact of family dynamics in homes is largely accepted by many as having profound effect on children. According to Milika (2023) family dynamics profoundly shape an individual's mental health, emotional development and social skills. Positive, support, and communicative environment foster security and resilience, why dysfunctional high conflict, or neglectful dynamics can cause anxiety, depression and long-term behavioural issues. Secure, loving and communicative families support healthy emotional development. Conversely, high-conflict inconsistent, or neglectful environment can trigger mental health disorders and trauma. Akeem (2023) opined that family interactions heavily influence self-worth, supportive behaviour boosts confidence, while constant criticism can erode self-esteem. It is a clear and factual statement that children often model the communication styles,

conflict resolution skills, and emotional expression they observe at home, which directly affects their relationships outside the family.

Ogubuka (2018) is of the view that dynamics of a family such as shared meals, can influence physical health, including the risk of childhood obesity, whereas dysfunctional dynamics can lead to stress-related physical illnesses. Clearly family dynamics establishes a foundation for how individuals act in future relationships, with patterns often repeating across generations.

Students' educational goals may be influenced by family dynamics. While in-school students from supportive family dynamics may receive regular support either in payment of school fees and other provisions, competitive siblings may withhold support to deny elements of competence and success from a family member. Such behaviours may cause failures, underachievement and possibly drop out intentions/decisions. Conversely regular support could promote good achievement among members of authoritative families. Feley (2020) opined that in-school students may be challenged by suffering low self-esteem, heightened emotional instability and occasional frustration emanating from parental negative outlook in relation to future of their children.

While discarding the notion of survival of the fittest fostered by competitive families, Obikwelu (2023) asserts that cooperation is the key to development of social skills, creating stability any functional ego among in-school students. In-school students are contextually here, students within the age bracket of going to school who are actually in school. It is expected that students should observe schools' rules and regulations, form good study habit, attend lectures punctually, relate well with mates and authorities while engaging effectively in academic activities. However, Njoku (2021) asserts that antisocial behaviour among students' amounts to adjustment problem.

Considering the fact that students come from different families enclosed in different dynamics, it is pertinent to determine the relationship between family dynamics and academic cum social adjustment needs. Social adjustment is identified in students' positive relational behaviour with mates and teachers. It is also defined in good communication skills, transactional skills and socialization skills which many lack. The study sought to determine if dynamics in a family has any relationship with academic achievement and social adjustment. The present study is novel in Owerri Municipal Council hence, a gap which the present study will fill.

Statement of the Problem

In-school students are expected to be academically sound with good social skills. These desirable variables according to previous studies have proved to be important for academic excellence among students. Problems and challenges of not having social skills or failures in academic engagement may have its beginning from the dynamics of the family. Why some families support through their association with one another develop both academic worthiness and quality social skills others don't, rather contribute in no small measure the cultivation of negative behaviours devoid of school/academic adjustment and social skills. The present study determines the relationship between family dynamics and academic and social adjustment of in-school students in secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate family dynamics as correlate of academic and social adjustment of in-school adolescents in Owerri Municipal Council. The study specifically sought to:

1. determine the relationship between family dynamics and academic adjustment of in-school students.
2. ascertain the relationship between family dynamics and social adjustment of in-school adolescents.

Theoretically, the study is anchored on family systems theory, which views the family as an interconnected unit, where members are deeply interconnected because changes in one person's behaviour affect the whole system. Key concept in theory includes, differentiation of self while staying emotionally connected to the family. The theory posits that family members are interconnected and interdependent, meaning a change in one person's functioning is predictably followed by reciprocal changes in other. The theory was propounded by Dr. Murray Bowen in late 1940's and early 1950s, however the formal presentation of this theory began in 1966. This theory is important in understanding of family dynamics in relation to function, adaptability and emotional bond between members

Literature

Family dynamics are the complex interconnected patterns of interaction, communication and roles within a family unit heavily influencing individual mental health, child development, and emotional well-being. Key factors/variables like supportive parenting and open communication build resilience, while dysfunction, such as conflict or instability often results in poor psychological and social outcomes. Healthy families according to Obodo (2022) prioritize open communication, supportive, and safety, while dysfunctional families often exhibit conflicts, rigidity, or role confusion, such as parentification supportive parenting (warmth, responsiveness) is strongly linked to positive child development. Conversely, parental conflict, rejection, or divorce is associated with lower psychological and social well-being and lower academic performance.

Family atmosphere and individuation (independence) are strong protective factors against depression, whereas poor dynamics are linked to anxiety, aggression and suicide risk. Unhealthy dynamics according to Igwe (2019) are linked to higher risks of adolescent substance abuse and adult chronic health issues. However, family structures are shifting from traditional, intergenerational systems to smaller nuclear or blended families, often due to urbanization and economic changes, which can change support.

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided this study.

1. What is the relationship between family dynamics and academic adjustment of in-school adolescents?
2. What is the relationship between family dynamics and social adjustment of in-school adolescents?

Research Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses guided this study and they are tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between family dynamics and academic adjustment of in-school adolescents.
2. There is no significant relationship between family dynamics and social adjustment of in-school adolescents.

Method:

The present study is carried out in Owerri Municipal Council involving junior secondary students. The design of the study is correlational survey. The study sought to determine the direction and magnitude of family dynamics in relationship to adolescents' academic and social adjustment.

The population of the study is 19,575 students across eleven public secondary school in Owerri municipal council (secondary school management Board, SEMB 2024). The sample of the is 387 with an accepted margin error of 0.05. This sample was obtained by adopting Taro Yamane formula for selecting sample size from a population of 19,575 students.

Two instruments were used in data collection namely: Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES). It measured functioning communication, group situational bonds. There tools help identify family structures, patterns, strength and conflicts. The second instrument is Family Environmental Scale (FES). It measures social environmental characteristics of the family. Reliability coefficient of FACES is 0.8 while FES is 0.74.

The instruments were validated by research specialists from faculty of education, Imo State University. They were asked to determine the face, and usability of their instruments in present state. Their recommendations were useful to the exercise. The two instruments were adopted with reliability coefficient already determined.

Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Movement Correlational Coefficient (PPMC). It was used in answering the research questions and also test the hypotheses. Direction and magnitude of the relationship were determined by the coefficients in ranking sequence: 0.1 - 0.299 (Low); 0.30 – 0.499 (Moderate); 0.50 – 0.699 (Strong); 0.7 – 1 (Very strong). In testing the hypotheses, if probability value (P) is less than alpha value (0.05), the hypotheses is rejected but if greater than alpha value, the hypotheses is accepted ($P < 0.05$ & $p > 0.0$)

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between family dynamics and academic adjustment of in-school adolescents?

Hypothesis 1: there is no significant relationship between family dynamics and academics adjustment of in-school adolescents.

Table 1: PPMC on the relationship between family dynamics and academic adjustment of in-school adolescents

Family Dynamics	PPMC	Family Dynamic	Social Adjustment
	Sig (2-tailed)	1	0.68
			.000
		389	
Academic Adjustment	PPMC	0.68	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
			389

Table shows the magnitude and direction of the association between family dynamics and academic adjustment of in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council. The coefficient signified that family dynamics has strong relationship with academic adjustment in –school adolescent with coefficient of 0.68. The p-value of 0.000 against the alpha value of 0.05 shows that the relationship is significant at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence, there is s strong relationship between family dynamics and academic adjustment of students.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between family dynamics and social adjustment of in-school between family dynamics and social adjustment in –school adolescents in secondary schools on Owerri Municipal Council?

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between family dynamics and social adjustment in –school adolescent in secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council.

Table 2: APMC on the relationship between family dynamics social adjustment of in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council.

Family Dynamics	PPMC	Family Dynamic	Social Adjustment
	Sig (2-tailed)	1	0.72
			.000
		389	
Social Adjustment	PPMC	0.72	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
			389

Table 2 shows the magnitude and direction of the association between family dynamics and social adjustment of in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council.

The coefficient of the relationship signified that family dynamics has strong relationship with social adjustment of in-school adolescents with coefficient index of 0.72. The P-value of .000 against the alpha value of 0.05 shows that the relationship is significant at 0.05 level of confidence, there is a strong and significant relationship between family dynamics and academic adjustment of in-school adolescents.

Discussion of Findings

Family Dynamics and Academic Adjustments

The result of the study is that there exists a strong relationship between family dynamics and academic adjustment of in-school adolescents. The result means that family dynamics has a direction and proportional influence of academic engagement of students this involves, punctuality to classes, goal orientation, student teacher relationship, feedback strategy and involvement in academic discuss. The reason for this result could be associated with the lasting influence of parenting style at the formative stages of parenting style at the formative stages of children which also reflect while they are in school. In-school adolescents from authoritative homes, tend to be more involved in academic engagement than those from authoritarian homes where democratic representations are practically missing. The finding of the present study aligns to the study of Ibekwe (2023) whose study revealed a strong relationship between family dynamics and school engagement of students in Junior Secondary School two (JSS2) in Okigwe education Zone. The relationship was certified significant at 0.05 level of confidence.

Family Dynamics and Social Adjustment of In-School Adolescents

The finding of the present relationship between family dynamics and social adjustment. The result means that family dynamics has a linear and direct relationship with social adjustment. This result suggests that social adjustment may have enormous influence coming from family dynamics. In-school adolescents from democratic homes exhibit democratic behaviours in relating with colleagues because of their foundation. Similarly, in-school adolescents from authoritarian homes may have connoting influence of such homes. The finding of the study aligned with the finding of Aliyu (2020) whose study revealed that students from authoritarian homes were more inclined to bullying behaviors than those from authoritative homes.

Counselling Implications

The following counseling implications were derived from the study.

1. Counselling children from authoritarian families may help ease the burden teachers face handling their challenges which consists of class disruptions, and other antisocial behaviours that may not allow collaboration among students during instructions.
2. Class placement should be through counselling to enable teachers dictate children from families that need extra attention for good academic exercise to take place.
3. There is the implication that many adjustment needs of students are caused by parenting styles.

Conclusion

The present study investigated on family dynamics as correlate of in-school adolescents academic and social adjustment in secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council. The purpose of this study was to determine how family dynamics correlate with academic and

social adjustment. Many problems in school discipline emanate from family challenges built in parenting styles. Adequate awareness of these may help teachers and counselors work towards remedial programmes to salvage the situation. The study was conducted in Owerri Municipal Council. Research questions were built to derive answers on family structures and how they correlate academic and social adjustment needs among students. Major concepts were discussed in literature. Two theories anchored the study. Related empirical studies were reviewed. The design of the study was correlational survey. Sample size was 400 adolescents. The findings of the study revealed that a strong and significant relationship exist between family dynamics and academic cum social adjustment. Further the study revealed that school engagement had strong relationship with family dynamics

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