

Influence of Sex and Location on Relationship Between Student Problems and Academic Performance

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between male and female student problems and academic performance. It also examined the relationship between students problems and academic performance among rural and urban students. A descriptive research design was adopted for the study, a total of 300 JSS 3 students in 6 schools from Akure north and akure south local government areas were used as sample. The instrument used was a standardized self report inventory called Student Problem Inventory (SPI). The validity and reliability of the instrument were already established by the maker. However, the test-retest reliability obtained by the researcher was 0.77. The statistical techniques used to analyse the data generated was pearson product moment correlation. The results of the analysis showed that there was a significant negative relationship between student problems and academic performance among male, female, rural and urban students. Based on the findings, it was recommended that counsellors, parents and teachers should help the students to deal with their problems and teach problem solving skills, also parents should adopt good child rearing techniques.

Key words: Students problems, child rearing techniques, SPI, relationships, frustration, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The modern technological world has been aptly referred to as the age of anxiety (Bakare, 1983). Such reference arises from the fact that stress and conflicts one has to deal with have become more intensified and complex as the society continues to grow in population and achieve technological advances. Besides these societal problems, every stage of human development from conception through birth, early childhood, adolescence, adulthood to old age and death is heralded with a number of stresses and conflicts to which an individual must make continuous adjustment. These stresses and conflict are more acute during the period of adolescence because of the growth spurt with its subsequent physiological changes which combine with psychological and societal factors to make that period a particularly critical one for the individual. The inculcation of desired social behaviours starts immediately after birth with the establishment of mother child attachments. This rudimentary but crucial social relationship gradually extends to the father and to the rest of the immediate and extended family members. According to Erickson psychosocial development theory, successful socialization leads to trust of self and other people and ability to cope with agemates and playmates without feelings of superiority or inferiority. A child's social development is an important variable in the evolution of self concept and self assurance and by the same token in

his capacity and readiness to profit from school learning. The establishment of self confidence and self reliance apparently form a solid based for school entry and school success in all its forms. In general, properly socialized persons are more spontaneous, more cooperative, more dynamic, interact more warmly and often engage better in profitable leisure activities or pastime (Onyehalu, 1984).

Those who finance educational programmes that is the parents and government, generally expect the students benefiting from such programmes to perform well in their academic work so far the students are provided with enough qualified teachers to teach the subjects. The government is usually greatly disturbed by poor academic performance and teachers are often called to come and give reason why their students should fail. This means that academic successes is considered solely as function of number of qualified teachers present in school. Even when the teachers act like broadcasting stations, it is doubtful that all the pupils are tuned in. The reality is that these students are responding to other stimuli the rest of the time. This indicate that are other factors apart from availability of qualified teachers in schools that affect the academic performance of the students. Studies have shown that it is the students rather than schools that make the difference in academic performance. Steinberg (1996) says that it is the social background of students that play the key role on their ability to learn and only by moving outside of the educational system and attacking the pervasive economic inequalities that exist in the

society can student performance be improved. Similarly, Coleman *et al.* (1996) and Jencks *et al.* (1972) found that when the social background of students are taken into account, schools characteristic do not seem to influence student outcomes suggesting that schools do not serve as avenue for upwards mobility but instead reinforced existing and economic inequalities. Furthermore, Cao (1999) found a relationship between the social environment of child and academic achievement. Alokun (1991) also found a significant inverse relationship between student problems and academic performance. In further support of the view that factors outside qualified teachers affect school performance, NCCDPHP (2008) says that health related factors such as hunger, physical abuse, emotional abuse and chronic illness can lead to poor school performance and that they often affect students' school attendance, grades, test scores and ability to pay attention in class.

Larson (2002) also say that academic performance might be affected by health, financial, family or personal problems. Many factors emanating from advance technological development, knowledge explosion, rapid increase in population among other factors have combined to make Nigerian society of today more complex than ever before, more so in the cities. The complex nature of the society has its attendant and numerous psychological and social problems with which the young people of the society must contend. These problems of students may affect their academic performance. Noguera (2003) conducted a study on Africa American males and found out that environmental and cultural factors significantly influence their academic performance. On the other hand, Considine and Zappala (2002) studied students in Australia and found that geographical location do not significantly predict outcomes in school performance.

Some scholars looked at the relationship between gender and academic performance. Lunn (1972) discovered that girls tended to have more favourable school related attitudes while boys tended to have a better academic self-image, to be better socially adjusted and to be less anxious in the classroom. Serbin *et al.* (2004) used a multifactorial model to examine sex difference in academic performance in a sample of 347 school children. They discovered that girls' academic performance averaged higher than boys. It was confirmed that girl's advantage is partially due to their characteristic of greater responsiveness to social cues and compliance with adult direction. This advantage was partially offset in this model by boys' greater visual-spatial skill which also was a predictor of academic success. These results indicate that boys and girls' differential development of specific cognitive and social skills may play an important

role in establishing sex differences in academic performance. Student's problems were attributed to the early influences a child is exposed to (Adler, 1948). He emphasized the role played by early lifestyle that a person is exposed to as being of primary importance in the development of students' problem. Factors in the family that can contribute to development of problems are nature of parental discipline, too much money or lack of it, too much admiration or the absence of it having to take side in parental disagreements, too much or too little responsibility isolation from other children, discrimination and so on. Relationship between teachers and students is also important.

Indifference or hostility on the part of teachers can cause problems. Many problems arise from what the society expects from the adolescent during this stage of development. Adolescents are expected to assume social responsibilities, conform to the moral and ethical codes of society and achieve some emotional independence from the parents. They are also expected to select and prepare for occupations. They do not find it easy to live up to these expectations much to the distaste of their parents and of the society at large.

Academic performance had been linked with various factors of which some are resident in the society, some in the school, some in the child's home and others in the child himself. Gulliford (1974) says that in estimating what we can expect of pupils, we have to take account of the following: parental attitude to work, school morale, teachers expectations, personal qualities of the child, his emotional adjustment, his physical development, health, home influence and other school factors. He further states that when these are inadequate, poor academic performance may result. He goes further to assign poor academic performance to various kinds of social disadvantages, particularly to unstable family factors and marked deprivation of acceptable standards of child care. This is why, many psychologists have advocated that the environment of a child should be made quite stimulating so as to enhance the development of the intellect and thereby fostering future good academic performance. Some of the symptoms of these student problems are continued history of poor performance in school work, indifference to learning situation and other school activities, absenteeism or truancy from school, withdrawal and depression which may lead to the students being isolated and not mixing freely with other classmates in the class or school.

Students failing their examinations is a very bad omen for the future of the students and that of the country in general. It affects the nation's social, political, economic, moral and psychological growth. Academic failure constitutes a huge economic waste to the parents and an

assault on the family prestige. A recognition of the pre-occupation and needs of the growing boys and girls, of their personal psychological and social problems of what goes on in their environment, of their fears and anxieties and adaptation of curriculum and method of teaching to their needs might be a step in the right direction toward producing more effective and rapid learning and improve academic performance. If the fundamental needs of the growing personality of these boys and girls are not fully met, there will be little energy and motivations left for intellectual things. This is congruent to the findings of Alokun (1991) that there is a significant negative relationship between student problems and their academic performance.

Many educators have expressed opinions that in order for secondary school students of today to have a good outlook about life, they must be helped to come to terms with their social and emotional problems and needs (Rothney, 1980). This study therefore, examined the relationship between male and female students problem index and academic performance.

It also examined the relationship between students' problems and academic performance among rural and urban students. In other words, the study determined whether the variables (sex and location) have any influence on the relationship between student problems and academic performance. The findings of this study is expected to help parents, governments, teachers, school administrators and counsellors to know how best to help the students in bringing the best in him or her. The study will extend educators and parents' understanding that student problems need to be considered when planning and implementing instructional and counselling services. It will also stimulate teachers and counsellors to teach problem solving skills in the secondary school and at counselling sessions in particular, for the purpose of increasing the skills in the student.

Statement of the problem: Various studies in Nigerian schools have indicated that Nigerian learners are experiencing some problems (Bakare, 1977; Makinde, 1978, 1979). Lamke and Silvey (1990) did similar studies abroad and found that students experienced some problems. These problems in turn affect the academic performance of students (Alokun, 1991). Bakare (1977) listed some major psychological and social problems that are prevalent among adolescents and which affect their academic performance into broad groups social relationship problems, social psychological problems, personal psychological problems, family problems, financial problems, sexual problems, moral and religious

problems and school adjustment problems. This study attempted specifically to answer the question that says: are there any sex difference and location difference in the negative relationship between student problem index and academic performance?

Hypothesis: Specifically, the following hypothesis was tested. There is no relationship between:

- Male student problems and their academic performance
- Female student problems and their academic performance
- Students problems and academic performance among rural students
- Students problems and academic performance among urban students

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey. The population of interest was the JSS 3 students in Akure North Local Government and Akure South Local Government Areas of Ondo state. The justification for using this population of students was based on the fact that JSS 3 could be called the intermediate class in the secondary school system. The students in this class mirror to a large extent a representative cross section of all secondary school students. JSS 3 students also face a uniform JSS certificate examination which was used as a measure of academic performance.

About 6 schools were selected, 3 from rural areas and 3 from urban areas. Also, a sample of 300 students were drawn from the 6 schools by random sampling consisting of 150 boys and 150 girls. The instrument used for this study is student problem inventory (designed for use with African children) through which the individual students describes his personal problems. The SPI is divided into 11 major sections (A-K) with each section measuring a different problem area.

This instrument contains 120 statements of problems which the subject ticks if it applied to him or her or leaves blank if it does not apply to him or her. The total from each section were added up and the grand total constitute the raw score for the subject. A subject's score on the SPI represents his problem index. It can be high or low. Congruent as well as construct validity has been established for the SPI. Bakare (1983) reported that SPI correlates with other well known instruments in the expected direction. Scores on SPI were correlated with

score from Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale. A correlation of 0.50 was obtained. Its correlation with Saranson's Test Anxiety scale was found to be 0.45 (N 50; P 0.01) and with Bakare Study Habit Inventory 0.43 (N 49; P 0.01). Further evidence for the validity of the SPI is also provided by the fact that inter-correlations among the various sections of the inventory are in the expected direction. For instance, the correlation index between sections C and E is 0.52 the sections J and K 0.54 and sections E and F is 0.56. Evidence has also been shown for the construct validity of the SPI by the fact that it is able to distinguish between groups that are known to differ on the construct measured by the inventory.

The reliability of SPI has been established as fairly high. He administered the SPI twice on a randomly selected groups of 36 form 5 pupils (all males) at an interval of 6 weeks. They had a mean age of 15.6 years, standard deviation of 1.2 years. The test-retest reliability was found to be 0.63.

The SPI was also administered twice with an interval of 6 weeks between the 2, administrations to a randomly selected 28 form 5 girls with mean age of 15.02 and standard deviation of 1.1 years. The test-rest reliability this time was found to be 0.79 which is high. The researcher also administered the SPI to 30 JSS 3 in St. Peter Unity Secondary School, Akure at an interval of 2 weeks. The group consisted of both males and females with mean age of 12.6 and standard deviation of 1.2 years. The test-retest reliability for this sample was found to be 0.77. Administration of the test and data collection were done personally by the researcher with the help of some of the teaching staff of each school about 2 weeks to the start of Junior Secondary Certificate Examination which was used to measure performance because the problems that the students might have at this preparatory period would affect their academic performance in the examination. The copies of the questionnaire were collected back after completion. The data generated were analysed by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation that deals with relationship.

Testing of hypothesis: There is no statistically significant relationship between:

- Extent of problems of male students and their academic performance
- Extent of problems of female students and their academic performance
- Students problems and academic performance among rural students
- Students problems and academic performance among urban students

Table 1: Pearson correlation between student problems and academic performance among male, female, rural and urban students

Parameters	N	r	p-value
Male	150	-0.59	-
Female	150	-0.60	0.05
Rural	150	-0.57	-
Urban	150	-0.62	-

In testing this hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used.

Hypothesis 1: The result, $r = -0.59$ shows that there is a significant negative relationship between problems of male students and their academic performance (Table 1). The hypothesis 1 was rejected. This means that male students experiencing many problems do not perform well academically.

Hypothesis 2: The result, $r = -0.60$ shows that there is a significant negative relationship between problems of female students and their academic performance. The hypothesis 2 was rejected. It means that female students with many problems do not do well in school.

Hypothesis 3: The result, $r = -0.57$ shows that there is a significant negative relationship between problems of male students and academic performance among rural students. The hypothesis 3 was therefore rejected. The higher the problem index, the lower the academic performance among rural students.

Hypothesis 4: The result, $r = -0.62$ shows that there is a significant negative relationship between students problems and academic performance among urban students. The hypothesis 4 was therefore rejected. This shows that urban students with problems do not perform well academically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings that there is an inverse relationship between student problems and academic performance among male, females, rural and urban students mean that sex and location have no effect on the negative relationship between student problems and academic performance as established by Alokun (1991). The results are not surprising. The logical explanation for the results is that students who encounter a lot of problems are pre-occupied with thoughts and worries of how to solve their problems, irrespective of their sex and location. It could also be that they do not have adequate coping strategies to deal with their problems and consequently, they become confused and frustrated hence they are unable to concentrate on their studies. On the other hand, students

who experience less problems are somewhat free from worrying thoughts and are less anxious. They are more stable mentally, hence they are able to concentrate on their studies. These findings have therefore upheld Bakare (1986) postulation that emotional problem could give rise to worries which lead to adversely affect concentration and overall learning ability. Another explanation for these findings could be that students who experience less or minimal problems are those whose primary or lower psychological needs have been adequately gratified, hence they experience less problems and now set goals for themselves to achieve academically. This is a way of achieving self actualization which is a higher psychological need. On the other hand, students, who encounter lots of unresolved problems are yet to satisfy some basic lower psychological and physiological needs and therefore cannot extend themselves to aspire for an achievement of a higher goal, hence they performed poorly academically. The findings and explanations given here are congruent with Maslow (1968) postulation that gratification of a lower need enables the next higher need to emerge.

CONCLUSION

Evidence from the study has led the researcher to conclude that student problems are strongly associated with poor academic performance and that the variables (sex and location) do not affect the negative relationship between student problems and academic performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- In order to help to find adequate methods of adjusting to their lives problems, counsellors should reach to the students by invitation and also embark on interesting programmes rather than sit back and expect the students to come to them
- It is very important that parents should adopt good child rearing techniques so that self-discipline, self-reliance, confidence, self control and adequate socialization are inculcated into the child
- Problem solving techniques should be taught to students at different stages of development
- Significant others in the life of each student such as parents and teachers should also counsel the student in their own way to foster good interpersonal relationship between the student and significant others and to remedy some of the deep seated psychological problems

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