

PARENT-CHILD ATTACHMENT AS A CORRELATE OF SOCIAL SKILLS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NSUKKA EDUCATION ZONE, ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated parent-child attachment as a correlate of social skills of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlation research design. The population of the study was 3379 SS11 students with a sample size of 300 drawn through multi-stage sampling technique. The instruments for data collection for the study were structured questionnaires titled: Parent-child Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ) and Social Skills Questionnaire (SSQ). The instruments were face validated and subjected to a reliability test. Data collected were analyzed using linear regression to answer the research questions, regression ANOVA was used to analyze research questions with gender, Fisher's z-transformation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of this study revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students, Gender had no significant influence on parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that parents should exhibit behaviours that are responsive to the needs of their children such as care, love, attention, security, protection and a secure base that will empower them to explore the world, especially at the early stage of life also seminars and workshops should be organized for parents.

Keywords: Parent-child attachment, social skills, secondary school students, enugu state

Introduction

Secondary school education is meant to raise a generation of students who are emotionally, psychologically, economically, academically and socially competent. It remains the foundation that prepares students for the challenges that they may face in the future by building their knowledge base and confidence. National Policy of Education (FRN, 2004) Defined Secondary education as the education children received after primary education and before the tertiary stage. Here children start understanding the world better, are sensitive towards other people, understand the value of respecting each other's feelings and become sociable. Secondary school education prepares the student for the real world and opens up new opportunities and means, including helping out in making decisions while relating with others socially and otherwise.

Each day, students are required to handle a wide range of challenging social situations in secondary school setting and the successful management of the social world requires a sophisticated repertoire of social skills. The term social skills have been defined differently by different authors; they may be referred to as the vehicles that drive social relationships. Social skills are interpersonal tools we use to communicate, build relationships, and interact with others. To UNICEF (2019), Social skills are the tools used to communicate, interact, and grow healthy relationships. Morin, A. (2022) posits that

social skills allow students to interact positively with others and communicate their needs, wants, and feelings effectively. Doyle (2021) maintained that social skills are your ability to interact with others and work cooperatively. They are about communicating effectively and working well with others. Social skills could be defined as those skills needed by a student to interact with others, both verbally and non-verbally, through gestures, body language and personal appearance in a social context.

Social skills can be grouped into 4 types of skills which are namely survival, interpersonal, problem solving and conflict resolution skills (Gökel and Dağlı, 2017). Survival skills can be defined as the skills which include obeying rules and following directions. In addition, listening orders and suggestions are also included in these skills. Interpersonal skills on the other hand include skills such as empathy, learning collaboratively, sharing and relationships. Problem solving skills, differently, includes skills such as responsibility taking, help requesting, decision making and independence seeking. Finally, conflict resolution skills include skills such as coping with difficulties and apologizing. These skills also include internal peace of the people where the conflict mostly occurs (Johnson, 2016). Good social skills help build better relationships through more efficient communication. Having good social skills is advantageous to social interactions and social functioning because it helps the student to be a better communicator, become more assertive and interact better with peers, teachers and parents. Baker (2019) defined Social skills as desirable behaviors that occur in a social context. By desirable, we mean that the behaviors allow individuals to get more positive than negative responses from others.

However, in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, the researcher observed that secondary school students lack social skills such as not knowing how to relate with other students, being respectful, not knowing how to greet, recognizing when people look or sound annoyed, communicating effectively, understanding social cues, acknowledging compliments, expressing feelings, active listening, making and keeping friends and developing healthy relationships. In recent decades, in investigations of behavioural disorders and social deviations, sociologists and psychologists have found that many disorders have their roots in individuals' inability to analyse themselves correctly and appropriately, lack of control and personal adequacy counter difficult positions and the lack of awareness to solve social difficulties and problems in an appropriate way (Zach, Yazdi-Ugav&Zeev, 2016).

The Nigerian government has devised and employed several measures such as establishment of guidance and counselling units in Nigerian primary and secondary schools, Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State not exempted which is aimed at curbing poor social behaviours such as difficulties in interpersonal relationship with parents, teachers and peers, signs of depression, aggression and anxiety among school children in our society, but the case still persists. Since development is dynamic, these issue of poor social skills such as not knowing how to greet, easily getting into fight, talking to people at will without respect, disobedient to constituted authorities and other inappropriate behaviour as observed in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State has been a major concern to the researcher and every stakeholder. This expression of poor social skills could be traceable to the kind of attachment mechanism.

Attachments mean a biological instinct in which proximity to an attachment figure is sought when the child senses or perceives threat or discomfort. According to IJzendoorn (2019) Children are considered to be attached if they tend to seek proximity to and contact with a specific caregiver in times of distress, illness and tiredness. Attachment to a

protective caregiver helps infants to regulate their negative emotions in times of stress and distress and to explore the environment, even if it contains somewhat frightening stimuli. According to Cherry, K. (2022) Attachment is a special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of comfort, care, and pleasure. The desire to be near the people we are attached to, Safe haven: This entails returning to the attachment figure for comfort and safety in the face of a fear or threat. Secure base: The attachment figure acts as a base of security from which the child can explore the surrounding environment. Separation distress: This is anxiety that occurs in the absence of the attachment figure. The attachment between parent and child is referred to as parent-child attachment.

Parent-child Attachment is a reciprocal process by which an emotional connection develops between an infant and his/her primary caregiver (Crouch, 2015). It influences the child's physical, neurological, cognitive and psychological development. It becomes the basis for development of basic trust or mistrust, and shapes how the child will relate to the world, learn, and form relationships throughout life (Association for Treatment and Training in the Attachment of Children [ATTACH], 2015). Parent-child attachment is that cordial relationship between the child and the caregiver that helps provide the child with the needed social repertoire and stamina to explore the world safely.

Parent-child attachment has been identified in children in different categories. Two possible emotional bonds are usually formed between a child and her caregiver usually the mother, but not limited to mother. They are secure and insecure attachment. Insecure attachment patterns are further grouped into: Avoidant insecure pattern, resistant insecure pattern and insecure disorganized pattern). (Benoit, 2004). A child who is securely attached has proven by experience that the parents are available, supportive and responsive to his or her needs; the child trusts her attachment figure because the caregiver consistently gives the child comfort and support when stressed or upset (Drugli, 2012). A securely attached child usually has positive belief. He or she sees the world as a nonthreatening place to explore and believe that people mean well for him or her. Insecure attachment pattern entails a non meeting of needs, neglectful, distant and abusive caregiver-child interaction in early childhood produce insecure base for the child which tends to have long-term adverse effects on the child's personality and behaviour. Children with avoidant insecure attachment tend not to reach out for help because of his or her belief that no one will respond constructively. However, the tendency to exhibit poor social skill may depend on the student's gender. Gender have been defined differently by different scholars, Long (2013) postulated that gender refers to the behavioural differences between males and females that are culturally biased and socially learned. According to Balkis and Duru (2017) gender is defined as a social concept that is set to differentiate between two sexes, male and female. Gender is the attributes assigned to a person on the basis of being a male or female. Ultimately, in the context of Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, understanding the relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills in addition to moderation by gender becomes imperative. This research aims to explore the dimensional role that parent-child attachment play in shaping the social skills of secondary school students.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate parent-child attachment as a correlate of social skills and academic self-efficacy of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. determine the relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students.

- ascertain the relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students as moderated by gender.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- What is the relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of SS11 students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State?
- What is the relationship between parent-child attachment (secure and insecure) and social skills of SS2 students as moderated by gender?

Methods

This study adopted a correlation research design due to its appropriateness in the measurement of two or more variables and the relationship between or among those variables. A population of 3379 senior secondary two (SS11) students in the 62 public secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State was taken for the study. Multistage sampling techniques were used to select 300 respondents from 20 secondary schools. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collected. The instrument were face validated by three experts. One from Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Science Education and two from Educational Psychology Unit of the Department of Educational Foundations, all from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha for parent-child attachment questionnaire and social skills questionnaire and the reliability indices are 0.933 and 0.842 respectively. Two research assistants assisted the researcher to administer the questionnaire. The researcher with the two research assistants covered the 20 schools used for the study. They were instructed to administer the instruments to the respondents through on the spot administration. Linear regression analysis was used to analyze all the research questions, regression ANOVA was used to answer the hypotheses without gender and Fisher's z-transformation was used to test for hypotheses with gender, all hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What is the relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of SS2 students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State?

Table 1: Linear regression analysis of relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students

Variables	R	R ²	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Parent-child Attachment and Social Skills	.96	.92	.92	3.45

(R²) = Coefficient of Determination

The result in Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficient between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students was 0.96. The result implies that there exists a positive high relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students. The result also revealed that the coefficient of determination (R²) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.96 was .92. The coefficient of determination (R²) of .92 implies that parent-child attachment accounts for up to 92% of social skills of secondary school students. This is an indication that 8% of the variation in social skills of secondary school students is attributed to other factors other than parent child attachment.

Table 2: Regression analysis of significant relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	40196.327	1	40196.327	3371.186	.000 ^b
	Residual	3553.203	298	11.923		
	Total	43749.530	299			

The result in Table 2 shows that F-ratio of 3371.186 with associated exact probability value of 0.00 was obtained. This probability value of 0.00 was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found to be significant because 0.00 is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship was rejected. The researcher therefore, concludes that there is a significant relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students Nsukka education zone, Enugu State.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of SS2 students as moderated by gender?

Table 3: Regression analysis of the relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students as moderated by gender

Model	Gender	N	R	R ²	Fisher's Z score	Sig
1	Male	193	.956	.91	-0.725	.469
2	Female	107	.963	.93		

The result in Table 3 revealed that the correlation coefficient (r) of .956 and .963 with associated coefficients of determinant (r²) of .91 and .93 were obtained for male and female SS2 students in Nsukka education zone of Enugu state respectively on their social skills with respect to parent-child attachment. The obtained coefficient of determinant of .91 and .93 indicate that 91% and 93% variation in students' social skills is attributed to parent-child attachment for male and female students respectively. The difference in the variation of male and female students is jointly 2% in favour of the female students. Hence, gender moderates 2% variation in secondary school students' social skills in favour of the females than their male counterparts. From Table 3, the result shows that Fisher's z transformation score of -0.725 with exact probability value of .469 was obtained. Since the exact probability value of .469 was greater than the level of significance set at 0.05, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship was accepted. Thus there is no significant relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students as moderated by gender.

Discussions of Findings

Findings on the relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students shows that correlation coefficient between parent-child attachment and social skills of students was high, this means that there exists a high positive relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of students. By implication, it means that the coefficient of determination with a high percentage variation in social skills can be attributed to parent-child attachment. This finding corroborates the position held by Ezeji (2010) whose result reassert that parenting styles have influence on the social development of students which helps them to fit in smoothly in the social context, also result shows that parent's gender as well as location have influence on social skills acquisition of pre-school children. It was revealed also that parental socio-economic background influence social skills acquisition of pre-schoolers. This finding suggests that students who are attached to parents, would exhibit high social skills

Findings on the relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school as moderated by gender revealed that parent-child attachment has more effect on female children than their male counterparts in respect of social skills acquisition, the reason might be that the female spend more time with their parents than the male counterparts. Further analysis revealed no significant relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of students as moderated by gender. Supporting the present finding was Paul (2020). Who conducted a short-longitudinal study and analyzed the cross-sectional and longitudinal pathways linking adolescents and longitudinal pathways linking adolescent's quality of attachment to parents and peers and their practice of aggressive and prosocial behaviour which also explored the moderation effect of gender on those pathways. Results showed that aggression and prosocial behaviour were the strongest predictors of themselves overtime. These effects held stable for boys and girls, though gender-based differences were found in mean levels of attachments to peers and social behaviours.

Conclusions

Conclusively, the study investigated parent-child attachment as a correlate of social skills of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. The findings revealed a significant positive high relationship between parent-child attachment and social skills of secondary school students. Hence when students are securely attached to their caregiver, it helps them to acquire high positive social skills which enable them to relate well in the society in the future. Therefore, parent especially the mothers should be responsive to their infants need so as to develop trust in their children, and a conducive environment should be created for the children to soar. Overall, this study underscores the significance of parent-child attachment as a valuable tool in addressing the poor social skills among secondary school students.

Recommendation

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

1. Parents should exhibit behaviours that are responsive to the needs of their children such as care, love, attention, security, protection and a secure base that will empower them to explore the world, especially at the early stage of life, thereby inculcating social skills which invariably will help them to soar in life.
2. It will be of utmost importance that the aspects of the secondary school curriculum that is relevant to parent-child attachment and social skills should be enriched to enable parents and the entire society, to appreciate more the parent-child attachment that promotes a secure base and a stimulating and conducive environment for the child to thrive.
3. Seminars and workshops should be organized by government for parents through the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) forum, and also sponsor awareness programmes through radio and television jingles on parent-child attachment. This will boost the parents' opportunity to be enlightened on the need to adopt secure parent-child attachment pattern, which produce socially competent, self-confident, independent and self-propelled adolescent students needed for the 21st century world.

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