

**SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT CORRELATES AND ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT: AN ANALYTIC APPROACH**

BY

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Abstract

Social adjustment in adolescence is a multi-faceted concept. It is an integral variable that has been linked to several diverse constructs. This paper, therefore, primarily sought to determine the nature, strength and direction of the degree of relationship between social adjustment identified components of peer acceptance, school attachment and family climate on adolescent students' academic achievement. Adopting a stratified random sampling probability technique, two hundred and forty students drawn from six schools in junior school one in Old Benin Metropolis of Edo state, Nigeria were selected and used in this study. A Social Adjustment Inventory (SAI) instrument was administered on the students. To fulfil the study objectives, Ordinary Least Square multiple regression analysis was employed. The results revealed positive pathlinks and significant relationships between peer acceptance, family climate, school attachment and academic achievement. This study concluded that socially adjusted children blend and do well at school.

Keywords: Social adjustment, peer acceptance, school attachment, family climate, academic achievement.

1. Introduction

Early adolescents' academic success and social adaptation both in and out of the classroom always have been the concern of school teachers, parents and policy makers. The reason is because students' cognitive progress depends on their interests, confidence, sense of progress and achievement as well as on social interactions with their teachers and peers who provide them with both cognitive and emotional support. Therefore, when students show symptoms of poor social adjustment in their immediate environment, positive learning impact is assumed to be missing and this is often reflected in poor academic achievement.

Social adjustment is presumed to go a long way in affecting the academic achievement of adolescents. This has been confirmed from the research report by Kaur and Jaswal (2005) that emphasized that one aspect of the adolescents is their emotions and within families, schools and society as a whole. Unfortunately, this aspect has often been overlooked. A student that is not emotionally adjusted in academics tends to be unstable and puts off tasks in class.

Academic achievement is accomplished by the actual execution of class work in the school setting. Achievement refers to bringing an effort to the desired end or the end gained. Social adjustment is a state of harmonious relation to the environment wherein one is able to obtain satisfaction for most of one's needs and to meet fairly well the social and physical demands put upon one. Some specific

indicators for social adjustment outcome components are often suggested in students' success in coping with the interpersonal societal demands that are inherent in the school and students' participation in social activities alongside to establish social autonomy within him/she and the school. Measures of social adjustment are closely related to measures of mental health. In this paper, efforts are made to record the extent of social adjustment in areas of feeling at home and the ability to cope with immediate social surrounding; the level and quality of contact with friends and relatives and teachers.

Often educators and parents complain that students are unmotivated to learn. These significant others echo this cry and each blame the other for the students' apathetic response to learning (Halawah, 2006). Every day, news abound in the Nigerian media on examination misconducts by students in various citadels of learning. Many fingers are pointed to the classroom teachers as being responsible for this misconduct. Only few blame the child and the home as being responsible for this unfortunate situation.

Academics according to Halawah (2006) are not only about what goes on once students get into the classroom, it also includes what happens to them before and after school. Education and adjustment are two related terms that are intertwined with each other and the implications of not being well-adjusted in and out of school are daily drawn from our adolescents who are faced with the struggles within their home and school environment. Educators in general like Sankaran & Bui (2001) and Nwagwu (2008) believe that all students can learn, however, the strength of desire and temperament to learn according to them varies from one student to another particularly considering their motivational level and social environment. Maladjusted students are prone to academic challenges most especially in Nigeria as well as some other places all over the world where they are growing up in an increasingly complex environment. The austere learning environment in several cities and states in Nigeria like Edo state (as a case study) often expose them to circumstances and pressures.

These emotions do not usually augur well for academic excellence. It is believed that it is their fears, uncertainties, envies, rages, depressions, worries and anxieties that would naturally steer them into achieving in school from day to day. Literature affirms that when there is an academic gap resulting from a poor social adjustment, even the most academically brilliant among them are vulnerable to being undone by unruly emotions.

Many investigations on social adjustment in educational settings indicate that many present pedagogical practices can hinder most students' desire to learn. Academic performance has become an index of a child's future particularly so in highly competitive country like Nigeria where paper certificate is now the order of the day due to the present economic challenges being encountered by the present government particularly in the area of youth unemployment.

In their investigations, several researchers (Kiesner & Kerr, 2004; Berndt, 1999; Melecki & Elliot, 2002) have revealed many factors which can play a great role in social maladjustment among adolescent students which happen to correlate with their academic achievement. In social adjustment studies, social interaction among peers and family members have been revealed as providing significant opportunities for both self-discovery and teacher-guided social learning to the adolescent students. Granot & Mayseless (2001) noted this in their work on attachment to security and adjustment in school. A student is not very socially-adjusted when he/she cannot 'effectively function' in certain environments that require specific mannerisms.

Social adjustment is an important variable that has been linked to several diverse constructs like peer acceptance, family climate and school attachment. Peer acceptance, family climate and school attachment are identified constructs this paper tends to explore as social adjustment correlates to measure academic achievement among some Nigerian adolescent students.

Peer acceptance is the extent of which a child or an adolescent is accepted by peers in a social setting and bonds with others in or outside a group. It also measures how popular the person is in a given context. Peer acceptance also provides a wide range of learning and development opportunities for children in area of building social skills, group problem solving, conflict and competition management, companionship, recreation, self-exploration, moral and ethical development and emotional growth. To emphasize the importance of peer relations and their impact on children's development, Encyclopaedia on Early Childhood Development posited that deficit in emotional, cognitive and behavioural skills that underlie the ability to interact harmoniously with peers may still be compensated for when children interact with competent adults such as parents or teachers or with tolerant older siblings. This definitely goes a long way in enhancing academic achievement in school.

Some functions are also enumerated in peer acceptance for development towards academic growth or achievement namely; interpretation of body language of others and tone of voice, show of tact towards others, cooperation, compromise and demonstration of willingness to subordinate the self by modifying behaviour and opinions in others' interests. Peer acceptance studies that have specifically used standardized measures of academic achievement have revealed that students who score high on these measures are more accepted, less rejected and disliked by peers. They are also viewed by teachers as less deviant, and engage in more positive interactions than those who score low on achievement (Malecki & Elliot, 2002).

Children who are peer-accepted or popular have fewer problems in middle and high school. Again, teens who are peer-accepted have fewer emotional and social adjustment problems as adults (Asher and Cole, 1990). These findings throw more light on the importance of peer acceptance amongst students. This is because a student who is not accepted by his peers can react aggressively against his

immediate environment or be an isolate. He/she is at risk of poor academic achievement.

Family climate is another construct associated with social adjustment. It covers appropriate parenting behaviours in a supportive family environment such as praise, encouragement, help, approval, expressions of endearment etc. Research findings by Weinz-Gross, Siperstein, Untch & Widman, 1997 cited by Donald, et al. (2000) show positive relation of peer acceptance to academic achievement of adolescence. Ajibola & Olutola (2000) also explained in their study that the state of the home affects the individual's life to a great extent. Most recently, attention has turned towards understanding the role of attachment during adolescence.

Some parents do not show parental warmth/involvement and behavioural control to their children. The parents are so much into their personal career aspirations to the detriment of their children's social, academic and emotional development. This greatly affects these children during their early and middle adolescent period of life. This is in the areas of having greater social competence, autonomy, positive attitudes towards school and work, self-esteem and academic achievement. Bhushan (2013)'s research findings also indicated that general category students were found to be better on their family climate and school adjustment than their counterparts SC and BC category students.

Efforts to identify the role of attachment security in the past two decades have been clarified by researchers in promoting psychological well-being during infancy and adulthood. Most recently, attention has turned toward understanding the role of attachment with parents in healthy adjustment during adolescence. Adolescence period signifies many challenging stages characterized by stress and storm. Children are said to thrive in the context of close and dependable relationship, love and nurturance, security, responsive interaction and encouragement of exploration (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The more families support their children's learning and education progress, the more their children tend to do well in school and continue their education (Handerson & Map, 2002).

Another integral variable associated with social adjustment is *school attachment*: attachment to school/environment and teacher. School attachment refers to the degree people at school like the students, feel close to people at school, feel like a part of school and perceive school and teacher support. It is unfortunate that many schools in Nigeria are not conducive enough for our adolescents to want to learn in school. A conducive school environment has a way of motivating students to desire to learn and achieve optimally in academics. Same goes to the way and style of teaching by teachers. When teachers indicate interest in the academic and personal lives of their students and make the learning environment friendly and healthy for the students, it imbibes in the students a sense of school-belongingness.

When teachers are not efficacious in creating positive classroom climates for academic rigor and intellectual challenge, the students are at the receiving end.

When schools fail to meet students' needs for belonging, competence and autonomy, students are likely to become less motivated, more alienated with poorer academic performances (Deci, Valerand, Pelletier & Ryan, 1991). Significant findings also indicate that various school characteristics and practices and the school atmosphere in general were related to academic behaviours, attitudes and achievement.

McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum (2002) further revealed in their study that there were generally high levels of achievement at school when students identified with its norms and goals. In another study by Connell & Wellbourn (1991) perceived teacher support and caring have been associated with greater interest in class and school, which in turn positively affected grade averages.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

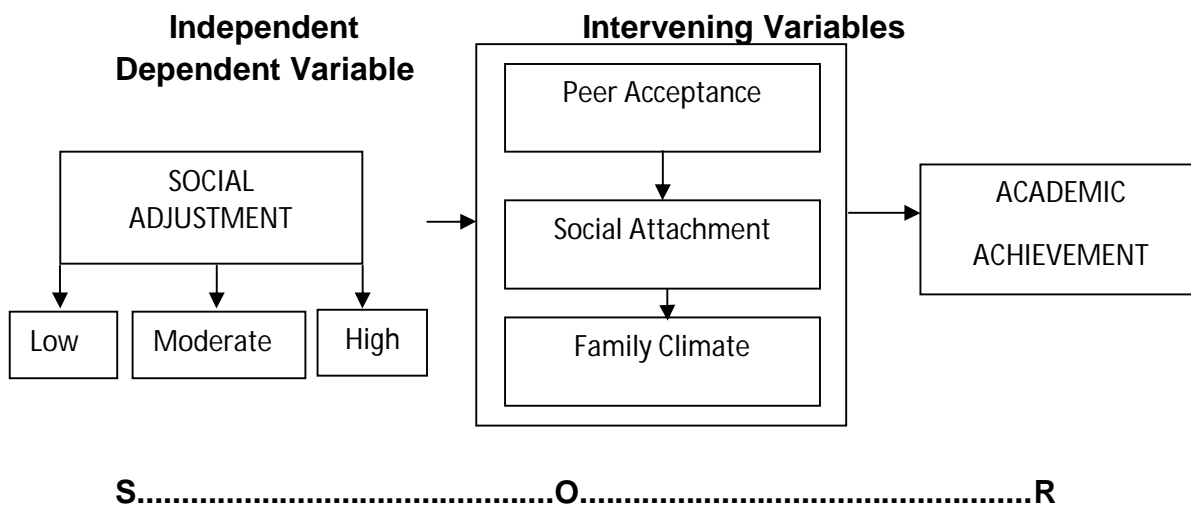


Fig. 1: Source: Adapted from Skinner (1971)

This study conceptualizes a model founded on social learning behaviour. The model conceptualizes academic achievement as depicting the relationship between the variables of peer acceptance, school attachment and family climate on social adjustment. In this study, there exists a set of systematic and functional relationship between the behaviour of students and their environment in social adjustment processes.

Stimulus here could mean any changes in the internal and the external environment of the organism or the response of the individual in the level of academic achievement. This refers to quantity of harmony an individual experiences as he handles his responsibilities and relates with others in his environment and the changes within it, most especially in the course of school-related activities.

In this study, effective deficits which tamper with proper functioning of the adolescent students in the classroom shall be focused on. It refers to the adaptability of adolescent students when subjected to these associated variables within their learning environment. It covers areas on peer acceptance, school attachment and family climate. The role of the individual and social factors in development is often presented from the social theory of Piaget Jean. In Piaget's theory of sociomoral and cognitive development, he pointed out that the child's intellectual adaptation is as much an adaptation to the social environment as to the physical.

Piaget's (1932/1965) description of sociomoral development was expressed as movement from anatomy (non-regulation by others or the self) to interonomy (regulation by others) to autonomy (self-regulation). In Piaget's view, adult-child relationship and cooperative type of relation help a child to interact and adjust well within his environment. This study will give a comprehensive picture of components of social adjustment and their relationship with academic achievement.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

This study anchors on the premise that adolescents do not actualize themselves the way they should in their academics. It is worthwhile to fill in the gap by studying components of social adjustment level of secondary school adolescents who are in their middle childhood stage of life, most especially now their behaviours could still be modified since they are of impressionable age and try to establish the relationship between these major variables and their GPA scores in all the subjects taken in junior school examination. This is because adolescents are under a lot of school and non-academic pressures and the parents, teachers and society are constantly expecting the best academic attainment from them. Achieving educational success is a major task facing these adolescents. A task cannot be positively accomplished when they have a problem with his/her 'self' or some elements within their learning environment.

1.2. Research Questions

To guide this study, vital research questions are raised to be answered.

- (a) Is there any relationship between social adjustment components and academic achievement?
- (b) What is the relative influence of social adjustment components on academic achievement?

1.3. Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses are stated to be tested in this study.

- (a) There will be no significant relationship between social adjustment components and academic achievement.

- (b) There will be no relative influence of social adjustment components on academic achievement among students.

2. Methodology

The research design of the study was an ex-post facto design. This design was adopted because the phenomenon or variables or 'cause' were not manipulated because they had already occurred. This study then observed and sought to relate the multiplicity of possible variables that were related to or contributed to the occurrence of the phenomenon. The population of this study consisted of all Junior secondary school one students in Old Benin Metropolis which was made up of Oredo, Egor and Ikpoba-Okha local government areas of Edo state, Nigeria.

The state is administratively divided into three senatorial districts, namely Edo South, Edo North and Edo Central. The sample for this study was drawn from junior secondary school adolescent students in Benin City. The stratified random sampling probability technique was used to select a sample size of six (6) schools (3 public schools and 3 private schools) drawn from the area of study. Therefore, twenty (20) boys and twenty (20) girls were selected in each sample school making it a total of 40 students from each school. In all, two hundred and forty (240) junior secondary school students were used in this study.

A close-ended instrument titled 'Social Adjustment Inventory' (SAI) was adapted from standardized instrument on Student Problem Inventory (SPI) by Bakare C.G.M (1977) to help elicit information to answer three raised questions and test hypotheses. It was validated and had test retest reliability of 0.69. It was a two-sectioned twenty-five item instrument used to assess and classify students as high, moderate, or low procrastinators. The instrument was constructed on a modified 4-point Likert format of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD). A scale of '1' signified low value while '4' signified high value. At the end of the items, students' GPA scores in all the subjects written at the junior school examination were obtained from third term 2008 official record folders and used as a measure of performance.

The researcher used Ordinary Least Square (OLS) method (Multiple Regression Analysis) in order to determine the nature, strength and direction of the explanatory variables as they affect the dependent variable which is academic achievement. Since, the explanatory variables were qualitative in nature, the researcher quantified them by coding the item data generated from field work. This was done using the SPSS package.

3. Results

3.1. Research Question One

Is there any relationship between social adjustment components and academic achievement?

Table 1:
Correlation matrix of social adjustment components and academic achievement

	GPA	FBG	PEA	SAT	SD
GPA	1	-0.08128382	0.3571371	0.1455987	-0.43861266
FC		1	0.2819124	*0.4503284	0.02848343
PEA			1	0.2279044	- 0.24077111
SAT				1	-0.20021562
SD					1

Key: GPA : Grade Point Average, FC: Family Climate, PEA: Peer Acceptance, SAT: School Attachment, SD: Self Discipline (Constant variable)

A look at table 4 shows absence of multi-collinearity. One of the variables (family climate) is averagely correlated with school attachment but not to the extent of generating multi-collinearity among the variables. Since this study is an analysis of correlation between the explained and explanatory variables, the test of collinearity is necessary in order to properly endorse or refute the statistical significance of the explanatory variables: thus, the result and this explanation further show that the explanatory variables individually affect the dependent variable using the rule of thumb.

3.2. Research Question Two

What is the relative influence of social adjustment components on academic achievement?

Table 2:

Regression result and analysis of social adjustment components and academic achievement

Variable Coefficient		β values	Std. Error	T Statistic	Prob.
Constant	46.23233	46.23233	2.454961	18.83220	0.0000
Peer Acceptance	4.117139	42.115191	0.805017	5.114349	0.0000
Family Climate	-3.649907	42.582423	0.995098	-3.667889	0.0003
School Attachment	1.814455	44.417875	0.906653	2.001267	0.0465
r^2 0.631767 Adjusted r^2 0.61073 D.Wt 1.59 F- statistic 11.9 Prob(F-statistic) 0.0001					

The Beta result in table 2 shows that peer acceptance, family climate and school attachment have moderate effect on academic achievement of students. This is shown from the multiple regression result. A critical look shows that peer acceptance has 44.41 percentage affect on GPA of students. This by implication means that a percentage increase in school attachment will increase GPA by 44.41%.

Family climate also proved to have a positive relationship with student GPA. By implication of the result, a percentage increase in peer acceptance will increase students' GPA by 42.11%. This means that family climate has much influence on GPA.

3.2.1. Hypothesis 1

There will be no significant relationship between social adjustment components and academic achievement.

Table 3

Regression result and analysis of the relationship between social adjustment components and academic achievement.

Variable	Coefficient	β values	Std. error	t-Statistic	Prob.
Constant	46.23233	46.23233	2.454961	18.83220	0.0000
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r^2 0.631767 Adjusted r^2 0.610731 D.Wt 1.59 F- statistic 11.9 Prob (F-statistic) 0.000					

Table 3 indicates that the computed multiple regression result has an F-statistic value of 11.93 which is significant at 5% confidence level. This means that the model has a goodness of fit. With the r-square of 63, it indicates that the explanatory variables explain 0.63 variation in the dependent variable while 0.37 is unexplained. This shows that the explanatory variables explains well of academic achievement and this is endorsed by the r-bar squared (r^2). Individually, the explanatory variables are statistically significant by the rule of thumb. This is indicated by the t-statistic. The value of D.W. statistic shows the absence of serial auto correlation. This means that the model is not biased. According to the coefficients, the result shows that peer acceptance, family climate and school attachment are positively related to GPA with values of 42.11, 42.58 and 44.41 respectively. This reveals that a percentage increase in the variables will increase GPA by 0.4211, 0.4258 and 0.4441 respectively.

Since, the result of the hypothesis conforms to a priori expectation, this means the rejection of null hypothesis and acceptance of alternative hypothesis that has confirmed that social adjustment has a significant relationship with academic achievement of students.

3.2.2. Hypothesis 2

There will be no relative influence of social adjustment components on academic achievement among students.

Table 4

Regression result and analysis of the relative influence of social adjustment components on academic achievement.

(Refer to Table 2 for data)

From the multiple regression statistical analysis, it is obvious that peer acceptance, family climate and school attachment have significant impact on academic achievement among students. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This is the outcome of the t-statistic. Individually, the instrumental variables of social adjustment are statistically significant. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternate hypothesis that the instrumental variables of social adjustment have relative influence on students' academic achievement.

4. Discussion

This study had examined social adjustment components as correlates of students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Edo state, Nigeria. The findings from this study reveal in summary that responses from the six schools (three private and three public) showed positive relationship of the explanatory variables (peer acceptance, family climate and school attachment) with the academic achievement. For social adjustment, all the schools revealed positive relationship between them and

academic achievement. The null hypotheses were, thus, rejected in acceptance of the alternate ones. In an analysis of social adjustment components and academic achievement in the six schools, result revealed that in social adjustment components and GPA which showed that peer acceptance, family and school attachment affect the level of academic achievement of students.

On social adjustment analysis, significant finding was consistent with the findings on peer acceptance, family climate and school attachment made by previous researchers (Granot, 2001; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Henderson & Mapp, 2002 and Baumrind, 1991 and NAEP, 1998). The findings suggest that when students are accepted by their peers and are less rejected and disliked by peers, it affects their academic achievement positively (Malecki & Elliot, 2002). The same goes for family climate. This is because the more families support their childrens' learning and education progress, the more their children tend to do well in school. The findings of Halawah (2006) support this discovery. More could be said for school attachment. The finding from this study has revealed that conducive school environment has a way of motivating students to want to learn and achieve more academically. This discovery is in line with those of Henderson and Mapp (2002). Same goes for the way and style of teaching by teachers.

These findings suggest that peer acceptance is a particularly strong influence in academic achievement. Family climate factors such as household environment in terms of warmth and encouragement also play important role in explaining achievement among students alongside the way they perceive their school in terms of teacher factor and environs. Thus, adolescent students cope better in whatever situation when they are socially adjusted in their environment. Socially adjusted students as the findings in this study have proven usually exhibit positive achievement outcomes in school.

5. Conclusion

Within the frame of social adjustment and the developmental guidance perspective, it is proper that adolescent students need to be given psychological support to carry out vocational, instructional and psychosocial development. Appropriate education and counselling can, therefore, help them develop and cultivate the right attitude towards academic achievement. Parents should hold meetings with the school heads regularly in order to monitor the academic progress of their children and also know how and when to play vital roles in their future careers. It must be appreciated that the more families support their childrens' social adjustment and education progress, the better their children tend to do well in school when they have the proper peer acceptance, school attachment and the right family climate to learn and perform academically. The school counsellors ought to rise up and be more proactive by rendering quarterly counselling interventions in areas of peer acceptance, family climate and school attachment so as to help improve academic achievement and aid social adjustment.

6. Recommendations

- (i) Early interaction with peers at home and school setting is to be encouraged by parents and teachers.
- (ii) School counsellors should design programmes that support competence with peers. This is because of implications for education and mental health policy.
- (iii) Enough guidance counsellors should be posted to secondary schools because to help curb procrastination behaviours of our adolescent students. They need psychological support to carry out emotional as well as psychosocial development.
- (iv) To foster adolescent growth towards positive academic achievement, guidance counsellors should play a liaison role between teachers and students for healthy family climate outcomes. They should understand that the more families support their childrens' learning and education progress, the more their children tend to do well in school because they have the right family climate to learn and perform better academically.
- (v) Parents being the first socializing agent in a child's life should be encouraged to appreciate the importance of early childhood education in order to promote healthy interpersonal relationships between their children and others at school for positive group learning discussions.
- (vi) Guidance counsellors should through workshops/seminar organization and Parent-Teachers' Association meetings help to instil in parents the virtue of their children having friends in early childhood because this helps guide against development of psychological problem like isolation, inferiority complex etc later in childhood.
- (vii) The family environment of the child should be made enabling for the child through parental support of love, physical affection, help and encouragement so that the child can experience a sense of home belongingness and acceptance in the home to make it easy for effortless expressions of wishes and needs.
- (viii) Teachers being the second agent of socialization in adolescence can encourage positive academic achievement through endearing teacher-student bond relationship in the school to foster school connectionness and attachment. This they can do by reinforcing manifested desirable behaviours in students and by giving feedback after every response.
- (ix) The Nigerian federal and state government should map out policies to eradicate poverty in homes and fight high rate of unemployment in the country. When the basic needs of the children are not met at home due to poverty, they tend not to be socially adjusted to learn and perform optimally in teacher- assigned tasks The government can do this by creating more jobs for the working class citizens or making the environment more friendly, peaceful and resourceful for parents to invest in and earn income to manage their homes better. This is because it is very challenging for the adolescents who are in school to read and learn under poor socio-economic conditions.

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