

SOCIAL SUPPORT, COPING STRATEGIES AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT AMONG JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL BOARDERS IN UGHELLI NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the association between social support, coping strategies and academic adjustment among junior secondary school boarders in Ughelli North Local Government area, Delta State, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised to guide the study, the correlational research design was used. In Ughelli North Local Government area, Delta State, 2600 junior secondary school one students make up the population of the study. The sample size was 250 using simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Three instruments were used: Social Support Scale (SSS), Coping Strategies Scale (CSS) and Academic Adjustment Scale (AAS) to collect data. The reliability of the instruments was determined through Cronbach Alpha and it yielded 0.65, 0.68 and 0.71 respectively. All the three instruments used for data collection in this study were adapted and the items in the instruments were clearly explained by the researchers to the respondents for proper understanding before responding to it. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer research question 1-3. The study shows that social support and coping strategies have significant positive relationship with academic adjustment. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others; that students should go for counselling and should be taught how to schedule their time effectively in order to make necessary adjustment in their academic, personal- socio activities, emotional demands and follow the rules and regulations of the school and more professional counsellors should be employ to assist students to adjust to the new school environment.

Keywords: Social Support, Coping Strategies, Academic Adjustment, Boarding Students.

Introduction

Young children may find the transition from primary to secondary school to be quite difficult and as a result, the majority of children are not adequately prepared for the psychosocial realities of secondary schooling. JSS one (1) boarding students frequently struggle with the challenges of adjusting to living away from family and close friends, adjusting to the new school setting, having the independence to manage one's own affairs, and creating new connections with classmates, teachers and other members of the school environment.

Young children must study and internalize the character as well as the rules and regulations that guide the school they are attending in order to be prepare to deal with these obstacles in this new academic environment. Students' transition to secondary education is determined by how they approach these problems and how much they engage with the chances that are offered to them.

Adjustment is a continuous process in which a person may alter their behaviour as part of the ongoing process of adjustment in order to have a better positive relationship with both themselves and the environment in which they live (Salami, 2011). It may imply adjusting one's perspective and manner of living to the needs of the situation. Furthermore, a person's response to the psychological, physical, and social demands of oneself, other people, and the environment has also been described as adjustment. This suggests that learners may adapt to any situation they encounter, whether in the school, family, job, or relationship. Based on the above definitions, adjustment can be characterized as a person's general

adaptation to their surroundings and the demands of life. Academic, social, personal and institutional adjustments are the four different categories of adjustment. Social adjustment is an effort made by a person to adapt effectively with the standards, values and needs of the society in order to be acceptable. It has been shown that children who are traumatized during childhood and adolescence show low level of social competence and acceptance and tend to be isolated, rejected and generally have worse relationships with others (Odojin & Ugoji, 2023). Social adjustment also refers to how kids participate in social activities, whereas academic adjustment is how students manage or deal with their school activities, Personal adjustment refers to how a student may feel or perceive their physical selves. A student level of satisfaction with their current school and with their educational experience in general is referred to as their institutional attachment adjustment. (Baker, McNeil, Siryk, 2007). Some college students participate in vices such as cultism, carrying weapons, kidnapping, and smoking, binge drinking and drug addiction. These are a few examples of adjustment issues in secondary schools, and due to secondary school students' unstable behaviour in the classroom, the learning environment is not always safe. Most secondary school students are not psychosocially and academically well-adjusted because they are not able to interact with others or their peers positively. They engage in illicit sex, kidnapping, ritual killing, internet fraud, drug addiction, emotionally instability, disorganization and may also lack human feelings, such negative behavioral traits displayed by secondary school students could result in violence, aggression, and bullying (Odojin & Okoh, 2023).

The researchers personal experience has shown that most Junior secondary school one (JSS1) students are bound to move from home to attend boarding schools of learning which may reduce contact and social support from parents/guardians and friends. Also, the new school environment in which the children find themselves with new kinds of procedures and new people is capable of creating emotional and psychological problems. The students would like to establish new relationships which may not be achieved overnight. Living in dorms or halls with other students can present special problems particularly when roommates come from diverse racial, cultural and religious backgrounds with different value system. New secondary school students should follow lesson plans and teaching techniques, as well as the rules and regulations of the school.

Social support is one factor that can play a role on student's academic adjustment, Gurung (2006) define social support as the feeling of being loved, cared for, and valued by others. Children who receive social assistance may find it easier to cope with high levels of stress and adapt to their schoolwork. Satisfaction with social support is affected by personality factors Such as self-esteem and a feeling of control over the environment.

Two important elements of social support include having people one can turn to in times of need and the satisfaction one derives from it. Self-esteem and a sense of environmental control are examples of personality traits that have an impact on how satisfied one feels with social assistance. When necessary, social support might come from friends, family, teachers, coworkers, teachers, the community or any other social group (Yasin and Dzulkifi, 2010).

Coping strategies is defined as an individual's ability to manage specific external and internal conflicts that are appraised as exceeding the resources of the individual. The individual's coping strategies are very important in sustaining the total functioning during a stressful event. (McNulty, 2014).

Coping strategies is divided into problem-focused coping strategies, the ability to manage the source of stress, and emotion-focused coping strategies, the ability to manage emotional responses to a stressful situation. McNulty (2014). Individuals prefer to deal directly with the stress by confronting, controlling, or managing stressful tasks. Emotion-focused coping falls under the broader category of avoidant coping, the way people cope depend on the resources that are available to them, one important psychological resource for coping is viewing oneself positively. Children may not be able learn properly when they are faced with problems related to physical and social environments which confronts them like death or loss of a friend and inadequate social support.

Attending institution of learning such as secondary school gives students the opportunity for psychosocial development or adjustment. However, the transition from primary school to secondary could be a life changing period for many adolescents. Entering secondary school for the first time especially boarding students may be a serious strain and serious stressor, as a result of leaving home from parents and friends, trying to establish new social relationships, increased academic demands, as well as coping with

the new school environment. Students, who are newly admitted into secondary schools, now realize that learning and teaching methods are different from the primary school level as there are more assignments, examinations and classwork. All of these could result in emotional and psychological strain for the students.

Based on these, the study of social support, coping strategies and adjustment of junior secondary school one boarding students (JSSS 1) becomes very important. The problem of this study therefore, is to find out the extent of the relationship between social support, coping strategies and adjustment of junior secondary school one boarding students (JSSS 1) in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between social support and academic adjustment of junior secondary school one boarding students?
2. What is the relationship between coping strategies and academic adjustment of junior secondary school one boarding students?
3. What is the joint impact of social support, coping strategies and academic adjustment of junior secondary school one boarding students?

Methods

This study adopted correlational research design and involved an estimated number of 2,600 Junior Secondary School One Boarding (JSSS 1) students in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State. The sample size of the study comprised of (250) students drawn using Simple random sampling technique and purposive sampling technique. Three research instruments were used for data collection, Social Support Scale (SSS), is an adapted questionnaire to measure the level of social support of persons available to students and the overall level of satisfaction given to them. Coping Strategies Scale (CSS) is a self-report questionnaire which was developed to measure the coping strategies students use during a particular stressful situation and Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ) is a self-report questionnaire to measure the students' adjustment in academic learning. The instruments were responded to and scored on 4 point scale of strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (3), Disagreed (2), and strongly Disagreed (1). The face and content validity of the research instruments were conducted by experts in measurement and evaluation to ensure that the items of SSS, CSS, and AAQ were clearly stated and relevant to the study. All the three instruments used for data collection in this study were adapted. The items were clearly explained by the researchers to the students for proper understanding before responding to it. The Cronbach Alpha Technique was used in determining the reliability coefficient value of SSS, CSS, and AAS and it yielded 0.65, 0.68 and 0.71 respectively. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent of relationship between social support and academic adjustment of junior secondary school one boarding students (JSSS 1) in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State?

Table 1 showed the extent of relationship between social support and academic adjustment of junior secondary school one boarding students (JSSS 1)

R	r ²	Adj r ²	Std.Error	B			
0.52	0.27	0.27	4.34	0.65			
Model Summary							
	Sum of sq	df	Mean sq	F	α	sig	Result
Regression	1753.956	1	1753.956	93.16	0.05	.000	Significant
Residual	4669.280	248	18.828				(rejected Ho)
Total	6423.236	249					

Table 1 revealed that $r = 0.52$, $r^2 = 0.27$, adjusted $r^2 = 0.27$, standard error = 4.34 while $B = 0.65$, from the r values, model summary shows the calculated $F = 93.16$ while sig value is 0.000. Hence, since sig value ($p = 0.000 \leq 0.05$) is less than 0.05 alpha, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that social support has significant relationship with academic adjustment among junior secondary school one boarding students (JSSS1) in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of relationship between coping strategies and adjustment of junior secondary school one boarding students (JSSS 1) in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State?

Table 2 showed the relationship between coping strategies and adjustment of junior secondary school one boarding students (JSSS 1).

r	r^2	Adj r^2	Std.Error	B			
0.72	0.51	0.51	3.55	0.62			
Model Summary							
	Sum of sq	df	Mean square	F	α	sig	Result
Regression	3291.722	1	3291.722	260.69	0.05	.000	Significant
Residual	3131.514	248	12.627				(rejected Ho)
Total	6423.236	249					

Table 2 showed r to be 0.72, $r^2 = 0.51$, adjusted $r^2 = 0.51$, standard error = 3.55 while unstandardized $B = 0.62$, from the r values, it is seen that coping strategies has a relationship of 0.72 with academic adjustment. The model summary shows the calculated $F = 93.16$ while sig value is 0.000. Hence, since sig value ($p = 0.000 \leq 0.05$) is less than 0.05 alpha, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that coping strategies has significant relationship with academic adjustment among junior secondary school one boarding students (JSSS1) in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State.

Research Question 3: What is the extent of relationship among social support, coping strategies and adjustment of junior secondary school one boarding students (JSSS 1) in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State?

Table 3 showed the relationship among social support, coping strategies and adjustment of junior secondary school one boarding students (JSSS 1).

R	R^2	Adj R^2	Std.Error	B			
0.74	0.54	0.54	3.45	0.52			
Model Summary							
	Sum of Sq	df	Mean Sq	F	α	sig	Result
Regression	3490.496	2	1745.248	146.99	0.05	.000	Significant
Residual	2932.740	247	11.873				(rejected Ho)
Total	6423.236	249					

Table 3 showed R to be 0.74, $R^2 = 0.54$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.54$, Standard Error = 3.45 while unstandardized $B = 0.52$, from the R values, it is seen that social support and coping strategies has a joint relationship of 0.74 with academic adjustment. The unstandardized B value shows that for every additional increase or decrease in the values of social support and coping strategies, there will be a corresponding increase or decrease of 0.52 units in the values of academic adjustment. The model summary shows the calculated $F = 146.99$ while sig value is 0.000. Hence, since sig value ($p = 0.000 \leq 0.05$) is less than 0.05 alpha, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that social support and coping strategies jointly has significant relationship with academic adjustment among junior secondary school one boarding students (JSSS1) in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State.

Discussion

Findings one reveals a significant relationship between social support and academic adjustment among junior secondary school one students in boarding schools in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State. This means that a student who is socially supported such as; the number of available persons

that he or she can rely on at the time of need, and the level of satisfaction he or she has with the support tend to properly adjust to the school environment than those students who do not have these fundamental components of social support. The present study supports that earlier reported by Holahan, Valentiner & Moos (2008) who found that social support from both parents was positively associated with psychological adjustment. This study also supported the findings of Odofin & Okoh (2023) who revealed that there was a significant joint relationship between personality traits of Openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism and psychosocial adjustment of first year undergraduate students.

This study also supported that of Cutrona, Cole, Cocangelo, Aaouline & Russel (2007) which revealed a significant positive relationship between parental social support and predicted pre-college academic performance.

Findings two reveals a significant relationship between coping strategies and academic adjustment among junior secondary school students in boarding schools in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State. This means that the extent or ability of a student to adjust academically can determine how he/she can directly confront and manage the source of stress and the ability to take active steps in trying to deal with it. The present finding supports that of Hampel and Petermann (2005) which revealed that coping strategies were related with adjustment.

Findings three reveals a significant joint relationship among social support, coping strategies and academic adjustment of junior secondary school students in boarding schools. This findings supports the report of Ward and Kennedy (2007) who found a significant relationship among avoidant coping, humour, approach coping, acceptance, social support and adjustment process.

Conclusion

Based on the results in this study, it can therefore be concluded that social support and coping strategies have positive impact on academic adjustment among junior secondary school one students in boarding school in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

From the findings above, the following recommendations were made:

1. Students should be taught how to schedule their time effectively and balance their academic, personal- socio activities and follow the rules and regulations of the school.
2. Counsellors should provide adequate information to the students of the amount of social support available to them from parents, guardians, teachers, hostel wardens, for them to access these available services whenever they encounter challenges in their new school environment.
3. Counselling and Educational psychologists should organize guidance programmes for social support and coping strategies in developing the students adjustment to their new school.

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