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Influence of Parent-Child Interaction on In-School Adolescents' Interest in Learning in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study was designed to ascertain the influence of parent-child interaction on in-school adolescents' interest in learning in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. The study adopted an ex-post-facto research design. The population was 4592 senior secondary two (SS II) in-school adolescents in public secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone was used and 595 pupils were purposively sampled and used for the study. Three research questions and two null hypotheses, tested at 0.05 probability level guided the study. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection, the Parent-child Interaction Questionnaire (PCIQ) and Adolescents Interest for Learning Questionnaire (AILQ). The data collected was analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. The study revealed that parent-child interaction influences students' interest in learning and that gender may not have influence on students' interest in learning. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others

that government should introduce programmes that will educate parents on the need to adopt warmth parent-child interaction in the course of their child upbringing and socialization.

Key words: Parent-child interaction, In-school adolescent, Iinterest in learning

Introduction

Every individuals' stage of growth and development is posed with challenges, the teenage years are certainly no exception. In fact, parent-child interaction during adolescence may present unique situations as a result of the physical, cognitive, social and emotional changes taking place in a child's life. The period of adolescence is variously defined by different psychologists and authors. According to Piaget in Elias (2006), it is a period of advanced cognitive functioning when logical and abstract thinking dominates; Erikson in Ngwoke and Eze (2004) maintains that it is a period of identity formation, while Freud (1969) views it as a period of libidinal energy concentration in the genitalia in readiness for procreation. These definitions are geared towards describing different changes in a child's body system due to maturation which acts as a lee way into adulthood and procreation. These changes to Hall in Woolfork (2001) are considered to cause an upheaval (storm and stress) in the lives of youngsters which could be attributed to their struggle to meet up with the incessant body changes 'yet unknown to them' and the changes in the expectations from the environment.

At the adolescence stage, the biological, cognitive, and emotional changes peculiar to the period spark transformations in the parent-child interaction. This is because, adolescent period is a time during which the child's urges for independence may challenge parents' authority, as the young adolescent strives to establish a sense of emotional autonomy, or

individuation (Fisher & Johnson, 1990) which leads to a shift from parental bond to peer relationships. Much like toddlerhood, many parents perceive early adolescence as a difficult period requiring a fair amount of adaptation. In the case of toddlerhood, most families are unable to cope with these adaptational demands successfully (Oluwatelure and Oloruntegbe, 2009). Adolescents fare better, and their family relationships are better-off, if the parents are supportive, responsive and accepting of the child's needs for more psychological independence.

In this study, there are in-school and out-of-school adolescence. In-school adolescents are children between the ages of 11-18 years who are still in school system while out-of-school adolescents are adolescents who are not in school system probably due to financial predicament, frustration, deprivation, early pregnancy or poverty. This study focused on the in-school adolescence. These adolescents could be said to be mostly influenced by peer relationships in school because this is a period of identity formation. Several studies indicated that parental interactions and involvement have a lasting influence throughout the educational careers of children (Barnard & Kelly 1990). This is because interactions and experiences a child has in the home and family setting provide a framework for how the child will interpret his or her world and give meaning to culturally-framed events. Even the degree to which the child is prepared to benefit from later schooling is predicated in part on what transpires before he enters the school environment. Interaction is the sending of information from one person to another which can be verbal or non-verbal (Kristin & Nicholas, 2006). It is very important for parents to be able to interact openly and effectively with their children. Open and effective interaction benefits not only the children, but every member of the family. This is because relationships between parents and their children are greatly improved when there is effective interaction taking place between the parents

and their children. This enhances children's interest in the objects of parental interest such as learning in school. This gives credence to the need for proper parent-child interaction.

Parent-child interaction can also be seen as the ability of the parents to perceive and interpret accurately the signals and communications implicit in their child's behaviours, and the way they respond to them appropriately and promptly, (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, (NICHD) 2004). However, parent-child interaction could be seen as an intentional, interpersonal, communication (both verbal and nonverbal) interaction, within close proximity between a parent and a child, and directed at a common goal. It can also be seen as a two-way channel of communication in which there is reciprocity of interaction between parents and their children. The child emits some actions and the parents respond appropriately depending on their perception of the child's emission. Therefore, it is essential that the parent-child interaction be appropriate to the child's communication and situation. Parent-child interaction as a continuum has a lot of influence on the academic attainment of a child during school years. This is because, it has been found to be better related to child's fewer behavioural problems in school (Domina, 2005), better attendance rate, better course completion, (Simon, 2001), and lower dropout rates (Rumberger, 1995). Research shows that over time, adolescents who have been reared under securely attached bond (Ainsworth, 1969) continue to show more success in school, better psychological development, and fewer behavioural problems than their counterparts from other types of homes.

However, hostile parent-child interaction can also be seen as parental use of detachment, intrusiveness, ignoring, and neglectful response to child's signals and needs, (Bowlby, 1969). It is associated with destructive adolescent problem behaviours (Rueter & Conger, 1995**)** and with an increased likelihood of involvement in drinking, delinquency, and other

problem behaviours in school (Domina, 2005). Research has found that children who have hostile interaction with their parents are likely to be disruptive, apply minimal effort, have low attendance rate at school and as a result, perform poorly in school, (Halle, Anderson, Blasberg, Chrisler & Simkin, 2011). Hostile parent-child interaction could be seen to be better related to boys' maladaptive behaviours in school and girls' low self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Sex role stereotypes are well established in early childhood through parent-child interaction. Messages about what is appropriate based on gender are so strong that even when children are exposed to different attitudes and experiences, they will revert to stereotyped choices (Haslett, Geis & Carter, 1992). Moreover, when parents are attuned to their child's development and support their autonomy in decision making, the youth is better adjusted (Lord, Eccles & McCarthy, 1994).

These variations in parent-child interaction seem to have caused most school children within the study area to lack interest in learning. A Casual observation revealed that children possess interest in learning at early childhood, (Shagle & Barber, 1993) which is observed by their curiosity for novel things, their persistence, need to master their surroundings, and their desire to read their favourite books repeatedly. However, as these children reach upper elementary school through secondary school, their interest in learning seems to wane. A common complaint among middle - school teachers is that many of their students do not take active role in their own learning in particular, when the students face challenges and difficulties (Ogunfowora, Olusoga, Olanrewaju, & Akenzua, 2005). Despite awareness of academic problems they may have and the availability of assistance, many school children tend to give up prematurely, sit passively, or persist unsuccessfully on their own without ever asking for help. This disparity in

interest is puzzling and leads one to question "what happens to student's interest in learning over the school years.

According to Obodo (2002), interest is the attraction which forces or compels an individual to respond to a particular stimulus. Schiefele (2001) perceived interest as the persisting tendency of an individual to pay attention and enjoy some activities or contents that appeal to one's desire. This points out that a child will only develop interest if he likes or desires that particular stimulus. Interest is a motivational concept but differs by its content-specificity, that is to say that interest is always identified with particular content (for instance, learning, dancing, reading, jumping and eating). For the purpose of this study, child's interest in learning is a state of the child's mental and emotional readiness to respond to learning processes in a manner that gives first place to his or her learning desires. This goes further to say that interest in learning implies reaction, impressions and feelings to the child (Krapp, 2000). A child with positive interest gets motivated to learn and gets satisfied from learning new things. Conversely, a child with negative interest may have low motivation in learning and could not be an active learner in the class. When parents are actively involved in instruction through mutual interaction or helping with learning activities, children are likely to develop more interest towards learning.

Researches specifically concerned with interest and learning (Krapp, Renninger & Hidi, 1992; Krapp, 2002) have focused on two components of interest as; individual interest and situational interest. Individual interest refers to relatively stable orientations that have developed over time. Individual interest has a dispositional quality, residing in the person across situations (Renninger, 2000), these children have a well-developed interest in learning and learning tasks to trigger more interest in them. Situational interest on the other hand, refers to interest that is built on a contextual feature that make a task or activity interesting, and is depended on favourable

environmental conditions in which learning occurs (Boekaerts & Boscolo, 2002). The level of interest triggered when a child is presented with a set of learning activities could be an outcome of a well-developed individual interest through various experiences acquired before the child walks into the school environment on which parent-child interaction is not exempted. Even the degree to which children view themselves as either male or female and the sex roles attached to them are based on the interactions they are exposed to at home and these could enhance or mar the child's motivation and interest in learning at school.

Statement of problems

The issue of poor academic achievement and low attention span arising from a steady decline on students' interest in learning has been a source of worry to the parents, teachers, and to the general public. As a result, primary secondary school students sit passively in the class and are not willing to participate in learning activities irrespective of the availability of facilities and assistance they have. These disruptive behaviours are traceable to what transpires between the parents and their children at home. It therefore seems that parent-child interaction is faulty and parents are not aware of their roles in their children's cognitive, psychological and learning development at the child's early stage.

In addition, there have been unresolved claims on the influence of gender in relation to parent-child interaction on students' interest in learning. Therefore, the problem of this study put in question form is: What is the influence of parent-child interaction on in-school adolescent's interest in learning in Nsukka Education Zone?

Research questions

1. What is the pattern of parent-child interaction in Nsukka Education Zone?
2. What is the influence of parent-child interaction on in-school adolescent's interest in learning?
3. What is the influence of gender on in-school adolescent's interest in learning?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at 0.05 probability level.

Ho_1: There is no significant influence of parent-child interaction on in-school adolescence's interest in learning

Ho_2: There is no significant influence of gender on students' interest in learning.

Methods

The study adopted ex-post-facto or causal comparative research design. This is because the study seeks to investigate already existing phenomenon which are inherently cannot be manipulated (parent-child interaction), thus seeking to find out the present status of its existence or absence in-school adolescence interest in learning (Kerlinger in Eze, 2005). The area of the Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State and it is comprised of three Local Government Areas.

Population of the Study

The population of the study is all the 4592 students in senior secondary two (SS II) in public secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone (*source*: Planning, Research and Statistics (PRS) Unit, Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB)

Zonal office Nsukka, 2013). In this population, Nsukka LGA has 2800 SS II students; Igbo-Etiti LGA has 1292 SS II students; while Uzo-Uwani LGA has 500 SS II students.

The sample is 495 (comprising of 277 males and 218 females) students drawn using multi-stage random sampling technique. At first stage, a proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to draw the sample from each local government in which about 40 percent of the schools were randomly drawn to ensure average representativeness from three schools that make up the education zone. Having drawn the schools, parent-child interaction questionnaire which was used as an identification instrument was used to identify students in SS II who have warmth or hostile parent-child interaction with their parents. From the analysis, it was found that 319 students had warmth parent-child interaction whereas 176 students had hostile parent-child interaction with their parents. This was done to avoid sampling students who have the same parent-child interaction experience. At second stage, purposive sampling was used to draw students after their identification.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instruments used for this study was 30 items questionnaire on parent-child interaction (PCIQ) adapted from Albert Home visitation Network Association (child version) (2009) and thirty items of Child Interest in Learning Questionnaire (CILQ) adapted from 63 items of Interest Inventory Scale (IIS), by Grahnfang (2009) was used to elicit information on pupils' level of interest in learning. The questionnaires were made up of two sections A and B. section A was structured to obtain personal data from the respondents while section. Section B comprises of items skewed on 4-point-scale of (Never =1, Rarely =2, Sometimes =3, and Always = 4 for items that are positively skewed and alternately to items that are negatively structured)

to elicit information that will provide answers to the research questions on study.

Three experts validated the instrument. The internal consistency of the instruments were established using Cronbach Alpha Statistics, the instrument yielded the following: Parent-child interaction Questionnaire = 0.764; Child Interest in Learning Questionnaire (CILQ) = 0.823. The 495 copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researchers and duly collected from the students.

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and parametric statistic (mean, standard deviation, and t-test). Specifically, research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while hypotheses were tested using t-test.

Results

Research Question 1:

What is the mean response of in-school adolescent from warmth parent-child interaction and in-school adolescent from hostile parent-child interaction?

Table 1: Mean response and standard deviation of in-school adolescent depicting the type of parent-child interaction that exist in Nsukka Education Zone.

Variable: PCI	N	$\bar{X}$	SD
Warmth PCI	319	2.91	0.29
Hostile PCI	176	2.29	0.17
Mean Difference		0.62	

PCI = Parent-child Interaction

The result presented in Table 1 shows that two types of parent-child interaction- warmth and hostile parent-child interaction exist in Nsukka Education Zone. In-school adolescents from warmth parent-child interaction had a mean of 2.91 with a standard deviation of 0.29, while in-school adolescents from

hostile parent-child interaction had a mean of 2.29 with a standard deviation of 0.17. The difference between the mean of in-school adolescent from warmth parent-child interaction and in-school adolescent from hostile parent-child interaction is 0.62.

Research Question 2

What is the influence of parent-child interaction on in-school adolescents' interest in learning?

Table 2: Mean scores, SD & t-value of student's motivation in learning by parent-child interaction

Variable: SI	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t_{cal}	Sig	Decision
Warmth	319	2.82	0.35				
				396	22.14	0.00	S
Hostile	176	2.13	0.52				
MD	0.69						

SI= Students' Interest, DM = Mean Difference

Table 2 shows that in-school adolescent from warmth parent-child interaction (PCI) had a mean of 2.82 with a standard deviation of 0.35 while in-school adolescent from hostile parent-child interaction had a mean of 2.13 with a standard deviation of 0.52 for students' interest (SI) in learning. The difference between their mean response scores is 0.69. This is indicative that in-school adolescents from warmth parent-child interaction background had more interest in learning than in-school adolescent from hostile parent-child interaction. The corresponding hypothesis which stated no significant influence of parent-child interaction on in-school students' interest in learning was subjected to t-test.

The test of the hypothesis as contained in table 2 above revealed that a t-value of 22.14 was obtained with associated probability value of 0.00. Since the associated probability value

(0.00) was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis H_{01} was rejected. Thus, there is a significant influence of parent-child interaction on in-school adolescents' interest in learning.

Research Question 3:

What is the influence of gender on in-school adolescent interest in learning?

Table 3: Mean scores, SD & t-value of students' interest in learning by gender

Variable:	SIN	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t_{cal}	sig	Decision
Male	199	2.16	0.52				
				395	0.83	0.41	NS
Female	198	2.12	0.52				
DM		0.04					

α = 0.05, S=Significant, SI = Students' Interest, DM = Difference in Mean

The result presented in Table 3 shows that in-school adolescent males had a mean response score of 2.16 with a standard deviation of 0.52 whereas their female counterparts had a mean of 2.12 with a standard deviation of 0.52 with regards to gender difference in interest in learning. The difference between their mean response scores is 0.04. This is seemingly negligible, indicating that gender may not have some influence on in-school adolescent students' interest in learning. The corresponding hypothesis which stated no significant influence of gender on in-school adolescents' interest in learning was subjected to t-test.

The test of the hypothesis in table 3 above revealed that a t-value of 1.04 was obtained with associated probability value of 0.83. Since the associated probability value (0.83) obtained was greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis H_{02} was not rejected. Thus, there is no significant influence of gender on in-school adolescent students' interest in learning.

Discussion

The results of the findings revealed that two types of parent-child interaction- warm and hostile parent-child interaction exist in the zone. It was shown that students from warm parent-child interaction were 319 in number against students from hostile parent-child interaction who are 179. Students from warmth parent-child interaction out-numbered their counterpart, which shows that most parents have warmth interaction with their children.

The summary of the analysis in table 2 indicated that in-school adolescents from warmth parent-child interaction develop more interest in learning than in-school adolescent from hostile parent-child interaction background. The finding is in line with the study by (Kuhn, & Franklin, 2006) which asserts that when parental interaction with the child is high, children come to school with more developed interest and set more task-specific goals, self-regulate, exert effort easily in the domain of their interest(s), ask curious questions and are more inclined to learning. This is as a result of their constant warmth interaction with their parents and it has made the students to have more interest in whatever thing that will boost their interaction with their parents.

The finding contradicts the findings of Hassan (1995) in a study to Investigate into the Factors Affecting Science Interest of Secondary School Students which revealed that students' interest development in science depends on the triggered situational interest in a selected number of variables in the learning environment. Students' development of interest could also be as a result of emerging situational interest resulting in the style and teachers' approach towards instructional delivery.

The finding of the study revealed a seemingly negligible difference on male and female response to the influence of gender on their self-esteem. This indicates that gender may not

have some influence on students' self-esteem. The corresponding hypothesis also revealed no significant influence of gender on students' self-esteem. The findings agree with the findings of Falaye, Falaye, and Ogundoku (2006) on a study carried out on Age, gender, religion and physical location as predictors of the social interactions of some Nigerian adolescents during puberty which indicates that gender difference as predictors of the social interactions among some Nigerian adolescents during puberty is minimal.

However, the finding disagrees with findings of Ainley, Hidi, and Berndorff, (2002) on Interest, learning and the psychological processes that mediate their relationship which revealed that there is a significant difference in rating students' interest with their gender. Gender bias towards students' interest in learning was observed to have no significance because interest could be perceived as an innate trait in human being and their possession of it have no correlation with their gender.

Conclusion

- Most parents exhibit warmth parent-child interaction which had a positive influence on the students' exhibition of adaptive behavioural outcome such as high socio-emotional outcomes, stronger pro-social orientations, more numerous and higher quality friendships, and higher levels of peer acceptance.
- On the other hand, in-school adolescents' response to learning interest in relation to the type of parent-child interaction they are exposed to indicated that parent-child interaction influence their interest in learning.
- Gender has no significant difference on in-school adolescents' interest in learning.

Recommendations

- Government should introduce programmes that will educate parents on the need to adopt warmth parent-child interaction in the course of their child upbringing and socialization.
- Being that the world in general and Nigeria in particular are placing much emphasis on gender equality. There is need to let parents know that this movement should start in the home during child upbringing and socialization and parent-child interaction among the children should be gender neutral.

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