



AN ASSESSMENT OF EMOTIONAL STRESS AND SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM DIVORCED FAMILIES IN KANO METROPOLIS NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the level of emotional stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria. A correlational design was employed for the study. The population of the study was 481 males and females SS II students from divorced families among senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria. A sample of 215 students were used in this study. Two instruments stress questionnaire and school adjustment questionnaire were used in data collection. Data collected in this study were analyzed using statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20.0 software. Percentages, frequency, mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were calculated. The result indicated that there is high emotional stress among senior secondary student from divorced families in Kano Metropolis (mean = 50.67: SD = 93.07). The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance and revealed that there is significant negative relationship between emotional stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families ($r = -.669, p = 0.002$). Based on this of findings, the study concluded that there is a negative relationship between emotional stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families. The study recommended the need for students who experience emotional stress to be referred to school psychologists and counselors who should assist them to enable them cope with stress. The study also recommended the need for the establishment school psychologists' units across all secondary schools in Kano Metropolis.

Keywords: Assessment Emotional Stress Students Divorced Families Kano

Introduction

In psychology, stress is a feeling of strain and pressure. Small amounts of stress may be desired, beneficial, and even healthy. Positive stress helps improve academic performance, motivation, adaptation, and reaction to the environment. Excessive amounts of stress, however, may lead to bodily harm (Baqtayan,2011). Stress can increase the risk of strokes, heart attacks, ulcers, dwarfism, and mental illnesses such as depression. Stress can be external and related to the environment, but may also be created by internal perceptions that cause an individual to experience anxiety or other negative emotions surrounding a situation, such as pressure, discomfort, etc., which they then deem stressful Alborzkouh, Nabati, Zainali, Abel and Shahgholy-Ghafarokhi, 2015). Lazarus (2005) reported that a wide range of emotions may be associated with stress in its



early stages, including frustration, anger, anxiety, fear, apprehension and irritability, if the stress persists, these emotions may become confounded with others such as tension, hypochondria, depression, demoralization and helplessness. People may change in a way that appears not to fit with their previous personalities. Fishbein (2006) remarked that emotional stress may change the way normally people used to behave, apparently carefree people may become over-controlled and organized, and caring people may become indifferent, as if radical solutions are being tried out, habitual problems such as worrying, unassertiveness or hostility may become exacerbated. Stoppard (2002) supported that, sudden emotional outbursts as a result of response to stressful situations can occur even though they are quite out of character, if such people also feel out of control, or powerless to change the situation, they may start to experience panic, hopelessness or even suicidal thoughts. If they blame themselves for the stress, or for their inability to cope, their self-esteem and self-confidence may also suffer. Emotional stress among students has become a growing public health and educational concern worldwide because of its potential to negatively affect learning outcomes, behaviour, mental wellbeing, and overall school adjustment.

School adjustment is a broad construct which consists of many different aspects such as academic achievement, school satisfaction, school engagement and pro social behavior. Well-adjusted students usually value what they are learning, are positively involved in classroom activities and perform well academically. But poor school adjustment leads to poor academic performance, behavioral problems, discordant educational aspirations and sometimes school dropout (Adhiambo & Mildred, 2011).

School adjustment is the process of adapting to meet academic demands in the school environment. Every individual from the time he or she steps out of the family and goes to school makes a long series of adjustments in his/her environment. Adjustment is totally based on the pattern established by earlier adjustment. It includes the individual students' ability to withstand the academic workload, regulate emotions, and maintain appropriate behaviour in school settings. When students experience difficulties adjusting to school, they may exhibit poor academic performance, absenteeism, low motivation, behavioural problems, and increased risk of mental health issues. The quality of adjustment in the early years of life determines the quality of adjustment in later years. The young adolescents make the transition from Elementary to Secondary School; they are caught up in the web of transitional experiences. The transition usually confronts adolescents with new social and educational demands. As pointed out by Phelam (1994) the transition into High School can be an unpleasant experience. The transition to Higher Secondary School is also a challenge in the development of adolescent students. Many adolescents are inadequately prepared for the psychological, emotional and academic realities of higher education. The students are confronted with the adaptation challenges of living apart from family and friends, adjusting to the academic regimen, assuming responsibility for the task of living, and developing a new array of social relationship with peers. Such transitions require the student to create new coping styles, overcome initial anxiety and adopt new behavior. Those children who fail to do can negatively influence their adjustment in school and which in turn affects their academic performance adversely. School is one of the important pillars on which the child's personality is formed.



This study, therefore, viewed school adjustment, as the child's ability to develop social, emotional and academic competencies that facilitate the achievement of school success. It is characterized by quality social relationships with peers and teachers, feeling of emotional security, less aggressive behaviors, pro-social behaviors, longer retention in educational system and better academic performance.

Therefore, studying how emotional stress influences students' adjustment to school is of great concern for developing effective school interventions, counseling sessions, and educational policies for promoting students' wellbeing and academic progress. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the level of emotional stress and school adjustment among secondary school students from divorced families in Kano Metropolis and examine its relationship with school adjustment.

Statement of the Problem

School adjustment is an effort made by students to cope with the academic demands or challenges of school environment. It includes the individual's involvement in school activities and satisfaction with various aspects of school experiences. In the process of school adjustment, the student tries to behave in accordance with the school norms, ethics, and values that will enhance his survival, and meeting the expectations of the school environment. Every individual student from the time he or she steps out of the family and goes to school makes a long series of adjustments in his/her new environment. However, Kano state has many cases of divorce among married couples. The Kano State, Social Re-orientation Board (2011), gave a gloomy picture about divorce rates in Kano state. It was reported from the study conducted that 32% of marriages in Kano state survives only a duration of three to six months; many young ladies within the age of 20-25 years are said to have gone through more than one wedding in their lives at least; that it is not unmoral to come across young women who are less than 30years of age who have not been serially divorced. Furthermore, as at 2009, it was estimated that there were over one million divorcees in Kano state.

However, the study observed that divorce has cause mayhem on the psychological stability and physical health of many secondary school students in Kano Metropolis. The study observed that some secondary students from divorced families in Kano metropolis have more emotional and behavioral problems, negative feelings and less psychological well-being than those from intact families. As such, the students experience a wide range of emotional reactions such as sadness, anger, loneliness, depression, heightened anxiety, worry, lower life satisfaction, low self-esteem and confidence, fear, yearning, rejection, conflicting loyalties and a sense of fault for their parents' problems, withdrawals from friends and families, aggressive, impulsive or hyperactive behavior. The instability of this emotions may easily initiate unusual behaviors which may affect their learning ability and academic achievements. This study notices that most of the secondary school students with higher level of academic stress result into violence, drug abuse, feeling inferior to others, not being able to think properly, worrying too much, feeling that life is not worth living, anxious without any apparent reason, truancy behavior, not paying attention to school activities and isolation activities. The catalogue of challenges experienced by secondary school students of divorced families are enormous and it is not just inimical to the students but to the society at large.



This problem is delicate and needs cautious handling that is why conducting research on the relationship between stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria, is imperative to illuminate the nuanced ways in which divorce-related stressors impact students' educational experiences within a specific cultural context. By investigating this relationship, the study can provide crucial insights into the potential academic, emotional challenges faced by these students, leading to the development of targeted interventions and support systems that enhance their overall well-being and educational outcomes. Hence, this study was carried out to examine the relationship between emotional stress and school adjustment among secondary school students from divorced families in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria

Research Question

The following research questions were answered.

1. What is the level of emotional stress among senior secondary school students from divorce families in Kano metropolis?

Objective of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To find out the level of emotional stress among senior secondary school students from divorced families in Kano metropolis.

Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant relationship between emotional stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families in Kano metropolis.

Basic Assumption

The following is the assumption for this research.

1. It is assumed that there may be a relationship between emotional stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families in Kano Metropolis.

Methodology

Correlational design was adopted for this study. Correlation design is appropriate for determining whether there is relationship between two or more quantifiable variables and to what degree this relationship exists. Correlational design according to McMillan and Schumachae (2010) is a research design in which information on at least two variables are collected in order to investigate the relationship between the variable. In correlational design, the researcher will not attempt to manipulate any variables. Instead, the researcher is more concerned to determine the extent to which the multiple predictors explain the outcome variable, but does not necessarily conclude that one variable cause the other variables (Schmidt & Brown, 2009). Therefore, correlation design



was used for this study because this study is geared toward examining the relationship among divorce, stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised of all male and female students in senior secondary schools in some local government in Kano Metropolis whose parents are divorced. Kano metropolis has six (8) Local Government Area. In this research (6) local government were used. The researcher with the help of class masters and class mistress and structured checklist identified the students whose parents are divorced. The checklist identified the students whose parents are divorced. As a result, the researcher identified 481 male and female SS II students whose parents are divorced in Kano metropolis in fifteen senior secondary schools selected by the researcher as indicated in table 1

Table 1: Population of the Study

Local government	Schools	Students from Divorced Families (SS II)
Dala	GGASS Gwammaja	55
Fagge	GGSS Yan Mata	63
Gwale	GGSS Dan Dinshe	29
	GASS Yalwa	18
Kano Municipal	GGASS HasiyaBayaro	22
	GGJSS TijjaniHashim	11
	GGSS Dangana	29
	GSS Tarauni	74
Nassarawa	GGSS Gwagwarwa	17
	GGSS Hotoro (S)	23
	GSS Hotoro (N)	39
	GSS U/Uku	17
	GSS Kundila	27
Tarauni	Engr. Bashir Karaye	24
	GGASS Ado Na Mai Tuwo	33
	TOTAL	481

Source: Kano State School Management Board (2020)

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size of this study is 215 male and female SS II whose parents are divorced. This selection conforms to the Research Advisor (2006) prescription as attached in the appendix of this research, who recommends that a population of 481 will require a sample of 215 respondents. Fifteen (15) schools were randomly selected from some schools in Kano metropolis. Proportionate sampling technique was used in the allocation of sample to the various schools. This is because the numbers of students whose parent are divorced differ from school to school. Table 2 shows the sample size of the study.



Table 2: Sample Size of the Study

Local government	Schools	Population	Sample Size
Dala	GGASS Gwammaja	55	24
Fagge	GGSS Yan Mata	63	28
Gwale	GGSS Dan Dinshe	29	13
	GASS Yalwa	18	8
Kano Municipal	GGASS Hasiya Ba Yaro	22	10
	GGJSS TijjaniHasshim	11	5
	GGSS Dangana	29	13
	GSS Tarauni	74	33
Nassarawa	GGSS Gwagwarwa	17	8
	GGSS Hotoro (S)	23	10
	GSS Hotoro (N)	39	17
	GSS U/Uku	17	8
	GSS Kundila	27	12
Tarauni	Engr. Bashir Karaye	24	11
	GGASS Ado Na Mai Tuwo	33	15
	TOTAL	481	215

Source: Kano State School Management Board (2020)

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in this study, Stress Questionnaire, School adjustment Questionnaire.

Stress Questionnaire

Stress Questionnaire is a twenty-six (26) item instrument adopted from Copenhagen stress questionnaire subscale (SQ, 2003). The scale consists of 2 subscales: Cognitive subscales and emotional subscales. Respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement for each statement. The instrument has 26 items, items 1 to 14 measures cognitive stress and item 15 to 26 measures Emotional stress. Items were scored using Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA) =5-points, A (Agree) =4-points, U (Undecided) =3-points, Disagree (D) =2-points and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1-point. This instrument is standardized one that seeks to determine aspect of social adjustment of students. Below is the scoring guide for the questionnaire

Scoring Guide (Emotional Stress)

12 – 24 Low Stress, 25 – 49 Moderate Stress and 50 – 60 High Stress.

School Adjustment Questionnaire

The School Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) is a twenty items instrument adapted from Adjustment subscale of the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) is a self-report inventory designed by Baker and Siryk (1989). Respondents are to respond from extremely (5), Quite a bit (4), moderately (3), a little bit (2) to not at all (1). Highest possible score is 100 (20x5=100).



Procedure for Data Collection

The questionnaires (which comprises of the Stress Questionnaire, School Adjustment Questionnaire) were given to the respondents to fill on the spot and collected back. Administering the questionnaire took the researcher 12 working days to cover all the schools.

Procedure for Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics was used to analyze the Bio- data of the subject; percentage; mean; and standard deviation was also used to answer the research question raised while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. SPSS version 20.0 was used for analysis.

Analysis of Demographic Variables

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	89	41
Female	126	59
Total	215	100.0

Source: Researcher's Data Analysis (2020)

Table 3 shows distribution of respondents by gender. A total of 89 respondents representing 41% were male students while 126 respondents which represent 59 were female students out of the total sample size of 215. This shows that majority of the respondents that participated in the study were female students in Kano Metropolis.

Results

The findings of this study are presented as follows:

Research Questions One: What is the level of emotional stress among senior secondary school students from divorce families in Kano metropolis?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation on Level of Emotional Stress among Senior Secondary School Students from divorced families in Kano Metropolis

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Emotional Stress	215	50.67	9.307

Source: Researcher's Data Analysis (2020)

Table 4 revealed that secondary school students from divorced families had high level of emotional stress as indicated by mean of 50.67 and standard deviation of 9.307 which falls under high level of emotional stress as shown by the scoring guide that a score from 50-60 falls within high level of emotional stress.



H01: There is no significant relationship between emotional stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families in Kano metropolis.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) on the relationship between emotional stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families in Kano metropolis. Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2 tailed)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p
Emotional Stress	215	50.67	9.307	-.669	.002
School Adjustment	215	63.18	10.19		

Source: *Researcher's Data Analysis (2020)*

Table 5 presents Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) statistics between emotional stress and school adjustment. The result shows the correlation index value of -0.669 at df 213 and the calculated P-value of 0.002 which is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance. Therefore, the result established that significant relationship exists between emotional stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families in Kano metropolis. This result shows further indicates that as emotional stress increases, school adjustment decreases. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between emotional stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families in Kano metropolis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The study found significant negative relationship between emotional stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families in Kano metropolis. This finding supports Kwadwo and Bartholomew (2015) who carried out study on effects of Divorce on Parenting, Psyche and Behaviour of Some Selected Public Senior High School Students in the Bolgatanga Municipality of Ghana. The study found that divorce negatively affect and emotional behaviour of affected students.

Similarly, Mohammed, Mahmud and Samson (2016) conducted study on relationship between Broken Home and Emotional Adjustment of Secondary School Student in Kaduna State Metropolis, Nigeria. The finding shows that relationship exist between broken home and emotional adjustment of SS II secondary students with the following values; parental separation and students' emotional adjustment; emotional adjustment and single parenting; and emotional adjustment and divorce.

A correlation study by Kemjika and Obikoya (2017) on relationship between family conflict, values and school adjustment of secondary school adolescents in Rivers State that there is a positive relationship between family conflict, values and school adjustment which are all statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance. Elijah (2018) when reporting the findings from a study on Family Variables and School Adjustment of Secondary School Students in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State reported that single parenting (male/female) and family type significantly influence school adjustment of secondary school students.



However, Singh, Sharma, Sharma and Zaidi (2022) reported significant positive relationship between academic stress and emotional adjustment which implies that a high level of academic stress perpetuates emotional maladjustment. Contrary to the finding of the present study that found negative correlation between stress and emotional adjustment. The contradict could be as result heterogenous groups being compared. The previous study used students without consideration given to either the students is from divorced families or not while the present study only used students from divorced families. One of the implications of this finding is that, since emotional stress increases and school adjustment decreases this will adversely continue to affects the academic performance of the students which will translate to more school drop out in the study area unless urgent interventions are put in place to address the trend.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, this study concluded that, there is negative relationship exists between emotional stress and school adjustment among senior secondary school students from divorced families in Kano metropolis.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that, students who experience high level of emotional stress should be given relevant therapy to enable them manage and overcome their stress.

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