



PREDICTIVE POWER OF PAEDOPHILIC TENDENCY ON SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT OF UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the predictive power of paedophilic tendency and pornographic addiction on the sexual behaviour and school adjustment of university undergraduates in South-East Nigeria. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. A correlational survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 148,712 undergraduate students enrolled in federal universities in South-East Nigeria during the 2024/2025 academic session. A sample of 1,148 undergraduates was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Two instruments were used for data collection: the Paedophilic Tendency Scale (PTS) and School Adjustment Scale (SAS). The instruments were face-validated by three experts from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, while Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients of 0.76 and 0.74 were obtained for the PTS and SAS respectively. Data were collected through Google Forms and analysed using simple and multiple regression analyses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that paedophilic tendency did not significantly predict university undergraduates' school adjustment. The study concluded that paedophilic tendency is an important psychological predictor of university undergraduates' sexual school adjustment. It was recommended, among others, that universities should strengthen counselling services, implement comprehensive sexuality and digital wellness education programmes, promote responsible internet use, and establish early identification and intervention strategies to improve students' adjustment.

Keywords: Paedophilic Tendency, School Adjustment, University Undergraduates, Predictive Power.

Introduction

The ability of university undergraduates to adjust successfully to the academic, social, emotional, and institutional demands of higher education has become an important concern for educators, counsellors, university administrators, and other stakeholders in Nigeria. University education is expected to equip students with knowledge, skills, and values necessary for personal development and national advancement. However, many undergraduates experience considerable difficulties in adapting to the university environment, resulting in poor academic performance, absenteeism, disciplinary problems, emotional instability, social isolation, low participation in campus activities, and, in some cases, withdrawal from their academic programmes. These adjustment challenges may adversely affect students' psychological well-being, academic success, and overall quality of life.



University undergraduates are in a developmental period commonly referred to as emerging adulthood, which is characterized by increased independence, identity exploration, emotional changes, and exposure to diverse social and cultural experiences. During this period, students are required to make important academic, social, and personal decisions with relatively limited parental supervision. While many students successfully navigate these developmental challenges, others experience psychological and behavioural difficulties that interfere with their ability to adapt effectively to university life. Consequently, identifying psychological factors associated with successful or poor school adjustment has become an important area of educational and psychological research.

School adjustment refers to the extent to which students successfully adapt to the academic, social, emotional, and institutional demands of the university environment. It encompasses effective participation in learning activities, positive relationships with lecturers and peers, emotional stability, compliance with institutional rules and regulations, and active engagement in university life. Students who are well adjusted generally demonstrate higher academic motivation, better interpersonal relationships, effective coping strategies, and greater commitment to their educational goals. Conversely, poor school adjustment is often associated with academic underachievement, behavioural problems, psychological distress, poor social integration, low self-esteem, and an increased likelihood of academic failure or withdrawal from school.

Among the psychological factors that may influence school adjustment is paedophilic tendency. Paedophilic tendency refers to a persistent psychological inclination characterized by recurrent sexual thoughts, fantasies, or emotional attraction toward prepubescent children. According to Pienaar (2023), paedophilic tendency is a psychological disposition that may exist at the cognitive or affective level without necessarily being acted upon, although it may influence an individual's attitudes, decision-making, and sexual perceptions. Similarly, Beier (2021) defined paedophilic tendency as an atypical pattern of sexual interest in which an individual experiences sexual arousal or curiosity toward prepubescent children rather than age-appropriate partners. Such tendencies may influence media consumption habits, moral judgement, and interpersonal interactions, particularly during late adolescence and early adulthood. Janssen (2018) further described paedophilic tendency as a recurring predisposition toward sexual interest in minors that reflects underlying psychological and developmental processes. Even when these interests remain latent, they may interact with environmental influences, including exposure to sexually explicit materials, thereby influencing sexual behaviour, emotional regulation, and psychosocial adjustment. Therefore, paedophilic tendency can be understood as a psychological inclination involving persistent sexual thoughts, fantasies, or attractions toward prepubescent children, irrespective of whether such attractions are acted upon.

Research examining paedophilic tendency among university students, particularly in Nigeria, remains limited because of the highly sensitive nature of the subject, social stigma, and legal implications associated with its disclosure. Nevertheless, some empirical studies have explored the occurrence of self-reported atypical sexual interests among non-clinical populations using self-report and indirect assessment measures. For example, Nwankwo et al. (2023) reported the



presence of recurrent sexual fantasies involving prepubescent children among a proportion of male undergraduates sampled from universities in Enugu and Anambra States, while Ekeocha et al. (2021) observed implicit associations between sexual arousal and child-related stimuli using the Implicit Association Test. These findings have been discussed alongside broader international evidence indicating that atypical sexual interests have been identified within a small proportion of young adult populations (Joyal & Carpentier, 2017). However, because of differences in research designs, measurement approaches, and cultural contexts, prevalence estimates should be interpreted with caution.

Several biological, psychological, and environmental factors have been associated with the development or expression of paedophilic tendency. Okafor et al. (2022) reported an association between childhood sexual abuse experiences and subsequent paedophilic ideation among Nigerian male undergraduates. Similarly, exposure to illegal child sexual exploitation materials through digital platforms has been identified as a potential environmental risk factor (Ibezim et al., 2023). Cultural and religious values may also influence the expression and reporting of atypical sexual interests. In South-East Nigeria, conservative social norms may discourage disclosure while simultaneously limiting access to professional psychological support (Chukwuemeka et al., 2023). Collectively, these findings suggest that paedophilic tendency is a complex psychological phenomenon that warrants further empirical investigation within Nigerian university populations.

Although paedophilic tendency is conceptually related to paedophilia as a clinical condition, it is important to distinguish it from both paedophilic disorder and child sexual abuse. Paedophilic tendency refers to the presence of atypical sexual thoughts, fantasies, or attractions that may not satisfy the diagnostic criteria for a clinical disorder and may never result in offending behaviour. In contrast, child sexual abuse involves the commission of criminal sexual acts against a child and results in direct harm to the victim (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). This distinction is essential because not all individuals experiencing paedophilic attractions engage in abusive behaviour. Contemporary psychological interventions, including cognitive-behavioural therapy and impulse-control strategies, are designed to help affected individuals manage their attractions, reduce psychological distress, and prevent offending (Hall & Hall, 2019). Accordingly, scholarly discussions of paedophilic tendency should emphasize prevention, evidence-based treatment, ethical responsibility, and the protection of children while maintaining clear conceptual distinctions between psychological attraction, clinical diagnosis, and criminal behaviour.

The increasing concerns surrounding school adjustment among university undergraduates in South-East Nigeria have become a significant educational and psychological issue requiring urgent attention from researchers, university administrators, counsellors, and other education stakeholders. Although university education provides opportunities for intellectual growth, career development, and personal independence, many undergraduates encounter considerable challenges in adapting to the academic, social, emotional, and institutional demands of university life. Difficulties in school adjustment may manifest through poor academic performance, absenteeism, disciplinary misconduct, social withdrawal, emotional distress, poor interpersonal relationships, and, in some cases, withdrawal from academic programmes. These adjustment



problems not only undermine students' educational attainment but also negatively affect their psychological well-being and future productivity.

University education represents a critical developmental stage during which young adults experience increased autonomy, identity exploration, and exposure to diverse social environments. Most undergraduates are transitioning from adolescence to adulthood and are expected to adapt successfully to new academic expectations, interpersonal relationships, and independent decision-making. During this period, students are also exposed to unrestricted internet access, evolving social norms, peer influence, and various psychological pressures that may either facilitate or hinder successful adjustment to university life. While many students adapt successfully, others experience behavioural and psychological difficulties that interfere with their ability to function effectively within the university environment.

School adjustment refers to the extent to which students successfully adapt to the academic, social, emotional, and institutional demands of the university environment. It encompasses effective participation in academic activities, healthy relationships with peers and lecturers, emotional stability, compliance with institutional rules and regulations, and active engagement in campus life. Well-adjusted students are generally more academically motivated, psychologically resilient, socially integrated, and better equipped to cope with the challenges associated with university education. Conversely, poor school adjustment may result in academic underachievement, behavioural problems, psychological distress, low self-esteem, poor social integration, and increased risk of dropping out.

Among the psychological factors that may influence school adjustment is paedophilic tendency. Paedophilic tendency refers to the presence of recurrent sexual thoughts, fantasies, emotional attraction, or atypical sexual interests directed toward prepubescent children. Such tendencies do not necessarily imply a clinical diagnosis of paedophilic disorder or engagement in offending behaviour. Rather, they represent underlying psychological characteristics that may coexist with difficulties in emotional regulation, social interaction, interpersonal relationships, and behavioural self-control. These psychological difficulties may interfere with students' ability to establish healthy peer relationships, participate effectively in university activities, concentrate on academic responsibilities, and adapt successfully to the demands of university life.

Although considerable research has examined school adjustment among university undergraduates, previous studies have focused largely on demographic characteristics, personality traits, family background, peer influence, academic stress, self-esteem, social support, and mental health. Comparatively little empirical attention has been devoted to the possible influence of atypical sexual interests such as paedophilic tendency on students' school adjustment. Furthermore, available findings remain inconsistent, and empirical evidence from Nigeria, particularly South-East Nigeria, is limited. This gap in knowledge limits the development of evidence-based counselling interventions and institutional support programmes aimed at improving students' psychosocial adjustment within universities.



Given the importance of successful school adjustment for students' academic achievement, psychological well-being, and overall development, there is a need to investigate psychological factors that may influence how students adapt to university life. The limited empirical evidence on the predictive relationship between paedophilic tendency and school adjustment therefore constitutes an important gap in the literature. Understanding whether paedophilic tendency significantly predicts school adjustment may contribute to the development of evidence-based counselling programmes, early psychological interventions, and institutional support services aimed at promoting students' emotional well-being and successful adaptation to university life. Consequently, this study investigated the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the school adjustment of university undergraduates in South-East Nigeria.

Research Question

What is the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on school adjustment of university undergraduates?

Hypothesis

There is no significant predictive power of paedophilic tendency on school adjustment of university undergraduates.

Research Method

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to determine the predictive relationship between paedophilic tendency (predictor variable) and school adjustment (criterion variable) among university undergraduates without manipulating any of the variables. The design also made it possible to determine the magnitude and direction of the predictive relationship between the variables. The study was conducted in South-East Nigeria, one of the six geopolitical zones of the country. The zone comprises Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. The area was selected because it has several federal universities with a large undergraduate population and increasing exposure to psychosocial and technological influences that may affect students' behavioural patterns and adjustment to university life.

The population of the study comprised 148,712 undergraduate students enrolled in federal universities in South-East Nigeria during the 2024/2025 academic session. These students constituted the target population because they were considered capable of providing reliable information on paedophilic tendency and school adjustment. A sample of 1,148 undergraduate students was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Although the minimum sample size calculated using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula was 399 respondents, the researcher increased the sample size to 1,148 to improve representativeness, minimize sampling error, and enhance the reliability and generalizability of the findings. The multistage sampling procedure ensured that respondents were fairly selected from the participating universities.



Two instruments were used for data collection: the Paedophilic Tendency Scale (PTS) and the School Adjustment Scale (SAS). The PTS was developed by the researcher based on extensive review of related literature, while the SAS was adapted from a standardized school adjustment instrument developed by previous scholars. The instruments consisted of Likert-type response formats designed to measure paedophilic tendency and school adjustment respectively. To ensure the validity of the instruments, they were subjected to face validation by three experts from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The experts assessed the relevance of the items to the objectives of the study, clarity of expression, grammatical correctness, adequacy of content coverage, and the appropriateness of the research questions and hypotheses. Their suggestions and corrections were incorporated before the final administration of the instruments. The reliability of the instruments was established through a pilot study involving fifty undergraduate students drawn from federal universities in South-South Nigeria, an area excluded from the main study because of its similarity to the study area. Internal consistency reliability was determined using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Reliability coefficients of 0.76 and 0.74 were obtained for the Paedophilic Tendency Scale (PTS) and School Adjustment Scale (SAS), respectively. Since both coefficients exceeded the minimum acceptable reliability coefficient of 0.70 recommended by Cohen et al. (2018), the instruments were considered sufficiently reliable for the study.

Data were collected through an online survey using Google Forms. With the assistance of students' representatives in the selected universities, the researcher distributed the questionnaire links through WhatsApp groups and other social media platforms commonly used by undergraduate students. The online approach was adopted because it ensured anonymity, promoted confidentiality, reduced social desirability bias, and encouraged respondents to provide honest responses to sensitive questions relating to paedophilic tendency.

The data collected were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Simple Linear Regression analysis was used to answer the research question and test the hypothesis. The strength of the predictive relationship was interpreted using the correlation coefficient classification proposed by Schober et al. (2018). The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Result Presentation and Interpretation of Data

Research Question: What is the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on school adjustment of university undergraduates?

Table 1: *Regression analysis of the Predictive power of paedophilic tendency on school adjustment of university undergraduates?*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	N
1	.357 ^a	.128	.127	8.76057	1148

a. Predictors: (Constant), Pedo_Tend

b. Criterion Variable: Sch_Adjust



Hypothesis: There is no significant predictive power of paedophilic tendency on school adjustment of university undergraduates.

Table 4: *Test of significance for the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on school adjustment of university undergraduates.*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	81.214	.793		102.388	.000
	Pedo_Tend	-.616	.048	-.357	-12.943	.000

Table 1 presents the regression analysis of the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the school adjustment of university undergraduates. The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.357, indicating a weak positive relationship between paedophilic tendency and school adjustment. However, the regression coefficient revealed a negative direction of prediction, indicating that higher levels of paedophilic tendency were associated with lower levels of school adjustment. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.128, indicating that paedophilic tendency accounted for 12.8% of the variance in school adjustment among university undergraduates, while the remaining 87.2% of the variance may be explained by other factors not included in the regression model. This indicates that paedophilic tendency had a weak predictive power on the school adjustment of university undergraduates.

Table 2 presents the test of significance for the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the school adjustment of university undergraduates. The analysis yielded a regression coefficient of $B = -0.616$ ($\beta = -.357$), with a t-value of -12.943 and a corresponding p-value of .000. Since the probability value was less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the school adjustment of university undergraduates, was rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that paedophilic tendency negatively and significantly predicted the school adjustment of university undergraduates. This implies that students with higher levels of paedophilic tendency tended to report lower levels of school adjustment.

Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis of the data collected and tested in this study, the following findings were made:

1. Paedophilic tendency was found to have a weak relationship with school adjustment among university undergraduates.
2. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.128$) revealed that paedophilic tendency accounted for 12.8% of the variance in school adjustment of university undergraduates, while the remaining 87.2% was explained by other factors not included in the study.
3. The regression analysis showed that paedophilic tendency significantly predicted school adjustment of university undergraduates.



4. The relationship between paedophilic tendency and school adjustment was found to be negative and significant, indicating that higher levels of paedophilic tendency were associated with lower levels of school adjustment among university undergraduates.
5. The null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant predictive power of paedophilic tendency on school adjustment of university undergraduates, was rejected.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the study revealed that undergraduate students' school adjustment is significantly predicted by paedophilic tendency. Further analysis indicated that paedophilic tendency negatively and significantly predicts undergraduate students' school adjustment. This implies that students with higher levels of paedophilic tendencies are more likely to experience difficulties in adjusting to school academically, socially, and emotionally. In other words, as paedophilic tendency increases, the level of school adjustment among undergraduate students tends to decrease.

This finding may be explained by the fact that individuals experiencing deviant sexual interests often contend with psychological challenges such as emotional distress, shame, guilt, anxiety, and fear of social rejection. These psychological burdens may reduce their concentration, motivation, and active engagement in academic activities, thereby affecting their academic adjustment. Furthermore, concerns about stigma or negative evaluation may discourage them from developing healthy interpersonal relationships, leading to social withdrawal, isolation, and a diminished sense of belonging within the university community. Such experiences can adversely affect their overall adjustment to the academic and social demands of higher education.

In addition, intrusive sexual thoughts and associated psychological conflicts may interfere with students' ability to maintain attention, regulate their emotions, and adhere to structured learning routines. Students experiencing these challenges may also avoid participating in extracurricular activities or peer interactions due to fear of being judged, thereby limiting opportunities for positive social integration. It is also possible that factors such as adverse childhood experiences, dysfunctional family environments, poor emotional regulation, or prolonged exposure to inappropriate sexual content contribute simultaneously to both the emergence of paedophilic tendencies and difficulties in adjusting effectively to the university environment. However, these factors were not directly examined in the present study and should be interpreted cautiously.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Cantor et al. (2008), who conducted a neurodevelopmental study at the University of Toronto and its affiliated hospitals to examine the biological correlates of paedophilia and reported that individuals with paedophilic tendencies generally exhibited lower levels of educational attainment. Although educational attainment differs from school adjustment, both findings suggest that paedophilic tendencies may be associated with poorer educational functioning.

Similarly, the findings support those of Johnson and Morgan (2020), who investigated the relationship between child abuse perpetration and school adjustment among adolescents and found that adolescent perpetrators demonstrated significantly lower levels of school adjustment. The



present findings are also in agreement with Brown and Johnson (2020), who reported a significant negative relationship between child abuse perpetration and school engagement, indicating that adolescents involved in abusive behaviours exhibited lower levels of school engagement and school adjustment.

Overall, the negative relationship observed in this study suggests that undergraduate students with higher paedophilic tendencies are more likely to experience challenges in their emotional, social, and academic adjustment within the university environment. Although the present study does not establish a causal relationship, the findings underscore the importance of providing accessible psychological counseling, mental health support, and early intervention programmes in higher institutions. Such services may assist students in managing psychological difficulties, improving adaptive coping strategies, and enhancing their overall adjustment to university life.

Conclusion

This study investigated the predictive power of paedophilic tendency on the school adjustment of university undergraduates. The findings revealed that paedophilic tendency had a statistically significant negative predictive relationship with school adjustment. Specifically, paedophilic tendency accounted for 12.8% of the variation in students' school adjustment, indicating that although its predictive power was relatively weak, it significantly influenced how well university undergraduates adjusted to the academic, social, emotional, and institutional demands of university life. The negative direction of the relationship suggests that higher levels of paedophilic tendency were associated with lower levels of school adjustment.

The findings underscore the importance of considering psychological factors when addressing students' adjustment challenges in higher education. Although paedophilic tendency explained only a modest proportion of the variance in school adjustment, its significant predictive influence suggests that psychological characteristics may contribute to students' ability to adapt successfully to university life. Therefore, universities should strengthen counselling services, mental health support programmes, and preventive interventions that promote students' psychological well-being and facilitate successful school adjustment. It is therefore concluded that paedophilic tendency is a significant, albeit weak, negative predictor of school adjustment among university undergraduates.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. University management should strengthen counselling and psychological support services by providing confidential mental health programmes that assist students experiencing psychological or emotional difficulties that may hinder their successful adjustment to university life.
2. University counselling centres should organize regular mental health awareness and psychosocial adjustment programmes to help students develop healthy coping strategies, emotional regulation skills, positive interpersonal relationships, and effective adaptation to the academic and social demands of university life.



3. Counsellors, clinical psychologists, and student affairs personnel should establish early identification and referral mechanisms for students exhibiting psychological or behavioural difficulties that may negatively influence their school adjustment, while ensuring confidentiality, ethical practice, and respect for students' rights.
4. Universities should provide comprehensive sexuality education and behavioural wellness programmes that promote healthy sexual attitudes, responsible decision-making, respect for personal boundaries, and appropriate help-seeking behaviours among students.

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