



PARENTAL MIGRATION AS A CORRELATE OF PUPILS' SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary discourse on socio-emotional development of pupils has increasingly centered on the phenomenon of parental migration and its impact on pupils' socio-emotional development. Debate have intensified concerning the benefits and potential socio-emotional implications. This study examined parental migration as a correlate of pupils' socio-emotional development in public primary schools in Anambra State. Five research questions guided the study while five null hypotheses were formulated. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 7151 teachers in the 992 primary schools in Anambra State. A sample of 500 primary school teachers was used in this study using a multi-stage sampling procedure and purposive sampling technique. Two instruments titled: Parental Migration Questionnaire (PMQ) and Socio-Emotional Development Questionnaire (SEDQ) were used to collect data for this study. Both instruments were researcher-developed and were subjected to face validity by three experts; two experts came from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one expert from the Department of Educational Foundations, Measurement and Evaluation unit all from the Faculty of Education Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State. Cronbach Alpha was used to check the internal consistency of the instruments and an overall reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained. The finding revealed that there was a weak positive and significant relationship between parental migration and pupils' emotional regulation; there was a strong positive and significant relationship between parental migration and pupils' social interaction; and there was a moderate positive and significant relationship between parental migration and pupils' self-concept. It was also found that there was a weak positive and non-significant relationship among parental migration and the combined dimensions of pupils' emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment in Anambra State. Based on these findings, it was recommended amongst others that teachers should be supported through training and counselling resources to help them recognize emotional distress linked to parental absence and provide consistent emotional guidance to pupils affected by migration.

Keywords: Parental Migration, Pupils, Socio-Emotional Development.

Introduction

Education serves as a fundamental instrument for national development, facilitating technological innovation, social integration, political stability, and economic progress. As a dynamic social institution, education nurtures young individuals into productive members of society by instilling in them socially acceptable behaviors, values, and skills needed to navigate life effectively. Education also plays a vital role in socialization, helping to transmit cultural norms and societal expectations from one generation to the next.



Among the three levels of formal education, primary education stands out as the foundation for lifelong learning and human development. It targets children aged 6 to 11 years and aims to equip them with basic literacy, numeracy, and communication skills. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), the objectives of primary education include fostering scientific, critical, and reflective thinking, cultivating patriotism, fairness, and national unity, and promoting moral values, social norms, adaptability, and life skills. Beyond academic skills, primary education also supports pupils' socio-emotional development.

Socio-emotional development refers to the process through which individuals particularly children learn to understand and manage their emotions, establish healthy relationships, develop empathy, make responsible decisions, and effectively navigate social environments (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2020). It encompasses a range of skills essential for functioning in the family, school, and community settings. These competencies will be assessed through teacher observations, behaviour ratings, and socio-emotional skill indicators. According to UNESCO (2023), socio-emotional development in educational settings refers to the process through which learners acquire the competencies to recognize and manage emotions, develop care and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions and handle challenging situations effectively. For the purpose of this study, socio-emotional development is operationally defined as the observable and measurable competencies exhibited by primary school pupils in managing emotions, demonstrating empathy, forming relationships, and engaging in socially appropriate behaviors within the school setting. Daniel Goleman (1995) outlined four key dimensions that serve as a framework for understanding socio-emotional development. These dimensions are widely adopted in both educational and psychological settings. They include: emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment.

Emotional regulation refers to an individual's ability to monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional reactions in appropriate ways to achieve personal and social goals (Gross, 2018). For primary school pupils, this means being able to manage feelings such as frustration, excitement, sadness, or anger in the classroom and during peer interactions. In a school setting, pupils who are emotionally regulated are more likely to follow rules, engage in positive peer relationships, and respond constructively to feedback or setbacks in learning (Denham et al., 2020). They can concentrate better, adapt to routines, and are more resilient when faced with challenges. Without consistent adult modeling and co-regulation of emotions, pupils may resort to maladaptive behaviours such as withdrawal or aggression (Okojie, 2021). Emotional regulation is closely linked to how children interact with others, as their ability to manage emotions may directly influences their social relationships and behaviour in group settings. Consequently, it is important to examine how parental interaction influences the development of their child's social interaction skills.

Social interaction involves the ability to engage in meaningful and reciprocal communication with others, cooperate, share, and resolve conflicts (Rubin et al., 2016). Primary school children with strong social interaction skills are better able to participate in group activities, make friends, and negotiate social situations effectively. These skills promote belongingness and reduce incidents of bullying or exclusion. However, when parents migrate it may limit children's exposure to regular socialization at home, especially when the care giving arrangement is inconsistent or emotionally detached. Left in the care of extended family members or caregivers who may not offer nurturing interaction, children might experience difficulty in developing appropriate social



behavior (Nwajiuba and Olatunji, 2020). The resulting insecurity can hinder their ability to trust others and engage in healthy peer relationships. These social challenges can also influence how children perceive themselves, linking directly to their self-concept.

Self-concept refers to the perception a child holds about themselves who they are, what they can do, and how valuable they believe they are (Marsh, 2017). It includes aspects like academic self-esteem, physical self-image, and social identity. A positive self-concept in primary school supports confidence in learning and encourages participation in classroom activities. It further enhances children's capacity to take initiative and make independent decisions when solving problems and setting personal goals. When parents migrate, especially for extended periods, children may experience identity confusion or reduced self-worth. Feelings of being "left behind" may lead to internalized beliefs of being unloved or unimportant, damaging their self-concept (Asis and Ruiz-Marave, 2018). Additionally, a lack of parental affirmation and guidance during formative years can reduce children's belief in their own abilities. It is therefore important to note that how children perceive themselves and develop confidence also affects their ability to adjust socially within the school environment.

Psychologists and educators have long recognized the critical role parents play in their children's socio-emotional development. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), the family particularly the immediate care giving environment is the most influential system in a child's developmental outcomes. When one or both parents migrate, especially without the child, it disrupts the traditional parenting structure and potentially affects the child's emotional stability, self-concept, and social behaviour (Graham and Jordan, 2021). Studies have shown that parental absence, particularly maternal, is associated with lower levels of emotional insecurity, increased anxiety, and behavioral issues among children (Graham and Jordan, 2021; Mazzucato and Cebotari, 2017).

In recent years, one of the emerging challenges affecting children's holistic development, especially their socio-emotional well-being, is the phenomenon of parental migration, popularly referred to in Nigeria as the "Japa syndrome." However, in a broader sense, parental migration does not only refer to international movement but also includes internal migration within Nigeria, where one or both parents relocate from one state or region to another often urban cities in pursuit of better employment, business, education, or safety opportunities.

Parental migration, therefore, encompasses both cross-border and within-country movement, resulting in children being left behind under the care of relatives, guardians, or domestic caregivers. According to Cortes (2017), parental migration is a specific form of labor migration that involves parents leaving their children behind in the country of origin while they work or study abroad. Bryant (2019) also described parental migration as a transnational family arrangement where the economic and physical separation of parents and children creates both opportunities (e.g., remittances, improved living standards) and challenges (e.g., emotional disconnection, social dislocation). Operationally, parental migration refers to the situation where one or both biological parents of a primary school pupil in Anambra State have emigrated from Nigeria to a foreign country for economic, professional, or educational reasons, leaving the child under the care of guardians, relatives, or domestic caregivers. In Anambra State as one of the most educationally vibrant and economically active states in southeastern Nigeria, the phenomenon manifests both as external migration (parents relocating abroad) and internal migration (parents relocating to other



parts of Nigeria). This trend cuts across socio-economic groups as parents seek better living and working conditions in countries like Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, or in other states in Nigeria with greater economic prospects (Adesina, 2023; Akinrinade and Ogen, 2021). Both forms of migration have significant implications for the socio-emotional development of primary school pupils. For many children whose parents have migrated, separation anxiety, inconsistent care giving, and lack of emotional support are common, often leading to difficulties in emotional regulation, attachment insecurity, and behavioural challenges (Cortes, 2017; Olaniyan and Olayanju, 2020).

Within this context, parental migration in Anambra State manifests in two primary forms: parents leaving their children behind under the care of relatives or guardians, parents migrating with their children to a new country. Both have significant implications for socio-emotional development of primary school pupils. For many pupils whose parents have migrated abroad, the emotional trauma begins with separation anxiety, often exacerbated by inconsistent care giving and lack of adequate emotional support. The absence of a parental figure during early or middle childhood years can lead to difficulties in emotional regulation, attachment issues, and low self-esteem (Cortes, 2017; Olaniyan and Olayanju, 2020). These children may struggle to build trusting relationships, perform poorly in group settings, or display aggressive or behaviour due to unmet emotional needs.

This trend has generated concerns among educators and has motivated researchers to embark on this study due to the increasing prevalence of parental migration in Anambra State and the observable socio-emotional struggles among affected pupils. The researchers have witnessed first-hand the subtle yet profound changes in children's classroom engagement, peer interactions, and emotional expressions especially among those whose parents have migrated. In primary school settings, these disruptions may manifest in altered peer relationships, fluctuating emotional regulation, reduced self-confidence, and changes in classroom participation. Within the Anambra State context, where parental migration is increasingly normalized as an economic strategy, the socio-emotional needs of affected pupils may receive limited systematic attention in schools. Understanding how parental migration relates to pupils' socio-emotional development therefore provides an important lens for appreciating the hidden emotional dimensions of contemporary mobility patterns among pupils who are victims.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, Anambra State, like many other states in Nigeria, has witnessed an increasing wave of parental migration popularly referred to as the "Japa Syndrome." This phenomenon characterized by the mass exodus of skilled professionals and families seeking better living conditions abroad has led to the growing disruption of traditional family structures. While the economic motivations behind this trend are often justified, its implications for the socio-emotional wellbeing of primary school pupils are frequently overlooked. Children, especially those in their formative years, require consistent emotional support, stable social environments, and nurturing caregivers for their holistic development.

In many schools across Awka, Nnewi, Onitsha, and other towns in Anambra State, teachers and school administrators are increasingly observing worrying trends among pupils affected by this migration wave. There has been a report by social workers in Nnewi about the rise in cases of



emotional outbursts, depression-like symptoms, and bullying behaviors among children whose primary caregivers are either absent or emotionally distant. These children often struggle with emotional imbalance, manifesting in anxiety, mood swings, and poor anger management, Social isolation.

These socio-emotional struggles can be largely traced to the reality of parental migration. For pupils left behind, the absence of parental presence creates an emotional vacuum that extended family members may be ill-equipped or unready to fill. Preliminary investigations revealed that such children are often subjected to neglect, inconsistent discipline, or over-expectation from relatives, leading to feelings of insecurity and confusion. This growing concern necessitates a thorough investigation into how parental migration correlates with the socio-emotional development of primary school pupils in Anambra State. It is therefore against this background that this study sought to determine parental migration as a correlate of pupils' socio-emotional development in primary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between parental migration and pupils' emotional regulation in primary schools in Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between parental migration and pupils' social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State?
3. What is the relationship between parental migration and pupils' self-concept in primary schools in Anambra State?
4. What is the relationship between parental migration and pupils' social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State?
5. What is the joint relationship among parental migration, pupils' emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level:

1. There will be no significant relationship between parental migration and pupils' emotional regulation in primary schools in Anambra State
2. There will be no significant relationship between parental migration and pupils' social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State
3. There will be no significant relationship between parental migration and pupils' self-concept in primary schools in Anambra State
4. There will be no significant relationship between parental migration and pupils' social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State
5. There will be no joint significant relationship among parental migration, pupils' emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State



Research Method

The correlational survey research design was adopted for this study. According to Nworgu (2015), a correlational survey research design is a non-experimental quantitative approach used to explore the relationships between two or more variables without manipulating them. It seeks to determine both the direction and magnitude of associations between these variables. The correlational survey design is more appropriate because the study seeks to find out relationship between two variables, parental migration and pupils' socio-emotional development in primary schools in Anambra State.

The population of the study consisted of 7151 teachers in the 992 primary schools in Anambra State (Source: Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board, 2025). A sample of 500 primary school teachers were used in this study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. According to Shanti and Shashi (2017), multistage sampling is a sampling technique that involves dividing the population into hierarchical stages or levels and then selecting units at each stage to form a sample. In stage one, a simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 LGEAs out of the 21 LGEAs in Anambra State. In stage two, a simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 primary schools from each of the 10 selected LGEAs, giving a total of 100 primary schools. In stage three, a simple random sampling technique was used to select 5 teachers from each of the 100 primary schools, giving a total of 500 teachers who participated in the study. Two instruments titled: Parental Migration Questionnaire (PMQ) and Socio-Emotional Development Questionnaire (SEDQ) were used to collect data for the study. The Parental Migration Questionnaire (PMQ) is a researchers' developed questionnaire designed to capture the multifaceted impacts of parental migration on children, with particular focus on their socio-emotional development. PMQ is a 10-item questionnaire item structured on a 4-point scale of Always, Often, Sometimes and Never with nominal values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

The Socio-Emotional Development Questionnaire (SEDQ) is researchers' developed questionnaire crafted to measure the emotional and social competencies of primary school pupils, capturing how they navigate their feelings, relationships, and social environments. The SEDQ is sub-divided into four clusters according to the dimensions of socio-emotional competencies such as emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment. Each of the dimension has 10 items, making a total of 40 items for the four clusters. The structured questionnaire on a 4-point scale of Always, Often, Sometimes and Never with nominal values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The face validity of the instruments was determined by three experts. Two experts were from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education while one expert was from the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation Unit). These experts are all lecturers in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The experts were given the thesis title, purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses as well as draft copies of the questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained by trial-testing the instruments on 20 primary school teachers in five selected primary schools in Orji River LGA of Enugu State. Cronbach Alpha was used to check the internal consistency of the instruments and the reliability values for the four clusters on SEDQ were 0.72, 0.82, 0.73 and 0.75 were obtained while a reliability coefficient of 0.77 was obtained for PMQ. An overall coefficient value of 0.76 was obtained. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation and linear regression was used to answer research questions 1 – 4. Pearson Product Moment was used to ascertain the co-



efficient “r”. More so, simple regression was used to determine the R^2 and the adjusted R^2 of each research questions. In answering research question 5, multiple regression was used to determine the joint correlation. - 0.39 weak correlation;

0.40 - 0.59 Moderate correlation and

0.60 - 0.99 Strong correlation

In testing the null hypotheses 1 - 4, linear regression was employed to determine the significant relationship of the variables. In testing the null hypothesis 5, multiple regression was employed to ascertain the interactive significant level of correlation among all the variables. In interpreting the values of the null hypotheses, when p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 ($p \leq 0.05$), the null hypothesis was rejected otherwise, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The analysis was done with the application of a computer software programme: Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between parental migration and pupils’ emotional regulation in schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Pearson r on parental migration and pupils’ social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State

Sources of variance	N	Pearson r	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Remark
Parental migration	489	0.225	0.051	0.049	weak positive relationship
Social interaction					

Table 1 indicates a weak positive relationship between parental migration and pupils’ social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State ($r = .23, n = 489$). The coefficient of determination shows that parental migration explains approximately 5.1% of the variance in pupils’ social interaction ($R^2 = .05$), while the adjusted R^2 value of .05 suggests a minimal reduction after adjusting for sample size.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between parental migration and pupils’ social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Pearson r on parental migration and pupils’ social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State

Sources of variance	N	Pearson r	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Remark
Parental migration	489	0.712	0.507	0.506	Strong positive relationship
Social interaction					

Table 2 indicates a strong positive relationship between parental migration and pupils’ social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State ($r = .71, n = 489$). The coefficient of determination shows that parental migration explains approximately 50.7% of the variance in pupils’ social interaction ($R^2 = .51$). The adjusted R^2 value of .51 further suggests that this explanatory power remains stable after adjusting for sample size. This result means that parental migration is a



substantial correlate of pupils’ social interaction, with higher levels of parental migration being strongly associated with differences in pupils’ social interaction skills.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between parental migration and pupils’ self-concept in primary schools in Anambra State?

Table 3: Pearson r on parental migration and pupils’ self-concept in primary schools in Anambra State

Sources of variance	N	Pearson r	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Remark
Parental migration	489	0.491	0.241	0.239	Moderate positive relationship
Self-concept					

Table 3 shows a moderate positive relationship between parental migration and pupils’ self-concept ($r = .49, n = 489$). The coefficient of determination indicates that parental migration accounts for approximately 24.1% of the variance in pupils’ self-concept ($R^2 = .24$, adjusted $R^2 = .24$). This suggests that parental migration is meaningfully associated with how pupils perceive themselves in primary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between parental migration and pupils’ social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State?

Table 3: Pearson r on parental migration and pupils’ social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State

Sources of variance	N	Pearson r	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Remark
Parental migration	489	0.392	0.154	0.152	weak positive relationship
Social adjustment					

As presented in Table 4, a weak positive relationship exists between parental migration and pupils’ social adjustment ($r = .39, n = 489$). The R^2 value of .15 indicates that parental migration explains about 15.4% of the variance in pupils’ social adjustment, with an adjusted R^2 of .15. This finding implies that while parental migration is related to pupils’ social adjustment, the strength of the relationship is relatively low.

Research Question 5: What is the joint relationship among parental migration, pupils’ emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State?

Table 5: Summary of multiple regression analysis on parental migration, pupils’ emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State

N	R	R ²	%	df	Cal. F	p-value	α	Remark
489	0.31	0.096	9.6	4,484	64.093	0.07	0.05	Low joint relationship



- a. Predictors: (Constant), emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment

Table 5 reveals a low joint relationship between parental migration and pupils’ emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept, and social adjustment ($R = .31$). The model explains approximately 9.6% of the total variance in pupils’ socio-emotional development ($R^2 = .096$, adjusted $R^2 = .089$).

Test of Statistical Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between parental migration and pupils’ emotional regulation in primary schools in Anambra State

Table 6: linear regression on parental migration and pupils’ social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State

Linear Regression	R	R ²	B	Df	T	a.level	p-value
a.	.225 ^a	.051	.225	487	5.11	.05	.000
b. Predictors: (Constant), parental migration							
c. Dependent: social interaction							

In Table 6, the linear regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between parental migration and pupils’ emotional regulation, $R = .23$, $R^2 = .05$, $t(487) = 5.11$, $p < .05$. Parental migration accounted for approximately 5.1% of the variance in pupils’ emotional regulation. Consequently, since the p-value of 0.000 is less than alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, therefore, there is a significant relationship between parental migration and pupils’ emotional regulation in primary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between parental migration and pupils’ social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State

Table 7: linear regression on parental migration and pupils’ social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State

Linear Regression	R	R ²	B	Df	T	a.level	p-value
d.	.712 ^a	.507	.712	487	22.38	.05	.000
e. Predictors: (Constant), parental migration							
f. Dependent: social interaction							

In Table 7, the regression analysis showed a strong and statistically significant relationship between parental migration and pupils’ social interaction, $R = .71$, $R^2 = .51$, $t(487) = 22.38$, $p < .05$. Parental migration explained approximately 50.7% of the variance in pupils’ social interaction. Therefore, since the p-value of 0.000 is less than alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, this means that there is a significant relationship between parental migration and pupils’ social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State



Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between parental migration and pupils’ self-concept in primary schools in Anambra State

Table 8: linear regression on parental migration and pupils’ self-concept in primary schools in Anambra State

Linear Regression	R	R ²	B	Df	t	a.level	p-value
a.	.491 ^a	.0241	.491	487	12.45	.05	.000
b. Predictors: (Constant), parental migration							
c. Dependent: self concept							

In Table 8, the regression analysis showed a significant relationship between parental migration and pupils’ self-concept, $R = .49$, $R^2 = .24$, $t(487) = 12.45$, $p < .05$. Parental migration explained approximately 24.1% of the variance in pupils’ self-concept. Therefore, since the p-value of 0.000 is less than alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, this means that there is a significant relationship between parental migration and pupils’ self-concept in primary schools in Anambra State

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between parental migration and pupils’ social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State

Table 9: linear regression on parental migration and pupils’ social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State

Linear Regression	R	R ²	B	Df	t	a.level	p-value
a.	.392 ^a	.0154	.392	487	9.43	.05	.012
b. Predictors: (Constant), parental migration							
c. Dependent: social adjustment							

In Table 9, the regression analysis showed a significant relationship between parental migration and pupils’ social adjustment, $R = .390$, $R^2 = .15$, $t(487) = 9.43$, $p < .05$. Parental migration explained approximately 15.1% of the variance in pupils’ social adjustment. Therefore, since the p-value of 0.012 is less than alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, this means that there is a significant relationship between parental migration and pupils’ social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State

Hypothesis 5: There is no joint significant relationship among parental migration, pupils’ emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State

Table 10: Summary of multiple regression analysis on parental migration, pupils’ emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State

N	R	R ²	%	df	Cal. F	p-value	α	Remark
489	0.31	0.096	9.6	4,484	64.093	0.07	0.05	Not significant

a. Predictors: (Constant), emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment



In Table 10, the multiple regression analysis indicated that the joint contribution of emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept, and social adjustment to parental migration was not statistically significant, $R = .31$, $R^2 = .10$, $F(4, 484) = 64.09$, $p > .05$. Although the predictors jointly explained 9.6% of the variance, the model did not reach statistical significance. Therefore, since the null hypothesis of 0.07 is greater than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no joint significant relationship among parental migration, pupils' emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept and social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion

Parental migration and pupils' emotional regulation in primary schools in Anambra State

The findings from this study reveal a weak positive and significant relationship between parental migration and pupils' emotional regulation. This suggests that, parental absence due to migration may subtly influence how pupils manage their emotions perhaps through increased stress or disrupted attachment the connection is not robust, implying other factors like caregiver support or school environment play a mitigating role. This result aligns with several empirical studies that highlight the emotional toll of parental migration, though with varying degrees of intensity. For instance, Zuniga et al. (2024) found a strong link between parental migration and deteriorating youth mental health, including heightened emotional stress and loneliness, which supports the positive direction of our correlation by underscoring migration's disruptive potential. Similarly, Okeke and Ibe (2024) reported significant differences in emotional development due to parental absence, reinforcing that migration can indeed impair regulation, even if weakly in our case. However, our weaker association opposes the more pronounced effects in Fauk et al. (2024) among Indonesian adolescents, where migration led to severe emotional states like anxiety and depression; this difference might stem from our focus on younger primary pupils and teacher-reported data, which could understate direct emotional experiences compared to self-reports in their qualitative study.

Parental migration and pupils' social interaction in primary schools in Anambra State

The finding revealed that there is a strong positive and significant relationship between parental migration and pupils' social interaction, indicating that parental absence markedly shapes how pupils engage with peers and form social bonds. This could reflect adaptive behaviors, such as seeking peer support in the absence of parents, or heightened social challenges that prompt more observable interactions. This strong correlation finds support in multiple empirical works that link migration to altered social behaviors. Chukwu and Onuoha (2023) reported negative peer influences and social exclusion among left-behind young adults, aligning with our positive relationship by illustrating how migration disrupts social ties, though their qualitative depth on loneliness opposes our strength if interpreted as maladaptive interaction. Tesfaw and Gezie (2022) found increased social withdrawal among children of migrants. Nwogu and Chidiebere (2016) reported authoritative parenting's role in positive social interaction, indirectly opposing our findings by suggesting absent parents (via migration) weaken such outcomes, yet our strong positive tie implies migration could paradoxically heighten interaction needs.



Parental migration and pupils' self-concept in primary schools in Anambra State

The finding revealed that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between parental migration and pupils' self-concept, implying that while migration may introduce uncertainties affecting how pupils view themselves such as feelings of abandonment or independence—the impact is balanced, neither negligible nor dominant. This moderate link highlights a nuanced reality where some pupils might develop a stronger self-image through necessity, while others struggle, influenced by factors like remittance benefits or caregiver quality. Empirical evidence both supports and opposes this finding. Mustapha and Odediran (2019) found low self-esteem prevalent among adolescents from separated homes (including migration-like absences), aligning with our positive correlation by indicating migration's potential to erode self-concept. Zhao et al. (2018) reported heightened emotional difficulties without clear self-concept recovery post-reunification, supporting the directional tie but suggesting a more severe impact than our moderate result; this contrast could reflect cultural differences or our focus on ongoing migration effects. Jian and Tian (2010) linked migration to severe loneliness, which indirectly opposes our moderation by emphasizing profound self-worth erosion, yet our findings humanize this by showing resilience in Anambra State, possibly through community support absent in their rural sample.

Parental migration and pupils' social adjustment in primary schools in Anambra State

The finding revealed that there is a weak positive and significant relationship between parental migration and pupils' social adjustment, suggesting migration exerts a subtle influence on how pupils adapt to social norms and roles in school. This weak tie may indicate that while parental absence creates adjustment hurdles like fitting into peer groups or following routines pupils often navigate these with minimal long-term disruption, aided by teachers or extended family.

This outcome resonates with several studies, though with varying emphases. Okafor (2021) in Delta State, Nigeria, found significant negative correlations between broken homes (including migration) and social adjustment, supporting the positive direction here as indicative of challenges, but opposing our weakness with stronger deficits; differences might arise from their direct student sampling versus our teacher proxies. Adetola (2019) showed social adjustment as a strong predictor of well-being, aligning with our significance but contrasting the weakness, as their regression highlighted robust ties absent in our moderate context perhaps due to their undergraduate focus.

The Joint Relationship Among Parental Migration and Pupils' Emotional Regulation, Social Interaction, Self-Concept, and Social Adjustment in Primary Schools in Anambra State

The findings of this study revealed that a low joint relationship between parental migration and the combined dimensions of pupils' emotional regulation, social interaction, self-concept, and social adjustment, with a non-significant overall association. This implies that while migration may individually touch on these socio-emotional facets, its collective influence is minimal and as such suggesting a more holistic pupil development in Anambra primary schools remains important



despite parental absence which could have been certain bolstered by community, school, or remittance factors.

This low, non-significant joint tie finds mixed support in empirical literature, often highlighting fragmented rather than unified impacts. Mazzucato et al. (2015) across Ghana, Nigeria, and Angola showed varied psychological well-being deficits from migration, supporting our low collective effect by noting country-specific mitigations, yet their regression models indicated significance in some contexts, partially opposing our non-significance. Fauk et al. (2024) in Indonesia detailed intertwined social and mental challenges, aligning with potential joint risks but contrasting our low tie through qualitative emphasis on severe exclusion; our quantitative aggregation may dilute such depth.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between parental migration and key dimensions of pupils' socio-emotional development in primary schools in Anambra State. The findings collectively indicate that parental migration is meaningfully associated with how pupils regulate emotions, interact socially, and perceive themselves within the school environment. Although the relationship with emotional regulation and social adjustment was weak, the statistical significance suggests that parental absence still exerts a subtle but consistent influence on pupils' everyday emotional responses and adaptation to school routines. The strong association observed with social interaction highlights the central role of parental presence in shaping children's peer engagement and communication skills, while the moderate relationship with self-concept underscores the importance of parental affirmation in fostering pupils' sense of worth and competence. However, the absence of a significant joint relationship across all socio-emotional dimensions suggests that parental migration alone does not fully explain pupils' developmental outcomes.

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