

A Study of Factors Influencing Maladaptive Behaviour among High School Students

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Abstract This study investigated factors influencing maladaptive behaviour in which broken home and negative attitudes of teachers serve as independent variables while maladaptive behaviour serves as dependent variable. A total of one hundred (100) participants comprising 50 males and 50 females senior secondary (high) school adolescent students between the ages of 12-16 and 17-21 and a mean age of 14 and 19 respectively were selected from the population of five secondary schools in Ishiagu, Ebonyi State, South East Nigeria making use of randomization technique. They were administered with a 20 item questionnaire in a dichotomous response style of Yes/No. Survey design was adopted and Chi-square was applied in which results obtained revealed that broken home significantly influenced maladaptive behaviour with $X^2 (1,1) = 21.16$ at $P < .001$ and also, negative attitudes of teachers significantly influenced maladaptive behaviour with $X^2 (1,1) = 51.84$ at $P < .001$. The findings were discussed with respect to literature reviewed and recommendations were made.

Keywords Broken homes, Family, Teachers, Adolescents, Maladaptive behaviours, Punishment

1. Introduction

Behaviour is considered abnormal or antisocial if it is uncommon, different from the norm and does not conform to what society expects. This idea is also closely related to the statistical approach to definite abnormality which rest on the idea that differences in human behaviour tends to fall into a normal distribution curve (Nwankwo, et al 2010). A particular behaviour is not acceptable or is antisocial if any of these three criteria are seen; the behaviour does not allow a person to function effectively with others as member of society; if the behaviour does not permit the person to meet his or her own needs and the behaviour has a negative effect in the well being of others (Roberts, 1981). However young people are segregated from adult society and such segregation serves as an important contribution to antisocial behaviour by teenagers. Period of adolescence is the most crucial period in the life of human beings and is the stage where life reaches its peak (Nwankwo, 2001). The adolescent is eager to learn new experiences, to find new relationships, to examine resources of inner strength and fathom the strength of inner ability. However, antisocial personality disorder is one the most significant types of personality disorder (Nwankwo et al. 2010). People with the social problems make life miserable for those around them.

They typically display no regard for the moral or ethical

rules of the society or the rights of others, manipulating people and situation for their own benefits.

Maladaptive behavior has been an important topical issue that has been researched by various researchers in an attempt to discover the outcome of it in various contexts especially educational context such as secondary and tertiary institutions and how it affects the academic achievements of students. According to Advanced Learner's Dictionary, maladaptive behaviour means a way of behaving, manners, treatment shown towards others. Maladaptive behaviour is socially defined as problem, a source of concern, or as undesirable by the norms of conventional society and the institutions of adult authority, and its occurrence usually elicits some kinds of social control response.

It is viewed as a violation of a formal or informal rule including serious criminal acts or flagrant disregard for conventional standards of approved behaviour, as well as more private and momentary oppositional and hurtful acts. According to Angement (1997), maladaptive behaviour is believed to result from lack of motivation and unfavorable social climate which make students to quit their study program at school. It was equally stated that background factor such as family that has educational history with little successes, background of students in the secondary schools and parents with a low educational level contribute to students maladaptive behaviour at schools (Angement, 1997). It has been an everyday phenomenon in the society that our secondary students are exhibiting much maladaptive behaviour irrespective of the stages of socialization and cognitive development they have undergone. As a result, the society is very much worried about the future of younger

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generations as fathers and mothers of tomorrow have turned into beast that behaved in a manner that lacks moral consciousness. (Unachukwu, 1995). The incidence of maladaptive behavior in the society among adolescents has continued to attract public condemnation and has generated public debate on the possible causes and solutions (Unachukwu and Nwankwo, 2001).

According to Durojaiye (2003), maladaptive behavior is believed to result from under socialization and inadequate training of children which make them to proffer reasons for indulging in an unacceptable behaviours. Lydiat (2000) in his own contribution stated that mature moral judgement occurs between 12 and 18 years of age and any student who falls within the age range is expected to be of good behaviour, but indiscipline has come to take the place of this esteemed virtue which threatens the favorable atmosphere of secondary schools and the society at large. Unachukwu and Nwankwo (2001) emphasized these behavioural problems affect academic achievement and performance. Grinder (2001) sees anxiety as a powerful disrupter of cognitive functions as well as initiator of other faulty defensive logics. According to him, these faulty logics can lead to display of maladaptive social behaviour at schools. Unachukwu and Nwankwo (1994) remarked that university and secondary school students exhibit maladaptive behaviour such as fear of examination, anxiety gangstering, cultism, aggressiveness, and moody disposition which could put them at great risks at any point in time. It has been observed that protective factors where parents gloss over their children wrongdoings are related to delinquent behaviours. This can be seen when parents lie in order to obtain admission for their adolescent children and several attempts to defend them when issues of critical concerns were brought up explain the motives behind adolescent's misbehavior at schools (Haright 1998). Unachukwu (1995) found that home conditions affect the behaviour of children. Attitudes learned from close associates can affect the child's behaviour positively or negatively. He however stressed that parental love, care, and attitudes towards children are powerful determinants of their behaviours. He noted that children rejected by parents and those from broken homes are more likely to have maladaptive behaviour. He also found that biased parental preference for one child over the other and disharmony in the homes where fathers abandon their roles of participating in the training of children to the mothers can breed maladaptive behaviour. Freud (1981) said that children record their father as the power authority and more dangerous person to be transgressed against and that is, adolescents who were left at the mercy of mother tend to be more rude, arrogant, proud and always have disciplinary problems. Discipline according to Akubue (1991) must begin at home if the society will be good for happy living and this discipline is the major role of parents on the part of adolescents who are to move into the secondary schools to practice what they have learned at home. Adolescent children should be properly conditioned by both fathers and mothers because family is the first basis for the establishment of good and adequate relationship in

order to help the adolescents model good life style and become less susceptible to maladaptive behaviour, but whereby they fail to do so, the reverse will be the case. Also, poor socialization of adolescent children has been found to play a role in the maladaptive behaviour of adolescent secondary school students (Akubue, 2000). Oker (2000) found that factors like broken homes and parental projection cause maladaptive behaviour. He also stressed that parental influence such as drunkenness, constant conflicts, over protection of children or over permissiveness and illegitimacy of kids contribute to maladaptive behaviour displayed by students. The effect of social world cannot be left aside in this discussion. Researches found that social rules and laws can have negative impact on the behaviour of adolescents in the secondary schools. Mass media such as television, videos, pornographic books and newspapers, and other abnormal reading materials have paved the way for the continuity of maladaptive behaviours of adolescent students in schools and in the society at large. They are as effective as real life models in shaping children's aggressive responses such as stealing, fighting, cheating and robbery (Bandura and Walter 1959).

Interestingly, adolescents' maladaptive behaviours are also influenced from several factors at their place of study. Nwankwo (1991) observed that majority of students learn most of their ill-behaviours or problem behaviours from their peer group. Unachukwu and Nwankwo (2001) stressed that teachers are mainly the centre of attraction for adolescents in the secondary schools and as adolescents whose knowledge is still below average, they admire and copy their teachers in various aspects. This including mode of dressing, teaching, walking, make-up, sitting, standing, talking and eating and all these affect the personality of these adolescents both socially and morally. They went further to state that some teachers, no doubt are bad models, prone to behaviours and character destruction instead of being an object of virtue worthy of imitation and being reference for good behaviours. Some of these teachers they said are quite ignorant or seem to be unaware of the concept of discipline let alone behaving in accordance with social expectations. Akubue (1991) and Unachukwu (1995) observed that maladaptive behaviours of secondary school students can originate from the teaching patterns of some teachers, inappropriate objectives of instruction, poor planning and inefficient lesson presentation, poor teaching materials and poor evaluation techniques. They found that attitudes exhibited by some teachers can create an atmosphere which produces and encourages problem behaviour. They also noted that lack of confidence, and sense of humors may be symptoms of personal problems of incompetence as a teacher which are manifested in his/her being egocentric, dull, unproductive and intolerant and these affect the behaviours of students negatively (Nwankwo, 1991). Unachukwu (1995) stressed that manner of dressing by some teachers tend to reduce their status and personalities before students. Again, some members of staff create problems by wearing unbuttoned and flying shirts, abnormally high-heeled shoes, gorgeous dressing and heavy

make-up to school and all these negatively influence the behaviours of adolescent students who strive to imitate their life styles. These behaviours also can attract disobedience from students. Nwankwo (1991) also discovered that some teachers scandalize and mislead students by discussing personalities and criticizing openly school management and their fellow teachers before the students which tend to encourage the display of maladaptive behaviours. Oker (2000) observed that students often feel insecure and afraid because teachers constantly threaten them with unexpected examination and failure. He pointed out that some teachers use stringent autocratic controls which make students to publicly feel humiliated and result in power struggle between students and teachers. Again, administrative indifference to the needs and aspirations of students causes poor relationship between the teachers, management and the students which cause students to revenge by fighting and violent action. Social discrimination by teachers may bring inferiority on the part of some students which will make them to burst out with anti-social behaviours (Oker, 2000). Unachukwu and Nwankwu (2001) stressed that students at secondary schools are all adolescents and as such are faced with the problem of social identity such as increase in intellectual awareness ability; emotional capability and expanded social interests which they believe affect their behavioural patterns at schools. They were of the opinion that all human being have fairly common socio-psychological and innate biological needs which bring conflict in an attempt to satisfy them by the adolescent students and this throws them off balance which resulted in maladaptive behaviour. Nwankwo (1991) noted that when adolescents move into the secondary schools, they try to test all that they have acquired and developed. This, according to him lead to anxiety and they tend to use defense mechanisms to escape punishment which eventually attract aggression and rejection at schools. He believed that peer group plays an important role in socializing the child. This happens when students look up to their age mates and peers and emit behaviours similar to theirs during interaction at the schools. In the school, students are propelled by two major drivers known as affiliation and dominance and according to him, affiliation, is explained as the search for personal relationship and subtle patterns of intimacy while dominance is seen as the desire to control and influence the thoughts, attitudes and behaviours of others in an attempt to gain recognition, admiration and prestige. These two forces interact and shape the behaviour of students and equally reinforce their identification, modeling and emotional attachment. These forces or influences can be positive or negative depending on whether the aims of the groups are social or anti-social (Unachukwu, 1995).

The rapid changes of social and economic life of the people have been held responsible for the high incidence of maladaptive behaviour of adolescent students. The societal influences may sometimes manifest itself in the identification with significant others by adolescents and this happens may end up internalizing the wrong values because of the prevailing circumstances he/she finds him/herself.

This is in agreement with the statements of Bandura and Walter (1959) that a child internalizes the beliefs and life styles of, people he/she lives with.

Hypotheses

There will be a significant positive effect of broken home on maladaptive behavior of students.

There will be a significant positive effect of negative attitudes of teachers on maladaptive behavior of students.

2. Method

Design/Statistics

Survey design was adopted in the study because the researcher did not manipulate any experimental variable and again, it was a design in which responses were obtained from a relatively large population who were considered a representative of a group. Also, chi-square, (χ^2) was applied as statistics to test the hypotheses.

Participants

A total of one hundred (100) participants comprising fifty (50) males and fifty (50) females senior secondary school adolescent students between the ages of 12-16 and 17-21 respectively and with a mean age of 14 and 19 respectively were selected for the study. They were randomly selected from the populations of five secondary schools in Ishiagu, Ebonyi State, South East Nigeria as samples for the study.

Instrument

A 20 item questionnaire with a dichotomous response format of Yes/No designed by the researchers to measure factors influencing maladaptive behaviour was used in the study. The items were positively worded with items 1-10 measuring the influence of broken homes and items 11-20 measuring the influence of negative attitudes of teachers. In scoring the questionnaire a response of Yes = 1 point while a response of No = 0 point. The items of the questionnaire were exposed to content validity using 5 judges from the department of psychology Enugu State University of Science and Technology whereby the original 28 items was reduced to 20 items. Hence, Cronbach Alpha Internal Consistency of .70 was obtained in a pilot study. Eight items were rejected because they did not load up to .30. In addition, a test-retest study was carried out making use of 30 participants comprising 15 males and 15 females' senior secondary school adolescent students. The result yielded an $r = 0.51$ as against r -critical value of 0.46 at degree of freedom of 28 and at $P < .01$ while a full-scale reliability using Spearman Brown correlation coefficient yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.68.

Procedure

A total of 118 copies of questionnaire were randomly distributed to males and females senior secondary adolescent students as a group within 3 days. Out of 118 copies of questionnaire distributed, 100 copies were properly completed and returned and were used for the study.

3. Results

Item 7: Adolescents from broken homes always display aggressive and violent behaviour at school.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant positive effect of broken home on maladaptive behaviour.

Table 1. Summary Table of Chi-square on the Difference between Observed and Expected Frequencies on the Influence of Broken Home on Maladaptive Behaviour

N	Df	Responses		χ^2	P
		Yes	No		
100	1	73 73%	27 27%	21.16	<.001

Table 1 shows that the χ^2 -calculated value of 21.16 is greater than the χ^2 -critical value of 10.83 at $P<.001$ and at degree of freedom of 1. Hypothesis 1 is therefore accepted. This shows that broken home has positive effect on maladaptive behaviour of adolescents at schools.

Item 11: Teachers' negative attitudes towards students influence their behaviour negatively.

Hypothesis II: There will be a significant positive effect

Table 3. Summary Table of Chi-square on the Difference between Observed and Expected Frequencies on other Items Related to Factors Influencing Maladaptive Behaviour

S/NO	ITEMS	χ^2	P
1	Parental attitudes towards their adolescents expose them to maladaptive behaviour.	14.44	<.001
2	Parents without religious and moral background produce adolescents with maladaptive behaviour.	36	<.001
3	Poor monitoring of adolescents behaviour by parents make them prone to maladaptive behaviour.	46.26	<.001
4	Adolescents from polygamous family display aggressive and quarrelsome behaviour at school.	0	>.05
5	Poor economic background of parents lead adolescents into committing crime at school.	10.24	<.01
6	Adolescents trained by one parent are more likely to show misbehaviour at school than adolescents trained by two parents.	0.64	>.05
8	Adolescents from family with low level of education show lack of interest in school lessons.	0	>.05
9	Adolescents whose parents are dead are more likely to display maladaptive behaviour at school than those whose parents are living.	1.44	>.05
10	Adolescents whose parents smoke are likely to smoke at schools.	0.16	>.05
12	Adolescents' poor academic performances at school lead them to maladaptive behaviour.	29.16	<.001
13	Lack of recreational facilities at school lead to students' engagement in unacceptable behaviour.	0.64	>.05
14	Watching of corrupt films exposes students to maladaptive behaviour.	84.64	<.001
15	Social clubs at school make adolescents deviate from school goals and rules.	0.16	>.05
16	Social discrimination in terms of power sharing at school lead students to display maladaptive behaviour.	16	<.001
17	Autocratic leadership in school attracts rebellion from students.	17.64	<.001
18	Unfair and stringent school rules cause adolescent students to exhibit maladaptive behaviour.	23.04	<.001
19	I derive joy in going contrary to school rules and regulations.	1	>.05
20	Teachers' automatic threat of examination make adolescent students react aggressively and violently.	6.76	<.01

of negative attitudes of teachers on maladaptive behaviour.

Table 2. Summary Table of Chi-square on the Difference between Observed and Expected Frequencies on the Influence of Negative Attitudes of Teachers on Maladaptive Behaviour

N	Df	Responses		χ^2	P
		Yes	No		
100	1	86 86%	14 14%	51.84	$P<.001$

Table 2 shows that the χ^2 -calculated value of 51.84 is greater than the χ^2 -critical value of 10.83 at $P<.001$ and at degree of freedom of 1. Hypothesis II is therefore accepted. This equally shows that there is a significant positive effect of negative attitudes of teachers on maladaptive behaviours.

Table 3 shows that items 1,2,3,5,12,14,16,17,18 and 20 yielded significant results as regards factors influencing maladaptive behaviour. This shows that they equally contribute to the occurrence of maladaptive behaviours at schools. Also, items 4,6,8,9,10,13,15 and 19 did not yield significant results as regards factors influencing maladaptive behaviour. This shows that they do not contribute to occurrence of maladaptive behaviours at schools.

4. Discussion

It is obvious to note that findings in this research work were highly upheld as the two hypotheses stated were accepted, proving that broken home and negative attitudes of teachers significantly have positive effects on maladaptive behaviours. The first hypothesis which states that there will be a significant positive effect of broken home on maladaptive behaviour was accepted because the χ^2 -calculated value of 21.16 is greater than the χ^2 -critical value of 10.83 at degree of freedom of 1 and at $P < .001$. This shows that there is a relationship between broken home and maladaptive behaviour. The acceptance of this hypothesis was in agreement with the assertion of Pickering and Vazsonyi (2002) that adolescent students from broken homes are always aggressive, jealous and are more likely to display maladaptive behaviour. They maintained that anti-social adolescents have long histories of disruptive behaviours traceable to childhood because of traits modeled at home during childhood which became manifested in their late adolescence when they enter secondary school. Also poor socialization of adolescent children associated with disruptive homes plays a role in the maladaptive behaviour of adolescent secondary school students. Freud (1981) said in support of this hypothesis that adolescents abandoned by their father at the mercy of their mother as a result of broken home are more likely to be rude, arrogant, proud and always have disciplinary problems.

The second hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant positive effect of negative attitudes of teachers on maladaptive behaviour was accepted because the χ^2 -calculated value of 51.84 is greater than χ^2 -critical value of 10.83 at degree of freedom of 1 and at $P < .001$. This shows that there is a relationship between negative attitudes of teachers and maladaptive behavior of students'. This hypothesis was supported by the research of Unachukwu (1995) where he stated that teachers' negative relationship with students influence their behaviours negatively and also, unfavourable instructions posed to adolescent students by teachers as a result of their negative attitudes towards students elicited maladaptive behaviours. Akubue (1991) study supported this finding. He found that attitudes exhibited by some teachers can create an atmosphere which produces and encourages problem behaviour. He equally noted that teachers' lack of sense of humours makes them to be egocentric and intolerant which in turn precipitated the display of maladaptive behaviour by adolescent students. Oker (2000) in his research observed that students often feel insecure and afraid because they are constantly threatened with unexpected examination and failure by teachers due to non-existence of mutual relationship between them. An overview of the discussion above revealed that broken home is significantly related to maladaptive behaviour and also, negative attitudes of teachers is significantly associated with maladaptive behaviour.

5. Implications of the Findings

Sequel to the outcome of these findings, it has been established that broken home creates an atmosphere that paved the way for the occurrence of maladaptive behaviours at schools and also, negative attitudes of teachers significantly influenced the behaviours of students negatively. Family cohesion is obviously necessary for learning healthy social skills. Studies have consistently shown that attachment to one's parents is especially crucial, as this affects the friendships formed by adolescents, which in turn relates to levels of delinquency. Moreover, a balance between cohesion and adaptability creates more positive communication, which is characterized by empathy, supportiveness, and "reflective listening" among family members. The outcome of this study will be beneficial to parents who would use the knowledge to understand that it pays a lot to live in peace in the family as that would transfer to their children. Both parents should also use the knowledge from this study to understand that joint and harmonious training of children and adolescents will make them to have a sense of belonging and imbibe a sense of responsibility when they grow to adulthood. Also, this study will help the school authorities to understand that practicing democratic leadership style in schools where students would be allowed to express their views and vent their feelings will help to reduce tension and anxiety which will in turn lead to harmonious co-existence between teachers and students and development of emotional attachment.

6. Limitations of the Study

The major limitations of this study are the small sample size, limited time and difficulty encountered in getting students to respond to the measure. Subsequent studies should increase the sample size and adequate time is required for a big sample to participate in the study. Moreso, personality dimensions of the adolescent participants should be considered as variable in the study. Parenting style should as well be included to ascertain how it influences the manifestation of maladaptive behaviours.

7. Conclusions

Since the results of the findings indicate that there is a significant positive influence of broken home and negative attitudes of teachers on maladaptive behavior of high school students. High, proper and effective socialization mechanism should be put in place at the family level where adolescent children should be properly groomed in moral values and learn virtues of good behaviour because family is the basis of development of good behaviour. Parents should engage in frequent counseling to learn how to use complimentary method of communication to relate with each other in order

to reduce or eliminate opinions and behaviour incompatibilities and enhance harmonious living. Also, school management should ensure adequate installation of recreational facilities in schools where students will burn their energies rather than engaging in idol, frivolous and trivial activities. School authorities should create democratic atmosphere where students would be carried along in the scheme of things.

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