

**INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENTS ON PEER
VICTIMIZATION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EMOHUA
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: *Students need to adjust properly in school and social systems to be able to realize their potentials. They need to adjust appropriately in the school and society to acquire pro-social behaviours. Pupils who are maladjusted in school and society are most likely to acquire antisocial behaviours including bullying and peer victimization. This correlational study, therefore, investigated the influence of school adjustment and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. From a population of 1548 senior secondary school (1&2) students from public secondary schools in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, a sample of 476 students was composed using a combination of simple random sampling technique and proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection is School, Social Adjustment and Peer Victimization Questionnaire. The instrument validated through the assistance of three experts in Counselling Psychology has reliability coefficients obtained through Cronbach alpha technique in the range of 0.72-0.82. The findings of the study showed that school adjustment had a high negative and significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State; social adjustment had a high negative and significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students; school adjustment and social adjustment had a negative and significant joint influence on peer victimization. On the basis of the findings, it was therefore recommended that parents, guardians and teachers should assist students to adjust properly in the school and society. This they can do by showing love, care and responsiveness to their children/wards or students during the upbringing.*

KEYWORDS: social adjustment, school adjustment, antisocial behaviour, pro-social behaviour, bullying, truancy, harm, academic achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Peer victimization has been defined as by Adekunle (2010) as the experience among the children of being a target of aggressive behavior of other children who may not be siblings or age mates. It is the act of an unprovoked attack that causes harm of a psychological, social or physical nature (Smith, 2018). It is a problem that occurs when someone is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons with the hostile or malicious intent (Lumsden, 2016). It is a pervasive bullying act in which a person or a group of persons direct aggressive behaviours designed to cause harm towards another person.

Perpetrators of victimization are usually more powerful than their victims. They strike fear in the minds of their victims who are usually weaker and hapless. Peer victimization can be in form of physical victimization in which perpetrators abuse the victims using physical means such as slapping, punching, kicking, spitting, etc (Adefunke, 2018). Peer victimization may be of verbal form in which the perpetrators use abusive words on the victims. It can be in form of social manipulation in which the perpetrators work concertedly with other people to undermine and cause harm to the victims. Peer victimization can also occur by attack not directly on the person but on his property so as to hurt him.

Irrespective of its nature or form, peer victimization results to physical, emotional or social harm. Therefore, the consequences of peer victimization are grievous. It strikes a long time fear in the minds of the victims making them timid, panicky and isolated. The victims appear stigmatized, traumatized and worried. Drop in self-confidence and self-esteem is a hallmark of peer victimization. Perpetrators of peer victimization are apparently people without honour. They are people who have issues with good sense of judgment. High rate of substance abuse is common among them. They indulge in antisocial behaviour or conduct disorder and may grow up to become adult criminals.

In school, peer victimization causes lateness to school and in extreme cases, result to absenteeism among the victims. Participation in academic activities is low among the victims of peer victimization. Emerson (2017) reported low academic achievement among the perpetrators and victims of peer victimization. There is a high rate of dropout among victims of peer victimization. There are some factors that are capable of influencing peer victimization. These include but not limited to school and social adjustment. School adjustment, defined by Adeyemo (2005) is ability of students to manage school challenges and act overtly in a way which is socially appropriate and responsible in a school environment. Mangal (2008) defined it tersely as a consistent and continuous process which aids students regulate their behaviours to facilitate a more harmonious relationship within the school environment. It is adoption of appropriate behaviours for harmonious/peaceful coexistence of key actors in school environment.

Students enroll into secondary schools from diverse economic, social and parental backgrounds. Through various methods of socialization and sheer peer group influence, students acquire various systems of behaviours, some pro-social and some antisocial. Most likely, they may manifest these behaviours in school unless they are compelled to adjust/adapt to school standards and norms. They can achieve this through school adjustment. Through the school adjustment, students jettison antisocial behaviours which can hinder interpersonal-relationship build-up among learners and between students and staff. They can also adopt pro-social behaviours that can enable them remain focused which will eventually create a conducive atmosphere for school activities to thrive for the aim of guaranteeing ultimately academic success. School adjustment helps to bring students' behaviour in conformity with the school norms. It aids students to manage challenges and demands of school activities (Paramanik, Saha & Mondal, 2014) and adapt to school environment and pressure of school life or academic activities. Psychologically, school adjustment helps students cope with intense demand or pressure present in the school and world and also the desires, needs,

and conflicts from within (Ogoemeka, 2012). It entails making changes where necessary by discarding beliefs, attitudes and behaviours which can militate against appropriate students' socialization and good academic achievement. Students must be assisted to feel comfortable in the presence of other students, work together with fellow students and adopt appropriate conduct in schools. Students who adjusted well are motivated to learn and are positively engaged in activities in classroom and thus receive high grade for their efforts. In other words, well-adjusted students obtain high grades, pass their subjects and eventually graduate. They usually develop good reading culture, adopt good metacognitive strategies and study skills that can guarantee good academic success. Poorly adjusted students may have reduced concentration in academic work, loathe academic work generally, show poor attitude to work and are generally disruptive in classes. They are truants, adopt poor study skills, obtain poor grades and may sometimes drop out from the school system.

A study John and Ayere (2011) showed significant difference between girls and boys in school adjustment did not exist. A study by Vemurugan and Balakrishnan (2011) showed correlation between self-concept and social adjustment has a negligible correlation coefficient. Basu (2012) investigated ability of college students to adjust in schools and found significant differences existed when the adjustments of students are compared based on gender, types of family structure, instructional medium and students' socio-economic background. The outcome of research conducted by Roy and Mitra (2012) showed that students who were in their late and early adolescence differed significantly in social areas, home, emotional and health adjustment with girls showing improved adjustment when compared to the male counterparts. Research results for the descriptive study by Paramanik, Saha and Modal (2014) showed significant difference in mean school adjustment between girls and boys in favour of girls.

Social adjustment was defined by Ray and Elliott (2006) as any general process for which individuals change their response patterns as the dimension of environment changes. It was aptly defined as ability to adjust/adapt to a given environment along with humans and also satisfy one's needs and meeting almost all one's demands (Mazaheri, Baghiyan & Fatehizadeh, 2006). It a person's ability to fit and adapt in any social system for purposes of accommodating himself to satisfy his needs. Social adjustment is necessitated from the perspective that human beings cannot survive in isolation in the society. People need to interact with one another within a social system for some purposes. There is interdependence and inter-relationship among people as they strive to have their needs satisfied. In every social system, people co-exist and do things in common. Therefore, they should ensure social order is not disrupted or existing norms/values, standard acceptable behaviours are not violated. They must avoid behaving in a manner that will undermine the interests of one another. By extension, they should work towards peaceful coexistence of people of diverse socio-cultural and religious backgrounds.

In school, social adjustments are needed for cordial relationship of peers, and between students and staff. It is needed for promotion of positive attitude in academic work among the students. Again, it is needed for promotion of positive attitude in school extra-curricular activities. Socially adjusted students obey the school rules/regulation, show respect to teachers and constituted authorities. They protect the school and individual property, and exhibit pro-social behaviours.

Conversely, socially maladjusted students are recalcitrant and exhibit bullying and other forms of antisocial behaviours.

Some studies have been conducted and reported on the correlates of peer victimization. Robin (2016) working on the influence of self-concept and social adjustment on peer victimization found that positive self-concept negatively influenced peer victimization and social adjustment negatively influenced peer victimization. There was a negative significant joint influence of self-concept and social adjustment on peer victimization. Ayadim (2016) investigated the influence of school adjustment and self-esteem on the peer victimization using a sample of 98 students. The data generated were analyzed using regression statistical tool. The results showed that school adjustment had a negative and significant influence on peer victimization. Self-esteem also had a negative and significant influence on peer victimization. There was also a negative significant joint influence of self-esteem and school adjustment on peer victimization. In the study conducted by Chukwuma, (2016) on the relationship among self-concept, locus of control and peer victimization, a sample of 108 secondary school students was involved. The data obtained were analyzed using regression. The findings indicated that self-concept had a negative and significant relationship with peer victimization. Furthermore, locus of control had a negative and significant relationship with peer victimization.

Statement of the problem

Peer victimization has been going on unabated in the secondary schools in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. Permanent solutions appear to elude the school authorities. This has created a semblance of low level of lawlessness in the schools. Indiscipline among the school children has been the order of the day. It has created a feeling of fear among the victims. Going to school is no longer done with zeal. Lateness to school and truancy has been observed among the victims of peer victimization. Besides, both the perpetrators and victims of peer victimization possess poor study habits and experience dwindling academic fortunes. This is because perpetrators and victims of peer victimization find it difficult to adjust to the school and society. Hence, they exhibit poor school and social adjustment. Until the students begin to adjust fully in the school and society, the incidence of peer victimization may continue to persist. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of school and social adjustments on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research questions

The following research questions were answered in this study.

1. What is the influence of school adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. What is the influence of social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?
3. What is the joint influence of school adjustment and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study at 0.05 alpha level.

1. There is no significant influence of school adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State
2. There is no significant influence of social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State
3. There is no significant joint influence of school adjustment and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

METHODOLOGY

This is a correlational study. From the existing 24 public secondary schools in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, 12 schools were slated for study using simple random sampling technique. Then of the 1548 senior secondary (1&2) students, a sample of 476 students was drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection is School, Social Adjustment and Peer Victimization Questionnaire. The instrument was researcher-made. The contributions of three experts in the field of counselling psychology ensured that the instrument possessed validity. The reliability coefficients of the instrument obtained using Cronbach alpha technique were 0.81, 0.72, 0.77 and 0.82 for school adjustment section, social adjustment section, peer victimization section and overall respectively. The instrument is of 4-point Likert format of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

Each section of the instrument contained 10 items. The minimum point obtainable by a student in each section is 0 while the maximum point obtainable by a student is 40. The data generated from this instrument were analyzed using regression statistical tool.

RESULTS

RQ1: What is the influence of school adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Research question 1 was answered using coefficient of correlation. The results are as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Coefficient of regression (R) for the influence of school adjustment on peer victimization

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
-0.815	0.664	0.664

Table 1 shows that the value of coefficient of regulation is -0.815. The square of coefficient of regulation is 0.664. The adjusted square of coefficient of regulation is 0.664. The value of coefficient of regulation (-0.815) shows that school adjustment had a high negative influence on peer victimization. The value of adjusted square of coefficient of regulation (0.664) shows that 66.4 percent variation in peer victimization can be accounted for by school adjustment.

HO1: There is no significant influence of school adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

Hypothesis 1 was tested using t-test associated with regression analysis and the results are shown in table 2

Table 2: t-value for the influence of school adjustment on peer victimization among the students

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	48.034	0.773		62.128	0.00
School adjustment	-0.931	0.030	-0.815	30.639	0.00

Table 2 shows that value of standardized beta coefficient is -0.815. The t-value for school adjustment is 30.639 which is significant at 0.00 alpha level and also significant at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated t-value is significant at 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a negative significant influence of school adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The unstandardized B coefficients shows that the predictive model for the influence of school adjustment on peer victimization is given by $48.034 - 0.931SA = PV$, where SA stands for school adjustment and PV for peer victimization.

RQ2: What is the influence of social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Research question 2 was answered using coefficient of regression and the results are shown in table 3

Table 3: Coefficient of regression (R) for the influence of social adjustment on peer victimization

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
-0.760	0.578	0.577

From table 3, it can be seen that coefficient of regression is -0.760. The square of coefficient of regression is 0.578 and the adjusted square of coefficient of regression is 0.577. The value of coefficient of regression (-0.760) shows that social adjustment has a high negative influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The value of adjusted square of coefficient of regression (0.577) shows that social adjustment accounts for 57.7 percent of variation in peer victimization.

HO2: There is no significant influence of social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

Hypothesis 2 was tested by the use of t-value associated with regression analysis. The results are as presented in table 4.

Table 4: t-value for the influence of social adjustment on peer victimization among students

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	45.529	0.831		54.80	0.00
Social adjustment	-0.801	0.031	-0.760	25.464	0.00

Table 4 shows that the beta value is -0.760. The calculated t-value for social adjustment is 25.464 which is significant at 0.00 alpha level and also significant at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated t-value is significant at 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that social adjustment has a significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The predictive model for the influence of social adjustment on peer victimization is given by $PV = 45.529 - 0.801SA$, where PV is peer victimization and SA is social adjustment.

RQ3: What is the joint influence of school adjustment and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Research question 3 was answered using coefficient of regression. The results are presented in table 5

Table 5: Coefficient of regression (R) for the joint influence of school adjustment and social adjustment on peer victimization

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
-0.842	0.708	0.707

From table 5, it can be clearly seen that the coefficient of regression is -0.842 which shows that school adjustment and social adjustment jointly had a high negative influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The square of coefficient of regression is 0.708. The adjusted square of coefficient of regression is 0.707. The value of the adjusted square of coefficient of regression (0.707) implies that school adjustment and social adjustment jointly account for 70.7 percent variation in peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State.

HO3: There is no significant joint influence of school adjustment and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State Hypothesis 3 was tested using f-value associated with multiple regression analysis and the results are presented in table 6

Table 6: F-value for the joint influence of school adjustment and social adjustment on peer victimization among the students

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	26301.012	2	13150.5066	573.953	0.00
Residual	10837.450	473	22.912		
Total	37138.462	475			

Table 6 shows that the mean square regression is 13150.5066. The mean square residual is 22.912. The degrees of freedom regression, residual and total are 2, 473 and 475 respectively. The calculated f-value is 573.953 which is significant at 0.05 alpha level and also significant at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated f-value is significant at 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant joint influence of school adjustment and social adjustment on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The predictive model for the joint influence of school adjustment and social

adjustment on peer victimization is given by $PV = 49.709 - 0.644SA - 0.344SA$ where PV is peer victimization, SA is school adjustment and SA is social adjustment.

DISCUSSION

In this study, it was found that school adjustment had a high negative and significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. This finding is in line with the findings of Ayadim (2016) which revealed that school adjustment had a negative and significant influence on peer victimization. The finding that school adjustment had a negative influence on peer victimization among students can be explained from the fact that school adjustment enables students to adapt to the school environment. It helps students to maximize learning opportunities that the school can offer. In other words, it enables students to utilize maximally the human and material resources that the school can offer. When students adapt very well to the school environment, the possibility of getting involved in bullying, peer victimization and other antisocial behaviours becomes remote. Therefore, school adjustment has a negative influence on peer victimization.

It was found that social adjustment had a high negative and significant influence on peer victimization among secondary school students in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Robin (2016) which reported that social adjustment had a negative and significant influence on peer victimization. The finding that social adjustment had a negative influence on peer victimization among students can be explained from the fact that social adjustment is needed to ensure cordial relationships among peers, between students and staff. It is needed so as to promote positive attitude to academic work among the students. Socially adjusted students obey school rules and regulation, show respect to fellow students, teachers and constituted authority and shun bullying and other antisocial behaviours. They protect the school and individuals' property, and exhibit pro-social behaviours. As positive psychological construct, social adjustment has a negative influence on peer victimization which is a negative psychological construct.

It was also found that school adjustment and social adjustment had a negative and significant joint influence on peer victimization. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Robin (2016) which reported a negative significant joint influence of self-concept and social adjustment on peer victimization. It is also in agreement with the findings of Ayadim (2016) which revealed that there was a negative significant joint influence of self-esteem and school adjustment on peer victimization. The finding that school adjustment and social adjustment had a negative and significant joint influence on peer victimization can be explained from the fact that school adjustment and social adjustment enables students to adapt in the school environment or social system in which they find themselves. Proper adaptation of the students in the school or social system brings out the best of the students. As such, school adjustment and social adjustment had a joint, negative and significant influence on peer victimization behaviours among the students.

CONCLUSION

School adjustment and social adjustment is very important for students' learning. When students are maladjusted in school and society, it will be difficult to realize their full potentials. Hence, students should be assisted to adjust properly in the school and society as students who fail to adjust properly in the school and society are most likely to engage in peer victimization. Conversely, students who adjust properly to the school and society are less likely to engage in peer victimization.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that parents, guardians and teachers should assist students to adjust properly to the school and society. This they can do by showing love and care to their children/wards or students. They should ensure proper upbringing of the children so as to inculcate integrity, morality, virtue and good values in the students. They should be responsive to academic and physiological needs of the children in order to train out children that are responsible and pro-social. In this way, the children will develop to their full potentials and contribute meaningfully to the society.

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