

**FAMILY COMPOSITION AND ADOLESCENTS ADJUSTMENT
IN ETUNG-OBUBURA CONSTITUENCY,
CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study investigated family composition and adolescents' adjustment in Etung-Oburura Constituency, Cross River State, Nigeria. The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The multi-stage selection procedure was adopted in the study. Four towns were randomly selected from the constituency. Six secondary schools (3 in Etung and 3 in Oburura) were selected using the simple random sampling technique, with family composition as stratum. Eleven or twelve (as the case may be) adolescents (earlier identified in a prior visit) were selected from each school using stratified sampling techniques. In all, two hundred and ten (210) adolescents (70 from intact families, 70 from single-parent families, and 70 from stepfamilies) respectively constituted the study sample. A valid and reliable instrument: Adolescent Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ) was used to obtain data for the study. Data were analysed with ANOVA. The results indicated significant variation in the emotional adjustment of adolescent from intact families, single- parent families and bonus families ($f= 16.567, p<0.01$). the results further revealed significant variation in the social adjustment of adolescents from the three-family composition. ($F=22.944, p<0.01$). However, the findings demonstrated no significant variation in the educational adjustment of adolescent in the three-family composition ($F=2.363, p>0.05$).Based on the findings of the present study, it is recommended that counsellors should pay particular attention to adolescents' adjustment, especially, emotional and social adjustment.

Keywords: *Adolescents' adjustment, emotional adjustment, social adjustment, educational adjustment and family composition.*

Introduction

The word adjustment represents the process of modifying behaviour in harmonious way. It involves a process of constant changes and people developing consistent pattern to this continuous changes. Adjustment is a

process that never ends. All living beings try to adjust to surrounding atmosphere to enable them survive. Human beings are part of this continuous process. Adolescence is the most difficult period through the stages of human development with regards to social, emotional, sexual, and academic adjustment. Little wonder, Aggrawal (2004) maintained that adolescent adjustment significantly depends on the fulfilment of specific needs which comprised, physical needs, intellectual needs, emotional needs, social needs, moral needs, as well as vocational needs. A person can be well adjusted or maladjusted.

The 21st century is the era of information and communication technological advancement and changing patterns. As a result of changes, life is becoming really complex with each passing day. In this dynamic environment, adolescents' adjustment is becoming a big issue. Adolescents are not only concerned with their academics but equally affected by the social and emotional changes. This transition has been described by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) as a 'cultural shock which involves significant social and psychological relearning in the face of encounters with new ideas, new teachers and new friends with quite different values and benefits, new freedoms and opportunities and new academic, personal and social demands'' (Pp 58-59).

Family composition is defined by the present make up of the household, specifically, three types were considered in the study: biological parent families, consist of children living with two biological parents; single-parents families comprise children living with one unmarried biological parent only (mother/father); and stepfamilies, comprise children living with one biological parent and a non-biological parent (stepparent). Family composition has been documented as one of the numerous factors that affect adolescent's adjustment mechanism (Rehman & Singh 2015). A family is the most basic and immediate environment that a child is exposed to. It is the basic unit of the society (Adhiamdo et al., 2011; Raju & Rahmatullah 2012). The family teaches the child the strategy for dealing with different life situations. The nature of the family environment significantly affects children's cognitive and behavioural development. The family environment speaks volumes on the quality of the psychological environment of the home. Adolescent social adjustment is therefore, related to home and school relationships adjustments. Kokko and Pulkkinen, (2000). Lai and McBride-chang (2001) suggested that a normal and well-integrated home and school life experienced by an adolescent spread to all other adolescents' similar wholesomeness of attitude and control of behaviour.

The family environment, to an extent, impacts a child's life. Interactions and relationship among family members play a pivotal role in the adjustment of adolescents (Weaner, 2003). Herman, Ostrander, & Tucker (2007) seemed to support Weaner when they maintained that cohesive and supportive relationship among family members are associated with adolescent's psychological adaptation and lower depression. In a family, parents are the most significant support system in the formation of children personality. Spruijt and De Goede (1997) demonstrated that young people in happy families, harmonious parental marriage experience little challenges and higher wellbeing than their counterparts in divorced and maritally distressed families. Prior research (For instance, Jewell and Stank 2003) revealed that family environment impacts on adolescents' psychological adjustment, problem solving skills, self-confidence and clear goal setting abilities.

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of children and adolescents who spend part of their early lives within families that do not include both biological parents, probably as a result of parental divorce, remarriage or single-parenthood (Dunn, 2003; Office for National Statistics 2007). Research is consistent in reporting that children and adolescents in single-parent and stepfamilies (Bonus families) have on the average higher probabilities of experiencing difficulties in their psychological, health and school adjustment than their counterparts in intact families. A range of risk factors for this poor adjustment have been documented by Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan, (1999); O'Connor, Dunn Jenkins and Pickering, and Rabasah, (2001) to include; socio-economic difficulties, family conflicts, poor parental mental health, frequent changes in family situation, lack of social support for the mother and decreased parental attention.

There is a common assumption that two biological parents provide the optimal environment for healthy child development. The single-parent family composition is associated with lower levels of parent-child interaction, parental supervision, support, and control-family dynamics that have been demonstrated to have harmful repercussion from for adolescents (Furstenberg, Morgan, & Allison 1987). Similarly, adolescents in bonus family (Stepfamilies) may be disadvantaged in two ways. First, because they had lived with one parent following parental divorce, they suffer disruptions or reduced parental interaction, monitoring and support before bonus family formation. Second, family system theories suggested that bonus family living arrangement is complex and stressful (Crosbie-Bumett, 1998), especially for bonus parents and bonus children (Mills, 2004)

Banus (2012) reported significant difference in the adjustment of secondary school students compared on the bases of family type structure.

Mohan Raj, and Latha (2014) in a study of perceived family environment in relation to academic achievement that academic achievement was related to independence and conflict domain of family environment. Similarly, Vaghela (2015) indicated significant difference of adolescent girl students from nuclear and joint families in relation to their social adjustment. Nuclear family is a family unit that includes two married parents of opposite gender and their biological or adopted children living in the same residence. A joint family is an extended family arrangement prevalent throughout the Indian subcontinent, particularly in India, consisting of many generations living in the same household, all bound by the common relationship. Further, Vaghela (2015) found significant difference in the emotional adjustment of adolescent girls from nuclear and joint families. However, the study revealed no significant difference in the educational adjustment of adolescent girls from nuclear and joint families. Sharma's (2015) study indicated no significant difference in the social adjustment of students in highly satisfactory family climate and those from highly dissatisfactory climate.

Tewari and Shubham (2015) in a comparative study demonstrated that adolescents in nuclear families showed more emotional need fulfilment than those in joint families. Alam (2017) indicated significant difference in the emotional, social and educational adjustment of adolescents from nuclear and joint families. Dhyani, and Singh (2013) and Deepshika and Bhanot (2011) found adolescent educational adjustment components from biological nuclear families non-significant with adolescents from foster home. Rehman and Singh (2015) supported the previous findings that there is a significant correlation between family type and adjustment level of adolescent in emotional adjustment compared with their counterparts in nuclear families. A study by Attar-Schwartz, Tan, Buchanan, Flouri and Grrigs (2009), indicated that grandparent involvement was more strongly associated with reduced adjustment difficulties among adolescents from lone-parent (sing-parent) and stepfamilies than those from two-parent and biological families.

Previous studies have not taken a comparative character. Numerous studies compared children in single-parent families with children in intact families (Amato & Keith 1991); Children in joint families and those from intact families (Alam, 2017); fewer studies attempted a comparison of children in bonus families with those in intact families (Ganonge & Coleman, 2004) but rarely are all three groups compared. Therefore, the problem of the present study put in a question form is: "what is the relationship between family composition and adolescents' adjustment in Etung-Obubura constituency, Cross River State, Nigeria. "

The following hypothesis were raised:

- 1) There will be no significant variation in the emotional adjustment among children from intact families, single-parent families and Bonus families.
- 2) There will be no significant variation in the social adjustment of children from intact families, single-parent families and Bonus families.
- 3) There will be no significant variation in the educational adjustment of children from intact families, single-parent families and Bonus families.

Method

Design

The study adopted the descriptive research design.

Population

The target population of the study consisted of all children from intact, single-parent and bonus families, in Etung-Oburura consistency, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The multi-stage selection procedure was adopted in the study. Four towns were randomly selected from the constituency. Six secondary schools (3 in Etung and 3 in Oburura) were selected using the simple random sampling technique, with family composition as stratum. Eleven or twelve (as the case may be) adolescents (earlier identified in a prior visit) were selected from each school using stratified sampling techniques. In all, two hundred and ten (210) adolescents (70 from intact families, 70 from single-parent families, and 70 from stepfamilies) respectively constituted the study sample. The adolescents ages ranged between 12 and 19 years. The mean and Standard deviation of respondents were 15.6 and 2.2 respectively. Gender distribution was 106 males and 95 females.

Instrument

One instrument was utilized in the study titled, Adolescents Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ), developed by the researcher. The questionnaire comprised four sections A, B, C and D. Section A sought demographic data of respondents, which also included items on family composition (example of items included, I live with both of my parents (intact family), I live with one of my parent (mother/father) who is not married

(single-parent family) and, I live with one of my parent and his/her spouse, (stepfamily). Section B contained 15 items on adolescents' emotional adjustment (example of an item is, 'I feel anxious'). Section C comprised 15 items on adolescent social adjustment, (example of item is "I easily get along with people"). Section D contained 15 items on adolescents' educational adjustments (example of an item is, "I attend to class assignment promptly). Therefore, the questionnaire was made up of 45 items formatted on a four-point scale; Strongly Disagree (SD)= 1, Disagree (D)= 2, Agree (A)= 3 and Strongly Agree (SA)= 4. The instrument demonstrated construct validity and reliability at 0.76 index.

Procedure

The researcher sought and obtained permission from the principals, class teacher as well as the consent of the respondents. The instruments were administered by the researcher employing the help of two research assistants. The exercise lasted for two weeks, it required the immediate completion of the instruments and retrieval.

Data Analysis

Data collected were subjected to ANOVA statistical method.

Results

Hypothesis I

There will be no significant variation in the emotional adjustment among adolescents from intact families, single-parent families and bonus families.

Table 1: ANOVA result of the variation in the emotional adjustment among adolescents from intact families, single-parent families and bonus families

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2845.324	2	1422.662	16.567*	0.000
Within Groups	17776.243	207	85.876		
Total	20621.567	209			

Descriptive statistics

Family types	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper bound
Intact family	70	29.06	8.973	1.073	26.92	31.20
Single family	70	37.30	8.995	1.075	35.16	39.44
Bonus family	70	36.34	9.808	1.172	34.00	38.68
Total	210	34.23	9.933	.685	32.88	35.58

*Significant at 5% alpha level; tabulated F-value = 3.03

Answer to the first hypothesis was provided using One- Way Analysis (ANOVA) and the results obtained are shown in Table 1. The result revealed that there is a significant variation in the emotional adjustment among adolescents from intact families, single-parent families and bonus families ($F = 16.567, p < 0.01$). This decision is based on the fact that the probability value of 0.000 is lower than 5% (0.005) significance level or because the calculated F- ratio of 16.567 is greater than the tabulated F-ratio of 3.03. it therefore means the adolescents from the three family types emotionally adjust differently based on the home environment and the type of family conflict and care they are exposed to. The results of mean values clearly showed that adolescents from single-parent families have low emotional adjustment followed by those from bonus family homes, while those from intact family have high emotional adjustment with values of 37.30, 36.34 and 29.06 respectively.

Hypothesis II

There will be no significant variation in the social adjustment among adolescents from intact families, single- parent families and bonus families.

Table 2: ANOVA result of the variation in the social adjustment among adolescents from intact families, single-parent families and bonus families.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3096.038	2	1548.019	22.944*	0.000
Within Groups	13966.157	207	67.469		
Total	17062.195	209			

Descriptive statistics

Family types	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper bound
Intact family	70	38.81	9.443	1.129	36.56	41.07
Single family	70	30.99	7.860	.939	29.11	32.86
Bonus family	70	30.39	7.173	.857	28.68	32.10
Total	210	33.40	9.035	.623	32.17	34.62

*Significant at 5% alpha level; Tabulated F-value = 3.03

One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to provide answer to the second hypothesis. The results obtained are indicated in Table 2. The results demonstrated that there is a significant variation in the social adjustment among adolescents from intact families, single-parent families and bonus families ($F = 22.944$, $p < 0.01$). This decision is consequent upon the probability value of 0.000 being lower than the tabulated F-ratio of 3.03. It therefore suggested that adolescents from the three family types socially adjust differently based on their exposure to family care, stability and conflict. The results of mean values clearly showed that adolescents from intact family have high social adjustment followed by those from single-parent homes, while those from bonus family have low social adjustment with values of 38.81, 30.99 and 30.39 respectively.

Hypothesis III

There will be no significant variation in the educational adjustment among adolescents from intact families, single-parents Families and bonus families.

Table 3: ANOVA result of the variation in the educational adjustment among adolescents from intact families, single-parent families and bonus families.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	330.695	2	165.348	2.363*	0.097
Within Groups	14486.300	207	69.982		
Total	14816.995	209			

Descriptive statistics

Family types	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper bound
Intact family	70	29.59	7.502	.897	27.80	31.37
Single family	70	31.97	8.482	1.014	29.95	33.99
Bonus family	70	32.46	9.040	1.081	30.30	34.61
Total	210	31.34	8.420	.581	30.19	32.48

*Insignificant at 5% alpha level; Tabulated F-value = 3.03

Also, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to provide answer to the third hypothesis. The results obtained are shown in Table 3. The results indicated that there is no significant variance in the educational adjustment among adolescents from intact families, single-parent families and bonus families ($F = 2.363, p > 0.05$). This decision is consequent upon the probability value of 0.097 being greater than 5% (0.005) significance level or because the calculated F-ratio of 2.363 is lesser than the tabulated F-ratio of 3.03. It therefore means that adolescents irrespective of family types portray similar educational adjustment. The results of mean values clearly showed that adolescents from bonus family have high educational adjustment followed by those from single-parent families while those from intact family have low educational adjustment with values of 32.46, 31.97 and 29.59 respectively.

Discussion

The result that there is significant variation in the emotional adjustment among adolescents from intact, single-parent and Bonus families is consistent with prior findings, for instance. Banus (2012), indicated significant difference in the adjustments of secondary school students along family type. Vaghela (2015) reported significant difference in the emotional adjustment of adolescent girls from nuclear and joint families. Tewari and Stubbam (2015) in a comparative study, demonstrated that adolescents in nuclear families showed more emotional fulfilment than those in joint families. Similarly, Alam (2017) reported significant difference in emotional adjustment of adolescents from nuclear and joint families. Adeoye (2009) indicated that joint families have better emotional adjustment compared with their counterparts in nuclear families.

Similarly, the present study's finding which revealed a significant variation in the social adjustment of adolescents from intact, single-parents and bonus families is consistent with the studies of Herrington and Stanley Hagan (1999); O'Connor, Dunn Jenkins and Pickering and Rabasah, (2001) in reporting that children and adolescents in single-parent and stepfamilies (Bonus families) have on the average higher probabilities of experiencing difficulties in their physiological adjustment than their counterparts in intact families. Vaghela (2015) indicated significant difference of adolescent girl students from nuclear and joint families in relation to their social adjustment. Also, Sharma (2015) reported significant difference in social adjustment of students in higher satisfactory family climate and those from higher dissatisfactory family, Rehman and Singh (2015) corroborated the findings that there exists a significant correlation between family types and social adjustment level of adolescents.

The present findings indicated no significant variation in the educational adjustment of adolescents from intact, single-parent and bonus families, supported the finding of Dyani and Singh (2013), who similarly reported no significant difference in educational adjustments component between adolescents from biological nuclear families and adolescents from foster homes. Vaghela found no significant difference in the educational adjustment of adolescent girls from nuclear and joint families. Similarly, Dyani and Singh (2013); and Deepshika and Bhanot (2011) reported no significant difference in educational adjustment of adolescents from intact and foster homes. However, the study's findings negated the findings of Alam (2017), who reported significant difference in the educational adjustment of adolescents from intact and joint families.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed significant variation in adolescents' emotional and social adjustments. However, the findings indicated no significant variation in adolescents' educational adjustment. Therefore, the present study needs to be published through various media.

Implication of the findings

The positive role of the family involvement in adolescent adjustment need to be emphasized in family and educational psychology.

Recommendations

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

1. Those in the helping profession, example, qualified and dedicated counsellors should get involved in assisting adolescents make healthy adjustment in the society by boosting adolescents personal coping resources and others that may be available, and rae of value.
2. Parents should be supportive of the adolescents by being available to offer information and assistance in a non-judgemental manner. They should be conscious of the pressure they exert on their adolescent children.

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