

## **INFLUENCE OF PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION PATTERNS ON SELF-ESTEEM OF IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ENUGU EDUCATIONAL ZONE**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the influence of parent – child communication patterns on self-esteem of the in-school adolescents in Enugu Education zone. Three research questions and two null hypotheses (tested at  $p < 0.05$ ) guided the study. The study applied an ex-post facto researcher design. The sample for this study was made up of 480 senior secondary class II (SSII) students which comprise of 199 males and 281 females in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. One intact class was randomly drawn from each of the ten schools that were randomly selected for the study. Two instruments, namely: - Perceived Parent – Child Communication Patterns Scale (PPCCPS) and Students Self-esteem Scale (SSES), were used to elicit the parent – child communication patterns and the state of the in-school adolescents' self-estee. On the test of internal consistency, the parent – child communication patterns yielded an alpha of 0.847 for conversation (concept) orientation pattern and 0.833 for conformity (Socio) orientation pattern respectively. The students' self-esteem scale on the other hand yielded an alpha of 0.874 which was established through cronbach alpha procedure. Mean, standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the t-test of Equivalent values was to test the null hypotheses. All the null hypotheses were tested at  $p < 0.05$  level of significance. The major finding of the study among others includes, that; Parent – child communication patterns have significant influence on the self-esteem of the in school adolescents.*

**Keywords:** Parent-Child Communication Pattern, Self Esteem and Adolescence.

### **Introduction**

Adolescence is the stage of development between childhood and adulthood. It begins with the onset of puberty which in girls is usually at the age of 12 to 13 years and in boys about 14years and usually lasts until 19years

of age (Martin, 2010). The transition between the period of childhood and adulthood involves biological, cognitive and social emotional changes (Santrock, 2008). At this stage the adolescence child is faced with developmental challenges ranging from social, emotional, psychological and physiological problems (Opara, 2010). An adequate attention by Parents and other care givers to the adolescent' child at this stage is highly necessary. Specifically, the communication channels that occur abundantly between parents and their adolescents' children are called communication patterns (Trenholm and Yersen, 1996). The pattern of the parent-child communication demands for clear understanding of the content and intention of each message and family members should be able to transfer their thoughts, feelings, desires and needs to one another. The primary essence of parent-child communication is that children learn communication from others, interpret others' feelings as well as generally experience the communication activities with others (Koerner and Fitzpatrick 2004). Family patterns of communication play a pivotal role in the socialization of children with a socio-cultural environment (Albert and Rosella, 2003). Two predominant patterns of parent-child communication that are likely to influence the growing child positively or negatively in their personality make up have been identified as concept orientation and socio-orientation (McLeod and Chaffee, 1972, koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2006)

Socio-orientation stresses interpersonal harmony in the family and avoidance of conflicts or controversy (McLeod and Chaffee, 1972). Based on their explanations concept-orientation encourages children to think independently and proffer solutions to some social issues relating to them and the society at large. McLeod and Chaffee stress that a highly socio-oriented parent thinks that, in order to maintain social harmony, children should not argue with adults and should not express opinions that are different from those of the family members. In contrast, a highly concept-oriented parent believes that children should look at both sides of issues and talk freely about these issues.

From these two patterns of parent-child communication, McLeod and Chaffee developed a four-fold typology of family communication patterns: parents who are high on concept-orientation but low on socio-orientation are labelled pluralistic. Pluralistic parents emphasize children's free expression of ideas without fear of punishment. Parents low on concept-orientation and high on socio-orientation are labelled protective. Protective parents stress obedience and harmonious relationships with the children and show little concern over conceptual matters. Parents high on both patterns are labelled consensual. Consensual parents stress both relational harmony and free

communication exchange. In this type of family, children are allowed to express their ideas as long as the family's internal harmony is maintained. Parents who are low on both patterns are labelled *laissez-fair*. *Laissez-fair* parents encourage neither open communication between parents and children nor relational harmony. In this type of family, there may be very little conversation among parents and children. Communication research has provided evidence in support of the behavioural and/or attitudinal consequences of family communication patterns. Studies have found that children whose parents adopted socio-oriented pattern are more susceptible to persuasion and more responsive to source characteristics, such as source prestige. Conversely, children with concept-oriented parents are less vulnerable to persuasion and focus more on the persuasive message, such as the number and the quality of arguments (McLeod & Chaffee 1972).

Concept orientation on the other hand has been seen as parental encouragement of conversation and open exchange of ideas and feelings (Fitzpatrick and Ritchie, 1990). They further assert that children of such parents are encouraged to develop and express autonomous opinions and ideas, and are less susceptible to influences and focus on information cues in messages. They went further in explaining socio-orientation as the use of parental power to enforce the child's overt conformity to the parent. Children of parents with such orientation are empirically related to aggression outside of the family. High score in such orientation are associated with less communication in general. In this study, parent-child communication patterns are means through which parents and their children interact with one another for family peace and harmony. It offers parents the opportunity of coming closer and reaching out to their children for a better understanding of their plights. In line with the above assertion, it is plausible to assume that the communication patterns parents apply in bringing up their children could play an essential role in cultivating individuals' behavioural outcomes, which reflect the unique ways they think, feel, and behave which explains one's level of self-esteem. Patterns of communication adopted by the parents could be responsible for the level of self-esteem of these adolescents who are more or less striving to identify with their self-esteem.

Self-esteem refers to how one regards or values oneself in terms of accomplishments and relationships (Ngwoke, 2010). Ngwoke stresses further that it is actually the image one has for oneself. Self-esteem is the essence of living with positivity and responding to life's difficulties in a realistic way. Self-esteem of a person has the potential to make or break a person's personal and professional life (Aiger, 2011). A study by Crocker and Burettes (2003) revealed that self-esteem is a component of personality and for it to grow,

people need to have self-worth and our self-worth will be sought from embracing challenges that result in the showing of success (Crocker & Niya 2006). One's self-esteem determines the level of one's achievement in all endeavours of life.

An individual may have either low or high self-esteem. The consequences of low self-esteem have been implicated in low level of achievement, depression, and other maladjusted behaviours (Ngwoke 2010). Low self-esteem generally is the result of untoward incidences from childhood that have prompted a person to go into the shell of aloofness which usually ultimately leads to self-degradation and robs a person of self confidence and rational thinking (Aiger, 2011). Low self-esteem makes a person face life with inference and negative attitude. It influences the emotions of people and has the potential to cause serious consequences like extreme emotions that can lead to depression, suicide attempts, mental and physical disorders, teenage pregnancy or even delinquency. In adolescents particularly, low self-esteem is responsible for violence which can cause irreparable and physical damages.

Low self-esteem could be blamed on such factors as background and status of the person, his surrounding, age, association with the outside world and so on. Laishram, (2011), stressed that children brought up in conditions where love and affection are lacking, feel abandoned and insignificant as they grow up. They find it difficult to trust people and mingle with them.

Furthermore, parents tend to influence a child with the reflection of their unfulfilled dreams. For instance, when a child is constantly reminded that he is no good, could results in depression and low self-esteem. Such incidences create a feeling of worthlessness, making the child pessimistic and hesitant in doing anything positive. Laishram further opined that other factors that might lead to low self-esteem of a child include, among others, achievement, physical appearance, negative experience and child abuse.

Researchers like laishram also found that individuals with high self-esteem often achieve higher in life than individuals with low self-esteem. Marold in Santrock (2001) maintained that individuals with high self-esteem tend to focus on their strength, whereas those with low self-esteem are more likely to dwell on their negative qualities and weaknesses. A student's self-esteem can serve as his/her defence and survival kit in a competitive society where academic excellence is held in very high regard. Leky in Broga (1998) pointed out that students with high self-esteem tend to have high academic achievement while students with low self-esteem tend to have low academic achievement. All in all, low self-esteem may result in adolescents' students poor academic achievement. According to Aiger (2011), when a child lacks self- confidence, he lacks motivation to try his best and to learn new things.

The child therefore finds himself in a circular loop, as low self-esteem leads to lack of motivation and poor academic achievement; Poor academic achievement and low grades could result in lowered self-esteem.

Regrettably, the manner in which parents communicate with their children could play a negative role in the psychodynamics lives of these children. Communication enables parents and children to express their thoughts and feelings to one another. Effective communication helps strengthen parent-child relationship and increases mutual understanding (Greg Duran, 2010). In line with this assertion, the manner in which parents communicate with their children could either make or mar them. Laursen & Collins (2004) perceived that parent-child relationships without emotional bonds will likely breed disruption and unresolved issues during the child's schooling period. In the light of this assertion it becomes obvious that parents who did not speak to their child about matters of interest at a young age should not expect the child to easily express his/her questions and ideas about issues of interest when that child is of age. Furthermore, being male or female can have influence in ones communication pattern with parents. It is the differences that exist between male and female ways of doing things in society that is referred to as gender.

Gender refers to the widely shared expectations and norms within a society about appropriate male and female behaviours, characteristics and roles (Gupta, 2000) these roles attribute and values define the behaviour of male and female and the relationship between them. Gupta further asserted that these attributes and values are created and maintained by social institutions such as families, government, communities, schools, churches and media. These differences in males and females attributes and values indicate that there is the need for further research on gender regarding the psychological construct called self esteem of the adolescents' students.

However, considering their different socio-cultural environments, the extent to which parent-child communication patterns would influence self-esteem and other areas of achievement of the in-school adolescents in Nigeria, is not yet clearly known. The researchers worry then is that one does not know if these patterns of communication differ among the parents. One does not know the influence of parent-child communication patterns on the in school adolescents' self-esteem. Also one does not know the influence of gender on the self esteem of in-school adolescents students in the study area. Put succinctly in a question form, the problem of this study is: what is the influence of parent-child communication patterns on self-esteem of the in school- adolescents' students in Enugu-Education zone of Enugu State? It is against this problem that the researches seek to carry out this investigation.

**Three Research questions guided this study and they include:**

1. What is the dominant parent-child communication pattern among parents and their in-school adolescents in Enugu State?
2. What is the influence of parent-child communication patterns on the in-school adolescents' self esteem?
3. What is the influence of parent child communication patterns on male and female in-school adolescents' self esteem?

**The two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:**

- $H_{01}$ : there will be no significant influence of Parent-child communication patterns on the self-esteem of the in-school adolescents' students.
- $H_{02}$ : there will be no significant influence of parent child communication pattern on male and female in-school adolescents' self esteem.

**Method**

The design of the study is ex-post facto or causal comparative research design. The ex-post facto research design seeks to establish relationship without any control or manipulation of the variables of interest. The population is 480 adolescents students made up of 199 males and 281 females out of 5,265 senior secondary II (SSII) students in Enugu educational zone (Planning, Research and Statistics Department) (PRSD) Ministry of Education Enugu (MOE, 2017). Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in drawing the sample. First, out of the twenty eight (28) senior secondary schools in the Education zone, the researcher randomly sampled ten (10) senior secondary schools. From each of these sampled schools, the researchers randomly selected one intact class, which resulted in a total of ten intact classes that constituted the sample for the study. The intact classes gave rise to a total of four-hundred and eighty (480) SS II students for the study. Two instruments were used by the researchers for data collection. They include; Perceived Parent-Child Communication Pattern Scale (PPCCPS) and Student' self – esteem scale (SSES). The PPCCPD was used to collect data on the student's perceived parents-child communication pattern adopted by their parents, while the SSES was used to elicit information on the self-esteem of the students. To determine the reliability of the instruments (questionnaires), a trial test was conducted with thirty (30) respondents from a secondary school outside the area of study. On a test of internal consistency using Cronbach alpha, the overall instruments yielded an alpha of 0.882 for the parent-child communication patterns questionnaire with an alpha of 0.847 for (conversation) concept orientation pattern and 0.833 for (conformity) socio-

orientation pattern respectively. These were reasonably very high for the instruments to be considered reliable. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the t- test of equality of means was used to test the null hypotheses. The null hypotheses were tested at  $P \leq 0.05$  level of significance.

## Results

**Table 1:** Mean score and standard deviation of parent-child communication patterns.

<b>parent-child communication patterns</b>	<b>N</b>	$\bar{x}$	<b>SD</b>
Concept (conversation) orientation	207	3.2	0.51
Socio (conformity) orientation	273	3.0	0.59

Result presented in Table 1 revealed that the two hundred and seven (207) out of four hundred and eighty students (480), are those whose parents adopt concept or conversation orientation pattern; two hundred and seventy three (273) students are those whose parents adopt conformity or socio-orientation pattern. This is indicated by the mean score of 3.2 with a standard deviation of 0.51 for concept (conversation) orientation pattern; and a mean score of 3.0 with a standard deviation of 0.59 for conformity (socio) orientation pattern respectively. However, the data revealed that the socio (conformity) parent-child communication pattern is dominant in Enugu state as perceived by the students.

**Table 2:** Mean score and standard deviation of parent-child communication patterns on the in-school adolescents' self-esteem.

<b>Parent-child communication patterns</b>	<b>SELF-ESTEEM</b>		
	<b>N</b>	$\bar{x}$	<b>SD</b>
Concept conversation orientation	207	2.59	.38
Socio (Conformity) orientation	273	2.42	.40

Result presented in Table 2 indicate the difference in the mean self-esteem score of students based on their parent-child communication patterns - conversation (concept) and socio (conformity) patterns. The result revealed that students whose parents adopt the concept (conversation) communication

pattern have a mean self-esteem score of 2.59 and a standard deviation of 0.38. Those whose parents adopt socio (conformity) orientation communication pattern had a mean self-esteem score of 2.42 with standard deviation of .40.

Also result from Table 2 further showed that students whose parents adopt the conversation (concept) orientation communication pattern have a high self-esteem score (above 2.5), while those whose parents use conformity (socio) orientation communication pattern have a low self-esteem score (below 2.5). This implies that students whose parents adopt the conversation parent-child communication pattern have high/ positive self-esteem while those whose parents adopt the conformity communication pattern have negative / low self-esteem.

To further address the research question, a corresponding hypothesis was postulated in Table 3 thus: Hypothesis one:

**Table 3: T-Test analysis for parent-child communication patterns on the in-school adolescents' self-esteem (independent sample test for equality of means)**

Parent-child communication patterns		t-test for equality of means				
		$\bar{x}$	T	Df	Sig(2 tailed)	Decision
Concept orientation	(conversation)	2.59	4.98	478	0.000	S
Socio orientation	(conformity)	2.42				

The result of t-test presented in table 3 shows that the influence of parent-child communication patterns on the in-school adolescents' self-esteem is significant at 0.000 and also significant at 0.05 level of significance at which the null hypothesis was tested ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). This is expressed by the t-test value of 4.98. This suggests that conversation (concept) orientation and conformity (socio) orientation parent-child communication patterns significantly influenced the self-esteem of the in-school adolescents. The null hypothesis which inferred no significant influence of the parent-child communication patterns on the self-esteem of the adolescents in school is therefore rejected. However the data did not suggest the influence of each of the parent-child communication patterns: conversation and conformity respectively on the self-esteem of the students. But it did show that conversation (concept) parent-child communication pattern encourage positive/high self-esteem of the in-school adolescent as indicated in Table 3 above.

**Table 4: Mean scores and standard deviation for influence of gender on the in-school adolescents' self esteem.**

Gender	Self esteem		
	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
Male	199	3.73	34.1
Female	281	2.84	43.9

The result in Table 4 revealed that out of the total number of 480 students, the male adolescents students are 199 had a higher mean score 3.73 in their self esteem than the female students whose self esteem mean scores is 2.84 respectively, with a standard deviation of 34.1 and 43.9 respectively were obtained as well. Hence there exists a differential influence in the self esteem of male and female adolescents' students from Enugu educational Zone of Enugu State.

To further address the influence of gender on in-school adolescents' self esteem, a t-test was conducted and presented to test hypothesis 2 in Table 5.

**Table 5: t-test analysis for gender influence on the in-school adolescents' self esteem.**

Gender	t-test for equality of means				
	$\bar{x}$	T	df	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision
Male	3.73	9.51	478	0.000	S
Female	2.84				

The result of the t-test presented in Table 5 shows that the t-test value of 9.51 is significant at 0.000 and also significant at 0.05 level of probability ( $t = 9.51; p < 0.000$ ). The null hypothesis of no significant difference of gender on the self esteem of in-school adolescents is therefore rejected. This suggests that gender significantly influenced the in-school adolescents' self esteem in schools. The influence of gender on the self esteem of the adolescents' students has been clearly shown in Table 5 and confirmed by the t-test data.

### Discussion

The discussion of the findings is presented in line with the research questions and hypotheses:

It has been shown that majority of the parents engage in conformity or socio orientation parent-child communication pattern while a simple minority of the parents engage in conversation or concept-orientation parent-child communication pattern. In spite of the variation in the pattern of communication among parents and their in-school adolescents, it is still evident that conformity (socio) pattern of parent-child communication is dominant in Enugu State.

This dominance of conformity orientation was partly supported by the works of Babin and Palazzalo (2012) who revealed that parental conformity orientation predicted that son's and daughter's reported intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetration and victimization. They equally showed that parental conversation orientation predicted sons and daughters reports of their own use of and an intimate partner's use of negotiation tactics. Hence both hypothesis received partial support. This is contradicted by the findings of this work which showed clear dominance of conformity orientation parent child communication pattern in Enugu State.

It was indicated that in-school adolescents whose parents adopt the conversation (concept) orientation parent-child communication pattern have positive/high self-esteem mean scores. This suggests that conversation orientation parent-child communication pattern influences the self-esteem of the in-school adolescents more positively than the conformity orientation parent-child communication pattern. This result agrees with the findings of Kernis, Brown and Brody (2000) that parent-child communication pattern enhances positive high self-esteem in the students.

However, the result of this work does not negate the findings of any of the research works reviewed. The findings of this study further reveal that parent-child communication patterns enhance the self-esteem of the in-school adolescents. Results presented in Table 4 indicated that gender have significant influence on the in-school adolescents' self esteem. This finding is shown in the differences of the mean self esteem scores of the male students from the female students. It further indicates that the male adolescents' students have higher self esteem mean score than female adolescents 'students.

## **Conclusion**

On the basis of the findings and discussions of the study, the following conclusions were reached.

1. The conformity (socio) parent-child communication pattern is dominant in Enugu state as perceived by the in-school adolescents.

2. Parent-child communication patterns significantly influence the in-school adolescents' self-esteem.
3. Gender significantly influenced the adolescents' students self esteem.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of the findings, discussion and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- It is of utmost importance that the aspects of the secondary school curriculum that relate to human growth and development alongside the family communication patterns should be enriched to enable parents and the entire society, to appreciate more the parent-child communication pattern (conversation orientation) that promotes healthy positive self-esteem and cognitive development.
- Seminars and workshops should be organized by government for parents through the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) forum. This will boost the parents' opportunity to be enlightened on the need to adopt the necessary conversation orientation parent-child communication skills which predict creative, self confident, independent and self-propelled adolescent students.

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