

PARENT-CHILD ATTACHMENT STYLES AND DEPENDENT PERSONALITY DISORDER AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract

This is an ex-post-facto research design to determine the influence of Parent/Child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder among students in Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State. The population of the study consisted of all the 18,763 students in all the 21 public Senior Secondary Schools (SS1-SS3) in the area. The sample size is 1,920 students drawn from 10 Public Secondary Schools through cluster, simple random sampling, proportionate sampling technique and purposive sampling techniques. Two research questions and three null hypotheses guided the conduct of the study. Two adapted instruments “Dependent Personality Disorder Scale (DPDS)” and “Parent/Child Attachment Style Scale (PCASS)” were used for data collection. The DPDS and PCASS were validated by experts in educational psychology and Measurement and Evaluation in order to ensure face and content validities. The internal consistency reliability coefficients of 0.69 (DPDS) and 0.77 (PCASS) were obtained through Cronbach Alpha statistical method. The research questions were analyzed with mean (\bar{x}), standard Deviation (SD) while hypotheses were tested with One-Way ANOVA and Two-Way ANOVA. It was found among others that there is a significant influence of Parent/Child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder of students in favour of those who practiced secure attachment style. More so, The interaction effect of gender and parent/child attachment style on dependent personality disorder among students was significant. Based on these findings, it was recommended that schools should employ the services of Guidance Counselors through close examination and interaction in order to identify and help students facing dependent personality disorder.

Keywords: Parent/Child Attachment Styles and Dependent Personality Disorder

Introduction

Parenting is one of the major responsibilities of parents. Parents have many strategies at their disposal for adoption in bringing up their children.

These strategies are referred to as parenting styles. Parenting styles are psychological constructs that represents standard strategies which parents use in rearing their children (Obigwe, 2016). These include: Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive parenting among others. It is obvious that parenting styles, whether good or bad influence personality or behavior formation in children either positively or negatively mostly at the early stages of life. Furthermore, it is also logical to observe here that parenting experiences of children have direct link with the type of bond that develops between the child and their parents. This bond which emerges between children and their parents in the course of parenting is referred to as “attachment” (Ekeh 2012).

Ainsworth (1978) was the first to classify infants attachment styles empirically, based on a structured series of separation and reunions between infants and caregivers. Ainsworth was a co-proponent of attachment theory who expanded its concepts. Bowlby (1973) originated attachment theory that derived its concept on the caregiver as a secure base from which the infant explores its environment, as well as an appreciation for the role of parents’ sensitivity in the development of attachment patterns. Therefore different attachment styles abound as children interact with parents. These according to Ainsworth, (1978) include Secure, Insecure Avoidant, and Insecure Ambivalent or Resistant. The fourth attachment style known as Disorganized Disoriented was later identified by (Main, & Solomon, 1990).

Secure Attachment Style: attachment here is classified as secure when they show distress, or protest on separation. Most of times, the children seek for reunion from parents and are successfully soothed quickly if distressed, and return to exploration play. Securely attached children exhibit goal oriented and directed life style (Adams, 2017) In similar fashion secure adolescents report more satisfying and cordial relationship with mates and the environment (Akpan, 2015)

Insecure Avoidant Attachment Style is all about inconsistent and impulsive. Children who develop under this style demonstrate low level of self-control. These children may appear unpredictable, disobedient, rude, moody, depressed, violent and aggressive with little or low self-esteem. They display no physical or emotional attachment to anyone; they are less socially competent during their childhood period (Ekeh, 2012). Insecure avoidant children thus fail to develop trusting relationships with others, seeing others as unable to provide emotional closeness and comfort, and thus feeling socially and emotionally isolated.

Insecure Ambivalent Resistant Attachment Style produces children who are directed towards the caregiver rather than the environment. They do

not derive feelings from their attachment figures. They are touchy, easily angered, passive, whiney, fussy, helpless or immature or they may be petulant and resistant towards their attachment adults (Ekeh, 2012). Resistant children sometimes express strong need for their attachment figures in stressful situation and are difficult to be consoled when upset.

Disorganized-Disoriented Attachment Style: Children with disorganized-disoriented attachment style do not show clear attachment behavior. That is, the parents have served as a source of both fear and reassurance, thus arousal of the attachment behavioral system produces strong conflicting motivation, attraction and avoidance. Disorganized disoriented attachment predicts the poorest outcome in infancy and beyond. Ukaigwe (2016) simply puts it that children under disorganized–disoriented frequently adopt a good coping strategies. Studies have shown that there is connection between disorganized-controlling attachment and later behavior issues in the child (Ade, 2017). Children with this attachment style demonstrate violent, bad tempered, quiet antisocial behaviors. They are not organized in their behaviors to their attachment adults. They are rather apprehensive, timid and undecided most of the time (Ekeh 2012).

The above discourse on attachment styles seem to give indication that child's attachment experience may influence different aspects of his/her life including personality development. Dependent personality disorders could be therefore one of the consequences of an individual's attachment experience. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders, Fourth Edition Text Revision Axis II (DSM-IV TR) lists ten personality disorders which are grouped into three clusters that share certain features. (i) The odd-eccentric cluster often referred to as cluster A – includes paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal personality disorders, (ii.) The dramatic-erratic cluster-called Cluster B which includes the histrionic, narcissistic, borderline, and antisocial personality disorders (iii) The anxious-fearful cluster-Cluster C which includes, dependent, obsessive compulsive, and avoidant personality disorders (Bernstein, Penner, Clark-Stewart,& Roy, as cited in Udo, 2016). Personality disorders are enduring patterns in our behaviors in which Dependent Personality Disorder (DPD) falls into the third group of- cluster C of DSM-IV-TR classification of personality disorder.

Gender carries a center stage in discuss on social equality or inequality or social expectation of people (Anyanugo, 2018). Dependent Personality disorder may be seen as a chronic problem that affects people irrespective of their gender and age. Dependent personality disorder could be dependent on the type of attachment styles that existed between the children and their parents. Most parents tend to give more attention to the female child more than

the male while other parents, the reverse is the case. That is why Udo (2016) reported that female students because of their nature tend to experience more of Dependent Personality Disorder more than their male counterparts that received care under secure and insecure attachment styles.

Dependent Personality Disorder (DPD) is part of the cluster C personality disorders along with avoidant and obsessive compulsive personality disorders. They are all considered as the anxious and fearful type (APA, 2000). As the most commonly diagnosed personality disorder DPD is found in about 14% of people who have personality disorders and about 2.5% of the general population (Sperry, 2003).

It is worthy to note that DPD is characterized by emotional attachment and dependence on others leading to intense fear of abandonment and separation from people (Ekeh, & Izibefien, 2014). For proper diagnosis of a person with DPD, they must exhibit five or more of the eight criteria that are listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders, Fourth Edition Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR (APA, 2000)). These criteria include the: 1) the individual finds it tough to make simple everyday decision which is a challenge especially when other one is not giving advice or reassurance, 2) DPD persons want others to take responsibility for decisions involving the major areas in their life such as what career to follow, where to live etc, 3) they do not agree even when they have agreed with others, 4) They find it difficult to start a project due to lack of self-confidence, 5) they can go an extreme length and endure unpleasant events, 6) many times being alone is very uncomfortable, 7) people with DPD say when one relationship ends, another quickly begins. They believe they cannot function on their own, 8) since they believe that they must depends on others advice and help, there is the fear of abandonment which will mean they will have to care for themselves.

For Ekeh and Izibefien (2014) it appears that development of DPD has some link with human interaction. It also seems that a child's attachment style to parents may influence his/her overall existence especially in personality development (Ekeh, 2012). However, it is not certain the extent to which these speculations are true. In effect, it is not certain the extent to which parent/child attachment styles influence dependent personality disorder of individuals. Therefore the question that arises is, "how does parent/child attachment styles influence dependent personality disorder of students? The researcher's desire to answer this question spurred the conduct of this research.

Research Questions

The understated research questions guided this study.

1. What is the influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder among students?
2. What is the influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder of male and female students?
3. What is the interaction effect of attachment styles and gender on dependent personality disorder of students?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

1. There is no significant influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder among students.
2. The influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder of male and female students does not differ significantly.
3. There is no significant interaction effect of attachment styles and gender on dependent personality disorder of students.

Method

The study adopted ex-post facto research design. The population of the study consisted of all the 18,763 senior students in all the 21 public secondary schools in Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State. A sample of 1,920 Senior Secondary School students (SS1-SS3) was drawn from 10 secondary schools. Multistage sampling involving cluster, simple random sampling technique by balloting, proportionate stratified random sampling technique, and purposive sampling technique were employed for the study. Firstly, the schools were clustered into 21 schools in Khana L.G.A. Secondly, simple random sampling technique by balloting was used to draw ten schools with 19,200 (10140 male and 9060 female) students. Thirdly, the proportionate stratified random sampling technique using 10% gave 1014 male students from 10140 male students and 477 female students from 9060 female students respectively. Finally, the purposive sampling technique was used to draw all the 1014 males and 906 females to constitute the sample size of 1920 students. The sampled students were trial test with Parent/Child attachment styles scale by Amsden and Greenberg in order to categorize them into the most prevailing attachment style that existed between them and their parents. Two instruments -Dependent Personality Disorder Scale (DPDS) adapted from Huber (2005) and Parent/Child Attachment Styles Scale (PCASS) adapted from Amsden and Greenberg (1987) were used for data collection. The instruments were

modified to have four point response options of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree respectively. The instruments were vetted by three research experts in terms of suitability and adequacy of the items contained therein. Face and content validities were ensured by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt. The internal consistency reliability coefficients of 0.69 (DPDS) and 0.77 (PCASS) were obtained through Cronbach alpha statistical method. The data collected were analyzed using Mean (\bar{x}), Standard Deviation (SD) for Research Questions while One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Two-Way ANOVA were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Results gotten after data analysis were presented in the tables below

Research Question 1: What is the influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder among students?

Table 1: Mean (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation (SD) of influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder among students.

Parent/Child Attachment Styles	Dependent Personality Disorder		
	N	\bar{X}	S.D
Secure	1098	45.01	10.90
Insecure Avoidant	216	56.94	4.55
Insecure Resistant	368	66.53	5.05
Disorganized-disoriented	238	74.92	10.09

Data in Table 1 showed that securely attached students obtained dependent personality disorder mean (\bar{x}) score of 45.01 while their counterparts of insecure avoidant; insecure resistant and disorganized-disoriented attachment styles obtained dependent personality disorder mean (\bar{x}) scores of 56.94; 66.53 and 74.92 respectively. By this result, the disorganized-disoriented attached students obtained the highest dependent personality disorder score, followed by those of insecure resistant; insecure avoidant and secure attachment respectively. The result therefore showed that students of secure attachment style exhibited the lowest level of dependent personality disorder.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder of male and female students?

Table 2: Mean (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation (SD) of influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder among male and female students.

Parent/Child Attachment	Gender	N	\bar{X}	S.D
Secure	Male	621	41.08	10.15
	Female	477	50.14	9.65
Insecure Avoidant	Male	99	54.87	1.87
	Female	117	58.70	5.36
Insecure Resistant	Male	179	66.79	4.59
	Female	189	66.29	5.45
Disorganized-Disoriented	Male	115	77.73	7.73
	Female	123	72.30	11.29

Information in Table 2 showed that for secure and insecure avoidant attachment styles, the female respondents obtained higher DPD means (\bar{x}) scores of 50.14 and 58.70 respectively compared to their male counterparts with mean (\bar{x}) scores of 41.08 and 54.87 respectively. In the case of insecure resistant and disorganized disoriented attachment styles male respondents had higher DPD mean (\bar{x}) scores of 66.79 and 77.73 respectively compared to their female counterparts who obtained DPD mean (\bar{x}) scores of 66.29 and 72.30 respectively. The results showed that secure and insecure avoidant male students demonstrated lower level of Dependent Personality Disorders (DPD) compared to their female counterparts. Conversely, the female insecure resistant and disorganized disoriented students exhibited lower levels of Dependent Personality Disorder (DPD) compared to the males.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder among students.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA of difference in dependent personality disorder due to parent/child attachment styles.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	Df	Mean Square (MS)	F-ratio	F-critical	Significant value	Result
Between Groups	252513.448	3	84171.149	958.09	1.90	0.05	Significant
Within Groups	168326.427	1916	87.853				
Total	420839.874	1919					

Table 3 showed that the calculated F-value of 958 is greater than the F-critical value of 1.90 at 0.05 alpha level and dfs of 3 and 1916. The null hypothesis one was therefore rejected. This implied that there was significant influence of Parent/Child Attachment Styles on Dependent Personality Disorder (DP) in favour of secure attachment styles which produced the lowest level of DPD among the respondents.

Table 4: Scheffe' Post Hoc Pair Wise Comparison of Difference in Dependent personality disorder due to parent/child attachment styles

	Secure	Insecure Avoidant	Insecure Resistant	Disorganized Disoriented
Attachment Styles	45.01	56.94	66.53	74.92
Secure	45.01	*		
Insecure Avoidant	56.94		*	
Insecure Resistant	66.53			*

Key * indicates pairs of means which differed significantly at 0.05 alpha level.

The data of Table four (4) showed that:

1. Securely attached and insecure avoidant students differed significantly in dependent personality disorder, in favour of securely attached ones.
2. Insecure avoidant and insecure resistant attached students differed significantly in dependent personality disorder, in favour of insecure avoidant attached ones.
3. Insecure resistant and disorganized disoriented attached students differed significantly in dependent personality disorder, in favour of insecure resistant attached ones.

Hypothesis 2: The influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder of male and female students do not differ significantly.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant interaction effect of attachment styles and gender on dependent personality disorder of students.

Table 5: Two-Way ANOVA of Difference in dependent personality disorder due to parent/child attachment styles and gender.

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	Df	Mean Square (MS)	F-cal	F-critical	Result
Corrected Model	327981.513 ^a	5	65596.303	1352.073	1.90	S
Intercept	107397.767	1	107397.767	2213.687	1.90	S
Parent/Child Attachment	63137.935	1	63137.935	1301.401	1.90	S
Gender	5195.853	3	1731.951	35.699	1.90	NS
Parent/Child Attachment & Gender	19556.537	1	19556.537	403.100	1.90	NS
Error	92858.362	1914	48.515			
Total	6058399.000	1920				
Corrected Total	420839.874	1919				

From Table 5 above, it was observed that all the F-calculated values were respectively greater than the F-critical values, at 0.05 alpha levels and dfs of 1 and 1919. The null hypothesis two was therefore rejected. The result showed that there was significant influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder among male and female students

The result in Table 5 also showed that the F-calculated value for Parent/Child Attachment styles and Gender (403.100) was greater than the F-calculated value of 1.90 at 0.05 alpha level and dfs of 1 and 1919. Hence, the interaction effect of gender and parent/child attachment on dependent personality disorder among students was significant.

Discussion

Findings of this study indicated that secure attachment style produced the lowest level of Dependent Personality Disorder (DPD) (among students followed by insecure avoidant, insecure resistant and insecure disorganized disoriented attachment styles respectively. In effect, the insecure attachment style produced higher levels of Dependent Personality Disorder among students. This finding is supported by Obigwe (2016) who submitted that insecure attachment style is associated with high level of Dependent Personality Disorder among married couples. This study has proven that

students who grew under insecure attachment tend to exhibit high level of Dependent Personality Disorder possibly because of the little care given to them at every stage of development.

Also, the result of hypothesis one indicated that there was significant influence of Parent/Child Attachment Styles on dependent personality disorder of students in favour of secure attachment style. These result was corroborated by Securely attached children exhibit goal oriented and directed life style (Adams, 2017) In similar fashion secure adolescents report more-satisfying and cordial relationship with mates and the environment (Akpan, 2015). Russ, Heim, and Westen (2003) are in support of the above assertions as they indicated that problems experienced at the level of parental bonding are significant with personality disorders.

The study further showed that secure and insecure avoidant male students had lower Dependent Personality Disorders compared to female students. This finding is in line with Udo (2016) who reported that female students because of their nature tend to experience more of Dependent Personality Disorder more than their male counterparts that received care under secure and insecure attachment styles. However, whether secure or insecure attachment style, the male students have proven to be at risk of Dependent Personality Disorders. Conversely, male insecure avoidant and disorganized disoriented had lower in dependent personality disorder compared to female students.

The result of hypothesis two indicated that there was significant influence of parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder among male and female students. The interaction effect of gender and parent/child attachment styles on dependent personality disorder among in-school adolescents was significant. The result is not surprising to the researcher because the majority of female students need attention and care to enable them enjoy emotional development.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that disorganized-disoriented attached students experience dependent personality disorder more than insecure resistant, insecure avoidant and secure attachment. Moreso, secure and insecure avoidant students differed significantly in dependent personality disorder. Also, insecure avoidant insecure resistant student differed significantly in dependent personality disorder. Finally, it was concluded that insecure resistant and disorganized-disoriented attached students differed significantly.

Recommendations

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

1. Parents should help to foster secure attachment in relating with their children as it reduces dependency among children.
2. Schools should employ Guidance counselors to help identify and help students facing dependent personality disorder.
3. Seminars and workshops should be organized for parents to make them aware of the consequences of attachment styles as they relate with their children at home and help correct anomalies in parent-child relationships.

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