

Authoritative Parenting, Birth Order and Social Adjustment of Secondary School Students

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Abstract: This study investigated authoritative parenting, birth order and social adjustment of secondary school students in Isoko South and Isoko North Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria. The study used ex-post facto design and was guided by three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses. From the population of 3,346 first-year secondary school students, a sample of 654 was drawn using multistage sampling procedure. A Questionnaire named Social Adjustment Scale (SAS), and Parenting Styles Scale (PSS) developed by the researcher were used for data collection in the study. The instruments were validated for face, content and construct validities by specialists in Educational psychology and test experts in Measurement and evaluation. The instruments had construct validity coefficients of 0.67 for SAS and 0.80 for PSS using Pearson product moment correlation method. The reliabilities of the instruments were determined using test-retest method and coefficients of 0.89 and 0.69 were obtained for SAS and PSS respectively. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Among others, the result showed that male students of authoritative parenting style were more socially adjusted than their female counterparts. Also, there is no significant influence of middle and last born positions on students' social adjustment. Based on the above findings, it was recommended that the level of guidance and counselling services should be increased in secondary schools so as to assist students, especially the first-year (JSS-1) students in coping and adjusting to the school environment.

Keywords: Parenting Styles Scale (PSS), Social Adjustment Scale (SAS).

1. INTRODUCTION

First-year students in secondary schools who are also known as Junior Secondary School One (JSS-1) students in Nigeria appears different from all other students in the school especially with respect to their social interaction. Personal contact with some of these students revealed that the problems they encounter in the process of social interaction include inability to get along very well with other students, make good friends, feel free with peers, classmates and other people; develop trust in other students in such a way that others could develop such trust in them, etc. This relative deficiency in social skills may lead to problems of social adjustment in school.

Students' social adjustment is the process whereby a student is able to get along, work, interact, and establish relations with peers, friends, classmates and others. Onyekuru (2009) stated that a person (student) is regarded socially adjusted when he/she is able to start and engage in adequate interpersonal associations with other people in his environment. Moreover, Jain (n.d.) communicated that children are regarded to be socially adjusted when they can adjust intelligently with various groups of people as well as their peers.

Parents play dominant roles in the process of students' adjustment. Odebunmi (2007) observed that parental affection, compassion and consideration contribute to children affective development and consideration. Similarly, a student who encounters restlessness, hostility, dismissal from the family, may likely experience poor social adjustment; which may in turn thwart his adequacy in relating and associating with companions, classmates, peers and others in the school environment. Furthermore, parents may differ in how they try to control or socialize their children. Opara and Onyekuru (2013) refer to parenting styles as peculiar arrangement used by parents in the upbringing of children in any particular family.

The parenting style which formed the major focus of this study is authoritative parenting style. Baumrind (as cited in Hickman and Crosland, 2004-2005), described authoritative parenting as a child upbringing pattern in which parents apply tough, yet impartial discipline, compassion and amiable affections, use reasoning as a disciplinary method, and engage in b-directional communication transaction with their children. Dewar (2010 - 2013) observed that children raised by authoritative families are more likely to become confident/bold, independent, socially acknowledged, scholastically fortunate, polite, less expected to show sadness and misery, and involve less in harmful behaviour such as misconduct and use of drugs.

Moreover, Darling (2007) reported that authoritative child upbringing foretells child welfare/comfort in the areas of social capability, academic performance, psychosocial development and anti-social behaviour. Children and adolescents from authoritative families evaluate themselves and are evaluated by objective measures as more socially and actively skillful than those whose parents are not authoritative.

In addition, Berk (2000) expressed that researchers observed that the best adjusted children, especially in terms of social capability, had parents with an authoritative child upbringing pattern. The children have higher self-worth, social and moral maturity, self-discipline, etc. Furthermore, Kaufmann, Gesten, Santa-Lucia, Salcedo, Rendina-Gobioff and Gadd (2000) opined that authoritative parenting style is positively connected with successful adjustment and lowering maladjustment than authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. Also, Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg and Dornbusch (1991); Steinberg; Lamborn and Dornbusch (1992) stated that authoritative parenting is associated with higher child adjustment and psychological capabilities. However, Pacheco, Gomes, and Teixeira (as cited in Martinez and Garcia, 2008) observed that there is no advantages for children of authoritative parents in social competence.

The study also focused on birth order (middle and last born). Birth order is the position a child occupies among other siblings in a family. Onyekuru (2009) refers to birth order as the arrangement or order in which parents give birth to children in the family. Ekeh (2001) communicated that the middle child is an individual born after the first child and who arrived before the last child of the parents. The child may be second, third, fourth, etc. but not the last child in the family. In addition, Leman (2000) refers to the middle born child as the person who lies between the first child and the last child. However, in this study the middle child is the child born after the second baby and before the last child in a family. Forer (as cited in Eckstein, Aycock, Sperber, McDonald, Van Wiesner, Watts and Ginsburg, 2010) described middle children by feelings of not comfortable and happy, extraverted, sociable, relates well to older and younger people, contests in various areas than first-borns, and success in group sports.

In addition, Leman (2000) revealed that the middle children are extraverted, cordial, more accepting in relationship and makes friends more faster at school and within the vicinity. They are sociable, conciliators and sometimes used; spend a lot of time with their peers than first, second or last child of the parents. These social competencies may make them begin and maintain successful peer relationships. However, Schilling (n.d.) stated that middle borns are irritated and antagonistic.

In a similar vein Franzoi (2000) observed that individuals who are socially distressed and hostile are not expected to start successful interactions with other people. Additionally, Mash and Wolfe (2007) reported that poor social competences and social-intellectual deficiency frequently following early antagonistic and hostile behaviours, is expected among holders of the middle born position. These poor social competences may expose the middle born child to poor relationship, dismissal by peers, social segregation and disengagement.

Sulloway (1996) observed that the last born children are liable to be more independent, socially inclined and united than first born children. Moreover, Nyman (1995) described the last born children as nurturing, cordial and sociable.

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Furthermore, Forer (as cited in Eckstein et al; 2010) expressed that the last child is higher in social importance/amiableness, and most compassionate and most well known. In addition, Leman (2000) stated that the last child is liable to be attractive, align to people and loving.

Also, Baskets (as cited in Herrera, Zajonc, Wiecezorkowska and Cichomski, 2003) communicated that the babies of the families (last borns) are most lovable, loyal and sociable. Again, Kesse (n.d.) reported that the last born child is observed to be more social and cordial. They are liable to develop competences such as obliging and patience. Thus, when these positive social behaviours are extended to their associations with peers and companions in the school, this may make them tolerable and encourage their social adjustment. However, Healey and Ellis (2007) observed that the children that occupies the last borns positions are the most disobedient. Moreover, Kesse (n.d.) expressed that males who are last borns in the family are observed to be selfish and idle, while female who are last borns children were observed to be indifferent. Nevertheless, Healey and Ellis pointed out that this harmful behaviours may not make last born children develop successful social competences towards peers and companions in the school.

The concern about influence of authoritative parenting style and birth order (middle and last born) on social adjustment of secondary school students is that the study would help secondary school students, especially the first year students to successfully adjust to the school social and academic environment thereby minimizing cases of poor social adjustment. In addition, parents would be assisted in the way they would train and lead their children to develop social adjustment skills.

Statement of the Problem:

The first-year secondary school (Junior Secondary School One) students were supposed to be socially adjusted like every other student within the school environment. However, some students exhibit social adjustment problems in school which may be a reflection of stress and difficulties within the school environment not previously experienced. Again, these students are raised by different parents and might have experienced varying parenting styles. These students are also occupying different birth positions. People have these attributes and one does not know whether they influence social adjustment of students.

Therefore, it is in the light of this the study sought to answer the question; what is the influence of authoritative parenting style and birth order (middle and last born) on social adjustment of secondary school students in Isoko South and Isoko North Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria?

Aim and Objectives:

The aim of this study was to determine the influence of authoritative parenting style and birth order (middle and last born) on students' social adjustment. In specific terms, the study was carried out to:

1. Find out the influence of authoritative parenting style on social adjustment of students based on their gender.
2. Find out whether middle and last born positions influence students' social adjustment.
3. Determine whether middle and last born positions influence social adjustment of male and female students.

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the influence of authoritative parenting style on social adjustment of students based on their gender?
2. What is the influence of middle and last born positions on students' social adjustment?
3. What is the influence of middle and last born positions on social adjustment of male and female students?

Hypotheses:

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant influence of authoritative parenting style on social adjustment of male and female students.
2. There is no significant influence of middle and last born positions on students' social adjustment.
3. The influence of middle and last born positions on social adjustment of male and female students is not significant.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The ex-post facto research design was adopted in this study. The population of this study consisted of all the 3,346 first-year secondary school (Junior Secondary One) students in all the public secondary schools in Isoko South and Isoko North Local Government Areas in Delta State (Post Primary Education Board Office, 2015). The sample of this study was 654 students who were identified based on their birth order. This gave 464 middle borns (213 males and 251 females), and 190 last borns (96 males and 94 females), drawn from the population using multistage sampling procedure by applying simple random sampling and purposive sampling at various stages. In the first stage, simple random sampling technique was in drawing two aims of JSS-1 class from each of the 19 public secondary schools in Isoko South and 15 public secondary schools in Isoko North Local Government Areas. Then, the purposive sampling technique was used to draw 654 subjects who possessed the birth order under investigation which constituted the sample for the study. The items of the SAS were responded to on a 4-point scale of: Applies always to me, Applies sometimes to me, Seldom applies to me, and Not at all applicable to me. Similarly, the items of the PSS were responded to on a 4-point scale of: Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD).

A Questionnaire named Social Adjustment Scale (SAS) adapted from Denga (1991), and Parenting Styles Scale (PSS) developed by the researchers were used for data collection. Face, content and construct validities of the instruments were conducted by specialists in Educational psychology and test experts in Measurement and evaluation. The instruments had construct validity coefficients of 0.67 for SAS and 0.80 for PSS using Pearson product moment correlation method. The reliability of the instruments were determined using test-retest method and coefficients of 0.89 and 0.69 was obtained for SAS and PSS respectively. The instruments was administered on the respondents by the researchers and filled out copies were collected on the spot. Data collected were analysed using mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (SD) to answer the research questions while t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test the null hypotheses.

3. RESULTS

The results were presented in line with the research questions and hypotheses in the tables below.

Research Question 1: What is the influence of authoritative parenting style on social adjustment of students' based on their gender?

Table 1: Mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (SD) of the social adjustments based on authoritative parenting style and gender.

Parenting Style	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Authoritative	Male	309	133.01	9.98
	Female	345	132.10	9.35

The result in table 1, revealed that the mean score for the male students was 133.01 with a standard deviation score of 9.98 while that of the female students was 132.10 with a standard deviation score of 9.35. The indication is that along gender line, male students were more socially adjusted than their female counterparts.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of authoritative parenting style on social adjustment of male and female students.

Table 2: Summary of t-Test Analysis of the authoritative parenting style on social adjustment of male and female students.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-Cal.	Sig	Alpha level
Male	309	133.01	9.98				
Female	345	132.10	9.35	652	1.21	0.227	0.05

Data in table 2, indicated that the calculated t-value of 1.21 for authoritative parenting style was significant at 0.227 level. Thus, there was no significant influence of authoritative parenting style on social adjustment of male and female students.

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Research Question 2: What is the influence of middle and last born positions on students' social adjustment?

Research Question 3: What is the influence of middle and last born positions on social adjustment of male and female students?

Table 3: Mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (SD) of the social adjustment of students based on their birth order and gender.

Birthorder	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Middleborn	Male	213	132.98	10.58
	Female	251	131.78	8.58
	Total	464	132.33	9.55
Lastborn	Male	96	133.09	8.57
	Female	94	132.95	11.17
	Total	190	133.02	9.92

Table3, showed that the middle born had a mean social adjustment of 132.33 while last born had 133.02. The corresponding standard deviation of their scores was 9.55 and 9.92 respectively. The indication is that students of last born position were found to be higher in social adjustment (133.02), than the middle born (132.33).

Also, for middle born position, the male students had the mean (\bar{X}) score of 132.98 while the female had 131.78. The standard deviations of their scores were 10.58 and 8.58 respectively. This shows that the male middle borns are more socially adjusted than their female counterparts. Similarly, for last born position, the male students had the mean (\bar{X}) score of 133.09 while the female had 132.95. The corresponding standard deviation (SD) scores were 8.57 and 11.17 respectively. This result also indicated that the male last borns are more socially adjusted than their female counterparts.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of middle and last born positions on students' social adjustment.

Hypothesis 3: The influence of middle and last born positions on social adjustment of male and female students is not significant.

Table 4: Summary of Two-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the influence of middle and last born positions on social adjustment of students by gender.

Source of variance SV	Type III Sum of squares SS	Degree of freedom Df	Mean Square MS	F-Ratio	Sig.	Alpha Level
Corrected Model	230.167 ^a	3	76.722	.822	.482	0.05
Intercept	9475609.209	1	9475609.209	101510.907	.000	
Birthorder	55.374	1	55.374	.593	.441	
Gender	60.623	1	60.623	.649	.421	
Birthorder * Gender	36.988	1	36.988	.396	.529	
Error	60674.721	650	93.346			
Total	11547993.00	654				
Corrected Total	60904.888	653				

Results in table 4, revealed that the calculated F-value (0.593) for birth order was significant at 0.441 level. So, since the significant level is greater than 0.05 ($P > 0.05$), which is the chosen alpha level, it means that there is no significant influence of middle and last born positions on students' social adjustment. On the basis of this, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Analysis of variance in table 4 also showed that the calculated F-value (0.649) for gender was significant at 0.421 which is greater than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. The result is that the influence of middle and last born positions on social adjustment of male and female students was not significant.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the research question one showed that along gender line, male students were more socially adjusted than their female counterparts. However, hypothesis one statistically revealed that there is no significant influence of authoritative parenting style on social adjustment of male and female students. The finding of the present study contradicts previous research findings (Dewar, 2010-2013 and Darling, 2007), who in their studies found out that child from authoritative parenting style are more likely to be socially accepted, socially competent, well behaved and less likely to show depression and anxiety, which may contribute to their social adjustment.

The result of the research question two revealed that students of last born position were higher in social adjustment than their middle born counterparts. However, the result of hypothesis two showed that there is no significant difference on the influence of middle and last born positions on students' social adjustment. The finding, however, is consistent with the findings of Forer (as cited in Eckstein et al, 2010); and Leman (2000) who in their studies found out that middle borns are sociable, make friends quickly and relate well to older and younger people. Nevertheless, this finding is inconsistent with that of Mash and Wolfe (2007) who observed that poor social skills and social – cognitive deficits often accompanying early oppositional and aggressive behaviours, is likely among occupants of middle born position, predispose an individual to poor peer relationships, rejection by peers, social isolation and withdrawal.

Also, the finding of this study is not aligned with those of Forer (as cited in Eckstein et al; 2010); and Kesse (n.d.) who found last borns to be more sociable, friendly, popular and relate well with peers, hence they are socially adjusted. Similarly, this finding is discordant with that of Healey and Ellis (2007) who pointed out that last borns are the most rebellious which may influence their social adjustment.

The result of research question three showed that the male middle borns were more socially adjusted than their female counterparts. This result also indicated that the male last borns were more socially adjusted than their female counterparts. However, the findings of hypothesis three statistically indicated that influence of middle and last born positions on social adjustment of male and female students was significant. This result may have been due to the fact that the patterns of behaviour and attitudes formed early by both male and female students used in this study were` consistent, and hence influence of middle and last born positions on social adjustment of male and female students differ. This could also be an indication that both male and female students used in this study irrespective of their birth order, may have had dissimilar experiences with their peers. Furthermore, the finding is consistent with that of Onyekuru (2009) who revealed that female adolescents of middle borns are significantly more socially adjusted than their male counterparts.

5. CONCLUSIONS

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

1. Authoritative parenting style had no significant influence on social adjustment of male and female students.
2. Middle and last born positions had no significant influence on students' social adjustment.
3. Influence of middle and last born positions on social adjustment of male and female students was not significant.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings and conclusions reached, the following recommendations were made:

1. Administrators of secondary schools should encourage social activities, such as sports, debate, excursion, etc; that can facilitate effective interpersonal relationships among students.
2. The researchers strongly recommend that the level of guidance and counselling services should be increased in secondary schools so as to assist students especially the first-year (JSS-1) students in coping and adjusting to school environment.
3. Parents should learn to accept their children from childhood; as neglectful parenting appears to be associated with children poor social adjustment.
4. Parents should encourage their children to engage in healthy interpersonal relations and interaction with their siblings and other members of the family as this would assist them in developing social skills that would enhance their adjustment to secondary school life.

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