

Parenting Styles and Birth Order as Determinants of Social Adjustment of Secondary School Students

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Abstract: This study investigated parenting styles and birth order as determinant of social adjustment of secondary school students in Isoko South and Isoko North Local Government Areas in Delta State, Nigeria. The study used ex-post facto design and was guided by four research questions and three hypotheses. From the population of 3,346 first-year secondary school students, a sample of 262 was drawn using simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. 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 0.77 for PSS using Pearson product moment correlation method. The reliabilities of the instruments were determined through test-retest method and coefficients of 0.89 were obtained for SAS and 0.97 for PSS using Pearson product moment correlation method. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Among others, the result showed that authoritarian parenting style produce high social adjustment among students. Also, there is no significant influence of first and second born positions on students' social adjustment. Based on these findings, it was recommended that administrators of secondary schools should encourage social activities such as sports, debates, excursions, etc; that can facilitate effective interpersonal relationships among students.

Keywords: Social Adjustment, Parenting Styles and Birth Order.

1. INTRODUCTION

First-year students in secondary schools who are also referred to as Junior Secondary School class One (JSS-1) students in Nigeria, face many school adjustment challenges such as making new relations with peers and friends of both sexes, achieving emotional independence, etc; which were not previously sources of concern. Furthermore, these first year students in secondary schools are visibly 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 poor interaction with other students, inability to make friends easily, develop trust in other students in such a way that others could develop such trust in them. This relative deficiency in social skills may lead to problems of social adjustment in school.

Student's 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 adjustment when he/she is able to start and engage in adequate interpersonal associations with other people in his environment. Moreover, Jain (n.d.) communicated children are regarded to be socially adjusted when they can adjust reasonably with various groups of people as well as peers.

Also, Parents have major roles to play in the adjustment process of students. Odebunmi (2007) observed that parental affection, compassion and attention contribute to children emotional development and adjustment. Similarly, a student who encounters restlessness, hostility, dismissal from the family, may likely turn out to be socially maladjusted, which may in-turn thwart his adequacy in relating and interacting with companion, classmates, peers and others in the school environment.

Parents developed different patterns of interacting with or socializing 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 authoritarian parenting style. Baumrind as cited in Hickman and Crossland (2004-2005) described authoritarian parenting by strict discipline, dismissal, humbleness, and having fixed limits demonstrated physically, intensely and psychologically towards children. Kendra (2011) observed that authoritarian parents are acquiescence-aligned and position-aligned and children are expected to obey their order and rules without giving reasons. Furthermore, Dewar (2010-2013) stated that authoritarian parents need children to obey rules without questioning and also make such rules compulsory.

This study also focused on birth orders (first and second born). Birth order is the position a child occupies in relation to other siblings in a family. Onyekuru (2009) refers to birth order as the arrangement or order in which parents give birth to children in a family. The first born is the oldest child and not an “only” in the family, while the second born child is the person born after the first baby and before the middle and the last baby in the family. Eckstein, Aycock, Sperber, McDonald, Van Wiesner, Watts and Ginsburg (2010) defines first-born as the first child given birth to in a family with succeeding children.

Onyekuru (2009) observed that the first born child is naturally unfriendly and antagonistic towards the second born child who may be observed as a competitor, while second borns are more socially adjusted. Moreover, Ekeh (2005) reported that first borns are very stubborn and conventional, while the second borns are hostile and low in social adjustment. In addition, Leman (2000) described the first child as determined, well organized, dedicated, selfless, agreeable, dependable, traditional, stick to rules and regulations, believer in power and rite, faithful and independent, etc; while the second born child looks unto the first child as a mentor or exemplar and as he observes the behaviour of the first child, he charts the pattern of his life.

The concern about influence of parenting style (authoritarian) and birth order (first and second born) on students' social adjustment is that the study would help all 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. Therefore, one may wonder if or whether these attributes influence social adjustment of first year secondary school students.

This study therefore sought to answer the question; “what is the influence of parenting style (authoritarian) and birth orders (first and second born) on social adjustment of secondary school students in Isoko South and Isoko North Local Government Areas in Delta State, Nigeria”?

Aim and Objectives:

The aim of this study was to determine the influence of parenting style (authoritarian) and birth orders (first and second) on students' social adjustment. In specific terms, the study was carried out to:

1. Find out the influence of authoritarian parenting style on social adjustment of secondary school students.
2. Find out the influence of authoritarian parenting style on social adjustment of students based on their gender.

3. Find out whether first and second birth positions influence students' social adjustment.
4. Determine whether first and second birth positions influence social adjustment of students based on their gender.

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the influence of authoritarian parenting style on social adjustment of secondary school students?
2. How does authoritarian parenting style influence social adjustment of students based on their gender?
3. What is the influence of first and second birth positions on students' social adjustment?
4. How do first and second birth positions influence 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 authoritarian parenting style on social adjustment of male and female students.
2. There is no significant influence of first and second birth positions on students' social adjustment.
3. The influence of first and second birth positions on social adjustment of students is not significant due to gender.

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 school class 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 the study was 262 students who were identified based on their birth order. This gave 195 first borns (113 males and 82 females), and 67 second borns (01 male and 66 females), drawn from the population through simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. 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 0.77 for PSS using Pearson product moment correlation method. Moreover, the reliabilities of the instruments were determined through test-retest method and coefficients of 0.89 was obtained for SAS and 0.97 for PSS using Pearson product moment correlation method. The instruments were 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 authoritarian parenting style on social adjustment of secondary school students?

Table 1: Mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (SD) of influence of authoritarian parenting style on social adjustment of secondary school students.

Parenting style	N	Social Adjustment		Criterion Mean
		Mean	Std. Deviation	
Authoritarian	262	132.87	10.20	100

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An overview of the result in table 1, revealed that the authoritarian parenting style had a mean social adjustment score of 132.87. The corresponding standard deviation (SD) of the score was 10.20. Since the mean score of 132.87 is higher than the criterion mean of 100, it means authoritarian parenting style produced high social adjustment among students.

Research Question 2: How does authoritarian parenting style influence social adjustment of students based on their gender?

Table 2: Mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (SD) of the social adjustments based on authoritarian parenting style and gender.

Parenting style	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Authoritarian	male	114	132.01	8.81
	female	148	133.62	11.11

The result in table 2, revealed that mean score for the male students was 132.01 with a standard deviation score of 8.81 while that of the female students was 133.61 with a standard deviation score of 11.11. This implies that along gender line, the female students were more socially adjusted than the males.

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

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis of the influence of authoritarian parenting style on social adjustment of male and female students.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-Cal.	Sig	Alpha level
Male	114	132.01	8.81	260	1.27	0.206	0.05
Female	148	133.61	11.11				

Data in table 3, indicated that calculated t-value of 1.27 was obtained at 0.206 significant level. Since the significant level is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), the chosen alpha level, it means there is no significant influence of authoritarian parenting style on social adjustment of male and female students. Hence the null hypothesis was accepted.

Research Question 3: What is the influence of first and second born positions on students' social adjustment?

Research Question 4: How do first and second birth positions influence social adjustment of male and female students?

Table 4: Mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (SD) of first and second birth positions' influence social adjustment of male and female students.

Birthorder	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Firstborn	male	113	132.15	8.72
	female	82	133.81	10.66
	Total	195	132.85	9.59
Second born	male	1	116.00	0.00
	female	66	133.36	11.72
	Total	67	133.11	11.83

Table 4 showed that the first born position had a mean social adjustment score of 132.85 while second born had 133.11. The corresponding standard deviation of their scores was 9.59 and 11.83 respectively. The indication is that students of second born position were found to be higher in social adjustment (133.11), than first born (132.85). Thus, students of the second born position are more socially adjusted than their first born counterparts.

Furthermore, observation of table 4 indicates that for first born position, the male students had the mean (\bar{X}) score of 132.15 while the female had 133.82. The corresponding standard deviation (SD) scores were 8.72 and 10.66 respectively. This shows that the female first borns are more socially adjusted than their male counterparts. In a similar vein, for second born position, the male had the mean (\bar{X}) score of 116.00 while the female had 133.36. The corresponding standard deviation (SD) scores were 0.00 and 11.72 respectively. This result also indicated that the female second borns are more socially adjusted than their male counterparts.

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

Hypothesis 3: The influence of first and second born positions on social adjustment of students is not significant due to gender.

Table 5: Summary of Two-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the influence of first and second 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	432.181 ^a	3	144.060	1.394	.245	
Intercept	256289.492	1	256289.492	2480.782	.000	
BirthorderFS	266.059	1	266.059	2.575	.110	
GenderFS	349.500	1	349.500	3.383	.067	
BirthorderFS * GenderFS	237.789	1	237.789	2.302	.130	0.05
Error	26653.971	258	103.310			
Total	4655754.000	262				
Corrected Total	27086.153	261				

Results in table 5, revealed that the calculated F-value of 2.575 for birth order was significant at 0.110 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 first and second born positions on students' social adjustment. On the basis of this, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Analysis of variance in table 4 also shows that the calculated F-value of 3.383 for gender was significant at 0.067 level, which is greater than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. The result is that the influence of first and second born positions on social adjustment of students is not significant due to gender.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

An overview of the result of research question one indicated that authoritarian parenting style produced high social adjustment among students. This findings may have been due to the fact that the subjects used in this study did not extend the troublesome, hostile or harmful behaviours encountered in their upbringing to their relationship with peers and companions in the school. This findings was inconsistent with those of Garcia and Gracia as cited in Dewar (2010-2011); Martinez, Garcia and Yubero (2007), who in their studies found out that authoritarian parents tend to have children with low social capability.

The result of research question two showed that along gender line, female students of authoritarian parenting style were more socially adjusted than their male counterparts. However, the result of hypothesis one statistically revealed that there is no significant influence of authoritarian parenting style on social adjustment of male and female students. Thus, this study was not in consonance with the findings of Goodman and Gurian (1999) who found out that boys of authoritarian parents showed high rates of anger and defiance while girls were dependent and lacking exploration. This means that male and female students of authoritarian parents tend to lack social competence, and have poor social skills which may have affected their social adjustment. However, on a general note, Kyalo & Chumba (2011) found out that female students have more difficult time adjusting to the colleges or university (secondary school) environment more than their male counterparts.

The result of research question three revealed that students of the second born position are more socially adjusted than their first born counterparts. However, hypothesis two statistically showed that there is no significant influence of first and second birth positions on students' social adjustment. This is not in line with that of Sulloway (2001) who found out that first borns are more conscientious and socially dominant. Furthermore, this is inconsistent with that of Ekeh (2005) who found out that the privilege of being occupants of the first birth position, makes the first borns very dogmatic and conservative in later life; insisting that things must be done in some specific and conventional ways; which may not be helpful in initiating and sustaining healthy peer relationship. Also, the finding is inconsistent with that of Eckstein,

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Aycock, Sperber, McDonald, Vein-Weisner, Watts and Ginsburg (2010) who observed that first borns are most fearful in new situation and conservative towards change; which may not be helpful when extended to their relationship with peers and friends in the school. In addition, this study was not in agreement with the finding of Onyekuru (2009) who found out that the second born adolescents are highest in social adjustment. Furthermore, this finding is in disagreement with the findings of Ekeh (2005) which revealed that second borns are significantly more aggressive; a situation which will ordinarily make them alienated and less acceptable by their peers.

The result of research question four shows that the female first borns are more socially adjusted than their male counterparts. This result also indicated that the female second borns are more socially adjusted than their male counterparts. Nevertheless, the finding of hypothesis three statistically indicated that influence of first and second birth positions on social adjustment of male and female students was not 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 first and second born positions on social adjustment of male and female students differs. This could also be an indication that both male and female students used in this study irrespective of their birth order, may have had different experiences with their peers. The finding of this study is consistent with that of Onyekuru (2009) who revealed that female adolescents of first and second born are significantly more socially adjusted than their male counterparts.

5. CONCLUSIONS

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

1. The influence of authoritarian parenting style on social adjustment of secondary school students was not significant.
2. The influence of authoritarian parenting style on social adjustment of male and female students was not significant.
3. The influence of first and second birth positions on students' social adjustment was not significant.
4. The influence of first and second birth positions on social adjustment of students was not significant due to gender.

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 researcher strongly recommends 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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