

## **Adolescents' Sex Differential Social Adjustment Problems and Academic Performance of Junior Secondary School Students in Uyo Metropolitan City**

**Dr. I. N. George**  
Faculty of Education  
University of Uyo  
Uyo, Nigeria.

**Dr. D. E. Ukpong**  
Faculty of Education  
University of Uyo  
Uyo, Nigeria.

### **Abstract**

*The study investigated adolescents' social adjustment problems and academic performance of secondary school students in Uyo metropolis of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. It particularly examined the impact of sex differences of adolescents exposed to family counseling services on their academic achievement vis-à-vis their counterparts not exposed to counseling services. Related literature was reviewed on the study variables. The design of the study was survey inferential and it was suitable because it is one of the best designs used to study large population after which the result could be inferred and generalized. The population of JSS 2 students in Uyo metropolis as at 2009/2010 session was 1016. A total of 500 students constituted the sample size of the study. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample. A researcher designed was used to collect data for the study. A pilot test was conducted and the value was found to be high enough for the research instrument to be used. The data were tested with t-test statistics. Findings revealed that a significant difference exists in the academic performance of socially adjusted male students exposed to family counseling services from that of their counterparts not exposed to family counseling. It was recommended that teachers should give more attention to the females in class to enable them cope up academically with their male counterparts.*

### **Introduction**

Social adjustment problems have been associated with academic performance of secondary school students particularly in Akwa Ibom State and in Nigeria in general. Several researchers relate students' academic performance to social adjustment problems, study habits, hardwork, commitment, events, perseverance and pre-conceived convictions (Ugwuegbu, 1975). Others associate students' achievements in school to instructional methods, teaching strategies and techniques. In general, teaching and learning as well as achievement in school are affected by social adjustment problems, study habits and strategies of instruction adopted by the teacher.

Students in our secondary schools exhibit various social adjustment problems and these in effect affect their academic performance. It is generally believed that the adolescence period offers a unique opportunity to the learners to realize many intrinsic values associated with their adjustment problems.

Based on the findings of the study, the stake-holders would be able to identify and understand the concept of social adjustment problems and their influences on the academic performance of students. It is on this note that curative and preventive measures will be taken in order to deter further fall in standard of education which immensely centers on social adjustment problems of our students in recent times. The findings of the study will help to check such unusual social adjustment problems like irregularity in attendance to lessons, a feeling of inferiority complexes which nurture negative self-concept among the students and retard their academic achievement.

## The Study Rationale

This study investigated adolescents' sex differential social adjustment problems and academic performance of junior secondary school students in Uyo metropolitan city of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

The aims of the study are:

- (i) to examine the impact of sex differences of adolescents exposed to family counseling services on their academic performance in Social Studies Education and their counterparts not exposed to counselling.

## Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- (i) To what extent have the sex differences of the social adjusted students exposed to family counseling services impacted on their academic performance in Social Studies Education vis-à-vis their counterparts not exposed to counseling services?

## Research Hypothesis

In order to properly guide the direction of this study the following research hypothesis was generated:

1. There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of the socially adjusted male students exposed to family counseling services and their counterparts not exposed to counseling services.

## Operational Definition of Terms: Academic Achievement

**Academic performance:** Students' performance in a given school subject (social studies) with reference to his/her scores both in continuous assessments and terminal examinations.

**Adolescents:** Youths aged between 11 and 20 years.

**Social problem:** Any act or behaviour that is contrary to generally and societal accepted norms and values.

**Highly socially adjusted students:** Regularity in school and being in full compliance to school rules and regulations.

**Averagely socially adjusted:** Adolescents not too truant and not very regular in school, but occasionally violating school rules.

**Socially maladjusted students:** Students frequently showing truant behaviour, including loitering, wondering, hanging around and absence from classes.

**Gender stereotype:** This implies sex classification of the adolescent into male or female.

**Social adjustment:** Behaviour dispositions which do not violate specific legal norms and values of a particular social group.

## Theoretical Framework

### Anomie theory

Dirkheim (1897) formulated the theory of anomie which means a condition of formlessness. This results from breakdown in human relations. When social relations break down, society loses its ability to regulate behaviour. That is, lack of social interactions causes ignorance of norms, lack of motivation to obey norms, and absence of moral direction provided by old members of that society. This has made Durkheim (1897) to say that:

In modern urban societies the individual is morally 'empty'. Without social ties, no force restrains them (members) and in such circumstances people literally lose the ability to wrong.

Reacting to this, Mizruchi (1964) has suggested that the term "deregulation" is the best translation of anomie. Durkheim (1897) has argued that cities destroy the power of societies to control their members and become locations for excessive amounts of serious deviance. Again, he believes that macro changes in the social structures can have devastating effects at the micro level. To this end, Stark (1987) has agreed that:

The sheer size and disorganization of big cities reduce the average person's attachments and beliefs. Thus free to deviate, people will do so. The consequences of weak moral and social disintegration are costly. As Stark (1987) observed Mal-adjusted behaviour rates will vary as integration varies, for example, crime-rates will be higher wherever integration is lower. Stark (1987) quoting studies by Shaw and McKay (1929, 1931, 1941; Angel, 1942).

Crutchfield (1980) cited in Stark (1947, 1949) explains that all have supported Durkheim's anomie theory. Consequently, the high rate of absenteeism in our secondary schools might have been ushered in by the social disintegration going on in the families, and schools that are located in the urban cities such as Uyo Metropolis. In such situation, people are only interested in their own private business and may not interfere to ask students why they are loitering about, absenting themselves or even withdrawing from school.

## **Related Literature Review**

### **Sex differences, levels of social adjustment and students' academic performance**

Considering the background of a study involving female participants, one could reasonably expect women to outperform men. However, in spite of the higher indicators of success possessed by women, this expectation is not always fulfilled. Data gathered and background predictions do not often match up with what actually occurred. Men tend to receive better grades, and retain more of their self-confidence, and more men stay in chemical engineering than women (Kelly, 1981).

When students run into mathematics difficulties, men are more likely to credit difficulties to challenges inherent in the subject, while women are more likely to explain away failure by lack of ability. This is the first of many discrepancies in men's and women's perceptions of their own performance.

Regarding general academic performance, women are more likely to attribute poor performance to lack of ability, while men more often attribute it to lack of hardwork or to unfair treatment. If students do well, women will more likely chalk it up to outside help while men see it as a reinforcement of their own ability.

Regarding course performance, women were asked to indicate what grade would satisfy them and what grade they actually expected to receive in a course. The women's expectations decreased as the term progressed; they downrated their ability and ended up underestimating themselves.

Although group work was found by Inyang (1989) to be generally positive and well-received by students, the findings inspired the researcher to caution educators about potential reactions of students to group work.

- Men were more likely to feel they did more than their fair share of work.
- Women were more likely to feel as though their contributions were undervalued or ignored.
- Men enjoyed the challenge of explaining material to another student.
- Women appreciated personal explanations, but passively absorbed information, and tended not to master the material as **thoroughly as the men who gave the explanations.**

The most striking point to emerge about gender differences and academic performance according to Matza (2009) is that boys predominate in all situations. In a whole-class teaching, where the teacher decides who should contribute, boys make more contributions than girls, and their contributions are usually more elaborate. This happens partly through activities within discussions, for example hand-raising, and partly because boys' reputations for misbehavior leads to greater monitoring of them by teachers. In small groups, where pupils resolve matters among themselves, boys usually have the upper hand than girls. They dominate the physical side (volunteering for demonstrations in science, controlling the mouse and keyboard in computing) and they do same when the focus is on talking. Research into oral assessment suggests that boys interrupt girls more than girls do to boys. Although interruption has not been studied in other contexts, a similar pattern is suggested by boy's assertive, rather than negotiation style in mixed-sex work with computers. Being regarded as the source of help is a further area where boy's dominance is evident. The research shows that boys are asked for help more than girls are, and by girls as well as by boys.

The greater tendency of girls to request help from others is a second major theme in the research literature. In a study conducted by Toby (1951) girls approach teachers for individual help more than boys do and in group work, girls are also relatively more likely to seek help. They are willing to give help when asked. Indeed the research suggests that in group work girls are more likely than boys to respond to requests for help. It is simply that fewer requests are addressed to girls in the first place. Girls contribute to make dominance, for example in mix-sex groups, by tending to direct their request s to boys though there are hints that girls resent their less-expert image, as when they receive physical help at the computer, they contribute to make dominance.

## Research Design

This study uses the survey inferential design, a form of descriptive study that is aimed at collecting samples from the population of a targeted respondents in order to examine the interaction between the variables being studied. This design is suitable because it is one of the best designs used in studying large and small samples of the population after which the results obtained could be inferred from the generalized population that would otherwise be too expensive to study as a whole.

In addition, the design is suitable because concepts like social adjustment problems and academic performance are best studied through the use of such instruments like structured questionnaire, interview, students' performance records, and observation which the survey inferential design utilizes as its essential tools.

The researcher was, however, aware of some of the weaknesses of using this design for this particular study – focusing primarily on the population of a specific respondent in a particular Local Government Area rather than the entire state but could not help using the design due to the nature of the research problem. The study sought to provide answers to research questions and to control variance. Therefore apart from the design being a case study, it can also be regarded as Ex-post Facto Design.

## Description Area of Study

The area covered in this study is Uyo Metropolis which coincides with the limit of Uyo Capital City Development Authority (UCCDA). Uyo is the capital city of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. It covers an approximate land space of 89.64km<sup>2</sup> with a population of approximately 1,287,619 according to the population census. Uyo Local Government Area is located approximately between Latitude 5° 04' and 5° 08' North of the Equator and between Longitude 7° 18' and 7° 24' East of the Greenwich Meridian.

The study area is bounded on the North by Itu, Ibiono and Ikono Local Government Areas, on the South by Nsit Ibom and Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Areas, on the West by Abak Local Government Area and on the East by Uruan Local Government Area. Even before the creation of Akwa Ibom State in 1987, Uyo had been one of the major commercial towns in the then mainland part of the erstwhile Cross River State. Uyo is among the famous and major commercial towns in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria. The town is commerce-oriented and is predominantly inhabited by civil servants, business men, artisans, traders, technicians, medium and small scale industrialists as well as other self employed persons.

Uyo had already been famous because of its enterprising nature, where self reliance and industry reign supreme in the heart of men. Buttressing this point, Uyo Metropolis has three large daily markets of national repute, namely; Itam market – along Ikot Ekpene/Calabar-Itu Road, Akpan Andem market along Udo Umana Street, and shopping centre complex sited along Ikot Ekpene Road. Besides these markets, goods are sold from Road side stalls, carried to the consumers' homes by mobile traders, or displayed at road junctions, motor parks, and so on, to attract the attention of travelers.

In addition, there are major food businesses ranging from eating houses, “mama-puts”, restaurants to big hotels such as Esma Restaurant, Mr. BIGGS, Dollars both located along Ikot Ekpene Road; and so on. All these attract the attention of both young and old. Little wonder that some adolescents abandon school lessons and rush to some of these guest houses at the expenses of their academics, thereby creating social problems for themselves and the society. There are also major motor parks relocated by the Akwa Ibom State Government. These include the Itam motor park located along Ikot Ekpene Road, Aka-Nung Udoe park sited at Aka-Nung Udoe Road, Ikot Okubo park along Abak Road and Mbiabong Etoi park sited along Oron Road. These new parks are meant to decongest the City centre particularly, along Ibom Connection and to open up new development centres for business.

## Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of all Junior Secondary Two Students offering Social Studies in Uyo Metropolis. The population of Junior Secondary Two (JSS 2) students in Uyo Metropolis as at 2009/2010 academic session was as follows: Public schools: (Males = 518, Females = 498). Thus, a total of 1016 students of both males and females were in public schools. Private schools were made up of 1002 students of which 540 of them were males, while 462 were females. Hence, the grand total of Junior Secondary Two (JSS 2) students for this study was 1016.

## **Data Analysis**

The data collected for the study were analysed by using the t-test statistics. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significant.

## **Sample and Sampling Technique**

Random sampling technique was used in the selection of the sample for this study. The selection of sample was from public and registered private secondary schools in Uyo Metropolis. The (15) secondary schools in Uyo Metropolis randomly selected consisted of two girls, three boys and ten mixed schools. In each selected school, a total of thirty three (33) students were randomly selected from 10 schools while 34 students came from 5 schools for this study. Thus, a total of 500 students representing approximately 25% of the population were the sample size for this study.

The random sampling method used in selecting the schools and the 50 socially adjusted students is called Balloting. Balloting is “a method of drawing a sample from a population such that all members of the population have equal and independent chances of being selected” (Olaitan & Nwoke, 1988).

To obtain the required number, the researcher assigned numbers to the students (the highly socially adjusted, averagely socially adjusted and the socially maladjusted) identified by the class teaching thus we had 1 to 1000 representing all categories of the students. These numbers were written, each on a piece of paper and put inside a bag. The pieces of paper were then shuffled very well so that one was not certain about which number, one would pick. The researcher with the help of the class teachers in each of the schools used the class Register and identified the highly socially adjusted, averagely socially adjusted and the socially maladjusted students. The researcher called upon them to come and pick and proceeded like that until the obtained the first 500 numbers representing the sample of the population for the study.

## **Instrumentation**

For the purpose of data collection, a researcher designed instrument was constructed by the researcher. It was titled “Adolescents’ social adjustment problems and Academic performance inventory (ASAPAPI) with the help of the teachers and idea from related literature since there was no standardized inventory on the relevant variables of the study.

**The instrument had five sections: (A-G)** Section A dealt with the personal bio-data which contains eleven items such as sex, age, school parental occupation, education, social-economic status and marital status.

Section B consisted of likert-type questionnaire with a four point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). This section also contained 30 items designed to elicit adolescents’ responses on how sex differences and adolescents’ family background affect their academic performance in Social Studies.

Each pilot subject was given an identification mark by the researcher for the case of matching the first response of the first administration with the second administration. The two respondent questionnaire were paired up according to their identification mark and data obtained was computed accordingly. The mean and standard deviation were also computed. The data obtained from, test and retest sets of questionnaire were correlated with each other, with the use of t-test statistics. The obtained t-value was 0.65 and the value having been compared with the table r-value was not only found to be significant but also substantially high enough for the research instrument to be used.

## **Testing of Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of the socially adjusted male students exposed to family counselling services and their counterparts not exposed to family counseling services.

**Table 1:** t-test analysis of the difference in the academic achievement of the socially adjusted male students exposed to family counselling and their counterparts not exposed

Variable	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Socially Adjusted Male students exposed to family counseling services	500	18.71	1.32	6.04	1.96	Rejected
Academic Performance	500	15.32	0.97			

$$P > .05, df = 498$$

### Findings

The result in Table 1 above shows that the calculated t-value of 6.04 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the academic achievement of the socially adjusted male students exposed to family counseling services from that of their counterparts not exposed to counseling services.

### Discussion of Findings

The most striking point to emerge from this study is that males predominate in all situations. They make more contributions in class than females and their contributions are usually more elaborate. Females are more likely to seek for help from males.

In a study conducted by Toby (1951), it was discovered that girls approached teachers for help more than boys did in group work. Males are willing to give help to females when asked. This present study has found a significant difference between male and female students' academic achievement because in small group discussions, where pupils resolve matters among themselves, boys usually have the upper hand than girls. Boys interrupt girls more than girls do to boys in class responses to the teacher's questions.

Males are highly socially adjusted than girls and tend to receive better grades and retain more of their self confidence than females. Akpan et al (1985) and Caspari (1979) strongly believe that socially adjusted students are more disciplined and more performing in school than their male adjusted counterparts. Consequently, the persistent non-adjusted females have lower academic grades than their male counterparts.

This study also corroborates Davidoff's (1987) position that boys show stronger orientation towards work than girls with poor socially adjusted behavior. This is so because some of the girls tend to be more anxious, depressed and withdraw from confronting academically challenging situations.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that the academic performance of the socially adjusted students differ from that of their non-adjusted counterparts based on gender.

### Recommendations

It is hereby recommended that teachers should give more attention in class to the females to enable them cope up academically with their male counterparts. This is not to say that the males should be ignored when they seek for help from the teacher.

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