

Peer Group Influence, Socio-Economic Background and Gender Differentiating Psychological Well-Being among Adolescents of Senior Secondary Schools in Ogun State

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Abstract. The concern for proper adolescents' psychological well-being is to ensure that children are properly integrated into healthy family in which young people will thrive, translating into a healthier society. In view of this, this study investigated and reported the social factors differentiating psychological well-being of Senior Secondary School adolescents in Ogun State. A survey research design of the ex-post-facto type was employed in the study. Two thousand four hundred (2400) Senior Secondary School Two (SSS2) students comprising 1200 male and 1200 female were sampled for this study. Three (3) validated instruments: Psychological Well-being Scale, Social Economic Status Scale and Peer Group Influence Scale were employed to obtain responses from the participants. Analyses of data were done using descriptive statistics and logistic regression analysis fixed at the .05 significant levels. Results revealed that peer influence (odd ratio = 3.474, Wald value = 29.773, $\chi^2 = 41.523$, $p < .05$), socio-economic background (odd ratio = 3.356, Wald value = 30.211, $\chi^2 = 24.960$, $p < .05$), and gender differentiated (odd ratio = 1.633, Wald value = 25.712, $\chi^2 = 33.005$, $p < .05$) differentiated adolescents' level of psychological well-being. Age did not differentiate adolescents' level of Psychological well-being (odd ratio = .301, Wald value = 1.034, $\chi^2 = 2.171$, $p < .05$). The findings showed that all the social factors are potent in differentiating adolescents' level of psychological well-being. It is concluded that the home environment should be a strong source of support for developing adolescents psychological wellbeing by providing close relationships, strong parenting skills, good communication, and modeling positive behaviour. Therefore, modifications in the home environment should be made more favourable for the enhancement of adolescents' psychological well-being.

Keywords: Adolescents, Psychological wellbeing, peer influence, Social Economic Status, gender, Secondary Schools.

1. Introduction

Adolescence as a developmental period is filled with many challenges. Early developmental theorists, defined the period of adolescence as one of identity versus role confusion, in which adolescents must determine who they are, combining their self-understanding and social roles into a coherent identity. Today, Adolescents live in a society which has become multi-complex, thus making the roles of adolescents very diffuse and confusing. The roles of adolescents and their developmental tasks are no longer well defined and prescribed. Knowledge explosion, material wealth pursuit, plurality of the society and estrangement from the extended family system, the hypocrisy of adult standards, the fallacy of physical maturity all present a great battle for the adolescent to fight with the dilemma of indefinite status (Hill, Bromell, Tyson, & Flint, 2007).

Coupled with this complexity are the multifarious needs (biogenic, physiogenic, sociogenic and psychogenic) that the adolescent has to satisfy. He has got exuberant energy with which to pursue his needs but perhaps not the logical rationale with which to estimate the balance between degrees of freedom and the threshold of danger. Thus, adolescent engages in activities that pose real threat to his/ her psychological well-being (Adenuga & Ayodele, 2010; Hill *et al*, 2007, Mill, 2010).

Adolescence is full of challenges. The change is fast, everywhere and hard to keep up with: the body changes in response to increasing levels of gender hormones; the thinking process changes as the child is able to think more broadly and in abstract ways; the social life changes as new people and peers come

into scope. Yet the child needs to deal with every single one of these changes, all at the same time! Thus, making the issue of psychological well-being a great concern in adolescence is essential (Adenuga & Ayodele, 2010; Mill, 2010).

Psychological well-being is a multi-dimensional concept. Cheerfulness, optimism, playfulness, self-control, a sense of detachment and freedom from frustration, anxiety and loneliness had been accepted as dimensions of psychological well-being (Sinha & Verma, 1992 cited in Adenuga & Ayodele, 2010). McCulloch (1991) as cited by Mills (2010) has shown that satisfaction, morale, positive effect and social support constitute psychological well-being.

Psychological well-being is a point of much emphasis in society today. Whereas insurance companies and society in general once thought of a person's health mainly in physical terms, in modern society personal wellness has come to refer to a more thorough definition that includes psychological well-being. In regard to psychological well-being, within the literature, happiness has generally been viewed as the outcome variable (Hill *et al* 2007; Mills, 2010).

Traditionally, psychological research has focused on negative states, their determinants and consequences (Chang, 1998 cited in Adenuga & Ayodele, 2010). Studies on depression, separation, alienation and similar topics focus on people's suffering and its deleterious effects on their psychological and physical states until relatively recently, when few studies have been conducted on subjective moods or feelings of well-being and their determinants (Crocker, Luthertanen, Baline, & Broadnax, 1994).

Perhaps, due to the fact that psychological well-being is a subjective term which means different things to different people, earliest literature focused on short-term affective well-being (happiness) at the expense of enduring effects. Psychological well-being is defined as states that emerge from feeling of satisfaction with one's close interpersonal relationships and with one's occupation and financial situation (Bar-On, 2005). In this study, it is defined as a combination of happiness, life satisfaction and depression. Happiness is an emotional state whereas life satisfaction addresses a more global cognitive evaluation of one's life (Compton, 2005; Khramtsova *et al*, 2007). Whereas happiness and life satisfaction are positive affects, depression is a negative affect. Both effects tell us the well-being of the individual. At present much more is known about negative effects of depression on student success than about the benefits of happiness and life satisfaction

(Khramtsova, *et al*, 2007). For example, depression is negatively related to students' success, grade point average and less time spent on homework (Field, 2001 as cited in Salami, 2010).

However, there are remarkable differences in the abilities of adolescents to cope with the challenges which confront them. Some adolescents have great difficulty in dealing with problems which for others would be minor. When these young people are not able to cope with stresses in an adaptive manner they may develop problem behaviours and are at risk of developing mental health problems. Other adolescents with major problems seem to be able to emerge from stressful encounter not only successfully, but also with increased abilities and resources (Khramtsova, *et al*, 2007, Salami, 2010).

It is worthy to note that contemporary studies undoubtedly show that higher functions in no small measure develop under the influence of social and cultural factors. Emotional intelligence is a novel area with regard to research, especially with regard to testing emotional intelligence and establishing the role of emotional intelligence during the adolescence stage.

Adolescence is in and of itself a difficult challenge in the realms of emotions. The adolescent is faced with new relationships and atmosphere where proper social integration is of utmost importance for success. As the adolescent travels on this journey to the time of graduation and engages in the progression towards adulthood, being emotionally competent is not only important, it is a necessary ingredient for successful journey. Goleman (1995) stated that students who have emotional competency can better deal with the pressure of peer politics, the higher demands required for academics, and the temptations of alcohol, drugs and gender.

Peer group is another variable that affects the behaviour of the adolescents. Peer pressure can be both negative and positive. The researcher observed that the negative aspect of peer pressure strives more than the positive aspect. Adolescents belong to one peer group or the other as a source of identity and social support. They conform to the ideas, beliefs and judgment of the peer group and they spend much more time, with their peers than parents.

According to Conger and Chao (1996) cited in Ajidahun (2011), adolescents spend more time with peers because of low self-esteem, and internal pressure which makes adolescents susceptible to peer pressure. The authors believe that adolescents who

see themselves as unintelligent, unpopular and unattractive are more vulnerable to peer pressure because their hunger for a sense of acceptance and approval compel them to seek such things through conformity. Adenuga and Ayodele (2010) are of the opinion that the influence of peer group on adolescents' wellbeing can be examined by how they spend their free-time.

Adolescents spend much time with peers and receive less adult supervision and control. They try to avoid close supervision by parents. They become more aware of the values and behaviour of their peer group. And this lures them to some behavioural problems which are anti-social in nature such as robbery, cultism, prostitution and drug abuse (Ajidahun, 2011). In order to feel belonged and be part of their groups, adolescents sometimes conform most of the time because of the benefit they derive in joining their friends. Some of the benefits may be financial benefits, hailing and acceptance.

Conger, Ge, Elder Jr., Lorenz, and Simons (1994) cited in Fox, Scholar & Timmerman (2003), described low socio-economic background as "a high level of economic pressure [which] indicates spousal agreement that the family (a) cannot meet its material needs, (b) often falls behind in paying its debts, and (c) has had to cut back on everyday expenses in an attempt to live within available means" (p. 543). Oftentimes, SES is used interchangeably with social class, and for the purpose of this study it will be considered as such. Therefore, throughout this article references made to low or high SES can be thought of as references to low or high social class.

Another variable considered in this study is gender. Gender relates to the difference in gender (that is, either male or female) and how this quality affects their dispositions and perception toward life coping skills (Adenuga & Ayodele, 2010). The difference in gender as it affects students' and coping skills is inconclusive (Adenuga & Ayodele, 2010). This has necessitated the need to find out if there is any significant difference between male and female adolescents in the levels of psychological well-being and parenthood.

Age is considered one of the independent variables that may likely mediate the effect between the levels of psychological well-being and parenthood among adolescents in this study. Cognitive development and maturity (which are associated with age) are necessary for a worthwhile mental health. Age of the individual, as it increases, usually affects the various developmental changes. It also affects every area of

human performance (Ukueze, 2007). Therefore, it has become necessary to examine the extent to which age affect the levels of psychological well-being and parenthood of adolescents.

In the last decade, psychological well-being has been a subject of investigation in Nigeria (Balogun, Bada & Adejuwon, 2013). However, despite the growing body of literature on psychological wellbeing, only few African studies have explored psychological wellbeing and parenthood among adolescents in Nigeria. In particular, there are relatively no considerable empirical studies on the psychosocial factors in differentiating psychological well-being and parenthood among senior secondary school adolescents in Ogun State, South-West, Nigeria.

2. Research Hypotheses

- The Peer group influence will not significantly differentiate the level of psychological well-being
- Socio-economic background will not significantly differentiate the level of psychological well being
- Adolescents' age will not significantly be differentiated the level of psychological well-being
- Adolescents' gender will not significantly be differentiated the level of psychological well-being

3. Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted the descriptive research design of the ex-post-facto type to investigate the psychological variables that were critical in differentiating the level of psychological well-being among adolescents from senior secondary schools in Ogun State.

Sample and Sampling Technique: Sampling was done through stratified random sampling technique. The State was stratified into four major educational divisions namely: Remo, Ijebu, Yewa and Egba (RIYE). There are twenty Local Government Areas in the four Educational divisions in Ogun State. Simple random sampling was adopted to pick two Local Government Areas from each of the Educational divisions. In total, eight Local Government Areas represented the interest of the four Educational Divisions.

The selection of the schools were done through balloting method in which all the names of all the secondary schools in the selected divisions were written based on the strata (local governments) on

separate sheet of paper of equal size. These sheets were folded and put into 16 plastic bowls (8 public and 8 private). After thorough reshuffling, and without looking into the plastic bowls, the researcher picked up three (3) slips each from each of the 16 bowls to get out the forty-eight (48) participating schools for the study.

In each of the participating schools, 50 students were randomly selected from SSII classes (Science, Art, and/or Commercial). From these classes, 50 students (comprising 25 male and 25 female) were purposively selected to participate in the study. In all, 2400 SSII students comprising 1200 male and 1200 female within the age range 13 – 17 years were sampled for this study.

Research Instruments: The researcher used 4 validated instruments namely:

Psychological Well-being Scale: *Psychological well-being was measured with the Ryff's (1989) scales of psychological well-being.* Participants response using a six-point format: strongly disagree (1), moderately disagree (2), slightly disagree (3), slightly agree (4), moderately agree (5), strongly agree (6). Responses to negatively framed item were reversed in the final scoring procedures so that high scores indicate high

self-ratings on the dimension assessed. The internal consistency (coefficient alpha) was .913.

Peer Group Influence Scale is a 25-item sub-scale of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) was developed by Armsden & Greenberg (1987) in order to assess adolescents' perceptions of the positive and negative affective/cognitive dimension of relationships with parents and close friends -- particularly how well these figures serve as sources of psychological security. The items are scored on a five-point scale ranging from almost never (1) to almost always (5). The reliability coefficient for the 25-item peer influence sub-scale was .81. Using the Cronbach's alpha model, the reliability coefficient for the IPPA was calculated between 0.87 and 0.93 (Armsden & Greenberg (1987). A re-validation of the peer influence sub-scale was done by the researcher and yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.81.

Method of Data Analysis: The data collected in the study were analysed descriptively and inferentially. The characteristics of the respondents were described using frequency counts, simple percentages, mean and standard deviation scores. Inferentially, the logistic regression analysis set at the .05 significant level was used to analyze the hypotheses generated for the study. All these were done using the SPSS computer analysis.

4. Results and Discussions

Table 1: Logistic regression coefficient predicting influence of peer group on the level of psychological well-being

Predictor	B	S.E	Wald	Df	Sig.	Odd Ratio (Exp. β)
Psychological well-being	-2.001	.178	29.773	1	.047	3.474
Constant	-3.543	.323	40.013	1	.000	.000

Note: N = 2400, *P < .05 (2-tailed)

The results of the logistic regression analysis show that the full model which considered the differentiating influence of peer influence on psychological well-being was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 41.253$, $df = 1$, $N = 2400$, $p < .05$). This implies that the odd for senior secondary school adolescents to indicate their levels of psychological well-being were related to peer influence. The model correctly classified approximately all the cases. The “pseudo” R estimates indicate that the model explained between 16.3% (Cox & Snell R Squared) and 25.6% (Nagelkerke R Squared) of the variance of the peer influence in differentiating the levels of psychological well-being among senior secondary school adolescents.

The result explains that the environment of the students play a significant role in their happiness, social involvement, and sociability, therefore the external influence on the adolescents' decisions cannot be jettisoned. This finding is not at variance with the findings of Ebeunuwa-Okoh and Onoyase (2014) whose finding revealed that friends of adolescents have stronghold on their lives because of the search for autonomy and role identity. Similarly, Steinberg and Monaham (2007) in their study reported peer influence as a primary contextual factor contributing to adolescent heightened tendency to make risky decisions.

Table 2: Logistic regression coefficient predicting influence of socio-economic background on the level of psychological well-being

2 Log = 29.588 Cox & Snell R ² = .087 Nagelkerke R ² = .133 Chi-square (χ^2) = 24.960							
Predictor	B	S.E	Wald	Df	Sig.	Odd Ratio (Exp. β)	
Psychological well-being	-1.141	.403	30.211	1	.009	3.356	
Constant	-2.450	.927	28.333	1	.000	.000	

Note: N =2400, *P<.05 (2-tailed)

The results of the logistic regression analysis show that the full model which considered the differentiating influence of socio-economic background on the dependent variables (psychological well-being) was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 24.960$, df = 1, N = 2400, p < .05). This implies that the odds for senior secondary school adolescents to indicate their levels of psychological well-being were related to their socio-economic background. The model correctly classified approximately all the cases. The “pseudo” R estimates indicate that the model explained between 8.7% (Cox & Snell R Squared) and 13.3% (Nagelkerke R Squared) of the variance of the socio-economic background in differentiating the levels of psychological well-being among senior secondary school adolescents. These findings sharply contradict the findings of Raboteg-Šarić., Brajša-Žganec & Šakić (2009) that higher perceived material well-being among adolescents to a great extent will influence their psychological and subjective well-being. Also, the general assertion that family economic hardship will adversely affects the adjustment of adolescents experiencing economic disadvantage (Conger et al., 2000) can be ascertained.

Table 3: Logistic regression coefficient predicting influence of age on the level of psychological well-being

2 Log = 15.511 Cox & Snell R ² = .031 Nagelkerke R ² = .078 Chi-square (χ^2) = 2.171							
Predictor	B	S.E	Wald	Df	Sig.	Odd Ratio (Exp. β)	
Psychological well-being	-.167	.147	1.034	1	.312	.301	
Constant	-.451	.080	.537	1	.466	.000	

Note: N =2400, *P<.05 (2-tailed)

The results of the logistic regression analysis show that the full model which considered the differentiating influence of age on the dependent variables (psychological well-being) was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 15.511$, df = 1, N = 2400, p < .05). This implies that the odds for senior secondary school adolescents to indicate their levels of psychological well-being were not related to their age. The model correctly classified approximately all the cases. The “pseudo” R estimates indicate that the model explained between 3.1% (Cox & Snell R Squared) and 7.8% (Nagelkerke R Squared) of the variance of the age in differentiating the levels of psychological well-being among senior secondary school adolescents.

It could be deduced that adolescents with low psychological well-being and poor mental health irrespective of their age tend to form less than desirable self-evaluations, which significantly affect their happiness and life satisfaction. This finding therefore, contradict the findings of Nishikawa (2009), Veenstra, Lindenberg, Oldehinkel, De Winter & Ormel (2006), and Muris, Meesters & Van den Berg (2003) who found that lower levels of perceived parental emotional warmth and higher levels of rejection and overprotection were linked to increase mental health problems in adolescents regardless of the age.

Table 4: Logistic regression coefficient predicting influence of gender on the level of psychological well-being

2 Log = 26.008 Cox & Snell R ² = .136 Nagelkerke R ² = .207 Chi-square (χ^2) = 33.005							
Predictor	B	S.E	Wald	Df	Sig.	Odd Ratio (Exp. β)	
Psychological well-being	.081	.027	25.712	1	.006	1.633	
Constant	3.446	.052	28.999	1	.000	.000	

Note: N =2400, *P<.05 (2-tailed)

The results of the logistic regression analysis show that the full model which considered the differentiating influence of gender on psychological well-being was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 33.005$, $df = 1$, $N = 2400$, $p < .05$). This implies that the odd for senior secondary school adolescents to indicate their levels of psychological well-being was related to their gender. The “pseudo” R estimates indicate that the model explained between 13.6% (Cox & Snell R Squared) and 20.7% (Nagelkerke R Squared) of the variance of the gender in differentiating the levels of psychological well-being and parenthood among senior secondary school adolescents.

This result is in line with the findings of Flouri and Buchanan (2003) who reported that adolescents who possess low psychological well-being or psychological distress may also exhibit characteristics of low levels of happiness and self-efficacy, along with high levels of depression. It can be deduced that adolescents with low psychological well-being will tend to form less than desirable self-evaluations, which significantly affect their happiness and satisfaction. This might be as a result of the way the adolescents account for the relationship between their behaviour and the results of their behaviour (Deryakulu, 2002).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of the evidences from the results, the current study concluded that psychological well-being was significantly differentiated by peer influence, socio-economic background and gender. As a result, it can be implied that social factors are essential to an adolescent’s psychological well-being; hence the following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study:

- Peer group influence significantly differentiated the level of adolescents’ psychological well-being.
- Socio-economic background significantly differentiated the level of adolescents’ psychological well-being.
- Age did not significantly differentiate the level of adolescent’ psychological well-being.
- Gender significantly differentiated the level of adolescents’ psychological well-being.

Based on the conclusion drawn from this study, it is recommended that the home environment should be a strong source of support for developing adolescents’ psychological wellbeing by providing close relationships, strong parenting skills, good communication, and modeling positive behaviour.

Therefore, modifications in the home environment should be made more favourable for the enhancement of adolescents’ psychological well-being.

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