

Parental Attachment Styles as Correlates of School Adjustment of Primary School Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District

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Abstract: The study investigated parental attachment styles as correlate of school adjustment of primary school pupils in Rivers state. The objective of the study was to find out the extent to which attachment styles (secure, ambivalent and avoidant) correlate independently and collectively with school adjustment. The population of the study was all the 8,086 pupils in all the 152 public primary schools in Ikwerre, Obio-Akpor and Port-Harcourt local government areas of Rivers state. A sample of 485 pupils from 30 public primary schools was drawn using simple random sampling and proportionate sampling technique. Four research questions and four null hypotheses guided the study. Two instruments were adapted for the study namely; Adjustment Inventory for School Student and Attachment Style Questionnaire. Face, content and construct validity of the instruments were ensured. Reliability of the instruments was done using test-retest method and the coefficients obtained are: .863 for school adjustment and .861, .752, and .917 for secure, ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles respectively. Simple regression analysis was used to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3 while multiple regression analysis was used to answer research question 4. In testing the null hypotheses, t-test associated with simple regression was used to test hypotheses 1,2 and 3 while hypotheses 4 was tested using Analysis of Variance associated with multiple regression. Results of the study indicated that secure attachment style and ambivalent attachment style had a negative and significant relationship with school adjustment while avoidant attachment style had a positive and no significant relationship with school adjustment. The result also revealed that there is a joint positive and significant relationship between the three attachment styles and school adjustment, Based on the findings, recommendations were made, one of which is that parents should create an enabling home environment that will help boost their children's confidence as this will make them feel more relaxed outside the home thereby enabling them to adjust to school activities.

Keywords: Parents, Attachment styles, school adjustment, pupil.

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INTRODUCTION

The school environment is seen as one of the most influential socialization domains in the life of a child. It has been demonstrated that a student's experience at school and his adjustment to school can exert both positive and negative influences on their development and performance in school. Major part of a child's life is spent in school and one importance of schooling is to help the pupil to develop those capabilities that will help them in making effective adjustment in life. Adjustment is a continuous process in which a person varies his behaviour to produce a more harmonious relationship between himself and his environment (Gates & Jersild, 2000). Students could be said to have good adjustment in all areas of their life if

there is a balance between their academic -intellectual, emotional, social and other needs and their satisfaction. According to Lubna (2012), adjustment can be defined as a process of altering ones behaviour to reach a harmonious relationship with his environment. It can also be seen as the process of adopting and finding modes of behaviours suitable to the environment or the change in the environment. As children begin school, they face many challenges; children face the challenges of adjusting to the teachers, adjusting to new academic activities and mixing up with new children. Successful adjustment to school May likely depends on past experiences at home and on skills and knowledge (Fabian, 2000).

The term “school adjustment” has been defined in Psychological Wiki, (2019) as the process of adapting to the role of being a student and to various aspects of the school environment. Failure to adjust can lead to mental health issues and school refusal or school dropout and may require school counselling (Psychological Wiki, 2019). Schunk, Pintrich & Meece (2018) stated that school adjustment involves student’s attitude towards school, anxieties, loneliness, social support, and academic motivation. Failure to adjust could lead to poor academic achievement.

The pattern of relationship parents have with their child (ren) may in one way or the other be associated with how the child behaves or adjust socially or performs academically. This relationship refers to the unique and enduring bond between a caregiver and his or her child which has to do with the ways that parents and children interact with one another physically, emotionally, and socially. It is assumed that the relationships between parents and children are very important in determining who we become and how we relate to others and the world (Schissel, 2018). This pattern of relationship has to do with their attachment styles.

Attachment styles according to Kendra (2007) is a special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of comfort, care and pleasure. Ronit (2015) maintains that baby’s relationship with their parents in their first year of life has a significant impact in their future relationships. The kind of attachment they have with their parents as babies becomes a blueprint of their attitude towards themselves and others later in life. Attachment can be seen as the bond a child forms to a primary caregiver (parents). This bond endures throughout life and has a profound effect on the individual’s development. Webster and Reld, (2004) stated that the impact of this early attachment relationship can be seen in a child’s social emotional development, cognitive and language development, school readiness, school success/failure, and overall adjustment in school. According to Bowlby in Bergin and Bergin (2009), attachment is a deep and enduring affectionate bond that connects one person to another across time and space. It is in effect, an affectionate bond or tie between an individual and an attachment figure (usually a care giver).

The relationship infants have with their parents or primary care givers has an enormous impact on their future mental, physical, social, and emotional health. It is not founded on the quality of care or parental love, but on the nonverbal emotional communication developed with the child, known as the attachment bond (Segal, Glenn, and Robinson, 2019).

John Bowlby is credited as the father of attachment theory. He described attachment as a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings

(Bowlby, 1969). He proposed three types of attachment styles: Secure attachment style, ambivalent attachment style and Avoidant attachment style.

Secure attachment is an attachment relationship which is classified by children who show distress when their caregiver leaves but are able to composed them knowing that their caregiver will return.

They feel protected by their care givers and they know that they can depend on them to return. A toddler who is securely attached to his or her parent (or other familiar caregiver) will explore freely while the caregiver is present, typically engages with strangers, and is often visibly upset when the caregiver departs, and is generally happy to see the caregiver return. The extents of exploration and of distress are affected, however, by the child’s temperamental make-up and by situational factors as well as by attachment status. A child’s attachment is largely influenced by their primary caregiver’s sensitivity to their needs. Parents who consistently (or almost always) respond to their child’s needs will create securely attached children. Such children are certain that their parents will be responsive to their needs and communications. (Schacter, 2009). According to Aronoff (2012), a child becomes securely attached when the parent is available and able to meet the needs of the child in a responsive and appropriate manner. At infancy and early childhood, if parents are caring and attentive towards their children, those children will be more prone to secure attachment.

A secure attachment bond ensures that the child will feel secure, understood, and calm enough to experience optimal development of his or her nervous system. A child’s developing brain organizes itself to provide him with the best foundation for life, a feeling of safety that results in eagerness to learn, healthy self-awareness, trust, and empathy (Segal et al., 2019).

Ambivalent attachment style is an attachment relationship which is classified by children who become very distressed when their care giver leaves and they are not able to soothe or compose themselves. A child with an ambivalent pattern of attachment cannot depend on their care giver to be there for them, they will typically explore little and is often wary of strangers, even when the parent is present. When the caregiver departs, the child is often highly distressed. The child is generally ambivalent when the caregiver returns. (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Walls, 1978) The ambivalent strategy is a response to unpredictably responsive care giving, and the displays of anger (ambivalent resistant) or helplessness (ambivalent passive) towards the caregiver on reunion can be regarded as a conditional strategy for maintaining the availability of the caregiver by pre-emptively taking control of the interaction (Crittenden, 1999).

Avoidant attachment style is an attachment relationship which is classified by children who avoid

their caregivers, showing no distress when the caregiver leaves. An infant with an avoidant pattern of attachment will avoid or ignore the caregiver, showing little emotion when the caregiver departs or returns. The infant will not explore very much regardless of who is there. Infants are depicted as avoidant when there is conspicuous avoidance of the mother in the reunion episodes which is likely to consist of ignoring her altogether, although there may be some pointed looking away, turning away, or moving away. If there is a greeting when the mother enters, it tends to be a mere look or a smile, either the baby does not approach his mother upon reunion, or they approach in abortive fashions with the baby going past the mother, or it tends to only occur after much coaxing. If picked up, the baby shows little or no contact-maintaining behaviour, he tends not to cuddle in, he looks away and he may squirm to get down (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Children with avoidant attachment style react similarly to strangers as they do with their care giver.

Ehibudu and Obikoya (2017) conducted a study on family conflict and attachment patterns as correlates of school adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers state with a sample of 984 students. Mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis were employed for data analysis. The result of their study indicated that attachment styles (secure, ambivalent and avoidant) collectively predicted school adjustment; secure: $r = .461$, $P = .000$, ambivalent: $r = .461$, $P = .000$, avoidant: $r = .518$, $P = .000$. This results show that attachment styles have significant relationship with school adjustment ($P < .05$).

Bin-Bin (2017) carried out a study on Parent-Adolescent attachment and academic achievement. The study examined associations between adolescents' attachment relationships with both mother and father and their academic adjustment, and explored the potential mediation role of self-worth in the associations. Participants were 384 Chinese adolescents (49.6% male, average age = 15.13 years) from public schools in Shanghai, China. They completed self-report measures of mother-adolescent attachment, father-adolescent attachment, general self-worth, academic engagement and school grades. The results indicated that adolescents' attachments to both parents were associated with higher levels of academic engagement. There was partial support of the mediating role of self-worth, as adolescents who had high levels of parent-adolescent attachment were more likely to have high levels of self-worth, which in turn enhanced their academic engagement and then improved high school grades.

Hasanvand, Merati, Khaledian and Hasani (2014) investigated the relationship between attachment styles with depression among high school students. The population of the study included all male and female

students in different majors from Aleshtar medical Science University. The sample included 296 students, selected using simple random Sampling technique. The instruments for the study were adult Attachment scale and Beck-depression test, data was analysed using Pearson correlation coefficient and multi variant Regression. Result of the study showed that there is a significant negative relationship between secure attachment styles with depression in students ($p = .001$). And also there is a significant positive relationship between avoidance attachment style and ambivalence with depression in students ($p = .001$).

Lakhani, Jain and Chandel (2017) studied school adjustment, motivation and academic achievement among students. 120 students (60 males/60 females) of secondary classes from vasant dada patil school, Pimpri, Pune were randomly selected as sample for the study. Instruments for data collection were: The General Classroom Achievement Test, Adjustment Inventory of School Students and The Achievement Motive Test. Pearson's Correlational Coefficients and t-test were used for data analysis. Results obtained were as follows: No significant correlation between class achievement (1) and achievement motivation ($r = -.015$), no significant correlation between class achievement (1) and social adjustment ($r = .065$), no significant correlation between class achievement (1) and emotional adjustment ($r = -.012$), no significant correlation between social adjustment ($r = .065$) and achievement motivation ($r = -.159$), no significant correlation between social adjustment ($r = .065$) and emotional adjustment ($r = -.012$) and no significant correlation between emotional adjustment ($r = -.012$) and academic motivation ($r = -.159$).

Hutchison (2002) carried out a study to examine the relationship of adolescent attachment patterns to college student adjustment during the freshmen year. 47 undergraduate freshmen students between the ages of 18-19 participated in the study. Each participant completed four questionnaires including a demographic information survey, the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, the Texas Social Behaviour Inventory, and the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment. The results indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between overall adjustment to college and attachment to peers ($r = .463$, $p = .001$). There is also a significant relationship between college student adjustment during the freshmen year and attachment to an individual's mother ($r = .486$, $p < .001$) and attachment to an individual's father ($r = .378$, $p = .004$). A correlation was then conducted on the relationship between college student adjustment and attachment to parents, including mother and father. This also indicated a significant positive relationship between the two variables ($r = .422$, $p = .002$).

In a study conducted by Granot and Mayselless (2001) to examine attachment security and adjustment

to school in middle childhood, a sample of 113 children of 4th and 5th grade filled out a self-report measure of attachment security and were administered the Doll Story Completion task modified for use with children in middle childhood to assess the quality and the security of attachment-related representations of the relationship with the mother. Their teachers completed several questionnaires assessing each child's academic achievement, emotional and social adjustment, and frequency of behavioural problems. Also, each participating class underwent a sociometric procedure. Findings based on correlations and comparisons of attachment groups indicated that secure children showed better adjustment to school, avoidant and disorganised children showed the poorest adjustment.

Jeanne (2000) studied the relationship of parental attachment, peer attachment and self-concept to the adjustment of first year college students of the University of North, Texas. 158 students were used as sample for the study (79 men and 79 women). Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, Demographic Questionnaire, Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (2ndEd) and Students Adaptation to College Questionnaire were used for data collection. Results indicated that overall level of college eadjustment was predicted by a combination of mother attachment, father attachment, peer attachment, and overall self-concept. The attachment factors and overall self-concept together accounted for 56% of the variance ($R^2 = .557$) in college adjustment scores, $F(4, 74) = 23.22$, $p < .001$ (for men) and accounted for 48% of the variance ($R^2 = .482$) in college adjustment scores, $F(4, 74) = 17.19$, $p < .001$.(for women).

In a study conducted by Matthews (1994) to find out the influence of parental attachment and coping styles on the adjustment to college, 266 first year students from Jesuit College in the Northeast we reused as sample for the study. The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, The COPE Scale and a demographic questionnaire were used as instrument for data collection. The results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis indicated that both internal and external resources predicted academic and personal-emotional adjustment. The COPE emotion-focused and social support variables predicted academic adjustment with an inverse relationship between each predictor variable and academic adjustment. The COPE emotion-focused variable, peer attachment, and gender all predicted personal-emotional adjustment. Parental attachment did not predict any of the adjustment subscales.

School adjustment plays a vital role in the outcome of pupils' performance and achievement in academic endeavours. When there is difficulty in adjusting to school activities, there may likely be difficulty in achieving academic success and vice versa.

Many factors such as teacher-pupil relationships, relationship with peers or classmates e.t.c have been attributed to school adjustment, but it is not certain to the researchers whether some psychological factors such as parental attachment styles may be attributed to school adjustment of primary school pupils in Rivers State, Nigeria. At the primary school level, the children are younger and the influence of attachment may be more at this stage. Again, some studies carried out with similar variables were done mostly abroad using secondary school students thereby neglecting primary school pupils. It is for these reasons that there is a need to carry out a research to determine if parental attachment styles will correlate with school adjustment of primary school pupils. Therefore, the problem of the study is: How does parental attachment styles relate to school adjustment of primary school pupils? The researchers desire to answer this question spurred the conduct of this research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the conduct of this study:

1. What is the relationship between secure attachment style and school adjustment of primary school pupils?
2. How does ambivalent attachment style relate with school adjustment of primary school pupils?
3. How does avoidant attachment style relate with school adjustment of primary school pupils?
4. What is the joint relationship between attachment styles (secure, ambivalent and avoidant) and school adjustment of primary school pupils?

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between secure attachment style and school adjustment of primary school pupils.
2. Ambivalent attachment is not significantly related to school adjustment of primary school pupils.
3. Avoidant attachment style is not significantly related to school adjustment of primary school pupils.
4. Attachment styles (secure, ambivalent, and avoidant) jointly do not have significant relationship with school adjustment of primary school pupils.

METHODOLOGY

The correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the 8,086 primary school pupils (senior primary 5) in

all the 152 public primary schools in Port Harcourt, Obio-Akpor and Ikwerre local government areas of Rivers state. A sample of 485 primary 5 pupils in public primary schools was used for the study. Simple random sampling and proportionate sampling technique were adopted for the study. Simple random sampling (balloting) was used to draw 30 public primary school from the three local government areas; proportionate sampling technique was then used to draw the sample for the study. Two standardized instruments were adapted and used for data collection in the study. They include: "Adjustment Inventory for School Students" (AISS) developed by Sinha and Singh (1971) and "Attachment Styles Questionnaire" (ASQ) developed by Diane (2014). The items of AISS and ASQ were rated on a 4 point Likert scale of strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). Face content and construct validities were ensured. The reliability of the instruments was determined through the test-retest method for a measure of coefficient of stability and the following coefficients were obtained: .863 for School Adjustment and .861, .752 and .917 for

Secure, Ambivalent and Avoidant attachment styles respectively. The coefficients obtained were considered high enough to guarantee the use of the instruments as reliable for the study. Data obtained were analysed using simple regression analysis to answer research questions 1, 2, and 3, while multiple regression analysis was used to answer research question 4. T-test associated with simple regression was used to test hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 while analysis of variance (ANOVA) associated with multiple regression was used to test hypothesis 4.

RESULTS

Research question 1: What is the relationship between secure attachment style and school adjustment of primary school pupils?

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between secure attachment style and school adjustment of primary school pupils.

Table-1: Simple regression analysis showing the relationship between secure attachment style and school adjustment

Model summary	R	R2	Adjusted R2	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.567	.321	.320	4.57179	
Coefficient	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient		
Model (constant)	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	sig
Secure attachment	44.174	1.107		39.914	.000
	-.499	.033	-.567	-15.121	.000

The result in table 1 revealed that the R-value obtained for secure attachment and school adjustment was .567. This indicates that secure attachment had moderate relationship with school adjustment. To determine if the relationship was significant or not, t-test associated with the regression analysis was employed. It was observed that the beta value for secure attachment was -.567 and t-value was -15.121 which was significant at .000 and is less than the chosen probability level of .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis one was rejected. This implies statistically that secure

attachment has a negative and significant relationship with school adjustment.

Research question 2: How does ambivalent attachment style relate with school adjustment of primary school pupils?

Hypothesis 2: Ambivalent attachment style is not significantly related to school adjustment of primary school pupil.

Table-2: Simple regression analysis showing the relationship between ambivalent attachment style and school adjustment

Model summary	R	R2	Adjusted R2	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.126	.016	.014	5.50532	
Coefficient	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient		
Model (constant)	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	sig
Ambivalent attachment	30.386	.984		30.889	.000
	-.084	.030	-.126	-2.786	.006

The result in table 2 revealed that the R-value obtained for ambivalent attachment and school adjustment was .126. This indicates that ambivalent attachment had low relationship with school adjustment. To determine if the relationship was

significant or not, t-test associated with the regression analysis was employed. It was observed that the beta value for ambivalent attachment was -.126 and t-value was -2.786 which was significant at .006 and is less than the chosen probability level of .05. Therefore, the

null hypothesis two was rejected. This implies statistically that ambivalent attachment style has a negative and significant relationship with school adjustment.

Research question 3: How does avoidant attachment style relate with school adjustment of primary school pupil?

Hypothesis 3: Avoidant attachment style is not significantly related to school adjustment of primary school pupils.

Table-3: Simple regression analysis showing the relationship between avoidant attachment style and school adjustment

Model summary	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.002	.000	-.002	5.54936	
Coefficient	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient		
Model (constant)	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	sig
	27.667	1.575		17.565	.000
Avoidant attachment	.002	.051	.002	.044	.965

The result in table 3 revealed that the R-value obtained for avoidant attachment and school adjustment was .002. This indicates that avoidant attachment had low relationship with school adjustment. To determine if the relationship was significant or not, t-test associated with the regression analysis was employed. It was observed that the beta value for avoidant attachment was .002 and t-value was .044 which was significant at .965 and is higher than the chosen probability level of .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis three was accepted. This implies statistically that

avoidant attachment style has a positive and no significant relationship with school adjustment.

Research question 4: What is the joint relationship between attachment styles (secure, ambivalent and avoidant) and school adjustment of primary school pupils?

Hypothesis 4: Attachment styles (secure, ambivalent and avoidant) jointly do not have significant relationship with school adjustment of primary school pupils.

Table-4: Multiple regression analysis showing the joint relationship between attachment styles and school adjustment

Model summary	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.574	.330	.325	4.55292	
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of square	df	Mean square	f	Sig
Regression	4903.532	3	1634.511	78.851	.000
Residual	9970.686	481	20.729		
Total	14874.219	484			

The result in table 4 revealed the multiple regression analysis of the joint relationship between attachment styles (secure, ambivalent and avoidant) and school adjustment. The multiple regression coefficient obtained was .574, the value of R² was .330, while the adjusted coefficient of R² obtained was .325. This means that the three attachment styles collectively had a positive and moderate relationship with school adjustment. The R² value of .330 indicated that the joint relationship of the independent variables explained 33% of the variations in school adjustment.

collectively have significant relationship with school adjustment of primary school pupils.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The findings of the study were summarised as follows,

1. Secure attachment style had a moderate, negative and significant relationship with school adjustment.
2. The relationship between ambivalent attachment and school adjustment was low, negative and significant.
3. Avoidant attachment style had a low, positive and no significant relationship with school adjustment.
4. The joint relationship between attachment styles (secure, ambivalent and avoidant) and school adjustment was positive and significant.

To determine if the relationship was significant or not, analysis of variance (ANOVA) associated with multiple regression was employed. The calculated F-value of 78.851 was significant at .000 which is less than the chosen probability level of .05. Hence, the null hypothesis four was rejected. This implies that attachment styles (secure, ambivalent and avoidant)

DISCUSSION

The results got after data analysis indicated that there is a negative and statistically significant relationship between secure attachment style and school adjustment. This finding is similar to those of Ehibudu and Obikoya (2017), Hutchison (2002) and Granot and Mayseless (2001), who also found a significant relationship between secure attachment style and school adjustment and between attachment to parents and college students adjustment. However, the finding is in disagreement with that of Matthew (1994) whose finding indicated that parental attachment styles did not predict adjustment.

A low, negative and statistically significant relationship between ambivalent attachment style and school adjustment was found. This result is similar to those of Ehibudu and Obikoya (2017), Hasanvand et al. (2014), and Hutchison (2002) who in their studies, also found a significant relationship between ambivalent attachment style and school adjustment and depression. However, this finding is in disagreement with that of Matthew (1994) whose finding indicated that parental attachment styles did not predict adjustment.

Result of the study also indicated that there is a low positive and statistically no significant relationship between avoidant attachment style and school adjustment. This finding is similar to that of Matthew (1994) who also found that attachment styles do not predict school adjustment. However, the finding is in disagreement with those of Ehibudu and Obikoya (2017), Hasanvand et al. (2014), Hutchison (2002) and Grant and Mayseless (2001), who found that avoidant attachment had a significant relationship with school adjustment.

Finally, findings of the study indicated that attachment styles collectively had a significant relationship with school adjustment of primary school pupils at 0.05 level of probability. From the result, the R-value indicated that attachment style collectively has a positive relationship with school adjustment. The R^2 indicates that the relationship between the variables is moderate at 33%. From the ANOVA table, the F and P values showed a significant joint relationship between attachment styles and school adjustment. This finding is similar to those of Ehibudu and Obikoya (2017), Hutchison (2002) and Lee and Lee (2013) who also found in their studies that attachment styles collectively had significant relationship with school adjustment. However, the finding is in disagreement with that of Matthew (1994) who found that parental attachment style did not predict adjustment.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have revealed that secure and ambivalent attachment styles have significant relationship with school adjustment while

avoidant attachment style has no significant relationship with school adjustment. The result further revealed a joint significant relationship between secure ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles and school adjustment.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents should create an enabling home environment that will help boost their children's confidence as this will make them feel more relaxed outside the home thereby enabling them to adjust to school activities which will in turn boost their academic achievement.
2. Parents should ensure that they provide care and support for their children, as this will make the children feel secure with them.
3. Parents should as much as possible, respond to the needs of their children so that they will not feel neglected.
4. Teachers should try to pay attention to individual learners so as to identify those with adjustment issues in order to assist them in the adjustment process. When pupils are well adjusted, there will likely be a great improvement in their academic performance.

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