

Parental Support as Correlate of Scholastic Adjustment Among Public Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study investigated parental support as correlates of scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The correlational research design was adopted, guided by three research questions and three hypotheses. The population of the study consisted of 948,406 students in the 2024/2025 academic session. The sample size of the study was 495 students. One researcher developed instrument titled: "Parental Support and Scholastic Adjustment Scale" (PSSAS) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by research experts, while reliability was determined through the test re-test method, yielding a coefficient of .75 and .72 respectively. Data analysis employed Pearson's Product Moment Correlation using SPSS. The result of the study revealed that: parental encouragement had significant high positive relationship with scholastic adjustment. Parental warmth had significant moderate positive relationships, while parental assistance with homework had low positive relationship. The researcher made some recommendations, among which was that: parents should strive to improve on the warmth they offer their children via increased affection, love and nurturance for enhanced scholastic adjustment.*

Keywords: parental support, scholastic adjustment, secondary school students, Rivers State.

INTRODUCTION

Modern-day schooling presents students with a complex array of academic, social, and emotional demands that require continuous adaptation. One of the key constructs that explain how well

student's cope with these demands is scholastic adjustment. Scholastic adjustment involves students' ability to acclimatize to school expectations, adapt to instructional practices, and modify their behaviours to conform to established school norms and culture. It is an ongoing process through which students strive to balance personal characteristics with the demands of the school environment in order to achieve successful schooling outcomes (Longobardi et al., 2019).

Scholastic adjustment extends beyond academic performance to include emotional stability, resilience, positive peer and teacher relationships, attentiveness, and appropriate classroom behaviour. It reflects how effectively students manage classroom-related activities and respond to learning challenges in ways that promote desirable academic achievement (Longobardi et al., 2019; Tomás et al., 2020). According to Tomás et al. (2020), scholastic adjustment entails psychological and behavioural modifications as students regulate themselves to meet new academic expectations and learning requirements. Students who fail to adjust adequately to school demands often experience loss of interest in schooling, poor academic outcomes, and underachievement relative to their intellectual potential (Wong & Power, 2019; Tomás et al., 2020).

School constitutes a critical microsystem for adolescent development, making adjustment within the school context a major indicator of overall psychosocial well-being (León et al., 2021). Research has shown that effective scholastic adjustment contributes not only to academic and professional skill development but also to social-emotional competence, life satisfaction, and future independence (Mella et al., 2021; Symonds, D'Urso, & Schoon, 2022). Given that scholastic adjustment fluctuates considerably during adolescence (Kiuru et al., 2020), it is essential to identify factors that promote or hinder students' ability to adapt successfully to school life.

One of the most influential factors associated with scholastic adjustment is parental support. Parental support encompasses the emotional, social, and academic assistance parents provide to foster their children's development. According to Symonds et al. (2022), parents support their children through warmth, empathy, encouragement, guidance, and by modelling positive social behaviours. Such support plays a pivotal role in shaping students' personalities, academic aspirations, and adjustment patterns, as parents remain central agents in children's developmental trajectories (Mella et al., 2021). Empirical evidence suggests that parental support significantly predicts students' school adjustment, underscoring parents' capacity to enhance their children's successful adaptation to school demands (Symonds, D'Urso, & Schoon, 2022).

The dimensions of parental support relevant to scholastic adjustment include parental warmth, assistance with homework and encouragement. Parental warmth provides emotional security and nurturance, fostering a sense of belonging and self-worth that is vital for social and emotional development (Tomás et al., 2020; Iwundu, 2020). Assistance with homework enables parents to guide learning, improve comprehension, enhance confidence, and reduce academic stress (Kiuru et al., 2020). Parental encouragement promotes motivation, resilience, and a growth mindset through positive reinforcement of effort and achievement (Serna & Martinez, 2019). Despite the recognized importance of parental support in promoting scholastic adjustment, there is limited empirical evidence focusing on public secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. Socio-cultural, economic, and educational contextual factors may influence how parental support operates and how students adjust to school demands within this setting. Therefore, this study investigates parental support as a correlate of scholastic adjustment among public secondary school students in Rivers State, with particular attention to parental warmth, homework assistance and encouragement. Understanding these relationships is expected to provide insights that can inform parents, educators, counsellors, and policymakers on strategies for enhancing students' adjustment and overall school success.

Statement of the Problem

Scholastic adjustment is essential for students' academic progress, emotional stability, and social competence within the school environment. It refers to the extent to which students are able to cope with academic expectations, interact positively with teachers and peers, and manage school-related challenges. Students who are well-adjusted scholastically tend to participate actively in learning activities, maintain positive classroom behaviour, and perform well academically. However, students who experienced difficulties in scholastic adjustment often showed declining academic performance, weak motivation, behavioural issues, and strained social relationships, which could have long-term negative effects on their educational development.

In Rivers State, reports from teachers, school administrators, and guidance counselors indicated that a considerable number of students are experiencing challenges adjusting to school demands. Some students struggle to maintain concentration during lessons and showed low interest in academic work. Others frequently exhibit poor study commitment, examination anxiety, absenteeism, unfinished assignments, and difficulties interacting socially. These challenges limited student's academic progress and increased the likelihood of emotional stress, school withdrawal, and reduced educational aspirations.

Parental support is a significant factor influencing student's scholastic adjustment, however, in Rivers state, many parents face economic pressures, demanding work schedules, and limited educational backgrounds which may constrain their ability to provide consistent and effective support to their children's schooling. The absence or inadequacy of parental support may therefore exacerbate student's difficulties in adjusting to academic and social demands within the school system. Despite existing evidence on parental support and student outcomes, limited empirical studies have examined its relationship with scholastic adjustment among public secondary school students in Rivers State. This study addresses this gap.

Aim and Objectives: The aim of the study was to investigate parental support as correlates of scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State. Specifically, the study objectives were to;

1. determine the relationship between parental warmth and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State;
2. examine the relationship between parental assistance with home works and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State;
3. study the relationship between parental encouragement and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State;

Research Questions: The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between parental warmth and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between parental assistance with home works and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between parental encouragement and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between parental warmth and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between parental assistance with homework and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant relationship between parental encouragement and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholastic Adjustment: scholastic adjustment is a multidimensional construct that encompasses academic, emotional, and social adaptation (Raju & Rahamtulla, 2019). Students who are well-adjusted tend to experience higher academic success, lower levels of stress, and better relationships with peers and teachers. It reflects the ability of students to engage with academic activities, regulate their emotions, and form positive social connections in school (Yildirim et al., 2020). Lukman, (2023) opined that, scholastic adjustment plays a vital role in a child's life, and it is like a pillar on which child's entire life is based. It is not only related to a child's progress and achievement, but also their attitudes towards school, anxieties, loneliness, social support and academic motivation. Interpersonal relationship affects children's academic motivation. Relationship with peers and teachers is a powerful motivator. It was noted that school learning can be promoted by learning contexts that enhance student involvement with others. Research shows that children's loneliness and social dissatisfaction relate negatively to the influence that friends have on students' school adjustment (Tom, 2020).

Factors Influencing Scholastic Adjustment as inferred from Iwundu (2020) includes:

• Family Environment

The role of the family is critical in a student's scholastic adjustment. Parental support, family involvement, and home environment significantly contribute to students' academic and emotional adaptation (Pomerantz & Grolnick, 2020). A supportive home environment fosters a sense of security, allowing students to focus on their academic tasks. Conversely, family conflict or lack of parental involvement can hinder scholastic adjustment, leading to academic underachievement and emotional distress (Srinivasan et al., 2022).

Support Systems and Scholastic Adjustment

• Parental Support

Parental involvement continues to be a key factor in enhancing scholastic adjustment, as parents provide emotional, motivational, and academic support. Kim and Hill (2021) adduced that parental engagement in school activities and academic discussions leads to improved scholastic adjustment, especially in early and middle childhood.

• Emotional Support

Emotional support involves providing a nurturing environment where children feel loved, valued, and secure. It is worthy of note that children who perceive emotional support from their parents are more likely to have positive social relationships and a higher sense of autonomy.

• Psychological Well-Being

Parental support is also crucial for children's mental health and emotional well-being. A supportive home environment provides children with the emotional resources necessary to cope with stress and adversity. Adolescents who perceive higher levels of parental support tend to report lower levels of anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues (Maier 2021).

Parental emotional warmth refers to the praise, unconditional love, and support and coordination provided by fathers and mothers in response to children's requests and demands, aiming to nurture their personality, self-regulation, and self-assertion abilities serves as a crucial aspect that warrants investigation within the context of parenting style (Liu and Wang 2021). Rothenberg et al. (2022) defined parental warmth as accepting, caring, and supportive parenting. O'Neill et al. (2021) opined that parental warmth is a complex and multifaceted resource to children that is vital to their survival and healthy socio-emotional development. Parental warmth is one of many mechanisms that humans have evolved to extract information from their environment to determine whether it is safe, and whether their caregiver can reliably meet their needs.

Parental assistance with home works refers to the guidance and support provided by parents or guardians to their children as they complete their assignments and projects at home. Kiuru et al. (2020) disclosed that this assistance can be beneficial in various ways, including fostering improved understanding, increased confidence, enhanced learning, strengthened relationship, better time management and reduced stress. Maier (2021) opined that homework is perhaps one of the most important aspects of a student's academic journey. It offers an opportunity to reinforce classroom learning and allows students to practice and apply what they have learned in school. Homework also helps students develop important skills such as time management, perseverance, and responsibility. However, the effectiveness of homework also depends on the support provided by parents. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) pointed out that parents are a child's first and foremost teacher, and they play a crucial role in their academic progress. When parents are actively involved in their child's homework, it can have a significant impact on their overall academic experience (Obasun, 2023). A student's academic success is often determined by their ability to

complete homework assignments on time and accurately. When parents are actively involved in their child's homework, it fosters a positive learning environment which encourages academic success. Homework acts as a bridge between school and home, and parental support is crucial in reinforcing classroom learning. The cooperation between parents and teachers, and parental involvement in children's homework has received a lot of attention in recent years among professionals in the field.

Parental encouragement is the support and positive reinforcement provided by parents or guardians to their children, helping them develop confidence, self-esteem, and a growth mindset. Encouragement can be verbal or non-verbal, and it is essential to acknowledge and celebrate children's efforts, progress, and achievements (Serna and Martinez 2019). Vyas (2021) remarked that parental encouragement can be packaged as the motivation or extra-helping given by the guardians to the youngsters for their dynamic association in scholastic life. Parental consolation assumes a significant part in the arrangement of life of kids. It likewise empowers them to confront the difficulties of life. It includes various things like profound comprehension of formative cycle and learning of demeanors, clever, character designs, entomb individual activity and socialization and so on (Iwundu, 2020). Parental Encouragement in higher optional training is fundamental for kids to find success in school and later in their lives. Lakshmana and Rajasekaran (2021) defined parental encouragement as the general process undertaken by the parents to motivate and giving directions to the behaviour of the children towards high scholastic achievement. Parental Encouragement and contribution in training is related with (i) better grades and grades, (ii) better participation, (iii) higher paces of schoolwork culmination, (iv) expansion in uplifting outlooks and ways of behaving at school and at home, (v) higher graduation rates, (vi) higher school participation rates, (vii) more prominent generally speaking understudy accomplishment, (viii) better disposition toward school and individual branches of knowledge, (ix) additional opportunity to spent on schoolwork and contemplating, and (x) better self-idea.(Lakshamana & Rajasekaran, 2021).

Theoretical Foundations

The relationship between parental support and student's scholastic adjustment was anchored on Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979). The theory emphasized the complex interplay between an individual and their multiple environmental systems. According to this theory, a student's scholastic adjustment is influenced by different levels of their environment, ranging from their immediate school and family settings to broader societal factors. Bronfenbrenner (1979) in Rosa and Tudge (2023) identified five environmental systems that

impact development and adjustment: the microsystem (e.g., family, school), mesosystem (connections between microsystems), exosystem (indirect influences like parents' work), macrosystem (cultural values), and chronosystem (life changes over time).

In the context of scholastic adjustment, Bronfenbrenner's theory highlights how factors like family support, peer relationships, school policies, and broader socio-economic conditions collectively shape a student's academic experiences. For instance, students from well-supported families (microsystem) who attend schools that foster positive peer relationships (mesosystem) are more likely to adjust successfully to academic demands (Bronfenbrenner 1979 in Rosa & Tudge, 2023).

This theory can be used to examine how different environmental factors influence students' academic performance and overall adjustment, leading to interventions that target both personal and environmental support systems hence it's inclusion in the study. The theory is often visualized as a set of concentric circles, each representing a different environmental layer, with the individual at the center. Over time, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model has been expanded and refined, offering invaluable insights into how environments and social systems influence individual growth and development across the lifespan. Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that individuals are nested within various environmental systems that influence their development. Bronfenbrenner outlined these systems in a hierarchical model, which consists of five key levels: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Each of these systems has a unique role in shaping the individual's experiences and development (Bronfenbrenners, 1979).

Empirical Review

Empirical findings from different contents suggest that parental support is a significant factor in students' scholastic adjustment. In line with this, Liu et al. (2024) examined family and school influences on individuals' early and later adjustment in China. Their findings showed that children with high parental warmth were more likely to get high approaches to learning and their self-efficacy played a partial mediating role in this link. In addition, teacher-child closeness moderated the correlation between parental warmth and children's self-efficacy. Specifically, the association between parental warmth and children's self-efficacy was stronger for children with high teacher-child closeness than those with low teacher-child closeness. The findings extend our understanding of how parental warmth affects children's approaches to learning, revealing that strategies that could enhance self-efficacy would be effective in improving children's approaches to learning.

However, Park et al. (2023) warned that when parents monitor, check, and assist in completing homework without an invitation, their children's motivation and academic achievement often decline. The researchers proposed that intrusive support from parents might also send the message that children are incompetent, especially if they believe their intelligence is fixed. These findings suggest that the belief that intellectual ability cannot be changed may exacerbate the detrimental effects of uninvited help on academic work.

Further empirical evidence is offered by Ghazee and Islam (2021), who identified the relationship between parental encouragement and self-regulated learning with academic achievement among senior secondary school students in India. The study revealed that a significant relationship exists between parental encouragement and academic achievement and an insignificant relationship between self-regulated learning and academic achievement.

Research Gap

An overview of the reviewed empirical literature revealed that most of the studies were foreign in nature, hence the need to fill the missing link or gap by conducting the present research in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study adopted correlational research design. The design was appropriate for examining the association between parental support and scholastic adjustment without experimental manipulation. It enabled the assessment of relationships among naturally occurring variables.

Area of the Study: The study was conducted in Rivers State, Nigeria, comprising 23 Local Government Areas distributed across three senatorial districts. The State has a large population of public senior secondary school students, providing a suitable context for the investigation.

Population of the Study: 948,406 public Senior Secondary School Three (SS3) students in Rivers State as at 2024 formed the population of the study. These students were drawn from State-owned secondary schools offering Science, Arts, and Social Science subjects, and represents mostly adolescents preparing for their Senior School Certificate Examinations.

Sample and Sampling Techniques: 495 students were selected using a multistage stratified random sampling technique. First the state was stratified into three senatorial districts. Three Local

Government Areas were randomly selected from each district. One public secondary school was selected per LGA and 55 students were randomly sampled from each school.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Parental Support and Scholastic Adjustment Scale" (PSSAS). Parental support was measured through validated sub-dimensions including warmth, assistance and encouragement. Responses were rated on a 4-point Likert scale.

Validation of the Instrument

Content validity was established through expert review in Educational Psychology and Guidance and Counselling.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability was determined using the test re-test method with Pearson Product Moment Correlation, yielding acceptable reliability coefficients.

Administration of the Instrument

A letter of introduction was presented to the principals of the selected schools. The researcher, with the assistance of three trained research assistants, visited the schools, explained the purpose of the study, and administered the questionnaires. Rapport was established with the students, and they were guided on how to respond accurately. The instrument was administered with support from teachers.

Data Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the relationship between parental support and scholastic adjustment at the 0.05 level of significance using SPSS.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the relationship between parental warmth and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between parental warmth and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 1: Relationship between Parental Warmth and Scholastic Adjustment

		Parental warmth	Scholastic adjustment
Parental warmth	Pearson Correlation	1	.631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	450	450
Scholastic Adjustment	Pearson Correlation	.631**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	450	450

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result indicates a moderate positive and significant relationship between parental warmth and scholastic adjustment ($r = .631$, $p < .001$). Hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between parental assistance with home works and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between parental assistance with homework and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 2 Relationship between Parental Assistance with Homework and Scholastic Adjustment

		Parental assistance with homework	Scholastic Adjustment
Parental assistance with homework	Pearson Correlation	1	.312**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	450	450
Scholastic adjustment	Pearson Correlation	.312**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	450	450

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result shows a low positive and significant relationship between parental assistance with homework and scholastic adjustment ($r = .312$, $p = .001$). Hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between parental encouragement and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between parental encouragement and scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 3 Relationship between Parental Encouragement and Scholastic Adjustment

		Parental encouragem ent	Scholastic adjustment
Parental encouragement	Pearson Correlation	1	.876**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	450	450
Scholastic adjustment	Pearson Correlation	.876**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	450	450

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result reveals a strong positive and significant relationship between parental encouragement and scholastic adjustment $r (= .876, p < .001)$. Hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Parental Warmth and Scholastic Adjustment

The findings revealed that parental warmth has a significant moderate positive relationship with scholastic adjustment, suggesting that balanced emotional support enhances students' academic adaptation. However, excessive warmth may limit independence and competitiveness. This aligns with Martinez-Escudero et al. (2022), who found that parental warmth predicts academic self-concept and adjustment, and Parmer and Nathans (2022), who identified warmth and involvement as predictors of achievement.

Parental Assistance with Homework and Scholastic Adjustment

Parental assistance with homework showed a significant but low positive relationship with scholastic adjustment. While supportive involvement may strengthen learning, over-assistance can foster dependency. This supports Benckwitz et al. (2023), who reported that controlling parental practices may negatively affect outcomes, and Maria-Magdolna (2023), who emphasized constructive parental involvement in improving achievement.

Parental Encouragement and Scholastic Adjustment

Parental encouragement demonstrated a strong positive relationship with scholastic adjustment, highlighting its motivational role in enhancing engagement and coping skills. This corroborates Ghazee and Islam (2021), who found parental encouragement significantly associated with academic success.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that: parental support is vital to scholastic adjustment among public senior secondary school students in Rivers State. When parents support their children via encouragement, warmth and assistance with homework they endear their children to adjust scholastically. Strengthening parental involvement in education will enhance students' scholastic adjustment and academic success.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended as follows:

1. Parents should desist from doing homework for their children; they should rather constrain themselves to offering guidance when the need arise as assistance with homework has a significant low positive relationship with scholastic adjustment.
2. Parents should strive to improve on the warmth they offer their children via increased affection, love and nurturance for enhanced scholastic adjustment.
3. Parents should strive to encourage their children on daily basis to commit themselves fully to their educational development for adjustment purposes.
4. Schools should organize parental education programs on effective support strategies.
5. Government should implement policies promoting parent involvement in schools.

6. Future researchers should examine other family and school factors influencing scholastic adjustment.

Implications for Guidance and counselling Practices:

- a. **Systematic Counselling Approaches:**
School counsellors should adopt systematic frameworks that involve families as active partners in promoting scholastic adjustment.
- b. **Parent Consultation Services:**
Counselling programmes should include structured parent consultation sessions to promote autonomy-supportive involvement.
- c. **Strengthening Family-School Partnerships:**
Collaborative models between educators, counselors, and parents should be institutionalized to enhance student outcomes.
- d. **Cross-Cultural Sensitivity:**
Counsellors working in multicultural settings should consider cultural variations in parenting practices when designing interventions.

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