

Interpersonal Relationship Behaviours, Perceived Social and Civic Obligations, Background Variables and Academic Achievement among Senior Secondary School Students in Bayelsa State of Nigeria

Agnes Ebi Maliki

*Department of Educational Foundations, Niger Delta University, P. M. B. 071,
Wilberforce Island, 560001, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
E-mail: agnesmaliki@yahoo.com*

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ABSTRACT The study sought to examine the differences between interpersonal relationship behaviours, perceived social and civic obligations, background variables and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Bayelsa State of Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted in this study. The sample consisted of 228 male students and 222 female students, all of senior secondary three randomly selected. The findings revealed that there were significant differences in students' measure of interpersonal relationship behaviours and perceived social and civic obligations on the basis of sex, fathers' educational attainment, number of siblings, age of father and academic achievement. Male and female students whose fathers had higher educational attainment, as well as those from large families, who had older fathers and those with higher educational attainment were on the average in their interpersonal relational relationship behaviours and social and civic obligations than their male counterparts, whose fathers were less educated, had fewer number of siblings, had younger fathers and lower achievement scores.

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal relationship has the potential to influence classroom performance and learning outcomes in positive ways and also negatively. Within the classroom, students tend to interact with each other more than with their teachers. These interactions are typically under constant teacher supervision, they can complement teacher behaviour in ways that directly support the instructional process. Students provide each other with valuable resources necessary to accomplish academic task. Students frequently clarify and interpret their teachers concerning what they should be doing and how to do it, provide mutual assistance in the form of volunteering substantive information and answering questions and as such share various school materials such as books, pencils, pens, and papers. Classmates also provide each other with information by modelling both academic achievements. Peers provide each other with normative standards for performance by comparing works and grades.

In recent years, there have been some controversies on the precise role of interpersonal relationship behaviours in promoting academic achievement. In this regard, Wentzel (1991) opined that the capacity of the student to ad-

here to his/her role requirements for learning behaviour such as high time- in- task and paying attention as may be appropriate during the learning process, which are demonstrably positive predictors of learning could provide the avenue for making appropriate learning. According to Thomas (1998) that posited that such and other behaviours serve to accelerate the learning process and consequently enhance the degree of recorded learning. In the same vein, socially irresponsible behaviours such as classroom disruptive activities like noise making, bullying and fighting serve only to reduce time on task and to vitiate appropriate engagement in learning activities. The effect of this is a decline in gains and diminished academic achievement. There is the perception that students' adherence to classroom rules offers a fertile ground that enables them focus their efforts on teaching – learning progress. In other words having positive interpersonal relationship behaviours and positive perception of social and civic obligations offers the student the motivational orientation that is necessary for success in school work. In the same vein, Kodzi et al. (2011) posited that good interpersonal interactions of teachers with students had positive effects on academic achievement, good interpersonal interactions with teachers and parents had posi-

tive effects on academic achievement; a situation where parents provided materials and financial support and were generally involved in school affairs those students had better grades than students whose parents were not involved. Lack of parental involvement in the classroom also had negative effects on students' grades. They concluded that the quality of social relationships is associated with academic outcomes.

Wetzel and Watkins (2002) revealed in their study that quality of students' peer relationships affect academic orientation and performance. In the same vein Duflo et al. (2009) examined the impact of peer academic performance on peers of first graders in a randomized evaluation of a tracking system and found that high achieving students maintained their higher performance while low achieving student indirectly benefited from tracking through their teachers teaching at a level more appropriate to the students.

The home is the first social group with which the child comes in contact. As the child spends more of his time at home than in school, it is considered that the home could either be a motivating or an inhibiting factor to the child's learning at school. Responsible behaviour at school appears to be an important social competency that links the overall quality of family functioning to student's academic achievement. For example, parental marital satisfaction and the use of child – centred practices are positively related to social responsibility in pre- adolescence as measured by consideration for others, suppression of aggression, and impulse control (Feldman et al. 1990). Also appropriate forms of parental control are related to parental hostility and maladaptive forms of parents – child interaction are also related negatively to classroom specific measures of social responsibility. Muola (2010) revealed that eighth grade students' in Machakos district in Kenya found that student motivation for academic achievement was associated with home background predictors, essentially parental socio-economic status.

The incidences of students' anti- social behaviours have tremendously increased in intensity and magnitude in recent years. It is pertinent to state that students are misled and damage their lives in socially irresponsible behaviours causing damage to their pursuit resulting into school attrition. It is against this background that this study sought to examine the

differences between interpersonal relationship behaviours, perceived social and civic obligations, background variables and academic achievement.

The following hypotheses were raised to guide this study:

1. There is no significant difference in students' interpersonal relationship behaviours on the basis of sex, parental educational attainment, number of siblings, parental age and academic achievement.
2. There is no significant difference in students' perceived social and civic obligations on the basis of sex, parental educational attainment, number of siblings, parental age and academic achievement.

METHODOLOGY

This study was a survey research design. The population from which the study was drawn was 66,345 senior secondary school students of Bayelsa – State.

The sample was made up of 450 senior secondary three students. Stratified random sampling technique was used to derive the sample. Data were collected in 2009/2010 academic session. The state was stratified into three urban, sub – urban and rural areas. Three secondary schools were selected from each area. A total of 9 schools were randomly selected by balloting, 50 senior secondary three students from each of these schools.

The instruments used for this study are: (i) Social Responsibility Scale (SRS) and (ii) Achievement Test (AT). The Social Responsibility scale is a 57 item scale of sections A and B. Section A had 7 items that sought students' personal information such as sex, name of school, parental educational level, parental age, number of siblings. All the 50 items in section B were raised to elicit information regarding social responsibility using 5 dimensions. Accordingly, item 1-7 sought interpersonal relationship information, items 8-16 sought social and civic obligations information, items 17-27 sought health and moral duties information, items 28-34 sought within family behaviours and items 35-50 sought within school behaviours information. All the items were raised on a four- point Likert scale, ranging from always, most times, hardly and never.

The Achievement Test consisted of 90 items with 30 items from 3 compulsory subjects, En-

glish Language, Mathematics and Biology; these were drawn from West African Examination Council Syllabus.

The instruments were validated by Professors of Educational Administration, Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation. They ensured content validity of the instruments. The reliability of the instruments were determined by a test-retest for Social Responsibility Scale and Split half for Achievement Test. The instruments were administered to 100 senior secondary school three students randomly selected in two schools in Cross River State. The derived reliability estimates for the various dimensions for Social Responsibility Scale are 0.86, 0.89, 0.94 and 0.85. While Achievement Test yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.85. Data were analysed using independent t- test.

RESULTS

Hypothesis One

This hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in students' interpersonal relationship behaviours on the basis of sex, parental educational attainment, number of siblings, parental age, and academic achievement. The hypothesis was tested using independent t-test. The result is presented in Table 1.

The result of Table 1 shows that significant difference exist in students interpersonal relationship behaviours on the basis of sex, fathers education, number of siblings, age of father and academic achievement. In that, female students showed significantly greater levels of interpersonal relationship behaviours (mean = 18.96; SD = 4.65) as compared to their male counterparts (mean = 15.24; SD = 4.42). The observed

t- value was 9.13. Similarly, students whose fathers had higher educational attainment (mean = 16.11; SD=4.82) with the calculated t-value standing at 3.18. In the same vein, students from large families proved inferior (mean = 16.16; SD= 5.04) in terms of interpersonal relationship behaviours scores as compared to their counterparts from smaller sized families (mean = 18.13; SD= 4.91). Also students whose fathers were older scored higher in interpersonal relationship behaviours than those whose fathers are younger. Their mean scores were 17.81 (SD= 4.36) and 16.12 (SD= 4.79) with a calculated t-value of 3.84. Students who had higher achievement scores were superior in their interpersonal relationship scores (mean = 18.77; SD= 5.15) than those with lower academic achievement scores. The calculated t- value was 7.13. This hypothesis was therefore rejected; one can therefore conclude that there is a significant difference in students' interpersonal relationship behaviours on the basis of sex, parental educational attainment, number of siblings, parental age, and academic achievement.

Hypothesis Two

This hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in students' perceived social and civic obligations on the basis of sex, parental educational attainment, number of siblings, parental age and academic achievement. The hypothesis was tested using independent t- test. The result is presented in Table 2.

Results indicated that of the seven variables on the basis of which differences in students perceived social and civic obligations, number of siblings and academic achievement were found to be significant factors. In respect to sex,

Table 1: Means, student deviations and t- values depicting differences in students' interpersonal relationship behaviours on the basis of some background variables and academic achievement

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>
Sex	Male	228	15.24	4.42	9.13*
	Female	222	18.96	4.65	
Fathers Education	High	110	17.73	4.08	3.18*
	Low	340	16.11	4.82	
Mothers Education	High	100	17.28	5.01	1.51
	Low	350	16.54	4.56	
No. of Siblings	Large	240	18.13	4.61	4.19*
	Small	210	16.16	5.04	
Age of Father	Young	208	17.81	4.36	3.84*
	Old	242	16.12	4.76	
Age of Mother	Young	236	16.84	4.68	0.35
	Old	224	16.69	4.43	

Table 2: Means, standard deviation and t- values depicting differences in students' perceived Social and civic obligations on the basis of some background variables and academic achievement

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Dimension</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>
Sex	Male	228	20.26	6.35	6.64*
	Female	222	24.18	6.82	
Fathers Education	High	110	23.82	7.04	3.84*
	Low	340	21.09	6.31	
Mothers Education	High	100	22.89	6.78	1.03
	Low	350	22.15	6.47	
No. of Siblings	Large	240	23.16	6.84	2.41*
	Small	110	21.63	6.98	
Age of Father	Young	208	22.94	7.02	1.09
	Old	242	22.21	7.11	
Age of Mother	Young	236	22.70	7.08	0.50
	Old	224	22.47	6.43	

females were found to be significantly higher in their perceived social and civic obligations. The mean scores were 24.18 (SD= 6.82) and 20.26 (SD= 6.35) respectively. Students whose fathers had higher educational attainment, perceived social and civic obligations (mean=23.82; SD= 7.04) higher than their counterparts whose fathers had lower educational attainment (mean = 21.09; SD= 6.31). Similarly, students from larger families were inferior (21.63; SD= 6.98) to their counterparts from small families in terms of their perceived civic obligations. The calculated t- values for these significant cases of differences were 6.64, 3.84 and 2.41 respectively. Finally, higher academic achieving students scored higher (mean = 24.36; SD= 6.93) with a calculated t- value of 6.65. The hypothesis was therefore rejected in this instance.

No significant differences could be established on the basis of mothers' education, fathers' age and mothers' age. Mothers with higher educational attainment had higher mean values on perceived social and civic obligations than those whose mothers' had lower educational attainments while children of older fathers were found to have higher mean scores than those fathers that were younger. The mean values for this latter case were 22.94 (SD= 7.02) and 22.21 (SD= 7.11). Also students whose mothers' were younger scored less (mean = 22.79; SD= 7.08) with a calculated t – value of 0.05. In the light of this the hypothesis was retained.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that male and female differ in their interpersonal relationship behaviours. Female students' showed greater levels of interpersonal relationship

behaviours than the male students'. This is supported by Erickson and Erickson (1984). They posited that females demonstrate greater levels of social responsibility than males. In that, social and cultural factors work together to create different experiences and expectations for boys and girls to communicate to children what behaviours are considered sex appropriate. In Nigeria, boys and girls are afforded different experiences in their course of growth, and indeed for greater parts of their lives. For example, the toys of boys differ from those of girls. In most Nigerian sub- cultures, females are expected to be homely and to spend greater part of their time at home helping their mothers with home chores. These behaviours are considered unusual for males who are expected to interact with others in the home, challenge existing social milieu and to be generally adventurous and risk – oriented in their behaviours. Also girls are allowed to engage in risk free physical behaviours or plays while boys participate in basically violent plays.

Given the complexity of the social processes to which boys and girls are differentially exposed to, and the social reinforcement that accrue to the display of sex appropriate behaviours, it would follow that raising female to be pliable, conforming, accommodating, gentle and loving only serves to predispose them towards social acceptance rather than challenge their limits of behaviours as spelt out or specified by society. This is supported by Kelly (2001) who noted that girls are disadvantaged in science because they are not socially raised to venture into the unknown.

The findings also revealed that there is a difference among respondents on the basis of parental level of educational attainment. Students

whose parents were more educated had higher scores as compared to their counterparts. This is supported by the study of Williams and Stith (1994) which revealed that the constitution, values and practices of individuals from two categories: the highly educated and poorly educated could affect children's perception in social and civic obligations and academic achievement. Students whose parents come from essentially what may be referred to as middle class background where education, social striving, honesty, moderation, thrift, delayed gratification are highly endorsed and valued. The family's strong emphasis on education as a strong tool for personal development and social survival can be seen in child rearing practices among members of this social class and their emphasis on essentially honest competition, good achievement and conforming of existing social rules. In that, because the families are relatively smaller in size, parental supervision on their children is on the average higher than would obtain in the homes of the poorly educated. The results of these family characteristics or traits are that, on the average the children have a better focus of life, exhibit better social behaviours and generally are more inclined to be socially responsible.

On the other hand, those from homes where parents are poorly educated may be characterized by such social problems as psychosis, divorce, physical diseases, illegitimate children, unemployment, poor housing conditions and inadequate educational facilities. According to Chilman (1996), these children are not only plagued by the above social problems, they also exhibit stereotype labels such as undependable, lazy, dirty, good – for – nothing, moral decadence and stupid. This is to say that homes where the parents are not highly educated are essentially poor lower class homes. To a large extent, these parents are unable to meet the physical, social and psychological needs of the children. This may in turn affect their academic achievement negatively. This is also supported by the study of Kodzi et al. (2011) who posited that good interpersonal interactions with teachers and parents had positive effects on academic achievement; a situation where parents provided materials and financial support and were generally involved in school affairs those students had better grades than students whose parents were not involved. Lack of parental involvement

in the classroom also had negative effects on students' grades.

The study also revealed that number of siblings or family size was not significantly related to social and civic obligations, it was shown that respondents from small families were on the average more socially responsible than those from large families. There was a consistent pattern in the data indicating that the former groups were superior as compared to their counterparts in this regard. This could be as a result of the family structure that exists in small and large families.

A major finding of this study is that students with high levels of interpersonal relationship, social and civic obligations were shown to achieve higher in their examinations. This is supported by the study of Safer (2000) that showed that academic achievement in school is positively related to the display of appropriate classroom conduct. The study by Kodzi et al. (2011) is in support of this finding in that they revealed that good interpersonal interactions of teachers with students had positive effects on academic achievement,

CONCLUSION

Background variables such as home environmental conditions are important in the formation of cognitive abilities. Cognitive abilities include a child's measured intelligence, his creativity, the manner in which he conducts interpersonal relationships, and his level of thinking. Educated parents were likely to provide both financial and material support to ensure their children's progress. Children from deprived social background lagged behind in most aspects of school learning as parents find it difficult to provide financial and material assistance for their education. A high social status gives a child high self-esteem and a high self-esteem seems to a large measure to be due to parental affection, consistency and democratic behaviour that is to do things that make a child feel valued, significant and responsible member of the family. The influence of parents is one of the strongest and most persistent factors determining the child's interests in school. Not only do parents influence his attitude toward school generally but they have profound influence on his attitude toward the importance of education, toward studying, toward different school subjects and

towards his teachers. When parents show interest in the child's schooling and pride in his achievements, he usually lives up to his capacities. When they are indifferent, the child is likely to be indifferent also.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that parents should painstakingly ensure proper and productive upbringing of their children. This is because it is the family that lays the foundation for the various forms of behaviours shown by a child this can be done through emphasis on culturally relevant aspects of their social lives.

Also given the favourable role that could be played by intrinsic motivation in both academic and social learning situation, it is recommended that various mass media agencies in Bayelsa State be contracted to commence mass media campaigns that portray the individual and group benefits of socially responsible behaviours as a means to stimulating appropriate intrinsic motivations among the citizenry for acquisition and demonstration of socially responsible behaviours.

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