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Social Life Adjustment and Academic Achievement of Adolescents in the Northwest Region of Cameroon: What Counsellors Need to Know

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Abstract: This study aimed at finding out the effects of social life adjustment on the academic achievements of adolescents in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon and also to verify if the social life adjustment and academic achievement apply equally for both male and female. Four hundred and eighty (480) students were randomly sampled from three secondary schools in major urban areas of the Region. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. A self-constructed questionnaire with the Likert scale on social life adjustment was used to gather the necessary data. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The data were analysed using the chi-square and Fishers' Z scores for gender. The findings revealed that social life adjustment had significant influence on students' academic achievements in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon. It was also found that there exist no significant difference in the effects of social life adjustment on academic performance between boys and girls. Based on these findings, it was recommended amongst others that, counsellors should constantly monitor and guide adolescents properly during class periods, recess periods and extracurricular activities in order for them to achieve academically. Keywords: Social life adjustment; Adolescents; Academic achievements; Cameroon.

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1. Introduction

Achievement is setting a goal either financial or the accomplishment of learning a difficult skill, or improving your health and through hard work accomplishing the desired goal. Achievement is something successfully attained. Academic achievement refers to outcome/performance of education. It has been linked to differences in intelligence and personality. Hoyle (1986) argued that schools are established with the aim of imparting knowledge and skills to those who go through them and behind all this is the idea of enhancing good academic performance. Thus it indicates the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments. Agubosi (2003) outlined some causes of poor academic achievement in adolescent students including the inability to cope with anxiety, rigidity of thought and poor study habit, lack of reading skills, unplanned and sporadic attempt to study, low rate of productivity resulting in inability to complete work on time, poor note taking, inability to develop arguments in a reasoned and coherent manner, lack of good expression in written work, and inability to reason logically.

Adolescence is a period of human life full of adjusted problems which are due to various physical changes, psychological changes, behavioral changes, cognitive changes etc. According to Nsamenang (2004), it becomes difficult for the adolescent to cope up with the various adjustment problems since they face problems, at home, school, society and within peer group. This is the period of physiological change. It is the period when children become sexually mature. It is also the period of intensified personal interaction with peers of the same and opposite sex (Nsamenang, 2004). Agubosi (2003) stated that it is the era of peer grouping when the adolescents spend most time with their age group. According to the above author, this stage is a period of storm, stress and identity formation.

Adolescents who have problems in their social lives are likely not to perform well and are usually withdrawn, shy and anti-social among their mates (Nsamenang, 2004). The end result of the above is truancy and absenteeism from school. Obe (1998) sees truancy as when a student stays away from school regularly without permission, whereas absenteeism is when there is high rate of absence when regular attendance is required.

Young adolescents have a strong need to belong to a group—with peer approval becoming more important as adult approval decreases in importance. This need often results in fierce loyalty to peer groups "Friendships, positive peer relationships, and social interactions can boost young adolescents' self-esteem." As young adolescents mature

socially, they often experience opposing loyalties to peer group and family. Social maturity often lags behind physical and intellectual development.

A characteristic of adolescent thinking that is relevant to a discussion of their play activities is adolescent egocentrism. According to [Nsamenang \(2004\)](#), the two major forms of egocentrism during the teenage years have been referred to as the imaginary audience and the personal fable, and both result from the adolescent's failure to distinguish his or her thought processes from those of other people. The imaginary audience is the belief that what is of interest to oneself is of interest to others as well, and adolescents are often shocked to discover that their passion for a particular cause is not shared by other people. Adolescents often feel, on the other hand, that other people are as interested in them as they are in themselves. Personal fable is the adolescent belief that one is unique and that no one else could possibly share or understand one's thoughts and feelings. The often tragic element in the personal fable is that a teenager may take frightening risks, secure in the belief that nothing bad could happen to him or her. Bad things happen only to other people. Consequently, young adolescents may overreact to social situations, ridicule others, and feel embarrassment. There is therefore need for adjustment.

According to [Osa-Edoh and Iyamu \(2012\)](#) the ability of adolescents to adapt to various rules and regulations of a given society calls for social life adjustment. The concept of social life of adolescents is associated with the way they life their lives in various communities. Adjustment refers to the behavioral process by which humans and other animals maintain equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environments. This, according to [Dickens \(2006\)](#) includes how he relates to other (interpersonal) and how he deals with his responsibilities and inner feelings. Psychologically, adjustment helps the organism to cope with the demands and pressures of the outside world as well as the needs, desires and conflicts experiences from within.

Thus, adjustment helps for self-initiated growth and development along intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and vocational dimensions. But when the reverse is the case, social life problem arise ([Osa-Edoh and Iyamu, 2012](#)). Social problems are conditions affecting a significant number of people in ways considered undesirable, about which something ought to be done through collective social action ([Horton et al., 1991](#)). Adjustment problem starts right from the birth of and continues till death. Adolescence stage of life is full of stresses and strains. Therefore an adolescent will be considered well-adjusted if his social life is free of problems.

Adjustment is associated with living systems: system of organs, psychological systems or personality systems, group of individuals, that is, social systems, closely structured such as social organizations. In the process of adjustment, forces can be seen balanced naturally within the system with forces originating from the environment ([Bhagat and Baliya, 2016](#)). The immediate goals of the process may be characterized generally as a type of equilibrium with the system and in the interaction of the system with the environment. Generally, adjustment refers to an individual's general adaptation to his environment and the demands of life such as the way he relates to other people (that is, interpersonal behaviour), how he handles his responsibilities, deals with stress, inadequacy in learning, growing up and meeting his own needs and life satisfactions. Since life is constantly changing, the ability to revise one's attitude and behaviour appropriately is an essential ingredient of adjustment. Life adjustment is easier when the individual is educated. There are several issues which an individual needs to adjust to in their academic life, social life, marital life, job experience etc.

Adjustment is generally divided into social and personal spheres of reference. In a social context, a person might be judged as poorly adjusted when compared with some cultural norms. Value judgements are often made by reference to behaviour in one of several major role areas such as work, marriage, leisure or family activities. Social adjustment may include how the person interacts with others or, in a narrower sense, how the person conforms to social expectations ([Levy-Wasser and Katz, 2004](#)).

The personal aspects of adjustment can be determined by asking the person about his feelings, attitudes cognitive and behavioural characteristics: only the individual can subjectively assess the degree of adjustment and satisfaction experienced ([Hannah, & Mildlarsky, 1999](#) cited in [Osa-Edoh and Iyamu \(2012\)](#)). [Rodrigue et al. \(1993\)](#) suggested three major determinants of personal adjustment, viz;

- Subjective happiness and contentment
- Relative freedom from handicapping anxiety, and
- Sufficient frustration tolerance and flexibility to meet and deal with stress without undue anxiety

Social adjustment as an important indication of psychology health is a topic attracting the attention of many psychologists. Social growth is the most important aspect of one's development and it is acquired through the relationship with others especially with the parents, peers and the teachers, and it is the assessing criterion of social growth related to the person's adjustment with him/herself and others ([Hartup and Rubin, 2013](#)). Adolescents who are emotionally healthy are those who have learned to cope effectively with themselves and their environment. Cameroonian adolescents are faced with a lot of social problems that and consequently need adjustment. They are exposed to an environment full of imported culture that is contradictory to the African context. These include watching of pornographic movies, dressing and dancing half-naked, singing of immoral songs, etc. Those adolescents, whose social and personal behaviour appears to be reasonably well integrated, will eventually appear to be reasonably happy. In case the society approves of their behaviour, their means of coping with themselves and their environment may be more effective. This study therefore seeks to highlight and enumerate the effects of social life adjustment on the academic performance of adolescents in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon.

2. Statement of the Problem

Education is a social instrument that makes individual faith and future but unfortunately the system of education in Cameroon has been divided in to many segment namely as private sector and public sector, Anglophone and Francophone system, technical and general system, etc. this has brought competition and added more crisis to adolescents who find it difficult to manage their biological and psychological crisis. In order to survive the turbulent period the adolescent needs guide and honest assistance. At this stage of life, the adolescent is faced with many challenges which may adversely affect their academic achievement if not resolved.

Therefore, these adolescents need to be reintegrated academically into their classes through well thought out counselling programmes, geared toward improving academic achievement that will foster in the long run national development. It is against this backdrop and those advanced in the background that the researcher embarked to investigate the relationship between social life adjustment of adolescents and their academic achievements in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to;

1. Examine the relationship between the social life adjustment of adolescents and the academic achievement and
2. Verify if the social life adjustment and academic achievement applies equally for both male and female in Cameroonian schools.

4. Research Questions

In order to realize the above objectives, two research questions were raised to guide the investigator as follow;

1. What is the relationship between social life adjustment of adolescents and their academic achievements?
2. Is the social life adjustment of adolescents and academic achievements the same for both male and female students in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon?

5. Research Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between social life adjustments and the academic achievements of adolescent students in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon.
2. There is no significant relationship between social life adjustments and the academic achievements of adolescents for both male and female students in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon.

6. Theoretical Framework and Empirical Review

The framework of this study was based on [Erikson \(1962\)](#)'s psychosocial theory of development. He emphasized the social cultural determinants of personality in his theory of psychosocial development. He opined that adolescent grapples with the question "who am I?" Adolescents must establish basic social and occupational identities or they will remain confused about the roles they should play as adults. The key social agent for adolescent is the society of peers. He also theorized that teens must master important social and academic skills to boost academic achievement.

Erickson saw the adolescent period as the stage where teens compare themselves with other peers. Erickson believed that human beings face eight major crises or conflicts during the course of their lives. Each conflict has its own time for emerging as directed by both biological maturity and social demand which developing people experience at a particular point in life and each must be resolved successfully in order to prepare the individual for a satisfactory resolution for the next life crises. During the identity confusion, the adolescent may feel he is regressing rather than progressing. In fact a periodical retreat to childishness appears to be a pleasant alternative to a complex involvement required of him in an adult society. The adolescent's behaviour is consistent and unpredictable during this chaotic state. Consequently, Educational stakeholders, Teachers, Parents and counsellors should put into cognizance adolescent chaotic stage when dealing them.

[Singh \(2006\)](#) studied the effects of socio, emotional and socio emotional climate of the school and sex on the adjustment of students along with their interactions effects. Boys were significantly better than girls in their health adjustment at different levels of socio-emotional climate of the school; [Ahmadi and Ali \(2008\)](#) studied educational adjustment and educational motivation in military and non-military students and results revealed meaningful difference between military and nonmilitary students in terms of familial adjustment, hygienic adjustment and total adjustment Comparison between military and nonmilitary students in terms of educational motivation power revealed that there is significant difference in the level of $p \leq 0.01$ and was higher in military college students. Unlike non-military students, military students will definitely be working in areas relevant to their field of study; [Hamidi and Hosseini \(2010\)](#) researched on the relationship between irrational beliefs and social, emotional and educational adjustment among Junior Students. They found that there is an inversely significant relation between irrational beliefs and general, social, emotional, and educational adjustment; [Ganai and Mir \(2013\)](#) comparatively studied the

adjustment and academic achievement of college students and found that the male and female adolescents differ significantly on mental health; Kaur and Kaur (2016) studied adjustment among adolescent girls studying in co-educational and non-coeducational schools and found Significant differences between the Adjustment of adolescent girls studying in co-educational and non-co-educational schools for all the dimensions of adjustment i.e emotional, social and educational respectively; Arora and Singh (2014) studied Self-efficacy and Emotional Intelligence as predictors of Alienation among Graduates and results of their study showed that the conjoint prediction of Alienation on the basis of Self-efficacy and Emotional Intelligence was significantly higher as compared to their separate prediction; and Mirderkvand (2016) worked on relationship between academic self-efficacy with level of education, age and sex in Lorestan University students. The results showed that in terms of academic self-efficacy there is a significant difference; and Bhakta (2016) studied the adjustment level of students and its relation with academic achievement. The results indicate that 82% students of class XII have average level of adjustment. Significant positive correlation is found between adjustment level and academic achievement of the students. Moreover, there exists significant difference in the level of adjustment of male & female, rural & urban and Arts & Science class XII students.

7. Methodology

The study was carried out in selected secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon. The design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey. The purposive sampling method was used to select three secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon. Simple random sampling was used to select eighty (80) adolescents from each of the three schools urban schools. The total selected from the three schools (GBHS Bamenda, GBHS Kumbo and GBHS Nkambe) was four hundred and eighty (480). A self-developed questionnaire with a four point likert type scale of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree was used to collect data. The questionnaire was tagged Social Life Adjustment Questionnaires (SLAQ) and was designed to get information on the relationship of social life adjustment of the adolescents and academic achievement and the role of gender on both variables. This instrument was validated by two experts in the Department of Science of Education, HTTTC, University of Bamenda.

8. Major Findings

Research question one: *What is the relationship between social life adjustment of adolescents and their academic achievements?*

Research hypothesis one: *There is no significant relationship between social life adjustments and the academic achievements of adolescent students in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon.*

In order to answer this question and verify the hypothesis, the data obtained from the field were analyzed and presented on the tables 1 and 2 below with the use of SPSS and excel;

Table-1. Showing the df

df value			
Summary		Alpha	0.05
Count	Rows	Cols	df
1200	5	4	12

The table above shows that the df for hypothesis one is 12

Table-2. Calculating the Chi-Square

Chi-Square Value					
	chi-sq	p-value	x-crit	sig	Cramer V
Pearson's	28.65853	0.00000	21.026	yes	0.590681
Max likelihood	27.98078	0.00000	21.026	yes	0.623252

From table 2 we can notice that our test value is significant (yes). That is;

Calculated $X^2 = 28.659$

Critical (table) $X^2 = 21.026$

Interpretation

At a 0.05 level of significance and 4df, the calculated x^2 (28.659) is far greater than the critical value (21.026). Inference (Yes) leads us to conclude that the test value was significant. Since the test value is significant for the hypothesis, that is, the calculated value (28.659) is greater than the table value (21.026) we rejected the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative and concluded that There is no significant relationship between social life adjustments and the academic achievements of adolescent students in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon. This means that the higher the social Life Adjustment the higher the Academic Achievement and vice versa.

Research Question Two: Is the social life adjustment of adolescents and academic achievements the same for both male and female students in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon?

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between social life adjustments and the academic achievements of adolescents for both male and female students in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon.

In order to answer this question and verify the hypothesis, the data obtained from the field were analyzed and presented on the tables 3 below with the use of SPSS and excel;

Table-3. Fisher's Z of Social Life Adjustment and Student Achievement by Gender

SEX	N	R	Zr	z	Zcal
Male	244	0.399			
Female	256	0.392		0.049	1.96

Alpha level = .05

Inferential analysis in table 3 shows that the Fisher Z value is 0.053 and a table value of 1.96. Testing at a significance level of 0.05, the calculated value of fisher Z is within the acceptance region. That is, it is less than the table value. So, the null hypothesis was retained and consequently concluded that there is no significant relationship between social life adjustments and the academic achievements of adolescents for both male and female students in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon. That is, the relationship between Social Life Adjustment and Academic Achievement applies equally for males and females.

9. Discussion of Findings

The analysis of data revealed in tables 1 and 2 that Social Life Adjustment influences students' academic achievement. That is, a child who is well adjusted socially will perform better in school than one who is not socially adjusted. This finding is in congruence with [Bhakta \(2016\)](#) who found a significant positive correlation between adjustment level and academic achievement of the students. Also, This view is in line with the view of [Agubosi \(2003\)](#) that a child who cannot adapt to his environment is likely to perform poorly in school.

Furthermore, it was found in table 3 that at alpha level of 0.05 there is no significant relationship between social life adjustments and the academic achievements of adolescents for both male and female students in secondary schools in the North West Region of Cameroon. That is, between social life adjustment affects the academic achievement of both boys and girls equally. This finding, although contradicting with that of [Singh \(2006\)](#) and [Bhakta \(2016\)](#) who found a significant difference, it is in congruence with [Akinboye and Alao \(1997\)](#) who posited that boys and girls are only concerned about bodies and social life adjustments and that their concern is to show up and be admired.

10. Conclusion

The 1998 law of orientation in Cameroon demands that the education of the child should be all-round. That is, intellectually, socially, morally and physically. Secondary school students are predominantly adolescents who face a lot of problems and consequently need assistance for adjustment. The adjustment process is a way in which the individual makes effort to maintain harmonious relationships with the environment by dealing with their needs, stress, tension, conflicts etc. From the time children enter school, peers take on an increasingly meaningful and influential role becoming key providers of support, companionship, advice, and affirmation. Adolescents who are not well adjusted socially are likely not to achieve well in school. This leads to poor academic performance which consequently makes the students shy, withdrawn, or antisocial. The role of the counsellor in assisting adolescents to achieve success in life is therefore inevitable. The school counsellor has to be aware of these environmental effects and stay awake to constantly guide the adolescents throughout this period of turbulence. He/she should fulfil the needs of adolescence students properly and thus help them achieve all round development as stipulated in the 1998 law of Orientation in Cameroon. This will enable the adolescents concentrate in school and improve upon their academic performances.

11. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made to counsellors;

1. Counsellors should inculcate and participate in the provision of curricular and co-curricular activities during which can foster the academic performance of their students
2. Counsellors should encourage good interpersonal relationship among teachers, students and guardian
3. Counsellors should constantly monitor and guide adolescents properly during class periods, recess periods and extracurricular activities in order for them to achieve academically.
4. There should be proper provision of all guidance and counselling services for the students.
5. Guidance counsellor should partner with the parents and teachers to educate the students on the need to pay more attention to their studies than to short time enjoyment activities.
6. The guidance counsellor should create the enabling atmosphere for the adolescent to bring out their views about their environment, self and academic, so that they can be assisted to adjust appropriately.

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