



SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS AS PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC EMOTION AMONG NIGERIA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the sociological factors as predictors of academic emotion among Nigeria University students. The study adopted a survey research design. The participants in the study were 345 undergraduates in South-West, Nigeria. Their age ranged between 17 years and 24 years with mean age of 21.69 years. Three valid and reliable instruments were used to assess academic emotion, parental involvement and social support while birth order was assessed by requesting the participants to fill out a short family history form as part of a battery of sociological tests. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to analyse the data. The result revealed that parental involvement, social support and birth order were potent predictors mildly associated to academic emotion. The study has implications for behaviour therapist, educational psychologists, educational stakeholders, government and parents on how challenges faced by student under a serious emotional strain which are virtually involved in every aspect of teaching and learning process can be reduced and well managed.

Keywords: *Academic emotion, Parental involvement, Social support Birth order*

INTRODUCTION

Students in higher educational institutions are viewed as leaders of tomorrow. They have academic success as their major goal. For this goal to be achieved, it requires dedication, sacrifice, self-discipline, motivation and cordial relationship between students and lecturers. Students at this level are saddled with a lot of responsibilities and challenges (Imonikebe, 2009) which may sometimes result into stress. On this account, students' emotion and psychological well-being cum academic achievement has been a source of concern to educational stakeholders (School administrators, Educational psychologists, Teachers, Government etc.)

In the school environment, students are faced with diverse emotions that are directly linked with learning, classroom instruction and achievement. Emotions play a very important role in the students' lives. It is essential to know how they affect learning and achievement. Academic emotion is based on new insights into the origin of student emotions which makes it possible to derive theory – driven intervention and evaluation programmes towards fostering academic emotion. Thus, emotions cannot be separated from learning and academic achievement of students.

Emotions are intimately involved in virtually every aspect of the teaching and learning process and, therefore, an understanding of the nature of emotions within the school context is essential (Pekrun, 1992). Thus, academic emotions (especially in higher institutions) can be largely associated with many psychosocial factors (e.g. hopelessness, memory, attention, attribution, self-belief) (Lewis, Sullivan & Michalson, 1984). This may be because most students in the higher institutions are daily confronted with challenges under a serious emotional strain caused during teaching and learning process by un-motivational lecturers, poor school environment, low self-esteem, lack of social support etc.

With the realization that emotions have the potential to influence teaching in both positive and negative ways, Schutz and Pekrun(1997) argue that by implication there is a great need to study emotions in educational contexts. Emotions that are directly tied to student learning, classroom instruction, and achievement are termed academic emotions (Pekrun, Goetz & Perry, 2002). These researchers suggest that by using academic emotions in this way, the term academic is used as is commonly done with terms such as academic



motivation or academic self-concept and, in doing so, the domain of academic emotions would include students' achievement emotions experienced in school or university settings as well as going beyond emotions relating to success and failure by also covering, for example, emotions relating to instruction or to the process of studying.

A great deal of research supports the notion that parental involvement generally has a positive effect on children's achievement. Parents who are more involved in their children's schooling become knowledgeable about school goals and procedures (Hiel & Taylor, 2004), communicate the importance of education to children (Lareau, 2000), help children learn strategies to enhance their perception of competence and control over achievement outcomes (Grolnick & Slowoaczek, 1994).

Parental involvement has been documented as positively impacting students' mathematics proficiency and achievement (Sirvani, 2007b, Sheldon & Epstein, 2005), gains in reading performance (Powell-Smith, Stoner, Shinn, & Good, 2000), as well as performance on standardised tests and academic assessments (Domina, 2005; Jeynes, 2005 and Desimone, 1999). In addition, parental involvement was found to be related to fewer behaviour problems in school (Domina, 2005), better attendance and class preparation (Simon, 2001), better course completion (Simon, 2001) and lower dropout rates (Rumberger, 1995). Given the recognition of parental involvement as part of a remedy for school education, it might be surprising to note that various aspects of parental involvement have differential effects on students' academic outcomes (Domina, 2005; Jeynes, 2005; Fan, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001).

The increasing interest in the concept of social support among those concerned with health and well-being can be attributed to several factors. Another reason for increasing attention being paid to social support is the role it may play in uttering behavioural and emotional characteristic (Cohen & Syme 1985). Both psychological and physical health has been widely research on in relation to social support (Antonucci & Jackson, 1987; Cohen & Wills, 1985). Thus social support can be defined as exchange or provision of supportive behaviour that can range from emotional to instrumental (Antonucci & Jackson, 1987). Studies examining measure of wellbeing (e.g. depression, overall happiness, life satisfaction) have concluded that social support is emotionally beneficial (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Experience and research show that each element of this challenge can be enhanced by thoughtful, sustained, and systematic attention to the social-emotional skills of children (Greenberg et al., 2003).

The most prominent concept of birth order studies is its impact on personality. Over the decades, a large number of studies have been carried out to examine personality differences among siblings. Alfred Adler, one of the pioneers of this topic of interest, has theorized that each birth position has a set of personality traits. According to Adler (1964) as cited in McGuirk and Pettijohn 2008, firstborns are always seen as leaders, high-achievers, ambitious, and conforming. They attempt to please their parents via traditional way, which is through academic performance and responsible behaviours (Paulhus, Trapnell, & Chen, 1999). Middle birth children, on the other hand, may experience difficulty finding a position of privilege and significance in the family because they never have the opportunity to monopolize parents' attention (Adams, 1972). Thus, they constantly fight to stay ahead of their younger siblings and uphold or perhaps, surpass their older brothers or sisters. In contrast, last born and only children are frequently viewed as the baby and spoiled kid of the family. It is because both of these birth positions are the only focus of the family. However, unlike the only children, the later born children, including the middle birth and last birth children, are aware of the higher status of the firstborn, so, they will seek alternative strategies to outstand their siblings (Paulhus *et al.*, 1999).

In addition, Adler (as cited in Adams, 1972) also proposed a dethronement theory. Before the birth of the younger sibling, the eldest child has his or her parents' complete attention but he or she is later dethroned by a new born sibling. As a consequence of dethronement, the child struggles to regain parental attention and his or her family niche.



This leads the firstborn to develop characteristics such as conscientious and conservative (Paulhus *et al.*, 1999). Besides, firstborns may be more independent and competent as a result of dethronement (Adams, 1972). These personality characteristics are seen to facilitate one's academic attainment in the future.

In a great while, research on birth order has contributed significantly to the knowledge base regarding vocational interests, preferences, choices and is the single-most researched Adlerian construct in the vocational literature (Bradley, 1982; Watkins, 1984). However, Watts and Engel (1995) noted that the vast majority of birth order research has focused on actual or chronological birth order rather than perceived or psychological positioning within the family.

Birth order is defined as a person's rank by age among his or her siblings (Steelman, 1985). In other words, it is the chronological order of birth in a family. Birth order can be classified into firstborn, middle born, lastborn and only child.

Thus Ordinal position refers to the actual order in which the child was born; i.e., first, second, third...tenth, eleventh and so on. Birth order refers to five basic positions that Adler described which tend to have recognizable characteristics later on in life. These are the firstborn, second, middle, youngest and only. In the discussion of these positions, it is important to remember that psychological position is the important determinant. One child may be an only child for several years and may then find himself in the position of being a firstborn. He may be overrun by the younger sibling, who then becomes, in some respects, like a first born. The oldest may then function like a second born. By reason of physical illness or frailty, an older child may actually function like the youngest.

According to Adler (1964), as cited in McGuirk and Pettijohn (2008), first born are always seen as leaders, high-achievers, ambitious, and conforming. They attempt to please their parents via traditional way, which is through academic performance and responsible behaviours (Paulhus *et al.*, 1999). Middle birth children, on the other hand, may experience difficulty finding a position of privilege and significance in the family because they never have the opportunity to monopolize parents' attention (Adams, 1972). Thus, they constantly fight to stay ahead of their younger siblings and uphold or perhaps, surpass their older brothers or sisters. In contrast, last born and only children are frequently viewed as the baby and spoiled kid of the family. It is because both of these birth positions are the only focus of the family. However, unlike the only children, the later born children, including the middle birth and last birth children, are aware of the higher status of the firstborn, so, they will seek alternative strategies to outstand their siblings (Paulhus *et al.*, 1999).

In the past, studies that were carried out to examine the relationship between birth order and personality have generated inconsistent findings. Some studies succeeded to find significant birth order effects on personality differences between siblings (Healey & Ellis, 2007; Paulhus *et al.*, 1999), while some others have failed to support Adler's predictions and Sulloway's (1996) theory (as cited in Parker, 1998). Birth order has been a standard variable in psychological research for decades, but attempts to link it to personality traits have usually shown weak and inconsistent results. (Jefferson, Herbst & McCrae, 1998). Several studies show significant birth-order effects but fail to fit nicely into specific categories. (Eckstein, Aycock, Sperber, McDonald, Van Wiesner, Watts & Ginsburg, 2010). There were also studies that suggested birth order was unrelated to education achievement, which were against the aforementioned theories. However, Hauser and Sewell (1985) found no relationship between birth order and educational attainment as well.

However, the present study sought to investigate the predictive effects of parental involvement, social support and birth order on academic emotion among students in higher educational institutions.

Research Questions

Taking into consideration, the set objectives of this study, the following questions were raised



- Is there any significant relationship among parental involvement, social support, birth-order and academic emotion?
- What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (parental involvement, birth-order, social support) to the prediction of academic emotion?
- What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (parental involvement, birth-order, social support) to the prediction of academic emotion?

Methodology

Research Design

A descriptive research design of an ex-post facto type was adapted for this study. Inferences about relations among variables are made without direct interaction from concomitant variation of independent and dependent variables.

Participants

The population for this study comprised Nigeria university students in South-West, Nigeria. A multi-stage random sampling technique was employed in selecting 350 participants for the study, of which 5 undergraduates were randomly selected from three different departments in the 5 Faculties randomly selected from 4 Universities (i.e. two Universities each from both Federal and State) in South-west Nigeria.

Measures

Demographic information of the students such as age, gender, birth order, University name, religion, and faculty were collected from the participants. The participants completed the three questionnaires: Academic Emotion Scale (AES) developed by Goetz, Pekrun, Hall and Haag (2006); Social Support Scale (SSS) developed by Guillermo, Mildred and Maria (2003), Parental Involvement Scale (PIS) developed by Ngai (2005).

Academic Emotion Scale: Goetz, Pekrun, Hall and Haag (2006) measure the level of academic emotion of students. The scale has 16 items rated on a 4 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 4. Lower scores indicate high level of academic emotion on item from 1 – 6 while high scores indicates high level of academic emotion in items 7 – 16. Typical examples of the items are: “I am proud of myself when I have done my homework”, “When a test is coming up I get very nervous”, among others. The reported reliability coefficient of the scale after three weeks was found to be .86.

Social Support Scale: Guillermo *et al* (2003) measures the level of support received by students socially. It is a 9- item placed on a 5 points Likert scale ranging from None = 1 to Quite a lot = 5. Typical examples of the items are: “How much emotional support have you received,” “How much advices have you received? (e.g. family, friends, professionals.” “How much material support have you received (e.g. money, food, home transportation, etc.)” among others. The reported reliability coefficient of the scale after three weeks was found to be .76.

Parental Involvement Scale: Ngai (2005) measures the level of parental support to students’ academic. It is a 10 item placed on a 4 point Likert scale ranging from Not at all = 1 to Most of the time = 4. Typical examples of the items are: “volunteers at school to take up a task,” “stopped by to talk to teacher.” among others. The reported reliability coefficient of the scale after three weeks was found to be .93.

Birth-order assessment: Participants in the study were required to fill out a short family history form as part of a battery of sociological tests. Responses to questions about birth rank and total number of siblings were used to define birth-order categories. Only children (5.6%) were defined as individuals who had no siblings; first born (25.2%) indicated that they had siblings but none born before them; middle born (47.4%) indicated that they had siblings, some born before them; and last born (21.8%) indicated that all their brothers and sisters were born before them.

**Procedure**

The researchers personally administered instruments to the participants in their various Universities. The participants were adequately briefed on the need to cooperate with the researchers. The participants were also assured of confidentiality of their responses. The data collection covers three weeks, during which 350 questionnaires was administered while 345 were correctly filled and subjected to data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results based on research questions were presented below:

Table 1: Product Moment Correlation Distribution comparing the Predictor Variables (Parental involvement, Birth order and Social support) and the criterion variable, Academic emotion).

Variables	1	2	3	4
Academic emotion	1.000			
Parental involvement	.534**	1.000		
Birth order	.346	.029	1.000	
Social support	.441**	.031**	-.027	1.000
Mean	46.6886	23.4286	2.79	79.8242
S.D	5.8020	8.4863	1.50	12.6062

* Sig. at .05 level

The result from the table 1 above shows there was significant relationship among Parental involvement ($r = .543$; $p < 0.05$); Birth order ($r = .346$; $p < 0.05$) and Social support ($r = .441$; $p < 0.05$) on the Academic emotion of the students.

Table 2: Regression Analysis Result of Independent Variables on Academic Emotion

Multiple R = .652					
Multiple R ² = .570					
Adjusted R ² = .541					
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE					
Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P.
Regression	2052.974	3	4684.325		
Residual	480681.62	346	389.253	12.034	<.05
Total	482734.59	349			
	7				

Table 2 shows that there was joint contribution of the independent variables (Parental involvement, Birth order and Social support) on the academic emotion yielded a coefficient regression R = .652, Multiple R² of .570 accounting for about 57% of the variation in the



independent variables. Hence, the table further shows that the linear combination of the Parental involvement, Birth order and Social support on the academic emotion was significant $F_{(3,346)} = 12.034$; $p < 0.05$). This indicates the causal relationship of the independent variables was significant and other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Table 3: Multiple Regression showing relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of Academic Emotion

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	P.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	142.456	17.115		8.324	<.05
Parental involvement	.598	.092	.436	6.511	<.05
Birth order	.295	.138	.137	2.369	ns
Social support	.525	.157	.243	3.338	<.05

The table shows the relative contribution of each of the independent variables made to the academic emotion of the students: Parental involvement ($\beta = .436$; $t = 6.511$; $P < .05$); Birth order ($\beta = .137$; $t = 2.369$; $P > .05$) and Social support ($\beta = .243$; $t = 3.338$; $P < .05$) respectively. The table further shows that Parental involvement appeared to be the most potent contributor to academic emotion. Hence, all the independent variable were significant

Discussion

The results of the present study show that parental involvement had a significant correlation with academic emotion. This finding is consistent with the earlier research findings of Goetz, Pekrun, Hall and Haag (2006); Tella and Tella (2003) who revealed a substantial result concerning the relationship between academic emotion and aspect of parental involvement. Jacob (1996) also revealed the relationships between perceived classroom environment variable and middle and high school students' test related emotions including enjoyment, anxiety, anger, hopelessness and shame. This shows that the good state of parental involvement in students' academic and social support enhances balance academic emotion of student; the stronger the relationship, especially between the parents and their wards' education, the higher the academic achievement.

Birth order was found to be significant contributor to the academic emotion of the students. This lends support for the credibility of the findings which have shown positive correlations between birth order and academic emotion (e.g. Ernst & Angst 1983; Johnson, 2000; Herrera et al., 2003) emphasized the link between beliefs and behaviors, suggesting that individuals' beliefs about typical birth-order characteristics may affect actual outcomes in career choice. One explanation for this phenomenon relates to the emotional heritage acquired by the individual in the sibling system. Emotional heritage is of great consequence when compared to other traits that one can adopt throughout life, since the individual's emotional atmosphere is formed in early childhood, thus is deeply rooted in his or her personality.

The findings of this study indicate that a significant correlation was found between social support and academic emotion of the students. This result is in consonance with prior studies (Punia & Sangwan, 2011; Adeyemo, 2005; Luiselli et al., 2005) who found that using positive behavioral supports always decreases the behavioral problems while improving the academic performance.



The possible explanation for the result may not be unconnected with a functional perspective that social support is part of education that links academic knowledge with a specific set of skills important to success in schools, families, communities, workplaces and life in general. As recent world events have taught, there is a danger to each of us both locally and globally; when children grow up with knowledge but without social support and a strong moral compass. Hence, a combination of academic and social emotional learning is the true standard for effective education in the world today and for the foreseeable future.

Implication of the Findings

Obviously, the findings revealed a significant positive relationship between Academic emotion, social support and parental involvement. The results therefore, has provided an empirical finding for behaviour therapists, educational psychologists, educational stakeholders, government and parents on how challenges faced by student under a serious emotional strain which are virtually involved in every aspect of teaching and learning process can be reduced and well managed.

Based on these findings, parents and guardians should improve the level of their involvement in the children academics in order to foster their confidence in their ability. Government, educational stakeholders should make learning environment conducive and free from negative emotions which are directly linked with learning and teaching process.

Educational Psychologists and Guidance Counsellors should focus on academic emotion based on new insights into the origin of students' emotion in order to provide an appropriate counselling intervention programme and enabling environment.

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