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## **Fathers' attachment styles and loneliness as predictors of academic achievement among secondary school students in Rivers state, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Fathers' attachment styles and loneliness as predictors of academic achievement among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria was investigated. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided this study. The study design was correlational with a sample composed of 261 females and 252 males in senior secondary one (SS1) students drawn using Taro Yamen formula. The multistage sampling technique was used to draw nine secondary schools out of 247 public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Two adapted instruments were used namely: Father-child attachment subscale of Inventory of Parents and Peers Attachment (IPPA), and Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale (SELS). The instruments had a Cronbach Alpha of 0.78 for fathers' attachment and 0.72 for loneliness scale. Data was analyzed using linear regression and one way ANOVA method to answer research questions and test hypotheses. The study revealed that attachment styles of fathers and loneliness predicted students' academic achievement based on gender significantly. Recommendations were made that fathers should be vigilant about the behaviour of their children and should there be an observation of loneliness they should consult the counsellor.

**Keywords:** father attachment, loneliness, academic achievement

### **1. Introduction**

Academic achievement of students in secondary schools, at the basic education stage, is one test among numerous trials that transfuse Nigeria's educational development as a nation. Contemporarily, there has been a dismal performance by secondary school students in public examinations in Nigeria, as had been observed. But educational activities in schools are geared towards students' mastery of educational objectives, usually measured through academic achievement scores. Academic achievement may determine if a student will complete his/her education, and or, if the individual will maintain further advancement in his/her vocational career. Hence, Schwartz (2010) <sup>[11]</sup> proffered reasons why students performed poorly academically. These include but not limited to, home environment, performance pressure, peer pressure, indulgence, and school ethos.

Home environment typically characterized by chaos and parental violence. Performance pressure; depicts high performance expectations by parents and teachers. Peer pressure; students are besieged to disregard school rules and use drugs. Indulgence; students indulge in social media use; and school ethos; schools lack the ability to enforce discipline, rules and regulations. Human capital incontrovertibly is the greatest asset available to any nation. Thus, academic achievement expresses the performance outcome of a student, or the degree an individual has accomplished specific goals in an instructional environment, specifically in school (Steinmayr, Meibner, Weidinger, Wirthwein, 2015) <sup>[12]</sup>. Thus, academic achievement is a gauge for measuring the learned skill attained in various fields of academic endeavour through cumulative grade point average (CGPA) or criterion tests assessment score, and even for certification.

The direct engagement in child rearing by fathers may have implications in the child's adaptation to novel social situations which appear to shape their sociability and variance in the total behaviour of the child across lifespan. Thus, the depth and value of the father's involvement perform a decisive function in the maturation process of the child, specifically

in mitigating maladjustment and impaired psycho-social development that may modify academic achievement.

Attachment as defined by Mahasneh, Al-Zoubi, Batayeh, and Jawarneh, (2013) <sup>[5]</sup> is a child being strongly disposed to seek proximity to and contact with a specific figure and to do so in certain situation, notably when he or she is frightened, tired, or ill. Thus, father's attachment is an interpersonal relationship that includes behaviours, attitudes and values fathers employ to interact with their children to influence their physical, emotional, behavioural, social and intellectual development. Father-child attachment underscores the father's unique and independent contribution to adolescents' behavioural outcomes, Hwang Ray, (2012), Volker, (2014) <sup>[4, 13]</sup>. Citing Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley and Roggman opined that the security of father-child attachment may relate to school adjustment. Therefore, father-child attachment may affect children's adaptation to social situations such as school, especially the students' academic achievement. Consequently, paternal non-challant attitude may negatively influence students' academic achievement according to Noah, Aromolaran, Odunaro, (2015) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Loneliness may appear as a reaction to specific deficiency in relational security, such as meaningful attachment, an intimate friendship, or a tie to a lucid community. Hence, the individual is deprived of some definite customary relationships. Onukwufor, (2012) <sup>[7]</sup> citing Brehm, Kassin and Fein defined loneliness as a feeling of deprivation about existing social relations. Furthermore, he states that loneliness is a sad and heart-wrenching emotional situation. Thus, an individual's dissatisfied experience with the frequency and closeness of their social contacts, or the discrepancy between the relationship they have and the relationship they would like to have, reflects loneliness. Consequently, lonely individuals tend to see themselves in a negative, shameful, and unattractive way. Likewise, they consider themselves to be disappointing, pessimistic, and uneasy, as well as regarding others as unaccepting. They consequentially absent themselves from class and school academic activities, hence, turnout with poor academic grades.

Oommen, (2015) <sup>[8]</sup> studied home environment and academic achievement of students at higher secondary level in Kerela and reported that male and female students' academic achievement showed no significant difference as mean score were 55.46 and 54.006 respectively. Wells, (2008) <sup>[14]</sup> investigated father-child play at 54 months, and child cognitive development and academic achievement, revealing that fathers parenting during father-child play at 54 months had independent effects on children's cognitive development and academic achievement. Likewise, Demir, and Tarhan, (2010) <sup>[2]</sup> investigated sociometric status, gender, and academic achievement to loneliness with 370 secondary school students in Turkey, and found a negative relationship significantly between academic achievement and loneliness, indicating that as loneliness increased, academic achievement decreased. It is against this background that the researchers thought is wise to investigate fathers' attachment styles and loneliness as predictors of academic achievement among in-school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## 2. Statement of the problem

Fathers' attachment relationships appear to impede

academic achievement of students in the secondary schools. Students in secondary school with insecure attachment, separate themselves from situations that arouse emotions, view other people suspiciously, and reject their feelings due to an enhanced probability of difficult trajectories. Likewise, loneliness hinders students' academic achievement as they are not vigorous and persistent, as they do not see the need for studying and having good grades. Lonely students fail to appropriately interpret academic environment which breeds lackluster attitude in them.

## 3. Purpose of the study

This study purpose is to ascertain if attachment styles of fathers and loneliness are predictors of academic achievement among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## 4. Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What attachment styles of fathers predict the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does loneliness predict the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria?

## 5. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Fathers' attachment styles do not significantly predict the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. Loneliness does not significantly predict the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## 6. Methodology

The study used a correlational design and was conducted in Rivers State, Nigeria. Simple random and multistage sampling techniques were used to draw three local government areas and three secondary schools from each of the three selected LGAs, totaling nine secondary schools used in the study. The population of the study comprised of all senior secondary one (SS1) students in Rivers State. The sample size composed of 261 females and 252 males from nine secondary schools in the three LGAs using Taro Yamen formula, totaling 513. The instruments used for the study were father-child attachment subscale of Inventory of Parents and Peers Attachment (IPPA), and the short version of the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale (SELS). The instruments were made up of 45 items. Validity and reliability was determined using factor analysis which yielded a cronbach alpha of 0.78 and 0.72. Linear regressions and one-way Anova were the data analysis technique adopted for answering research questions and testing hypotheses.

## 7. Results

**Research question 1:** What attachment styles of fathers predict the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Hypothesis 1:** Fathers' attachment styles do not significantly predict the academic achievement of male and female students in Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Table 1:** Simple linear regression showing the extent attachment styles of fathers predict male and female students' academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria.

|        | R    | R <sup>2</sup> | Adj.R <sup>2</sup> | Std.Error | β    |
|--------|------|----------------|--------------------|-----------|------|
| Male   | 0.71 | 0.50           | 0.21               | 3.19      | 0.49 |
| Female | 0.37 | 0.13           | 0.03               | 2.21      | 0.32 |

**Table 2a&b:** One-way (ANOVA) showing the extent father-child attachment styles predict academic achievement of male and female students in Basic Science and Technology subject in Rivers State, Nigeria.

| ANOVA      |            |     |          |       |      |       |             |
|------------|------------|-----|----------|-------|------|-------|-------------|
| Male       | Sum of sq. | Df  | mean sq. | F     | α    | sig   | Result      |
| Regression | 32.431     | 2   | 18.818   |       |      |       | Significant |
| Residual   | 2553.560   | 250 | 5.342    | 2.542 | 0.05 | 0.030 | (Rejected)  |
| Total      | 2585.991   | 252 |          |       |      |       |             |
| ANOVA      |            |     |          |       |      |       |             |
| Female     | Sum of sq. | Df  | mean sq. | F     | α    | sig   | Result      |
| Regression | 21.435     | 2   | 20.702   |       |      |       | Significant |
| Residual   | 2035.567   | 259 | 8.350    | 3.026 | 0.05 | 0.037 | (Rejected)  |
| Total      | 2057.002   | 261 |          |       |      |       |             |

The ANOVA table 2a&b reveals calculated F value of 2.542 for male and 3.026 for female students with a sig. value of 0.030 for male and 0.037 for female students respectively. Since the sig value (p 0.030 and 0.037<0.05) is less than 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The alternate hypothesis that father-child (secure; anxious-avoidant and anxious-resistant) attachment style do predict significantly, male and female students academic achievement in Basic Science and Technology subject in Rivers State, Nigeria is accepted.

**Research question 2:** To what extent does loneliness predict male and female students' academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Hypothesis 2:** Loneliness does not significantly predict the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Table 4a&b:** One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showing the extent loneliness predicts male and female students' academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria.

| ANOVA      |            |     |          |       |      |       |             |
|------------|------------|-----|----------|-------|------|-------|-------------|
| Male       | Sum of sq. | Df  | mean sq. | F     | α    | sig   | Result      |
| Regression | 28.739     | 2   | 17.037   |       |      |       | Significant |
| Residual   | 2760.105   | 250 | 7.196    | 2.160 | 0.05 | 0.025 | (Rejected)  |
| Total      | 2788.844   | 252 |          |       |      |       |             |
| ANOVA      |            |     |          |       |      |       |             |
| Female     | Sum of sq. | Df  | mean sq. | F     | α    | sig   | Result      |
| Regression | 24.783     | 2   | 19.307   |       |      |       | Significant |
| Residual   | 2035.615   | 259 | 8.948    | 3.654 | 0.05 | 0.026 | (Rejected)  |
| Total      | 2060.398   | 261 |          |       |      |       |             |

The ANOVA table 4a&b revealed calculated F value of 2.160 for male and 3.654 for female students with a sig. value of 0.025 for male and 0.026 for female students respectively. Since the sig value (p 0.025 & 0.026<0.05) is less than 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The alternate hypothesis that loneliness does significantly predict, the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Basic Science and Technology subject in Rivers State, Nigeria is accepted.

Table 1: showed regression coefficient (R) for male is 0.71, and female 0.37. The coefficient of determination R<sup>2</sup> for male is 0.50, and female is 0.13. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is 0.21, for male and 0.03, for female. The standard error = 3.19, 2.21 and β=0.49, 0.32. The determining coefficient R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.50, and 0.13, reveal that father-child attachment accounts for about 50% of changes in male students' academic achievement and 13% of the alteration in academic achievement for female students respectively.

**Table 3:** Simple linear regression showing the extent loneliness predicts male and female students' academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria.

|        | R    | R <sup>2</sup> | Adj.R <sup>2</sup> | Std. Error | B    |
|--------|------|----------------|--------------------|------------|------|
| Male   | 0.69 | 0.48           | 0.21               | 3.02       | 0.49 |
| Female | 0.33 | 0.11           | 0.03               | 2.79       | 0.32 |

Table 4.13: showed the regression coefficient (R) for male is 0.69 and 0.33 for female. The coefficient of determination R<sup>2</sup> value for male is 0.48, and 0.11for female students respectively. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.21, 0.03, for male and female students respectively. While standard error = 3.02, 2.79 and β=0.49, 0.32. The coefficient of determination R<sup>2</sup> value reveals that loneliness accounts for about 48% of the variation in male students' academic achievement, and 11% of the variance in academic achievement of female students in Basic Science and Technology subject in Rivers State, Nigeria respectively.

**8. Summary of results**

Fathers' attachment styles of account for 0.71 or 71% of the variance in male students, and 0.37 or 37% for female students' academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria. Equally loneliness accounts for 0.69 or 69% of the changes in male students, and 0.33 or 33% for female students' academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria. This implies that attachment styles of fathers and loneliness do explain or account for academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The coefficient of determination  $R^2$  value reveals that loneliness accounts for about 48% of the variation in male students academic achievement, and 11% of the variance in academic achievement of female students academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria respectively. The determining coefficient  $R^2$  value of 0.50, and 0.13, reveal that fathers' attachment styles account for about 50% of changes in male students' academic achievement and 13% of the alteration in academic achievement for female students respectively

### 9. Discussion of results

This study found that in Rivers State Nigeria, academic achievement among secondary school students was predicted significantly by fathers' attachment styles. Attachment styles of fathers have a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.71 for males and 0.37 for females, and the determining coefficient ( $R^2$ ) is 0.50 for males and 0.13 for females. Thus, 71% of the variation in students' academic achievement can be accounted for or explained by attachment styles of fathers. This finding is in agreement with Ricaurte, (2011), Abikoye, Solarin, and Omosuyi, (2013) [9, 1] whose studies on fathers' attachment, parenting behaviour and their association to child adjustment outcomes; and parental bonding and bullying on adolescents' mental well-being. Revealed that fathers attachment dimensions were related to children's higher adjustment outcomes, and consequently, academic achievement. Also, that paternal bonding ( $r=0.14$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) was significantly related to mental well-being. Suggesting that the greater the adolescents' paternal bonding the better his/her mental well-being and academic achievement. However, the findings of this study disagree with Oommen, (2015) [8] who found male and female students' academic achievement showed no significant difference. Therefore, in Rivers State, Nigeria, secondary school students' academic achievement was significantly predicted by the kind of attachment pattern they had with their fathers. This means that success in their academic endeavour is to a large extent associated with fathers' attachment styles.

Loneliness does predict male and female students' academic achievement significantly in Rivers State, Nigeria in this study. The regression coefficient (R) is 0.69 for male students, and 0.33 for female students. Showing the correlation coefficient between loneliness and secondary school students' academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.48 for male students, and 0.11 for female students. Revealing a moderate link between loneliness and in-school students' academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria. This reveals that loneliness accounts for 48% of the variance in male students' academic achievement, and 11% in female students' academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria. This study finding is in tandem with Flook, Repetti, and Ullman, (2005) [3] examination of classroom social experiences as predictors of academic performance. Findings revealed that academic achievement was predicted by internalizing symptoms (unstandardized coefficient  $-1.00$ ,  $p < .10$ ), indicating the interconnections for children who are having social difficulties in the classroom such as social, emotional, and cognitive development are fundamentally interrelated during childhood. Zerei, Heydari, and Adli, (2013) [15] study which found that loneliness ( $r=0.30$ ) relationship with academic achievement is

significant. Rosenstreich and Margalit, (2015) [10] investigated mindfulness practice, loneliness and academic achievement in Israel and found that loneliness negatively predicted academic achievement. The implication is that, students experiencing loneliness are unlikely to graduate from school.

### 10. Recommendations

1. Fathers' attachment styles should be robustly encouraged, most especially the secure attachment style as it appears to protect against childhood delinquent behaviours which are common during early adolescence, and peer influence which are capable of derailing academic achievement.
2. Teachers and fathers should pay greater attention on their children both in the classroom and at home where loneliness or delinquent behaviours are usually displayed.
3. The school counsellor should be involved early enough at the observation of signs of loneliness.
4. Fathers should of requisite obligation strengthen their efforts at monitoring, showing more interest as well as fostering needed interactive-time with their children's academic activities.
5. Also counselling services should be provide to advise fathers on the worthiest ways of facilitating their children's academic advancement or achievement

### 11. Conclusion

Fathers' attachment styles and loneliness as predictors of academic achievement among in-school students in Rivers State, Nigeria have been ascertained to have a relationship with secondary students' academic achievement based on gender. Loneliness can hinder students' academic achievement. This is because students with loneliness shy away from social gatherings either in the classroom or outside the classroom. Their level of concentration and assimilation may decline which may result in academic underachievement. It therefore becomes imperative that fathers, teachers and concerned adults should employ necessary measures to ameliorate the influence of loneliness and fathers' insecure attachment style on secondary school students' academic achievement.

Also, germane is that paternal enquiries about academic advancement milestones must be developed jointly with children. This would clearly define and drive the ownership home to the child. Feedback to fathers about the child's academic progress from teachers or school administration has to be vigorously encouraged. Certainly, paternal participation in a child's academic endeavour is a benefit that herald healthy father child relationship over the lifespan. All fathers, notwithstanding their socioeconomic status, or level of education, can modestly inquire about academic activities from their child or the child's teacher(s). Consequently, being involved in their children's education not only aids the children achieve more academically, but further renew the teacher's self-confidence and which delivers the fulfillment of excellent academic achievement.

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