Identity and Adjustment of Secondary School Students: Implications for Counselling in Nigeria.

Dr. Anietie Etim Akaka
Department of Educational Foundation (Guidance and Counselling)
Faculty of Education
University of Uyo, Uyo
aniakaka25@gmail.com

Abstract
The study investigated the influence of identity on the adjustment of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. A survey design was used for the study. The population of 20,452 senior secondary two (SS 2) students were sampled and 290 SS 2 students were used for the study. A researcher’s made questionnaire of 15 items was designed and administered. Analysed data used mean for research questions and independent t-test for null hypotheses. Findings of the study revealed that achievement and self-esteem identity influenced the adjustment of male and female secondary school students. Recommendations were that: informational charts on identity be pasted at strategic positions within the schools by the guidance counsellors; seminars on achievement and self-esteem be organized by the guidance counsellors to stimulate student’ ego for positive identity and adjustment, and counsellors should encourage parents to use democratic parenting styles to achieve a balanced child.

Keywords: adolescence, Identity, Adjustment and guidance counsellors

Introduction
Secondary school students are expected to use their identity to adjust in the school environment. Consistent with this, students are to wear the correct school uniforms; perform duties assigned to the different gender; attend lessons in all subjects, carry out task expected in each subject as instructed by the teacher; participate in extra-curricular activities; relate to peers/classmates and teachers positively for collaborative learning and guide; render self to the services of a guidance counsellor; obtain information on issues in life through appropriate quarters for set goals to become actualized; portray behaviours of moral upbringing, and posses other adaptive characteristics summarily interpreted as healthy identity for adjustment. McKinney (2001) explained that identity is an individual’s self-definition that focuses on enduring characteristics of the self. Santrock (2006) enumerated that identity is a self portrait that is composed of many pieces. In this study, these pieces are achievement identity and self-esteem identity.

Consistently, Nwachukwu (2004) described that achievement is accomplishing whatever goals an individual had set for self, which is doing what an individual wants to do within bounds of the law, overcoming obstacles and attaining a high standard. Therefore, academic achievement is the extent to which a learner is profiting from instructions in a given
area of learning. Achievement identity of students has been of concern to parents, guardians, students and the wider society. The desire for a high level of achievement puts a lot of pressure on students, teachers and the education system generally. In conjunction, Bossaert, Doumen, Buyse and Verschuren (2011) asserted that it appears as if education system revolves round academic achievement of students, though various other outcomes are also expected from the system. Achievement reflects in students’ behaviour in interacting with members of the peer group leading to their being socially competent or incompetent. Students make up the majority of adolescents in secondary schools.

Students with a more objective perspective to achieve could possess a high self-esteem. As such children do not only grow to understand more about themselves, construct more intricate self portrait, but begin to evaluate the qualities they perceive to have (Santrock, 2006; Waiten, 2007). This evaluative aspect of self is called self-esteem. Students’ evaluation of themselves and their competencies is the most important part of self that can influence all aspects of their conduct and their psychological well-being. Umana-Taylor (2002) opined that self-esteem has been shown to be extremely vulnerable during adolescence. During adolescence, individuals become increasingly alert to how others perceive them, and this translates into an increase self consciousness. Students with high self-esteem are satisfied with the type of person they are, recognise their strong points, acknowledge their weaknesses (often helping to overcome them) and generally feel quite positive about the characteristics and competencies displayed. While students with low self-esteem view self in a less favourable light, choosing to dwell on perceived inadequacies rather than on any strength they may happen to display.

Moreso, Kroger (2000) asserted that identity achieved individuals have undertaken explorations of meaningful life directions prior to their commitments and show high levels of self-esteem. This is increasingly centred on interpersonal relationships for adjustment. Tanvi and Jain (2011) opined that social adjustment is the effort made by an individual to cope with standards, values, and needs of a society in order to be accepted. This is a psychological process of getting along with members of society as best one can. Kiff (2012) explained that adjustment is the balancing of internal needs and external demands on the organism. To be more explicit, Denga (2002) opined that a person who is struggling to meet needs is striving towards adjustment. Moreover, adjustment is defined as harmony, congruence or a goodness of fit between an individual and standards against which an individual is adjudged.

Intensively, Seidman (2000) and Eccles (2004) stated that transition from junior school to senior/highs school is a normative experience for all children, and this can be stressful most associated factors in adolescent student include the accompanying changes in social cognition: increased responsibility; independence in association with decreased dependency on parents; change from a small contained classroom structure to a larger more impersonal school structure; change from one teacher to many teachers, and a larger more heterogeneous set of peers, and an increased focused on achievement, performance and assessment.

Theoretically, identity status theory of Marcia (1966) stated that identity achievers explore and are committed to ideology. They construe most personal problems as manageable and solvable. Accordingly, they confront their problems directly by actively seeking out relevant information and considering alternatives when attempting to deal with them. These
individuals show high level of achievement motivation and self-esteem, high consciousness and extrovertedness. Cognitively, individuals have the ability to function well under conditions of stress and use more planned, rational and logical decision-making strategies. They demonstrate high level of moral reasoning. They develop mutual interpersonal relationships with both close friends and a partner, and are genuinely interested in others.

Moreso, Vygotsky (1978) of socio-cultural theory, theories that children’s cognitive development is fuelled by social interactions with parents, teacher and older children who can provide invaluable guidance. It means that culture exerts great influence over how cognitive growth unfolds. However, in secondary schools, nowadays most students academic performance is poor, they fail to draft a study time table, submit assignments in time for continuous assessment, indulge in examination malpractices. Most students especially in public secondary schools use vernacular in communication, cannot make a speech in front of classmates, do not involve in any competitive task in school, absent themselves from classroom activities, report late to school, lie, steal, do alcoholism and prostitutions, do not relate to teachers positively, wear wrong school uniforms, form cultism, and are non-challant to counselling services and so on. Therefore, the problem of this study is to find the influence of identity on the adjustment of male and female secondary school students?

Purpose of the Study

This study specifically examines the influence of:

1. Achievement identity on the adjustment of male and female secondary school students;

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of achievement identity on the adjustment of male and female secondary school students?
2. In what way would self-esteem identity influence the adjustment of male and female secondary school students?

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between male and female secondary school students on the influence of achievement identity on adjustment.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female students on the influence of self–esteem identity on adjustment in secondary schools.

Methodology

Survey design was used in conducting the study in the 80 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, with the population of 20,450 senior secondary two (SS 2) students (SSEB, 2015). Multistage sampling technique was used to select 315 SS 2 students. This was done to ensure a generalization of the entire population. The instrument titled “Identity and Adjustment of Secondary School Questionnaire (IASSQ)” was developed
by the researcher for data collection. The instrument was face validated and had a reliability index of 0.72. Three hundred and fifteen (315) copies of the instruments were administered, while 290 copies were duly completed and returned, representing 91% return rate. Data collected were analysed based on each research question and hypothesis. Mean was used in answering the research questions while the independent t-test was used for the null hypotheses.

Results

Research Question 1 What is the influence of achievement identity on the adjustment of male and female secondary school students?

Table 1: Achievement Identity and Adjustment of Secondary School Students (N = 290)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Influence of achievement identity</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Satisfied with choice of subjects</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Submission of assignments on time</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Challenged to confront problems in any subject</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Visit library for more information</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Make use of GSM in learning</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>Disagreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Read in group</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Examination is a test of knowledge</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Consult teachers for any difficult problem</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in Table 1 revealed that seven of the eight influences of achievement identity on adjustment of secondary school students had mean value above 2.50 cut off point in decision rule. It then follows that achievement identity influences adjustment of secondary school students.

Research Question 2 In what way would self-esteem identity influence the adjustment of male and female secondary school students?

Table 2: Self-esteem Identity and Adjustment of Secondary School Students (N = 290)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Influence of Self-esteem Identity</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Being proud of self</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relate to classmates</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Talk in front of people</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Participate in extracurricular activities</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wear designated school uniform</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Carry out duties assigned</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Use leisure time to develop talents</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings in Table 2 revealed that all items were greater than 2.50 decision rule. Therefore, students in secondary school agreed that self-esteem identity influences adjustment.
Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between male and female secondary school students on the influence of achievement identity on adjustment.

Table 3: The influence of achievement identity on the adjustment of male and female secondary school students (N = 290)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>t-crit</th>
<th>Decision at p&lt;0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>17.06</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>17.28</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P < 0.05 significant

Results in Table 3, shows that the calculated t-value of 2.82 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it implies that the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning, there is significant difference between male and female students on the influence of achievement identity on adjustment in secondary school.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between male and female students on the influence of self-esteem identity on adjustment in secondary schools.

Table 4: The Influence of Self-esteem identity on the adjustment of male and female secondary school student (N = 290)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>t-crit</th>
<th>Decision at p&lt;0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>21.62</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>25.06</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P < 0.05 significant

Results in Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value 3.01 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 and as such the null hypothesis is rejected. It implies that there is significant difference between self-esteem identity of male and female influence on adjustment of secondary school students.

Decision of Findings

Result showed that achievement identity influenced adjustment of secondary school students. The objective of being a student is to let education pass through an individual. For a student to get enrolled in a school, means there are needs which must be met; such as attending school five days within the week, buying of notebooks and textbooks, staying in the class to be taught, getting along with classmates/peers, doing assignments and sitting for examination to be promoted to a higher class level, etc. This invariably is the processes of adjustment in school. The findings of the study is in line with Nwachukwu (2004) who asserted that achievement is accomplishing whatever goals an individual had set for self, which is doing what an individual wants to do within the bounds of the law, overcoming obstacles and attaining a high standard. The findings also is in consonance with Tanvi and Jain (2011) who opined that social adjustment is the effort made by an individual to cope
with standards, values and needs of a society in order to be accepted. The findings of the study supports Kiff (2012) who asserted that adjustment is the balancing of internal needs and external demands on the organisms. The findings of the study is in line with the assertion of Eccles (2004) who stated that some factors associated with adolescent students include change from a small contained classroom to a larger more interpersonal structure, from one teacher to many teachers and larger more heterogeneous set of peers, and an increased focused on achievement, performance and assessment.

The result shows that self-esteem identity influenced adjustment of secondary school students. It is evident that a student who have needs to meet will behave accordingly to the expected norms and values of the school. An achiever is said to have a high self-esteem. The findings of the study is in line with Kroger (2000) who asserted that identity achieved individuals have undertaken explorations of meaningful life directions prior to their commitments and show high levels of self-esteem which is increasingly centred on interpersonal relationships for adjustment. The finding of the study is in support with Deng (2002) who stated that a person who is struggling to meet needs is striving towards adjustment. Also, the findings is in support of Umana-Taylor (2002) who opined that during adolescence individuals become increasingly alert to how others perceive them, and this translates into an increase self consciousness.

Implications for Counselling

Counselling is a process of helping an individual gain self-knowledge, self-awareness, self-direction, self-determination, self-development and self-actualisation that will usher the individual to fullness of living, knowledge acquisition and problem-solving skills (Onyekuru and Ekechukwu, 2009). It is glaring that counsellors have a lot to do in the area of identity and adjustment of secondary school students. This is because the study revealed a significant influence of identity variables on the adjustment of secondary school students. Counsellors are the best resourceful persons that could render services for an individual to attain positive identity for an admirable personality as a whole. Although other agencies such as family, teachers, school, religion, friends, peers, the media and the society also contribute to the development of an individual cognitively, emotionally, socially, spiritually, etc. The counsellors could do much better and their effectiveness goes along way in curbing maladjusted living in adolescence through several processes. Adolescence is a time of strain and stress and as such this stage need proper guidance by significant members. Guidance counsellors should counsel adolescent students facing crises being evidence in poor academic performance, inability to speak in a group, wearing of wrong school uniforms examination malpractice, poor speech coordination, habitual vernacular speaking , truancy, absenteeism from class especially during mathematics and English language lessons, bullying, fighting, intimidation, alcoholism and loitering for subsequent restructuring of life pattern and adjustment generally.

Counsellors should lay emphasis on identity through charts, talk shops, and individual/group counselling sessions. Counsellors should liaise with the school principals to incorporate extracurricular activities such as debates, quiz competitions, games and sports internally within classes weekly for social interaction and development of self-esteem.

Counsellors should educate teachers to use skills and strategies in teaching students at different intelligence level to acquaint them with techniques on how to perform better in academic tasks.

Conclusion
Secondary school students’ adjustment is influenced by their achievement and self-esteem identity. An individual who has needs to meet must definitely abide to the demands of the environment from where these needs would be met or given. Students adjustment in school is as a result of the goals that must be achieved, however, it is still believed that a student could be maladjusted in school even when needs are to be met. This is why guidance counsellors help to breach the gap in using theories, skills, interventions and follow-up (guidance and counselling services) for identity development in adolescent students for adjustment that could create a conducive learning environment in secondary schools.

**Recommendations**

The findings of study revealed significant influence of identity on adjustment, therefore the following recommendation are made:

1. The counsellor should make sure that informational charts on the identity variables are pasted at strategic locations within the school.
2. Seminars on achievement and self-esteem should be organized by guidance counsellors. These would help stimulate students’ ego to develop a positive identity for adjustment in school and in any other setting they find themselves.
3. Competitions in sporting activities should be organized by the counsellors in collaboration with sport officials to enhance social interaction and the development of a high self-esteem.
4. Counsellors should encourage parents during the parent teachers association in school to use democratic parenting styles to achieve a balance child.
5. The counsellors should encourage the school principals to revive the non-academic activities that have become a moribund for self-knowledge, awareness and directions in students. This would also affect their achievement levels positively.

**References**


