The Relationship between School Phobia and Students' Academic Performance: A Qualitative Study Design

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Abstract

Objective: This study aimed to explore the relationship between school phobia and secondary school students' academic achievement in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State using a correlational research design. The study was guided by five research questions and corresponding null hypotheses.

Methods: The sample population consisted of 94 secondary school students in the area selected through stratified random sampling. However, Taro Yamane was used to determine the sample size. The instrument used for data collection, titled "School Phobia Inventory (SPI)," demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.78 and the data analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method at a significance level of 0.05.

Results: The study's findings revealed a significant relationship between school phobia and academic achievement among students in public junior secondary schools in the Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Conclusion: There exists a notable negative significant relationship between school phobia and the academic performance of students based on gender and family type in public junior secondary schools in the area.

Keywords: Family Type, School Phobia, Gender, Academic Achievement, Phobia

Introduction

Education serves as the cornerstone of national development and survival. It transforms burgeoning human resources into skilled individuals vital for societal progress and economic growth. Education varies in interpretation depending on personal views, societal norms, and educational qualifications, with formal education being a structured system with defined objectives.

Education is often regarded as the transformer of crude, raw and undeveloped human resources of the nation into skilled, technical and highly valued elements of the society. Education facilitates national development as it equips the individuals with the needed knowledge, skills, character, techniques and information for the

improvement of the national and global economy (Amaele, 2012). The meaning of education may vary from person to person depending on variables such as level of literacy and education, personal values and perception of the functions of education. It may also vary from society to society as expressed in the component of its curriculum and other instruments of education. From the functionalist perspective, education is viewed as a vehicle for the transmission of society's norms and values, which engenders its homogeneity through the encouragement and perpetuation of inclusive similarities central for society's survival. (Agi, Amakiri & Daminabo, 2007) view education as the transmission of knowledge, culture, skills, attitude and insights germane to the growth and development of individual and in turn society as whole. Education is fashioned to perpetuate society's values or norms or aimed at promoting self-development of an individual and or designed to indoctrinate for class purpose, the processes are only possible through the acquisition of a planned knowledge or attitude.

Education takes several forms and includes traditional education (education given and received in one's immediate society of birth), informal education (education that is not received in formal school setting and which does not follow the procedures of planned instructions and deliberately thought out programmes), non-formal education (functional literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education for youths and adults outside the formal school system) and formal education (is education provided within formal school setting with formally prescribed curriculum, methodology, procedure and sustained by a structural arrangement differentiating roles and levels). Unlike the other forms of education, formal education system enjoys time, structure,

definition and therefore can statistically determine and predict opening, resources and turnout. Unlike the other types of education, it is deliberately planned, organized and coordinated. The formal education structure is designed to cover pre-nursery, nursery, primary, junior secondary (the last two is subsumed now into nine years of Basic Education), senior secondary and tertiary institutions (FRN, 2014). The provision of formal education in Nigeria at any level has been liberalized to involve not only government but also the private sector, however it is strictly guided by government regulations.

Literature Review

Various variables influence students' academic performance, including psychological factors like phobias. Phobia, such as school phobia or scolinophobia, can severely impact students' concentration, attendance, and academic outcomes. Factors contributing to phobias include genetics, trauma, social insecurities, bullying, and excessive stress, leading to poor academic performance and possible school dropout. Among the psychological variables is phobia and Kinanee (2020) asserts that phobia is intense irrational fear, phobia belongs to a group of unpleasant or negative experiences called anxiety. Phobia in the life of a student may result in several negative consequences such as impaired concentration, poor participation in school or classroom activities, poor school attendant or absenteeism, punctuality to school, completion and prompt submission of assignment, poor academic achievement, and in extreme cases, drop out of school. Phobia affects the personality of the student it is the root of poor self-concept, poor-social skills, and intra-personal behaviours. Although, it is normal to express fear or phobia from time to time but when it becomes habitual and affects an individual's

daily functioning, it becomes worrisome and several students are involved (Amed, 2018). There are certain variables that are responsible for phobia among students which is also called scolinophobia. Some of these variables include: genetic or hereditary factors, trauma, post-stress trauma, insecurity in the society, bullying especially excessive bullying, cultism and its associative consequences, excessive wickedness by teachers and other students, excessive punishment from teachers, persistent threat to life, irrational thoughts, etc. It is for this reason that phobia is neurotic when it does not impair duly functioning while at this same time, phobia may be psychotic when it affects daily functioning. However, whether neurotic or psychotic, phobia is related to students' academic achievement. Nwankwo (2016) posits that many students are affected by scolinophobia and this may account for the high rate of school dropout and poor academic achievement.

Fear of school may affect the students in the following ways: it may affect school attendance, result in impaired concentration, absenteeism, truancy, inability to complete and submit assignment on schedule, loss of writing materials and in extreme cases withdrawal from school or school attribution. These behaviours affect academic achievement negatively and may not be the cause of poor academic achievement. Although other researchers investigated the relationship between school phobia and academic achievement of students, there is a dearth of published study been conducted in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. It is as a result of the foregoing that this study intends to investigate the relationship between school phobia and students' academic achievement in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State.

2.1 Academic Achievement

Academic achievement refers to educational aim a student achieves over a specific time frame (Edun & Akanji, 2016). Iyalla (2019) explains that academic achievement measures the amount of academic content a learner learns in a determined amount of time. Each grade level or category of learners has learning goals or instructional standards that educators are required to teach. Doyle (2016) suggests that academic achievement is the result that had been achieved or acquired by the learner or student. It is the result of which resulted in changes within the individual as a result of activity in learning. It is the result or level of ability that has been achieved by students after attending a teaching-learning process with a certain time in the form of changes in behaviour, skills and knowledge and will then be measured and assessed and then realized in numbers or student.

Academic achievement is a term that is used to indicate the degree of success attained in some general or specific area. Obodo (2009) states that academic performance is the extent or degree of attainment of students in tasks, courses or programs to which they were sufficiently exposed. Anene (2005) asserts that academic performance is quantified by a measure of the students' academic standing in relation to those of other students of his age. Academic performance in school subject symbolizes a mark or score on a test or examination.

2.2 School Phobia

Another name for school phobia is scolinophia. It is the intense irrational fear relating to school and its associative activities. This arises due to the fear of children leaving home and their parents as well as loved ones. Malik (2015) posits that school phobia is a complex syndrome that can be influenced by the students' temperament, the situation at school and in

the family. Tempano and Marcia (2011) view school phobia or school refusal as an anxiety disorder related to separation anxiety. Students may refuse to attend school because doing so causes uncomfortable feelings, stress, anxiety or panic. Students may develop physical symptoms such as dizziness, stomach cramp or headache, when they are made to go to school. School avoidance is a milder form of refusal to attend school. With school avoidance, the student usually tries to avoid a particular situation, such as taking a test, writing an examination or changing clothes for physical education, rather than avoiding the school environment altogether.

Methodology
Research Questions
The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What is the relationship between school phobia and students' academic achievement in public junior secondary schools in the area?

2. What is the relationship between school phobia and male students' academic achievement in public junior secondary schools in the area?

3. What is the relationship between school phobia and female students' academic achievement in public junior secondary schools in the area?

4. What is the relationship between school phobia and the academic achievement of students from intact family in public junior secondary schools in the area?

5. What is the relationship between school phobia and the academic achievement of students from broken family in public junior secondary schools in the area?

This research is completed using the following procedures for the study. The study was presented under the following sub-headings: research design, population of the study, sampling technique, sample of the

study, instrument for data collection, validation of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, administration of the instrument and method of data analysis.

Research Design
The research employed a correlational design and utilized stratified random sampling to select a sample of 94 students from secondary schools in the area. Data were collected using the "School Phobia Inventory (SPI)," and analysis was carried out using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method. Ajoku (2006) posits that this type of research is used to determine the extent or degree of relationship existing between two or more variables. Nwankwo (2013) asserts that whenever a researcher is interested in finding out whether there is a relationship between two or more variables, and data from such variables are in ratio or interval scale to create the possibility for the scores to be correlated, such study is a correlational design. Also, Obilor (2018) opines that correlational research involves collecting numerical data to determine whether a relationship exists between two or more variables and the extent of the relationship. The extent or degree or magnitude and nature of relationships are expressed as correlation coefficients. This research design is appropriate for the study as the researcher aim at determining the relationship between school phobia and secondary school students' academic achievement in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Population of the Study
The population of this study consisted 94 students in secondary schools in the area diagnosed as experiencing school phobia. This figure was known through the school academic register. Since the population was

small the researcher used the entire population of 94 students.

Sampling Technique
This study adopted stratified random sampling technique. This is because the researcher ensured that only students experiencing phobia for school and academic activities were used for the study. Furthermore, the study adopted census sampling technique. This is a research design in which the researcher made use of the population as the sample due to the manageable size of the population (Ogidi, 2018).

Sample of the Study
The sample of the study comprised of 94 students in junior secondary schools in the area, they were: 36 male students and 58 female students in junior public secondary schools in the area. Also, while 33 students were from intact families in the area 61 students were from the broken families in the area, all from the sample.

Instrument for Data Collection
Two instruments were utilized in gathering data for the study. These are self-developed instrument titled: "School Phobia Inventory (SPI)". The instrument was segmented into two sections A and B. Section A sought information on the Bio-data of the students (such as the gender, family type etc). However, the section B sought information on the students' school phobia inventory. The section B was patterned alongside the modified Likert scale. The responses and the weights assigned to the responses are:
Strongly Agree (SA) = 4
Agree (A) = 3
Disagree (D) = 2
Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1
Another instrument used in the study was the students' academic achievement in Mathematics and English Language. The

mean of the students' performance in the two subjects was used in determining their academic achievement.

Reliability of the Instrument
The reliability of the School Phobia Inventory (SPI) was determined using Cronbach alpha reliability method. Copies of the instrument were administered to 20 students who did not form part of the sample. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78, indicating that the instrument was quite reliable. The results of the students in Mathematics and English Language were collected directly from the respective school principals and were adjudged to be reliable.

Administration of the Instrument
The School Phobia Inventory (SPI) was administered to the students sampled for the study with assistance of two (2) research assistants who know the area very well. The administration of the instrument was made possible through the permission of the principals who gave their consent that their schools should be used for the exercise. The administration of the instrument lasted three (3) weeks. The direct method of administration of instrument was utilized in the administration of the instrument. This was to forestall instrument loss. At the end of the administration, all the copies of the instrument administered were retrieved. The results of students in Mathematics and English Language were collected immediately alongside the administration of the School Phobia Inventory (SPI).

Method Of Data Analysis
Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method was used in answering the research questions and in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used in analyzing the data for the study.

Results
Research Question One
To what extent does school phobia relate to the academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Asari-Toru Local Government Area?

Hypothesis One
There is no significant relationship between school phobia and students' academic achievement. The responses of the students in junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area on the relationship between school phobia and their academic achievement was subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method.

Table 4.1: Relationship between School Phobia and Academic Achievement among Junior School Students

Correlations		School Phobia	Academic Achievement
School Phobia	Pearson Correlation	1	.79**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	94	94
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.79**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	94	94
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Result in Table 4.1 reveals that the relationship between school phobia and academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. This result showed that there is a high negative relationship between school phobia and junior secondary school students' academic achievement in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. The result shows that as scores on school phobia increases, there is a decrease in the students' academic achievement in junior secondary schools in the area.

Result in Table 4.1 also reveals that the relationship between school phobia and students' academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State is significant at 0.05 level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This is because the p-value (.004) is less than the level of significance (.05). The result of this null hypothesis is that there is significant relationship between social phobia and students' academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Question Two
To what extent does school phobia relate to the academic achievement of male junior secondary school students in Asari-Toru Local Government Area?

Hypothesis Two
There is no significant relationship between school phobia and male junior students' academic achievement in Asari-Toru Local Government Area.

The responses of male junior students in secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State on the extent to which school phobia is related to their academic achievement was subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method.

Table 4.2: Relationship between School Phobia and Academic Achievement **among Male students Junior Secondary Schools**

Correlations

		School Phobia	Academic Achievement
School Phobia	**Pearson Correlation**	1	.71**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011
	N	39	39
Academic Achievement	**Pearson Correlation**	.71**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	
	N	39	39
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Result in Table 4.2 indicates the relationship between school phobia and male junior students' academic achievement in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. This result shows that there is a high negative relationship between school phobia and academic achievement among male junior secondary school students in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. This result indicates that as scores on school phobia increases, there is a decrease in the scores on male students' academic achievement in junior secondary schools in the area.

Result in Table 4.2 shows that the relationship between school phobia and male junior students' academic achievement in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State is significant at 0.05 level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This result is because the p-value (.011) is less than the level of significance (.05). The result of this null hypothesis is that there is significant relationship between school phobia and male

students' academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Question Three
To what extent does school phobia relate to the academic achievement of female students in junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Hypothesis Three
There is no significant relationship between school phobia and the academic achievement of female students in junior secondary schools.

The responses of female students in junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State on the extent to which school phobia is related to their academic achievement was subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method

Table 4.3: Relationship between School Phobia and Academic Achievement among Female Students in Junior Schools

Correlations			
		School Phobia	Academic Achievement
School Phobia	**Pearson Correlation**	1	.81**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	55	55
Academic Achievement	**Pearson Correlation**	.81**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	55	55
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Result in Table 4.3 shows that the relationship between school phobia and female junior students' academic achievement in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. This result signifies that there is a very high negative relationship between school phobia and academic achievement among female junior secondary school students in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. This result indicates that as scores on school phobia increases, there is a decrease in the scores on female students' academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Result in Table 4.3 shows the relationship between school phobia and female students' academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State is significant at 0.05 level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This result is because the p-value (.001) is less than the level of significance (.05). The result of this null hypothesis is that there is significant relationship between school phobia and female students' academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Finding
The study investigated the relationship between school phobia and students' academic achievement in public junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. The researcher raised five research questions and five corresponding null hypotheses to guide the study. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The review of related literature was presented on the following subheading: Conceptual review, theoretical review, empirical review and summary of literature reviewed. The review

of related literature helped in supporting the results of the study. The data analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between school phobia and academic achievement among students in public junior secondary schools in the Asari-Toru Local Government Area. The correlation coefficients indicated a strong inverse relationship, signifying that increased school phobia led to decreased academic performance.

The procedures adopted in carrying out the study were presented in the third chapter of the study. The study adopted a correlational research method of the non-experimental type. The population of the study comprised of 94 students diagnosed of school phobia in public junior secondary schools in the area. The sample of the study consisted of 94 students selected through census sampling technique (census sampling technique was used due to the manageable size of the population).

Discussion
School phobia adversely affects students' academic outcomes by diminishing their interest in school-related activities, leading to poor academic self-concept and study habits. These findings align with previous research highlighting the detrimental impact of school phobia on students' achievement. School phobia is also called scolinophia. It is the intense irrational fear relating to school and its associative activities. The term scolino is derived from the Latin word scius meaning knowing. Scolinophobia is related to dickleinophobia meaning also fear of school. This fear arises due to the fear of children to leave home and their parents as well as loved ones. Malik (2015) notes that school phobia is a complex syndrome that can be influenced by the students' temperament, the situation at school and the family situation (Tempano and Marcia,

2011). The study investigated relationship between school phobia and secondary school students' academic achievement in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State.

There is a negative relationship between school phobia and academic achievement among students in public junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. The negative relationship between school phobia and academic achievement means that as scores on school phobia increases, there is a decrease in the scores on academic achievement of students in public junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. However, the result reveals that the relationship between school phobia and the academic achievement of students in public junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State is significant at 0.05 level of probability. Thus, while the degree of relationship was found to be -.79, the degree of lack of relationship was found to be 0.61. This result reveals that school phobia will affect students' perception of school, affect their participation in school activities and attendance. Thus, affecting students' performance in test, assignment and examination. The result above is in agreement with the view of Harris (2017) who states that there is a high negative but significant relationship between the academic achievements of students in California. This result corresponds with the assertion of Adesokan (2016) that there is negative but significant relationship between school phobia and the academic achievement of students in Lagos.

From result presented in Table 4.2, there is a negative relationship between school phobia and the academic achievement among male students in public junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of

Rivers State. This may be because school phobia will make the male students to loss interest in school and its related activities, develop poor study habits and even very poor academic self-concept. There is statistical significance at 0.05. This result is in agreement with Greenwald (2015) who states that there is a negative relationship between school phobia and the academic achievement of male students in Poland. Furthermore, the findings also corroborate the findings of Umaru (2018) that there is a negative relationship between school phobia and the academic achievement of male students in Kano Metropolis.

From the result in Table 4.3 there was a negative relationship between school phobia and the academic achievement of female students in public junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. This was significant at 0.05 level of probability, the negative relationship between school phobia and academic achievement among female students indicates that as scores on school phobia increases, there is a decrease in the scores on students' academic achievement in public junior secondary schools in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. This is perhaps because school phobia discourages the female students, create in them the feeling of hopelessness and helplessness, make the students loss the will to resists the flood of overwhelming fear that they experience. School phobia will also make the students feel that school activities is detrimental to their own existence and wellbeing. The presented result was in consonance with Lanwary (2018) findings that there is high negative and significant relationship between school phobia and academic achievement among female students in London. Also supported by Uwalaka (2017) that school phobia negatively influences the academic achievement of female students.

Recommendation of the Study

Based on the results of the study, the researchers recommend as follows, that:

1. Counseling units be established in public secondary schools to assist students experiencing school phobia. Additionally, nurturing parent-child communication, encouraging teachers' active involvement, and implementing strategies for early identification of psychological challenges among students are essential.

2. Parents should have time to interact with their child(ren) so that they can quickly noticed when such child(ren) is manifesting psychological problems.

3. Teachers should maintain healthy relationship with the students so that they can also identify students facing psychological challenges.

4. Public secondary school management should put in place machinery to easily identify students facing psychological problems like school phobia so that they can receive help before their condition worsened.

Implication of the Study

The implications of the study are discussed below:

The study has made case for the establishment of counseling unit in secondary schools. The establishment of such counseling unit will go a long way in reducing both the incidence and prevalence of school phobia.

It will not also be proper to establish a counselling unit when it cannot function effectively. This entails that the counseling unit should be well equipped with modern gadgets that will enhance effective service delivery.

It also implies that a qualified counselor should be employed to manage the counseling unit. The current practice of appointing a teacher to play the role of a counselor without necessary professional training and experience will not suffice.

There is also need to provide professional on the job training for the employed counselors in order to be abreast with the professional experiences and modern techniques of counseling. This will enable the counsellor to continually update his or her knowledge of issues relating to counseling.

Another implication of the study is the need for early identification of school phobia among students so that it can easily be treated to achieve the needed results.

Contribution of the Study

The major contribution of the study is that it has shown that there is negative or inverse relationship between school phobia and academic achievement of public junior secondary schools' students in Asari-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. Specifically, the study indicates that there is negative but significant relationship between school phobia and academic achievement of male, female students, students from both intact and broken families.

Future Studies

The study suggests as follows:

1. Psychosocial variables as correlates of school phobia should be investigated.
2. Strategies for reducing the prevalence of school phobia should be investigated.
3. Influence of cultural factors on school phobia among students should be investigated.

Conclusion

In conclusion, school phobia presents a significant challenge to students' academic achievement in public junior secondary schools. Early intervention and support mechanisms are crucial in addressing school phobia and its detrimental effects on students' educational outcomes. It may be

phobia for examination, particular subject in the school system, daily classroom activities that go on in the school or fear of a particular teacher in the school system. Based on the results of the study, the researchers conclude that there is a negative or inverse relationship between school phobia and the academic achievement of males, females as well as students from intact and broken families.

Conflict of Interest
None was declared.

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