

**PEER RELATIONS AND SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT AS CORRELATES OF
EARLY ADOLESCENTS' ADJUSTMENT AFTER TRANSITION TO JUNIOR
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN IBADAN**

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Abstract

Chronic school failure is associated with poor academic and emotional functioning. Consequently, children and adolescents with poor peer relations and school involvement may be particularly vulnerable to emotional problems and school maladjustment. Children and adolescents with poor adjustment also encounter considerable school and academic problems, including poor motivation, high dropout rates, and modest school achievement. The study therefore sought to investigate the influence of peer relations, school involvement on adjustment of early adolescents transiting in junior secondary schools.

The sample for this study consists of selected junior secondary school students from selected junior secondary schools in Ibadan. Two hundred early adolescents comprising 100 males and 100 females participated in this study. Their ages ranged between 13 and 15 years

The three assessment scales used in this study are Involvement in School scale (Berndt and Miller, 1990); Friendship Quality (Parker and Asher, 1993) and Personal-social adjustment scales (Akinboye, 1977) were used for the investigation. The three instruments have adequate psychometric properties. The Multiple Regression Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to analyse the data collected.

Results showed that peer relations and school involvement made a joint contribution of 19% to the prediction of adjustment among the study participants. It also shows that the two independent variables – peer relations and school involvement made a significant joint contribution to the prediction of adjustment among study participants ($df = 199, F = 8.809; P < .05$). School involvement made the highest relative contribution ($\beta = .252; t = 3.657; P < .05$) followed by Peer relations ($\beta = .024; t = .341; P > 0.05$). Results further show that adjustment correlated with peer relations ($r = .165; P < .05$); and school involvement ($r = .280; P < .05$). Results of this study point to the importance of including a peer component in intervention programs designed to improve early adolescents' adjustment during the transition to middle school. Based on these findings, some recommendations as well as suggestions for further studies were made.

Key words: Peer relations, School involvement, Adolescence, Early adolescence, School, Adjustment.

Introduction

Background of The Study

Adolescence, which is generally referred to as the second decade of the life span, is a developmental period that is characterized by numerous biological, cognitive, and social transition (Steinberg, 2002). In addition to coping with these fundamental changes, the early adolescent must typically navigate the contextual changes associated with the transition to the school environment. In many cases, adolescents move from a small elementary school with self-contained classrooms and close relationships with teachers to a larger, more impersonal junior school environment (Simmons and Blyth, 2007). Overall, research indicates that the transition from the elementary to junior school environment coincides with declines in early adolescents' academic achievement, self-esteem, interest in school, and level of motivation (Eccles, Lord, and Buchanan, 1996; Fenzel, 2000; McDougall and Hyrnel, 1998). Studies have also reported that adolescents experience increases in psychological distress across this transition (Chung, Elias, and Schneider, 1996).

Given these findings, researchers have sought to identify factors that influence early adolescents' adjustment across the school transition. Some studies have focused on the impact of the timing and number of secondary school transitions on adolescents' adjustment (Crockett, Petersen, Graber, Schulenberg, and Ebata, 2003). Other research has examined how changes in adolescents' achievement goals relate to declines in their academic performance (Anderman and Midgley, 1997). Recently, investigators have begun to consider adolescents' own perceptions of the stressfulness of their transition to junior school (Berndt and Mekos, 1995; McDougall and Hymel, 1998).

A small number of studies have examined the relationship between adolescents' perceptions of support from adults and peers and the nature of their transition experience (Fenzel, 2000). Given the rising importance of relationships with peers during adolescence, it is quite remarkable that researchers have largely overlooked the role of peers across the school transition. Equally overlooked is the importance of adolescents' school involvement in the total wellbeing by being well adjusted with consequence positive impact on their achievement.

Overall, there is substantial evidence linking poor peer relations to adjustment difficulties such as aggressive behaviour, feelings of loneliness, poor academic achievement, school dropout, involvement in criminal activity, and mental health problems (Bagwell, Newcomb, and Bukowski, 1998; Coie, Dodge, and Kupersmidt, 1990). In recent years, researchers have made distinctions between the various *types* of relationships that are encompassed by the broad concept of "peer relations". Popularity (i.e., a particular child's level of acceptance by the members of his or her peer group), friendship (i.e., involvement in a mutual, dyadic relationship), and friendship quality (i.e., the extent to which a friendship affords certain provisions such as validation and companionship) are conceptually distinct, yet related constructs that make unique contributions to children's adjustment. The impact of these peer variables on adjustment has been examined across *early* school transitions.

According to Skinner, Wellborn, and Connell (1990), school involvement incorporates students' initiation of action, effort, and persistence on schoolwork, as well as ambient emotional states during

learning activities. Connell, et al. (1994) asserts that engagement appears to be the cornerstone of academic achievement motivation.

Hudley, Daoud, Hershberg, Wright-Castro, and Polanco (2002) highlight the necessity of student involvement as a reflection of intrinsic motivation that is necessary for student success in high school. They maintain that students who become increasingly disengaged with school tend to leave or drop out early and maladjusted. In contrast, students who find comfort and experience a feeling of belonging tend to do much better as they progress through high school.

To this point, however, researchers have rarely considered the influence of peers as well as students involvement across the transition from elementary to junior school. The current study focused on expanding the frontiers of knowledge on understanding the influence of early adolescents' peer experiences and school involvement in determining successful adjustment across the junior school transition.

Theoretical Basis for the Study of Friendship

Harry Stack Sullivan (1953) is frequently cited as one of the first developmental theorists to emphasize that involvement in friendship makes vital contributions to children's and adolescents' psychological development and well-being. Sullivan's theory is based on the idea that psychological development is best understood in terms of interpersonal relationships. According to Sullivan, interpersonal relationships should be examined from a developmental perspective. More specifically, Sullivan outlined a developmental progression of specific interpersonal needs that emerge across various stages of development. As an individual develops, emergent interpersonal needs either lead to feelings of security (when the needs are fulfilled) or to feelings of anxiety (when the needs are not met). At each stage of development, particular social relationships provide the most suitable context in which an individual's needs are satisfied.

Furthermore, children and adolescents acquire particular social skills and interpersonal competencies within the context of each of these fundamental interpersonal relationships (Buhrmester & Furrnan, 1986). Sullivan (1953) asserted that from infancy through adolescence, personality development is greatly influenced by relationships with members of the immediate family, school personnel, and peers. Another major aspect of Sullivan's theory is that the emerging social

needs are cumulative in nature. That is, as individuals move from one stage to the next, new interpersonal needs add to those that already exist. During Sullivan's first stage (0-2 years), infants' primary need is that of tenderness. Naturally, this need is satisfied mainly through interactions with parents. During the stage of childhood (2-6 years), the need for companionship or adult participation in children's play emerges. Throughout this stage, parents continue to serve as the primary means through which the social needs of tenderness and companionship are fulfilled. The juvenile era (6-9 years) is marked by the emergent social need for acceptance. At this stage, egalitarian relationships with other children become important. Although parents partially fulfill the need for acceptance, children also have a desire to be accepted by their peers. During the pre-adolescent stage (9- 12 years), there is an emergent need for intimacy and consensual validation, which is fulfilled primarily through involvement in same-sex friendships. During early adolescence (12-16 years), individuals encounter needs for sexual involvement and intimacy with an opposite-sex partner. Although opposite-sex peers play an increasingly prominent role throughout adolescence, relationships with same-sex peers remain extremely important, offering provisions such as companionship and a context for intimate disclosure.

Of particular relevance is Sullivan's assertion that relationships with same-aged peers (i.e., friendships) become more significant during the pre-adolescent years. During this developmental stage, the need for interpersonal intimacy emerges and becomes more important than the need for acceptance, which was of primary importance during the juvenile era. It is through relationships with a few close friends, generally of the same sex, that this need for intimacy is first satisfied. With friends the young individual learns to divulge and receive private information and to build a close friendship that is based on loyalty and trust. Involvement in a friendship also offers the benefit of consensual validation, as friends realize that their shared interests, fears, preferences, and hopes are valid and important. Through involvement in an intimate friendship, the pre-adolescent is building a foundation of skills to implement in both same- and opposite sex relationships during adolescence and adulthood. Although Sullivan did not discuss these skills in more detail, Buhrmester and Furman (1986) suggested that these abilities include cooperation, compromise, competition,

empathy, mutual self-disclosure, and perspective taking. According to Sullivan, an individual who does not experience intimate relationships with friends will not develop these skills and will likely experience relationship difficulties as an adolescent or young adult.

Sullivan (1953) also believed that involvement in intimate friendships during preadolescence could have a corrective or therapeutic influence, helping to ameliorate interpersonal problems that may have developed during childhood. For example, involvement in a supportive relationship with a friend during preadolescence could assist an individual in overcoming feelings of insecurity that developed as a result of poor family or peer relationships. Friendship may also serve as a buffer against the negative effects of rejection by the larger peer group. Alternatively, Sullivan emphasized that lack of involvement in intimate friendships could lead to feelings of loneliness.

In recent years, researchers have empirically evaluated various aspects of Sullivan's theory. For instance, one study focused on the development of the need for companionship (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). Results of this study indicated that during the juvenile stage (second grade), children perceived same-sex peers as providing the same amount of companionship that parents provide. However, consistent with Sullivan's theory, participants in the early adolescent stage (eighth grade) described same-sex peers as more frequent sources of companionship than parents. Research also supports Sullivan's idea that intimacy plays a more prominent role in preadolescent relationships. For instance, between preadolescence and adolescence, children's descriptions of friendship demonstrate a significant increase in the number of comments regarding sharing intimate thoughts and feelings (Berndt, 1981 ; Furman & Bierman, 1984).

Sullivan's theory does not refer to gender differences in the social needs that emerge at each developmental stage. In addressing this issue, Buhrmester and Furman (1987) found that boys and girls in second grade did not differ significantly in their ratings of intimacy in same-sex friendships. However, by fifth grade, girls' ratings of intimacy in their same-sex friendships were significantly higher than those of boys. This gender difference in level of intimacy in friendship became even more pronounced when the participants were in eighth grade. These findings indicate that during preadolescence, the role of intimacy

in friendship becomes increasingly important, particularly for girls. Buhrmester and Furman (1986) state that researchers have only just begun to conduct critical tests of Sullivan's hypothesis regarding the relative influence of peer groups and close friendships on psychological adjustment at various stages of development.

Moreover, these researchers emphasize that in addition to determining the number of friendships a child has, it is crucial to assess the quality of these relationships. Using Sullivan's framework as a theoretical foundation, the current study addressed this limitation by assessing the impact of three different levels of adolescents' peer experiences (i.e., peer acceptance, friendship, and friendship quality) on adjustment across the school transition.

Chronic school failure is associated with poor academic and emotional functioning. Consequently, children and adolescents with poor peer relations and school involvement may be particularly vulnerable to emotional problems and school maladjustment. Children and adolescents with poor adjustment also encounter considerable school and academic problems, including poor motivation, high dropout rates, and modest school achievement. Students with adjustment and peer relations challenges may work harder than their teachers give them credit for and teachers have been noted to perceive such students as less motivated (Grolnick & Ryan, 1990) and less competent

The primary purpose of the present study was to simultaneously consider the peer relations and school involvement in predicting children's adjustment across the transition from elementary to junior school.

The outcome of all these would enable educational psychologists and other curricular planners as well as students to have a sense of direction in tackling the challenges in successful academic adjustments among early adolescents in transition to junior schools.

Links between peer relations and school adjustment

Over the past decade, research has demonstrated that children's and adolescents' peer experiences make a significant contribution to various indices of school adjustment. Across empirical investigations, school adjustment has been defined in various ways. For example, several studies have focused on the influence of friendships on

adolescents' behaviour, attitudes, and self-perceptions, whereas other work has considered the relative contribution of different levels of peer experience (e.g., friendship, peer acceptance) to adolescents' academic achievement. Yet another body of literature has focused on the role of peer experiences in children's academic and social adjustment across the transition to kindergarten. Notably, although researchers have considered the role of children's peer experiences across the kindergarten transition, peer variables have not been examined extensively with respect to the transition to middle school. In order to demonstrate the importance of considering adolescents' peer experiences across the transition to middle school, the extant literature that has established links between peer experiences and school adjustment are reviewed in the following paragraphs.

Across several investigations, Berndt and his colleagues have considered the influence of friendships on adolescents' attitudes toward school and their behaviour at school (Berndt, 1999). In one short-term longitudinal study involving 297 seventh and eighth graders, students completed self-report questionnaires regarding their level of involvement and extent of disruptive behaviour in the classroom (Berndt & Keefe, 1995). Participants were also asked to nominate up to three best friends and report their perceptions of their friends' classroom involvement and disruptive behaviour at school. For each friend that was nominated, participants completed a questionnaire that assessed various features of the identified friendship (e.g., positive features such as intimate disclosure and prosocial behaviour, negative features such as conflict and rivalry). In addition, teachers were asked to report each participant's classroom involvement and disruptive behaviour, and the grades that they received on the most recent report card. The information described above was collected at two different times, during the fall and again in the spring.

Results of this study indicated that students who had friends that described themselves as being disruptive during the fall assessment phase increased in self-reported disruption across the school year (Berndt & Keefe, 1995). In contrast, participants who were involved in best friendships that were characterized by more positive features increased in self-reported levels of involvement across the school year. Interestingly, teachers' ratings of the involvement of an individual's friends predicted changes in that individual's level of

involvement as rated by teachers. In addition, the grades of multiple friends were a significant predictor of changes in a participant's grades during the school year. With respect to gender differences, girls were more influenced by their very best friend in terms of self-reported disruptive behaviour than were boys. Overall, these results suggest that both the characteristics of adolescents' friends and the quality of their friendships affect various aspects of their school adjustment (Berndt & Keefe, 1995).

Links between school involvement and school adjustment

In examination of friends' influence on school adjustment, Berndt, Laychak, and Park (1990) considered the impact of friends on adolescents' motivation to achieve in school. For this study, friendship dyads were assigned to either a control or an experimental condition. In the experimental condition, the friendship dyads were asked to discuss six hypothetical dilemmas that would require an individual to make a choice between doing schoolwork and participating in another activity (e.g., deciding to stay home to study for a big exam for which you do not feel prepared or to go to a concert of a popular rock group). Friendship dyads that were assigned to the control group were exposed to the same hypothetical dilemmas, but were then asked to discuss topics unrelated to school. For both the experimental and control groups, students were required to decide between two choices, one that represented a high level of academic motivation and one that represented a low level of academic motivation. These decisions were made on an individual basis, both before and after the friendship dyad discussions.

Results revealed that discussions of the dilemmas within the friendship pairs led to an increase in the similarity of friends' decisions. Additionally, discussions that were more agreeable in nature and involved a greater exchange of information resulted in a greater degree of change in the decisions of individual participants. As Berndt, Hawkins, and Jiao (1990) suggest, these results point to yet another means by which peers may influence adolescents' school adjustment.

Other research has considered the impact of peer experiences on adolescents' academic achievement in the middle school context. Wentzel and Caldwell(1997) followed one sample of sixth graders for three years. Number of reciprocated best friendships (ranging from

zero to three) and level of peer acceptance were obtained for each participant. In addition, using the reciprocal friendship information, groups of friends were identified. Academic achievement scores were calculated based on students' grades that were acquired from school records. Antisocial and prosocial behaviour for each participant was assessed using peer nominations and teacher ratings.

Each participant's level of psychological distress was also measured with the Weinberger Adjustment Inventory. Overall, Wentzel and Caldwell found a significant relationship between peer experiences and academic achievement. More specifically, group membership was the most consistent predictor of grade point average (GPA) in this sample. The relationship between peer group membership and GPA was indirect, due to a strong association between peer relations and prosocial behaviour. These results suggest that the links between peer relationships and academic achievement are complex and likely mediated by additional factors such as prosocial behaviour (Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997).

Thus far, few researchers have considered the influence of peers on adolescents' adjustment across the middle school transition. However, the impact of peer variables on adjustment across school transitions has been examined with younger samples. Over the past decade, Ladd and his colleagues have conducted several studies on the influence of peers on children's adjustment during the transition to kindergarten. As children enter kindergarten, they are faced with many challenges such as gaining acceptance by new peers, becoming comfortable in the school environment, meeting the teacher's expectations, and developing the pre-academic skills that are presented to them (Ladd, 1989; Ladd & Kochenderfer, 1996). As with any type of transition, many factors mediate a child's adjustment to a new school environment. For example, child characteristics such as gender, level of intelligence, and social skills seem to be important predictors of future school adjustment (Ladd, 1989). Research suggests that children's relationships with their parents, siblings, and peers (both inside and outside of the classroom) are also related to school adjustment outcomes (Ladd, 1989).

Research Questions

1. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (peer relations and school involvement) to the prediction of dependent variable (Adjustment)?
- 2, what is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (peer relations and school involvement) to the prediction of dependent variable (Adjustment)?
3. There will be no significant relationship between peer relations, school involvement and adjustment of adolescents.

Methodology

The design adopted is descriptive research design. The researcher was interested in knowing the significant correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable without necessarily manipulating the independent variables. Here the dependent variable, which is psychological adjustment, is being paired with the independent variables peer relations and school involvement to know both their joint and relative predictive value of the dependent variable.

Participants

The population of this study comprised all junior senior secondary school adolescents. Stratified random sampling method was used to select 200 participants. The respondents were made up of 100 males and 100 females. Their ages ranged from 13 years to 15 years.

Instrumentations

The three assessment scales used in this study are Involvement in School scale; Friendship Quality and Personal-social adjustment scales.

Involvement in School

The nature and extent of children's involvement in school was assessed using the 12 school involvement items from the Attitudes Toward School self-report questionnaire (Berndt & Miller, 1990). For this measure, children rated their participation in school-related activities on a 1 (never) to 5 (very often) scale. The 12 school involvement items, adapted by Berndt and Miller from Moos and Trickett (1974), assess school-related involvement in classroom and school-related activities (e.g., "How often do you take part in class discussions or activities?",

"How often do you put a lot of energy into what you do in school?"). Internal consistency for the school involvement items, based on Cronbach's alpha, has been reported to range from .77 to .83 (Berndt & Miller, 1990; McDougall & Hymel, 1998).

Friendship Quality

Children were asked to assess their perceptions of various qualitative aspects of their previously identified friendship dyad using the Friendship Quality Questionnaire- Revised (FQQ-R; Parker & Asher, 1993). This questionnaire consists of 41 primary items and one practice item. For each item, children indicated on a 1 (not at all true) to (really true) scale the extent to which a particular quality was characteristic of their relationship with a specific friend (e.g., " makes me feel good about my ideas". ("and I always tell each other about our problems.")). Each child completed a customized FQQ-R questionnaire regarding a particular friend. According to Parker and Asher (1993), this method is used to reduce the likelihood that children will complete the questionnaire based on an ideal friendship or mental representation of a combination of many different friendships. Parker and Asher (1993) have reported acceptable to high internal consistency for this measure, with coefficient alphas ranging from .73 to .90.

Social Adjustment

Personal-social adjustment scale (PSAS) was developed by Akinboye (1977). Personal –social adjustment subscale in section J, was used to measure the social adjustment level of the subjects. The item selection procedure ascertained that the items described an adolescent's level of personal-social adjustment, thus pointing to the authenticity of adequate face validity the scale has construct validity indicated by a coefficient Alpha ($\alpha = .808$). The sub-scale also has an intend alpha of 0.87 after 3 weeks and $r = .80$ after 2months.

Procedure

The questionnaires were personally administered to the participants by the researcher with the help of the representative from each class. The instruments were collected immediately after completion.

Method of Data Analysis

Data obtained from the study were statistically treated to ascertain both the joint and the relative contributions of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The two basic statistical methods used were (1) Multiple Regression Analysis and (2) Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Results

This section presents the data analysis as well as the display of results obtained in finding answers to the research questions raised in the study.

Research question one

The first research question states that – What is the joint contribution of the independent Variables (peer relations and school involvement) to the prediction of dependent variable(Adjustment) among participants in the study?

Table one: Regression table of analysis showing contribution of the independent variables

R = .430 R ² = 0.185 Adj. R ² = .164 Std Error = 3.3638					
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	498.408	2	99.682	8.809	.000
Residual	2195.187	198	11.315		
Total	2693.595	199			

Table one shows that the independent variables – peer relations and school involvement made a contribution of 19% to the prediction of adjustment among the study participants. From the above table, df = 199, F= 8.809; P<.05. This however shows that the two independent variables – peer relations and school involvement made a significant joint contribution to the prediction of adjustment among study participants.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among variables

Variables	N	MEAN	SD	1	2	3
Adjustment	200	8.4550	3.68	1.000		
Peer relations	200	25.90	6.48	.165**	1.000	
School involvement	200	13.845	3.61	.280**	.570**	1.000

** P<.05

N=200.

Table 2 shows descriptive and inter-correlations among the study variables. As shown in table 2, adjustment correlated with peer relations ($r=.165$; $P<.05$); school involvement ($r = .280$; $P<.05$).

Research question two

The second research question states that what is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables(peer relations and school involvement) to the prediction of dependent variable(Adjustment) among study participants?

Table 3: Table showing the relative contribution of the independent variables

Model	Un-standardized coefficient		Std coefficient B	t	Sig.
	B	Error			
(Constant)	57.287	9.963		5.750	.000
Peer relations	2.319E-02	.068	.024	.341	.733
School involvement	.514	.141	.252	3.657	.005

The above table shows that school involvement made the highest relative contribution ($\beta = .252$; $t=3.657$; $P<0.05$) followed by Peer relations ($\beta = .024$; $t = .341$; $P > 0.05$).

Summary of the findings

The findings of the study are summarized thus:

Peer relations and school involvement made a joint contribution of 19% to the prediction of adjustment among the study participants. From the

above table, $df = 199$, $F = 8.809$; $P < .05$. This however shows that the two independent variables – peer relations and school involvement made a significant joint contribution to the prediction of adjustment among study participants. School involvement made the highest relative contribution ($\beta = .252$; $t = 3.657$; $P < 0.05$), followed by Peer relations ($\beta = .024$; $t = .341$; $P > 0.05$). Results further show that adjustment correlated with peer relations ($r = .165$; $P < .05$); and school involvement ($r = .280$; $P < .05$)

These findings therefore formed the basis for discussion in the next session.

Discussion of Findings

Introduction

In this section, the researchers discuss the result of findings in the study, recommendations, suggestions for further research and limitations of the study are equally given.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study are summarized thus:

The first research question states that: What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (peer relations and school involvement) to the prediction of dependent variable (Adjustment) among participants in the study?

Results showed that Peer relations and school involvement made a joint contribution of 19% to the prediction of adjustment among the study participants ($df = 199$, $F = 8.809$; $P < .05$). This however shows that the two independent variables – peer relations and school involvement made a significant joint contribution to the prediction of adjustment among study participants.

This result means that the independent variables, peer relations and school involvement safely predicted adjustment among early adolescents in transition in junior high schools. This finding is in line with the findings of Berndt, Hawkins, and Jiao (1999) who asked sixth grade students several open-ended questions to assess the number and specific names of their best friends, and quality of their friendships (e.g., "Do you have any best friends?" and "Do you and your

best friend ever talk about things that you wouldn't tell most other people"). In addition to the friendship interview, these researchers examined friendship stability, students' self-esteem, peer-rated social behaviour, teachers' ratings of students' behaviour problems, and report-card grades.

Results indicated that students who had high quality sixth-grade friendships that were also fairly stable across the transition increased in sociability and leadership from sixth to seventh grade. Students with less stable friendships and sixth-grade friendships that were high in behaviour problems evidenced increases in behaviour problems across the transition.

Finally, sixth grade students whose friends were rated highly by peers on sensitivity isolation, increased in their own sensitivity-isolation across the transition if the quality or stability of these friendships was low or average. Alternatively, if the quality or stability of these friendships was high, sixth graders' sensitivity-isolation did not increase, even if they had sensitive-isolated friends. Berndt et al. (1999) conclude that friendship quality and stability may relate to the extent to which friends influence each other across this school transition. Overall, these results demonstrate that the quality and stability of students' elementary-school friendships influence students' behaviour as rated by peers and teachers during the initial months of junior high school. Berndt and colleagues (1999) suggest a further examination of the influence of peers across the transition to middle or junior high school.

Similarly, the findings of this study also confirms the findings of Berndt & Keefe (1995) who asked participants in their study to nominate up to three best friends and report their perceptions of their friends' classroom involvement and disruptive behaviour at school. For each friend that was nominated, participants completed a questionnaire that assessed various features of the identified friendship (e.g., positive features such as intimate disclosure and prosocial behaviour, negative features such as conflict and rivalry). In addition, teachers were asked to report each participant's classroom involvement and disruptive behaviour, and the grades that they received on the most recent report card. The information described above was collected at two different times, during the fall and again in the spring.

Results of this study indicated that students who had friends that described themselves as being disruptive during the fall assessment phase increased in self-reported disruption across the school year (Berndt & Keefe, 1995). In contrast, participants who were involved in best friendships that were characterized by more positive features increased in self-reported levels of involvement across the school year. Interestingly, teachers' ratings of the involvement of an individual's friends predicted changes in that individual's level of involvement as rated by teachers. In addition, the grades of multiple friends were a significant predictor of changes in a participant's grades during the school year. With respect to gender differences, girls were more influenced by their very best friend in terms of self-reported disruptive behaviour than were boys. Overall, these results suggest that both the characteristics of adolescents' friends and the quality of their friendships affect various aspects of their school adjustment (Berndt & Keefe, 1995).

Furthermore, further analysis showed that School involvement made the highest relative contribution ($\beta = .252$; $t=3.657$; $P<0.05$), followed by Peer relations ($\beta = .024$; $t = .341$; $P > 0.05$). Results further show that adjustment correlated with peer relations ($r=.165$; $P<.05$); and school involvement ($r = .280$; $P<.05$). Compatible with original predictions, school involvement was positively correlated with several of the peer variables, and the regressions of school involvement on the dimensions of early adolescents' peer relationships were significant. By implication, specifically, peer acceptance emerged as a unique predictor of school involvement across the school transition for the participants. These results are analogous to the findings of research on early school transitions, which indicated that higher levels of peer acceptance and lower levels of peer victimization were related to high levels of school liking (Ladd et al., 1997) and peer rejection predicted more negative attitudes toward school and lower levels of participation in the classroom (Ladd, 1990; Ladd et al., 1999). The present findings of this study lend credence to the above findings.

This research is of vital use to all those that are concerned about how teaching and learning outcomes of students depend to a great extent on their ability to adjust favourable within the school system especially during transitions. In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are here made:

Results of this study indicate that the development of interventions specifically tailored to improving children's friendship experiences is very vital. For example, such interventions could include a component that focuses on enhancing the quality of early adolescents' friendships as well as increasing the size of the friendship network

There must be a very strong effort on the part of school administrators especially through the school counsellors to look into the life of these students in order to proffer solutions to their problems before they get out of hand.

Parents should be educated on the need to put their children's views into consideration when selecting schools for them. For instance, results of this study show among other things that "peer relations" is very vital in successful school adjustment. Therefore students should not be put into schools far away from their peers.

Schools should endeavour to organize on a regular basis programmes and activities that would promote social bonding among students within and outside the school environment. Similarly, teachers and school administrators should adopt participative approach to teaching and learning system that provides opportunities for students to be involved and to participate actively in school work. This has the advantage of motivating students to enjoy school and have very positive attitude to school.

Conclusion

The study has attempted to explore the influence of peer relations and school involvement on adjustment among early adolescent on transition. This is with the view to determining not only the need for successful adjustment but also to investigate the complexities of school transition.

Important findings emerged from this study. Results showed that peer relations and school involvement significantly predicted successful adjustment. It further showed that adjustment positively and significantly correlated with peer relations and school involvement.

This study concludes by making a number of remarkable recommendations. Chief among these recommendations is that school transition intervention programmes that include a peer component would likely lead not only to improved psychological adjustment but also to more positive school adjustment across this transition.

Overall, peer relations and school involvement appear to be somewhat related dimensions of early adolescents' experience that make unique contributions to psychological and school adjustment. To the extent that the independent variables considered in this study could predict adjustment, such prediction should be further improved upon for more successful and positive adjustment.

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