The Predictive Effectiveness of Gender and Peer Pressure on Parent-Adolescent Conflict in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract
Parent-child conflict increases as children move into adolescence. This trend is common and can be quite distressing for parents and adolescents. Parents may wonder why their formerly cooperative and responsible children now seem hostile and destructive. They may perceive their children’s behavior as resistant and oppositional and may respond to this perceived lack of cooperation with increasing pressure for future compliance. To the growing adolescents, they perceive this increasing pressure by parents as a reduction in their autonomy, just when they want more. This increased stress in parent-child relations may result in negative adolescent behavioral outcomes. For instance, adolescents who dropped out of school in comparison to those who completed their school programme reported more conflict and less communication with parents (Montemoyer, 2002). Equally, teenage girls who reported that their relations with their parents were more stressful are likely to marry early than their school mates who reported calm relations with their parents. Montemoyer (2002) also found that frequent parent adolescent conflict would result to greater peer involvement. The questions at this juncture are: Has parent-adolescent conflict anything to do with gender? To what extent does peer pressure influence parent-adolescent conflict? Providing answers to these questions form the main thrust of this study.

Adolescence is a period of several years marked by rapid physical and psychosocial changes. It is a unique period of several years marked physical, social and psychological changes and the people that occupy the stage are known as adolescents (Opara, 2004). As children turn into adolescents, family relationships are altered as the process of differentiation begins to take place (Phinney and Ong, 2002). Many researchers (Opara, 2010; Erikson, 1969) associate these changes that characterize this new stage of development with conflict, tension and turmoil. Equally they see the changes that occur as being responsible for the disruption in the adolescents thought processes which also disrupt the smooth functioning system between them and their parents. Opara (2010) therefore argued that there must be a readjustment of parent-child relations in order to achieve a new homeostatic.

Conflict in the context of this study refers to the existence of competing incompatible or opposing desires, needs, goals, demands or opportunities between parents and their adolescent children, which
sometimes generate antagonistic interaction in which one party attempts to thwart the intentions or goals of the other. It can be also seen as a dyadic, personal event involving overt behavioural opposition, quarrels, arguments and disagreements between adolescents and parents. Conflicts increases in frequency as teen tries to gain independence and as he/she tries to discover who he/she is? Dreikurs (2004) alluded that the consequences of such conflict affect the adjustment of the adolescent. For instance, a child who experiences tense and conflictual relationship with parent at home tends to carry the unfavourable home experiences to school and elsewhere which may result to truancy, poor grade, bullying, drug use and so on.

Researchers (Smetana, 2009; Montemayor, 2004) analyzed sources of conflicts between parents and their teen children. They found that issues eliciting the most serious conflicts included: coming home late; grade at school, house hold chores, family rules and regulations, dating, clubbing, choice of friends, spending money and physical appearance.

Peer pressure is another variable of this study. The term peer pressure is often used to describe instances where an individual feels indirectly pressured into changing their behavior (Wikipedia 2009). It can also be defined as influence exerted on a peer in order to conform to group norm. Group in this definition is either social group, social clique, social gang, close friends or chums. It stresses that there are two types of peer pressure – positive and negative. Positive peer pressure is when some one tries to help you change something about yourself for the better and negative peer pressure is the opposite. Negative peer pressure occurs when a teen’s FRIEND or other people of their age try to convince him or her to do something that is either harmful to his/her body or against the norms of the society, the law of the land. Examples include: drinking alcohol taking drugs, engaging in cult classes, stealing, vandalization and so on. Although teen usually know when something is bad for them, they often choose to do it because they want to be liked, to fit in to be accepted or because they are afraid they will be made fun of. The desire to be accepted by their peers is perhaps the strongest motivating force.

As peer identification increases, teens begin to question adult standards. It becomes reasonable for teens to rely on their peer for advice they believe they can understand them better and sympathize with them. Peer relationship then occupy central role in their life, often replacing their parents and family members as their main source of advise, socialization and entertainment activities. This period adolescents begin to break away from their homes and try different roles and behavior, in attempt to figure out “who he/she is”. They also question rules instituted out of common sense, like not touching hot iron and those that are based on culture-related standard, such as, not dating until certain age, returning home late, responsibilities and so on, a delineation that younger children do not make (Smetana, 2003 and Bochnk, 2010). Parents at this period often hear their teens say: I can handle it”, “it does not concern you daddy” you won’t understand” and so on.

Based on the foregoing, it is observed that most parents-adolescents relations experience increased conflict and decreased closeness Bochnk (2010). This increased conflict in parent-adolescent relations could affect adjustment in their future lives. This study focuses on peer pressure influence on parent-adolescent conflict.

Gender is a term normally used to indicate the distinction between human beings on the basis of masculinity/femininity diachotomy. It is used conterminously with sex to demote the female and male divide in society (Opara, 2004). For the purpose of this study gender will be strictly seen in reference to the distinction between male and female

Researchers have established that there has been conflicting and contrasting values in the lives of most growing adolescents (Arnett 2000). Parents fear that their teens would be subject to bad influences as they break away from home to seek for solution to their problems from inexperienced peers. This situation inescapably produces tension and stress on parent-adolescent relations.

Danesty (2004) and Smith (2004) in their studies associated socioeconomic status, family background and family structure to parent-adolescent conflicts. Bochnke (2010) studied the consequences of peer-pressure on academic performance. There is paucity of empirical studies to the best of the researcher’s knowledge on influence of gender and peer-pressure on parent-adolescent conflict hence the need for the present study.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The design of the study is correlational survey design. This is because the study aims at determining the relationship between variables and to ascertain the extent to which variation in one variable is associated with variations in another. It also seeks to determine the magnitude and direction of relationship between variables (Nworgu, 2006). The population of the study comprised all secondary II (SS II) students spread across 74 senior secondary school in Okigwe education zone of Imo State of Nigeria. Imo state is in the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The total number is 4028. A total of 600 SS II adolescent students constitute the sample of the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 12
secondary schools from Okigwe education zone from where the sample was drawn.

A researcher developed questionnaire was used for the collection of data. The title of the instrument was parent-adolescent conflict questionnaire (PACQ). The instrument is made of two sections A and B. Section A deals with bio-data of respondents while section B consists of 55 items which have items that seek how gender and peer pressure influence parent-adolescent conflict. Their responses were rated using 4-point likert scale of Always A = 1 Sometimes (S) = 2; Rarely (R) = 3 and Never (N) = 4. Decision point is 2.5 or 50 percent. Any score above 2.5 would be regarded as positive score while and score below 2.5 would be regarded as negative score.

Chi-square was used to answer RQ 1, regression analysis was used for research question 2 and t-test statistics was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Three experts from the department of measurement and evaluation and one from psychological foundations validated the instrument. The instrument was also subjected to test-retest and reliability analysis and it yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.78 an indication that the instrument was reliable. Two research questions and one null hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**
1. How does the sex of the adolescent influence adolescent conflict with parents?
2. To what extent does peer-pressure predict conflict behavior parents and adolescent?

**Null hypothesis 1**: There is no significant relationship between the mean score of male and female adolescents on parents-adolescent conflict among SS 2 students in Imo State.

**RESULT**
The data collected were statistically analyzed and presented below;

**Research Question one**
How does sex of the adolescent influence adolescent conflict with parents?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adolescent with Parents (Grouped)</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00-2.49</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50-2.99</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00-3.49</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.50-4.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>250</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X² = 12.679; df=0; p=0.005; p<0.01; Test is Highly Significant

Coefficient of variation (cv) = 0.14

**Conclusion**
There is a statistically significant influence of gender on adolescent conflict with parents X² = 12.679; df=0; p=0.005; p<0.01;

**Research question two**
To what extent does peer-pressure predict conflict between parents and adolescents?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of square</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Means square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R square</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>29.386</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29.386</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>605a</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>.000a</td>
<td>Peer Pressure Conflict</td>
<td>1.406 .483</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>20.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>50.899</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>345.249</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80.285</td>
<td>599</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Peer Pressure Conflict
b. Dependent Variable: Adolescent Conflict (r = 0.6605; r² = 0.3.366; 1=a.405; b=0.483; P<0-01)

**Conclusion:**
a. The correlation coefficient (r=0.605) is significantly high. Therefore there is a
b. the coefficient of variation measured by \( r^2 = 0.366 \) implies that about 32\% = 36.6\% of the variations in Adolescent Conflict with parents is attributable to variations in Peer Pressure conflict.

c. The regression coefficients namely \( a = 1.405 \) and \( b = 0.483 \), are both highly significant (\( a = 1.405; b = 0.483; P < 0.01 \)), therefore then, adolescent conflict with parents, assigned dependent variable (\( Y \)) is predictable by peer pressure conflict, assigned independent variable (\( X \)) with the equation:

\[
Y = 1.405 + 0.483X
\]

where

- \( Y \) = Adolescent conflict with parents
- \( X \) = Peer pressure conflict

And \( X \) and \( Y \) can assume the values 1 to 4 (1 = always, 2 = sometimes; 3 = rarely; 4 = never).

**Hypothesis 1**

There is no significant difference between the mean score of male and female adolescent on parent adolescent conflict among in school adolescents in Imo state.

**DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

In the discussion of research findings, the approach adopted was to discuss the three major findings that emerged from the investigation.

There is statistically significant influence of gender on adolescent conflict with parents. This is reflected on the value of \( x^2 = 12.675 \) as shown on table 1.

The above result corroborates with the findings of Yau and Smetana (2003) who reported that gender influences parent –adolescent conflict. The conflict according to them was more pronounce in adolescent males than their female counterpart. The same study further revealed that female adolescents are more in communion with their parents than the male adolescents. Further more the above findings is also in line with the findings of Shittu (2004) who reported that parent-adolescent conflict and child maladjustment and behavior problems were more prevalent among male adolescent than their female counterparts, especially in the prediction of externalizing symptoms. Put succinctly, females reasoning about conflicts could be said to focus more on psychological justification while males focused more on interpersonal justification.

The second major finding: there is statistically relationship between peer pressure and parent-adolescent conflict. The analysis on table 2 shows that the correlation coefficient (\( r \)) is significantly high, with \( r = 0.605; P < 0.01 \) and coefficient of variation measured by \( r^2 \) as 0.366. The above finding corroborate with the finding of Boehnk (2010) who reported that parent- adolescent conflict has its major root on peer pressure. He opined that parents make incredible demands from their teen children in their academic work, time to return home, company to go out with, responsibilities and so on. Most often, this stressful home environment make adolescents to break away from home to seek advice and companionship from their peer.

Equally, the finding is in line with Breikurs (2004), who reported that adolescent rely more on peer for companionship, affection and mutual support they hope to enable them to achieving the two primary developmental tasks, which are autonomy and independence from parents; and identity - finding the answer to the question ‘who am I’. Arnett (2000) also found peer pressure as a factor in the use of harmful drugs, cigarette smoking, alcohol use, stealing and other acts harmful to the body. Nevertheless, some studies Smetana (2004), Shittu (2004) opined that peer pressure does not always produce negative effect on teens. For instance, Steinberg and Morris (2000) viewed peer pressure involvement by children who are unable to form close and satisfying relationships with peers to be rewarding. This is because peer
relationship provides avenue for imbibing on social self confidence, and also inspire teens to achieve goals that they might never aimed for on their own.

CONCLUSION

The result of this study confirms that there is statistically significance relationship of gender and parent-adolescent conflict among secondary school adolescents in Imo State, Nigeria. Equally there is statistically relationship between peer-pressure and parent-adolescent conflict. The finding on influence of gender on parent –adolescent conflict was further established by the result obtained from the null hypothesis formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. However, we must not lose sight that conflict is a part of any relationship and the ability to successfully resolve differences is the key element to the continuation of a relationship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. Adolescent perceive physical and psychosocial changes during puberty as stressful and disturbing. There is also identity crisis problem. Parents should therefore help their teen children to resolve these crises successfully and this may not be achieved through confrontation.

2. The skill that is required to be a successful parent of a child may not be the same as the skill necessary during adolescent years to rear their teens. Therefore some parent-adolescent conflicts may be the result of parent deficits in adolescent management skills. Government should therefore organize childrearing programme for parents through their appropriate agencies. Such programme should not only focus on skills for managing infants but also include skills on the new abilities and problems that appear during adolescent years.

3. Parent should make effort that are targeted at healthy and positive peer relations since its effect on adolescents is significant to their future positive development.

4. Parents and teachers should be gender friendly and give to each sex their due attention and provision. Gender stereotyping or bias should be minimized in all spheres of human endeavor during adolescence period.

5. Parents and teachers should know that crises involved during adolescent stage seem normal, that is why Erikson (1970) used the term “identity versus role confusion” to describe the stage. Opara (2004) also described the stage as turbulent, boisterous and stormy. Parents and teachers should therefore use positive intervention measures rather than conflict and harsh measures in assisting the growing adolescents to overcome the crises of this stage. Equally when teens are reassured it would not only help them to accept the changes calmly but also to refrain from engaging in deviant behavior.

REFERENCES


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