

Parents variables and Social Skills Acquisition Among Primary School Pupils in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of parents' variables on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District, Nigeria. To achieve this purpose, three specific objectives and corresponding research questions were raised to guide the study. Three null hypotheses were also postulated to guide the study and were tested at .05 level of significance. The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population of the study was 50,345 primary two pupils while simple random sampling was used to select a sample size of 400 primary two pupils. Parents' Variables Questionnaire (PVQ), for parents and Pupils' Social Skills Acquisition Rating Scale (PSSARS) for pupils were used as instruments for the study. The Cronbach's alpha statistical analysis was used to determine the reliability of instruments which yielded a coefficient indices of 0.89 and 0.92 respectively. Mean analysis and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that there is a significant influence of parenting styles, parents' marital status and parents' socio-economic status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended among others that parents should be encouraged to improve on their relationship with their children and choose the right parenting style that will help the children to behave positively in their social life among peers and perform well in their academics. Ministry of Education, school administrators, teachers, parents, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs, and other stakeholders should identify and understand the unique needs of individual children, owing to the differences in their parents' marital status. This may help boost the children's acquisition of social skills.

Keywords: *Parent, Parenting styles, Marital status and Socio-economic status and social skills*

Introduction

Children are born sociable beings with a preference for social interaction and the capacity to experience and express emotions, explore their world, develop, and learn. In the first 18 months of a child's life, this development and learning occurs at an astounding rate due to the rapid growth of the baby's brain (Britto, 2017). Babies progress from being highly dependent newborns to walking, self-assertive individuals with growing language skills. Children's social skills are constantly developing at different ages and stages. Skills built upon earlier skills are often interrelated and affect other areas of development such as language, thinking, planning and decision making. Children's development of social skills is also dependent upon development in these other areas associated with brain growth. Babies and toddlers engage in more concrete thinking based on what they can see. Pre-schoolers begin to have more conscious control and use abstract thinking, such as

understanding of the past and the future to guide their thoughts, feelings, and actions. However, it is useful to remember that these skills are just beginning in preschoolers and that they may find it difficult to make responsible decisions and 'do the right thing' on their own. Hence, social relationships with other people are necessary for healthy emotional functioning and psychological adjustment, and such relationships cannot be attained without the appropriate repertoire of social skills. Possessing such skills also allows an individual the opportunity to express both positive and negative feelings in interpersonal situations in ways that do not result in the loss of social reinforcement (Argyris, 2001). Social skills can also be described functionally, in terms of effectiveness – in any situation, an action can be termed skillful if it effectively coordinates appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour to, in turn, elicit a desired response from the environment (Gresham and Elliott, 2004).

Social skills are behaviours that promote positive interaction with others and the environment. Some of these skills include showing empathy, participation in group activities, generosity, and helpfulness, communicating with others, negotiating, and problem solving. Children learn these skills from adults and children in their environment who model and explain how to behave in certain circumstances (Ladd, 2005). Ladd and Burgess (2001) posit that the social skills that children learn when they are young form the basis for subsequent relationships that they develop in later childhood and adulthood. Due to the importance of social development in the formative early years of the child, all children need to learn and practise social skills. Parents are very influential in the lives of their children. They can shape, sustain, and develop pupils who will be active, diligent, creative, and tolerant, through their positive involvement in the learning process and educational activities. Parents are also capable of repressing and destroying the motivation and ability of their children through neglect and in difference to their achievements.

The influence of parents at childhood stage is very crucial, this is because parents play tremendous roles in childhood transition to adulthood as well as the social skills of the pupils. The family unit is considered as one of the most influential components of a child's social skills since the family is the first source of internal education for a child (Sumari, Hussein and Siraj, 2010). Generally, the social behaviour of the children depends on the parents' variables such as parenting styles, parents' marital status, socio-economic status. Utti (2006) observed that these variables are the major vehicles in socializing the child.

Parenting styles involve combination of acceptance and responsiveness on one hand and demand control on the other. Baumrind (2001) defined parenting style as a psychological construct representing standard strategy that parents use in their children. Baumrind (2001) further outlined four types of parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, neglectful, and indulgent. Authoritarian parents are parents who have strict ideas about discipline and behaviour, while authoritative parents encourage their children to be independent but still place limits and control on their actions. Neglectful parents are uninvolved in their children's lives, and lastly indulgent parents are highly involved with their children but place few demands or control on them. Kwaiji (2014) found in a study that authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style, neglectful parenting style and indulgent parenting style had influence on adolescents' social behaviour and academic performance differently. On the contrary, Salami and Alawode (2010) found no significant relationship between social behaviour of adolescents from single parenting home and those from intact home.

Parents' marital status is another variable that can shape, sustain, and develop or repress pupils' social skills. Growing up in a household with two parents is advantageous during childhood, and it continues to be an advantage during adolescence, at least in terms of development of high self-esteem, good interpersonal relationships, and avoidance of risky behaviour (Harter, 2000). Because of the important role of psychological functioning for children' daily lives and their further social adaptation, it is apparently relevant to study the effect of the family environment on the social skills of children. One aspect of the family that has been steadily found to affect the social skills of children is the quality and stability of their parents' marriage (Amato and Keith, 2001). Numerous studies have shown that children growing up in families with a happy, harmonious parental marriage experience fewer problems and a higher well-being than those from divorced or maritally distressed families (Amato, Loomis, and Booth, 2005). Parental divorce generally has negative, if only small, effects on the social skills of children (Amato and Keith, 2001). Compared to their peers growing up in continuously intact families, children who have gone through the divorce of their parents are more likely to experience emotional and social problems, less likely to attend or complete college, more likely to display

problematic behaviour, and more likely to engage in early sex and experience relational problems (Amato and Keith, 2001).

Earlier study conducted by Vandervalk, Spruijt, De Goede, Meeus and Maas (2004) revealed that marital status, marital process, and parental resources are important in predicting adolescents' emotional adjustment. They found that adolescent emotional adjustment was clearly based on the family as well as on the individual. Also, growing up both in post-divorce families and in intact families with a low marital quality related negatively to adolescent emotional adjustment; those parental resources, in the form of parental support, parent-adolescent relationship, and parental psychological health, partly mediate the negative association between low marital quality and divorce on one hand and children's adjustment on the other hand was also confirmed. Growing up in post-divorce families was especially detrimental for the emotional adjustment of girls. Similarly, Kimani (2007) found that children from dual parent households tended to have higher self-esteem levels than those from -single parent households.

The basic responsibilities of the traditional family which remain housing, clothing, health care, nutrition, and safety, have in modern times included the provision of quality education and a homely condition with necessary facilities that support child learning. As a measure of socio-economic status, families regard education as a means of maintaining their status or improving it. This perhaps explains why high socio-economic status families tend to show much concern over their children's poor performance at school either by teaching them those subjects in which the children perform poorly or employing part-time teachers for them. Today, most high socio- economic status families strive to maintain their status by ensuring that their children attend the best nursery and primary schools which guarantee admission to highly rated secondary schools, provide the best routes to university education and thus guarantee access to a prestigious occupation and employment and enhanced income. It was found that the higher the income of the parent, the greater their participation and involvement (Goldberg, 2001). Parents with a low income found it more difficult to obtain a position of influence than those with a higher income. It may therefore be said that the higher the income and the socio-economic status, the more parents will participate and become involved. Moreover, financially well-established parents can contribute to the acquisition of social skills of their children (Goldberg, 2001). A study conducted by Ugwuja (2010) revealed that children from educated parents achieve more than those from uneducated parents in academics; children from high-income status parents enjoy considerable advantage in academic achievement than children of low income status parents because their parents were able to afford necessary materials and equipment needed for effective learning in the school; parental level of motivation also influenced children's academic achievement because motivation and reward served as a form of reinforcement for children's learning at school.

Statement of the Problem

Social skills are considered the main component of behaviour that helps individuals understand and adapt across a variety of social settings. Looking at the context of home relationships formed within these settings, the interactions between parents and pupils creates a more complete picture of children's development. Although the family unit is considered as the most influential component of a child's social skills owing to the families' internal education, most pupils still exhibit poor social skills.

Based on the researchers' observations, children of nowadays are not able to take turns when talking to their communication partner, they fail to use polite forms of communication (e.g. saying: please, thank-you, hello and good bye), they are unfriendly owing to the non-teaching of these skills at home while others are of the notion that these important skills should be taught in school to achieve academic excellence. The pertinent questions that come to mind are: Is it that these skills are not identified early by parents and teachers? Can the debilitating and detrimental effect affect their success in life and hinder them from learning? It is based on these issues that this study was conducted to investigate the influence of parents' variables on social skills acquisition among primary school pupils in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to examine the influence of parents' variables on pupils' social skills acquisition among primary schools in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Determine the extent to which parenting styles influence pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District.
- Ascertain the extent to which parents' marital status influences pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District.
- Determine the extent to which parents' socio-economic status influences pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- To what extent do parenting styles influence pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District?
- To what extent does parents' marital status influence pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District?
- To what extent does parents' socio-economic status influence pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance in this study:

- H₀₁:** There is no significant influence of parenting styles on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant influence of parents' marital status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant influence of parents' socio-economic status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District.

Method and Materials

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. This design is deemed appropriate for this study due to its ability to elicit a wide range of baseline information. It also ensures rapid data collection with minimal expenditure of effort, time, and money. Descriptive studies may often result in the formulation of important principles of knowledge and solution of significant problems. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District. The population of the study was 50,345 primary two pupils in 384 public primary schools in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District. A sample size of 400 pupils with their parents was used for the study selected through purposive and simple random sampling technique. Ofo (2005) stated that purposive sampling is a method that allows the researcher to hand-pick the samples because they are typical to the study, and they simply satisfy the researchers' need. The researchers' criteria for the selection were: A school with at least 30 teachers irrespective of the location. This was to ensure effective curriculum implementation and an average teacher-pupil ratio of about 1:30. Eight schools met these criteria. Therefore, simple random sampling was used to select 50 pupils each from schools chosen for the study. This was done through the Hat and Draw method which gave the pupils equal opportunity to be selected. The instrument for data collection was Parents' Variables Questionnaire (PVQ) for parents and Pupils' Social Skills Acquisition Rating Scale (PSSARS), for pupils. Parents' Variables Questionnaire (PVQ) sought information on Parents' Variables while PSSARS had 20 items. The instruments were structured on 4-point type Likert Scale of strongly agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and strongly disagree (1 point). The instrument was face validated by three validators and Cronbach's alpha statistical analysis was used to determine the reliability of instruments which yielded coefficient indices of 0.89 and 0.92 respectively.

Prior to the commencement of the study, the researchers visited each of the sampled schools to obtain permission for the administration of the questionnaire and the researchers explained the purpose of the study and the contents of the questionnaire to the respondents. In the administration of these instruments, the researchers reached out to parents through their children. In doing this, the researchers and three research assistants after obtaining permission from the relevant authorities visited selected schools, explained the contents of the questionnaire to the pupils and gave copies of the questionnaire to the pupils for onward transmission to their parents. The children returned the filled questionnaire from their parents together with

their own social skills scale to the researcher 7 days after administration. A period of one week was given for the pupils to return the filled questionnaire to allow parents to whom questionnaire were given enough time to complete the questionnaire. This was done by the researchers with the help of some teachers who served as research assistants and the rate of returns was 100 percent. Mean analysis and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One

To what extent do parenting styles influence pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District?

Table: Mean and standard deviation of the extent parenting styles influence pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District (n=400)

Variables	\bar{x}	SD	Weighted Mean	Decision
Parenting Styles	27.08	8.56	2.71	
				HE
Pupils' Social Skills	45.71	8.48	3.57	

HE = High Extent, LE = Lower Extent

Result in Table 1 revealed parents' responses on the parenting styles had a mean of 27.08 with a standard deviation of 8.56, while pupils' social skills had a mean of 45.71 with a standard deviation of 8.48. Given the criterion mean of 2.5, the weighted mean of 2.71 for parenting styles is greater. This implies that parenting styles influence pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District to a high extent.

Research Question Two

To what extent does parents' marital status influences pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the extent parents' marital status influences pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District

Variables	Parents' Marital Status	n	\bar{x}	SD	
Pupils' Social Skills Acquisition	Intact	207	47.00	8.86	
	Separated family	43	44.13	6.27	
	Divorced	11	41.72	5.93	
	Single parent	103	43.40	8.06	
	Widow/Widower	36	45.91	6.73	

Table 2 shows the extent parents' marital status influences pupils' social skills acquisition. The mean of the social skills acquisition of pupils whose parents' marital status is intact is 47.00 with a standard deviation of 8.86, those whose parents' marital status is separated family is 44.82 with a standard deviation of 6.72, those whose parents' marital status is divorced is 41.72 with a standard deviation of 5.93, those whose parents' marital status is single parent is 43.40 with a standard deviation of 8.06 and those whose parents' marital status is widow/widower is 45.91 with a standard deviation of 6.73. The result indicates that pupils whose parents' marital status is intact had the highest extent of influence on pupils' social skills acquisition followed by those whose parents are widow/widower, separated family, single parent and lastly divorced. The result also showed that pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District differs based on parents' marital status.

Research Question Three

To what extent does parents' socio-economic status influence pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the extent parents' socio-economic status influences pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District

Variable	Parents' Socio-Economic Status	N	\bar{x}	SD
Pupils' Social Skills Acquisition	Below N 10, 000	142	47.15	9.40
	N10, 000- 50,000.	194	44.25	7.64
	N50,000 and above	64	45.78	7.04

Table 3 reveals the influence of parents' socio-economic status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District. The mean of the social skills acquisition of pupils whose parents earned below N10, 000.00 monthly is 47.15 with a standard deviation of 9.40, mean of the social skills acquisition of pupils whose parents earned N10, 000.00 - N50,000.00 monthly is 44.25 with a standard deviation of 7.64 and mean of the social skills acquisition of pupils whose parents earned is N50,000.00 and Above 45.78 with a standard deviation of 7.04. The result indicates that pupils whose parents' socio-economic status is below N10, 000.00 monthly had the highest extent of influence on pupils' social skills acquisition followed by those whose parents earned N50,000.00 monthly and above and lastly N10, 000.00 - N50,000.00 monthly. The result also showed that pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District differs based on parents' socio-economic status.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant influence of parenting styles on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District.

Table 4: t-test analysis of significant influence of parenting styles on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District

Variables	n	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Decision
Parenting styles		27.08	8.56				
	400			398	30.91*	1.96	Reject H ₀₁
Pupils' social skills acquisition		45.71	8.48				

* = Significant at 0.05 level of significance

The result in Table 4 shows the significant influence of parenting styles on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District. Since the t-calculated value of 30.91 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96. This means that parenting styles significantly influence social skills acquisition. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant influence of parenting style on social skills acquisition is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant influence of parenting styles on social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant influence of parents' marital status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of significant influence of parents' marital status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Between Groups	1164.691	4	291.173	4.36*	.002
Within Groups	26398.949	395	66.833		
Total	27563.640	399			

The result in Table 5 showed that an F-cal of 4.36 with an associated probability value of 0.002 was obtained with regards to the significant influence of parents' marital status on pupils' social skills acquisition. Since the associated probability of 0.002 was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis two which states that there is no significant influence of parents' marital status on pupils' social skills acquisition was rejected. This implies that there is a significant influence of parents' marital status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa' Ibom South Senatorial District. The significance of the result caused the Post Hoc Scheffe test to be conducted to find the independent groups between which the significant difference lie.

Table 6: Post hoc Scheffe test of the significant influence of parents' marital status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District

(I) -	(J) Marital Status	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Bound	
					Lower	Upper
	Separated family	2.87013*	1.37008	.358	-1.3701	7.1103
	Divorced	5.28239*	2.52954	.361	-2.5462	13.1109
Intact	Single parent	3.60189*	.98576	.011	.5511	6.6527
	Widow/Widower	1.09300	1.47626	.969	-3.4758	5.6618
	Intact	-2.87013	1.37008	.358	-7.1103	1.3701
Separated family	Divorced	2.41226	2.76224	.943	-6.1365	10.9610
	Single parent	.73177	1.48429	.993	-3.8619	5.3254
	Widow/Widower	-1.77713	1.84681	.921	-7.4928	3.9385
	Intact	-5.28239	2.52954	.361	-13.1109	2.5462
Divorced	Separated family	-2.41226	2.76224	.943	-10.9610	6.1365
	Single parent	-1.68049	2.59318	.981	-9.7060	6.3450
	Widow/Widower	-4.18939	2.81641	.697	-12.9058	4.5270
	Intact	-3.60189*	.98576	.011	-6.6527	-.5511
Single parent	Separated family	-.73177	1.48429	.993	-5.3254	3.8619
	Divorced	1.68049	2.59318	.981	-6.3450	9.7060
	Widow/Widower	-2.50890	1.58282	.643	-7.4075	2.3897
	Intact	-1.09300	1.47626	.969	-5.6618	3.4758
Widow/Widower	Separated family	1.77713	1.84681	.921	-3.9385	7.4928
	Divorced	4.18939*	2.81641	.697	-4.5270	12.9058
	Single parent	2.50890	1.58282	.643	-2.3897	7.4075

*= The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As presented in Table 8, the result of the analysis shows a significant mean difference in intact family (1), separated family (2), Divorced (3) single parent (4) and widow/widower (5) at the 0.05 level. There is a significant mean difference between groups 1 and 2 (2.87), 1 and 3 (5.28), 1 and 4 (3.60), and 5 and 2 (4.18).

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant influence of parents' socio-economic status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District.

Table 7: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of significant influence of parents' socio-economic status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-cal	P-value
Between Groups	692.998	2	346.499	5.119	.006
Within Groups	26870.642	397	67.684		
Total	27563.640	399			

The result in Table 9 showed that an F-cal of 5.199 with an associated probability value of 0.006 was obtained with regards to the significant influence of parents' socio-economic status on pupils' social skills acquisition. Since the associated probability of 0.006 was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis three which states that there is no significant influence of parents' socio-economic status on pupils' social skills-acquisition was rejected. This implies that there is a significant influence of parents' socio-economic status on pupils' social skills. acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District. The significance of the result caused the Post Hoc Scheffe test to be conducted in order to find the independent groups between which the significant difference lie.

Table 8: Post hoc Scheffe test of the significant influence of parents' socio-economic status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District

(I) SES	(J) SES	Mean	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
		Difference (I-J)			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Below N 10, 000	10,000 - 50,000	2.89720*	.90859	.007	.6648	-1.6697
	50,000 and above	1.37368	1.23863	.541		4.4170
10,000 - 50,000	Below N 10, 000	-2.89720*	.90859	.007	-5.1296	-.6648
	50,000 and above	-1.52352	1.18594	.439	-4.4374	1.3904
50,000 and above	Below N 10, 000	-1.37368	1.23863	.541	-4.4170	1.6697
	10,000 - 50,000	1.52352	1.18594	.439	-1.3904	4.4374

* =The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

From the result in Table 10, it is observed that the significant difference lies in Below N 10, 000 (1) and 10,000 - 50,000 (2) at the 0.05 level. There is a significant mean difference between groups 1 and 2 (2.89).

Discussion of Findings

The result of the findings in hypothesis one showed that there is a significant influence of parenting styles on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District. And those differences exist based on the level of influence. This could be attributed to the fact parenting styles differ based on the care, support and love given that leads to a child's total development. And parenting is a complex process which involves a lot of commitment, patience, and time to groom a total child. This finding agrees with the initial findings by Kwaiji (2014) that authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style, neglectful parenting style and indulgent parenting style had influence on adolescents' social behaviour and academic performance differently. On the contrary, Salami and Alawade (2010) found no significant relationship between social behaviour of adolescents from single parenting home and those from intact home. This implies that parents should be blamed and be made to take responsibility for the misfortune that befalls the children. Good behaviour orientation and good children's attitude development is founded on positive parenting and styles adopted in relating with the children. The child lives and gains the first social experiences in the home based on the family culture and environment.

The result of the findings in hypothesis two showed that there is a significant influence of parents' marital status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District. This could be attributed to the fact that parent marital status differs based on circumstances which may result in divorced, single parenthood among others. And that parent marital status contributed to a child's mental development and stability, as such leads to positive or negative social skills acquisition. This finding is in accordance with earlier study conducted by Vandervalk, Spruijt, De Goede, Meeus and Maas (2004) who revealed that marital status, marital process, and parental resources contribute to predicting adolescents' emotional adjustment. They found that adolescent emotional adjustment was clearly based on the family as well as on the individual. They found that growing up both

in post-divorce families and in intact families with a low marital quality related negatively to adolescent emotional adjustment; that parental resources, in the form of parental support, parent-adolescent relationship, and parental psychological health, partly mediate the negative association between low marital quality and divorce on one hand and children's adjustment on the other hand was also confirmed. Growing up in post-divorce families was especially detrimental to the emotional adjustment of girls.

Similarly, this finding agrees with Kimani's (2007) earlier study who found that children from dual parent households tended to have higher self-esteem levels than those from single parent households. In addition, the duration of lived in a parenthood status did influence the self-esteem, discipline, and interpersonal relationships levels of children significantly. The gender of the single parent also influenced the levels of self-esteem, discipline, and interpersonal relationships of students significantly. This implies that parents' marital status is a strong determinant of pupils' social skills acquisition. Since self-esteem, discipline and interpersonal relationships are generally a product of home background, both parents have a responsibility to play to produce lively and societal acceptable children.

The result of the findings in hypothesis three showed that there is a significant influence of parents' socio-economic status on pupils' social skills acquisition in Akwa Ibom Northeast Senatorial District. This could be attributed to the fact parent socio-economic status determines the level of exposure among children. This finding agrees with earlier study conducted by Ugwuja (2010) who found that students from educated parents achieve more than those from uneducated parents in academics; students from high-income status parents enjoy considerable advantage in academic achievement than students of low income status parents because their parents were able to afford necessary materials and equipment needed for effective learning in the school; parental level of motivation also influenced students' academic achievement because motivation and reward served as a form of reinforcement for children's learning at school. However, this pattern is not consistent in this study because it was noticed that there are good number of families with low income, but with high level of social skills acquisition due to good moral values instilled in them by their parents. This goes to say that though low income or poverty could be an important determinant of social skills acquisition, appropriate investment in the child upbringing could go a long way to bring out the best in the child.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that parents' variables influence pupils' social skills acquisition. Prominent among the parents' variables include parenting styles, parents' marital status and parents' socio-economic status. Parents' marital status and pupils' social skills acquisition have a close relationship between them. This is because parents with intact marital status stand better chance to support their children for better social skills acquisition. On parenting styles, it was found that pupils who received encouragement and motivation from the family perform better in schools than their counterparts from non-encouraging families. The major reasons for the observed difference in acquisition are the motivation and positive attitude of the parents towards their children's social relationship.

Recommendations

In view of the research results and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

Generally, parenting styles determined the social skills acquisition of every child in the society. Parents should be encouraged to improve on their relationship with their children and choose the right parenting style that will help the children to behave positively in their social life among peers and perform well in their academic endeavour.

Ministry of Education, school administrators, teachers, parents, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs and other stakeholders should identify and understand the unique needs of individual students and children in general, owing to the differences in their parents' marital status. This may help boost the children's acquisition of social skills.

In addition, the government should establish income generating projects aimed at raising individuals' personal income to the affected parents. This would in turn enable the parent(s) provide for the basic needs of their families and consequently improve the social skills of pupils in these families.

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