



A STUDY OF GENDER DIFFERENCE IN TYPES OF SCHOOL PHOBIA AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN YOLA METROPOLIS, ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT: The Study investigated gender differences in the types of school Phobia exhibited by Primary School Children in Yola Metropolis. Public Primary school Pupils in Yola Metropolis constituted the population of the study. Eight Schools were sampled out of the total of 65 Primary Schools in Yola Metropolis. A total of 372 children were sampled from the Eight Schools. Sample random sampling technique was used to select a class from each of the sampled schools. A 21 item questionnaire was self – designed for the study. Data obtained was analyzed using t – test of independent samples. The study found no significant gender difference on the types of School Phobia exhibited by the Primary School pupils in Yola Metropolis, Adamawa State. The study recommends that efforts should be made to arrest the various types of school phobia in our schools.

INTRODUCTION

The Primary School pupils age 6 – 12 years is critical for the development of the child especially their emotional development and achievements. The United Nations (UN) emphasizes the provision of equal opportunities for the learning and development of children, through the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF). In Nigeria this emphasis is lauded through the National Child Rights Implementation Committee of the UNICEF (UNICEF, 1995). The provision of Basic Education to children is the responsibility of parents and the government through teachers. It begins from the home with parents and family members and the community as the first socializing agents for the child then through teachers and other children in the Primary School.

In the school process, the children are faced with a number of obstacles that are likely to hinder their efficient learning; these obstacles to the normal children may be simple experiences for development in their lives. However, when any obstacle scares some children to the level that they begin to avoid school, it is referred to as School Phobia or School Refusal. School Phobia is a psychological situation that makes the child to refuse attending school for fear of certain situation that scares him (not because he cannot perform well or does not like school). Phobia has been viewed differently by different scholars; Silverman (1978) defined Phobia as the intense feeling of anxiety associated with particular objects or situations. Newman & Newman (1981) defined Phobia as a strong fear that is focused upon specific object or situations. These objects or situation are then avoided, the general consensus is that phobia means one is extremely afraid of specific object, situation, or activity. Thus its different from every day's worry or stress. The phobic persons have so much fear that is hard for them to perform normal activities like going to school, going to work and speaking in public among others.

Plotnik (2005) and Kalat (2008), opined that when common fears of seeing blood, spiders or mice, having injections, meeting new people, speaking in public, flying or being in small places, turn into very intense fears, these are called Phobias. Several studies have addressed the issue of school phobia either as truant, social phobia, school refusal or having separation anxiety disorder (Heyne, King, Tonge & Cooper, 2001). When absent from school, truants typically are away from home. According to Berg and Nursten (1996), truant often exhibit poor academic progress and tense to display various anti-social behaviours. School Phobia is defined by Kearney (2007) and Silverman (1979) as any refusal by a child to attend school or have difficulty in attending classes for an entire day. According to Usman (2017) school phobia is a term accepted and used to described the situations of children's non-attendance to school due to fear of certain situation at the school or home. Gordon and Young (1978) defined school phobia as intense feeling anxiety associated with

school. Ramalingam (2006) states that school phobia is an irrational fear of attending school.

School Phobia very often hinders the academic progress of the child. It is an irrational elusion fear that is synonymous with and alters the learner's emotional disposition. The most common forms of school phobia are the fear of failure; atychiphobia, the fear of going to school, didaskaleinophobia and enochlophobia: the fear of crowds. Arguably, these and many other forms of school related combine to negate Thorndike's Law of readiness. Readiness in Thorndike theory implies the degree of concentration and eagerness to learn. The Law of readiness provides that for effective learning to take place, individuals need to be physically, mentally and emotionally ready (Kabir, 2017). But unfortunately enough according to him, we find that a child suffering from the forms of school phobia lacks concentration and learning is impaired. School phobia is a condition in which the child is very nervous and refuses to go to school. It is also called School Avoidance and School Refusal. Alston (2016) contended that the term school phobia came into existence in 1941 and it is a condition where a child has fear of attending school. Nwamu & Ekwe (2005) have it that school phobia is an extreme fear and avoidance of school often accompanied by a resistance against attending school of school refusal. School phobia is an exaggerated, often irrational fear of attending school (Onyemekey, 2015). Phobia can be defined as an excessive or unwanted fear of an object or situations that is handled with persistent avoidance (Egbule and Egbule 2008). APA (1994) opined that, Phobia is a type of anxiety disorder, usually defined as a persistent fear of an object or situation in the affected person will have great lengths of threat, typically disproportional to the actual danger posed. Phobia is a negative emotional state that would lead to anger, anguish, hatred, fear and frustration which are enemies of academic achievement (Okoro, Nsibike & Udeh 2017). Phobia is the fear or anxiety disorder, which causes avoidance and panic (Salaw & Mgbasiaka, 2017). Sloan (2003) viewed Phobia as learned emotional responses.

According to Kumar, Bapi and Ujjwal (2014), School Phobia, School Avoidance and School Refusal are terms that describe an anxiety disorder in children who have an irrational persistent fear of going to school, to them, academic phobic children are often insecure, insensitive and do not know how to cope with their emotions Colman (2003) perceives Phobia as a persistent, irrational fear of an object, event, activity or situation called Phobic Stimulus, resulting in a compelling desire to avoid it. The presence or anticipation of the Phobic Stimulus triggers anxiety, or phobic attack. Shehu (2006) views that depression, an indicant of Phobia, has been a principal cause of stress and has been responsible for school failure and lack of adjustment. He reiterated that stressful conditions within the school settings impede effective learning.

Approximately 1 to 5% of school aged children have school phobia, though it is most common in 5 to 6 years old and in 10 and 11 years olds (Fremont, 2003). School Phobia occurs more frequently during major changes in a child's life, such as entrance to Kindergarten, changing from Elementary to Middle School or changing from Middle to High School, this supported the view of Al – Nami (1997) who argued that the occurrence of school phobia begins in the latency stage (6 – 12 years) to accompany the growth of the superego. Children or adolescents suffering from school phobia have extreme difficulty attending school and remaining in school once there (Keifer, 1997). Keifer, (1997) added that children who are school phobic and refuses to attend school do so because of three reasons. These include acute anxiety, maternal anxiety and enmeshed mother – child relationship. Keifer, 1997 and Plesal, 1991 in Emmanuel (2017) asserted that every child suffers from some anxiety and emotional upset the first time he or she must be separated from the mother or caregiver. Children with school phobia have much higher levels of anxiety and never seem to adjust to the separation. Children with school phobia create a disturbance in the classroom. It is therefore incumbent on the school to be very vigilant when handling children with school phobia.

From the foregoing, school phobia can be said to be the irrational fear of school by the primary school child which he faces for going/being in school such as: the pains of separation with parents, strangeness (school) environment, new faces, new (school) activities, bullies from peers and hostility from teachers and the school subjects. These among others often make the child to refuse going to school. Hence school phobia is developed by the child. Berg, Nicholas and Pritchard (1969) classified school phobia into two groups in accordance with perceived reasons for avoiding or refusing to attend school. Kearney (2007) and Brill (2009) both classified school avoidance into four still based on the reasons for the avoidance of the school which they referred to as functions. This study examines types of school phobia on the following four factors of school phobia, physically related school phobia, emotional stress related school phobia, home related school phobia and fear/security related school phobia.

Several studies have addressed the issue of gender difference in types of school phobia for example, Emmanuel (2017) found out that authoritarian and negligence parenting styles correlates significantly with school phobia. The studies of Jenni (1997), Echebe and Ogbudike (2015), Abdullah, Elzeniny, Abdulhady and Elshelki (2016) who in their independent studies found out that authoritarian as well as negligence parenting styles relate significantly with school phobia Umoh (2011), Eke (2016) reported that children reared in permissive home are generally low in their ability to cope with school and school activities. Cherry (1992) and Elliot (1999) both of them reported that extreme fears, temper tantrums and crying are sign of school phobia. Keifer 1997 and Plersal, 1991 in Emmanuel (2017) asserted that children suffer from anxiety or school phobia and emotional upset when separated from the mother or caregiver. Mwamwenda (1994), Bandalos, Yates and Thorndike – Christ (1995) found out that insecurity of environment negatively affects learning as perceived by male and female children. Ali, Aukin, Batool and Muhammad (2013) reveal that female students had higher test

anxiety than male students in English Language. The Study examines gender differences in the types of school phobia exhibited by Primary School children in Yola Metropolis, Adamawa State.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was designed to find out:-

1. Gender differences in the home related type of School Phobia
2. Gender differences in the physical related type of School Phobia
3. Gender differences in the emotional related type of School Phobia
4. Gender differences in the fear/security related type of School Phobia

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypothesis were raised and tested at (0.05) level of significance:

HO₁: There is no significant gender difference in the home related type of school phobia exhibited by primary school children in Yola Metropolis, Adamawa State.

HO₂: There is no significant gender difference in the Physical type of school phobia exhibited by primary school children in Yola Metropolis, Adamawa State.

HO₃: There is no significant gender difference in the emotional stress type of school phobia exhibited by primary school children in Yola Metropolis, Adamawa State.

HO₄: There is no significant gender difference in the fear/security related type of school phobia exhibited by primary school children in Yola Metropolis, Adamawa State.

METHOD

Design

The study is an exploratory one that used a descriptive survey research, which according to Stangor (2004) attempts to capture the complexity of everyday behaviour. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest factually and accurately. Adoke (2003) stated that the descriptive survey method enables the researcher(s) to obtain the opinion of the representative sample of the target population so as to be able to infer the perception of the entire population.

Participants

The population of the study comprises all the pupils in public primary schools in Yola Metropolis which consists of Yola North and Yola South Local Government Areas of Adamawa State, Nigeria. There are Sixty Five (65) Public Primary Schools where 23 are from the North and 42 from the South. A total of 8 Schools were selected through random sampling by balloting from the 65 schools with 3 from Yola North and 5 from Yola South Local Government Areas. In the selection of suitable classes, a purposive sampling was used. Classes five (5) pupils were chosen on the assumption that they can read and understand the questionnaire with less difficulty. Altogether 372 pupils participated in the study.

Instrument

For the purpose of the study an instrument – School Phobia Assessment Questionnaire (SPAQ) was developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was developed based on the principles of content relevance (Anastasi; & Urbina, 2008). The instrument consist two (2) sections (A and B). Section A deals with the bio data of the respondents while Section B has four (4) sub-sections reflecting the perceived types of school phobia exhibited by the pupils. They include the home related type of school phobia, school phobia with physical symptoms, the types with emotional stress and the fear/security

related school phobia. The items in this section (B) has response mode of (Always, Sometimes and Never). The respondents were to tick the boxes against each of the 3 responses for each of the statements. Always were weighed 2, Sometimes weighed 1 and Never 0. The face validity of the instrument was established by experts in educational measurement and evaluation, Educational Psychology and Guidance and Counseling of the Education Department of the University of Maiduguri. As regards the reliability coefficient was 0.71 this was considered high enough for the study. The SPAQ was administered to the pupils in their classrooms.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were subjected to t – test of independent sample for equality of means which is considered at 0.5 level of significance.

Results

HO₁: There is no significant gender difference in the home related type of school phobia exhibited by primary school children in Yola Metropolis.

To test this hypothesis, the responses of the pupils on each type of school phobia, by group, were subjected to t – test of independent sample for equality of means as on table 1 below. Result is considered at .05 level of significance.

Table 1: Gender Difference in the Home Related Type of School Phobia

Home Related School Phobia	Sex	N	Mean	Std Dev.	T	Df	P.Level (0.05)	Decision
	Male	174	1.1149	0.6068	-0.339	370	0.735	HO Accepted
	Female	198	1.1364	0.6101				

Table 1 reveals a t – test result as 0.339 which is significant at 0.735, this is above .05 level of significance. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is retained. Meaning there is no significant gender difference on home related school phobia.

HO₂: There is no significant gender difference in the Physical type of school phobia exhibited by primary school children in Yola Metropolis

Table 2: Gender Difference in the Physical Related Type of School Phobia

Physical Related School Phobia	Sex	N	Mean	Std Dev.	T	Df	P.Level (0.05)	Decision
	Male	174	0.8563	0.5451	-0.042	370	0.966	HO Accepted
	Female	198	0.8586	0.4834				

From table 2, t – test is revealed as – 0.042 which is significant at 0.966 and which is more than .05 level of significance. Hence hypothesis 2 is retained. This means that there is no significant gender difference on physical related school phobia among primary school pupils.

HO₃: There is no significant gender difference in the emotional stress type of school phobia exhibited by primary school children in Yola Metropolis.

Table 3: Gender Difference in the Emotional Stress Type of School Phobia

Emotional Stress Related School Phobia	Sex	N	Mean	Std Dev.	T	Df	P.Level (0.05)	Decision
	Male	174	0.8391	0.5449	0.277	370	0.782	HO Accepted
	Female	198	0.8232	0.5647				

Table 3 reveals t – test result as 0.277 which is significant at 0.782. This is above 0.5 level of significance. Hence the hypothesis 3 is retained. This means that there is no significant gender difference on emotional stress type of school phobia on primary school pupils.

HO₄: There is no significant gender difference in the fear/security related type of school phobia exhibited by primary school children in Yola Metropolis.

Table 4: Gender Difference in the Fear/Security Type of School Phobia

Fear/Security Related School Phobia	Sex	N	Mean	Std Dev.	T	Df	P.Level (0.05)	Decision
	Male	174	0.8966	0.5051	0.256	370	0.798	HO Accepted
	Female	198	0.8838	0.4525				

Table 4 above reveals t – test as 0.256 which is significant at 0.798 and above .05 level of significant. Hence the hypothesis 4 is retained. This means that there is no significance gender difference on fear/security related type of school phobia among primary school pupils.

DISCUSSION

The study examined gender difference in types of School Phobia among primary school children in Yola Metropolis. The result of the study showed a significant negative correlation between gender differences in the home related type of school phobia. Meaning that there is no significant gender different on home related school phobia. Consequently, the null hypothesis on which stated that there is no significant gender differences in the home related types of school phobia exhibited by primary school children in Yola Metropolis was rejected while the alternative was accepted. This result agrees with Emmanuel (2017) who found out that authoritarian and negligence parenting styles correlates significantly with school phobia. This findings is also in agreement with Jenni (1997) and Abdullah, Elzeniny, Abdelhady and Elsheikh (2016) who found out that authoritarian as well as negligence parenting styles relate significantly with school phobia. Abdullah (2016) who found out that, children from authoritative home do not experience school phobia. Jenni (1997) and Abdullah (2016) which found out that children from permissive homes have school phobia. The findings also collaborate with the findings of Umoh (2011), Eke (2016) who explained that children, reared in permissive homes are generally low in their ability to cope with school and school activities.

Hypothesis two sought to find out if there is no significant gender difference in the physical type of school phobia exhibited by primary school children in Yola Metropolis. From table 2, t – test result is revealed as -0.042 which is significant at 0.966 and which is more than $.05$ level of significance. Hence hypothesis 2 is retained. This means that there is no significance gender difference on physical related type of school phobia among primary school pupils. This finding therefore aligned with the view of Cherry (1992) and Elliot (1999) both of them stated that extreme fears, temper tantrums and crying are signs of school phobia. They reiterated that if a child with school phobia is forced to attend school, he or she is going to exhibit anti-social behaviour while at school. He or she according to them will also make it difficult for other children to concentrate on the teacher and their studies. When a child with school phobia becomes physically sick at school and get hysterical, teachers have trouble dealing with these classroom disruptions.

Hypothesis three also revealed that there is no significant gender difference in emotional stress type of school phobia exhibited by primary school children. The findings agree with Keifer, 1997 and Plersal, 1991 in Emmanuel (2017) who asserted that every child suffers from some anxiety and emotional upset the first time he or she must be separated from the mother or caregiver. This finding seems to be contrary to some other studies. Mwamwanda (1994), Bandalos, Yates and Thorndike – Christ, (1995) found significant gender differences with respect to test anxiety and academic performance with females, having higher levels of overall test anxiety than males. Cassedy and Johnson (2002) explain the differences in test anxiety based on gender means that males and females feel same level of emotionality evident through physiological responses experienced during evaluative situations. Hypothesis four reveals that there is no significant gender difference on fear/security related types of school phobia exhibited by primary school children. From table 4 above, reveals t – test as 0.256 which is significant at 0.798 above $.05$ level of significant. Hence hypothesis 4 is retained. This means that

there is no significant gender difference on fear/security related type of school phobia among primary school pupils. The finding agrees with Usman (2017) who revealed that insecurity of environment negatively affects learning as perceived by male and female children. The finding disagrees with Ali, Awan, Batool and Muhammad (2013) who found that female children had higher test anxiety than male students in English Language.

CONCLUSION

The study was designed to identify gender difference in types of school phobia exhibited by primary school pupils in Yola Metropolis. It was found that the incidence of types of school phobia, home related, physical related, emotional stress related and the fear/security related types of school phobia were not significant types exhibited by the primary school children in Yola Metropolis. Based on the findings, the study concludes that teachers should possess broad and deep understanding of children, the subject they teach, the nature of learning process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that efforts should be made to arrest the various types of school phobia (due not significant) in our schools. Efforts should be made by parents to arrest the home related types of school phobia by controlling separation anxiety in children. The teachers and school guidance and counselors on the other hand should ensure that the physical related, emotional stress related and security related types of school phobia are controlled through close monitoring and development of effective spirit of orderliness, cooperation and self-discovery. It therefore, recommends further study to cover the whole state using different class levels to ascertain the finding of this study or otherwise.

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