Unizik Journal of
STM Education Volume Issue
ISSN: 1597-8249

PARENTAL ATTACHMENT AND PEER INFLUENCE AS CORRELATES OF ACADEMIC RESILIENCE AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Academic resilience enables adolescents to persist, adapt and remain engaged when they encounter academic setbacks. This study examined the relationships between dimensions of parental attachment and peer influence and academic resilience among in-school adolescents in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. A correlational survey design was adopted. The study population comprised 12,172 Senior Secondary II students in 263 public secondary schools. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select 750 students from 15 schools across three education zones; however, the available statistical output contained 680 complete cases, which constituted the analytic sample. Data were collected using an adapted Academic Resilience Questionnaire, the parental attachment component of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, and a Peer Influence Questionnaire. Internal consistency coefficients from the pilot study were .93, .92 and .91, respectively. Pearson product-moment correlations were used for analysis at the .05 level. Trust was negatively correlated with academic resilience ($r = -.145$, $p < .001$), while alienation ($r = .044$, $p = .252$) and communication ($r = -.052$, $p = .176$) were not significantly related to academic resilience. Peer pressure was negatively correlated with academic resilience ($r = -.181$, $p < .001$), peer behaviour was not significantly related ($r = -.016$, $p = .675$), and peer relationship showed a small negative correlation ($r = -.102$, $p = .008$). The findings indicate that specific relational dimensions, rather than parental attachment or peer influence as undifferentiated constructs, may be associated with adolescents' academic resilience.

Keywords: academic resilience; adolescents; parental attachment; peer influence; peer pressure

Introduction

Academic resilience refers to students' capacity to respond adaptively to academic adversity, sustain effort and continue pursuing educational goals despite setbacks. For adolescents, resilience in school is shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by the relational environments in which learning occurs. The family remains a major social context during adolescence, while peers increasingly become influential sources of support, comparison, conformity and social learning. Understanding how these relational contexts are associated with academic resilience is therefore important for educational psychology and for the design of school-based support.

Parental attachment is concerned with the quality of the emotional relationship between young people and their caregivers. Attachment theory proposes that dependable relationships provide a secure base

from which young people can explore, regulate distress and cope with challenges (Bowlby, 1969, 1973). In adolescence, attachment is expressed through trust, communication and experiences of alienation. A supportive relationship may help students seek assistance and regulate responses to academic difficulty, whereas relational insecurity may make academic setbacks more difficult to manage. Empirical work has linked attachment security with self-regulation and adaptive functioning (Pallini et al., 2019), although the association between specific attachment dimensions and academic resilience may not be uniform across contexts.

Peers constitute another important developmental context. During adolescence, students spend substantial time with age-mates and may be influenced by peers' attitudes toward school, study practices and academic achievement. Peer relationships can provide encouragement, collaborative learning and social support, but peer pressure can also redirect attention away from schoolwork or normalize disengagement. Research has therefore distinguished supportive peer relationships from pressure and behaviours that may undermine educational engagement. The present study treats peer influence as a multidimensional construct comprising peer pressure, peer behaviour and peer relationship.

Although parental relationships and peer experiences have each been examined in relation to adolescent adjustment, there remains a need for context-specific evidence on academic resilience among public secondary school students in Nigeria. Existing Nigerian studies have examined parental attachment, peer influence, academic achievement and related psychosocial outcomes, but the evidence is not sufficiently consistent to assume that every dimension of parental attachment or peer influence has the same relationship with academic resilience. The present study therefore focuses on the separate associations of trust, alienation and communication with academic resilience, as well as the associations of peer pressure, peer behaviour and peer relationship with academic resilience, among in-school adolescents in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationships between parental attachment, peer influence and academic resilience among in-school adolescents in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined whether academic resilience was related to (a) trust, (b) alienation, (c) communication, (d) peer pressure, (e) peer behaviour, and (f) peer relationship.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between trust as a dimension of parental attachment and academic resilience among in-school adolescents?
- What is the relationship between alienation as a dimension of parental attachment and academic resilience among in-school adolescents?
- What is the relationship between communication as a dimension of parental attachment and academic resilience among in-school adolescents?
- What is the relationship between peer pressure and academic resilience among in-school adolescents?
- What is the relationship between peer behaviour and academic resilience among in-school adolescents?

- What is the relationship between peer relationship and academic resilience among in-school adolescents?

Theoretical Framework

Attachment Theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973), which emphasizes the developmental significance of stable relationships between children and caregivers, informed the study. Attachment relationships can function as a secure base that supports exploration and as a source of comfort when individuals experience stress. Applied to schooling, the theory suggests that adolescents who experience dependable parental relationships may have relational resources that support coping with academic adversity. Trust, communication and alienation were therefore examined as distinct dimensions rather than assuming that parental attachment operates as a single homogeneous experience.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) provides a framework for understanding the role of peers as social models. Adolescents can learn attitudes and behaviours through observation, interaction, reinforcement and perceived social approval. Peers who value studying may encourage persistence, while peers who devalue schoolwork may reinforce avoidance or disengagement. This perspective supports examining peer pressure, peer behaviour and peer relationships separately.

Resilience Framework

The resilience perspective views successful adaptation as an outcome of interactions among individual capacities and protective or risk resources in the surrounding environment (Masten, 2001; Masten & Powell, 2003). Academic resilience is therefore not treated as a fixed personal trait. Rather, it can be supported or constrained by relationships and contexts in which adolescents learn and develop. This framework provides a basis for investigating parental and peer contexts as correlates of resilience in school.

Method

Research Design and Setting

A correlational survey design was adopted. The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The design was appropriate because the study sought to determine the direction and magnitude of relationships among naturally occurring variables without manipulating participants or assigning them to experimental conditions.

Population and Sampling

The population comprised 12,172 Senior Secondary II (SS2) students in 263 public secondary schools in Anambra State. A multistage sampling procedure was used. Three of the six education zones were selected through simple random sampling; five public secondary schools were selected from each selected zone, yielding 15 schools; and 50 SS2 students were selected from each school, producing a planned sample of 750 students.

The statistical outputs contained in the thesis report 680 cases for each of the six Pearson correlations. Accordingly, 680 observations were used for the reported analyses. The source document does not

provide sufficient information to determine whether the remaining 70 questionnaires were not returned, were incomplete, or were excluded for another reason. This discrepancy should be clarified by the author before final submission so that the participant flow and final analytic sample are fully transparent.

Measures

Academic resilience was measured with an adapted 30-item Academic Resilience Questionnaire based on Cassidy's (2016) Academic Resilience Scale. The items were simplified for the target student population and assessed responses to academic setbacks, including perseverance, adaptive help-seeking and emotional responses. The adapted instrument used a four-point response format from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Parental attachment was measured with the parental attachment component of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment developed by Armsden and Greenberg (1987). The adapted scale contained 25 items and assessed trust, communication and alienation. The thesis indicates that wording was modified so that 'parent or guardian' could be used because some students lived with guardians rather than biological parents.

Peer influence was measured with a 30-item Peer Influence Questionnaire adapted from the Peer Pressure Questionnaire-Revised reported in the thesis as Sunil (2016). The instrument assessed peer pressure, peer relationship and peer behaviour in relation to students' academic experiences.

Validity and Reliability

The three instruments were subjected to expert validation by three experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; one expert was from Educational Psychology and two were from Measurement and Evaluation. For reliability, the instruments were pilot-tested with 20 SS2 students from public secondary schools in Enugu State. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .92 for the parental attachment scale, .91 for the peer influence scale and .93 for the academic resilience scale.

Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaires were administered by the researcher with the assistance of five teachers from the participating schools over approximately two weeks. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to answer the six research questions. Statistical significance was evaluated using two-tailed tests at the .05 level. Although the thesis methodology also refers to regression analysis, the supplied statistical output verifies the six Pearson correlations only; therefore, no regression findings are reported in this article.

Results

Table 1 presents the Pearson correlations between the six relational dimensions and academic resilience.

Variable	r	p	Decision at .05
Trust	−.145	< .001	Significant
Alienation	.044	.252	Not significant
Communication	−.052	.176	Not significant
Peer pressure	−.181	< .001	Significant
Peer behaviour	−.016	.675	Not significant
Peer relationship	−.102	.008	Significant

Note. N = 680 for all correlations. Two-tailed Pearson product-moment correlations. The source SPSS output reports p = .000 for the trust and peer-pressure correlations; these are presented conventionally as p < .001.

Discussion

The first finding showed a small but statistically significant negative relationship between trust and academic resilience ($r = -.145$, $p < .001$). This result indicates that higher scores on the trust dimension, as measured in this study, were associated with slightly lower academic resilience scores. The direction is contrary to the expectation derived from attachment theory that greater relational security should be associated with stronger adaptive functioning. One possible explanation is that the adapted measurement and scoring procedure may not map straightforwardly onto a conventional secure-attachment score. The thesis itself notes the scoring characteristics of the adapted instrument, and publication should therefore avoid interpreting the direction as evidence that parental trust causes lower resilience. The finding is best treated as a context-specific association requiring replication and careful examination of item coding.

Alienation was not significantly related to academic resilience ($r = .044$, $p = .252$). The near-zero association suggests that, within the observed sample, variation in the alienation dimension did not correspond reliably with variation in academic resilience. This finding cautions against assuming that every aspect of the parent-adolescent relationship will show a measurable association with school resilience. It may also reflect the multidimensional nature of attachment and the influence of other protective resources not measured in the study.

Communication was likewise not significantly related to academic resilience ($r = -.052$, $p = .176$). Although open parent-adolescent communication is often regarded as supportive, the present data do not establish a statistically significant association between the communication score and academic resilience. This result suggests that the quality or frequency of communication alone may not be sufficient to distinguish students' resilience in the school context. Future studies could examine whether communication interacts with other factors, such as perceived parental support, self-efficacy, school connectedness or socioeconomic conditions.

Peer pressure demonstrated a statistically significant negative relationship with academic resilience ($r = -.181$, $p < .001$). Among the six relationships examined, this was the largest absolute correlation. The result is consistent with the proposition that pressure to conform to peer expectations can compete with academic goals and persistence. It also aligns with the resilience framework because a social environment that encourages avoidance or competing activities may operate as a contextual risk factor.

Peer behaviour was not significantly related to academic resilience ($r = -.016$, $p = .675$). The association was effectively zero, indicating that the peer-behaviour score used in this study did not distinguish students with different levels of academic resilience. This finding reinforces the value of examining peer influence dimensionally rather than treating all peer experiences as uniformly beneficial or harmful.

Peer relationship showed a small but statistically significant negative relationship with academic resilience ($r = -.102$, $p = .008$). The direction suggests that higher scores on the measured peer-relationship dimension were associated with slightly lower academic resilience scores. As with the trust finding, this direction should be interpreted cautiously because the peer scale includes both supportive and potentially discouraging statements and because the scoring structure is not fully

documented in the statistical appendix. The result nevertheless indicates that peer relationships deserve attention in school-based resilience research, especially in contexts where peer norms may compete with academic priorities.

Taken together, the results show a mixed pattern. Three of the six dimensions were statistically significant, but all significant associations were small in magnitude and should not be interpreted as evidence of causation. The findings support a more differentiated view of adolescent resilience in which particular relational experiences may be associated with academic adaptation while other dimensions show little or no detectable relationship.

Implications for Educational Practice

The findings have implications for educational psychologists, counsellors, teachers and parents. School-based resilience programmes may benefit from addressing the relational environments surrounding adolescents rather than focusing exclusively on individual study skills. Counsellors can help students identify peer pressures that interfere with academic goals and develop strategies for maintaining constructive peer networks. Parents and guardians can be encouraged to create supportive environments in which adolescents can discuss school difficulties without fear of rejection or excessive judgment.

Because the significant correlations were small, interventions should not assume that parental attachment or peer influence alone determines academic resilience. A broader ecological approach that also considers self-efficacy, school climate, teacher support, socioeconomic circumstances and academic motivation is warranted.

Limitations

The correlational design does not permit causal conclusions. The study also relied on self-report questionnaires, which may be affected by social desirability and respondents' interpretations of questionnaire items. The discrepancy between the planned sample of 750 and the analytic N of 680 should be resolved in the final manuscript. In addition, the adapted instruments may differ psychometrically from their original forms, and the source document does not provide sufficient information to evaluate the construct validity of the adapted measures beyond expert review and internal consistency.

The study was conducted in public secondary schools in one Nigerian state, so the findings should not be generalized automatically to private schools, other regions or different age groups. Future studies should use larger and more diverse samples, transparent missing-data procedures, validated culturally adapted measures, and longitudinal or multilevel designs where feasible.

Conclusion

This study examined six dimensions of parental attachment and peer influence in relation to academic resilience among in-school adolescents in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Trust, peer pressure and peer relationship showed statistically significant associations with academic resilience, whereas alienation, communication and peer behaviour did not. The results point to the importance of examining adolescent relational experiences at the dimension level rather than assuming that parental or peer contexts operate as uniform constructs. Given the small effect sizes and correlational design, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of association rather than causation.

Recommendations

- Secondary schools should strengthen counselling programmes that help adolescents recognise and manage peer pressure that conflicts with academic goals.
- Parents and guardians should be encouraged to maintain supportive, respectful communication with adolescents about academic difficulties and school expectations.
- School counsellors should incorporate peer-support and positive peer-network strategies into academic resilience programmes.
- Researchers should replicate the study using validated culturally adapted instruments and should report participant recruitment, missing data and scoring procedures in sufficient detail for reproducibility.
- Future research should examine potential mediators or moderators such as self-efficacy, school connectedness, teacher support and socioeconomic conditions.

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