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# Assessment of the Relationship between Secure Maternal Attachment and Social Adjustment of Primary School Pupils in South West Zone Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This study assesses the relationship between secure maternal attachment and adjustment of primary School pupils in South West Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population consisted of 26,256 primary school pupils within the age range of 7 – 10 years from 32 schools of the three sampled state in South West Zone Nigeria. Sample size consisted of 647 respondents that were selected through Multistage sampling techniques.*

*Two modified questionnaires modified on a four (4) point rating scale were used as instrument to collect data from respondents, using Likert type rating scale. The first questionnaire is titled “Attachment Q-Sort Questionnaire and the second is titled “Child Attachment Scale questionnaires.”*

*The questionnaires were validated by experts. Content validity was used. Test-retest method of reliability was used to obtain the internal consistencies of the instruments. The reliability index was obtained through reliability statistical method and reliability coefficient of 0.754 was obtained. Data collected were statistically analyzed using the frequency tables, mean score and PPMCC. 2.50 were taken as the bench mark for decision making.*

*The hypotheses raised for the study was tested at p-value of 0.05 level of significance. The tested null hypotheses revealed that secure maternal attachment had significant relationship on social adjustment of primary school pupils within the age range of 7 – 10 years.*

*The study discovered among others that the development of insecure maternal attachment among many other factors is the lack of prompt provision of child’s needs with highest mean response of 25.35 and 22.31 respectively for development of insecure attachment. Also, it was further discovered that, mother’s failure in maintaining physical contact with the child, weaken the social adjustments of the pupils.*

*The researcher therefore recommended among others that, Mothers and caregivers should respond to all needs (physical and emotional) of children in their care so as to establish good reciprocal relationship that will lead the child to develop secure-based attachment style that leads to better adjustment in future. Furthermore, workshops and seminars should be organized by Home Economists, family therapists, for mothers, to sensitize them on the risk of unstable care giving which promotes insecure avoidant attachment style that leads to social.*

**Keywords:** *Maternal, attachment, social, adjustment.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, attachment has been an ever more used increasingly successful explanatory framework for the occurrence and development of many psychological functions.

Attachment as a concept is primarily evolutionary and ethological. It consists of proximity seeking to an attachment figure in face of threat, for the purpose of survival.

Kobak & Madsen, (2011) stated that attachment is a process that begins early in a person’s life. Attachment to a protective mother helps children regulate their negative emotions in times of stress and distress and also helps them explore the environment, even if it contains somewhat frightening stimuli.

The distinctive feature of attachment is an affection bond between two people that promotes a sense of psychological security, children are considered to be attached when they tend to seek proximity to and contact with the mother in times of distress, illness and tiredness (Smith *et al.*, 2011).

It is believed that an individual attachment patterns would continue throughout life and that this pattern as it develops could greatly affects life and would have long lasting consequences for personality and close relationship (Browne & Winkelman, 2017). The close attachment relationship between responsive mothers typically ensures that the two will remain in physical proximity especially when the child is of age.

Longitudinal studies carried out indicate that, the mother-child interaction, especially in the first quarter of life, is a powerful determinant of a child's present and later competences. (Rholes *et al.*, 2014). Attachment is where a child uses the primary mother as a secure base from which to explore necessary comfort and security. According to Boris (2013), attachment is the emotional link that is form between a child and the mother which physically binds them together overtime.

All children get attached to a figure but differences arise in the quality of the relationships established. According to Bar-Haim *et al.*, (2010) attachment patterns can be: (i) Secure attachment pattern is when a child gets his/her needs promptly and secure emotional support and protection from caregiver; (ii) Insecure ambivalent is found in children whose parents are hostile and seldom provide for the needs of the child.

Ambivalent attachment is seen in children that have resistant behavior, those with abusive childhood experiences. They are always over-emotional and get frustrated easily; (iii) insecure avoidant are those children who ignore the caregiver showing little emotion when the caregiver is absent.

They get frightened often due to lack of attachments with their mother. Insecure Avoidant children are disproportionately represented in samples of abused or neglected children. These children are often abandoned when they have needs to be met. Children under this caregiver exhibit immature behaviors such as being arrogant, abusive and so on. They distance themselves from people; (iv) Disorganized Attachment pattern is seen in children that are contradictory, misdirected, or fearful in the presence of their mother.

Disorganized attachment is when the child is stuck in awful dilemma, where the mother tells her to flee to safety. Disorganized attachment can be regarded as more emergency versions of the avoidant attachment. This attachment pattern is developed by children of mothers who had suffered major losses or other trauma shortly before or after the birth of the child and had reacted by becoming securely depressed (Welch, & Houser 2010).

It is thought to be caused by frightening or frightened parental behavior, or loss or trauma in parents thus, they end up behaving in bizarre ways. This is associated with an increase in the risk of developing social and emotional maladjustment due to lack of or inadequate maternal attachment. Early interruption or poor quality of attachment often underlies many behavioral problems in children (Saami, 2013). Attachment problem is caused as a result of the perceived abandonment and rejection from the birth mother resulting to poor maternal attachment.

Social adjustment of children is the overall ability of these children to impact favorably on social setting of an environment in which they find themselves.

Social adjustment allows individual to cope with community standards, value, and needs of the society in order to be accepted (DeRosier & Lloyd, 2011). In the technical language of psychology "getting along with the members of society as best one can" is called adjustment. Adjustment can be called the reaction to the demands and pressures of the social environment imposed upon the individual.

Development of quality attachment in a child is characterized by the child's show of love to others, cooperation, and expression and control of negative emotions, Verbal and non-verbal behaviors are required of children to be able to perform socially. Social adjustment of a child includes the child's experience, expression, and management and ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others (Cohen, 2015). Human beings as a social being has to adjust himself in the social environment in his daily life, he commands others and works according to his or other's rules and regulations

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed descriptive survey design which involves collection of data from a large population. The population for the study was made up of primary school pupils' within the age range of 7- 10 years in South West Nigeria. The distribution of the population is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Population of the Study

State	Senatorial Zone	LGA	Total Enrolled	
Oyo	North	Akinyele	1652	
		Egbeda Oba	1752	
		Iddo Comm	1650	
		Aleshiloye	1658	
		Iyaganku	1680	
		Awodife	1750	
	South	Iseyin Comm	486	
		Saki	552	
		Fiditi	493	
		Summirire	602	
		Surulere	511	
	Central	Ori Oke	488	
		Isale Agbara	442	
		Afijo Ile	422	
		Igba Ora	410	
		Oko Comm	410	
		Isale Ora	410	
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,368</b>	
	Ondo	North	Owo	820
			Akure Odo	675
			Ikare Comm	816
Ile Oluji			814	
South		Aiyetoro	818	
		Ilepa	399	
		Isua	821	
Central		Orinsunbore	821	
		Akungba	867	
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,851</b>	
Ekiti		North	Omoo Ekiti	820
			Aramoko	820
	South	Imore Ekiti	725	
		Efon Alaaye	718	
	Central	Oye Ekiti	643	
		Aratami Ekiti	311	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26,256</b>		

Source: Available records from Universal Education Commission. Basic Profile

The sample size for the study is six hundred and forty seven (647) drawn from thirty two (32) local Government Areas of the three sampled states. These numbers of local government areas /pupils are selected because they are easily accessible. The Multistage technique was used in the selection of the sample. Stage 1: Simple random sampling by balloting was used in selecting the states. The names of the six (6) states in Southwest were written on pieces of paper squished and put inside a carton box. Each of the squeezed paper was picked by a research assistant, the researcher writes down the name of the picked state. This process was used until the three (3) states were randomly selected. Stage II: All senatorial zones were used based on Krejcie and Mogan (1970) which says, for any population less than (10) all should be used as sample size. Stage III.

Based on Sanghera *et al.*, (2012) 50% of local Government areas of the states under study were selected. Oyo state has 33 LGA, (50% = 16.5 =17) Ondo has 18, (50% =9) and Ekiti has 12 local Government Areas (50% = 6).Stage IV: Proportionate random sampling technique was used in determining sample size for each school of the sampled local government area. The enrolment per local government, divided by target population, multiply by sample size equal to number of primary school pupils selected. This was determined using Research Advisors (2006). See Appendix C. Stage V: Systematic technique was used in selecting pupils to be used in each school by choosing every even number. Table 2 shows the distribution of sample size for the study.

Table 2: Sample Size for the Study

State	Senatorial Zone	LGA	Sample Size
Oyo	North (12 LGA)	Akinyele	40
		Egbeda Oba	43
		Iddo Comm	40
		Aleshiloye	40
		Iyaganku Awodife	41
	South (10 LGA)	Iseyin Comm	12
		Saki	10
		Fiditi	10
		Summirire	10
		Surulere	10
	Central (11 LGA)	Ori Oke	12
		Isale Agbara	13
		Afijo Ile	10
		Igba Ora	10
		Oko Comm Isale Ora	10
Ondo	North (8 LGA)	Owo	20
		Akure Odo	16
		Ikare Comm	20
		Ile Oluji	20
	South (6 LGA)	Aiyetoro	20
		Ilepa	10
		Isua	20
	Central (4 LGA)	Orinsunbore	32
		Akungba	25
Ekiti	North (4 LGA)	Omuo Ekiti	25
		Aramoko	20
	South (4 LGA)	Imore Ekiti	20
		Efon Alaaye	24
	Central (4 LGA)	Oye Ekiti	16
		Aratami Ekiti	10
<b>TOTAL SIZE</b>			<b>647</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2018

For the sake of clarifications in data collection from the three (3) sampled states, the researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the Department of Home Economics, Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. The letter duly signed by the Head of Department, serves as a means of gaining access to the Headmaster of the schools sampled to be visited. The researcher goes to each school a day ahead to familiarize herself with the environment before the exercise. The researcher employed the services of three (3) research assistants in each of the sampled states. They were briefed by the researcher on how to administer the questionnaire to respondents and also to assist in ticking the option chosen when and where necessary. Each of the sampled state was visited one after the other until the sampled respondents are covered. Twelve weeks (12) was proposed for the administration of the instruments, meaning, four weeks for each state in the zone. The sampling technique for determine sample size for each school was followed. In all, a total of six hundred and forty seven (647) questionnaires were administered to pupils within the age range of 7 – 10 in the three sampled states. But, out of which six hundred and thirty one (631) of the questionnaire were valid for analysis. This, represent 97% success rate.

The collected data from the administered questionnaire were categorized based on degree of responses (Always (A) =4, Many Times (MT) = 3, Some Times (ST) =2, and Never (N) =1 by the respondents. Descriptive Statistical Method i.e. Frequency distribution, Simple Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation were employed in analysing the collected data.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 647 copies of questionnaires were distributed, however only 631 were correctly filled and collected from the respondents, representing 97% success rate. The data analysis is presented below.

Table 3: Population of the Study

State	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Ekiti</b>		
Male	45	<b>7</b>
Female	50	<b>8</b>
<b>Ondo</b>		
Male	90	<b>14</b>
Female	96	<b>15</b>
<b>Oyo</b>		
Male	180	<b>29</b>
Female	170	<b>27</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 4 revealed the mean response of respondents on the relationship between secure maternal attachment and social adjustment of pupils in South West Nigeria.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of the relationship between secure maternal attachment end social adjustment of pupils in South West Zone, Nigeria.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
<b>Secure Maternal Attachment</b>	193	23.35	2.949	
<b>Social Adjustment</b>	631	13.65	3.770	<b>11.7</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The highest mean score of 25.35 and standard deviation of 2.949 for social adjustment of pupils from secure maternal attachment were 13.65 and 3.770. The highest mean response of 3.770 implies that, respondents agreed that secure maternal attachment has positive relationship on pupils' social adjustment because the mean score of 25.35 for secure maternal attachment is greater than the mean score of 13.65 for social adjustment (which gave a mean difference of 11.7). This means that, secure maternal attachment has relationship on social adjustment of primary school pupils in south west zone. This also implies that relationship does exist between secure maternal attachment and social adjustment of pupils. It can rightly be concluded that secure maternal attachment has relationship with social adjustment of primary school pupils in South West zone, Nigeria.

Table 5: Mean Score of Respondents on Social Adjustment of pupils in Southwest Nigeria

S/N	Social Adjustment	A	MT	ST	N	N	4	3	2	1	Σ	X	Std
1	The child takes turn in playing with toys with peers.	283	180	92	76	631	1132	540	184	76	1932	2.5	1.6
2	The child likes to tease other children.	271	243	99	18	631	1084	729	198	18	2029	3.0	1.7
3	The child listens when other children are speaking.	291	216	86	38	631	1164	648	172	38	2022	2.5	1.6
4	The child is easily irritated with peers.	256	247	66	62	631	1024	741	132	62	1959	2.9	1.7
5	The child initiates interactions with other children.	295	242	32	62	631	1180	726	64	62	2032	3.2	1.8
6	The child is independent of adults.	203	310	39	79	631	812	930	78	79	1899	2.5	1.6
7	The child solves problems by him/herself.	291	246	18	76	631	1164	738	36	76	2014	3.0	1.7
8	The child talks a lot.	242	252	43	94	631	968	756	86	94	1904	2.8	1.6
9	The child rain abuses on other children with no cause.	254	227	97	53	631	1016	681	194	53	1944	2.8	1.7
10	The child threatens other peers in the class.	260	230	72	69	631	1040	690	144	69	1943	2.7	1.5

Table 5 revealed the mean responses of respondent on social adjustment of primary pupils in South West Nigeria. The highest mean response of 3.0 was that the child like to tease other children. The second mean response of 2.9 was that the child easily irritated with peers and people around him. The third highest mean response of 2.80 was that, the child rain abuses on other children with no cause. With the aggregate mean score of 2.77 it can concluded that children/pupils with faulty attachment styles (insecure attachment) had difficulty in adjusting socially in school and the society.

**A. Test of Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses formulated in this study were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) at probability of retaining or rejecting value of 0.05. This statistical tool was used in order to assess the relationship between maternal attachment on social and emotional adjustment of primary school pupils in South West, Nigeria.

Null Hypothesis:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between secure maternal attachment and social adjustment of primary school pupils in South West Zone, Nigeria.

Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation of the relationship between secure maternal attachment end social adjustment of pupils in South West Zone, Nigeria.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	r- Cal	P- Value
Secure Maternal Attachment	193	23.35	2.949	629	415**	0.33
Social Adjustment	631	13.65	3.770			

$P \leq 0.05$ , \*\* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**IV. CONCLUSION**

There was a significant positive relationship between secure maternal attachment and social adjustment of primary school pupils in South-west zone, Nigeria ( $r = .415, p = .033$ ). The more the secure maternal attachment, the better social adjustment of pupils.

It was found that a significant positive relationship exists between secure maternal attachment and social adjustment of primary school pupils in Southwest Zone, Nigeria. This means that secure maternal attachment is related to primary school pupils' social adjustment. This finding indicates that secure maternal attachment enhances child's social adjustment with other pupils at school. This finding is in conformity with that of Lynette, Jidith & Love (2011), who found that secure maternal attachment is the strongest type of attachment that dictates child's level of adjustment in school. The study by Welsh (2011) corroborated with the current study, it revealed that children with secure maternal attachment are competent, self-confident, resilient, and cheerful, mothers and other care givers provide empathic, humorous, playful, not vulnerable to approach by strangers, affectionate and able to interact well with others in school.

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