

PARENTAL CONCERN AND TEACHERS' CHARACTERISTICS AS DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

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Abstract

This study is on parental concerns and teachers' characteristics as predictors of social competence of children with hearing impairment in Ibadan metropolis. The study adopted survey research design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select five special primary schools in Ibadan metropolis. A total of twenty teachers, eighty children and eighty parents were purposively selected. Data were collected through social competence skills checklist for children with hearing impairment ($r=0.74$); teachers personality scale ($r=0.75$) and parent experience of hearing loss scale ($r=0.72$). Three research questions were answered. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple regressions. Teachers' characteristics and parental concerns showed significant relationships with social competence of the children with hearing impairment. There was joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable. Teachers' characteristics showed the higher contribution. Based on findings, it was recommended that parents should be more concerned about social adjustment of their children with hearing impairment rather than dwelling on the hearing loss. Teachers are however required to show more acceptances to students with hearing impairment so as to help them to develop positive self-image of themselves.

Keywords: Parental concerns, Teachers' characteristics, Social competence, Children with hearing impairment

Introduction

Social competence has been described as a unique and important factor in building relationships due to the fact that it aids self-esteem of an individual (Razny, 2011). It is further described as a child's ability to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying social relationships. An individual who therefore possesses social competence enjoys social acceptance as human beings are social even at birth (Osarenren, 2002). This is equally in line with Peter and Beer's (2014) definition of social competence, in which they asserted that it is the ability to achieve personal goals in social interactions while simultaneously maintaining positive relationships with others over time and across settings. When an individual tries to navigate his way in relation with the set rules or norms without social competence, relationship with others will definitely go sour.

Furthermore, social competence could be described as the degree to which a student is able to establish and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationship and gain peer acceptance (Bashir, Riaz, Shujaat & Saqib, 2014). Though there are usually individual differences and peculiarities, yet interpersonal relationships are expected to be cordial. The onus then lies on individuals to put in place different skills and behaviours which will help him to adapt in the society he or she finds himself/herself. Social competence then could be defined as the effectiveness in developmentally appropriate social interactions. It could be said to be a continual process of growth and change that occurs across the lifespan. It is a lifelong concept though it starts to develop very early in life. As a matter of fact, Kennedy and Pigott (2012) indicated that early play and social relationship begin from the foundation of social development.

Social competence however is anchored on social skills as well as social intelligence. Social skills have been described as those specific behaviours that must be put in place when interacting with others in order to have a smooth relationship. Equally, it is the knowledge of and ability to use a variety of social behaviours that are appropriate to a social context. Social intelligence on its own has been described as the child's ability to understand the emotions of others, perceive subtle social cues, read complex social situations and demonstrate insight about others' motivations and goals (Razny, 2011). Skills enable the individual to navigate his way through the norms and rules of the society so that he will be accepted by the other members of that group, having been found to be socially competent due to the application or use of social skills. These skills could also be referred to as social behaviour.

Language is known to be central in human communication; social communication (pragmatic) is one of the social skills. It can be presented that language is a pivot in the socialization process (Schectz, 2004). As children with hearing impairment lack oral language due to the damaged sense of hearing, then there is possibility of deficit in development of social skills and even social competence. Harris (2014) mentioned as a matter of fact, that lack of social incompetence is a major area of concern among children with hearing impairment. According to Naeni, Arshadi, Hatamizadeh, Bakhshi, S and Bakhshi, R. (2007), children and adolescents with hearing impairment usually have difficulties in acquiring social skills through daily experiences. The scholars reported some of these difficulties to be in communication, low experience in peer interactions, low school adaptation and school achievement. In the light of these, such a child could suffer peer-rejection, isolation, school disengagement, behavioural problems and even academic failure. In essence, for children with hearing impairment to function well in the inclusion setting, it is essential for them to be socially competent. This will enable them to communicate or interact adequately, to socialize and then learn. Social competence has been suggested to be an important ingredient in enabling an individual to conform with the societal norms, thereby being psychosocially adjusted.

In order to resolve the issue of poor social competence among children with hearing impairment, it will be beneficial to look into the supposed contributory factors. Moog, Geers, Gastus, and Brenner (2011) submitted from their findings that many adolescents reported that good oral skills enabled them to participate with hearing peers in school activities and in non-academic activities, so better communication skills lead to better socialization of deaf children with hearing peers. It must be noted that capability and desire for social relationships develop in early childhood (Most, Ingber & Heged-Ariam, 2012). With this view, it is indicated that parents are major factor in aiding the child's ability to have an all-round development, social inclusiveness. Razny (2011) is of the opinion that during the first years of life, parents are the primary source of social-emotional support, which serves as training grounds for the development of future relations. A parent that will fulfill this role must be highly concerned about the general well-being of this child. Adeniyi & Olufemi-Adeniyi (2010) are of the opinion that the social well-being of the children with hearing

impairment of school age is usually of great concern to their parents. Thomas (2015) recorded some of the other needs of children that must be met by their parents to show that the child is loved or that the parents are concerned about the child and not rejected (irrespective of the child's physical, sensory or emotional conditions). These concerns include acceptance of the child, child's education, feeding, clothing and protection of the child from physical and emotional harm. The scholar further stated that being unconcerned by the parents (for whatever reasons) could be termed as neglect or absence of parental love, thereby affecting the foundation of the development of the child's social and emotional life. Archibong (2015) corroborated this by stating that parents are capable of channeling a wide variety of feelings of their child.

Parental concerns, according to Theuissen, Rieffe, Netten et al (2014), could be expressed as the high quality parent-child attachment or relationship which is premised on the acceptance of the child by the parents irrespective of their differences. These scholars further posited that parents are models for their children. For instance, when parents have difficulties coping with stressed events such as hearing impairment of their children, their children could equally learn and apply their reactions. Such situations manifest in most of parents of children with hearing impairment focusing on the impact of the hearing loss and the medical site, while they overlook the child's emotional and social needs for support and guidance. Parents in this group might jettison their responsibilities to such a child since their concern is on the hearing loss and not on the needs of the child.

School and teacher-related factors (characteristics) also have been found to have impact on children's psychosocial adjustment (Polat, 2003). Apart from the parents, teachers are the next group of adults the child comes in contact with. Both are therefore believed to build the foundation for the social competence in the child (Bashir, Riaz, Shuyaat&Saqib, 2014). Social skills, which are ingredients of social competence, begin to develop at birth and this continued throughout the course of childhood and adolescence. Since social skills training involves description and modelling of the behaviour as well as practicing on the part of the child, parents and teachers are expected to serve as good role models in the socialization process (Masty& Schwab, 2006; Sharf, 2008; Abiola, 2006). Abiola (2006) added that the family is the starting place of socialization, while the school (through the teachers) is to complement the efforts of the home. Teachers are seen as the surrogate parents who should instill the basic responsibility of orderly living into the children. In reference to the sociocultural theorists, children are usually impacted by their interactions with the adults around them in order to acquire new skills (Thompson, 2008). This further explains the impact of both the parents and the teachers especially in early childhood on an individual.

Teachers' characteristics have also been identified as significantly affecting the child's behaviour (Satapathy, 2015). Teachers' attention and attitude are some of the characteristics mentioned by the scholar, being capable of affecting positively or negatively the social competence of children with hearing impairment. Other teachers' characteristics, otherwise known as features, are listed to include personality, attitudes and teachers' expectations (Orlando, 2013). According to Adeniyi and Tella (2006) teachers' characteristics are believed to be very spectacular because many researchers are reported to have found consistent relationship between the characteristics of teachers and behaviour as well as learning style of their students. For instance, teachers' personality is cited as playing a major role in the achievement of the learners. Thus a teacher who does not possess these characteristics may not be able to channel or impact the child's social competence.

Invariably, if parents are unable to lay the foundation of the child's social-emotional status, lack of social competence is inevitable. Social skills (tools employed by individuals to negotiate in relationships and conform to societal rules and norms) are usually absent in children with hearing impairment which results in

having fewer friends and feeling rejected than their hearing peers, thereby leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness (Wanters&Knoors, 2007). These social difficulties often occur in aspects like interacting and playing with other children, communication, behaviours in ways that are believed to be socially and culturally acceptable, difficulties in accepting boundaries, which can be environment or attitudinal barriers (Haddad, 2009). With these difficulties, it will be almost impossible to fit into the society by the child with hearing impairment. Martin, Bat-Chava, Halwan and Waltzman (2010) pinpointed hearing loss as the major cause of all these difficulties, as these have hampered their communication functioning.

Sense of hearing is one of the five senses designated as gateway to knowledge and as a means of becoming aware of one's environment. It is a potent tool for helping the child in building relationship (Mangal, 2007). In respect of this, great conscious efforts need to be employed in intervening in the training for acquisition of social skills in order for them to develop their social competence, thereby becoming psychologically adjusted. The emotional or physiological hardship they suffer would be alleviated if not completely removed. The two adults children encounter from infancy therefore are in the forefront of training the child with hearing impairment to acquire social skills. The burden is on them because infancy through adolescence formed formative stage of life of an individual. It has been discovered that children with hearing impairment exhibit low social competence especially in the developing countries based on literature search. It is evidenced from some literature reviewed, that children with special needs (children with hearing impairment inclusive) suffer neglect, low self-esteem and lack of motivation especially due to the parents' attitudes. These children also encounter sufferings which include isolation, loss of hope for the future, stigmatization, shame and anger. These children with hearing impairment usually experience neglect in the family as a result of inadequate communication and peer rejection as well as poor school performance.

This study is anchored on theory of social competence by Premack and Premack (1995) as presented by American Psychological Association (2015). Social incompetence is present as domain specific module, whereby objects interact. When the interaction is appropriately or inappropriately done, either way will generate reaction(s). The implication for this study is that interactions are inevitable among human beings but they must follow the norms to be successful in the interaction that is, to be socially accepted.

Factors other than parental factors and teachers' characteristics have been carried out. For instance, factors such as effect of school type; effect of age of onset, among others have been examined by other studies. This study therefore has examined parental concerns and teachers' characteristics as predictors of social competence of children with hearing impairment.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between the independent variables (parental and teachers' factors) and the dependent variable (social competence) of the children with hearing impairment)?
2. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (parental and teachers' factors) to the dependent variable (social competence) of the children with hearing impairment respondents?
3. What is the relative contribution of independent variables (parental concern and teachers' characteristics) to social competence of the children with hearing impairment)?

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a survey research design of the correlational type. This was chosen because the study investigated the relationship of parental concerns and teachers' characteristics on the social competence of children with hearing impairment.

Population

The population of the study comprised all children with hearing impairment in Special primary schools in Ibadan as well as their teachers and parents.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study comprised eighty (80) students with hearing impairment selected from primary schools (upper classes 4-6). Any child that was selected automatically has his parents involved while teachers in those schools were equally drawn as samples. Both the samples and schools used were purposively selected.

Instruments

The study adapted Minnesota Social Competence Skills Checklist for students with hearing loss, updated 2010. Teachers' Personality Scale by Adeniyi & Tella (2008) was also adapted to obtain information on teachers' characteristics, while Parental Experience of Hearing Loss Inventory by Thakre, Thakre and Alone (2012) was adapted for data collection on parental concerns. The reliability of the inventory, checklist and scale were in this order: Social Competence Checklist 0.74; Teachers' Personality Scale, 0.75 and Parental Experience of Hearing Loss Inventory 0.72.

Social competence skills checklist for children with hearing impairment consisted of two sections; Section A contained the bio-data of the respondents (age, religion, and onset of loss) while Section B contained items designed to elicit information in Yes/No type. Both Teachers' Personality scale and Parental Experience of Hearing loss Inventory were constructed to have two sections namely "A" and "B". Section A contained the Bio-Data of the respondents (age, marital status, level of education, years of experience and religion). Section B contained items designed to measure the various variables involved in this study, having four Likert scale type, ranging four Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). Following were the samples of the items on each of the scales: Social Competence Skills Checklist (I can only make friends with the hearing impaired; some of my mates are better than I am); Teachers' personality Scale (I enjoy teaching students with hearing impairment; for a child with hearing impairment to achieve, the teachers has the larger responsibilities, not the parents); Parental Experience of hearing Scale (My child need extra attention for him/her to be somebody in life; I find it difficult to communicate with my child).

Data Collection

The researcher visited schools for familiarization. Afterwards, the researcher went back with a research assistant to the schools and administered the instrument on the students purposively selected; same for the teachers and the parents that participated were met during PTA meeting. Initially, their consents were sought after which the instrument was administered. The data was thus collected for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data collected were coded and analysed with the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple regression analysis.

Results

Research Question One: What is the relationship between the independent variables (teachers' factor and parental factor), on the dependent variable (social competence of the children with hearing impairment)?

Table 1

Summary of Test of significant Correlations among Independent Variables and Academic performance of the Respondents.

Variable	1	2	3
Teacher's factor	1		
Parental factor	0.317**	1	
Social competence	0.140*	0.492	1
Mean	63.544	41.874	3.422
Standard deviation	13.09	8.684	7.296

NB: ** Significant at $P < 0.05$.

The results from table 1 showed that there were significant relationship between teacher's factor and parental factor on social competence of the respondents. Social competence had significant correlation with teacher's factor ($r=0.140$, $p < 0.05$) and parental factor of the children with hearing impairment respondents.

Research Question Two: What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (teacher's factor and parental factor) to the dependent variable (social competence of the children with hearing impairment participants)?

Table 2

Summary of Regression Analysis of the combined prediction of Social Competence by the Two Independent Variables

R = 0.859						
R Square = 0.737						
Adjusted R= 0.732						
Std. Error = 7.29654						
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P	Remark
Regression	37451.5	2	18725.7	416.22	0	Sig
Residual	13363.1	238	44.99			
Total	50814.6	240				

Table 2 showed the prediction of the two independent variables to the dependent variable. That is, social competence correlated positively with teacher's factor and parental factor. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlations R^2 of 0.859 and a multiple adjusted R square of 0.732. This means that 73.2% of the variance in social competence of children with hearing impairment is accounted for by the two predictor variables, when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at $p < 0.05$ using the F-ratio at the degree of freedom ($df=2/297$). The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded a F-ratio of 416.22 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the job contribution of the

independent variables to the dependent variables was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Research Question Three: What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (teacher's factor and parental factor) on social competence of the children with hearing impairment?

Table 3

Relative contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable (Test of significance of the Regression coefficients)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-9.887	2.597		-3.807	0.000
Teacher's factor	1.203	0.375	0.106	3.205	0.002
Parental factor	0.312	0.11	0.151	2.832	0.005

Table 3, reveals the relative contribution of the two independent variables to the dependent variable expressed as beta weight. The partial correlation coefficients of teacher's factor and parental factor have positive relationship with the social competence of the children with hearing impairment. The positive value of the effects of teacher's factor and parental factor implies that the social competence of the children with hearing impairment is actually enhanced by positive reinforcement of these two variables. Using the Unstandardized regression coefficients to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables to the explanation of the dependent variable: teacher's factor (B=1.203, t=3.205, p, 0.05) is the more potent contributor to the prediction and followed by parental factor (B=0.312, t=2.832, p<0.05) in that order.

Discussion

The results of research question 1 showed that significant relationships existed between independent variables and social competence of children with hearing impairment. This finding corroborates Satapathy's (2015) finding, whereby suggestion for parent-child interaction was made amidst other factors to boost the psychosocial development of children with hearing impairment. The scholar believes that once the parent-child interaction is established, having social-emotional adjustment will not be difficult for the children with hearing impairment. Harris (2014) is of the same opinion. He stated that ever before the value of peers would come in, during the preschoolage, the parent's interactions are the most important for the children with hearing impairment to have social competence. In the same vein, Furth (1973) in Satapathy (2015) believes that teacher-student interaction helps them to achieve better psychosocial adjustment. In the project carried out by Illinois State Board of Education (2015), teachers are actually rated as facilitator of social competence of children with hearing impairment as they create classroom communities that are open, honest and accepting differences.

The results of research question two showed that parental concern and teachers' characteristics jointly contributed to social competence of students with hearing part. This findings supports report presented, whereby it is indicated that educators work with parents to help them find positive discipline strategies and positive communication skills to promote child anger management and conflict resolution skills. Both parties complement each other in determining the social competence of the child. Harris (2014) is also of this thought

by presenting that both parents and teachers must be on the lookout for social-emotional development of the children with hearing impairment and intervene effectively if necessary.

The results of research question three revealed the relative contribution of the two independent variables to the dependent variable. The positive value of effects of the teachers' characteristics and parental concerns implies that the social competence of the children with hearing impairment is facilitated by positive reinforcement of these two independent variables. However, teachers' characteristics (factors) are discovered to be more potent as contributor to the facilitation of social competence and then followed by parental factor. Brown, Odom and McConnel's (2008) finding is in line with this result. They presented that educators are in the best position to facilitate good social experiences which will have an effect on the quality and quantity of the child's interactions even in the future as well. Teachers' factors is more important because they can construct opportunities and as well serve as mediators in social interactions between children with hearing impairment and children with normal hearing (NH). They can also plan social intervention programmes if need be. The parents are limited in this aspect because they have only their children with hearing impairment. It may not be easy or possible for them to get children with NH or from another background to compare with their own children. The teacher has access to children of various backgrounds and challenges, so, they can modify the curriculum and facilities to suit all children present in the classroom.

Conclusion

It is evident from literature that children with hearing impairment suffer from some social challenges such as stigmatization, lack of hope of future, rejection and low self-esteem. This is due to inadequate communication from the society in general and particularly because of the parents' attitude to their hearing loss especially, and the teachers' personality, attitude and expectations from the children with hearing impairment. The teachers' (who are referred to as the surrogate parents) characteristics are found to be more potent, and then followed by the parental concerns in the development of social competence of children with hearing impairment.

Recommendations

Parents of children with hearing impairment are implored to look beyond the hearing loss(es) of their children. They should see and accept them as having potentials even with their hearing losses. With this, the parents should go on to cater for an all-round development of their children. The starting point or the foundation for them is to accept the children and not to focus on the hearing loss.

Teachers are equally advised to see themselves as (surrogate) parents to those children with hearing loss. Training obtained in the college may not make the teacher competent or enable him impact on these children. They need to make the children see them (teachers) as loving, accepting them (children with hearing impairment) and treat them as normal children. This will be achievable especially when the teacher is empathic, being pitiful towards them will make him to apply the techniques acquired in the college, but empathy will enable him to blend ethics and personal opinions to impact the child. Teachers' attitude and personality will go a long way in helping the teacher to contribute to the child's all round development.

However both the parents and the teachers need to work as a team. They may have an informal forum whereby both of them will exchange ideas, create an out-of-class interactions between children with hearing impairment and those with normal hearing; teachers will be present with them and observe or co-ordinate the interactions, so as to boost social competence of the former.

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