

PEER-GROUP ASSOCIATED FACTORS FOR ADULT-ADOLESCENT CONFLICT IN IDOMA LAND OF BENUE STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the peer-group associated factors for adult-adolescent conflict in Idoma land. Multi-stage sampling was used to compose the subjects for the study. The technique introduced the use of 201 adults and 314 adolescents from three Local Government Areas in Idoma land. Data analysis was by mean (\bar{x}) scores statistics. Some of the peer-group related factors for the conflict were; Shifting peer culture from fashion in clothes, music, public kissing, breast fondling, sexual intercourse out of wedlock. Others include dominant role of peer-group on adolescents and parents' concern about the choice of peer and monitoring of peer relationships. Some of the recommendations were, adults should try and understand the state of the adolescents at this transition period and help them "cross-over" without much stress and conflicts. Adolescents on their own part should consider what sort of social and moral foundation they would want to lay for themselves, so that they would not be lured into ills of the time like cultism, drugs, illicit sex etc. and there is need for a "sound" moral education and youth orientation programmes to keep the youths abreast of the societal valves. It was therefore, concluded based on the findings of this study that conflicts really exist between the adults and adolescents in Idoma land, and peer-group relationships contribute to adult-adolescent conflicts in Idoma speaking area of Benue State.

Introduction

The period of adolescence occupies a very unique state in every person's life. Psychologists, guidance counselors, and sociologists have drawn attention to this period of development because of the traumatic experiences associated with it. The period marks a time in the individual's life when it is difficult to consider him or her either as a child or an adult. It is a period during which an individual cannot be treated as a child and if treated so, resents it. Thus Garsion (1964) views the period as a transition from childhood to adulthood, and the subject can be regarded as an adolescent.

Adolescence is a time of transition and includes important biological, social, emotional and cognitive changes that take place quite rapidly over a relatively short period. The individual is sexually mature and capable of production, but has yet to attain the emotional maturity or economic independence of the adult. The range of ages spanned by adolescence is somewhat arbitrary, because of the changes in the society. Adolescence is generally regarded as beginning at about age 13 and ending at about age 21, but W.H.O hold it that it being about the age of 10-18 years.

Each change in adolescence has its attending problems. Man naturally resists changes, thus the changes taking place during adolescence, cause conflicts stress and confusion for the adolescents concerned and parents. In view of this, the period has been described as a time of "storm and stress". The conflicts make the period so dreadful to parents due to its associated upheavals, crises and problems. The adolescents easily see loopholes of alternatives to parents' assumptions. They challenge and query parents' line of thought and actions. These acts lead to conflict between the adolescents and parents.

Conflict according to Ochiagha (1994), may be formally defined as the simultaneous arousal of two or more incompatible motives. Most often, an individual has several motives to achieve and sometimes the two motives coincide with each other and the satisfaction of one of the motives leads to the blocking or frustration of the other. Conflict could also mean a fight or situation of incompatibility involving two sides.

Adult-adolescent conflict in this study refers to verbal argument, hostility, struggle, disagreement or incompatibility in values between adults and adolescents. Although the adolescents

are aware that their behaviours are gradually falling short of adults' values, they do not care or bother. This, Hadfield (1994) in Ihaji (1991) observed that adolescents have the reputation of being rebellious and disobedient, but this is only because they are setting, out for no longer being ready to submit without question to authority and parents. Adolescents would like to do things their own way based on the idea of freedom from bondage of ignorance, illiteracy and primitivity, while parents will like to resist these changes that their children may not go astray.

Recent literature has stressed the importance of the peer-group as a factor responsible for adult-adolescent conflict (Hall and Jefferson, 1975). The peer-group has potential influence on its members according to Grinder (1978), Smith (1976) and Watlerberg (1978). There is a gap and conflict between adult and adolescents because peer-group influence is on the increase while parental influence is declining (Duccan, 1972).

The adolescent of today faces a lot of problems resulting from his social, emotional, intellectual, physical and moral development processes. Consequently, according to Iwuana (19-91), he tries to devise some self-made or group made mechanisms to help cope with such problems. Unfortunately, such mechanisms instead of helping the adolescent out of the problem succeed in compounding his problems and leaving him more confused, frustrated and helpless than he was. In the face of each of such developments, according to Iwuana, the uncounselled or ill counseled (perhaps by peers) may end up in actions that may be detrimental to himself and the society. Peer influence and problems of adolescent should present more than enough food for thought for parents, teachers, administrators, counselors and social workers.

In most families there is clearly a rise in the amount of arguing and bickering that go on, (Laursen and Collins, 1994; Eccles, Lord and Roeser, 1996; in Feldman, 2000). Adolescents as part of their search for identity, tend to experience a degree of tension between their attempts to become independent from their parents and their actual dependence on them. They may experiment with a range of behaviours, flirting with a variety of activities that their parents or adults find objectionable. Adolescent's relationships with friends and peers are particularly volatile (Berndl, 1992; Berndt and Keefe, 1995; Grabber, Brook-Gunn, and Petersen, 1996; Collerell, 1996; in Feildman, 2000).

Medical statistics reveal that the health index of our youths is nose-diving. This has been found to be due to their abuse of sex and related anti-social behaviours. The state of HIV/AIDS infection is highest among the adolescent students.

In Idoma land, there seems to be an increasing manifestation of tension between the adults and adolescents. Some other factors like the school and family were found to be the contributory factors for adult-adolescent conflict. In what measure the peer-group related factors have contributed to adult-adolescent conflict in Idoma land of Benue State?

Based on the foregoing, this study is designed to investigate the peer-group associated factors for conflict between the adults and adolescents in Idoma land of Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

The most frequent message concerning adults and adolescents has been one of the ever-widening gap between the two generations (Hamid and Wyllie, 1980). Also the popular belief is that there is conflict between the adults and adolescents.

In Nigeria today, particularly in Idoma speaking area there is a kind of overt manifestation of tension between the adults and adolescents. Adults in Idoma area lament daily over the behaviours of their adolescents. Such behaviours as: - recklessness, disrespect for constituted authorities, pre-marital sex, abortion, cultism, pregnancy out of wedlock, drug-abuse, nudity and indecent dressing, kissing and breast fondling publicly, social perversion and prostitution and a host of other grievous acts. For these reasons adults are deeply threatened by the shilling external trappings of adolescent peer cultures, from fashions in clothes and music to special and rapidly changing vocabularies. An unusually dominant role of the peer-group in the life of adolescents poses a serious threat to the adult's "world"¹ in Idoma speaking area.

Against this background therefore, this study was designed to investigate the peer group associated factors for adult-adolescent conflict in Idoma land of Benue State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the peer-group associated factors that can contribute to adult-adolescent conflict.

Significance of the Study

This study will be significant to adults, adolescents, schools, homes, churches, mosques, communities and entire society. Adolescents form a large proportion of the Nigerian population, therefore, the study of the peer-group as one of the contributory factors for adult-adolescent conflict; will provide the knowledge of adolescents' peer-group culture or values and behaviours in contemporary time to guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, educators and other bodies who are interested in resolving adult-adolescent conflicts.

Most literature on peer-group related factors for adult-adolescent conflict are based on western culture, so conclusions are based on the western values. This report will serve as an evidence on the issue which has not been adequately documented empirically in Idoma, so it will provide resources for future studies in the area.

The findings of this study may necessitate organizing workshops, seminars and value orientations for adolescents, adults, educators, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers and other interested bodies for the management of adult-adolescent conflict emanating from peer-group relationship.

Methodology

The study is a survey aimed at investigating the peer-group associated factors for adult-adolescent conflict in of Idoma land of Benue State.

Population

The population comprised all adults who are parents/teachers/guardians of adolescent students in the seven Local Government Areas of Idoma land with a total number of ninety-eight (98) schools and populations of nine thousand, one hundred and twenty-eight (9,128) senior secondary school students. Records available at Teaching Service Board (TSB) Makurdi Benue State.

Sample and Sampling

The sample consisted three hundred and fourteen (314) adolescents and two hundred and one (201) adults drawn from three Local Government Areas in Idoma land.

A multi-stage sampling was adopted to select three LGA out of the seven using random sampling. They are: - Apa, Agatu and Otukpo, with a total number of forty-three (43) senior secondary schools and population of three thousand nine hundred and thirteen (3,913) students. The data was collected from Teaching Service Board (TSB) Makurdi, Benue State.

The second stage involved selection of two senior secondary schools each from the three L.G.As (Apa, Agatu and Otukpo) using random sampling.

The third stage utilized the stratified proportionate sampling to draw a sample size of three hundred and fourteen (314) out of the population of one thousand and eighty-seven (1,087) adolescent students in SS III.

In the fourth stage, purposive sampling was used to draw a sample of two hundred and one (201) adults who are parents, guardians and teachers of the adolescents in the three L.G.A. Hence, the sample was five hundred and fifteen (515) comprising three hundred and fourteen (314) adolescent students and two hundred and one (201) adults in Idoma land.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire called "Adult-Adolescent Conflict Questionnaire (AACQ)". It contained ten (10) items on peer-group associated factors for adult-adolescent conflict in Idoma land.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To establish the validity, the questionnaire was given to specialists in guidance and counseling, measurement and evaluation and psychology for scrutiny. The items were criticized based on the language, ease of understanding, relevance to the study. Based on the criticism, some items were modified.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was carried out by trial testing the instrument on thirty (30) adults and fifty (50) adolescents randomly drawn from another area other than the area of study. The scores derived from the trial test were used to establish the estimates of internal consistency using Cronbach alpha (α). The internal consistency of the items was 0.86,

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Five hundred and fifteen (515) copies of the questionnaire were administered personally by the researcher. This was to ensure a high rate of return. Consequent upon this, all the five hundred and fifteen (515) copies of the questionnaire administered were properly completed and returned. Data collected was analyzed using means (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation (SD) to answer the research question. Two groups were involved, so mean (\bar{x}) of each item in each group and Grand mean, (\bar{x}) (Cumulative \bar{x}) were interpreted in relation to the real limits of the value assigned to the categories to the instrument. The decision ruled was 2.50 as follows:

| Response | Values | Lower Limit | Upper Limit |
|-------------------------|--------|-------------|-------------|
| Strongly agree (SA) | 4 | 3.40 | 4.39 |
| Agree (A) Disagree (DA) | 3 | 2.40 | 3.39 |
| Strongly Disagree (SD) | 2 | 1.40 | 2.39 |
| | 1 | 0.40 | 1.39 |

Data analysis was carried out by computer, using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) of the UNN Computer Centre.

Results

The research question for the study is, "what are the prevalent peer-group associated factors that can contribute to Adult-adolescent conflict in Idoma land"?

The respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the question above. The summary of responses to the question is in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean (\bar{X}) and Standard Deviation (SD) on Prevalent Peer-Group Associated Factors for Adult-Adolescent Conflict in Idoma Land. No. of Adults -201, Adolescents = 314, Total = 515

| S/No | Peer-group Associated Factors | \bar{X}_1 | \bar{X}_2 | SD ₁ | SD ₂ | Grand Mean (\bar{x}) | Remark |
|------|---|-------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Peers play an important role ' in the psychological development of adolescents, termed as "Youth Culture" or "Generation Group". Adults frown on the above assertion. | 2.88 | 3.05 | 0.75 | 0.81 | 3.07 | Agree |
| 2. | Adolescents should be allowed to depend solely on peer-group culture. | 2.20 | 3.17 | 0.73 | 0.78 | 2.69 | Agree |
| 3. | Parents should choose peer-groups for their adolescent children. | 2.71 | 2.65 | 0.85 | 0.81 | 2.43 | Agree |
| 4. | To have close friends makes a great difference in the life of adolescents, positively or negatively. | 3.14 | 3.31 | 0.66 | 0.89 | 3.23 | Agree |
| 5. | Parents should monitor peer-group relationship of their adolescents strictly. | 3.13 | 2.88 | 0.87 | 3.89 | 3.05 | Agree |
| 6. | Peer-group helps in the development of sense of identity in adolescence, therefore should be encouraged by adults. | 3.19 | 3.21 | 0.76 | 0.69 | 3.20 | Agree |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 7. | Parents are deeply threatened by the shifting external trapping adolescent peer cultures from fashion in clothes, music to special and rapidly changing vocabularies. | 3.23 | 3.21 | 0.78 | 0.79 | 3.22 | Agree |
| 8. | An unusual dominant role of the peer-group in the life of adolescent is due to lack of attention and concern by the parents or adults. | 3.01 | 3.07 | 0.69 | 0.76 | 3.04 | Agree |
| 9. | Getting along with peers pose problems to adolescents therefore may cause "over-dependent" on adults by adolescents of which can generate conflict between the adults and adolescents. | 3.11 | 2.99 | 0.68 | 0.82 | 3.05 | Agree |
| 10. | Immoral acts are learnt from the peer-groups. | 3.06 | 3.04 | 0.81 | 0.81 | 3.05 | Agree |
| | Grand mean (x) for all the items in each group | 3.06 | 3.58 | = | = | = | Agree |
| | Grand mean (x) for all the items in the two groups (combined). | = | = | = | = | 3.03 | Agree |

The remarks above were based on the grand mean (x) and a cut-off point of 2.50 on a four-point scale. Table 1 shows that two groups agreed with all the items (1-10) as the peer-group associated factors for adult-adolescent conflict in Idoma land (mean (x), 3.06 and 3.58 respectively).

Discussion

The findings based on Table 1, indicated a number of peer-group associated factors for adult-adolescent conflict in Idoma area. This is evidenced in the grand mean (x) of 3.03. The evidence is in support of the report in Hall and Jefferson (1975), which stressed the importance of peer-group as one of the major factors for adult-adolescent conflict. The peer-group has a potential influence on its members; therefore, any variable that would come in between the peers is revolted against. This is also in agreement with the findings of this study because adolescents are highly in support of peer formation, for the freedom they enjoy in the relationships. Adults on the other hand would want to monitor or possibly select the peer-group for their children.

Activities of the peers are sometimes devilish therefore should call for adults' intervention, particularly in the areas of peer "cultures" from fashion in cloths, music, public kissing, breasts' fondling are contrary to adults' cultural values. This finding is in support of what Owamama (1983) has said concerning the peer-group, that, among the Nigerian adolescents, peers impart information-that conflict adults' values. Such information includes: criminal acts (armed robbery, drug-abuse, smoking, cultism) and immorality (breast fondling, sexual-intercourse, abortion etc).

Through the influence of the peer-group, adolescents can resist parental control and run to-hide under the umbrella of the peers for solace. This could influence the adolescent as he or she, becomes ungovernable as reported by Valiant (1983). The findings of this study agreed with Valient's report. The major problem is that, adolescents must move or go along with their peers, so, no matter the actions or reactions of the adults, the idea of peer relationship still stands, but what is worth noting is that peers should "shade-off the idea of operating in isolation, but embrace the values of the adults' society, and allow for adults' advice where necessary. This will go a long way to instill sanity between the adolescents and adults.

Recommendations

Adolescence is a period of crises to the individual involved. A period of struggles for independence or emancipation by the adolescents concerned. It is recommended therefore that the adults should try and understand the state of the individuals at this phase of life, and guide them (adolescents) to "cross-over" this period successfully without much stress and conflict with the adults' "world". The period is really a transition from "childlike" behaviours to "adult like" maturity; therefore, the adolescents are not to blame too much on matters of conflict with adults because they are exploring and more so to be independent.

Nevertheless, adolescents are to be blamed in some areas of their conflict with the adults. Such as adolescents "peer culture" of public kissing, breast fondling, "uncultured" dressing and music. Those acts are considered to be peer-cultures and they are not acceptable in the adults' culture. Available literature affirmed the natural reality that the future is for the youths, therefore, whatever measure the adults are taking against them, they are all geared towards better future for the youths. Adolescents should consider what sort of social and moral foundation they would want to lay for themselves, especially in view of the fact that many of them have allowed themselves to be lured in the ills of the time like drugs, cultism, illicit sex and other acts that adults' society frown at in the process of peer interactions or relationships. It is pertinent for the adolescents to consider socially and morally positive alternatives, which like in adherence to divine laws and obedience to co-operate with adults.

[It is pertinent also for the peer-group to evaluate their own culture to see where adults' world is threatened so as to make amendments for smooth and "healthy" existence. There is need for a "sound" moral education and youth orientation programmes to keep the youths abreast of the societal values in order to avoid conflicting values from both sides.

Finally, adults require patience, openness, dialogue and understanding when handling issues concerning adolescents that may generate conflicts between them.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following are the conclusions. Evidence from the findings has shown that conflicts exist between the adults and adolescents in Idoma land, and peer-group associated factors contribute to conflicts between the adults and adolescents in Idoma area of Benue State. As a survey study, it really achieved its objectives by identifying some of the prevalent peer-group associated factors for adult-adolescent conflict.

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