

## **Teachers' Mentorship as a Predictor of Academic Adjustment among High Ability Secondary School Students in Owerri Municipal**

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### ***Abstract***

*The study investigated the relationship between teachers' mentorship and students' academic adjustment among high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal. Three research questions were raised and answered in the study. This study adopted a descriptive survey design of correlational type. This study was carried out in seven (7) public secondary schools in Owerri Municipal, Imo State. The population of the study consisted of all the 733 Senior Secondary School 2 high ability students in Owerri Municipal, Imo State, Nigeria, while the sample comprised 73 Senior Secondary School 2 high ability students representing 10% of the total population were selected through the multistage sampling technique. Teachers' Mentorship Questionnaire ( $\alpha=0.98$ ) and Academic Adjustment Questionnaire ( $\alpha=0.78$ ). Data were analysed using means and standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed a significant relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment. There was insignificant relationship between gender and academic adjustment. Also, there was insignificant relationship between school location and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal. Therefore, it was recommended among others that government and stakeholders of secondary school education should organize regular in-service training for teachers and school administrators on school mentorship programme for positive academic adjustment among high ability students in secondary schools in Owerri municipal, Imo State, Nigeria.*

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**Keywords:** *Academic adjustment, High ability student, Mentorship, Teachers*

## Introduction

The category of learners referred as those with high ability have attracted attention of many scholars. Thus, the high ability students are those who get high marks and good grades (Bainbridge, 2020). The students in this category often may be expected to do the work that is required and do it well. They are well-organised, with good time-management skills, and they are as well expected to turn in neat and tidy work on time. They also tend to be well-behaved, adjust well to the classroom environment and participate enthusiastically in classroom activities. Candeias, Rebelo, Olivera and Mendes (2012) described the high ability students as those who come and leave school with the autonomy to set their own learning goals and with a sense that they can reach those goals and tend to be better equipped to learn throughout their lives. Furthermore, Foster (2019) stated that high ability is not stable, that is, it is dependent upon motivation, effort, and opportunities to learn, and it develops step by step in an environment of appropriate support and challenge.

Nwazuoke, Olatoye and Oyundoyin (2002) contend that environment where a student finds himself or herself could foster or inhibit creativity. However, there are different ways of being smart across academic and non-academic domains. The term "high ability" according to Indiana Association for the Gifted (2019) refers to general or spectrum of abilities without being dependent on a single measure or index and these abilities as a result of many features. Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education (2013) further argued that demonstrations of, or potential for, exceptionally high capability may be with respect to intellect, creativity, or the skills associated with specific disciplines. Students who have high ability often demonstrate outstanding abilities in more than one area and may demonstrate extraordinary intensity of focus in their particular areas of talent or interest.

Clark (2002) submitted that students scoring in the top two percent in general intelligence on the Binet test or a similar measure are identified as high ability. Swiatek (2007) reiterated that science students are often referred to as high ability students rather than gifted students, as identifying giftedness requires a range of testing that is not part of the practice in the regular classrooms. This argument was affirmed by Iji and Herbor-peters (2005) that instructional practices in the mathematics classroom in Nigerian secondary schools, seems to favour only the students with high ability. Further description of these learners suggests that in comparison to students with average ability, high ability students are quick thinkers, more flexible in their use of strategies, demonstrate better memory, more knowledgeable, and prefer complexity (Scager, Akkerman, Pilot and Wubbels, 2014). Abakpa and Iji (2010) asserted that with the traditional method of teaching, the gap between the academic adjustment of high and other category of students continue to widen, because many of these students still struggled to do well in their academic achievement. Indeed, to bridge the gaps created by poor academic adjustment among the high ability students in Nigerian secondary schools, teacher mentorship plays crucial role in this area.

The term adjustment in this study refers to the degree of capacity by which an individual student tries to cope with inner tensions, needs, conflicts, frustration and is simultaneously able to bring coordination between his inner demands and those imposed by the school environment. It is often used as a synonym for accommodation and adaptation. Adjustment refers to the behavioural process by which humans and other animals maintain

equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environmental adjustment (Searle and Ward, 2012). It is used to emphasise the individual struggle to get along or survive in his or her social and physical environment. In this process, the individual also makes efforts to maintain harmonious relationship with the learning environment. The issue of adjustment is of great importance to all individual especially to the students who should be helped in developing good adjustment besides the intellectual progress.

A successful academic adjustment of students will enable them complete their studies. Present society is a dynamic; hence the needs of human beings are increasing tremendously which needs to be fulfilled. Everybody in the society is in the race of competition. This poses the serious threat to the adjustment of the individuals particularly to the adolescents in secondary schools. The problem of adjustment is a crucial problem of the modern world. This problem is a matter of such pervasive concerns that books, articles, magazines, scientific journals etc. dealing with adjustment problems are appearing more repeatedly (Winga, Agak and Ayere, 2011). Adjustment is the behavioural process by which one maintains equilibrium among various needs or between needs and the obstacles of environments. A sequence of adjustment begins when a need is felt and ends when it is satisfied. In general, the adjustment process involves four parts: (1) a need or motive in the form of a strong persistent stimulus, (2) the thwarting or non-fulfilment of this need, (3) varied activity, or exploratory behaviour accompanied by problem solving, and (4) some response that removes or at least reduces the initiating stimulus and completes the adjustment (Kumaraswamy, 2013).

A well-adjusted student is one who does not get affected adversely by the interactions such as conflicts and emotions, and whose personality development goes through a healthy course of socialisation (Sangeeta and Chirag, 2012). Academics involves a variety of demands differing in kind and degree and requiring lot of coping responses or adaptations. It is not only academics with which the students are concerned; they are equally affected by the social and emotional changes. According to Sharma (2012), the definition of academic adjustment reflects on how much an individual achieves through it, and its effect on his/her personal growth. In terms of how adjusted the individual is in academics, depends on the individual student's capability of getting grades and eventually achieving the goals and objectives of his/her academic pursuits.

The term mentorship is derived from the term 'mentor' which has its etymology from Greek mythology where Athena disguised herself as Mentor for the purpose of looking after Odysseus' son Telemachus while Odysseus sailed against Troy (Akinla, Hagan and Atiomo, 2018). Mentoring is an intervention which has been suggested to be effective in supporting students in the transition to third-level education through enhancing a sense of belongingness and improving student satisfaction, engagement and retention rates (Carragher and McGaughey, 2016). Mentoring can as well be described as a formal relationship in which a more qualified instructor provides guidance and support to a mentee or student. It is a method used by different school systems to support students in acclimatising to the new school/class environment (Andrews and Clark, 2011), which further boost students' academic achievement. Jucovy (2000) stated that mentoring programmes enrich students' lives, help

meet their need for positive adult contact, and provide one-on-one support and advocacy. Most notably, positive mentoring experiences have proven to be an effective tool to help students with high ability to overcome the risk factors that can lead to problems such as educational failure, dropping out of school, and involvement in delinquent activities, including gang crime and drug abuse.

Jegede and Olu-Ajayi (2017) submitted that teachers' mentoring in secondary schools exposes students to mentors, usually teachers, who engage them in a supportive relationship based on academic tutoring. Teachers' mentoring is indeed an asset in differentiating the curriculum for students with different needs and interests requiring extra attention by teachers. Low performing students are students with special need, who feel inferior to their classmates due to their low-ability level and mentoring can be used to improve students' academic achievement.

Evidence suggests that teachers are the most important school-based influence on student academic achievement (Hattie, 2003; Kyriakides, Christoforou and Charalambous, 2013). Naga, et al. (2020) conducted a study on the effect of mentorship programme in enhancing the academic performance and found that after mentorship programme was significantly higher than that conducted before commencing mentorship programme. This increment in performance is appreciated more in girls rather than the boys. Furthermore, the mentorship programme significantly helped to boost the academic performance in below average students. The effectiveness of the mentorship programme was further supported by the students' feedback. Teachers' mentorship can either impact positively or negatively on the student's academic adjustment.

Despite the importance of education for increased earnings, meaningful employment, and subsequent quality of life, nearly one in four secondary students leave school before completing their secondary school education (Ganai and Muhammad, 2013). The adjustment of students in school could differ due to gender differences. In fact, several factors, such as gender and geographical local of students are likely to influence their academic adjustment.

Gender refers to the socially culturally constructed characteristics and roles, which are ascribed to males and females in any society. Gender is a major factor that influences the adaptation of students to academics (Okeke, 2008). Gender is determined by attributes such as tasks, functions and roles of women and men in the society rather than the biological characteristic of women and men. As gender roles in the society are being rapidly redefined, female students today are showing outstanding academic prowess and pursuing higher education. Research on gender differences in school adjustment has portrayed that, girls are better adjusted as compared to boys. One such study was by Wang, Chen, Sorrentino and Szeto (2008) found that girls had higher scores on academic adjustment than boys. Another study by Prakash and Coplan (2007) found out that boys adjust better than girls in academics. Kiuru, Nurmi, Aunola, Salmela – Aro (2009) found out that girls' cliques resembled each other more in satisfaction with their educational choice and school engagement when compared with boys. These findings showed that there are gender differences in school adjustment. Farmer, Irvin, Thompson, Hutchins and Leung (2006) and Enochs and Roland (2006) found insignificant difference in the academic adjustment in their respective studies.

Hence this study sought to find out if differences are based on gender in terms of the academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal. Also, the locations of school could also be a factor in students' academic adjustment owing to shortfalls or adequate supplies of school facilities.

Location is the place or point that something is situated. Location comprises rural and urban areas. School location refers to the community in which the school is located, such as village hamlet or rural area with fewer than 3000 people, a small town (3000 to about 15,000 people), a town (15,000 to about 100,000 people). Bektag (2008) explained school location as specific geographical site of the school and it contains building where the school equipment is kept for educational use. A school cannot usually change its location, yet location conceivably may have consequences for how well students learn at the school. The investigations of a rural gap in academic adjustment have been explored in past studies, and showed that locations of schools have great impact on academic adjustment of students. From the forgoing, research has shown that a lot of maladaptive behaviour abound in schools. Students violate school rules; absconding from school, perpetual struggle with authority, substance abuse, incessant cheating, habitual smoking and drinking, fighting, destruction of school properties, drug addiction and in extreme cases drop out of school. The general review shows that many authors concentrated on academic achievement and performance while only a handful dealt on academic adjustment therefore this study tries to fill this gap.

The retention of high ability students in secondary school has been the concern of school administrators and parents at large. Many students drop out of school before completing their secondary school education to learn trade and others go into so many kinds of apprenticeship, which was not their initial plan at enrolment. This scenario has raised the attention of stakeholders in education and many researchers have sort for solutions to these problems, some attribute it to social, emotional and academic adjustment while others have shown that this could be as a result of the students' inability to cope with the academic situations in school owing to some school factors. Based on these therefore, this study investigated the relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal.

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal?
2. What is the relationship between gender and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal?
3. What is the relationship between school location and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal?

## **Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design of correlational type. This study was carried out in seven (7) public secondary schools in Owerri Municipal, Imo State, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of all the 733 Senior Secondary School 2 high ability

students in Owerri Municipal, Imo State, Nigeria, while the sample comprised 73 Senior Secondary School 2 high ability students representing 10% of the total population who were selected through the multistage sampling technique. Two instruments used for data collection in this study were Teachers' Mentorship Questionnaire ( $\alpha=0.98$ ) and Academic Adjustment Questionnaire ( $\alpha=0.78$ ). The instruments consisted of part A and B. Part A is on the demographic information of the respondents while part B comprised the item statements. The section B has response option of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD) with assigned weights of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively for positive questions and the reverse (1, 2, 3 and 4) for negative questions. The Teachers' Mentorship Questionnaire (TMQ) is a 20-item questionnaire which was developed by the researchers to elicit information from the respondents on their take about the nature of teachers' mentorship. Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ) is a 30-item questionnaire used to get information on students' academic adjustment in school. In order to ensure the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was carried out in Owerri North local Government Area using 20 students which share similar characteristics. In order to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. Cronbach Alpha formula was used. The two instruments (TMQ and AAQ) yielded internal consistency reliability index of 0.98 and 0.78, respectively. The data for this study were collected through administration of the instruments by the researchers and with the help of six research assistants. The research assistants were made up of teachers that are teaching in different schools in Owerri Municipal. In order to answer the research questions, this study employed mean and standard deviation while Pearson Moment Correlation coefficients was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

### Research Question 1

What is the relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal?

**Table 1:** Pearson correlation ( $r$ ) rating of relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal  
( $N=73$ )

Items	$\bar{X}$	SD		Teachers' Mentorship	Academic Adjustment
Teachers' Mentorship	2.70	.48	Pearson Correlation	1	.962**
	Sig	(2 tailed)		.000	
	N			73	73
Academic Adjustment	2.68	.49	Pearson Correlation	.962**	1
	Sig	(2 tailed)		.000	
	N			73	733

Results in table 1 show that teachers' mentorship had mean rating of 2.70 while academic adjustment had mean rating of 2.68. This show that both teachers' mentorship and academic

adjustment had high mean rating above the mean cut off point of 2.50. Relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment indicated high correlation for teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment with Pearson correlation =0.96. This show that there is high relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students. Also, data on table 1 show that Pearson correlation for teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment indicated significant relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students, ( $r =73$ ) =.962,  $p<.005$ . The null hypothesis was rejected.

### Research Question 2

What is the relationship between gender and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal?

**Table 2:** Pearson correlation (r) rating of relationship between gender and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal

(N=73)

Gender	$\bar{X}$	SD	Academic Adjustment		
			Pearson Correlation	1	.000
Male	2.68	.46			
Female	2.68	.52	(Sig 2 tailed)		.998
				73	73
Academic Adjustment			Pearson Correlation	.000	1
			(Sig 2 tailed)	.998	
				73	
			N		73

Results in table 2 reveal that male students had mean rating of 2.68 while their female counterparts had mean rating of 2.68. This shows that male and female students do no differ in their mean rating on academic adjustment. Also, the result indicated low correlation for gender and academic adjustment with Pearson correlation index of =0.00. This shows that there is no relationship between gender and academic adjustment. The Pearson correlation for gender and academic adjustment indicated no relationship between gender and academic adjustment,  $r (1, n=73) =.000$ ,  $p<.998$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. Indicating that there is no significant relationship between gender and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal

### Research Question 3

What is the relationship between school location and academic adjustment of high ability

secondary school students in Owerri Municipal?

**Table 3:** Pearson correlation (r) rating of relationship between location and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal (N=73)

School Location	$\bar{X}$	SD	Academic Adjustment		
Urban	2.68	.49	Pearson Correlation (Sig 2 tailed)	1	-.030
Rural	1.38	.54			.420
			N	73	73
Academic Adjustment			Pearson Correlation (Sig 2 tailed)	-.030	.420
			N	73	73

Results in table 3 showed that students in urban areas had mean rating of 2.68 while their rural counterparts had mean rating of 1.38. There is also a negative correlation for school location and academic adjustment with Pearson correlation index of -.030. Also, table 3 showed that Pearson correlation for school location and academic adjustment indicated a significant relationship between location and academic adjustment,  $r (1, n=73) = -.030$ ,  $p < .420$ . The null hypothesis was retained. Indicating that there is no significant relationship between school location and academic adjustment of high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal.

### Discussion of the findings

The findings of the study showed that there was significant relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment. Also, that there was significant relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment. This shows that when there is positive teachers' mentorship, it can culminate to high academic adjustment because teachers' mentoring in secondary schools exposes students to mentors, usually teachers, who engage them in a supportive relationship that leads to proper academic adjustment. The finding of this study is in line with Hattie, 2003; Kyriakides, Christoforou and Charalambous, 2013). Naga, et al. (2020) reported that there was high relationship between teachers' mentorship and students' academic achievement and adjustment. Therefore, it showed that teachers' mentorship has positive influence on students' academics.

The study revealed that there was no relationship between gender and academic adjustment. As well, there was insignificant relationship between gender and academic adjustment. The finding of the study could be traced to the fact that adjustment is an

individual's general adaptation to his environment and the demands of life such as the way he/she relates to other people. Academic adjustment deals specifically with modification or service that gives students equal opportunity to benefit from the educational process, which is how things are normally done to ensure that students benefit and adapt to school academic pursuits. This may have given both male and female students equal chances of benefiting from the academic activities of the schools. The finding of this study is in line with Farmer, Irvin, Thompson, Hutchins and Leung (2006) and Enochs and Roland (2006), who found out that there exists no significant difference in the academic adjustment in their respective studies. The study contradicts the findings of Velmurugan and Balakrishnan (2011) Yau and Cheng (2012) and Basu (2012) who found out that gender has significant influence on learners' school adjustment.

The study also showed no relationship between location and academic adjustment. Also, the study showed that there was a significant relationship between school climate and academic adjustment. These findings could be due to the fact that the school location which is classified into urban and rural schools may have affected the academic adjustment of the student due to the presence or absence of school learning facilities and the provision of qualified and devoted teachers and school administrators. This may have affected the level of adjustment of both rural and urban students, with one group performing better than the other. This finding is in line with the findings of Singh (2006) and Velmurugan and Balakrishnan (2011). Also, the finding of this study contradicts the finding of Ishak, Jdaitawi, Ibrahim and Mustafa (2011) who found out that there was no significant relationship in academic adjustment of urban and rural students.

## **Conclusion**

There was high relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment/there was significant relationship between teachers' mentorship and academic adjustment. There was no significant relationship between location and academic adjustment. There was significant no relationship between school location and academic adjustment among high ability secondary school students in Owerri Municipal.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government and stake holders of secondary school education should organise regular in-service training for teachers and school administrators on school mentorship programme for positive academic adjustment among high ability students in secondary schools.
2. Schools should ensure that school mentorship programme is provided irrespective of gender to ensure proper academic adjustment among high ability students.
3. Government should ensure adequate provision of school facilities for schools both in rural and urban areas since the study found out that location was a factor in student's academic adjustment.

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