

Prevalence, Gender and Level of Schooling Differences in Secondary School Students Level of Shyness

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Abstract

This study was conducted to ascertain the prevalence, gender and level of schooling differences in secondary school students' level of shyness in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State. Population of the study comprised all the senior secondary school class two (SSS II) and all the Junior Secondary school class two (JSS II) students in the Local Government Area. Sample for the study comprised 400 students. Stratified random sampling technique and simple random sampling techniques were used to draw four schools and the sample for the study based on gender and level of schooling. The instrument used for the study was the Revised Check and Bus Shyness Scale (RCBS 1983). Reliability of the instrument was determined by the authors through test-retest method and the co-efficient of correlation was 0.88. Three research questions were answered in this study while three hypotheses were tested. The statistical method of analysis adopted for the study were percentage, mean, standard deviation and T-test. The result showed that prevalence of shyness among secondary school students was 60%; 76% of the female students were found to be shy, while 44% of male students were found to be shy), 64% of SSS students were shy, while 43% of the JSS students were found to be shy. There was significant difference between shy and non-shy students, including male and female students' level of shyness. Significant difference was also found between JSS and SSS students' extent of shyness. Some of the recommendations made include: that parents should strive not to bring up their children in abusive homes and to encourage their children to attend social occasions such as wedding and birthday ceremonies.

Keywords: Shyness, Prevalence, Gender, Level of schooling

1. Introduction

Shyness which culminates in inadequate participation in social activities is a major constraint in human relationship especially among secondary school students. Thus globally, scholars have shown much concern towards the discomfort and behavioral inhibition which some people exhibit during interpersonal contact on social occasions which is known as shyness. Various terms have been used to describe the experience of apprehension and anxiety in social settings. The behaviour has been conceptualized as: social anxiety, shyness, dating anxiety, speech anxiety, social phobia, social inhibition, reticence, communication apprehension, stage fright and audience anxiety (Crozier, 2000; Leary and Kowalski, 1993; Evan, Dam-Baggen and Kraaimaat, 1999).

It should be noted that the mentioned terms cannot be construed as synonymous with each other. Shyness appears detrimental to interpersonal communication. Studies tend to show that many people all-over the world feel shy. According to Henderson and Zimbardo (1998), in-America 49% of the citizens described themselves as shy, in Israel 31%, in Germany 40%, in Taiwan it is 55%, while in Japan, 55% of the population described themselves as being shy. The high percentage of shyness in Taiwan and Japan may be attributed to their cultural orientation which emphasizes interdependence and collectivism rather than independence and assertiveness.

Shyness has been seen as social phenomenon associated with social anxiety. Thus, Buss (1980) defined shyness as an inhibition of expected social behaviour together with feelings of tension and awkwardness. A glaring aspect of shyness is that it leads to inadequate participation in social activities. Consequently, shyness has been defined as a tendency to avoid social interaction and to fail to participate appropriately in social situations (Durmus, 2007; Scholmerich, Broberg and Lamb, 2000). Bus cited in Bas (2010) defined shyness as discomfort, inhibition, awkwardness in social situations, particularly in situations with unfamiliar people.

Hence, shyness may emanate from perceived self inadequacies which stems from excessive negative self evaluation and the anxiety of being considered below expectation either in physical appearance, speech or financial standing. Essentially shyness occurs as a result of some one's feelings and thoughts about self.

According to Bas (2010), shyness may vary from mild, social awkwardness to totally inhibiting socio-phobia. In this write-up shyness is seen as a psychological state of discomfort which culminates in avoidance of social contact. Shyness therefore entails being nervous, frightened and unwilling to speak in the presence of others especially strangers. Weiten, Liloyd, Dum and Hammer (2009) stated that shyness refers to discomfort, inhibition, and excessive caution in interpersonal relations.

Shyness may occur due to fear of what other people will think and say about a person's behaviour and his quality. Thus, the fear of negative reactions, criticism and outright rejection may cause the shy person to

avoid social situations. Consequently, shyness is a term often used to describe the discomfort people feel in social situations and it may be a characteristic of people who have low-self esteem.

2. Shyness among Secondary School Students

Unarguably, most of the secondary school students are adolescents. According to Umeh (2013) shyness has been found to be more among adolescents and it ranges from mild, moderate to severe levels with the impact debilitating to self-development. Thus students who are shy may find it difficult to approach their classmates for discussion either in the classroom or outside the classroom. They may also find it difficult to mingle with other students during break. Shy students may reject their fellow students with the fear that such students will as well reject them.

When shy people do not find it easy to interact with others, this causes them to be lonely and isolated. A situation of loneliness gives rise to negative emotions such as anger and depression. A shy student may feel uncomfortable in the midst of other students. Research shows that people who are shy evaluate themselves negatively, expect to fail in their social encounters and blame themselves when they fail. Consequently, many shy people go into self-imposed isolation which causes them to feel lonely (Check and Melehor, 1990). According to Carducci and Zimbardo (2013); most shyness is hidden, only a small percentage of the shy appear to be obviously ill at ease, rather all suffer internally. Implicit in this regard is that most shy people suffer it internally rather than externally. According to Al-Sabaivi cited in Asi (2016) symptom of shyness among adolescents are cognitive symptoms which are inferred through the formation of regular thoughts about self, attitude and others as well as the fear of negative evaluation and appearing foolish in the eyes of others.

2.1 Causes of Shyness

Shyness could occur as a result of diverse factors which includes inborn personality trait. Thus some people are born with a temperamental tilt to shyness (Kagan 1994). It has been found that up to $\frac{1}{3}$ of shy adults were born with it (Carducci and Zimbardo 2013).

One important research finding by Arcus cited in Carducci and Zimbardo (2013) is that overprotected children grow up to become anxious and shy. In another finding, Pilkonin in Carducci and Zimbardo reported, that children whose parenting was such that it gave rise to an insecure attachment are more likely to end up shy. Insecure attachment may occur due to inconsistent feeding and caring for the child. Shyness can as well occur as a learned reaction to unsuccessful interactions with others. This presupposes that most shyness is acquired through life experience (Carducci and Zimbardo 2013). According to Rubin cited in D'Souza and Urs (2001), extreme shyness may be indicative of concurrent problems. This postulation indicates that people who have various challenges of life may be shy. For instance, people who are sick and do not appear fat; perhaps looking very lean may be shy when they are in the midst of very healthy looking people. Also people who are shabbily dressed in social occasions where many people are gorgeously dressed may feel shy in the occasion. In addition, academically poor students may feel shy in the presence of academically bright students. Consequently, human relative inadequacies may be another source of shyness to human beings. In a study conducted by Evans (1993) it was found that shy children participate in verbal interaction in the class infrequently and exhibit poor communicative competence and that quiet, less talkative children are viewed as less approachable, less socially competent and less desirable social partners by peers. D' Souza and Urs (2001) found that shyness is usually associated with low self-esteem and fear of criticism. According to Parobot (2011) people who are not shy are more successful in life, while people who are shy are usually sad and are more prone to depression. The absence of interpersonal contact has made computer and internet facilities more suitable medium of communication to shy people. According to Terwase and Ibaishwa (2014) the computer mediated medium is the perfect environment for shy people because of their greater perceived control over the communication process such as the absence of time constraints in preparing messages and the absence of direct observation by others. Also Caplan, Ofori and Goulet as cited in Terwase and Ibaishwa (2014) found that increased shyness significantly correlate with internet addiction, thus shy people prefer social media communication to avoid physical face to face contact.

2.2 Culture and Shyness

Studies tend to show that culture influences shyness among different groups of people. In a research conducted by Zimbardo cited in Carducci and Zimbardo (2013), he found that Japanese and Taiwanese students consistently expressed the highest level of shyness of 60 percent while in Israel only 30 percent of the college age students reported being shy. Thus, the Israelites appear to be the least shy people universally. The difference, between the Israelites and the Japanese level of shyness has been attributed to the way parents attribute blame or praise in the performance of their children. For instance, according to Zimbardo, in Japan, if a child tries and succeeds, the credit goes to parents, teachers' grandparents and coaches but if the child attempts something and fails the blame goes to the child alone. In Israel, a child who tries is rewarded, regardless of the

outcome. If the child tries and fails, in a competition the coach is blamed for not training the child adequately. Thus, in a culture where failure does not attract much blame, the tendency to take a risk by trying is high. In cultures with low level of shyness, such as America, the personal attributes held in high esteem include: leadership, independence, assertiveness, dominance and risks taking (Psychology today 2013). Thus, people who attract greater attention in the society are expressive, active and sociable.

2.3 Detrimental Consequences of Shyness

Psychology Today (2013) identified the cost of shyness as follows:

- Shy people do not like to be the object of attention. Consequently, in the classroom, a shy student may be reluctant to ask questions
- A shy childhood may be a series of lost opportunities. The child or adolescent may not be courageous to state his desires. As such, the opportunity to achieve such desires may be missed. Self-engagement in solitary activities reduces the likelihood of the child developing social skills and self-confidence.
- Shy students face teasing and peer rejection. Thus, shy students are the prime target for bullies.
- Shyness predisposes people to loneliness and numerous research findings tend to suggest that loneliness and isolation can lead to mental and physical decline, including a hasten death.
- Without close friends or relatives, people are more vulnerable to risk. Since isolated people lack the opportunity to share their problems and fears with other people, such problems may escalate, thus such persons are prone to paranoia since there may be no one around to correct their delusion.
- Shyness leads to abuse of alcohol and drugs as social lubricants. In a study conducted by Zimbardo as reported in Psychology today (2013) shy adolescents reported feeling greater peer pressure to drink or use drug than do the less shy students. Also shy adolescents reported that they use drugs and alcohol to feel less self-conscious and to achieve a greater sense of acceptance.
- Shy people find it difficult to communicate their sexual needs and desires, shy men may therefore resort to patronizing prostitutes.
- Shy people avoid seeking for help. Consequently they may find it difficult to seek medical attention for certain ailments.
- Shy people waste time deliberating and hesitating in social situations that others can pull-off in an instant. Thus shy people find it difficult to take decisions concerning social situations.
- Concern for consequences causes the shy person to feel anxious and this impairs his social performance.

2.4 Advantages of Shyness

There is the aphorism which states that anything that has an advantage also has a disadvantage. Consequently Zimbardo cited in Psychology Today (2013) in his extensive research identified some advantages of shyness as follows :Shy people are gifted listeners. Thus, they are great at conversations because they may be paying attention.

Shy people tend to be empathic. As such, they have the inclination to imagine and share another person's feelings, experience and emotions from that person's point of view.

Shy people seem to make really good friends and their friends are very loyal to them and value them a lot.

2.5 Prevalence of Shyness

In a study conducted by Bas (2010) it was found that the shyness levels of male students was higher than that of female students. Zimbardo in his research found that since 1975, that the prevalence rate of shyness has risen from 40% to 48% and may increase in future. According to Plotnik (1990) 40% of adults report mild but chronic shyness. However, about 20% reported more severe shyness and are unable to hide their pain and distress (Carducci and Zimbardo, 1995). In a study conducted by Burstein, Ameli- Grillon and Merikangas (2011) in the United States of America on shyness, 62.4% of parents reported that their adolescents were shy, while 46.7% of the adolescents reported that they were shy. Thus adolescent level of shyness in the United States of America ranges from 46.7% to 62.4%. In a study by Kagan (1998), about 10 – 15% of the population had a shy personality which to a large extent comes from genetic factors. Girls have been found to be shyer from infancy through adolescence, probably because parents are more protective of them than boys (Psychology Today 2013), Civitci (2010) found that the degree of shyness in female and male adolescents were not significantly different. Burstein, Ameli-Grillon found that shyness was more frequent among adolescent females than males. Parents reported that 65.3% of their female adolescents were shy, while the shyness level of adolescent males was reported by parents to be 59.7%. On the other hand, 50.1% of adolescent females reported they were shy, while 43.4% of the males reported being shy.

However, ninth grade students at a low social comparison level were found to be the shyest group. In

terms of age group shyness was more prevalent among the youngest age group which parents reported was 66.2% for junior, while parents reported shyness for oldest adolescent group was 54.8% (Burstein, Ameli-Grillon & Merikangas 2011).

3. Statement of Problem

Shyness as a social problem has the capacity to inhibit an individual's full social participation, cause loneliness and may lead to depression, a shy student may be unwilling to ask questions in the class to enhance better understanding of the lesson. If a student does not understand what the teacher teaches it may result in low academic achievement. A shy student may suffer peer rejection as he may be bullied, teased and molested by fellow students due to his in-assertive nature. A situation of this nature may cause the student to be sad, miserable and loose interest in school. The problem of this study therefore is to ascertain the prevalence, gender and level of schooling differences in secondary school students' level of shyness.

3.1. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the prevalence of shyness among secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. What is the difference between male and female students level of shyness?
3. To what extent is the difference between junior secondary and senior secondary school students level of shyness?

3.2. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance guided this study

1. There is no significant difference between shy and non-shy secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State,
2. There is no significant difference between male and female students' level of shyness.
3. There is no significant difference between junior secondary school and senior secondary school students' level of shyness.

3.3. Scope of the study

This study was conducted in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State Nigeria. Some of the variables studied included: shyness, gender and level of schooling. Related variables such as location and age were not studied because many researches have been conducted on those variables. Also studied include students' shyness level when with the opposite sex.

3.4. Methodology

The research design adopted for this research is descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Ikwerre Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State. Ikwerre LGA shares boundaries with Obio- Akpor LGA, Emuoha LGA, Oyigbo LGA and Imo State, Ikwerre Local Government Area is a rural area.

The population of the study was made up of all the senior secondary school class two students (SSS11) and junior secondary school class two (JSS 11) in the Local Government Area. Sample of the study was made up of 400 secondary school students drawn from four schools through stratified random sampling technique. Stratified Random sampling method was used because the study investigated gender and level of schooling differences in students' shyness. The sample comprised 200 (50%) female and 200 (50%) male students. The sample composition in terms of level of schooling was 200 (50%), senior secondary school and junior secondary school 200 (50%). The sample drawn from each school was 100. This was made up of 50 males and 50 females and 50 JSS students and 50 SSS students. The instrument used for the study was the revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale (RCBS). (1983). the instrument contained 13 items. The instrument was standardized, as such, the validity was determined by the authors, the reliability co-efficient of the instrument which was determined through test re-test was 0.88.

The instrument had four point scales of strongly agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) in terms of scoring, SA was scored 4 points A=3, D=2 and SD 1 point. Four items of the instrument were negatively cued and they were scored in reverse order. Criterion mean was used to determine shy and non- shy students. The calculated criterion mean was 2.5. Thus any student whose mean score was less than 2.5 was seen as non-shy, while any student whose mean score was from 2.5 and above was seen as a shy student. The percentages of shy and non-shy students were determined based on their number in order to ascertain the prevalence of shyness among secondary school students in Rivers- state of Nigeria. The research questions were answered with percentage, mean and standard Deviation, while the hypotheses were tested with t-test, the method of data analysis included: percentage; mean, standard deviation and t-test.

4. Results

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of shyness among secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government of Rivers state?

Table (1a) Percentage Prevalence of Shyness Among Secondary School Students

Shy	Number	Percentage
Non- shy	160	40
Shy	240	60
	400	100

In table (1a) above, it was shown that 40 % of the respondents were not shy students. While 60% of the respondents were found to be shy-students

4.1. Table (1b) Prevalence of Shyness among Male and Female Students

Variable	Number	Shy	Percentage of shy	Non-shy	Percentage of non-shy
Male	200	88	44	112	56
Female	200	152	76	48	24

Table (1b) above showed that 44 % of male students were shy while 76 % of the female students were shy.

4.2. Table (1c) : Prevalence of shyness between JSS and SSS Students

Level of Schooling	Number	Shy	Percentage of shy	Non shy	Percentage of Non-shy
JSS	200	86	43	114	57
SSS	200	128	64	72	36

Table (1c) above showed that 43% of JSS students were found to be shy, while 64% of the SSS students were found to be shy.

4.3. Table 1(d): Student's Shyness when they are with members of the Opposite Sex.

Sex	Number	Shy in the presence of Opposite Sex	Percentage Shy	Non shy before Opposite Sex	Percentage
Male	200	68	34	132	66
Female	200	140	70	60	30

Table (1d) above revealed that 34% of the male students feel shy when they are with the opposite sex, while 70% of the female students' feel shy when they are with the opposite sex.

HO1: There is no significant difference between Shy and Non-Shy students in Ikwerre LGA of Rivers State.

4.4. Table 1(e): A t-test analysis of Non-shy and Shy students.

Shy	Number	x	SD	t cal	t critical	Results
Non-shy	160	2.15	.34	17.21	1.96	Significant
Shy	240	2.45	.46			

Table 1(e) showed that the calculated t value of 17.21 is greater than the t critical of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level and 398 degree of freedom. This indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected. Rejection of the null hypothesis means that there is significant difference between shy and non-shy students.

4.5. Research Question 2: What is the difference between male and female students level of shyness?

HO2 : There is no significant difference between male and female students level of shyness

Table 2: A t-test Analysis of Male and Female Student's Shyness

Gender	Number	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-critical	Result
Male	200	2.22	.38	40.22	1.96	Significant
Female	200	2.51	.49			

Table 2 above, showed that the calculated t value of 40.22 is greater than the t critical of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level and 398 degree of freedom. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected. The rejection of the null hypothesis indicates that there is a significant difference between male and female students level of shyness.

4.6. Research Question 3: To what extent is the difference between junior secondary and senior secondary school students' level of shyness?

HO3: There is no significant difference between junior secondary and senior secondary school students level of shyness

Table 3: A t-test Analysis of SSS and JSS Students Shyness

Schooling Level	Number	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-critical	Result
SSS	200	2.56	.38	11.43	1.96	Significant
JSS	200	2.46	.48			

Table 3 above showed that the calculated t value of 11.43 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 at .05 level of significance and 398 degree of freedom. The result indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference between SSS and JSS students' level of shyness.

4.7. Summary of the Results

1. It was found that 60% of the respondents who are secondary school students were shy.
2. Female students (76%) were found to be shy than male students (44%).
3. The senior secondary school (SSS) students (64%) were found to be shy than the junior secondary school (JSS) students (43%)
4. Female students 70% were found to be shy when they are with the opposite sex than the male students 34% when they are with the opposite sex.
5. There was significant difference between shy and non-shy students.
6. There was significant difference between male and female students' shyness level.
7. There was significant difference between JSS and SSS students' shyness level.

5. Discussion

Prevalence of Shyness

Table 1a showed that 60% of the respondents were shy while 40 percent of the students were not shy; this result is in agreement with the findings of Zimbardo cited in Psychology Today (2013) that the highest level of shyness was found among Japanese 60% and Taiwanese students with shyness level of 60% while in Israel only 30% of the respondents reported to be shy. In terms of the prevalence of male and female students' shyness, it was found that 76% of the female secondary school students were shy while only 44% of the male secondary school students were found to be shy. This finding is in consonance with Crozier (1995) and Mandal (2008) who found gender difference in shyness. However the finding is at variance with Henderson and Zimbardo (1998) who found no gender difference in shyness. Shyness prevalence among junior secondary school students (JSS) was found to be 43%, while that of senior secondary school students' (SSS) was found to be 64%. This result was in consonance with Natesha and D' Souza cited in D' Souza, Urs and Jayaraju (2008) that 6% of the children showed high levels of shyness followed by 36.6% moderate and remaining 37.3% of the children showed low level of shyness.

Table 1(d) showed the prevalence of shyness in the presence of member of the opposite sex, 34% of the male students reported that they feel shy when they are with member of the opposite sex. On the other hand, 70% of the female students reported that they feel shy when they are with the opposite sex. Table 1(e) showed a significant difference between shy and non shy students. The null hypothesis was rejected which meant that shyness was high among secondary school students. This finding is contrary to Asi(2016) who found that shyness among adolescent was medium.

The high prevalence of shyness among secondary school students in Rivers State could be attributed to cultural differences. Nigeria like other developing countries of the world, belong to collectivist culture where shyness level is high. For example the shyness level in Japan is 60%.

5.1. Difference between Male and Female Students level of Shyness

Table 2 showed that there was a difference between male and female students' level of shyness. Male students mean score was 2.22, while that of females was 2.51. The mean difference was .29. Table 2 showed that the calculated t value of 40.22 was greater than the t critical at 398 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that there was a significant difference between male and female students level of shyness. Since the mean score (2.51) of female students was higher than that of male students (2.22), the female students are significantly more shy than male students. The result of this finding does not corroborate the findings of Afsham, Askan, Sam and Manic Kam (2015) that there was no significant gender difference in shyness level. The difference could be attributed to the age range of the respondents, while the age range of Askan et al. was 17 to 30 years, the age range of the present study was from 12 to 18 years.

5.2. Senior Secondary School (SSS) and Junior Secondary School Students (JSS) Level of Shyness.

Table 3 showed that the calculated mean of SSS students was 2.56, while that of JSS students was 2.46. The mean (\bar{X}) difference between the two category of students was .10. The mean difference showed that SSS students are shy than JSS students. In table 3 the calculated t value of 11.43 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 at .05 levels of significance and 398 degree of freedom. Based on this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies the existence of significant difference between SSS and JSS students' level of shyness. The senior secondary school students were found to be significantly shy than JSS students. This finding is in consonance with Sadeghi and Soleimani (2016) that advanced learners were moderately shy while pre-intermediate learners were least shy.

5.3 Recommendations

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

1. Parents are required to ensure that their children are not brought up in abusive homes, especially at the early stage of their developments. This will help the children not to develop shyness.
2. Government should post guidance counsellors to all the secondary schools in Rivers State so that they can counsel the students on how to reduce their shyness.
3. In schools, teachers should ensure that classmates accept each other. This helps the students develop the confidence that they are accepted by peers, when they grow with this feeling, it removes shyness in them.
4. Parents should not be overprotective to their children. Thus parents should allow their children to participate in social activities such as interaction with peers and neighbours, participation in sports and games.
5. Parents should encourage their children to attend social occasions such as weddings, child dedication and birthday celebrations in order to reduce their shyness
6. Parents should encourage their female children to attend mixed schools so as to enable them interact more often with male students, thereby reducing their shyness.

5.4. Conclusion:

Shyness is a universal phenomenon which affects almost everybody to a certain degree. It emanates from the fear of what others will say or think about our behaviour or performance. Human inadequacies also contribute immensely to shyness. Interpersonal interaction and active participation in social occasions can eliminate shyness. The findings of this study have shown that the prevalence of shyness among secondary school students is high and that female students are shy than the male students. The SSS students proved to be shy compared with the JSS students. Greater percentage of the female students reported feeling shy in the presence of the opposite sex compared with male students. Significant difference was found between male and female students shyness. Significant difference was also found between SSS and JSS student's level of shyness. Interpersonal interaction and active participation in social occasions could eliminate shyness among secondary school students.

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