

# **SOCIO-PERSONAL FACTORS AS PREDICTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS IN IBADAN, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

This study is an investigation into the influence of some social and personal factors on psychological adjustment of high ability students in Ibadan, Nigeria. Expo-facto design of correlation type was used for the study. A sample of 160 high ability students in selected schools in Ibadan participated in the study. Four research questions guided the study. Five instruments were used for this study namely Peer Pressure and Popularity Scale, Parenting Style Inventory, and Self-Esteem Scale, Psychological Adjustment Scale, and Self-Concept Scale. There were correlations between parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept, and psychological adjustment. The four independent variables made significant contributions to psychological adjustment of the participants with parenting styles ( $b= 1.45, 7.356; p<0.05$ ), peer acceptance ( $b= -1.67, 6.451, p<0.05$ ) and self-concept ( $b= 1.23, 6.872, p<0.05$ ) while parenting styles was found to be the most potent predictor of psychological adjustment of the participants ( $b= 1.45, 7.356; p<0.05$ ). When the four variables combined they yielded very strong effect on psychological adjustment i.e. an F-ratio value of 12.207 at 0.05 level i.e. ( $F(4, 155) = 12.207; p<0.05$ ). Recommendations made include the need for parents to imbibe parenting styles which will encourage their children to adjust well to emotional and psychological issues.

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**Keywords:** Socio-Personal, High Ability, Psychological Adjustment

## **Introduction**

High ability students are peculiar; they are cognitively ready for academic challenges and demonstrate exceptional skills and ability in varied areas of endeavour, however, for some of them, their positive high ability coexist with some forms of psychological maladjustment (Dada, 2014; Radina & Cooney, 2000). Clark (2000) noted that a high ability child have potential to perform at a level that is significantly higher than their peer, in one or more ability areas such as language, problem-solving, physical/kinesthetic or cognitive. However, high ability students are vulnerable to psychological imbalance and experience greater degrees of psychological alienation and stress than their peers (Dada, 2014; Neihart, 2002; Tannenbaum, 1997).

Abe (1995) noted that it is possible to perceive the totality of human as being guided and ruled by psychological and sociological variables. Onocha (2003) averred that the modern man has his educational aspiration and accomplishment projected by the psychological adjustment. The positions of these set of variables are unique and important and may be appreciated when it is realized that the variables are necessary for the understanding of human beings. Parenting styles play major role in the development of a child. The type of parenting styles adopted by parents can either ameliorate or worsen the emotional problems being faced by the gifted and talented students.

Many high ability students prefer older play mates and as a result, may not form friendship with their age-mates in the classroom. This situation can lead to self-isolation of gifted children from their peers. The income, educational attainment and occupation of the parents of the gifted are the three socioeconomic variables which are likely to affect emotional adjustment of gifted and talented students. Their adjustment problem stem from their quest to satisfy their curiosity.

Family background which is basically influenced by socialization pattern includes the language spoken in the home, how the parents self-identify and home values and spirituality. These factors play significant roles in the emotional adjustment of high ability students. Radina and Cooney (2000) noted that the quality of the relationships between parents and their children is critical to emotional adjustment. The family environments that are healthy in general are likely to imbue the child with good adjustment capacity. A dysfunctional home life may drive the child to seek a home away from home, with positive or negative outcomes.

Peer influence is another critical factor. Students relate with peers at home and in school. They form social groups, create norms and try to ensure conformity (Emery, 2003). Peer relationship is characterized by acceptance and rejection. In peer relationship, Ebersohn (2006) maintained that those

who conform to peer norms are accepted while those who failed to conform may be rejected. Thus acceptance is another factor which can have lasting effect on psychological adjustment of a child. A child who is accepted by his/her peers stands better chance of adjustment than a child who is rejected among his/her peers.

Poor peer acceptance deprives children of opportunities to learn normal, adaptive modes of social conduct and social recognition and this undermines academic progress. Indeed, loneliness, truancy, dropping out of school, juvenile delinquency, adult crime, job performance and suicide have all been linked to low peer acceptance in childhood (Dada, 2014). The term self-concept refers to the ordered set of attitudes and perceptions that an individual holds about his/herself (Wolffe, 2000; Woolfolk, 2001). Self-concept unlike family background is an internal factor that influences child's development. The way an individual perceives himself, described by psychologists as self-concept, influences the way he adjust in the process of interacting with his physical and social environment. The importance of self-concept has lead to the effort by several scholars carry out studies examining the role of self-concept in school performance (Oliva, 2003). According to Pehlivan (2010), people with high self-concept identify with people, are friendly and non-suspicious or critical when they relate with people either at home or in school. Self-concept is an important concept which has to do with understanding human behaviour.

Sufficient self-esteem, described as self-worth is extremely important for psychosocial functioning. Micki (2008) pointed out that self-esteem refers to one's general evaluation or appraisal of the self, including feelings of self-worth. Besides an evaluation of the self, self-esteem also denotes how one values oneself. This basic appreciation of the self has effects on multiple dimensions in our lives, such as our friendships, our successes, and our academic career. Parents play a major role in the education and total development of their children. They serve as teachers, motivators and counselors to their children particularly in building a level of self-esteem. They are responsible for helping their children to build supportive and good socio-personal trait that will enhance better psychological adjustment (Subotnik & Olszenwski-Kubilius, 1997). It is therefore a worthwhile and urgent need to investigate the influence of some socio-personal factors such as parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem on psychological adjustment of high ability students. The findings of this investigation will help in developing a better home social interaction, school intervention and counselling programmes for high ability students.

High ability students are confronted with challenges of psychological adjustment that stems from socio-personal issues at home and in school. Therefore, this study is **significant** to parents, government, teachers and

counselors. Parents of high ability students will have better understanding of the impact their parenting style their children. Hence they will be conscious of their style of parenting. Teachers of high ability students will be exposed to the impact of socio-personal factors on the psychological adjustment of high ability students and will see the need to encourage healthy social interaction among all students in the classroom for a positive adjustment of all, and particularly high ability students. Government through this study will appreciate the need for policy, identification and special intervention programmes for educating high ability students. The schools guiding counselors will strategize to provide and control variables that motive better psychological adjustment of high ability students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

High ability students are confronted with several problems, one of the major is psychological maladjustment. Social and personal factors are critical indices of child's development. The unique nature of high ability students, however subject them to the risk of psychological maladjustment. This situation affects their total development including academic achievement and socio-emotional life. Self-concept, self-esteem, peer acceptance and parenting style are some of the conceptual factors that are tangential to psychological adjustment reported in the literature. The gap therefore is what influence singularly and compositely is the socio-personal factors (self-concept, self-esteem, peer acceptance and parenting style) have on the psychological adjustment of high ability students? This study therefore investigated contributions of some socio-personal factors to psychological adjustment of high ability students from selected secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria.

The **purpose** of the study is express in the following **research questions**:

- What pattern of relationship exists among the socio-personal factors (parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem) on the psychological adjustment high ability students?
- What are the composite effects of the socio-personal factors (parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem) on the psychological adjustment high ability students?
- What are the relative effects of the socio-personal factors (parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem) on the psychological adjustment high ability students?
- Which of the four independent variables namely parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem exerts the greatest influence on psychological adjustment of high ability students?

## Methodology

This study is an expo-facto design of a correlational type. The sample for the study comprised one hundred and sixty (160) high ability students from ten senior secondary schools in Ibadan Metropolis. Using simple purposive sampling techniques through multi-stage procedure, sixteen (16) high ability students were screened from each of the selected schools using academic record, teacher nomination and peer nomination for eligibility. The instruments used for this study were Peer Pressure and Popularity Scale (Ryan, 2000) with reported internal consistency ranging from 0.71 to 0.89, Parenting Style Inventory (PSI) (Nancy & Teru, 2007) with five likert-scale and 0.75 reliability value, Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale with four point scale and reliability coefficient of 0.73, Aguero et al (2005) Psychological Adjustment Scale with internal consistency of 0.74, Self-Concept Scale (SCS) (Cambra & Silvestre, 2003) with four point-scale and a reliability co-efficient 0.75. The instruments were administer to participants with assistance of the research assistant (class teacher) after due permission from the schools' authourity. The data collected in this study were analyzed using simple percentage, multiple regression, t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

## Results

Research Question 1: What pattern of relationship exists among psychological adjustment and socio-personal factors; parenting style, peer-acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem among high ability students?

Table 2: Intercorrelation Matrix of Relationship among the Variables

Variables	Psychological Adjustment	Parenting Styles	Peer Acceptance	Self-concept	Self-esteem
Psychological Adjustment	1	.71	.65	.59	.12
Parenting Styles	.71	1	.56	.58	.10
Peer Acceptance	.65	.56	1	.51	-.09
Self-concept	.59	.58	.51	1	.63
Self-esteem	.12	.10	-.09	.63	1

Table 2 above shows the relationship that exists among all the variables. It shows that all the independent variables namely parenting styles ( $r=0.71$ ), peer acceptance ( $r=0.65$ ) and self-concept ( $r=0.59$ ) except self-esteem ( $r=0.12$ ) correlate positively high with psychological adjustment. The table further shows that parenting styles correlates positively high with peer acceptance ( $r=0.56$ ) and self-concept ( $r=0.58$ ), peer acceptance correlates positively with self-concept ( $r=0.51$ ) and that self-esteem correlate significantly with self-concept ( $r=0.63$ ). This implies that parenting styles,

peer acceptance, and self-concept are inter-correlated and so socio-personal factors have serious effects on the psychological adjustment of high ability.

**Research Question 2:** What are the composite effects of the socio-personal factors (parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem) on the psychological adjustment high ability students?

**Table 3: Composite Effects of Socio-personal Factors on Psychological Adjustment**

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of Estimate
0.802	0.6432	0.64	3.3301
Source of Variation	Sum of Square	Mean Difference	F
Regression			12.207
Residual	905.349	4	226.337
Total	2874.01	155	18.542

\*Significant at 0.05

As shown from Table 3 shows that, the independent variable socio-personal factors (parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem) have strong combined effects on the dependent variables (psychological adjustment). In other words, the four independent variables when put together yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions (R) of 0.802 and a multiple correlation square of 0.6432. This shows that over 64% of the total variance in the psychological adjustment of the participants is accounted for by the combination of the socio-personal factors (parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem). The table further indicates that the analysis of variance of the multiple regression data produced an F-ratio value of 12.207 at 0.05 level of significance i.e.  $F(4, 155) = 12.207$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . The implication of this finding is that parenting styles, self-concept, peer acceptance and self-esteem when combined have strong impact on the psychological adjustment of high ability students.

**Research Question 3:** What are the relative effects of the socio-personal factors (parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem) on the psychological adjustment of high ability students?

**Table 3: Relative Contribution of Each Independent Variable to the Dependent Variable**

Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient Beta	t	P
	B	SEB			
Parenting Styles	1.45	-.781	.87	7.356	<0.05*
Peer Acceptance	-1.67	-.681	.68	6.451	<0.05*
Self-concept	1.23	-.690	.72	6.872	<0.05*
Self-esteem	1.74	-.325	.02	.349	>0.05

\*Significant at 0.05

The results in Table 3 above shows the relative effect of each independent variable on the psychological adjustment of high ability students. The result shows that parenting styles, peer acceptance and self-concept made significant contributions to psychological adjustment of high ability students. The result also showed the following beta weights which measure the relative contribution of each of the socio-personal variables to psychological adjustment were observed: parenting styles ( $b= 1.45$ ,  $t= 7.356$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), peer acceptance ( $b= -1.67$ ,  $t= 6.451$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and self-concept ( $b= 1.23$ ,  $t= 6.872$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The implication of this finding is that each of parenting styles, peer acceptance and self-concept affect the psychological adjustment of high ability students. By extension, high ability students with any high self-concept, or students from parents who adopt good parenting styles or those who are accepted by their peers stand the chance of adjusting better psychologically.

**Research Question 4:** Which of the four independent variables namely parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem exerts the greatest influence on psychological adjustment of high ability students?

From Table 3 above, it could be seen that parenting styles is the most potent predictor of psychological adjustment of the participants ( $b= 1.45$ ,  $t= 7.356$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The implication of this finding is that parents who adopt good parenting practices provide their high ability children with the opportunity for better psychological adjustment.

### Discussion of Findings

Significant correlation was found between psychological adjustment and each of parenting styles, peer acceptance and self-concept. Significant correlation was also found between parenting styles and self-concept, peer acceptance; between self-concept and peer acceptance and self-esteem. These findings corroborate plethora of research efforts in the field which have consistently linked adolescents' adjustment to parenting styles (Odebunmi 2007; Onyechi & Oker, 2007). For instance, Odebunmi (2007) reported that parents who foster love, care, warmth and serious attention encourage the child to adjust adequately psychologically.

Onyechi and Okere (2007) reported that parenting styles adopted by parents have major roles to play in the adjustment process of adolescent. Moreover, Okpako (2004) reported significant relationship between psychological adjustment, parenting and peer acceptance. Okpako (2004) found and reported that adolescents who are accepted by their mates feel happier compared to those who are rejected. Ang and Goh(2006) for found that high correlation between parenting styles and self-concept of students. Ukoha (2003) established the link between self-concept and self-esteem, noting that students, who are aware and conscious of self, respect self and

accept self. Significant relationship was also found between psychological adjustment of the participants and peer acceptance. Researchers have repeatedly found that being well liked or popular in a peer group contribute to healthy emotion and psychological adjustment of adolescents (Lease, Kennedy, & Axelrod, 2002; Lease, Musgrove, & Axelrod, 2002). This study has also supported and extended the knowledge in literature in this view for high ability students who have been found to commonly have adjustment problems.

Composite effect of parenting styles, peer acceptance, self-concept and self-esteem was established. This is not unexpected as the relationship between each of the independent variables with the exception of self-esteem significantly predicts psychological adjustment. Researchers have found that peer group; self-concept and parenting pattern when combined had very significant effects on adjustment level of students in high schools and that self-concept is affected by parenting styles and that both self-concept and parenting styles contributed in no small measure to psychological adjustment of schooling adolescents (Zarbatany, McDougall & Hymel, 2000). More so, Zeller, Vannatta, Schafer and Noll (2003) finding lends credence to the above. Rose (2002) however found that no significant relationship existed between peer acceptance and self-concept and that both do not affect psychological adjustment in any way. This may be explained as a converse to the finding of this study. However the difference may be accounted for by the difference in the attributes of the samples in the studies.

Parenting styles, peer acceptance and self-concept made significant relative contributions to psychological adjustment of the participants. As regards peer acceptance, Crick and Nelson (2002) found that children often value their friends because they provide opportunities for emotional support and self-disclosure, and researchers have typically assumed that self-disclosure in friendship indicates healthy functioning. However, Rose (2002) found that some friendships are characterized by aggressive behaviour and other recent evidence suggests that children who discuss deviance in their disclosures with friends are at increased risk for deviance themselves (e.g., Brendgen, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 2000). It has been reported that peer group enhances psychological adjustment because it affords them the opportunity for discussions of personal problems among friends (Vitaro, Brendgen & Tremblay, 2002)

Rose (2002) found that having multiple friends is usually and rightly considered a positive sign of adjustment with peers. Yet, in specific friendships, feelings of jealousy can arise in one member if their friend's interest in, or activities with, an outsider highlights their own shortcomings in important areas or is perceived as an infringement on the quality or sovereignty of the relationship. There is evidence that feelings of jealousy,



an emotional experience born from closeness, can damage children's intrapersonal adjustment and result in negative behavior (Parker, Low, Walker, & Gamm, 2005). Romantic relationships, too, can be characterized by intense conflict and feelings of insecurity, exploitation, and sadness. The double-edged nature of these bonds, as it were, makes it more risky now than a decade ago to make assumptions about the protective factors associated with various positive indicators of adjustment with peers or the risks associated with markers that appeared uniformly negative.

It was found that self-concept contributed to psychological adjustment of the high ability students. This is in line with the finding of Burnstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello and Spagna, (2004). Self-concept at school is affected by the image that other significant persons (teachers, parents, peers) have of the student and by social comparison with others in the same setting. Different social environments would therefore be expected to influence an individual's self-concept in different ways. Feeling rejected by others will lead to greater hostility, low self-respect, emotional instability and unresponsiveness, and a negative view of the world, whereas feeling accepted by others will lead to a lower feelings of hostility, higher self-concept, emotional stability and responsiveness, and a positive view of the world (Burnstein, et. al, 2004). The importance of self-perception for the growth and development of children has been demonstrated in studies showing how self-concept can enhance or impair the level of cognitive functioning and performance (Bandura, 1989). A child's expectations about his own capabilities determine his behavior and influence his motivation, effort, and persistence regarding both the difficulty of the task and task efficacy.

Considering the four socio-personal factors, parenting styles was found to be the most potent predictor of psychological adjustment. Parenting styles was found to be the most significant predictor of emotional adjustment, followed by self-concept, peer acceptance while self-esteem did not have significant contribution to psychological adjustment of the participants. These findings provide explanation as to how parenting pattern, styles and attitude dictate how a high ability student adjusts to emotion. A significantly positive relationship of protectiveness, conformity, reward, and nurturance components of home environment can affect the child in all aspects including academic and psychological adjustment. The findings of the present study are in line with the findings of Lau and Knok (1995); Lau and Kwok (2000). Dinah (2004) also indicated that there is a significant relationship between parenting styles and self-concept. Kaur (2009) found adolescent's emotional self-concept was to be affected by religion, supervision at home (parent or guardian) and the number of siblings in the family. Also, Burnstein et. al (2002) found that self-concept is a mediating

variable between home environment and psychological adjustment. However, the present study revealed insignificantly contribution of self-esteem to psychological adjustment among high ability students.

## **Conclusion**

Social variables which are investigated in this study (parenting styles and peer acceptance) and self-concept when combined are strong predictors of psychological adjustment among high ability students. Parenting patterns dictates how a child will adjust to emotional situations. Parents are the first teachers and guide to any child. The kind of relationship that exists between a child and his parents goes a long way to determine not only the psychological adjustment of the child but also in all ramifications. This becomes particularly relevant to high ability students who are vulnerable to emotional problems such as thinking about what others feel about them and how they can be accepted among the people at home and in school. Parenting styles that facilitate intimacy of the child with parents will foster emotional adjustment of high ability students as students can share their emotions with their parents, seek succor and leverage on their parental support to overcome emotional challenges. The relationship with peers also contributed to psychological adjustment. Peer group relationship is often characterized by conformity which may in turn lead to acceptance and rejection. High ability students can discuss emotional and psychological problems with their mates. Such discussion can afford them psychological adjustment especially when good suggestions are made to them by their peers. Self-concept is another factor that was studied. This consciousness of a child about his strength is an internal factor that will assist the child in understanding his strength and weakness. For high ability students who may suffer isolation and social problem in the course of his relationship with mates, understanding his self-concept allow such a child to adjust better to such situations This is also necessary for the child to worry less about his difficulty with mates and peers and concentrate on his strength.

## **Recommendations**

In view of the findings in this research, the following recommendations are imperative.

1. Parents should be trained through parents seminar organized by school to imbibe and adopt parenting styles that are capable of strengthening child/ parent bond and trust. This will help a high ability child feel accepted, safe and secure to seek succor, counseling and encouragement from his/her parents.
2. Schools should collaborate with parents and the community to provide conducive psychological atmosphere through advocacy on

the characteristics of the high ability students and their psychological needs.

3. Schools should organize periodic talks, conferences and seminars to boost the self-concept of high ability students. High ability students could be made to understand how their self-concept affects their emotion and the need to develop better self-concept.
4. Parents should ensure that healthy peer relationship is fostered. Parents should guide their children on the kind of friends they choose. They should orientate their children on the need for children to carefully choose friends, who can promote their goals, provide encouragement and succour when necessary. Such assistance sought from good peers can provide high ability students with clear direction on psychological problems they face.
5. The role of counseling in mitigating the impact of psychological problem on high ability students cannot be over-emphasized. Schools should therefore be more proactive in offering counseling service to all high ability students. Student-counselor relationship can be brought to bear to solve adjustment problems confronting high ability students. Counsellors can use their professional expertise to encourage high ability students on issues regarding psychological adjustment.
6. Schools should ensure that biography and autobiography of great heroes and achievers are made available to high ability students to develop their self-esteem and boost their psychological adjustment. Instruction period should be made to accommodate this so that high ability students can cope adequately and adjust properly with problems that interfere with their emotion.
7. Teachers have direct dealings with high ability students hence; they should be exposed to ideas, methods and strategies which they can use to assist high ability students to overcome their emotional problems. Teachers can be made to imbibe such strategies via workshop.
8. Curriculum developers and policy makers should make self-concept part of the school curriculum and ensure equality in schools resources, and upgrade educators to equip them with skills to enhance learners' self-concepts and confidence.

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