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IMPACT OF PARENTAL PRESUMPTION ON ADOLESCENTS MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDAL THOUGHTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE-NIGERIA

Nkechi Uzochukwu OKEKE¹, Henry Uchechukwu OKORIE², Aloysius Okwuchukwu EZEANOLUE³

¹ <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0800-9387>

² <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0200-9434>

^{1,2,3}Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka-Nigeria

Abstract

This study utilized ex-post facto research design to investigate the impact of parental presumption on adolescents' mental health and suicidal thoughts in tertiary institutions in Anambra state-Nigeria. Two research questions were formulated to give direction to the study. All the 300 and 400 level students in all the government owned tertiary institutions in Anambra state were the population. Using multi-stage simple random sampling technique, 120 students were chosen as the sample. Data was collected using a researcher developed instrument titled "Impact of Unhealthy Parental Presumption and Adolescents' Mental Health" (IUPPAMH). The face and content validity of the instrument was ascertained by experts from the field of Education. Cronbach alpha was employed to ascertain the trustworthiness of the instrument and the score of 0.79 was gotten. The research questions were answered using statistical weighted mean. Findings of the study include among others that parental presumption wheel outstanding impact ranging from induced stress, induced depression, physical aggression, anxiety, poor sleep quality, extreme behavioural problems such as poor mental health and suicide thoughts on adolescents in tertiary institutions in Anambra state-Nigeria. One of the recommendations is that parents should be rational in their decision and out rightly avoid coercion.

Keywords: Parental presumption, adolescents, mental health and suicidal thoughts.

Introduction

Parental love, guidance, counseling, encouragement and reprove are vital component of child rearing. Parents are expected to guide their children towards imbibing good morals/etiquette, societal norms and values among others. On the counseling duty, parents should give advice and proffer suggestions on issues and problems bothering their children. Encouragement is expected from parents' to inculcate virtues like resilience, diligence, perseverance and positive self concept on their children and also the reprove duty is vital to checkmate their children's deviant and behavioural problems. However, for these parental duties to be fruitful/yield positive impact there should be caution in their exertion. One of such caution is that parents should see every child as unique bearing in mind the principle in Educational Psychology that "No two individuals are the same". That your child is of the age, stature, height or class as may be assumed does not make him/her the same with another child. The physical, mental, physiological and behavioural dispositions of the child should be taken into logical consideration before some decisions are taken but unfortunately ignorance, greed, quest for unnecessary recognition and professional interest has lured many parents to unhealthy acts.

Moreover, we live in a rival society where some parents desire positions, names, recognitions and titles for their children by all means without due considerations of the child's mental ability, health conditions, physical strength among others thereby exerting unnecessary pressure on their children. Giving credence to this assertion is Tantom (2023) who stressed that parental expectation on their children should exclude socio-demographic variables but solely anchored on the inherent traits in the child. Surmise from parents are normal but become abnormal or irrational when the psychological and physiological state of the child is not put into consideration. For example in Igbo traditional society in Nigeria where the researchers' come from, the prayer of most elders and parents is thus "My children will be greater or mightier than myself". This explains why often illiterate parents will struggle, endure extra levels of extra hardship to ensure quality education of their children.

The role of parents in child's rearing is crucial though without some hitches as observed by Pamela (2024). In Educational Psychology, parents and their various components such as parental rearing, parental attachment, parental involvement and parental expectations play crucial role in the life of every child. For instance, several researchers such as Lili, Changle, Duohui and Xinxin (2024) and Anierobi, Okeke, Nwiko and Etodike (2023) have established the relevance of parental involvement in a child's career. Klara, Adam and Gabriella (2024) observed that parents' cordial rapport with their children boosts their intimacy while parental coercion breeds association problems. Parental supposition is a facet of the emotions, thoughts and feelings of parents towards their children's well being. Parental expectations are vital in all aspects of life ranging from career, marriage, social life and academics among others but with caution as noted earlier that your child can never be you. Giving credence to this assertion is Dockery, Koshy and Li (2022) that with parents proper assessment of a child's inherent tendencies, family background, school and societal factors, parental presumption is paramount for academic breakthrough. Some authors and researchers have attempted explanation of parental supposition in different ways based on their varied perspectives. For example, Changfeng, Zeren and Shixiang (2024) opined that how children discern assistance/guide from their parents connote parental supposition. Andleeb (2022) defined parental supposition as the ambitions anticipated by parents concerning their children welfare such as academics and career. In the context of this study, the researchers' explain parental supposition as parents' wish, desires, hope and belief about their children attainment in life.

Adolescents in tertiary institutions are faced with lots of suspense from their parents, some healthy and some unhealthy. Parental healthy expectations will take into consideration the cognitive ability, interest, maturational level, age and physiological state of the child in question while parental unhealthy expectation is coercion, without logical reasoning, evaluation and assessment but considers only the parental priority. Also, parental healthy expectations are often critical, rational and responsible in nature while parental unhealthy suppositions are irrational and irresponsible. Therefore the irresponsible desire of some parents luring their children into academics, career and relationship they lack interest, mental ability, resilience and otherwise will be ruining the destinies of such children because of the inherent stress and depression.

Some researchers including Akanksha (2022); Meimei, Tao, Ning, Feng and Yong (2022); Ma, Siu, and Tse (2018); Galderisi, Henz, Kastrup, Beezhold and Sartorius (2015) and Lamia (2012) unanimously acknowledged the importance of parental expectation but stressed that the child's opinion should be respected to curb the serious challenges it has brought to so many families. Out rightly condemning high parental presumptions include Morshidi, Chew and Suarez (2023); Russell (2023) because of its destructive impact ranging from inflicted pressure, poor self esteem and low self concept.

Giving credence to the above assertion is Lili et al (2024) who affirmed that signs of downturn can hardly produce satisfactory output. Moore (2022) noted that parental unhealthy presumption often viewed as unnecessary stress exerted on children by their parents in areas of schooling, physical activities, societal norms, appearance and relationship among others. Moore further stressed that such stress result to psycho-social, emotional and behavioural problems. Elaborating on the above statement, Kennedy (2024) noted that stress can breed among others bodily and mental health challenges, personal harm and suicidal ideation. Morin (2020) observed that parents' unhealthy expectation limits the adolescents' performance thus challenging his/her mental health.

Mental health is a continual process because individuals have different problems, needs and challenges at different points in time. Sukhman (2022) noted that mental health encompasses all round balance which includes psychological, intellectual and social functioning of an individual. Peterson (2021) opined that mental health represent sound operation of the body, mental capacity and disposition of a person. Carnevale, Cheprasov and Levitas (2021) defined mental health as gross total of feeling, interaction and behavioural soundness of a person which determines his/her adaptation and adjustment in life. They observed that consonance in the three dimensions mentioned above will produce a mentally balanced and healthy personality while dissonance will rear a challenged personality in mental health with behavioural problems.

Behavioural problem like suicidal thought is rampant among the adolescents as noted by Tintori, Pompili, Ciancimino, Corsetti and Cerbara (2023). Suicidal ideation is an outcome of unhealthy parental presumption as well as poor mental health (Success CDs Team, 2022). Harmer, Lee, Duong and Saadabadi (2024) asserted that suicidal ideation is an extensive term that relates a compass of intention, desire and engrossment with demise and suicide. Okeke, Agu and Onyekwere (2023) asserted that suicidal ideation is a reaction to extreme psycho-social and emotional pain such as untimely death of a beloved, trust betrayal, failed relationship, lack of academic resilience, repeated failures in academics, academic overload, and unhealthy parental expectation. Janelle and Natalie (2021) noted that suicidal ideation implies when a person has an already conceived plan or intention to die. Recently, suicidal ideation seemed to be rampant in most tertiary institutions in Nigeria and this has taken

various dimensions ranging from outright social platforms, being engrossed in emotional pain and social withdrawal among others.

Close observation of some of the reported cases reveal the causes to include academic frustration, lack of ability for the enrolled course, academic stress emanating from school and behavioural excesses of some lecturers, lack of resilience ability and parental unhealthy expectation. The researchers as pointed out earlier still affirm that parental suppositions is vital for all round well being of a child but with a caution. There is no doubt that in academics, healthy parental expectation triggers diligence, resilience and breakthrough while unhealthy parental expectation birth stress, frustration, negative self esteem, low self concept, poor sleep quality which are enemies of sound psychological growth and mental health. Take for instance, in academics, where a student is coerced into studying a course which he/she lacks the required mental ability and capacity, the likely consequences include constant failure, rejection by peers, inability to graduate at scheduled time. Also if the parents decide to arrange a spouse for an adolescent without his/her endorsement, constant misunderstanding, separation, divorce and in extreme case suicide ideation/suicide becomes unavoidable.

When this happen, it is very glaring that the parents' expectations are not met. Psychologically, the parents feel disappointed and the adolescent will view himself/herself as a failure. With resilience, the adolescent may try harder to improve but the reverse will affect his/her mental health and may erupt suicidal ideation. It may not be an over statement to say that many great destinies has been ruined by parental greed all in the name of expectation. The study intends to investigate the impact of unhealthy parental expectation on mental health and suicidal ideation among adolescents in tertiary institutions in Anambra state with the view of proffering how parents' should channel their expectations healthily. The study is guided by two research questions thus:

1. What is the impact of parental supposition on mental health and suicidal thought of adolescents' in tertiary institutions in Anambra state-Nigeria?
2. What are the possible measures that could be effective in building healthy parental expectation for sound adolescents' mental health in tertiary institutions in Anambra state-Nigeria?

Method

Ex-post facto research design was used for the study. The researchers' sought to establish the domino effect by linking some actual event to some adjustable as tributary force as noted by Nworgu (2015). Tertiary institutions in Anambra state was used for the research work. The population is made up of all 300 and 400 level students in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. The researchers utilized purposive random sampling technique to select two tertiary institutions from the area of study and thereafter, multi stage random sampling technique was employed to hand-pick 60 students (30 in 300 and 400 levels respectively) from the institutions respectively. Therefore the sample for the study was 120 students.

The title "Impact of Unhealthy Parental Presumption on Adolescents' Mental Health" (IUPPAMH) was given to the researchers-constructed questionnaire used for the study with a total of 22 items drawn on a modified 4-point likert scale stretching from strongly agree, agree, disagree to strongly disagree. Specialists in Education assist in establishing the relevance of the instrument. The worthiness of the instrument was ascertained through Cronbach alpha method and a result of 0.79 was obtained.

Face to face method was used for the administration of the instrument on the chosen sample for the study. Statistics/figures obtained were interpreted using statistical weighted mean. Items with mean scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as accepted and mean scores of 2.49 and below were rejected.

Results and Findings

Table 1: Mean Scores of Adolescents on Impact of Parental Presumption on Their Mental Health and Suicidal Thoughts.

N = 120

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
1.	Induced stress	40	30	33	17	2.78	Agree
2.	Indecivness	40	32	27	21	2.76	Agree
3.	Poor emotional control	38	36	26	20	2.77	Agree
4.	Relationship problem	20	45	35	20	2.54	Agree
5.	Physical aggression	34	36	30	20	2.70	Agree
6.	Induced depression	38	37	25	20	2.78	Agree
7.	Anger management problem	46	34	25	15	2.92	Agree
8.	Deviant behaviours	43	36	24	17	2.88	Agree
9.	Anxiety	42	38	25	15	2.89	Agree

10.Poor sleep quality	40	42	20	18	2.87	Agree
11.Extreme behavioural problems such as suicidal ideation and suicide.	50	35	20	15	3.00	Agree

In table 1 above, the 11 items had means ranging from 2.54 to 3.00 which fall within the acceptable mean score of 2.50 and above. This implies that the adolescents agreed that some of the impact of the impact of parental presumption on their mental health and suicidal thought include among others induced stress, poor emotional control, relationship problem, physical aggression, induced depression, deviant behaviours and poor sleep quality.

Table 2: Possible Measures that could be Effective in Building Healthy Parental Expectation for Sound Adolescents' Mental Health.
N = 120

12.Shun greed	45	35	25	15	2.92	Agree
13.Avoid unnecessary rival	32	40	21	27	2.64	Agree
14.Desist from family class and profession/career interest	35	42	20	23	2.91	Agree
15.Allow your child's interest and ambition to stand but counsel and guide them where necessary.	34	41	23	22	2.73	Agree
16.Be mindful of your child's mental health.	31	40	22	27	2.63	Agree
17.Consider your child's physical fitness, strength and cognitive ability.	35	45	15	25	2.75	Agree
18.Seek for school counselors update on the child's academic ability.	32	53	13	22	2.90	Agree
19.Avoid over-estimated ambition.	42	40	18	20	2.87	Agree
20.Guard your ambition logically	38	42	21	19	3.00	Agree
21.Seek for spiritual direction and guidance.	31	47	23	19	2.75	Agree
22.Cognitive and emotional restructuring of parental ambition.	34	46	15	25	2.74	Agree

The result in table 2 above shows that all the items has mean score of 2.50 and above which depict acceptance. The researchers' therefore conclude that the adolescents in tertiary institutions in Anambra state adopted such measures as avoidance of greed, staying away from unnecessary competition, desisting from family class/status and profession/career interest, allowing the child's interest to stand, consideration of a child's physical fitness, strength, mental ability, cognitive and emotional restructuring of parental ambition and logical guarding of parental ambition to be among possible measures that could be helpful in building healthy parental presumption.

Discussion

It was discovered from the data analyzed that parental presumption wheel outstanding impact ranging from induced stress, induced depression, physical aggression, anxiety, poor sleep quality and extreme behavioural problems such as poor mental health and suicide thoughts among others on adolescents in tertiary institutions in Anambra state-Nigeria. The findings of this study agreed with Andleeb (2022) that parents with their unhealthy presumption end up inflicting untold duress on the youth in a bid to showcase him/her. Ma et al (2018) also aligned with the result of this study as they opined that unhealthy parental expectation leads to a state of gloominess and melancholy in the adolescent.

The findings of Galderisi et al (2015) is not different from this research as they enumerated the impact of unhealthy parental expectation on the adolescents to include: Trouble with making decisions, relationship problems and difficulty in handling behavioural and emotional problems. Moore (2022), Meimei et al (2022) and Success CDs Team (2022) agreed with the findings of this study that low self regard, lack of trust on oneself and suicidal ideation/suicide are all products of unhealthy parental expectation.

The findings of the study revealed possible measures that could be effective in building healthy parental expectations for sound adolescents' mental health to include among others parents guiding their ambition logically, shun greed and family class and due consideration of the child's physical fitness, strength and mental

ability. This aligned with the findings of Pamela (2024) and Akanksha (2022) that responsibility on the part of the parents, listening to the adolescent's feelings and thoughts, avoiding harsh regulations and embracing dialogue instead of coercion among others are possible ways of building healthy parental presumption. Also Lamia (2018) giving credence to the findings of this work suggested measures of enhancing healthy parental expectation to include: Logical and sincere reasoning by parents as well as being realistic instead of working by assumptions.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn by the researchers:

1. Parental presumption wheel outstanding impact ranging from induced stress, induced depression, physical aggression, anxiety, poor sleep quality and extreme behavioural problems such as poor mental health and suicide thoughts among others on adolescents in tertiary institutions in Anambra state-Nigeria.
2. Possible measures that could be effective in building healthy parental expectations for sound adolescents' mental health include among others parents guiding their ambition logically, shun greed and family class and due consideration of the child's physical fitness, strength and mental ability.

Recommendations

Going by the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made by the researchers:

1. Parents are advised to be rational in their decision. Be yourself and avoid unwarranted competition.
2. There is no alternative nor duplicate for your child's life and so guard it jealously and avoid inducing stress and depression on the child which will affect his/her mental health.
3. Parental coercion on issues affecting the adolescent such as academics, career and marriage affect their mental health and can trigger suicidal ideation and suicide. The researchers encourage support of adolescents' interest, desire and ambition but with proper guidance and counseling.
4. University authorities/management should organize career day at least once in a semester which should emphasize parents' compulsory attendance where proven counselors, psychologists and therapists should educate parents on the uniqueness of individuals and steps to career choice.

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