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Research Paper Education

Value Preferences as Predictor of Achievement Attribution of In-School Adolescents in Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to determine the extent value preferences predicted achievement attribution of in-school adolescents in Enugu state, Nigeria. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The design was correlational survey. The population was 11,268 (4,296 male and 6,972 female) senior secondary class two (SSII) students in all public co-educational schools in Enugu state in the 2012/2013 academic session. The sample was 1,155 students proportionately drawn from the schools selected. The instruments used for data collection were two researcher –developed questionnaires : In-school Adolescents' value preferences scale (IAVPS) and In-school adolescents' achievement attribution scale (IAAAS). The internal consistency estimates of IAVPS and IAAAS, established through Cronbach alpha procedure were .86 and .77 respectively. Findings indicated that value preferences significantly predicted in-school adolescents' achievement attribution. Value preference accounted for 88 percent of the variance associated with in-school adolescents' achievement attribution. Gender and location also significantly predicted achievement attribution. A major education implication of the findings is that educational efforts aimed at developing strong values could impact positively on achievement orientation of in-school adolescents. It was recommended that systematic educational efforts be developed to encourage in –school adolescents to make right choices as a lifelong habit.

KEYWORDS : Value, value preference, achievement attribution, adolescents, locus of control, gander, location.

1. Introduction

1a. Value

Value is an interdisciplinary term with several meanings and studied by many fields of study. Value means the actual worth of an object or item in monetary terms or the choices people make in what they consider important (Marta, 2003) In psychology, researchers delve into values mostly in terms of needs, interests and human motivation (Perkins, 2008). Value defines the choice between different ways of behaviour in a certain situation.

In psychology, value at times is used to explain why human beings prefer to choose some things over others, how person's behaviour may be guided or fail to be guided by certain judgments.

1b Value Preferences

Value preferences are choices people make on what they consider important (Stipek, 1997; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Glenn (2001) posited that people have terminal and instrumental types of values. The terminal values are concerned with general goals or end states of being and include such values as freedom, equality, self-respect, wisdom and inner harmony. These are termed intrinsic values (Odum, 1996). The instrumental values focus on means to goals or style of conduct. These include such values as being ambitious, courageous, honest, loving, responsible and imaginative. Clark (1999) opined that in the area of value preferences, all agents of socialization will transmit values embedded in a culture content that is characteristic for the society as a whole. In the context of this study, value preferences mean choice of values that exist among the individual in-school adolescent. Choice of value is a powerful indicator that differentiates attitudes and behaviours of people, including adolescents.

1c. Adolescents and their values

The adolescents are individuals bounded by childhood and adulthood. The upper limit of adolescence is the beginning of adulthood while the lower limit is bounded by childhood. The adolescents fall within the secondary school years, and educators expect the adolescents to be out of secondary schools at 18 years. Adolescents are taken to be young persons between ages 11 and 18years (Santrock, 2005). This age group is unique in the sense that several developmental changes are manifest in them. The major developmental task of adolescence was seen by Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith, Bem and Nolen-Hocksema (1993) as being able to create an identity, to develop answers to the questions such as: who am I? And where am I going? Atkinson, et al maintained that the psychoanalyst, Erik Erikson coined the term identity crisis to refer to this active process of self-definition. The word crisis is perhaps unfortunate because Erikson believed this period of self-doubt to be an integral part of healthy psychological development. Similarly, many developmental psychologists believe that adolescence should be a period of role experimentation (Santrock, 2005), in which the young persons can explore alternative behaviours, interest and ideologies. Many beliefs, roles, and ways of behaving may be 'tried out', modified, or discarded in an attempt to shape an integrated concept of the self. Ideally, the identity crisis should be resolved by the early or mid-twenties so that the individual can move on to other life tasks but this is not always the case as some of the adolescents may fail to resolve the identity crisis till later in life.

It was observed by Nelson (2008) that interests and attitudes on things amongst adolescents are far removed from adult responsibilities. The adult values, often referred to as traditional, conflict with the adolescents' values (Ikwumekwu, 2000). Adults want to preserve cultural values and transmit same to the adolescents who are found to repudiate them in most cases.

1d. Achievement attribution

In the area of achievement attribution, Weiner (1997) said that all the causes of success or failure can be categorized within three dimensions in some ways namely: locus of control, stability, and controllability. Locus of control has two poles: internal versus external. It refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them (Rotter, 1966). Individuals who believe that events result primarily from their own behaviour and actions are said to have internal locus of control, whereas individuals who believe that powerful others, fate or chance, primarily determine events are said to have external locus of control. Stability means whether causes change over time or not. Stability relates to expectations about the future. Controllability pertains to causes one can control, such as skills versus causes one cannot control such as luck and others' actions. Controllability is connected to emotions such as anger, pity or shame. This is because the dimension affects expectancy and value. Some explanations of success or failure could be luck, effort, ability, interest, clarity of instruction and much more. For example, the internal or external locus of control seems to be closely related to feelings of self esteem. When one succeeds, one attributes success internally. When a rival succeeds, one tends to credit it to external (luck or fate). When one fails or makes mistakes, one will more likely use external attribution, attributing causes to situational factors rather than blaming oneself.

1e. Gender variation in value preferences

Psychologists have been concerned about gender based differences in

value preferences of in-school adolescents. The term gender is used to refer to the socially constructed relationships between men and women in the society (Bent, 2005). Gender issues in value preferences are therefore fundamental concerns for achievement attribution. Machine and Jensen (1999) investigated whether men and women differ in what they view as important. They predicted that women would have a more caring value orientation. A study carried out by Newby (1991) also found gender differences in preferences for a caring value orientation. The studies support the idea that a value system which orients more caring attitude and directed at people and relationships, is preferred by females whereas males are more agentic in value orientation.

1f. Locational variation in value preferences in Nigeria

Location is another variable suspected to have the potential of predicting the value preferences and achievement attribution of in-school adolescents. The difference between urban and rural life constitutes a collateral influence on value preferences of in-school adolescents. In most cases in Nigeria, there are variations in the availability of social amenities and facilities in schools located in urban and rural areas and these may affect the value orientation and achievements of the in-school adolescent. Also in Nigeria there is very strong inclination for young persons to adore material wealth. Socio-economic divides may impact on value preferences more so in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural diverse nation like Nigeria.

2a. Statement of the Problem

There appears to be a remarkable shift in values of adolescents from the adults' values. The adolescents have characteristic way they view critical issues that relate to world views. They believe that values are not static but change with the changing world. Hence, values identified with the adults are often considered out-dated and moribund. Adult values generally seem to conflict with adolescent values. For instance adults may prefer hard work and right training for achievement but many adolescents may be more at home with short-cuts to achievements. Such shortcuts form their motivational patterns and often result in vices of different dimensions. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, the inculcation of right values in the teeming youths has not received adequate attention; hence, adolescents' value preferences are not sufficiently explored. Few related studies available to the researchers are mostly foreign based. In effect in-school adolescents are at risk in this part of the world since very little is done about how best to change their attitudes and achievement orientation. Therefore, the problem of this study posed as a question is: would value preferences predict achievement attribution of in-school adolescents?

2b. Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:-

1. To what extent do value preferences predict the achievement attribution of in-school adolescents?
2. What is the extent gender predicts value (a) preferences, and (b) achievement attributions of in-school adolescents?
3. What is the extent location (urban – rural) predicts (a) value preferences and achievement attribution of in-school adolescents?

2c. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of probability.

Ho_1: Value preferences do not significantly predict in-school adolescents' achievement attribution.

Ho_2 Gender does not significantly predict (a) value preferences and (b) achievement attribution of in-school adolescents.

Ho_3 Location does not significantly predict (a) value preferences and (b) achievement attribution of in-school adolescents.

3. Method

This is a correlational survey research design. The study was carried out in Enugu state of Nigeria. Enugu State has six Education zones namely: Nsukka, Agbani, Awgu, Enugu, Obollo-Afor and Udi, with 287 public secondary schools (Planning, Research and statistics (PRS) Units, Post Primary Schools Management Board, Enugu: 2013). The rationale for choosing this state was that Enugu State is a place where the pace of cultural change increases rapidly because of urbanization and this makes it difficult for people to retain single unified sense of the right values they possess resulting to certain crimes like kidnapping and armed robbery which may be blamed on the fact that there seems to be serious eroding of right values in the society occasioned by urbanization and globalization.

The population of the study consisted of all 2012/2013 co-educational Senior Secondary Class Two (SS II) students numbering 11,268 (4296 males and 6972 females) in the public secondary schools in Enugu State (Planning, Research and Statistics (PRS) unit, Post Primary Schools Management Board, Enugu -2013). The choice of senior secondary class two students was guided by the fact that the students were at the adolescence stage proper. One expects that their values are forming and are undergoing the identity transformation.

The sample size for the study consisted of 1160 (435 males and 725 females) senior secondary class two students which were drawn from public secondary schools in Enugu State. This number represents 10 percent of the total number of SSII students drawn through stratified random sampling procedure to represent the major variables of gender and location.

Two instruments were developed by the researchers and validated namely: In-school Adolescents Achievement Attribution Scale (IAAAS). The IAVPS sought information on choices students make in what they consider important. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items. The IAAAS sought information on what students felt was the explanation for the achievement they had made or the failure they had experienced. The questionnaire consisted of 27 items. Both instruments were structured on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2), and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1). Scores were reversed for negative item statements.

Data were presented using mean, standard deviation, and multiple regression. The transformed t-value was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of probability.

4. Results

Table 1: Relationship between Value Preferences and Achievement Attribution

R	R Squared	Adjusted R-squared
.881	.777	.776

Data in Table 1 indicate a strong and positive relationship between value preference and achievement attribution. This is shown by the calculated R of .88.

Table 2: Relative Contribution of Value Preferences in In-school Adolescents' Achievement Attribution

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.085	.042	.881	2.040	.042
Value preference of subjects	.958	.015		63.301	.000

Data in Table 2 show that the predictive index of value preference is .88. The data suggest that value preference predicted 88 percent of in-school adolescents' achievement attribution. The transformed t-value indicates that the relationship between value preference and achievement attribution is significant at 0.05 probability level.

Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that value preferences do not significantly predict in-school adolescents' achievement attribution is rejected.

Table 3: Relationship between gender and Value Preferences and Achievement Attribution

	R	R Squared	Adjusted R-squared
Value Preferences	.294	.086	.086
Attribution Achievement	.087	.008	.007

Data in Table 3 indicate a positive relationship between gender and value preference, and achievement attribution. This is shown by the calculated R of .29, and .09.

Table 4: Relative Contribution of Gender in Value Preferences, and Achievement Attribution of In-school Adolescents

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B Std. Error		Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant) Value preference of subjects	2.847 -.207	.033 .020	 -.294	85.240 -10.439	.000 .000
Achievement Attribution of subjects	2.928 -.074	.042 .025	 -.087	70.232 -2.981	.000 .003

Data in Table 4 show that the predictive index of gender on value preferences and achievement attribution are -.29, and -09 respectively. The data suggest that gender accounted for 29 percent and nine percent of the in-school adolescents' value preferences and achievement attribution respectively.

The transformed t-values indicate that the relationship of gender and value preferences and achievement attribution were significant at .05 probability level. Therefore the null hypotheses that gender do not significantly predict (a) value preferences and (b)achievement attribution were rejected.

Table 5: Relationship between Location and Value Preferences, Motivational Pattern and Achievement Attribution

	R	R Squared	Adjusted R-squared
Value Preferences	.522	.273	.272
Attribution Achievement	.270	.073	.072

Data in Table 5 indicate a positive relationship between location and value preference and achievement attribution. This is shown by the calculated R of .52, and .27 respectively.

Table 5: Relative Contribution of Location in Value Preference, and Achievement Attribution of In-school Adolescents

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B Std. Error		Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant) Value preference of subjects	3.089 -.363	.029 .017	 -.522	106.554 -20.802	.000 .000
Achievement Attribution of subjects	3.166 -.224	.039 .024	 -.270	80.713 -9.506	.000 .000

Data in Table 5 show that the predictive index of location on value preference and achievement attribution are-.52 and -.27. The data suggest that location accounted for 52 percent and 27 percent of the in-school adolescents' value preference and achievement attribution respectively.

The transformed t-values indicate that the relationship of location and value preference and location and achievement attribution were significant at .05 probability level. Therefore the null hypotheses that location do not significantly predict value preferences and achievement attribution were rejected.

5. Discussion

Results indicate a strong and positive relationship between value preferences and achievement attribution of In-school adolescents in Enugu State, Nigeria. Also 78 percent of the variance on achievement attribution of the students is accounted for by value preference. Gender significantly predicted value preference and achievement attribution, accounting for 29 percent and nine percent respectively of the variance observed. Location also significantly predicted value preferences and achievement attribution of in-school adolescents, accounting for 52 percent and 27 percent respectively of the variance observed.

The finding that value preferences accounted for 78 percent of the variance associated with achievement attribution is in tandem with the general conception of values as the degree of importance one attaches to various beliefs, ideas, objects or things (Milliken, 1997). This conceptualization suggests that value preferences would propel one to a particular kind of behaviour and life style. This perspective suggests also that one's value preferences would impact personal goals and at the same time place limits on the means one would ordinarily use to reach such goals and the interpretation one would most probably adduce for success or failure to reach life goals. What this means is that emergent shifts in value preferences of in-school adolescents will greatly impact their motivational pultern and goal orientation.

The finding that gender significantly predicts value preferences and achievement attribution may be explained from the etiology of gender identity and gender role construction from gender schema. The gender schema theory predicts that gender identity and gender role develop as an off shoot of a value system and cultural practices that translate into a blue –print or guideline for the choices and decisions one makes throughout one's life. Specifically in Nigeria, it has been noted also (Ngwoke, 2010) that the relics of traditional gender stereotype continue to determine gender differences in specific choices that lead to significant differences in life chances between the feminine and masculine gender. Women, for an example, have a more caring value orientation (Machine & Jensen 1999) while men have a more agentic value orientation (Ngwoke, 2010). The finding that location accounted for 52 and 27 percent of the variances associated with value preferences and achievement attribution respectively of In-school adolescents agree with the interpretation given by Walker and Brokaw (2001). These authors had maintained that a people's world view is constructed from several specific encounters with varied dimensions of human activities. It follows therefore that values are culture specific and would vary by geographic locations. The finding also agrees with Omatseye (2004) that value preferences derive their essences from culture specific practices like religious, customary, economic and educational practices. For an example, rural inhabitants emphasize social relationship (Malone, 1991) while inhabitants of highly developed economies like the United States of America emphasize individuality and competition (Ronald, 2008).

6. Conclusions

Value preferences significantly predicted achievement attribution. Therefore value preferences impact goals, aspirations, motivation and interpretations of success and failures of in-school adolescents. Gender and Location significantly predicted value preferences and achievement attribution of in –school adolescents. Therefore cultural and demographic idiosyncrasies are important variables in goal setting, aspiration motivation and feedback mechanisms in the educational process of in –school adolescents.

It is recommended that school authorities and major stakeholders assess and harness the emergent value preferences of in –school adolescents in determining curricula and instructional provisions. School authorities and stakeholders are also invited to partner in developing strategies to ameliorate the negative influences of gender and demographic differences in scholastic readiness and achievement of in-school adolescents in Nigeria.

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