Attribution Styles As Correlates Of Social Competence And Self-Esteem Of In-School Adolescents

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Abstract
This study explored the correlation between attribution styles and the social competence as well as self-esteem of in-school adolescents. The study adopted a correlational survey research design using a sample of 280 senior secondary II students drawn from the public secondary schools in Aba education zone, Abia State. Attribution Style Questionnaire (ASQ), Social Competence Assessment Questionnaire (SCAQ) and Self-esteem Scale (SES) were adapted and used for data collection. The instruments were face validated by experts. These instruments were trial-tested on a cross-section of the students. The reliability of the instruments was established using the Cronbach alpha correlation coefficient (α) method with the reliability indices of 0.81, 0.79 and 0.87 for the Social Competence Assessment Questionnaire, Self-esteem Scale and Attribution Style Questionnaire respectively. Data collected were analysed using linear regression analysis to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses. It was revealed that significant relationship between attribution styles and social competence as well as self-esteem of in-school adolescents. This implies that attribution styles are major determinants of in-school adolescents’ social competence and self-esteem. It is therefore recommended that parents inculcate social skills into their children for positive social interaction at early stage of life since moderate relationship exists between internal attribution styles and social competence.

Keyword: Attribution styles, Self-esteem, Social competence

Introduction
People attribute their experiences to many factors, which influences how they interact with others, as well as how they regard and value themselves. Attribution is a term used to describe the process of assigning causes to one's actions. This does not apply to in-school teenagers who blame internal or external circumstances for their success or failure. The study of attribution and other variables has had a tremendous impact on the educational system, households, and society as a whole. Humans are motivated to attribute causes to their actions or outcomes to internal...
elements such as talent, qualities, and so on, according to Moskonitz (2006). (Luck and contribution of others). According to Mohammed (2015), attribution is the process of interpreting the causes of a person's behavior or an occurrence. Attribution can be defined as the reason teenagers offer for their relationship's success or failure, as well as their self-evaluation or value.

Individuals tend to draw different conclusions about any behavior displayed via various approaches, resulting in attribution styles. Individuals' attribution styles are the various aspects they utilize to infer or explain the reasons of events or outcomes (Higgins & Mitchel, 2012). Tolanda (2015) defines attribution style as "the tendency to consistently assign positive and negative outcomes to a given sort of cause." In this study, attribution styles refer to the many ways in which adolescents explain the origin of their actions or events. This indicates that people have distinct explanations for what occurs in their surroundings. Various authors identified various attribution styles. It was divided into three categories by Alice (2015): stable versus transient, global versus specific, and internal versus external. Temporary attribution links events or things that happen around an individual to something that changes, whereas stable attribution links events or things that happen around an individual to something that changes.

Global attribution involves linking events or acts with something that reflects general traits, whereas specific attribution involves associating occurrences with something that reflects unique quality. External attribution is the process of assigning the cause of occurrences around one to external variables, whereas internal attribution is the process of relating events or behavior to internal elements. People attribute what happens to them to internal or external factors, according to Heider (1958), and therefore the two primary forms of attribution. As a result, the focus of this research is on these two main attribution styles: internal and external attribution.

Internal attribution style refers to how people attribute success to internal elements such as effort and personal skill, whereas external attribution style refers to how people attribute success to external factors such as luck and others' contributions (Mcleod, 2011). Most successful adolescents ascribe their success to internal sources and their failures to external circumstances, according to research (Gribb, Alloy, Walshaw & Comer, 2006). The failed teenagers, then, attribute their success to external circumstances and their failure to internal factors. Bach (2008), on the other hand, revealed no significant differences in teenagers' self-esteem and attribution techniques. Furthermore, when it comes to social relations, teenagers that struggle socially have an external attribution style. They attribute their incompetence to a lack of social skills required for social engagement, such as the capacity to initiate, maintain, and terminate relationships. However, socially competent people attribute a healthy relationship to their skill and efforts, which leads to a favorable self-evaluation.

The importance of studying adolescent social skills cannot be overstated. The act of gaining the skills and behaviors required in social interaction and using them in a relationship is known as social competency. Individuals must examine their social lives at this stage of development, when they must be recognized and accepted in society. The ability to build a relationship that borders on the quality of one's relationship is referred to as social competency.
To avoid negative treatment and victimization, Gale (2012) defines social competence as an individual's ability to form and maintain high-quality, mutually satisfying relationships. Individuals are required to interact and relate in a pleasant manner in order to gain others' affection and acceptance. Social competency, according to Miina (2010), is the ability to attain personal goals and affection in a social encounter while also maintaining positive relationships with others over time. In light of this, Schoon (2009) claims that social competence focuses on empathy, self-control, trust, and respect for others, allowing people to coexist in a given environment.

Social competency can be viewed in a variety of ways and dimensions. Social competence, according to Semrund-Clikeman (2007), has three dimensions: social skills, social communication, and interpersonal communication. The ability to communicate and connect with others is referred to as social skills. Adolescents' social communication refers to the language they use in social circumstances when they first meet. Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging information, sentiments, and meaning via spoken and nonverbal signals. These dimensions assist adolescents in displaying appropriate behaviors and functioning in their relationships. Adolescents in all relationships want to be accepted by their peers and others, which increases their self-worth and can lead to a more positive self-image, which is crucial for adolescents' development.

Self-esteem is one of the factors that influences teenagers' social competence and how they interpret what happens to them in their environment. Self-esteem, according to Oboci (2011), is an evaluation process that may be quantified as the ratio of an individual's success for effective development. Self-esteem is defined by Nwankwo (2010) as one's understanding, perception, or belief about oneself and behavior. In other words, self-esteem strives to keep an individual's behavior at a level that allows them to operate socially. This is because the way adolescents act is designed to help them identify with others. Adolescents who blame their classmates for their failure may find it difficult to communicate with them and may adversely rate themselves.

Saida (2008) defined high (positive) and low (negative) self-esteem as the two major forms of self-esteem. Self-esteem is defined as an accurate and justified assessment of one's value, achievement, and accomplishment (Christiana, 2012). Adolescents with high self-esteem are more positive about their own performance than those with poor self-esteem (Saida, 2008). Adolescents who have a favorable self-perception are more likely to have high self-esteem because they are more adept in social circumstances and are accepted by their peers. Additionally, teenagers with high self-esteem develop beneficial attributes and talents that they can bring to a relationship.

When a person develops a negative opinion of themselves, they acquire low self-esteem. Low self-esteem, according to Kweger and Vobs (2009), is the incapacity of an individual to have a positive assessment of one's value or worth. "Low self-esteem to be connected with a range of bad outcomes such as depression, rage, negative mentality, and poor relationships," Silverstone and Salsali (2007) write. Adolescents with poor self-esteem are more prone to suffer
from social anxiety and lack interpersonal confidence, which limits their social contacts. Low self-esteem adolescents are prone to loneliness, resentment, anger, and depression because they lack the ability to demonstrate high levels of social competence (Angela, 2010). Adolescence is a time when a person goes through a lot of changes as a result of ongoing growing. According to Opera (2015), teenagers are capable of examining abstract ideas while seeking to figure out who and what they are.

Adolescents' self-evaluation and event attribution is done through appropriate social engagement with others. A crucial role of adolescence, according to Collins and Steinberg (2010), is the development of a sense of self, separation from parents, and personal identity. Adolescents must separate from their family and spend more time with their peers in order to build their self-identity. As a result, if a teenager is not identified in society, he or she will become socially incompetent. Due to low self-esteem (Okoknkwo, 2009) and incompetence in social issues, most teenage pupils in the Aba education zone tend to become delinquent, violent, and drop out of school, roam the streets, and join touts in the motor parks, according to research. The allegation fell primarily on the homes, schools, and society, as they paid little or no attention to the adolescents' feelings and the outcome of their experiences, based on the researchers' personal interactions with adolescents from selected locations such as Ariaria market, motor park, and some streets of Aba education zone. As a result, the teenagers blame their bad behavior and academic failure on external issues such as instructor dislike, inability to educate effectively, parents' casual attitude, and not being accepted by peers (Mohammed, 2015). Such teenagers end up producing turmoil and troubles at school by engaging in various forms of absenteeism, trashing school property, joining kidnapping gangs, abusing substances, becoming rappers or cultists, engaging in violence, armed robbery, and becoming undesired pregnant. To summarize, teenagers can remodel their attribution pattern if they are led and guided to acquire good self-worth – positive self-esteem – and maintain cordial relationships with others – social competence. As a result, determining the relationship between self-esteem, social competence, and attribution styles of in-school teenagers is critical in this study.

Aims and objectives of the study
The main purpose of the study was to investigate attribution styles as correlates of social competence and self-esteem of in-school adolescents.

Methodology
Correlation research design was employed for the study. Similar studies by Okenyi et al. (2019), Achagh et al. (2020), Eya et al. (2020), Ezema et al. (2019), Gana et al. (2019), Ugwuanyi and Okeke (2020), Ugwuanyi, Okeke et al. (2020), Ugwuanyi, Okeke and Njeze (2020), Ugwuanyi, Okeke and Asomugha (2020) have adopted this design. The study was carried out in Aba education zone of Abia State, Nigeria. The population comprised all the 2878 senior secondary school II (SS II) students in all the public secondary schools in Aba education zone, Abia State. 280 students (140 female and 140 male) which is 10% of the entire population is the sample size.
Instruments
Three instruments – Attribution Style Questionnaire (ASQ), Social Competence Assessment Questionnaire (SCAQ) and Self-esteem Scale (SES) (Rosenbeg, 1995) were adapted and used for data collection. The instruments were face validated by experts. These instruments were trial tested on a cross-section of students. The reliability of the instruments was established using the Cronbach alpha correlation coefficient ($\alpha$) method with the reliability indices of 0.81, 0.79 and 0.87 for the Social Competence Assessment Questionnaire, Self-esteem Scale and Attribution Style Questionnaire respectively.

Data analysis
Data were analysed using the Person Product of Correlation coefficient for the research questions whereas multiple regression analysis and t-test statistics were used for testing the hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Attribution Styles and Social Competence of In-school Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables (Attribution Styles)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>$r^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal attribution</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External attribution</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: N = Number of respondents (in-school adolescents), X = mean, SD = Standard Deviation, $r$ = Correlation coefficient, $r^2$ = Coefficient of determination

The result in Table 1 shows that the scores from the responses of the respondents on attribution styles were correlated with their responses on social competence. The result indicates that a correlation coefficient ($r$) of 0.63 with an associated coefficient of determination ($r^2$) of 0.40 was obtained between scores from in-school adolescents’ internal attribution style and their social competence while 0.49 ($r$) with $r^2$ of 0.24 was obtained between external attribution style and their social competence. This result shows that there was a positively high relationship ($r$=0.63) between internal attribution style and social competence of in-school adolescents, while there was a direct moderate positive relationship ($r$=0.49) between external attribution style and their social competence. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($r^2$) implies that 40% ($r^2$=0.40) variation in social competence of in-school adolescents was due to their internal attribution style, while 24% ($r^2$=0.24) variation in social competence was due to their external attribution style.

Table 2: ANOVA F-test of significance in the relationship between attribution styles and social competence in-school adolescents
In order to test hypothesis 1 (Ho1), F-test was used to test for the significance in the relationship between attribution styles and social competence of in-school adolescents. The result in Table 2 shows that an F-ratio of 130.817 with an associated exact probability value of 0.000 was obtained based on data analysis. This probability value of 0.000 was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found to be significant because 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between attribution styles and social competence of in-school adolescents was rejected. Inference drawn was that, there was a significant relationship between attribution styles and social competence of in-school adolescents.

Table 3: Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Attribution Styles and Self-Esteem of In-school Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables (Attribution Styles)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>r²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal attribution</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External attribution</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: N = Number of respondents (in-school adolescents), X = mean, SD = Standard Deviation, r = Correlation coefficient, r² = Coefficient of determination

Result in Table 3 shows that the scores from the responses of the respondents on attributional styles were correlated with their responses on self-esteem. The result shows that a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.71 with an associated coefficient of determination (r²) of 0.50 was obtained between in-school adolescents’ internal attributional style and their self-esteem, while 0.39 (r) with r² of 0.15 was obtained between external attributional style and their self-esteem. This result indicates that there was a positively high relationship (r=0.71) between internal attributional style and self-esteem of in-school adolescents, while there was a direct positively low relationship (r=0.15) between external attributional style and their self-esteem. In addition, the coefficients of determination (r²) implies that 50% (r²=0.50) change in the self-esteem of in-
school adolescents was due to their internal attribution style, while 15% ($r^2=0.15$) change in self-esteem was due to their external attribution style.

**Table 4:** ANOVA F-test of significance in the relationship between attribution styles and self-esteem of in-school adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig. ($\alpha = 0.05$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>1602.404</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>801.202</td>
<td>153.956</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>1441.539</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>5.204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3043.943</td>
<td>279</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Dependent Variable: Social Competence
d. Predictors: (Constant), External Attribution, Internal Attribution

In order to test hypothesis 2 (Ho2), F-test was used to test for the significance in the relationship between attribution styles and self-esteem of in-school adolescents. The result in Table 4 indicates that an F-ratio of 153.956 with an associated exact probability value of 0.000 was obtained based on data analysis. This probability value of 0.000 when compared with 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis was found to be significant, because 0.000 is less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that; there is no significant relationship between attribution styles and self-esteem of in-school adolescents was rejected. The conclusion drawn was that; there was a significant relationship between attribution styles and self-esteem of in-school adolescents.

**Discussion**
The outcome of this study revealed that there was a significant relationship between attribution styles and social competence of in-school adolescents. Also, there was high relationship between internal attribution style and social competence and a positive moderate relationship between external attribution style and social competence. This implies that adolescents who ascribe what happens around them to internal factor (personal ability, effort, modeling good behaved people) maintain healthier social competence than those who relate events to external factor (luck, reward, teachers’ hatred). Hence, internal attribution is better for maintaining good relationships. The finding is in agreement with Lavin (2008), whose study showed a relationship between social competence and attribution styles. On the other hand, this finding disagreed Evans (2007) which revealed a negative relationship between social competence and attribution styles.

The study also revealed a high significant relationship between internal attribution styles and self-esteem of in-school adolescents, and a positive moderate relationship between external attribution style and self esteem. This implies that adolescents who ascribe what happens around them to internal factor (personal ability) develop healthier self esteem than those who relate
events to external factor (luck, etc). Hence, internal attribution is better for maintaining positive self esteem. This finding is in agreement with Obochi (2011); and Mohammed, Munttaz, and Sabeen, (2014) which revealed positive relationship between attribution styles and self esteem of adolescents, emphasizing that adolescent with low self esteem were discovered to attribute successes to external factors. On the other hand, this finding is at variance with Bach (2008) who found out that there was no significant difference between the self esteem and attribution styles of adolescents, implying that as adolescents’ external attribution to failure increases their self esteem decreases.

Conclusions
The deduction here is that adolescents with external attribution style perform well in social interaction than those with internal attribution style. More so, adolescents with internal attribution styles acquire high self esteem than those with external attribution styles indicating that most time adolescents believe it is their own behaviour rather than behaviour of others towards that leads to success or failure in their interactions with others. Adolescents tend to put more effort when confronted with social and self evaluation problems and when they perceived that their problem or failure is as a result of their inability to perform, such perception hinder their subsequent performance. Therefore, educators have the duty of helping adolescent students arrive at a most adaptive educational conclusion since it has been proved that external attribution does not facilitate success. Again, teachers, knowing that effective teaching is dependent on students’ willingness to interact with their teachers should endeavour to promote the academic achievement of students by boosting their self-esteem. It is therefore recommended that parents inculcate social skills into their children for positive social interaction at early stage of life since moderate relationship exists between internal attribution style and social competence. Group activities that enable the development of high self esteem and the ability to attribute their success to personal effort should be encouraged.

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