

Differences in Self-Concept, Academic Orientation and Vocational Interests of Normal and Institutionalized Street Children in Lagos Metropolis

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Abstract

The study investigated differences in self-concept, academic orientation and vocational interests between normal children and institutionalized street children in Lagos Metropolis. A sample of 120 children randomly selected from 2 rehabilitation homes, 2 private and 2 public schools within Lagos Metropolis was used. The conceptual hypothesis tested was that normal and institutionalized street children would not significantly differ in their self-concept, academic orientation and vocational interests. Data were generated using Bakare's (1977) Vocational Interest Inventory (VII), Lipsitt's (1985) Self-Concept Scale for Children (SCC) and Hare's (1985) Self-esteem Scale (HSS). Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Chi-square Test were used to analyse the data generated. Results showed similarities in the self-concept of all classes of children investigated irrespective of gender. However, the children differed in academic orientation and vocational interests. These findings were discussed in the light of their implications for bridging the gap between street and normal children and recommendations were also made.

Keywords: Self-concept, Academic Orientation, Vocational Interest, Street Children.

Background

The patterns of psychological and social adjustment among children have become a fundamental issue in psychosocial analysis. Research on self-concept, academic orientation and vocational interests of children have overtime focused on the intellectual factors more than the non-intellectual

Apart from being influential on a person's behaviour, self concept has been associated with academic motivation and occupational choices as well as success. Although individual differences are expected, science does not expect differences in academic orientation and vocational interests which are predicated on group membership. When such occurs, it is pertinent to trace the causes.

In Nigeria, the pattern of personality development is greatly influenced by the home environment with emphasis on the socio-economic status of parents. Scholars are of the opinion that the home environment is the single most influential and significant factor in determining the self concept, academic inclination and vocational interests of children (Ochola, 1996). When therefore, the home becomes a place of terror, fear and unhappiness, people have been known to run away. These escapes result in street children being what and who they are.

Onyango and Kuriuki (1992) discovered that the main cause of children being on the streets in developing countries like Nigeria is poverty. Although poverty is a significant factor in the creation of differentiation between normal and institutionalized street children, it is not the only one; there is also the children's frustration at their parents' seeming indifference to their emotional, financial and other needs. It is often asserted that happy (normal) children manifest better social judgment, more insight with regard to others and less feeling of inferiority than unhappy (street) children and that the social behaviour of the child is modifiable by the responses to his behaviour by those around him.

Depending upon whether such responses are positive (reinforcing) or negative (inhibiting), the child's future responses, goals and values will be influenced and determined. The extent and character of such determination will vary between children (normal or institutionalized) and will depend upon the sum total of the natural and acquired characteristics which the child brings to the learning situation; whether that situation be social, emotional, intellectual or educational.

The Problem

For many years, psychologists have searched for factors which determine and influence the self perception, academic inclination and vocational interests of children. This search has been two-dimensional: In one dimension has been the search for the intellectual factors in academic functioning (or malfunctioning) and vocational interest of children and this has been fairly conclusive and successful. In the second dimension is the search for non-intellectual factors viz - socio-economic and psychological determinants of self-concept, academic orientation and vocational interests. This has not achieved much success due to the confusion engendered by identifying too many variables and too many contradictory findings. For instance, it is alleged that among the psychological factors determining self-concept, academic orientation and vocational interest of children are impulsivity - reflectivity; extroversion - introversion; need achievement, interest, study habits, levels of aspiration, adjustment and anxiety. Considering the definitional ambiguity of these constructs and the vast interdependence of psychological processes, it is not surprising that reported correlation between these personality factors have not been conclusive (Ubangha, 2001).

It is also note worthy that most studies recorded in this research area were carried out outside Africa using mainly American and English samples. Studies among Africans are therefore urgently required to complement existing knowledge (Bakare, 1995). It therefore

becomes necessary to speculate that since academic and vocational self-image are so closely related to a specific social context and certain types of feedback (Eshel and Klein, 1985), it is important to examine the issue of differences in self concept, academic orientation and vocational interests of normal children in relation to institutionalized street children.

Literature Review

Everybody has a right to a level of self perception if she or he is to attain self esteem in life. Adolescents depend on adults to guide their future vocational choices but due to the inconsistent standard of most adults, many children exhibit identity crisis and role confusion such that they seek solace in peer-groups or strive for recognition through academics or sports or they lose their self value completely.

A review of available literature shows that self-concept is a hypothetical construct which can be investigated as within - network or between - network studies. Within network studies explore the multi-dimensionality of self-concept and attempt to show that it has consistent distinct components (for example, physical, social and academic). Between - network studies attempt to demonstrate a theoretically consistent pattern of relationships between measures of self concept and constructs/variables like ability/performance, self concept ratings inferred by significant others, family background, behavioural observations and experimental manipulations (Marsh, Smith, Barnes & Butter, 1983). They argue that self-concept is a looking-glass reflection of the perceptions of others and that self concept evaluations are by-products of how a person thinks other people see him. . According to Shavelson, Hubner & Stanton (1976), the Self concept construct has some crucial attributes, viz:

- It is multi faceted and the particular facet reflects the category system adopted by a particular group or individual; for example children.
- It is organised and structured in that people categorize the vast amount of information they have about themselves and relate these to one another.
- It has both descriptive and evaluative dimensions such that individuals may describe themselves (I am happy) and evaluate themselves (I do well in school)
- It can be differentiated from other constructs.

The speculation is that if a child's self concept is raised and maintained, academic improvement tends to follow and good vocational choices could be made. Many persons, especially educators, therefore unhesitatingly assume that achievement and ability indices are strongly related to self assessment of achievement and ability and to overall self regard.

An aspect of self-concept which has received considerable attention is that which has to do with academic performance. An overwhelming body of contemporary research points consistently to the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement, and suggests strongly that the self concept can no longer be ignored by parents and teachers. For instance, Purkey (1961) reports the strong and persistent relationship between self concept and academic achievement and alludes to why there is deepening discontent with the notion

that human ability is the overwhelming factor in academic success. Similarly, Shavelson and Bolus (1982) have demonstrated that a positive association exists between self concept and measures of performance and achievement.

Psychologists believe basically that characteristics such as intelligence, interest, self-concept, personality, values and needs are factors that influence vocational aspirations and choice (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996; Super, 1957). Sociologists on the other hand regard factors like family background including parental socio-economic status and environment as being contributory in determining a vocation. Hence, it is being suggested that self-concept was determined by behaviour growing out of social experience. Thus self-concept can be viewed as a feedback loop, affecting and being affected by the individual's experience in his social environment. Super (1957) pointed out that the concept of self influences an individual's choice of occupation. Self is the sum total of one's abilities, attitudes, aptitudes, interests, and values. Hoppock (1987) also believes that individuals choose their careers in order to meet individual needs like self-esteem and achievement; and posited that one's vocational choice should meet one's needs whether physical, psychological or emotional.

Epstein, Jeske and Harris (1985) contended that one's self-concept is the totality of what one believes about one's self plus the value one places on those beliefs. Thus a person's concept of himself may affect his academic orientation which in turn affects his career/vocational choice. When a person is psychologically and/or emotionally unsettled, he tends to make poor judgment and choices. This is what Osarenren (2000) meant when she declared that any idea which implies that a person is incomplete and/or insignificant might cause him intolerable distress and does serious harm to his self concept thereby affecting his productivity in life.

Perhaps it is this poor perception of self and several other factors that explain why some children have become street children. Edun (1999) reviewing Ennew (1989) and Firme, Stone and Tigiboy (1989) describes street children as those who occupy a position of extreme deprivation, working on the streets with full exposure to the vagaries of the elements and becoming participants in street crimes. They are aged between 8 and 18 years. Neale (1997), Olufemi (1998) and Onyanjo and Kariuki (1992) state that several related economic, social and political factors may be the cause of children being on the streets. These include land reforms, population growth, drought, economic recessions, unemployment, poverty and violence (physical and sexual abuse).

Available literature reveals that quite a lot has been done in an attempt to rehabilitate/institutionalize the street children. For instance, Oloko (1995) has catalogued a series of laws and policies in Nigeria which directly or indirectly relate to children on the streets. Similarly, Ocholo, Dzikus and Vanderschueren (1999) have documented strategies for local authorities in Africa on how to deal with street children and gangs. Even non-governmental organizations have shown interest in helping to re-orientate the street children, for instance: Child Life-line (CLL) in 1995, UNESCO since 1985, Precious Child Care Foundation in

2004. However, most of the street children even after rehabilitation, find it difficult to adjust socially. They are provided with necessary knowledge tools which should encourage them to do well. Unfortunately, the Nigerian experience shows that most rehabilitated street children usually have low self concept of themselves, exhibit poor academic orientation and make mediocre career/vocational choices.

From the theories and studies reviewed, it could be summarized that normal children and institutionalized street children do not have the same backgrounds. They may have common choices of vocation available to them, but their differences in psycho-social, socio-economic and family/environmental factors may engender differences in their self-concepts, academic orientation and vocational interests.

Hypotheses

The conceptual hypothesis tested was that there will be no significant difference in self concept, academic orientation and vocational interests among street children in rehabilitation homes and normal children in private and public schools. This hypothesis was broken into four null hypotheses and tested.

1. There will be no significant difference in the self-concept of normal and institutionalized street children.
2. There will be no significant difference in the academic orientation of normal and institutionalized street children.
3. There will be no significant difference in the vocational interests of normal and institutionalized street children.
4. There will be no significant gender difference in self-concept of normal and institutionalized street children.

Methodology

Sample. The participants consisted of 120 children aged between 9 and 18 years. Twenty children were randomly picked from each of 2 rehabilitation homes, 2 private and 2 public schools in Lagos Metropolis. A total of 60 boys and 60 girls participated in the study.

Instrumentation. To generate the relevant data, three Research Instruments were used.

a) Lipsett's (1988) Self Concept Scale for Children. This consisted of 22 items on a rating of 5 points used to assess the self-concept of the participants. To validate the instrument, the researchers employed Hare's (1985) Self-esteem Scale (HSS). Both instruments are standardized and have been extensively used among African children. However the two instruments were administered concurrently to a group of twenty (10 boys and 10 girls) JSS 3 students in Surulere and twenty children (of equal gender ratio and comparable ages) in a rehabilitation centre within the neighbourhood. Using the Pearson r as an estimate of reliability, both instruments correlated significantly (r 0.86, $P < .05$).

b) Academic Achievement Orientation Scale (AAOS). This was a nine item researcher designed instrument used to assess the academic orientation of the participants. Using a test -retest procedure with an interval of five weeks on the same normative sample, a reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained.

c) Bakare's (1977) Vocational Interest Inventory (VII) was used to identify the ten vocational interest areas of the participants, namely outdoor, mechanical, computational, scientific, persuasive, artistic, literary, musical, social and clerical. This inventory was developed in Nigeria and has been extensively used with encouraging results to assess the vocational interest of adolescents.

Data Collection Procedure: The procedure for data collection consisted of the researchers personally administering to the participants the three instruments, one at a time on the same day and guiding them to respond to each item. Group administration of the instruments was employed using their normal classrooms. Participants were encouraged to be honest in their responses as it was not a test. Although there was no timing constraint, the instruments were completed in less than one hour and were immediately retrieved. The return rate was therefore 100 percent. The instruments were manually scored by the researcher and the data generated were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 11.0.

Method of Data Analysis. Hypothesis 3 was analyzed using Chi-square test while hypotheses 1, 2, and 4 were tested using Univariate Analysis of variance, where the f ratio was statistically significant, post-hoc comparisons were made using the Shceffe procedure. All tests of significance were performed at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The first hypothesis stated that there will be no significant difference in the self concept of normal and institutionalized street children. The one - way analysis of variance technique was used to test the hypothesis. The results are in Table 1.

Table I: One-way ANOVA of difference in self-concept of normal and institutionalized street children

Group	N	X	SD
Normal (private)	40	87.40	18.33
Normal (public)	40	85.40	7.98
Institutionalized Street Children	40	80.68	8.60

Source of Variation	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean squares	F-ratio
Between Groups	954.02	2	477.01	
Within Groups	1846.98	117	157.85	3.02*
Total	19422.00	119		

*Not significant at 0.05, df = 2 & 117; critical F =3.05

Table 1 shows that a calculated F-value of 3.02 resulted. This is less than the critical F-value of 3.05 given 2/117 degrees of freedom at 0.05 significance level. It was therefore concluded that there is a negligible difference in the self concept of normal and institutionalized street children investigated.

The second hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the academic orientation of normal and institutionalized street children. One-way analysis of variance was used and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA of difference in academic orientation of normal and industrialized street children.

Group	n	X	SD
Normal (Private)	40	23.23	2.04
Normal (Public)	40	23.73	2.51
Institutionalized Street Children	40	19.78	3.48

Sources of Variation	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean squares	F-ratio
Between Groups	370.07	2	185.05	24.60*
Within Groups	879.93	117	7.52	
Total	1250.00	119		

* Significant at 0.05; df = 2 and 117; Critical F = 3.05

From Table 2, we observe that the ANOVA comparison yielded a calculated F-value of 24.60. As this value is greater than the critical F-value of 3.05 given 2/117 degrees of freedom, we failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that statistically significant between group differences exist in academic orientation of the street and normal children. It was necessary to investigate where significant between group differences lie and Scheffe's pair-wise comparison of groups means was done. The results of the comparison are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Scheffe Pair-Wise Comparison on Academic Orientation

Group	Private N = 40	Public N= 40	Rehabilitation Home N= 40
Normal (private)	23.23	-0.50	3.45*
Normal (public)		23.73	3.95*
Institutionalized Street Children			19.78

a: Group means are in the diagonal while protected t-value are above the diagonal

From Table 3 normal children in private and public schools showed similar levels of academic orientation ($t=0.05$, $df=78$, critical $t = 2.00$, $P>0.05$). However, both normal children from private ($t=3.45$, $df = 78$, critical $t = 2.00$, $P<0.05$) and public ($t=3.95$, $df = 78$, critical $t = 2.00$, $P<0.05$) schools showed higher academic orientation than street children in rehabilitation homes.

The third hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the vocational interests of the normal and institutionalized street children. The results of the Chi-square analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis of Difference in Vocational Interests of Normal and Institutionalized Street Children

Group	1 out.	2 mech.	3 compt	4 Sci.	5 pers.	6 arts.	7 lit.	8 music	9 soc.	10 cleric.	Total	X ²
Normal (private)	5 (2.67)	4 (4.67)	3 (4.33)	5 (9.67)	6* (2.33)	2 (1.33)	6* (5.00)	5 (4.33)	4 (2.33)	0 (3.33)	40	
Normal (public)	1 (2.67)	6 (4.67)	5 (4.33)	19* (9.67)	1 (2.33)	1 (1.33)	2 (5.00)	0 (4.33)	2 (2.33)	3 (3.33)	40	47.08
Street Children	2 (2.67)	4 (4.67)	5 (4.33)	5 (9.67)	0 (2.33)	1 (1.33)	7 (5.00)	8* (4.33)	1 (2.33)	7 (3.33)	40	
Total	8	14	13	29	7	4	15	13	7	10	120	

***Significant at 0.05; $df = 18$ critical $X^2 = 28.87$. Expected frequencies are in brackets**

Note:

Out – Outdoor

Compt – Computational

Pers – Persuasive

Lit - Literary

Soc – Social

Mech – Mechanical

Sci – Scientific

Arts - Arstistic

Mus – Music

Cleric - Clerical

The results in Table 4 show that there are differences in the vocational interests of all classes of children investigated. Normal children in private schools tended to be more interested in the outdoor, persuasive and literary vocations while normal children in public schools showed the greatest interest in scientific and computational vocations. In addition, the street children in rehabilitation homes differed as their interests lay more in the musical and literary vocations. An analysis of their career preferences show that while the normal children indicated interest in white collar and prestigious occupations such as medicine, law, pharmacy and engineering, the rehabilitated street children were interested in the skilled trades like music, dancing, carpentry, and mechanic.

The fourth hypothesis stated that there is no significant gender difference in self-concept due to the backgrounds of the respondents. The two-way analysis of variance results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Two-way ANOVA of gender difference in self-concept due to background of the respondent

Group	Sex	N	X	SD
Normal (Private)	Male	20	89.95	15.40
	Female	20	84.85	20.95
Normal (Public)	Male	20	84.45	8.89
	Female	20	86.35	7.06
Street Children (Rehab. Home)	Male	20	80.35	9.68
	Female	20	81.00	7.60
Source of Variation	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean squares	F-ratio
Group type	954.02	2	477.01	2.99 ^{ns}
Sex	21.68	1	21.68	0.14 ^{ns}
School Type/Sex	278.75	2	139.38	0.88 ^{ns}
Within Groups	8167.55	114	159.36	
Total	19422.00	119		

ns: Not significant at 0.05, df =1, 2 & 114; critical F =3.93& 3.07

From the ANOVA results, the calculated F-value of 0.88 for the interaction term is less than the critical F-value of 0.07 given 2/114 degrees of freedom at 0.05 alpha level. This means that there is no significant gender difference in self-concept irrespective of whether the subjects are street children in rehabilitation homes or normal children in private and public schools.

Generally, all the children recorded a high self-concept and understanding of themselves whether male or female.

From the results, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Children investigated had a high concept of themselves. Their attitude was positive.
- Normal children in private and public schools have higher academic orientation than street children in rehabilitation homes.
- The vocational interests and aspirations of the children differed significantly according to whether they were normal children in private or public schools or whether they were street children in rehabilitation centres.
- Gender did not affect the children's self-concept.

Discussion

The results of this research have shown that although some of the children do not live with their parents and may be classified as unhappy or disadvantaged, they too have a high level of self concept and can interpret their actions and identify their chosen field. The findings confirm the general notion that Nigerian youths perceive themselves to be hardworking, active, ambitious and confident. A child's behaviour and performance are often a reflection of how he or she views himself or herself. From the result, it is obvious that whether normal or street, every child has self-perception. Again irrespective of whether they were male or female, there was no significant difference in their self concept, This supports Falua (1985) who found no significant difference between males and females in their self concepts.

Interestingly, although the children manifested similar levels of self-concept, they had different academic inclinations, with the normal children scoring higher than the rehabilitated street children. An analysis of their actual vocational preferences and subject choices showed that most of the street children would rather take vocational/skilled subjects than academic subjects. This may be a survival strategy imposed on the street children by the reality of their many years of economic disadvantage. The differences in their interest in vocations reveal the fact that the children recognized their different capabilities, social circumstances and limitations before a choice. Onyejiaku (1991) found that a person's choice of vocation assumes his proper understanding of himself in terms of abilities, interests and aptitudes in relation to available occupational opportunities. From the way they chose, it is easy to know that street children prefer musical and clerical as they do not need tedious academic work while the normal children chose the areas that involved academics. These results call for attention of policy makers, governments and educators/counsellors to bridge the gap in academics between street children in rehabilitation homes and normal children in private and public schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

- Since the home as a primary agent of socialization place a vital in building a child's self concept, parents, siblings and significant others in the home should ensure they give all the encouragement and necessary support for developing a positive self concept in their children and guiding them in making the right choices.
- Teachers as role models have become a significant force in building positive and realistic self concepts in students, it is therefore imperative that they develop ways and means of encouraging high aspirations for academic achievements and informed choice of vocations.
- There may be the need for policy shift to encourage the mainstreaming of rehabilitated street children in regular schools if only to mitigate the negative consequences of economic disadvantage of the street children and encourage their overall development in a conducive learning environment.

Conclusion

This study has surveyed the differences in self-concept, academic orientation and vocational interests of normal and institutionalized street children. It was found that all the children had similar self-concept levels inspite of gender and background differences. It was also found that normal children had higher academic orientation than street children and all the classes of children had different vocational interests.

That street children have low level of academic orientation and make poor choices of vocations results from the social reality that they start taking care of their socio-economic problems and become independent too early in life than pursue academics. The consequences of these for teachers, counsellors, policy makers and government are enormous and call for urgent action.

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