



## Adolescent Neglect and Neuroticism among Senior Secondary School Students in Sokoto Metropolis

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined adolescent neglect and neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis. The research design used was descriptive survey. The total population of senior secondary schools in Sokoto metropolis used in the research was 19, 234 from 48 senior secondary schools. Nine (9) schools were sampled out for the study; three male schools, three female schools, and three mixed schools. Stratified, purposive, proportionate and random sampling techniques were employed. The sample size of the study was 365 derived from the Research Advisors Table (2006). Two instruments for data collection were used: Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ: Adult Version for ages 16-69) and self-constructed Adolescent Neglect Scale (ANS). Pearson correlation was used on the first hypothesis, and independent sample t-test was run on the second and third hypotheses. The results showed there was no significant relationship between adolescent neglect and neuroticism. There were, however, significant differences on the basis of adolescent neglect and neuroticism among the samples. The researchers recommended that parents and all other care givers should ensure that adolescents under their watch are not deprived of basic necessities of life.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History

Received: June, 2019

Received in revised form: July, 2019

Accepted: August, 2019

Published online: September, 2019

### KEYWORDS

Adolescent, Neglect, Neuroticism

### INTRODUCTION

Neglect is a negative attitude among caregivers, who may include parents, older siblings, nannies, school teachers, and authorities. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) see the concept of neglect as the failure to provide basic needed care for an individual irrespective of age such as shelter, food, clothing, supervision, medical care and other basic necessities needed for the person's wellbeing. In the view of Friedman (2010), the impact of neglect does not just end during childhood and adolescence; all care deficits experienced by children often constitute major obstacles during cognitive, behavioral and emotional development during adolescence and further into adulthood. Watson (2005) puts that, "adolescent neglect is the failure to provide basic needed care for the adolescent, such as shelter, food, clothing, education, supervision, medical care and other basic necessities needed for the adolescent's physical, intellectual and emotional development." Neglect of adolescents may be as a result of several problems on the part of parents such as psychological disorders, poor parenting style, substance abuse, domestic violence, unemployment, poverty, unplanned pregnancy, etc.

Adolescent neglect is indeed a common problem across Nigeria, and Sokoto State is not left out. Over the years, researchers in Nigeria have worked tremendously on child neglect, but not much seems to have been done on adolescent neglect. Such relative neglect of the subject of adolescent neglect may not be unconnected with our deep-seated culture of being non-challant or totally indifferent to the needs, expectations, challenges and future of adolescents in our environment. Sometimes parents and other stakeholders fail to recognize the need to support adolescents just as they support younger children. Many families in Nigeria apparently assume that their children require little guidance when they reach puberty and should be allowed to have independent decisions or fend for themselves. This attitude of neglect denies adolescents the opportunity to realize their goals in life and develop into adults their society will be proud of. Spano (2004) posits that as they grow and develop, adolescents are influenced by a lot of factors, such as their physical environment, culture, religion, school, and the media.

Neglect could also be in form of allowing the young individual to witness violence or severe

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abuse between parents or adults, or be ignored, insulted, or threatened, or not provided with a safe environment and adult emotional support (Cawson, 2002). It is the attitude of neglect that sometimes causes children and adolescents to abscond from school or drop out entirely. This research is set to assess how adolescent neglect relates to adolescents' personality traits and academic achievement in senior secondary schools located in Sokoto metropolis.

Neglect often causes stress that is associated with disruptions in early brain development, and severe stress can lead to physical consequences such as impairments in the nervous system and immune system, for which victims of neglect are at greater risk for future problems such as smoking, alcohol and drug misuse, and different personality disorders (World Health Organization [WHO], 2010). A lot of researches conducted on child neglect posit that most psychological problems found in adult life were deeply rooted during childhood and adolescence stages.

When there is an intentional or unintentional failure to provide all or part of the basic needed care for the adolescent, such a failure is named 'adolescent neglect'. Therefore, adolescent neglect is the situation whereby an adolescent, for certain reasons, does not have his/her basic needs met by those responsible for them. This attitude of neglect denies adolescents the opportunity to realize their goals in life and develop into adults their society will be proud of. Spano (2004) posits that as they grow and develop, adolescents are influenced by a lot of factors, such as their physical environment, culture, religion, school, and the media.

Neuroticism is a psychological construct used by psychoanalysts such as Freud and Eysenck to explain how stable and unstable the human mind becomes when faced with certain psychological or physical stimuli, or a combination of both. The trait of neuroticism shows the extent of an individual's emotionality. According to Eysenck (1975), neurotic or emotionally unstable people are anxious, worrying, depressed, overly emotional, rigid, and irrational. While emotionally stable individuals are optimistic, open-minded, rational and emotionally controlled.

In Sokoto State, adolescent neglect is a widespread phenomenon; adolescents are typically introduced to adult life almost prematurely; families pay little or no attention to the effects of factors that

influence the lives of young people. When infants and children are denied enough of good food, clothing, shelter, medicine, training and supervision, we say there is child neglect. In the same vein, when such denial occurs with respect to adolescents, researchers on adolescent development maintain that adolescent neglect has occurred. In Sokoto and environs, just as in other parts of Nigeria, children and adolescents raised by well-to-do homes also experience different forms of neglect which cause detrimental long lasting effects during developmental stages of such individuals. High frequency or chronicity of neglect, however, is what various researchers such as Brandon, Bailey, Belderson, and Larsson (2013) and Thornberry, Ireland and Smith (2001) found to have effects on life of adolescents.

There are different ways in which adolescents in Sokoto are being neglected at home and within the school environment. The researcher, having taught for many years in both private and public schools in the state, has observed that some adolescents are into drugs, out-of-school, drop-out, delinquent, lack adequate school materials, look depressed, lack enough medical care, personal and environmental hygiene, and emotional care in their homes. Similarly, some schools, across Sokoto State, which are supposed to compensate the hope and serve as source of hope for students, are not taking proper adequate care. These instances of neglect drew the researcher's interest to conduct this research in order to find out how adolescent neglect relates to neurotic personality development of adolescent students in senior secondary schools located in Sokoto metropolis.

### **Research Questions**

1. Is there any significant relationship between adolescent neglect and neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis?
2. Is there any significant gender difference in adolescent neglect among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis?
3. Is there any significant gender difference in neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis?

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the relationship between adolescent neglect and neuroticism among

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senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

2. To find out if there is any significant gender difference in adolescent neglect among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.
3. To find out if there is any significant gender difference in neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant relationship between adolescent neglect and neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.
2. There is no significant gender difference in adolescent neglect among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.
4. There is no significant gender difference in neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research is based on two relevant theories: Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1958) and Trait Theory of Personality (Eysenck, 1947). The major assumption of Bowlby's attachment theory is that parents are a sanctuary of safety throughout pre-adult life (i.e adolescence). Secure attachments help children and adolescents to develop an internal model of self-competence and a model of dependability for others. While insecure attachments, however, promote feelings of threat, rejection, and personal unworthiness. Eysenck's trait theory revolves around neuroticism, extraversion and psychoticism. With neuroticism dividing into emotionally-stable and emotionally-unstable traits.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted for the study is descriptive research, which primarily focuses on describing the extent of relationships or differences between quantitative variables. A descriptive research helps provide answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how associated with a particular research problem (Baron, 2001).

However, the target population for this study was the population of SS I and SS II students from 48 senior secondary schools in Sokoto metropolis, which was 19, 234. The students' average age was 17. A multi-stage sampling

technique was used to arrive at 365 respondents out of nine schools using the Research Advisors table (2006). Stratified, purposive, proportionate and random sampling techniques were employed.

Two instruments were used by the study: Self-developed Adolescent Neglect Scale (ANS) and Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ: Adult - 16 - 69 years of age) The Adolescent Neglect Scale (ANS) is made up of 30 items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to be responded to by the samples. Scores range from 30 - 150; higher scores (91 - 150) indicate adolescent neglect while lower scores (30 - 90) shows absence of adolescent neglect. While, on the EPQ, the researcher adopted only the 'neuroticism scale' which has 23 yes or no questions that identify neurotic trait and emotional stability.

The validity for Adolescent Neglect Scale was provided by researchers by exposing the scale to experts in the field of Psychology. While Eysenck and Eysenck (1975) validated the EPQ. Uzoka and Naedo (2013) used EPQ in their study of psychological correlates achievement in sports among Nigerian adolescents and maintained that EPQ had originality of measuring what it ought to measure.

In establishing the reliability of the instruments, test-retest method was used on Adolescent Neglect Scale in a three-week interval, and Eysenck's indices on Neuroticism Scale were adopted. The Pearson index obtained on the neglect scale was 0.74, while the alpha coefficients of reliability of the EPQ (Adult) for Nigerian samples were provided by Eysenck, Adelaja and Eysenck (1978), while Eysenck and Eysenck provided the test-retest reliability coefficients of EPQ (Adult) for samples of English University Students. The test-retest time interval was one month. The neuroticism coefficients for Nigerian samples were 0.73 (males) and 0.84 (females), while the coefficients for English samples were 0.90 (males) and 0.74 (females).

Pearson correlation was run on the first hypothesis, and independent sample t-test was used on the second and third hypotheses.

### **RESULTS**

Among the 365 respondents to whom the Adolescent Neglect Scale (ANS) and Neuroticism Scale were exposed, a total of 117 were identified as neglected. There were 54 neglected neurotics 33 of whom were males, 21 females. And there was a total of 63 emotionally stable respondents 36 of whom

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were males and 27 were females. There were 69 neglected males and 48 neglected females.

**Null-Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between adolescent neglect and

neuroticism among senior secondary students in Sokoto metropolis.

Relationship in hypothesis one is depicted in two tables since neuroticism is bi-dimensional on the instrument used.

**Table 1:** Relationship between Adolescent Neglect and Neuroticism Trait among Senior Sec. Sch. Students in Sokoto Metropolis

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Neuroticism	54	10.06	2.69	52	0.06	0.03	H <sub>0</sub> Retained
Neglect	54	89.38	16.36				

Table 1 indicates that the mean and standard deviation of neurotic personality are 10.06 and 2.69 respectively, while adolescent neglect has a mean score of 89.38 and a standard deviation of 16.36. The table shows that out of 117 neglected adolescents, 54 were neurotic. From the table, it is understood that r-Cal (0.06) is positively greater than p-Value (0.027) at 0.05 alpha level, which connotes a

non-significant relationship between adolescent neglect and neurotic personality trait among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis. This sort of correlation means that neglect of adolescents by parents, teachers and other caregivers does attract neurotic personality traits into such adolescent students.

**Table 2:** Relationship between Adolescent Neglect and Emo. Stability Trait among Senior Sec. Sch. Students in Sokoto Metropolis

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Emo. Stab	63	3.28	1.42	61	0.30	0.06	H <sub>0</sub> Retained
Neglect	63	89.38	16.36				

Table 2 indicates that the mean and standard deviation of emotionally stable personality are 3.28 and 1.42 respectively, while adolescent neglect has a mean score of 89.38 and a standard deviation of 16.36. The table shows that out of 117 neglected adolescents, 63 were emotionally stable. From the table, it is understood that r-Cal (0.301) is higher than p-Value (0.063) at 0.05 alpha level, which

connotes lack of significant relationship between adolescent neglect and emotional stability of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant gender difference in adolescent neglect in Sokoto metropolis.

**Table 3:** Gender Difference on the basis of Adolescent Neglect among Senior Sec. Sch. Students in Sokoto Metropolis

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	t-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Male	69	88.09	13.76	115	0.95	0.04	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Female	48	91.02	16.62				

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Table 3 shows a t-Cal of 0.951 is greater than the p-Value of 0.043, which indicates a significant gender difference on the basis of adolescent neglect among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis. This means that male and female senior secondary school students in Sokoto differed significantly in the way they were neglected in terms of education, healthcare,

supervision, emotional care, environmental hygiene, and physical care.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant gender difference in neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

Gender difference in hypothesis 3 is depicted in two tables since neuroticism is bi-dimensional according to the scale used.

**Table 4:** Gender Difference on the basis Neuroticism among Senior Sec. Sch. Students in Sokoto Metropolis

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	t-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Male	33	8.02	2.42	52	0.04	0.03	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Female	21	3.51	2.33				

Table 4 shows a t-Cal of 0.04 is greater than the p-Value of 0.03 at 0.05 level of significance under 52 degrees of freedom, which indicates a significant gender difference on the basis of neuroticism among senior secondary school

students in Sokoto metropolis. This means that male and female senior secondary school students in Sokoto differed significantly in their neurotic traits. The hypothesis is hereby rejected.

**Table 5:** Gender Difference on the basis Emo. Stability among Senior Sec. Sch. Students in Sokoto Metropolis

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	t-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Male	36	8.03	3.06	61	0.53	0.04	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Female	27	6.20	3.01				

Table 5 shows a t-Cal of 0.53 is greater than the p-Value of 0.04 at 0.05 level of significance under 61 degrees of freedom, which indicates a significant gender difference on the basis of emotional stability among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis. This means that male and female senior secondary school students in Sokoto differed significantly in their emotional stability traits. The hypothesis is hereby rejected.

3. There is significant gender difference on the basis of adolescent neglect among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.
4. The study found significant gender difference on the basis of neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.
5. There is significant gender difference on the basis of emotional stability among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

**FINDINGS**

1. The findings of the study reveals a non-significant relationship between adolescent neglect and neurotic personality trait among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.
2. The study found no significant relationship between adolescent neglect and emotional stability of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

**DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS**

Null Hypothesis one measuring relationship between neurotic personality and adolescent neglect among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis got retained to indicate that r-Cal (0.056) is positively greater than the p-value of 0.027 at 0.05 level of significance. Such a result empirically tells how the two variables are related. This sort of

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correlation, however, means that neglect of adolescents by parents, teachers and other caregivers does not attract neurotic personality traits in such adolescents. The concept of neuroticism, as earlier discussed in chapter two of this work, is concerned with being consistently anxious, timid, and overly fearful for no significant reason, restless, worrying, irrational, rigid, and depressed.

In Sokoto State, neurotic adolescents may abuse drugs in order to subdue their high feelings of worries and anxieties, isolate from public domain, withdraw from competitions over slight failures/hitches/misunderstanding with others, and would be invariably moody, sad-looking, and without enough confidence among friends or peers. In layman's terms, this particular finding highlights that neglect of young adults (adolescents) in terms of providing them with basic necessities (i.e. food, shelter, clothing, education, security, medicals, and guidance) leads to such adolescents having emotional instability.

Moreover, the results on relationship between emotional stability (opposing trait of neuroticism) and adolescent neglect reveals an  $r$ -Cal of 0.301 and a  $p$ -value of 0.063 at 0.05 alpha level. Such a result, in essence, indicates the absence of significant relationship between the correlated variables. Adolescents who are emotionally stable would be open-minded, i.e. receptive to positive ideas or suggestions coming from others; such adolescents would be optimistic about life, creative, rational, and emotionally controlled.

The finding on hypothesis two indicates there is a significant gender difference among neglected adolescents on the basis of neglect experience. Such difference is indicated by a  $t$ -Cal of 0.951 which is greater than a  $p$ -value of 0.043 under 115 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. The researcher had learnt from preliminary information stemming from Adolescent Neglect Scale (ANS) that in Sokoto metropolis boys seemed to be more neglected than girls in terms of guidance, emotional care, supervision, physiological needs, etc. It is only in terms of educational opportunities that boys are sometimes favoured over girls. This lone boy-preference is due to the norm that women's role is in the kitchen.

A large number of girls in Sokoto metropolis are still out of school, and many lucky to have been enrolled do not go anywhere beyond the level of Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE).

Such gender discrimination in Sokoto continues unchecked because majority of the populace have always been deceived by the belief that girls who have been to the University have experienced what the society refer to as "moral decadence"; and that working-class wives end up hijacked or harassed by other men at the workplace, and will be disloyal to their spouses. That must be a wrong perception because many young girls got morally spoiled while out of school; again, many working wives have been satisfactorily loyal and subservient to their spouses, and helpful too in looking after their families. A study by Alice (1987) in Bolton found there was no gender difference as to the effects of neglect on adolescent population.

A number of empirical studies the researcher came across indicated relationship between neurotic traits and neglect or abuse as the case may be. A research conducted by Jebb (2001) shows that anxiety and depression (neuroticism) correlate with child abuse and neglect in Karachi. A research by Harkness and Lumley (2008) also found a relationship between child abuse and neglect and depression particularly for adolescents. This research also argues with the finding of a study by Muff (2002) who examined how neglect of secondary school students correlated with Big-five personality traits in Mumbai. Results showed neuroticism and extraversion were positively related to neglectful attitude of parents. Younoos (1998) also reported a correlation between neglectful parenting and adolescents' suicidal tendencies (neurotic trait) in Birmingham with 208 respondents. Another research which also argues with the findings of this research is that of Michael (1990) which found a significant relation between child abuse and neglect and mood disorder (neurotic trait) in Karachi, though found no significant gender difference. Mills (2004) also associated abuse and neglect with internalizing behaviours such as depression in adolescents in Georgia. Hildyard and Wolf (2002) also found that 'internalizing behaviours' are commonly associated with neglect; they reported that children affected by neglect were more isolated at school compared to other groups of children and had difficulty making friends; and that neglected children had tendencies to display aggressive and disruptive behaviours (psychoticism).

But this research got the backing of an earlier study by Simon (2009) who found that adolescents and adults who were neglected during

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childhood were not at any risk of depression and anxiety in Johannesburg; that research rather found significant association between parenting styles and such personality disorders. Another researcher also supporting the finding of this research is that by Phillips (2013) who found no significant correlation between child abuse and neglect and the trait of neuroticism among students of selected tertiary institutions in Kampala, Uganda.

### CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have indicated that, there is no statistically significant relationship between adolescent neglect and the trait of neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis. But there is significant gender difference on the basis of adolescent neglect and neuroticism among the samples of the research. But other personality disorders might correlate positively with neglect.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations of the study based on its findings.

1. Parents and all caregivers anywhere in Sokoto should play their own part by making sure that basic necessities are available to children/adolescents under their watch so that no form of personality disorder develops thereupon. Parents should not discriminate against any gender concerning basic necessities.
2. Parents also need to control the behaviours and interactions of their children against intrusion of bad peers, consumption of illicit drugs, participation in antisocial activities, watching of violence, and so on and so forth.
3. Teachers in Sokoto should make sure that they fully discharge their duties in handling the curricular and extracurricular activities of their students.
4. Schools in Sokoto should consistently draw the attention of parents, guardians and government towards all inadequacies or deficiencies with respect to the pupils/students therein.

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