Some Psychological Variables Differentiating Between Adolescents With Step-parents And Those Without Step-parents

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Introduction

The well-being of adolescents has become a topic of increasing interest among researchers in general. It is now regarded as something worthy of empirical investigation by researchers in eliciting without faking, the true status of the living and parenting conditions of adolescents (Marks 1998; Leug and Jim Park 2000). Newman (1994) however observed that there has been a great increase in divorce rate that is threatening the marriage institution on the pages of parent media and also on the electronic media. Worse still, the failure rate of second marriages has been found to be higher than that of first-time marriages which in-turn has effects directly and indirectly on the involved-child.

Karnes & McGinnis (1996); Parker & Calhoun (1996); and Rimm (1997), all noted some of the inherent difficulties in second marriages and step family situations. These include

1. Facing the realities of step family
2. Understanding how step family works
3. Individual differences and the force of togetherness
4. Individual habits, attitudes, values and rituals’ that come into step families
5. Spoken, unspoken and hidden contracts
6. Jealousy in step families
7. Birth order characteristics and sibling displacement, and
8. Money issues in step families.

It is not uncommon to see children in step families longing to see their biological mother especially or biological father in some cases. There is even that sense of maltreatment, which is always perceived by children in step-parent arrangement, no matter how they are taken care of. In a step parenting situation, step fathers as compared with mothers had more optimistic perspective on step families, were less likely to endorse step family myths and reported greater satisfaction with (step) parent-child relationships (Kurdek & Fine 1991). Ishu – Kuntz and Ihinger – Tallman (1991), compared the effects of marital and parental status on three domains of well-being (marital quality, parental satisfaction and global life satisfaction) by examining three types of parents (first-married biological parents, re-married biological parents and step-parents), it was observed that first-married biological parents reported greater satisfaction with parenting than did the other groups.

Psychological variables such as self efficacy, life satisfaction locus of control are factors that have some relationship with family situations (Crossbie – Burnet & Helnbrech 1993). Self efficacy has been
the focus of studies on clinical problems such as phobias, depression, social skills and assertiveness on smoking behaviour, pain control, health and athletic performance (White & Riedmann 2002). In the academic settings, self-efficacy has been prominent in studies that have explored its relationships with attributions, goal settings, memory, modeling, problem solving, reward contingencies, self-regulation, social comparisons, strategy training teaching and teacher education, anxiety, self-concept and academic performances across subject areas (Wilson, Peterson & Henry, 1997)

Locus of control has also been the subject of a lot of research. A study by Murk and Addleman (1992) found that students who had a high level of moral reasoning were also more likely to have an internal locus of control. Kolruman-Honkanen, Honkanen, Viinamaki, Heikkilla, Kaprio and Koskenvuo (1997), investigated whether self reported life satisfaction predicted health indicator. It was however observed that life dissatisfaction has a long-term effect on the risk of suicide, and this seems to be partly mediated through poor health behaviour.

The erosion of marriage has caused enormous difficulties for children, parents and society compared to children born within marriage, those born outside of marriage for example are overwhelmingly more likely to live in poverty, depend on welfare and have behavioral problems. They may also suffer depression and physical abuse, failure in school, drug abuse and end up in jail (Fagon, Patterson & Rector, 2002). As much as studies are available in the constructs of life satisfaction, self efficacy and locus of control, none has been done to predict group membership of adolescents living with a step-parent and those living with biological parents. The concern of this study therefore, is to establish whether self efficacy, locus of control and life satisfaction would mutually or individually be able to predict adolescents living with their biological parents and those living with their step-parents.

To achieve the objective of the study, the following hypotheses were generated and tested:

1. Self efficacy, locus of control and life satisfaction would jointly not significantly discriminate between adolescents living with their biological parents and those living with their step-parents.

2. Self efficacy would not significantly discriminate between adolescents living with their biological parents and those living with their step-parents.

3. Locus of control would not significantly discriminate between adolescents living with their biological parents and those living with their step-parents.

**METHOD**

**Design:**

The expo-facto design was adopted in this study

**Subjects:**

The subjects for this study comprised all adolescents in all the nineteen secondary schools in Ijebu-North Local Government Area of Ogun State. Simple random sampling was used to select two hundred and sixty-eight (268) respondents. A list of all the schools in the research area was made and five (5) secondary schools were randomly selected.
Instrumentation:

Three instruments were used to collect data for the study. The instruments were described below:

– **Locus of Control Scale:** Rotler’s Locus of Control Scale developed by Rotler (1966) was abducted for the study. The scale is a 29 paired-item scale which was designed to measure the extent to which individuals believe they can control events that affects them.

– **Temporal Life Satisfaction Scale:** Temporal Satisfaction with Life Scale (TSWLS) by Parot; Diener & Suh (1998) is a 15-item scale that provides a total life satisfaction score and also three subscales relating to past satisfaction with life, concurrent life satisfaction and future expectation of life satisfaction. The ISWLS yielded a positive correlation of \( r = .39 \) with conditional intelligence (SakLfske, Austin & Minski 2003)

– **Generalized Self Efficacy Scale:** This was developed by Hassan (2004). It is a 22-item Likert Scale designed to measure individual’s expectances of beliefs about one’s ability to carry out specific behaviours. The internal consistency of the scale as measured by Cronbach Alpha was 0.86 while the test-retest reliability of 0.82 was recorded with three weeks inter-test interval.

Procedure:

The scales were personally administered on the participants by the researcher. To reach the respondents, visits were made by the researcher to the schools with permission taken from the school principals for the conduct of the study. The Discriminant Function Analysis (DFA) was then used for the production of group membership. Data were tested for significance at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results are as presented in table 1 – 4

Hypotheses 1:

Self – efficacy, locus of control and life satisfaction would jointly not significantly discriminate between adolescents living with their biological parents and those living with their step-parents.
The result in Table 1 indicated that when all the predictor variables were entered into the discriminant function model, locus of control, life satisfaction and self-efficacy were found to be significant predictors of adolescents’ parenting condition. (Wilks’ λ = .957, canonical correlation squared = .0428; P < 0.05). The canonical correlation squared of 0.0428 indicated that the model predicted 4.28% of the variation in adolescents.

**Hypotheses 2.**

Self efficacy would not significantly discriminate between adolescents living with their biological parents and those living with their step-parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Eigen value</th>
<th>% of variance</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
<th>Canonical Correlation</th>
<th>Wilks Lambda</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self efficacy</td>
<td>.034(a)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td>7.024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in table 2 indicated that self efficacy was found to be significant predictor of adolescent parenting condition. (Wilks’ λ = .967; canonical correlation squared = .0331; P < .05). The canonical correlation square of .0331 indicated that the model predicted 3.31% of the variation in adolescents’ parenting condition.

**Hypothesis 3.**

Locus of control would not significantly discriminate between adolescents living with their biological parents and those living with their step parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Eigen value</th>
<th>% of variance</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
<th>Canonical Correlation</th>
<th>Wilks Lambda</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locus of Control</td>
<td>.002(a)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.998</td>
<td>.356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in table 3 indicated that locus of control was found to be insignificant predictor of adolescents’ parenting condition (Wilks’ λ = .998; canonical correlation square = .0016; P > .05). The canonical correlation squared of .0016 indicated that the model predicted only 0.16% of the variation in adolescents’ parenting condition.

**Hypothesis 4.**

Life satisfaction would not significantly discriminate between adolescents living with their biological parents and those living with their step-parents.
The results in table 4 indicated that life satisfaction was found to be insignificant predictor of adolescents’ parenting condition (Wilks’ $\lambda = .996$; canonical correlation squared = $0.0042$; $P > .05$). The canonical correlation squared of $0.0042$ indicated that the model predicted 0.42% of the variation in adolescents’ parenting condition.

**Discussion**

Data breakdown using discriminant function analysis indicated that Locus of control, Life satisfaction and self-efficacy would jointly predict and classify adolescents living with both biological parents and those living with a step parent (Wilks’ $\lambda = .957$; canonical correlation squared = $0.0428$; $P < .05$). 61.8% of the cases were successfully classified, 61.3% of the adolescents living with both biological parents and 64.1% of the adolescents living with a step parent were correctly classified. In considering the relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction, it could be inferred from the result that each of the independent variable contributed significantly to the prediction of adolescents’ behaviour. Kurdek & Fine (1991); Burnet and Hambrecht (1993); Golish (2003), in their findings found that compared to step fathers, mothers had more optimistic perspective on step families, were less likely to endorse step family myths, and reported greater satisfaction with (step) parent-child relationships.

Self beliefs of efficacy is also a role player in the self-regulatory of maturational satisfaction. Human behaviour is being motivated by foresight embodying valued goals. As noted earlier by Crossle – Burnelt and Helmbrecht (1993); Cooney and Mortimer (1999) in their studies they observed that adolescents kept in touch with step/half siblings but saw them significantly less often than full siblings.

In related studies by Coppel and Smith (1980) and Boone and D. Branberder, (1993) there is ample evidence that locus of control is a fundamental and stable personality tract, with clear behavioral consequences. The opportunities provided to the adolescents’ within the two contrasting parenting conditions might be such that differences would be observed. On the other hand, life satisfaction is a matter of cognition. The way an individual perceive his life is what it would mean to the individual. The result indicated that life satisfaction would not significantly predict or classify adolescent living with both biological parents and those living with step parents. Ihinger – IGII – Man (1991) both examined that where a child is well taken care of, it might occur to a child that he is not receiving adequate care as it is presumed under a step-parenting condition.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made for practice:

1. Parents should endeavor to keep marriage intact rather than breaking up a marriage no matter the circumstances.
2. School counsellors’ should understand the intricacies of self efficacy and locus of control and build up programs that would enhance their development in the adolescents.

REFERENCES


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