

# PSYCHOLOGY FOR EVERY-DAY LIVING

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## EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Many aspects of human living call for adequate exercise of self-control. Many behavioural problems such as unhappiness, fear, corruption, laziness on the job, depression, aggression, irrational beliefs, thinking errors and other are in the final analysis products of loss of self-control in individuals that have been experiencing such problems.

This is why the present volume of Psychology For Every-Day Living attempts to bring the construct of self-control to the attention of the readers. If people can learn to exercise self-control in daily living, they are likely to listen, bargain, persuade, instruct, work, respond, concentrate better. To crown it all, the probability of making more accurate decisions is very high within the context of a well composed and adequately organized thinking, feeling and action systems.

Generally, the construct, self-control is often defined as a process initiated by an individual in his day to day activities so that he alone assumes total responsibility for guiding, directing, and regulating (some forms of self-monitoring) important and significant features of his own behaviour in a way that he can attain desired positive consequences. Self-control is a skill which an individual can acquire by making adequate social contacts and adequate reorganization of cognitive as well as physiological repertoires. The individual exercising self-control is always involved in complex series of judgemental activities which he utilizes as tools in formulating plans for action. Such actions are constantly tested for efficacy and internalized standards of his perceived competence.

It is not surprising therefore that Self-control in daily life is centrally mediated by cognitive processes within a broad context of affect. Hence the individual attempting to exercise self-control must be constantly reminded about the importance of the mediating roles of thought processes, Language, and feelings in delaying impulsive outbursts which may ruin his success. This is why self-control techniques have been constantly used in breaking many undesirable habits such as smoking, alcoholism, abnormal consumatory behaviours, aggression, depression, Insomnia, hyperactivity, underachievement and other personality disorders.

# RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERSONAL PROBLEMS AND STUDY HABITS OF NIGERIAN ADOLESCENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

Educators from the dawn of history have been pre-occupied by the problem of knowing what major factors cause poor academic performance. Miller (1962) wondered and asked "why do students flounder and eventually sink in the academic seas?"

Such techniques as the survey of students' opinion on reasons for poor academic performance have revealed that probable causes of poor academic performance and achievement include poor study habit, poor motivation, lack of ability, familial problems, psychological problems, and poor adjustment to institutions to mention but a few. Previous studies of Koile & Bird (1956), Miller (1962), Clemens and Oelke (1967) showed that poor study habits ranked highest when compared with other factors. But "why poor study habits?" may be the next question to ask. An array of reasons can be advanced and it is known from studies cited above that psychological problems which include adjustment (both social and personal), familial problems, financial problems, sexual problems and a host of other problems, are among the reasons for poor study habits.

It is the intention of this paper to look into eleven problem areas that confront the adolescent and examine how these can affect study habits students.

Before the effect of the problem areas on study habit is considered, one might like to ask "Does the Nigerian adolescent student have any thing one can call a "Study Habit"? Taking a cursory look at our schools, one finds that there is no formal instruction on the techniques of study and the common practice is

found to be the occasional advice and exhortation to study, by headmasters, heads of departments, teachers and parents. However, like Akinboye (1974) has observed, students have developed some study habits through constant involvement in academic instructions and studies. But how effective is such habit.

Now comes again the pertinent question "why poor study habits"? And to answer this question, among the many reasons that can account for poor study habits, it is the eleven problem areas confronting the Nigerian adolescent, as stated on the Bakare SPI (Student Problem Inventory) that will be the focus in this paper.

### **PERSONAL PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENTS**

Adolescence has traditionally been viewed as a critical period in development in many cultures, particularly the more technically advanced societies. Reference to the "storm and stress" of the years between childhood and normal adulthood have been common both in popular discussion and in the writings of novelists and poets. Behavioural Scientist (Kenniston 1960, 1968, Coleman 1961, Douvan and Adelson 1966, Erikson 1968) have also tended to agree that adolescence represents a period of particular stress.

Some, particularly the more biologically oriented (Freud 1905) have emphasised the adjustment required by the physiological changes associated with puberty, including increases in sex hormones and changes in body structure and function. Others like Friendenberg (1959) have tended to hold the culture primarily responsible for the adolescent's difficulties, emphasising the numerous, highly concentrated demands which our society has traditionally made on youth at this time — demands for independence, for heterosexual and peer adjustment, for vocational preparation, for the development of basic guiding philosophy of life. In many cultures in which these demands are neither as complex nor as restricted to one limited age period, adolescence is not viewed as a particularly difficult period of adjustment.

While, we encounter differences of opinion regarding the relative importance of biological, social and psychological factors, there is nevertheless general agreement that the adolescence period has special adjustment problems.

One of the problems that the adolescence faces is the host of inter-related physiological and morphological changes occurring during the early adolescence period from about 11—15 years of age. These changes are due in part to an increased output of activating hormones. The onset of the adolescent growth spurt differs for boys and girls. In girls the growth spurt may begin as early as 10½ or as late as 16 years, while in boys it may be as early as 11 years and as late as 17 years. From a psychological viewpoint, it is most important that all boys and girls be aware of the rather sudden changes that have taken place in their bodies and acquire sensible attitudes towards them. Cole and Hall (1964) have said that the adolescent needs help from adults and that good mental hygiene is extremely important to keep the normal adolescent comfortable, contented and well adjusted.

Concerning sexual problems, literature (Williams 1949, Remers and Shimberg, 1949, Lambo, 1964, Ladipo, 1976) is replete with facts to support the fact that adolescents have worries and fears relating to sex. This question is so important to adolescents that they need develop a sane attitude about it and be given facts about it freely. Ladipo (1976) gave a vivid picture of the guilt and shame that the adolescent, especially the girl, goes through as a result of information that is "too little and too late".

Personal psychological problems like being nervous, worrying too much and being too easily discouraged; moral and religious problems like the question of being forced to go to church, having a guilty conscience and not being able to forget some mistakes made are also inclusive in the personal problems that the adolescent contends with.

Family problems connected with the home and the family cannot be left out. Psychologists and Sociologists like Wattenberg (1955), Jersild (1965) and Hurlock (1973) have been studying homes in great detail in recent years. The main results of their researches have been to demonstrate the extreme importance of a child's home upon his personality, attitudes, reactions and behaviour.

Problems of academic motivation or adequacy concerning such problems as not knowing how to study effectively, poor memory, not liking school; along with the problems dealing with overall

adjustment to the school situation also rank high among the personal problems that confront the adolescent.

These and many other personal problems are the problems which encroach upon and affect the various aspects of the lives of adolescents — one of which is the development of good Study Habits.

The following four hypotheses were tested.

- (1) That the Nigerian Adolescent Student has poor study habits.
- (2) That the poor study habits of the Nigerian adolescent student will be related to some of the problems he faces.
- (3) That those who do not enjoy peer acceptance will have poor Study Habits.
- (4) What is the hierachy among the Study Habits components that constitute stress for the Nigerian adolescent student in forming favourable Study Habits?

## METHODOLOGY

### SUBJECTS

The subjects used for the study consisted of 100, third and fourth forms students (50 girls and 50 boys) Form two secondary schools in Ibadan City of Oyo State were randomly selected. There was a stratified random selection in choosing the population of male and female. In each of the schools, there are three streams of each of Forms III & IV. The students in all the three streams of each Form were brought together as a class out of which 25 subjects were randomly selected. This was done for each of Forms III & IV in each of the two schools.

The mean age of the subjects was 15 years. All subjects had had at least two years secondary school education.

## PROCEDURE

For each of the two Secondary Schools used; the two scales — Student Problem Inventory (S.P.I) and Study Habits Inventory (S.H.I), were administered the same day, on an evening when all the subjects used were free of other regular Classroom engagements. The subjects did not have any appreciable time interval or break in between the completion of the two tests, except the time in between the collection of one Test and the distribution of the other.

Before any of the two tests was filled, tension relieving remarks were loudly said out to the subjects. For example — “This is not a test as such and there are no right or wrong answers. We only want to know how you feel about certain things so that we can help students better”. The reasons for this include (i) to keep them at ease and make them relax and (ii) also to obtain their maximum candid response.

After the two tests had been completed, the subject were asked to write on a piece of paper provided each of them, the names of three of the other subjects that he will like to be friendly with.

## RESULTS

### TEST OF HYPOTHESIS I

This first hypothesis states that the Nigerian adolescent student has poor study habits. It is necessary to test this first hypothesis, because it will be rather ridiculous to say that the Nigerian adolescent personal problems are related to his poor study habits (which is the second hypothesis) — without first establishing whether he has poor study habits or not. Though the method of establishing poor study habits (taking a cut off score on the SHI) is rather arbitrary, as at present there is no better method using the SHI as the only basis of establishing study habits. Akinboye (1974) did the same thing and took the score of 170 as his cut off score on the SHI.

To test this first hypothesis, the scores of the subjects on the study Habit Inventory (SHI) were taken and the subjects were divided into two groups of those scoring (i) 167 and below and (ii) those scoring 168 and above. The count was taken in each category and this converted into percentage. Those who scored 167 and below were considered as subjects with poor study habits while those scoring 168 and above are the subjects considered as having favourable study habits. A score of 168 was taken as the cut-off score as a result of the view of the writer that students with favourable or good study habits should be able to score at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total possible score on the SHI. The total possible score is 224.

Table I shows that only 22% of the total sample scored above 168 while 78% scored below. This confirms the prediction of the first hypothesis.

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## MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

The literature on educational Psychology is replete with studies (Brooks & Heston 1945, Taylor 1953), pertaining to instruments to measure study habits and problems affecting adolescents. However, Brooks and Heston, (1945) have found out that many validated instruments are often valid only for the original population. Hence it is pertinent and more appropriate for the present study to use both the Bakare S. H. I. (Study Habits Inventory) and the S.P.I. (Student Problem Inventory), which were validated for the type of population used in the present study.

### Measure of Study Habits

The instrument used — the Study Habits Inventory (S.H.I) was validated by administering it to a group of high achievers and a group of underachievers. The test discriminate between the two groups. ( $t=5.13$ ;  $p < .01$ ). The inventory, also had a test — retest reliability of .83 with a group of students and .64 with another group within a time interval of 3 weeks and 6 weeks respectively.

### MEASURES OF ADOLESCENT PROBLEMS

For the instrument used here — the Student Problem Inventory (S.P.I), both the congruent and construct validity have been established. For instance, its congruent validity has been established by showing that it correlates with other well known tests in the expected direction e.g. it correlates. .50;  $p < .01$ ) with the Saranson Test Anxiety Scale. It also correlates — .43 ( $N=49$ ;  $p < .01$ ) with the Bakare Study Habits Inventory (S.H.I). In another randomly selected group, it correlates. .52 ( $N=43$ ;  $p < .01$ ) with the Bakare Study Habits Inventory.

Evidence for the validity of the S.P.I. is also provided by the fact that inter correlations among the various sections of the Inventory are in the expected direction. For example sections J. & K. Academic and study problems, (J) and School Adjustment Problems (K) Correlates .54.

TABLE I  
FINDING THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS  
WITH POOR & FAVOURABLE STUDY HABITS

SHI SCORE RANGE IS 101 — 188

SCORERS OF SCORE 167 & BELOW		SCORER OF SCORE 168 & ABOVE	
SHI SCORE	No. OF SCORES	SHI SCORE	No. OF SCORES
	0		1
101	1	168	3
102	1	170	1
108	1	171	4
117	3	172	2
124	1	174	1
125	1	176	2
126	2	179	3
127	1	180	2
128	2	181	2
129	1	184	1
132	1	188	1
133	1		
134	1		
136	6		
138	2		
140	4		
141	2		
143	3		
144	1		
145	1		
146	4		
147	2		
148	3		
149	5		
150	2		
151	1		
152	2		
153	2		
154	1		
155	2		
156	3		
157	7		
158	1		
159	1		
160	1		
161	1		
162	1		
163	2		
165	1		
167	3		
TOTAL	78	TOTAL	22

N =

$$\frac{78 \times 100}{100} = 78\%$$

$$\frac{22 \times 100}{100} = 22\%$$

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WITH POOR STUDY HABIT = 78  
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WITH FAVOURABLE STUDY  
HABIT = 22

TABLE 2

**COMPARING THE SHI SCORES OF LOW  
AND HIGH PROBLEM STUDENTS**

1. Degree of freedom for each variable = 98
2. The T-test value becomes significant at the 0.05 level when it is 1.66 and above.

SPI Variables	Group I — Low Problem Stu- dents (SPI Score — 0-4		Group II — High Problem Stu- dents (SPI Score — 5 and above)		T-test Value	Level of Significance
(1) Physical and health Problems	N	X	N	X	t	P
	90	152.09	18.23	10 144.50	1.11	(N.S.)
(2) Financial Problems	85	152.66	18.91	15 143.93	2.03	<0.05
(3) Social Relationship Problems	95	151.60	18.55	5 144.40	0.86	(N.S.)
(4) Sexual Problems	78	153.54	17.39	22 143.09	2.22	<0.05
(5) Personal Psycholo- gical Problems	59	154.27	19.73	41 135.02	3.19	<0.05
(6) Moral and Religious Problems	77	153.43	18.13	23 144.26	2.12	<0.05
(7) Social Psycholo- gical Problems	72	152.56	18.85	28 147.64	1.27	(N.S.)
(8) Family Problems	90	150.83	19.01	10 153.50	0.52	(N.S.)
(9) Problems about the Future	97	151.33	18.57	3 150.33	0.94	(N.S.)
(10) Academic and Study Problems	63	153.54	17.90	37 145.81	2.01	<0.05
(11) School Adjustment Problems	52	154.46	19.36	48 147.98	1.78	<0.05

### TEST OF HYPOTHESIS 2

The second hypothesis — that poor study habit will be related to some of the personal problems of the adolescent was tested. The subject were divided into two groups as regards the severity of their problems. The first group — the low problems group — are those

who scored 4 and below on each of the eleven problem areas on the student Problem Inventory (SPI), while those who scored 5 and above formed the second group — i.e. the High Problem Group.

The count (N) in each group was made and the SHI scores of these were taken. The mean (X) and the standard deviation ( ) for each group were calculated and they were compared using the t-test. Table 2 shows that Low and High Problem Students differ in their study habits in the following problem areas:—

- (1) Financial problems
- (2) Sexual problems
- (3) Personal Psychological Problems
- (4) Moral and Religious Problems
- (5) Academic and Study Problems
- and (6) School Adjustment Problems.

### CONCLUSION

The above six personal problems affect study habits.

TABLE III

### COMPARING THE SHI SCORES OF HIGH AND LOW SOCIOMETRIC STATUS STUDENTS

Degree of Freedom = 42

The T-test value becomes significant at the 0.05 level when it is 1.68.

LOW SOCIOMETRIC STATUS		HIGH SOCIOMETRIC STATUS		VALUE	P
N	X	N	X	t-value	P
23	151.13	21	148.81	23.81	0.37 (N.S.)

### TEST OF HYPOTHESIS 3

To test hypothesis 3 — that students who do not enjoy peer acceptance will have poor study habits — the subjects were divided into two categories of low and high sociometric status students, after taking the count of the number of times each subject was chosen. Those in the low status group were those chosen 2-times and below (including those who were not chosen at all), and the high status students were those chosen 5-7 times. The SHI scores of the numbers in each category was taken. The analysis of the t-value as shown on Table III reveals that there is no significant difference between the two groups. It thus appears that enjoyment of peer acceptance does not play a significant role in the acquisition of favourable study habits.

This result nullifies the prediction of this third hypothesis.

**Conclusion:** Popularity as measured by peer acceptance, does not affect study habits.

### TEST OF HYPOTHESIS 4

Considering the fourth hypothesis which asks the question — what is the hierarchy among Study Habits components that constitute problems for students? — Table 4 shows this hierarchy.

This Table shows that the five aspects of Study Habits or Procedures with which students have the most problems are:

- (1) Teacher Consultation
- (2) Examination
- (3) Concentration
- (4) Study Period Procedures
- and (5) Reading and Note Taking.

### CONCLUSION

Teacher Consultation, examination, concentration, Study period procedures, reading and note taking are areas of difficulty for students in forming good Study Habits.

## **SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS OF THE FINDINGS**

From the findings of this Study emerge the following conclusions.

- (1) That Nigerian adolescent students have poor Study Habits.
- (2) That the following personal problems are related to poor Study Habits.
  - (i) Financial problems
  - (ii) Sexual problems
  - (iii) Personal Psychological problems.
  - (iv) Moral and Religious problems
  - (v) Academic and Study Problems
  - (vi) School Adjustment Problems.
3. That popularity as measured by peer acceptance does not affect Study Habits.
4. That
  - (i) Teacher consultation
  - (ii) Examinations
  - (iii) Concentration
  - (iv) Study Period Procedure
  - (v) Reading and Note Taking are the aspects of Study Habits with, which Students have the most problems.

TABLE 4

**THE HIERACHY AMONG STUDY HABITS  
COMPONENTS CONSIDERED BEVERE**

THE COMPONENTS AS STATED S. H. I.	TOTAL POSSIBLE SCORE	MEAN TOTAL LOW SCORE	SEVERITY INDEX OBTAINED BY DIVIDING MEAN SCORE BY THE T- POSSIBLE SCORE
(1) Teacher Consultation	10	5.10	5.51
(2) Examinations	35	21.79	0.62
(3) Concentration	15	9.59	0.64
(4) Study Period Procedures	40	26.61	0.67
(5) Reading and Note Note Taking	45	30.07	0.67
(6) Writing Work	20	13.80	0.69
(7) Home Work and Assignment	30	21.84	0.73
(8) Time Allocation	30	22.37	0.75

*N.B.*

The lower the index, the more severe the problem.

## DISCUSSION

Hypothesis I — that the adolescent students in Oyo State Schools have poor study habits was confirmed. This results confirms the previous studies of Koile & Bird, (1956), Miller (1962), Clemens & Dels (1967) who found that poor study habits ranked highest when compared with other factors. The study of Akinboye (1974) also corroborates this result.

The problem of the acquisition of good study habits has always been a concern of educationists right from the dawn of history. This results help us to see the more the reason why there continues to be increasing failure on the part of students in class test, school examinations and public examinations like the West African School Certificate (WASC), the General Certificate of Education (GCE) and the Joint Admission and Matriculation Exams (JAMB). For, how do we expect students to pass examinations when they do not have sufficient insight into the subject, when they lack attention and perseverance, when they daydream and worry a lot, when they have intense negative feelings towards study — all problems associated with the development of poor study habits. The result of this hypothesis should also lead workers in the area of educational psychology to look into the specific nature of the Oyo State adolescent students' poor study habits.

It is interesting to note that social relationship problems and social psychological problems — problems which to the writer are closely related, because they both deal with basic points in the inter personal relationships among adolescents — have no significant relationship. A quick glance at Table 3 also reveals that there is no significant relationship between the high and low sociometric Status Students — another area that deals with social relationship. Students low and high on Social Psychological problems etc. do not differ in their study habits i.e. there is no relationship between these problems and Study Habits. This may be an evidence to support the assertion that Nigerians are a hospitable group of people, very accomodating and warm towards one another. From Table 2, Students low and high on family problems do not differ in their Study Habits. This result contradicts the results of Fleming (1962), Cole and Hall (1964), Jersild (1965), Samoon and Samoon (1971) and Hurlock (1973). However, many of the results, and also this present study were based on mean scores and correlation results. Maybe an experimental result would throw more light.

The fact that hypothesis 3 was not confirmed may just be logical conclusion that follows from an explanation in discussing the first hypothesis; that is, it may yet be another evidence confirming the assertion and the general belief that Nigerians are hospitalable,



accommodating and warming. And thus the Students too are not finding social relationships a difficult task to contend with.

In discussing hypothesis four, it is pertinent to explain that on the SHI scale, the higher the score the lesser the Study Habits Problem which the Student has. So the expectation is that a student or groups of students who has (have) little Study Habit problem should have high scores on the SHI. Thus when the score or any statistical manipulation of the score is low, then the problem is very much present.

According to the analysis shown on Table 4, the Study Habits component considered most serious is Teacher consultation. This Statistical data only buttresses what the cursory look into our schools as concerns student-teacher relationship reveals. Somehow it appears Students are afraid of their teachers. Many times they do not volunteer to ask their teachers those puzzling questions bothering them, even concerning their academic work, not to talk of discussing their personal problems with them. This might be as a result of treatment meted out to students e.g. corporal punishment, ridicule, and the fact that until very recently education has been largely teacher-centred instead of being child centred. It is hoped that with advancement into making educational child centred, plus the results of psychological findings on the adolescent which it is hoped the teacher will make use of, this aspects of teacher-consultation will decrease in its intensity as a problem which the student has to contend with in forming favourable Study Habits. Still on hypothesis four and Table 4, the next Study Habits component which the Students (at least the sample used) consider serious is examinations. This may not be very surprising since they find it difficult to concentrate when reading as shown by the equally low severity index on concentration (0.64).

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