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ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN OYO STATE, SECRETARIAT IBADAN

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of social support networks of young adults was conducted on the basis of two scales. The Visual Analog Scale (VAS) and the Whom Do You Turn To Scale (WDYTT) among 150 Junior and Senior Civil Servants of the Oyo State secretariat Ibadan. Their mean (X) age was 37.5 while the Standard Deviation (SD) was 15.1. The VAS and WDYTT scale were used to assess the extend of variation in the social network in the adult period of the life cycle. That is, a Visual Analog Scale (VAS) assessing the extent of closeness for seven interpersonal relationships and a second scale determining to whom the respondents would turn to in 14 situations (WDYTT). Chi-Square test and t-test analyses were employed.

The result showed significant differences, between the best female friend mother etc. Family of orientation vs friends as well as intergenerational vs intragenerational were also compared on WDYTT scale. Result also showed significant difference on the friends (interpersonal as first and second choice. The implication and recommendation of the study were made on the need for further researches on social network and relationship across the life-span in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Recent study on the social support network has demonstrated the crucial nature of the support network, for instance, in adaptation of social change and adjustment to stressful life events (Kitson, Moir and Mason 1982). For instance, research on interpersonal relationships has focused on support networks such as parent - child interactions, spousal relationships and friendships (Hinde, 1979).

These researchers have attempted to describe the quality of the relationships, (Huston & Levinger 1978) to isolate the factors that influence the interactions (Huston & Robinson 1982) and

determine the types of support that are provided by the relationship (Davis & Todd, 1982). Thus, for example, the quality of friendship varies significantly. If two people are acquaintances and know each other slightly, their relationship is influenced primarily by geographical proximity and a limited number of shared interests and they provide minimal support for each other (LaGaipa, 1982). However, if two individuals are close friends and know each other's strengths and weaknesses very well, their relationship is influenced by acceptance and shared interests. Close friends are described as persons with whom one has many shared interests, experiences, and activities and with whom one feels comfortable, talking. In addition to this cluster of doing things together, close friends are seen as being supportive, dependable, and understanding. That is, they are seen as people "one can count on" (Huston & Levinger, 1978). Such descriptions were similar for persons of all age groups from late adolescent through adulthood.

Byrne (1969) attempted to describe factors that influence interactions by arguing that similarity itself is effectively reinforcing when it involves interactions based on attraction. Therefore, reasons for the similarity attraction effect can be grouped into four categories which are the following:

1. Another's similarity itself is directly reinforcing as in operant conditioning.

2. Another's similar responses support the perceiver's sense of esteem and support.

3. Such responses indicate that other future benevolence or compartibility.

4. Another's degree of perceived similarity is confounded with the effective value of his responses and has no independent effect by itself.

Changes in life span are also observed by Weiss (1974) that is, there are changes through the adult life span in the needs of people and the degree to which such needs are provided for by components in a person's network of relationships. Therefore, a network of friends during the early adult years may be important to help people establish a sense of personal competence and provide

support due to common value systems (Campbell, 1976). However, during the middle years, family relations and obligations often supercede one's need for friendships.

Brady, Mosatch and Noberini (1984) conducted a research with VAS and WDYTT scales to assess the extent of variation in the social support network over the adult life-cycle and found a significant difference existing between the five age groups across life span they had studied. That is, individual responses from all groups indicated that they were likely to select individuals from their own generation for support. For example, the youngest group of subjects was likely to turn to the members of their family of orientation and friends when they feel happy.

Using the VAS and WDYTT scales by Asagba (1984), study of college undergraduate students reported significant difference between interpersonal relationships based on the VAS scale but no significant difference in other relationship. The result of WDYTT scale indicated that respondents obtained support from intra generation relationship more frequently than intergeneration relationship. Based on this findings, Asagba (1984) concluded that although young adults feel closest to relationship such as mother and spouse or dating partner; these same individuals tend to rely mostly on their friends except in situations when the subjects were seriously ill or needed money. Possible reasons why young adults rely on their friends as a social support network may include the sharing of common experiences which facilitate the development of value consensus and a common historical basis which produces common coping mechanism.

As reported above, many studies have been carried out in the Western countries on social support networks but very few of such has been noticed in Nigeria at present. Therefore, the study looked at the social support network among civil servants in Oyo State.

Many people are maladjusted because of the present economic and political situation in the country. This has adversely affected the lives of the people with a particular reference to the civil servants. It became imperative to examine the source of

support network among the civil servants and determine the extent of support provided by various interpersonal and institutional supports during early adulthood. In addition, the study examine correlation between the number of times the subject experienced support from the relationship and the closeness of the relationship. Therefore, the following hypotheses are formulated:

1.   Distant relationship with mother measured would be closer than other any of the ten types of relationships (Boss, Co-worker, Iman/Rev/Psychologist).
2.   There would be no significant relationship between the ages of workers and the level of support they obtained.
3.   Female workers would obtain significantly higher social support than male workers.
4.   Young adult would obtain high social support than male workers.
5.   Older workers would seek support from their family of procreation than younger workers.

METHOD

Participants

Participants used for this study were drawn from 4 departments of Oyo State Secretariat. These are accounts, internal audit, health and general administrative department. They were made up of 150 participants (75 males and 75 females) assigned into four age group as:

1.   Young adults of 18 - 30 years (32%)
2.   Middle adults of 31 - 42 years (34%)
3.   Late adults of 43 - 54 years (22%)
4.   Retiring adults of 55 - 65 years (12%)

INSTRUMENTS

Two instruments which appeared in three sections namely, A, B & C were used for the study.

1.   *Section A:* consists of demographic and sociological variables such as sex, age, marital status, education and ethnicity.

4

Section B: The Visual Analog Scales (VAS) that is made up of ten types of relationships was administered to students who were asked to order those ten relationships in terms of closeness or distance to them. The VAS was anchored to one end by the "closest Relationship" and at the other end by the description "Most distant Relationships".

3. *Section C:* is the Whom Do You Turn To Scale (WDYTT Scale) comprised of 14 situations in which the respondents have to indicate whom they would turn to first, second or third in each of the 14 situations stated in the scale. These two scales were developed by Brady, Mosatch and Noberini (1984) in a study conducted in U.S.A.

The result of the pilot study conducted with 30 Male and Female Civil Servants randomly selected from Oyo State secretariat, Ibadan showed reliability coefficient of $r = 0.80$, $P < 0.05$ for the VAS Scale and $r = 0.81$ $P < 0.05$ for the WYDTT Scale respectively.

DESIGN
The design for this study is a survey research design.

PROCEDURE
Permission was sought from the heads of the four departments (account, internal-audit, health and general administration) used for the study. Participants were assured of confidentiality after their voluntary acceptance to participate in the study. The questionnaires were distributed randomly among the workers from these four departments. Although the subjects are educated, they were first instructed on how to respond to the questionnaire, so as to ensure accuracy in their responses. Participants were instructed to order their current relationships between the two extremes of the VAS scale. The ten relationship included the following, (1) Best female friend (2) Best male friend (3) Boss/Supervisor (4) Co workers (5) Child (if appropriate) (6) Father (7) Mother (8) sibling you feel close to (9) Spouse or dating partner (10) Pastor/Rev/Imam/Psychologist.

After completing the VAS, the respondents had to complete the third part of the questionnaire. This part was the "Who Do You Turn To" scale (WDYTT). This consisted of fourteen hypothetical situations and asked the subjects to indicate who they would turn to first, second, and third in each of the situations where the subjects: (1) were excited and happy, (2) were nervous and tense, (3) needed money, (4) were depressed and lonely, (5) needed a companion to go to secret activity (6) needed someone for sports, (7) celebrated a happy occasion, (8) were in need of companion for a shopping trip, (9) were slightly ill (10) were in need of sympathy after someone close had died, (11) were recuperating from an operation, (12) were being pressured, (13) were having ethical questions. Twelve relationships were listed. They were (1) best female friend, (2) best male friend, (3) father, (4) mother, (5) sibling to whom subject felt closest, (6) self, (7) guidance, (8) religious minister (9) spouse or dating partner, (10) respondent's children, (11) teachers and (12) other if none of the listed alternatives was appropriate.

The 160 filled questionnaires were collected but only 150 which were properly filled where used for the study.

RESULT

Table 1: Showed Mean and Standard deviation of Distance for the Visual Analog Scale (VAS) among the Ten Different Relationships

	N	Mean X (in MM)	Standard Deviation SD (in MM)
Best Male Friends	150	51.34	37.51
Best Female Friends	150	45.31	41.03
Boss	150	58.25	52.01
Co-worker	150	51.61	30.05
Child	150	25.62	62.10
Father	150	48.47	41.20
Mother	150	20.37	21.04
Sibling	150	48.22	42.44
Spouse/Dating Partner	150	22.41	47.21
Pastor/Imam/Rev/ Psychologist	150	62.31	27.47

As shown in Table 1, the closet relationship is mother with mean X of 20.37 in mm distance while Pastor/Rev/Imam/ Psychologist has 65.31 (in mm) in distance. This confirmed the first hypothesis which stated that the relationship with mother would be closer than other ten forms of relationship.

Table II: Summary table of chi-square showing the relationship between the ages of workers and amount of support they obtained

	Family of Orientation	Family of Procreation	Friends	Total
AGE 18-30 years	5	40	3	48
31 - 42 years	8	32	11	51
43 - 54 years	8	19	6	33
55 - 65 years	-	16	2	18
Total	21	107	22	150

Chi-Square	Value	df	P
X^2	13.09	6	.05

Result $X^2 = 13.09$; df = 6; $P < .05$

The second hypothesis which stated that there would be no significant relationship between the ages of workers and the amount of support they obtained was rejected. The result as shown in Table II showed that there is a significant difference between the ages of workers and the amount of support they obtained.

Table III: Summary table of t-test analysis showing the relationship between female workers and male workers on social support

Sex	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	DF	T	P
Male	75	68.89	12.85	1.48	148	3.39	.05
Female	75	62.10	11.58	1.33			

Result t = 3.39; df = 148; P < 05

Hypothesis III which stated that female workers would obtain significantly higher social support than male workers was confirmed. The result as shown in the Table III indicated that female workers would have a higher significant difference on social support than male workers. Unlike the fourth hypothesis which stated that young adult workers would more significantly seek emotional support within their family of procreation than older worker was not confirmed as it has revealed in the table IV.

Table IV: Summary table of Chi-Square showing the relationship between Young and Old workers on emotional support

AGE	Family of Orientation	Family of Procreation	Friends	TOTAL
Young	19	.60	20	99
Old	8	34	9	51
Total	27	94	29	150

Chi-Square	Value	df	P
X^2	.541	2	.05

Result: $X^2 = 0.54$; df = 2; P > 0.5

Table V: Showing the old workers would seek support from their family of procreation than younger workers

	Family of Orientation	Family of Procreation	Friends	Total
Young	13	72	14	99
Old	8	35	8	51
Total	21	107	22	5

Chi-square	Value	df	P
X^2	291	2	.05

Result: $X^2 = 0.29$; df = 21; P > .05

Table V present the result of the Chi-Square test employed for both old and young who seek support from their family of procreation. The result of the fifth predicted hypothesis was statistically significant. That is, there is no significant difference between the ages of workers and the amount of support they obtained. Thus it suggested that the age generation gap of a worker is not a determining factor on the amount of support he or she will obtain from his family of procreation.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The present study investigated the analysis of social support network among civil servants in Oyo State. Unlike in Western countries where a lot had been done on this issue. Very few studies had been carried out in Nigeria on the relationship and seeking behavior among workers. The research is very interesting and further confirmed these previous ones such as those of LaGaipa (1975); Weiss (1974); Huston & Robbing (1982); Kitson et al (1982); Shulman (1975); Huston & Levinger (1978); Davis & Todd (1982). For example as predicted in the first hypothesis the result

9

of the relationship of workers on the VAS on their responses to their relationships indicated that most workers maintained a close relationship to their partner ($X = 22.41$) and child ($X = 55.62$), while on the other hand maintained a distant relationship to such individuals as Pastor/Rev/Imam/Psychologist. This is confirmed in the result and it is in line with previous findings of Brady, Mosatch and Noberini (1984) and Asagba (1993) where those results indicated that subjects maintained the most closest relationship with their mother and spouse/dating partner on one hand and the most distant relationship with their father likewise their Pastor/Imam/Rev/Psychologist and not least close relationship with siblings. This is an implication for further research.

The second hypothesis which predicted that there would be no significant relationship between the ages of workers and the amount of support they obtained was however not confirmed by the findings of the study. However, this result was in line with Asagba (1983) study which discovered that a greater proportion of the young-adults turned to close friend for emotional support while fewer ones turned to their family members.

The results showed that there is a significant difference between female workers and male workers on social support as predicted by the third hypothesis of this study. It also confirmed several studies on sex stereotype and role that viewed female as passive and have higher tendencies in help seeking behavior.

No support was found for the fourth hypothesis which stated that young adult workers would seek emotional support within their family of procreation more than the old workers.

As the result indicated, older workers seemed to seek emotional support as well as the young adults within their family of procreation.

This was supported by Asagba (1983) study in which young adults reported that they turn to close friends rather than members of the family for emotional supports. Thus, it could be deducted that Nigerian youths show higher need for belonging, sharing common values and conception within themselves. This is also an implication for further research.

The final hypothesis which stated that older workers would seek support from their family of procreation than young workers was also not confirmed. As it is in this present study, the too generation of workers had turned to their family of procreation which is not in him with Brady; Mosatch and Noberini (1984) study. Their earlier findings which revealed that majority of old workers turned to their family of procreation. It could be implied that cultural variations might be existing between this present study and the ones carried out by Brady et al (1983). Conclusively it could be deducted from the present study that in the Nigerian context, individuals still maintained very close relationship with their siblings and other family members even at a latter age.

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