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Emotional Maturity and Emotional Adjustment of Adolescents with Emotional and Behavioral Disorder

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders (AEBDs) are individuals who experience persistent difficulties in managing their emotions, behaviors, and social interactions. Based on this, the study assessed the emotional maturity and emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East local Government, Kwara State Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design of correlation type. The respondents were 120 Junior secondary school 2 adolescents with emotional maturity and emotional adjustment were purposively selected. Two research instruments were used for data collection: The emotional maturity questionnaire and the emotional adjustment questionnaire. The study revealed that the emotional maturity of AEBDs was low, it was also shown that their level of emotional adjustment was low. It was revealed that there was a significant difference between the emotional maturity of male and female AEBDs where females had better emotional maturity. There was no significant difference between emotional adjustment of AEBDs based on gender. Based on the findings the study concluded that emotional maturity and emotional adjustment of AEBDs were low; it was recommended that teachers and parents should be trained on various approaches that can be used to improve emotional and emotional adjustment of adolescents with EBD.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a basic period during which life changes significantly from being a youngster to a grown-up person which is usually joined by inventiveness, a soul of freedom and experience, unique reasoning and vision. Adolescence is a critical period for emotional development, marked by significant changes in identity, self-esteem, and social relationships. These also include adopting healthy sleep patterns; exercising regularly; developing coping, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills; and learning to manage emotions; protective and supportive environments in the family, at school, and in the wider community are important, when we think of someone who's emotionally mature; we typically picture a person who has a good understanding of who they are. However, adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders face additional hurdles in achieving emotional maturity and positive adjustment. All these characteristics exhibited by an individual that has reached adolescence level are not found in an adolescent with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders (AEBD) are a distinct group of individuals who face persistent and significant challenges in managing their emotions, behaviors, and social interactions (Jusienė *et al*., 2022). The term "emotional and behavioral disorders" encompasses a broad spectrum of conditions that vary in severity and presentation (Maras, 2021). Some common examples of emotional and behavioral disorders observed during adolescence include aggressive behavior, hyperactivity, feelings of withdrawal, learning difficulties, and conduct disorder (Agarwal *et al*., 2023). One significant consequence of AEBD in adolescents is the interference with their academic success within school settings. Many adolescents with EBD struggle to learn effectively across different subject areas, such as reading and math (Sanders & Garwood, 2016). Moreover, they often encounter difficulties in establishing and maintaining appropriate social relationships with both peers and adults (Lane *et al*., 2016). Some may exhibit noncompliant behavior, aggression, and disrespect towards authority figures, further exacerbating their social challenges. The complex behaviors exhibited by adolescents with EBD can lead to unfavorable circumstances, including misidentification, marginalization from accessing educational resources, and exclusion from mainstream educational environments (Al-Hendawi *et al*., 2022). These experiences detrimentally affect their emotional maturity and ability to adapt emotionally to their surroundings (Bohanon *et al*., 2019).

Emotional maturity is a personality trait, which succeeds in controlling immediate emotion and acting wisely after analyzing the situation; emotional Maturity is a stage in an individual's life wherein he faces reality (Jose & Swammy, 2022). Emotional maturity is a state of having reached an adult level of emotional development which implies emotional control in a social situation (Shimsiya & Parambat, 2016); Emotional maturity is one of the major determinants in shaping an individual's personality, behavior, and attitudes and it helps in enhancing the relationship with others and to enhance the self-worth of the person and emotional stability is considered as one of the major components in mental health (Anand *et al*., 2014). If a person or a child is emotionally mature, he or she may have the capacity to make effective adjustments with himself, family members, peers, society and culture, and his or her environment itself, he/she can enjoy his adjustment fully, Hence it's considered as an individual's ability to control emotions himself or herself.

Emotional maturity is the ability to control strong emotions through a series of objective and positive thoughts and showing the expression in a socially acceptable way. An emotionally mature person does not immediately explode emotions but thinks critically first (Herwanda & Prastuti, 2020). But many adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders

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do exhibit this immaturity. Emotional maturity as the achievement of individual development in directing and controlling emotions to be accepted by oneself and others (see http://www.sonic.net/drmurray/maturity.htm). Emotional maturity encourages everyone to be open to experiences and be able to interpret them positively.

Several studies have been carried out on the emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders. Jose and Swammy (2022) conducted a study on emotional maturity among adolescence; it was found that the level of emotional maturity among adolescents in the age range of 18 to 23 years is low. Similarly, Jobson (2020) examined the emotional maturity of adolescence with its importance. The findings revealed the level of emotional maturity among adolescents is low and 74% of the participants were found to be extremely emotionally Immature. Duhan (2020) conducted a study on the emotional maturity of Adolescents concerning their Gender. The findings revealed emotional maturity level of Adolescence that more or less an equal percentage (30-35%) of respondents were having moderately emotionally mature and extremely emotionally immature levels of emotional maturity respectively.

Kanaparthy and Rani (2018) examined the emotional maturity among adolescent students in the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. The results revealed that nearly 32% of the sample adolescent students possess low emotional maturity. The remaining 68% of the sample have high emotional maturity. In a study conducted by Jose and Swammy (2022) on emotional maturity, it was found that males are a bit more emotionally mature than females. The reason could be that females are more expressive and sentimental than males, some studies suggest that adolescent males with emotional and behavioral disorders may struggle more with emotional regulation than their female counterparts.

Emotional adjustment is the ability to regulate or maintain one's emotional responses to stressful or challenging situations, promoting psychological well-being and adaptive functioning, it is an individual's ability to cope with stress, trauma, and adversity healthily and adaptively. This includes developing effective coping strategies, seeking social support, and maintaining a positive outlook (Aslam *et al*., 2021). Varela *et al*., (2022) opined that emotional adjustment is the process of adapting to life's challenges and demands, through the effective management of emotions and the development of healthy coping strategies. That is an individual's ability to adapt to emotional situations and effectively regulate their emotions. This does not exclude developing emotional intelligence, empathy, and social skills that enable individuals to navigate complex social situations and build positive relationships with others, managing negative emotions such as anxiety, sadness, and anger, as well as positive emotions such as joy and contentment.

Therefore, emotional adjustment simply means a way of achieving emotional stability and well-being, through the effective management of negative emotions and the cultivation of positive emotional experiences. Adjusting emotionally has been posing challenges to adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders, and this can be found in the reports of my researchers. In a study by Melero *et al*. (2017) on the emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders, it was found that adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders had lower levels of emotional adjustment than adolescents without these disorders. Lynn *et al*. (2013) found that adolescents with EBD experienced significantly lower emotional adjustment levels than their typically developing peers.

Merrill *et al*. (2017) found that some adolescents with EBD exhibited high levels of emotional adjustment, while others experienced low levels. These studies suggest that

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gender differences do exist in the emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders, with males exhibiting higher levels of externalizing behavior and females exhibiting higher levels of internalizing behavior. Based on the above information the present study examined the emotional maturity and emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders exhibit destructive behavior such as Aggression or self-injurious behavior (acting out, fighting); Withdrawal (not interacting socially with others, excessive fear or anxiety); Immaturity (inappropriate crying, temper tantrums, poor coping skills); and. Learning difficulties (academically performing below grade level). The adolescent difficulty is emotionally based and cannot be adequately explained by intellectual, cultural, sensory general health factors, or other additional exclusionary factors. which leads to low emotional maturity and emotional adjustment in adolescents. Researchers have found that these emotional responses have resulted in lower emotional maturity and emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders. Moreover, limited studies show no significant difference in emotional maturity and emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders.

The literature reviewed by the researchers shows that numerous studies have not considered the assessment of both emotional maturity and emotional adjustment of adolescence with emotional and behavioral disorders together. This is the gap the present study intends to fill. Therefore, this study is aimed to look at the assessment of emotional maturity and emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders.

The research questions are the following:

(i) What is the level of emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East local Government, Kwara State Nigeria?
(ii) What is the level of emotional adjustment of the adolescent with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East local Government, Kwara State Nigeria?

Research hypotheses are the following:

(i) H1. There is no significant difference between the level of emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders based on gender
(ii) H2. There is no significant difference between the emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders based on gender.

2. METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The sample of this study comprises two hundred and (120) adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State, Nigeria. They were purposefully selected from all the JSS 2 Students in schools in Ilorin East Local Government. The emotional Maturity questionnaire and emotional adjustment questionnaire were the instruments used for the study. The emotional maturity questionnaire was constructed by the researchers, and it contained 10 items with response choices of 4- on a point scale: Strongly Disagree (SD), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Agree (SA). The reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained using the test-re-test method. The emotional adjustment questionnaire was also constructed by the researchers and it contained a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. It was validated with a reliability coefficient of 0.87 which indicated that the instrument was reliable. The researcher administered the questionnaires and collected them back on the spot. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and t-test.

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3. RESULTS

3.1. Research question 1: What is the level of emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State?

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation distribution level of emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State. The following shows the level of emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State: I am aware of my emotions and can identify what I am feeling (2.9), I can control my emotions and handle stress effectively (2.5), I can understand and consider other people's feelings (1.4), I can think critically before I explode my emotions (1.3), I see problems objectively and make decisions to solve them (2.3), I bounce back quickly after facing setbacks or failures (1.6), I can seek for support and ask for help when I need it (1.9), I don't blame myself or others for my mistakes (1.8), I can express my emotions appropriately in various situations (1.5), I have healthy and supportive relationship with my family and friends (2.6). The weighted mean was 2.0 which indicates that the calculated mean is less than the fixed mean, this implies that the emotional maturity level of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State is Low.

Table 1. The mean and standard deviation (STD) distribution of the level of emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State.

S/N	Items	Mean	STD	Decision
1	I am aware of my emotions and can identify what I am feeling.	2.9	1.1	High
2	I can control my emotions and handle stress effectively.	2.5	0.6	High
3	I can understand and consider other people's feelings.	1.4	0.5	Low
4	I can think critically before I explode my emotions.	1.3	0.6	Low
5	I see problems objectively and make decisions to solve them.	2.3	0.8	Low
6	I bounce back quickly after facing setbacks or failures.	1.6	0.7	Low
7	I can seek support and ask for help when I need it.	1.9	0.6	Low
8	I don't blame myself or others for my mistakes.	1.8	0.7	Low
9	I can express my emotions appropriately in various situations	1.5	0.8	Low
10	I have a healthy and supportive relationship with my family and friends.	2.6	0.7	Low
	Weighted Mean	**2.0**		

3.2. Research Question 2: What is the level of emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State?

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation distribution of the level of emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State. The following shows the assessment level of emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State: My mood swings when stressed (2.6), I adjust easily to a newly acquired life or event (2.3), I feel lonely or isolated from others and struggle to spend time with peers (2.6), I feel nervous or anxious in social situations (2.8), I have difficulty making friends and adjust with their behavior (2.8), I can maintain my attitude to adapt to any circumstances (2.5), I worry a lot about things in the environment (1.7), I often feel sad or depressed to adjust with things going on in society (2.4), I often engage in activities or hobbies that bring joy and

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relaxation(2.2), I find it easy to adjust with my emotions in any situation (2.3). The weighted mean was 2.4 which indicates that the calculated mean is less than the fixed mean, this implies that the emotional adjustment level of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State is Low.

Table 2. The percentage and mean distribution of the level of emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State.

S/N	Items	Mean	STD	Decision
1	My mood swings when stressed up	2.6	0.7	High
2	I adjust easily to a newly acquired life or event	2.2	1.1	Low
3	I feel lonely or isolated from others and struggle to spend time with my peers	2.6	0.9	High
4	I feel nervous or anxious in social situations	2.8	0.7	High
5	I have difficulty making friends and adjusting to their behavior	2.8	0.7	High
6	I can maintain my attitude to adapt to any circumstances	2.5	0.9	High
7	I worry a lot about things in the environment	1.7	0.8	Low
8	I often feel sad or depressed to adjust to things going on in society	2.3	1.1	Low
9	I often engage in activities or hobbies that bring joy and relaxation	2.3	0.7	Low
10	I find it easy to adjust to my emotions in any situation	2.2	0.7	Low
	Weighted Mean	**2.4**		

3.3. Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the level of emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government based on gender

Table 3 shows the difference between the level of emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government based on gender. It was revealed that the mean and standard deviation of the male is 21.05 and 8.04 respectively, while the mean and standard deviation of the female adolescent is 22.11 and 5.16 respectively. There was a significant difference in the level of emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders based on gender ($t = 0.79$, $df = 118$, $p < 0.05$). The hypothesis is therefore rejected in light of the result since the significant value of 0.00 is less than 0.05. This implies that gender had a significant difference in the emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State.

Table 3. The difference between the level of emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government based on gender.

Gender	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig	Decision
Male	76	21.05	8.04				
				0.79	118	0.00	Significant
Female	44	22.11	5.16				

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3.4. Research Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference between the level of emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government based on gender

Table 4 shows the difference between the level of emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government based on gender. It was revealed that the mean and standard deviation of the male is 19.09 and 6.68 respectively, while the mean and standard deviation of the female adolescent is 24.16 and 7.54 respectively. There was no significant difference in the level of emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders based on gender ($t = 3.82$, $df = 118$, $p>0.05$). The hypothesis is therefore not rejected in light of the result since the significant value of 0.57 is greater than 0.05. This implies that gender had no significant difference in the emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government, Kwara State.

Table 4. The difference between the level of emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in Ilorin East Local Government based on gender.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig	Decision
Male	76	19.09	6.68	3.82	118	0.57	Not Significant
Female	44	24.16	7.54				

4. DISCUSSION

The first finding of the study revealed that the emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders is low. The reason for this could be because of the nature of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders. This finding is in line with the findings of Jose and Swammy (2022) who found that the level of emotional maturity among adolescents in the age range of 18 to 23 years is low. Similarly, Jobson (2020) revealed the level of emotional maturity among adolescents is low and 74% of the participants were found to be extremely emotionally Immature. The second finding of the study showed that the emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders is low; the reason for this could be because of the severity of their behavioral and social problems. This finding is following the findings of Melero *et al*. (2017) who found that adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders had lower levels of emotional adjustment than adolescents without these disorders. Similarly, Lynn *et al*. (2013) found that adolescents with EBD experienced significantly lower emotional adjustment levels than their typically developing peers. But the finding is not in line with the finding of Merrill *et al*. (2017) found that some adolescents with EBD exhibited high levels of emotional adjustment, while others experienced low levels.

Another finding of the study showed that there was a significant difference between the emotional maturity of male and female adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders, where females had better emotional maturity. This finding is not in support of the finding of Jose and Swammy (2022) that found that males are a bit more emotionally mature than females. Lastly, the finding of the study revealed that there was no significant difference between the emotional adjustment of male and female adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders, this finding is not in line with the finding of Merrill *et al*. (2017) found that gender differences do exist in the emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders, with males exhibiting higher levels of externalizing behavior and

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females exhibiting higher levels of internalizing behavior. The finding was also in tandem with the findings of Obafemi *et al*. (2023), and Obafemi (2021) which revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female learning outcomes.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the emotional maturity of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders is low and the emotional adjustment of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders is low. In addition, there was a significant difference between the emotional maturity of male and female adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders; there was no significant difference between the emotional adjustment of male and female adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders. The study, therefore, suggested the following recommendations:

(i) There should be intervention programs for teachers and parents that will aim at improving the emotional maturity and emotional adjustment of adolescents with EBD.
(ii) Teachers and parents should be trained on various approaches that can be used to improve the emotional and emotional adjustment of adolescents with EBD.

6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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