© IIJP 2026 | Volume 2, Issue 4, pp. 944-950 | ISSN: 2636-4484

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY VARIABLES, DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN GBOKO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, BENUE STATE

Linda Chiaka Manger[1] & Ezekiel Aondoaseer Hanior[2]
[1,2]*Department of Educational Foundations, Rev. Fr Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, Benue State*
***Corresponding Author**: haniorezekiel@bsum.edu*

ARTICLE INFO
Article No.: 0694
Accepted Date: 11/10/2026
Published Date: 13/11/2026
Type: Research

ABSTRACT
This study investigated the relationship between family variables, depression and anxiety among in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population of the study was 10,768 secondary school students from 24 public secondary schools in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State. A sample of 340 respondents was selected using the Research Advisor Table (2015). A multi-stage sampling technique involving purposive, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling procedures was employed. Three researcher-developed instruments titled Family Variables Questionnaire (FVQ), Depression Questionnaire (DQ) and Anxiety Questionnaire (PQ) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by three experts, while their reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha method, which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.70. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the research questions, while linear regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses. The findings revealed a strong negative relationship between family variables and depression ($r = -0.821$) and between family variables and anxiety ($r = -0.803$) among in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State. The findings further revealed significant relationships between family variables and depression ($F(1, 338) = 698.940$, $p < .001$) and between family variables and anxiety ($F(1, 338) = 613.601$, $p < .001$). The study concluded that family variables were significantly and negatively related to depression and anxiety among in-school adolescents. Based on the findings, the study recommended, among others, that parents should provide adolescents with adequate emotional support, love, care and encouragement, while parents and guardians should improve communication with their children and create peaceful home environments to help address depression and anxiety.

Keywords: Family variables, depression, anxiety, in-school, adolescents.

Introduction

Across the world, many in-school adolescents experience emotional and behavioural problems such as depression, anxiety, aggression, withdrawal and substance abuse. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2025) reports that about one in seven adolescents aged 10–19 experiences a mental disorder. According to Okoye (2019), parental conflict, poor parenting practices and inadequate emotional support increase the risk of psychological problems among adolescents. These difficulties may affect students' behaviour, peer relationships and adjustment to school life. In Nigeria, economic hardship, family instability and poor parent-child communication contribute to emotional and behavioural difficulties among adolescents. According to Adewale (2022), family challenges can affect students' concentration, behaviour and participation in school activities. In Benue State, particularly Gboko Local Government Area, concerns about depression, anxiety, aggression and substance abuse among in-school adolescents require attention. However, the extent to which family variables such as parental conflict, parenting styles, family structure and emotional support relate to psychopathology among these adolescents remains unclear, creating the need for this study.

Family variables refer to the conditions, characteristics, and interactions within the family that vary influence a child's or adolescent's behaviour, emotions, and development. These variables describe how the family functions, how parents relate to their children, and how family members support or affect one another. They include factors such as parenting style, family structure, communication patterns, family size, family location, parental monitoring, financial status, occupational status, educational status, and the emotional climate of the home (Okoye, 2019). Family variables also cover issues such as marital stability, levels of conflict, cultural practices, and the quality of parent–child relationships. Researchers note that positive family variables, such as warmth, support, and good communication, help adolescents develop confidence and emotional stability (Akinsola, 2020). However, negative family conditions, such as conflict, harsh parenting, poor communication, or instability, may increase the risk of psychopathology by exposing adolescents to emotional stress, behavioural problems, and mental health disorders such as depression.

Depression is a serious mental health condition characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness that affect a student's daily functioning beyond ordinary sadness. Common signs include loss of interest in usual activities, significant changes in sleep patterns, changes in appetite and weight, low energy, poor concentration, and feelings of worthlessness. In some cases, depression may also involve thoughts of death or suicide. Clinical guidance explains that symptoms of major depression typically persist for at least two weeks before a diagnosis is considered (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Depression can arise from a combination of genetic, biological, psychological, and environmental factors, including stressful life events. Treatment may involve psychotherapy, medication, or both, depending on the severity of the condition and the individual's support needs (WHO, 2025). Edet and Essien (2023), observed that students with low social support had significantly higher depression scores. According to Ogunlade (2023), parenting styles and self-esteem jointly contributed to depression among secondary school students.

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or fear that, when excessive or persistent, can interfere with a student's daily life, schoolwork, and relationships. It occurs in conditions such as generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and social anxiety disorder. Symptoms may include restlessness, irritability, and persistent expectations of negative outcomes, even when there is little immediate danger. Anxiety can also produce physical symptoms, such as a rapid heartbeat,

sweating, trembling, or shortness of breath. Clinical guidance notes that anxiety disorders involve fear or worry that is excessive, difficult to manage, and disruptive to normal functioning (WHO, 2025). Researchers also link anxiety to brain systems involved in fear and threat responses, including the amygdala (Stein & Sareen, 2017). Olawuyi, Adeleke and Badamas (2023), who found a significant relationship between family type and social anxiety among students. To Nwufo, Onyishi, Ubom, Akinola and Chukwuorji (2017), who found that positive parenting, especially authoritative parenting, negatively predicted test anxiety among secondary school students

Statement of the problem

In Nigeria, adolescent mental health is also becoming a serious concern. UNICEF reported that one in six young Nigerians aged 15–24 often feels depressed, has little interest in doing things or feels worried, nervous or anxious (UNICEF, 2021). This suggests that many Nigerian adolescents may be struggling with emotional distress which can interfere with their academic performance and social development. The situation may be more serious in Benue State because of the effects of violent conflicts, displacement, poverty and insecurity. Farmer-herder conflicts in the state have exposed many young people to violence, loss of property, fear and unstable living conditions. Such experiences can increase the risk of trauma, anxiety, depression and other psychopathological symptoms among adolescents. Reports on the farmer-herder crisis in Benue State also show that children and young people affected by conflict are at risk of psychological trauma and emotional distress (UNICEF, 2025).

These behavioural and emotional problems are strongly linked to family instability, such as parental conflict, separation, poverty, and poor parenting practices. In Gboko, common family conditions include polygamous family structures, economic hardship, fathers being absent due to work demands, and weak parent child communication. These situations create ongoing emotional stress, which increases adolescents' risk of developing depression, anxiety, and aggressive behaviour. In Gboko Local Government Area, adolescents may also face pressures linked to school stress, peer influence, economic hardship, overcrowded living conditions and limited access to mental health support. These challenges may increase feelings of irritability, sadness, fear and poor emotional adjustment among in-school adolescents. It is against this background that the researcher investigates family variables, depression and anxiety among in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State.

Purpose of the study

The general purpose of this study was to investigate relationship between family variables, depression and anxiety of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the relationship between family variables and depression of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State
2. establish the relationship between family variables and anxiety of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the relationship between family variables and depression of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State?
2. What is the relationship between family variables and anxiety of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State?

Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. Family variables have no significant relationship with depression of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State.
2. Family variables have no significant relationship with anxiety of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State

Methodology

The study investigated the relationship between family variables, depression and anxiety among in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population of the study was 10,768 secondary school students from 24 public secondary schools, from which a sample of 340 respondents was selected using the Research Advisor Table (2015). A multi-stage sampling technique involving purposive, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling procedures was employed. Three researcher-developed questionnaire titled Family Variables Questionnaire (FVQ) Depression Questionnaire (DQ) and Anxiety Questionnaire (PQ) were used for data collection. The questionnaire covered family variables depression and anxiety. The questionnaire was validated by three experts, while their reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding an overall coefficient of 0.70. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the research questions, while linear and multiple regression analyses were used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research question 1

What is the relationship between family variables and depression of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State?

Table 1:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test of Relationship between Family Variables and Depression of In-school Adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State

		Family Variables	Depression
Family Variables	Pearson Correlation	1.000	-0.821**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	340	340
Depression	Pearson Correlation	-0.821**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	340	340

The results presented in Table 1 indicated a correlation coefficient of -0.821, this implies that in-school adolescents often feel sad most of the day, lost interest in activities and find it hard to concentrate. This shows strong negative relationship between family variables and depression of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State.

Research question 2

What is the relationship between family variables and anxiety of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State?

Table 2:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test of Relationship between Family Variables and Anxiety of In-school Adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State

		Family Variables	Anxiety
Family Variables	Pearson Correlation	1.000	-0.803**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	340	340
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-0.803**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	340	340

The results in Table 2 revealed a correlation coefficient of -0.803, this implies that in-school adolescents worried too much about many things feel restless most of the time and find it difficult to relax. This shows strong negative relationship between family variables and anxiety of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between family variables and depression of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State.

Table 7:

Linear Regression Analysis of Relationship between Family Variables and Depression of In-school Adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State

Variable	R	R^2 df	F	B	T	Sig.
(Constant)	0.821	0.674	698.940			0.000
Depression				-0.821	-26.437	0.000

F (1, 338) = 698.940, P < 0.05

Table 7 result showed that F (1, 338) = 698.940, R = 0.821, R^2 = 0.674, B = -0.821, t = -26.437, and p = 0.000. Since p = 0.000 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis which stated that family variables have no significant relationship with depression was therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant negative relationship between family variables and depression of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between family variables and anxiety of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State.

Table 8:

Linear Regression Analysis of Relationship between Family Variables and Anxiety of In-school Adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State

Variable	R	R^2	df	F	B	T	Sig.
(Constant)	0.803	0.645		613.601			0.000
Anxiety					-0.803	-24.771	0.000

F (1, 338) = 613.601, P < 0.05

Table 8 result showed that F (1, 338) = 613.601, R = 0.803, R^2 = 0.645, B = -0.803, t = -24.771, and p = 0.000. Since p = 0.000 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis which stated that family variables have no significant relationship with anxiety was therefore rejected. This

implies that there is a significant negative relationship between family variables and anxiety of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State.

Discussion of findings

The discussion of the findings is organized around the research questions and hypotheses for ease of understanding and comprehension.

The finding based on research question one and hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant strong negative relationship between family variables and depression of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State. This implies that in-school adolescents are exposed to persistent sadness, loss of interest in activities, low concentration and feelings of emotional emptiness. This finding agrees with Edet and Essien (2023), who found that students with low social support had significantly higher depression scores. It also agrees with Ogunlade (2023), who found that parenting styles and self-esteem jointly contributed to depression among secondary school students. This implies that family-based support, improve parent-child communication and identify adolescents who show signs of depression early enough for counselling intervention.

The finding based on research question two and hypothesis two revealed that there is a significant strong negative relationship between family variables and anxiety of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State. This implies that in-school adolescents f experience excessive worry, restlessness, fear and difficulty relaxing. This finding agrees with Olawuyi, Adeleke and Badamas (2023), who found a significant relationship between family type and social anxiety among students. It also agrees with Nwufo, Onyishi, Ubom, Akinola and Chukwuorji (2017), who found that positive parenting, especially authoritative parenting, negatively predicted test anxiety among secondary school students. This implies that peaceful homes reduce unnecessary threats and criticism and provide adolescents with emotional reassurance, while school counsellors should organize anxiety-management programmes for students.

Conclusion

The study concluded that there is a significant strong negative relationship between family variables, depression and anxiety among in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State. This means that positive family conditions reduce the likelihood of depression, anxiety, aggression, substance abuse and trauma reactions among adolescents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on the relationship between family variables, depression and anxiety of in-school adolescents in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents should provide adolescents with adequate emotional support, love, care and encouragement. This will help reduce feelings of sadness, hopelessness and poor concentration that may lead to depression.
2. Parents and guardians should improve communication with their children and create peaceful home environments. Adolescents should be allowed to express their fears and worries freely so that anxiety can be identified and handled early.

References

Adewale, O. (2022). Family dynamics and adolescent mental health in Nigeria**.** *Journal of Adolescent Psychology***,** 15(3), 45–60.

Akinsola, E. (2020). Depression and emotional breakdown among in-school adolescents in Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 12(2), 88–102.

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed., text rev.).

Edet, P. B., & Essien, E. E. (2023). Family affluence, social support, and depression among students in Calabar, Nigeria. *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 13(1), 45–58.

Nwufo, J. I., Onyishi, I. E., Ubom, I. U., Akinola, O. O., & Chukwuorji, J. C. (2017). Parenting styles and emotion regulation as predictors of test anxiety among secondary school students. *Nigerian Journal of Psychological Research*, 13(1), 45–58.

Ogunlade, A. O. (2023). Self-esteem and parenting styles as determinants of adolescents' depression among senior secondary school students in Oyo State (Master's thesis, Lead City University).

Okoye, R. (2019). Impact of family stress on student learning and behavior. University of Lagos Press.

Olawuyi, B. O., Adeleke, M. J., & Badamas, O. L. (2023). Family type and social anxiety among university undergraduates in Ilorin, Kwara State. *Unilorin Journal of Lifelong Education*, 4, 83–92.

Stein, M. B., & Sareen, J. (2017). Clinical practice: Generalized anxiety disorder. *New England Journal of Medicine,* 7(21), 59–88.

World Health Organization. (2025). ICD-11 for mortality and morbidity statistics (2025 release). https://icd.who.int/browse/releases/mms/en

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on poor mental health in children and young people 'tip of the iceberg' – UNICEF. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/press-releases/impact-covid-19-poor-mental-health-children-and-young-people-tip-iceberg-unicef

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2025). Nigeria humanitarian situation report No. 2 (farmer-herder conflict), 02 July 2025. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/documents/nigeria-humanitarian-situation-report-no-2-farmer-herder-conflict-02-july-2025