

Adult Consent As A Correlate Of Interpersonal Relationships Among Teachers In Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State

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Abstract: *The study investigated the correlation between adult consent and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The design used for this study is a correlational research design, the multi-stage random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 350 teachers (140 males and 210 females), from a population of two thousand, seven hundred and ninety-six (2,796) teachers (1,006 males and 1,260 females) in the 166 government-owned secondary schools. The research instrument that was used for this study is a questionnaire titled "The questionnaire is titled "Consent and Interpersonal Relationships Scale (CIRS). The face validity of the instrument was estimated through experts' judgment. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha statistics analysis and it yielded reliability index (r) of 0.73 for the Adult Consent Rating Scale. The research questions were answered using Pearson and multiple Correlations statistics. Hypotheses were tested using multiple regression statistics at 0.05 levels of significance. Results revealed that there is no significant relationship between adult consent and its components (voluntariness, informed decisions, and capacity) and interpersonal relationship among teachers. There is no significant moderating influence of gender on the relationship between adult consent and interpersonal relationship among teachers. Based on the above findings, it is recommended that teachers consent should be intentionally directed towards building interpersonal relationship at workplace.*

Keywords: Adult Consent, Interpersonal Relationship, Gender, Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal relationships are the intricate web of connections, interactions, and associations that individuals develop with one another. These relationships form the fabric of social life and are indispensable for personal growth, well-being, and fulfillment. Ranging from fleeting acquaintanceships to profound, intimate bonds, interpersonal relations span a broad spectrum of dynamics shaped by various factors including communication styles, emotional intelligence, cultural backgrounds, and individual personalities. Scholars like Berscheid and Reis (2017) highlight the significance of interpersonal and close relationships, underscoring their profound influence on individuals' emotional and psychological well-being. Additionally, Vangelisti (2017) stresses the pivotal role of interpersonal communication as the cornerstone of all relationships, facilitating understanding, connection, and intimacy among individuals.

At the heart of interpersonal relations lie two key elements: communication and empathy. Effective communication encompasses both verbal and nonverbal exchanges, active listening, and the ability to articulate oneself clearly while empathizing with others' perspectives. Empathy, on the other hand, involves recognizing and sharing others' emotions, laying the foundation for trust and connection. Interpersonal relationships manifest in various forms such as friendships, romantic partnerships, familial ties, and professional collaborations, each with its own set of norms, expectations, and boundaries. Healthy interpersonal relations are characterized by mutual respect, trust, support, and reciprocity. However, conflicts, misunderstandings, and disagreements might inevitably arise in any relationship. Effective conflict resolution skills, compromise, and a willingness to understand each other's differences are crucial for navigating these challenges and maintaining healthy connections.

In the workplace, interpersonal relationships constitute a critical component of organisational dynamics, exerting a significant impact on productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organisational effectiveness. Interactions among colleagues and relationships between supervisors and subordinates might profoundly influence employee job motivation, performance, satisfaction, engagement, retention, and organisational culture. Felps et al. (2017) emphasized the pivotal role of these relationships in underpinning the success and productivity of teams within organisations. Interpersonal relationships in the workplace are essential for fostering a positive work environment, enhancing employee well-being, and driving organizational success. This implies that these relationships might contribute to various aspects of workplace dynamics, including collaboration, communication, and employee satisfaction. Positive relationships create a conducive environment for teamwork, innovation, and organizational growth, while also promoting employee morale and organizational citizenship behaviours. Interpersonal relationships in various work or organisational settings are influenced by a multitude of variables that might shape the way individuals connect and interact with one another. These might include personality traits, organisational culture, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, self-perception, consent of superiors, leadership styles, work stress, and working conditions among others. For the purpose of this study, the relationship between adult consent, the moderating role of gender and interpersonal relationship were considered.

Adult consent refers to the voluntary agreement or permission given by a competent adult to engage in a specific activity, such as research participation, specific task assignment, and contractual agreements among others. This concept emphasizes the importance of individuals being able to make informed decisions about their own lives and actions. The American Psychological Association (2017) emphasize the importance of obtaining informed consent from competent adults before conducting research or providing psychological services. This includes ensuring that individuals can understand relevant information and voluntarily

consent to participate. Adult consent, in the context of interpersonal relationships, refers to the voluntary agreement or permission given by competent adults to engage in various activities within those relationships. This could include consent for physical intimacy, agreement to certain terms in professional collaborations, or permission for sharing personal information in friendships.

This implies that not all adults represent position of authority nor can give a legal consent. The presence of adult consent is crucial in interpersonal relationships as it establishes boundaries, respect, and trust between individuals. When both parties freely agree to participate in activities or interactions, it can foster a sense of mutual understanding and empowerment. Consent might ensure that all parties involved are comfortable and willing participants, leading to healthier and more fulfilling interpersonal relationships. However, the absence of clear and informed consent can lead to misunderstandings, breaches of trust, and even harm within interpersonal relationships (Faden & Beauchamp, 2019). In workplace, adult might mean or represent superiors or older colleagues which might be junior staff. In interpersonal relationships in work environment, adult consent might serve as a cornerstone for establishing mutual respect and trust which might lead to efficiency and enhanced productivity.

Besides the above discussed variables, it is assumed that the variable of gender has the potency of influencing adult consent and interpersonal relationship among workers. Gender refers to a wide range of biological, behavioural, physical and mental characteristics regarding to and differentiating between female and male individuals (Adigun et al., 2015). Gender is one of the personal variables that establish differences in motivational functioning and in self-regulated learning patterns among males and females. Gender differences are shaped by the societal orientation that males are superior to their female counterparts. It is no secret that males and females are raised and socialized quite differently from each other around the world. Eagly and Wood (2012) gender stereotypes often portray men as assertive, dominant, and task-oriented, while women are depicted as nurturing, communal, and relationship-oriented. As a result, individuals may internalize these stereotypes and behave in ways that align with societal expectations of their gender. For instance, men may feel pressured to assert their authority and dominance in professional settings to conform to the masculine ideal, while women may feel compelled to prioritize relationship-building and communal goals (Van Laar et al., 2024). These gender expectations can influence how individuals are perceived and treated by their colleagues, ultimately shaping the quality of interpersonal relationships within the workplace. Moreover, the perpetuation of gender stereotypes can contribute to the reinforcement of gender biases and discrimination in the workplace. Individuals who deviate from traditional gender norms may face stigma, prejudice, and barriers to career advancement (Van Laar et al., 2024). For example, women in leadership positions may encounter resistance and skepticism from their male counterparts, while men in caregiving roles may face scrutiny and skepticism regarding their competence and commitment (Chanda & Ngulube, 2024).

Statement of Problem

Organizations across the world are made up of individuals who share common aims, objectives, goals, and insights, and who work together to accomplish what cannot be achieved in isolation. Interpersonal relationships within the workplace—encompassing the interactions among employees, managers, and other stakeholders—are widely recognized as crucial for fostering team cohesion and enhancing organizational performance. However, despite their significance, many organizations continue to struggle with dysfunctional interpersonal relationships that hinder workplace outcomes. Workers face interpersonal conflicts, communication breakdowns, unhealthy competition, and a lack of trust among colleagues. However, observations by the researchers, in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State suggest potential poor interpersonal relationship among workers turns into conflicts, favoritism, emotional exhaustion, resistance to change, and negative organizational culture. Poor interpersonal relationship might result in workers' dissatisfaction as evidenced in their negative attitude towards their work which is revealed through truancy or being late to work, ineffective use of working hours, poor performance, teaching late, completing assignments late, often leaving the office before office hours. It is not known if adult consent and gender are the factors that could affect the interpersonal relationship. Therefore, the problem of this study is put in question form: Is there a relationship between adult consent and interpersonal relationship with respect to gender of teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State?

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What is the relationship between adult consent and its component of voluntariness, informed decision, capacity and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state?
2. What is the moderating influence of gender on the relationship between adult consent and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between adult consent and its components of voluntariness, informed decision, capacity and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.
2. There is no significant moderating influence of gender on the relationship between adult consent and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.

METHOD

The design adopted for this study was a correlational survey research design, which is well-suited for collecting structured, numerical data. This design was considered appropriate because it investigates the relationship among variables without manipulating any of the outcomes or variables. The population of the study comprised 2,796 teachers (1,006 males and 1,260

females) in 166 government-owned secondary schools spread across the nine local government areas that make up the North Senatorial District of Delta State during the 2023/2024 academic session (Delta State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2024). Male teachers constituted 36% of the population, while female teachers made up 64%. The sample size consisted of 350 teachers (140 males and 210 females), selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure. At the first stage, five (5) local government areas were randomly selected from the Senatorial District using the simple random sampling technique. These were Aniocha South, Ika South, Ndokwa West, Oshimili North, and Ukwani Local Government Areas. At the second stage, seven (7) secondary schools were randomly selected from each of the five local government areas, making a total of 35 schools. At the third stage, proportionate random sampling was used to select four (4) male teachers (36%) and six (6) female teachers (64%) from each school, making a total of 10 respondents per school. This process yielded a total of 350 respondents (140 males and 210 females).

The instrument for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire titled Consent and Interpersonal Relationships Scale (CIRS). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A collected demographic data such as sex, while Section B consisted of 33 self-report items divided into two subscales: the Adult Consent Scale and the Interpersonal Relationships Scale. Respondents indicated their opinions on a four-point Likert scale with close-ended options: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The face validity of the instrument was established through expert judgment, while content and construct validity were determined through factor analysis using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method. For face validity, copies of the questionnaire were given to the researcher’s supervisor and two experts in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka, for review and corrections. Based on their input, some items were modified to better reflect respondents’ perspectives. To establish content validity, 50 copies of the questionnaire were administered to secondary school teachers in Delta Central Senatorial District who were not part of the study.

The data obtained were subjected to PCA, which yielded the following values: 66.16% for the Adult Consent Rating Scale and 69.41% for the Interpersonal Relationship Rating Scale. Construct validity was determined using the rotated factor loading of the varimax method, which produced values ranging from 0.55 to 0.86 for the Adult Consent Rating Scale and 0.57 to 0.87 for the Interpersonal Relationship Rating Scale. Reliability of the instrument was ascertained through a pilot test involving 50 secondary school teachers from Delta Central Senatorial District (who were not part of the main study). The data were analyzed using the Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient, a statistical measure of internal consistency. The coefficients obtained were as follows: 0.73 for the Adult Consent Rating Scale, 0.79 for the Leadership Style Rating Scale, 0.78 for the Life Role Stress Rating Scale, 0.76 for the Interpersonal Relationship Rating Scale, and 0.93 for the overall reliability. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher and two trained research assistants. Prior to administration, permission was obtained from school heads, and respondents were adequately briefed and encouraged to respond sincerely and objectively. They were also assured of the confidentiality of their responses. All copies of the questionnaires were retrieved on the same day of administration. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson and multiple correlation statistics for the research questions. The hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression analysis, with all hypotheses tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between adult consent and its components (voluntariness, informed decision, and capacity) and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state?

Table 1: Multiple Correlation and Coefficient of Determination of Adult Consent and its Components (Voluntariness, Informed Decision, and Capacity) and Interpersonal Relationship Among Teachers

Variables	N	R	R-Square	R ² %	Decision
Voluntariness					
Informed Decision					
Capacity	350	.124 ^a	.015	1.5	Low Positive Relationship
Interpersonal Relationship					

Predictor(s): Voluntariness, Informed Decision, Capacity

Dependent: Interpersonal Relationship

Table 1 showed the multiple correlation value (r-value) of the relationship between adult consent and its components (voluntariness, informed decision and capacity) and interpersonal relationship among teachers. The r-value=.124, which showed a relationship among the variables. The coefficient of determination was 0.015 (1.5%) and the amount of contribution of adult consent and its components (voluntariness, informed decision and capacity) to interpersonal relationship among teachers. This revealed a low positive relationship between adult consent and its components (voluntariness, informed decision and capacity) and interpersonal relationship among teachers.

Research Question 2: What is the moderating influence of gender on the relationship between adult consent and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state?

Table 2: Multiple Correlation and Coefficient of Determination of the Moderating Influence of Gender on the Relationship between Adult Consent, and Interpersonal Relationship Among Teachers

Variables	N	R	R-Square	R ² %	Decision
Adult Consent	350	.273 ^a	.074	7.4	Positive Relationship
Gender					

Predictor(s): Adult Consent

Dependent: Interpersonal Relationship

Moderator(s): Gender

Presented in Table 2 is the multiple correlation value (r-value) of the moderating influence of gender on the relationship between adult consent and interpersonal relationship among teachers. The r-value=.273, which showed a moderating influence of gender on the relationship among the variables. The coefficient of determination was 0.074 (7.4%) and the amount of contribution of the moderating influence of gender on the relationship between adult consent to interpersonal relationship among teachers. This revealed a positive moderating influence of gender on the relationship between adult consent and interpersonal relationship among teachers.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between adult consent and its components (voluntariness, informed decision, and capacity) and interpersonal relationship *among teachers* in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of the Relationship Adult Consent and Its Components (Voluntariness, Informed Decision, and Capacity) and Interpersonal Relationship Among Teachers

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	74.243	3	24.748	1.807	.146 ^b
	Residual	4737.954	346	13.694		
	Total	4812.197	349			

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	29.360	2.057		14.273	.000
	Voluntariness	.168	.108	.084	1.559	.120
	Informed Decision	.190	.108	.094	1.758	.030
	Capacity	.026	.046	.031	.581	.561

R= 0.124, p=146>0.05, Not Significant

Predictor(s): Voluntariness, Informed Decision, Capacity

Dependent: Interpersonal Relationship

Table 3 showed the regression ANOVA f-value = 1.807 and p-value of 0.146. Testing the hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level, the p-value of 0.146 was greater than the alpha value of 0.05. This indicated a no significant relationship. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between adult consent and its components (voluntariness, informed decision, and capacity) and interpersonal relationship *among teachers* in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State, is retained. This indicated that there was no significant relationship between adult consent and its components (voluntariness, informed decision, and capacity) and interpersonal relationship *among teachers* in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.

From the coefficient table, the unstandardized coefficient (B) for predicting interpersonal relationship from voluntariness was .168, informed decision=.190 and capacity=.026; and the standardized coefficient (β) for voluntariness=.084, t=1.559, p=.120, informed decision (β)=.094, t=1.758, p=.030 and capacity (β)=.031, t=.581, p=.561. Hence, voluntariness and capacity were not significant at an alpha level of 0.05, while informed decision was significant. This implies that only informed decision has significant impact on interpersonal relationship.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant moderating influence of gender on the relationship between adult consent and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis of the Moderating Influence of Gender on the Relationship between Adult Consent and Interpersonal Relationship among Teachers

Model		Coefficients ^a				Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1	(Constant)	27.222	2.345		11.608	.000
	Adult Consent	.025	.039	.034	.631	.528
	Gender	-.656	.393	-.087	-1.671	.096

$R=.273, P=.096>0.05$

Table 4 showed the analysis of the moderating influence of gender on the relationship between adult consent and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. The coefficient ($\beta=-.087, t=-1.671, p=.096>0.05$) indicated a negative and no significant moderating influence of gender on the relationship among adult consent, leadership styles, life role stress and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant moderating influence of gender on the relationship between adult consent, leadership styles, life role stress and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State, is retained. This means that there is no significant moderating influence of gender on the relationship between adult consent, leadership styles, life role stress and interpersonal relationship among teachers.

Discussion of Findings

From the analysis of data in answering research question one and testing hypothesis one, result revealed that there is no significant relationship between adult consent and its components (voluntariness, informed decisions, and capacity) and interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. This means that adult consent and its components (voluntariness and capacity) do not predict interpersonal relationship among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. However, the component of informed decision was significant in predicting interpersonal relationship. The possible reason for this findings is that giving consent voluntarily or based on your capacity do not influence how interpersonal relationships are built or cultivated. This outcome may be explained by the influence of other workplace factors such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and working conditions, which play a critical role in shaping the emotional dimensions of interpersonal relationships. Notably, this finding stands in contrast to the study of Fu (2021), who investigated corporate volunteering, positive relationships at work, affective commitment, and work engagement using a mediated moderator model. Fu's results showed that employee participation in corporate volunteering significantly strengthened the link between positive interpersonal relationships and work engagement. Likewise, Sheenu et al. (2023) examined problem-solving and decision-making as correlates of interpersonal relationships among secondary school students, reporting that decision-making was not significantly correlated with interpersonal relationships. In contrast to these findings, the present study demonstrated that volunteering, informed decision-making, and individual capacity did not significantly influence interpersonal relationships among teachers. This divergence suggests that interpersonal relationships in the teaching profession may be shaped less by individual decision-making or voluntary participation, and more by contextual workplace factors such as school culture, leadership practices, and work conditions.

In answering research question two and testing hypothesis two, the findings revealed that sex does not significantly moderate the relationship between adult consent, leadership styles, life role stress, and interpersonal relationships among teachers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. This indicates that the relationship among these variables is consistent across both male and female teachers, showing no significant difference. A plausible explanation for this outcome is that interpersonal relationships are cultivated irrespective of sex, with no particular pattern unique to either males or females. This result is consistent with the work of Roberts et al. (2022), who examined the influence of organizational climate and sex on interpersonal relationships and reported no significant difference between male and female employees. Similarly, Wikaningrum and Yuniawan (2018) found no significant differences in perceptions of leadership styles and interpersonal skills between male and female leaders. Supporting this position, Shina (2022) investigated work-life balance, work environment, sense of competence, interpersonal relationships, and work stress among secondary school teachers in Ibadan Metropolis, and found no significant differences in work stress between male and female teachers. Taken together, these findings reinforce the conclusion of the present study that sex does not exert a significant moderating effect on the relationship between adult consent, leadership styles, life role stress, and interpersonal relationships among teachers.

Conclusions

From the study, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship between adult consent and interpersonal relationship, but the adult consent component of voluntariness was related to interpersonal relationship. The study also concluded that gender no moderating impact in the relationship between adult consent and interpersonal relationship among teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers consent should be intentionally directed towards building interpersonal relationship at workplace.
2. Teachers should effectively utilize adult consent in building and enhancing interpersonal relationship.
3. In counselling for interpersonal relationships, gender of teachers should not be major consideration as it does not influence interpersonal relationships.

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