

**BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:  
EXAMINING MALADAPTIVE INFLUENCES IN ABUJA SCHOOLS****Johnson, Olivia Margaret**

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**Abstract**

Secondary school students often exhibit maladaptive behaviours that disrupt academic performance and social development, including bullying, truancy, anxiety, aggression, cultism, substance abuse, and other forms of misconduct. Factors such as overprotective parenting, where parents excuse or cover up children's wrongdoings, can further exacerbate these behaviours. Maladaptive behaviour is broadly defined as any action that violates societal norms, school regulations, or ethical standards, and it may manifest as antisocial, criminal, or unethical conduct. While schools provide formal academic instruction, the development of socially acceptable behaviours and character formation largely depends on familial and community influence. This study examines the prevalence, causes, and impacts of maladaptive behaviours among secondary school students, emphasizing the need for effective interventions by educators, counsellors, and parents. By understanding the multifaceted nature of maladaptive behaviours, stakeholders can implement strategies to promote responsible behaviour, enhance student performance, and foster holistic development within the school environment.

**Keywords:** Maladaptive behaviour, Student performance, Secondary education, Counselling, School discipline

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Secondary school students usually display maladaptive behaviours such as bullying, truancy, fear of examination, anxiety, gangster, cultism, aggressiveness, and moody disposition which could put them at great risks at any point in time. Factor such as over protectiveness of parents, where parents gloss over their ward's wrongdoings is also a maladaptive behaviour. This is usually portrayed when parents tell lies to cover their children's misdoing (Aboh cite in Adikwu, Oguiche, Usman & Olabode, 2023). The various forms of student maladaptive behaviours are late coming, drug and alcoholic abuse, bullying, love affairs, vandalism, assault on the school prefects, insult on educators, wearing the wrong school uniform, use of the mobile phone, smoking, writing or using foul language in class, work not done, class disruption and immoral acts (Gutuza & Mapolisa, 2015). Maladaptive behaviour is generally defined as any behaviour that does not conform to the established rules of a group of individuals or the society at large (Idris 2016). It could also be referred to as the engagement of people in criminal offences, illegal, antisocial and unethical behaviour. In a nutshell, any behaviour that violates the norm or social standard of the society is maladaptive. Maladaptive behaviour could also be any form of behaviour that contravenes the rules and regulations or even laws that govern an establishment. Most of the informal education is got from home. The school offers only the literary and academic component of education. Initiation into the culture of the society

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and the development of good character and socially acceptable behaviour are more than what the school alone can give. The aims and objectives, goals and means of teaching them are usually stated in the school's curriculum or subject syllabuses, but the aims and intentions of community-wide education are implicit in the societal expectations of individual members. That is why the wider community has to complement the efforts of the school. Therefore, a person could live all his/her life without receiving purposeful education, particularly where aims and intentions are not clear from the start and efforts are limited to the acquisition of book knowledge alone (Crittenden cited in Musa, 2014). The rate of involvement of in-school students in deviant behaviour is of great concern to stakeholders. Students go through a lot of challenges as they engage in behavioural experimentation and maladaptive behaviours. Students' unruly behaviour may continue to disrupt their academic programmes to the extent that teachers are unable to cover the contents of the school curriculum. Maladaptive behaviour such as substance abuse, cultism, drunkenness, drug addiction, engaging in physical altercations, and engaging in theft are evident of manifestations of maladaptive conduct in schools. Maladaptive behaviours in schools have reached an alarming rate; this could be traced to the home, society and the attitude of students towards schooling. In order for these students to perform well in external examinations, they may resort to examination malpractices. The high incidence of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in FCT, Abuja has become public concern and in spite of efforts by school counselling and government interventions, this problem remains intractable. Regrettably, instances of maladaptive conduct have shown an upward trend, particularly within the FCT Abuja. The researcher had encountered distressing issues related to conduct while teaching students, particularly concerning the decline in academic achievement and bad behaviour. Parents, teachers, curriculum experts, and school counsellors have expressed concern over the subpar academic achievement. Societal norms and values become fundamental determinants that significantly impact students' conduct. Despite government efforts to prioritize students' psychological well-being, there is a prevalence of vices such as cultism, drunkenness, drug addiction, physical altercations, and theft. While some students may exhibit maladaptive conduct in the educational setting, others may have academic setbacks that result in subpar performance. It is based on the above notion that this study investigated the influence of maladaptive behaviour on academic achievement of senior secondary school students in FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to find out if there was any influence in maladaptive behaviour and academic achievement among Senior Secondary School students in FCT Abuja. The specific objectives were to:

i. find out the maladaptive behaviours among senior secondary school students in FCT-Abuja.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the conduct of the study:

1. What are the maladaptive behaviours among senior Secondary School Students

## 2. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between male and female students on the various maladaptive behaviours among senior Secondary School students in FCT Abuja.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between students from rural and urban areas on the various maladaptive behaviours among senior Secondary School students in FCT Abuja.

### **Delimitation of the Study**

This study is delimited to the influence of maladaptive behaviours and academic achievement among Senior Secondary School students in FCT Abuja. Maladaptive behaviour in this study is delimited to substance abuse (alcoholism, drug addiction), fighting, depression and cultism. The researcher focused on public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. This study was further delimited to only Senior Secondary School (SSS) one students in public secondary schools within the geographical area of FCT, Abuja Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this research includes four major sub-headings, including the concepts of maladaptive behaviour, causes of students maladaptive, types of maladaptive behaviours, characteristics of senior secondary school students with maladaptive behaviours, academic achievement, causes of students' maladaptive behaviour, academic achievement, maladaptive and academic achievement and counselling techniques for managing maladaptive behaviour of students in schools were reviewed below.

### **Maladaptive Behaviour**

Maladaptive behaviour has been an important topical issue that has been researched by various researchers in an attempt to discover the outcome of it in various contexts especially educational context such as secondary and tertiary institutions and how it affects the academic achievements of students. Okolo (2019) stated that maladaptive behaviour appears as everyday phenomenon in our present-day society particularly among the senior secondary school students irrespective of their stages of socialization and cognitive development. As a result, the society is very much worried about the future of younger generations as fathers and mothers of tomorrow have turned into beast that behaved in a manner that lacks moral consciousness. The author further stressed that, maladaptive behaviour means a way of behaving, manners, and treatment shown towards others which does not conform to the norms of the society. In other words, maladaptive behaviour is socially defined as a problem, a source of concern, or as undesirable by the norms of conventional society and the institutions of adult authority, and its occurrence usually elicits some kind of social control response. Maladaptive behaviour is the behaviour being displayed by students in an environment of learning that disregards both written and unwritten social norms as well as laid down rules of the school. It involves a wide variety of behaviours, such as outright delinquency to far more subtle forms of disruptive or antisocial behaviour. In addition, maladaptive behavior can be aimed at

specific people (e.g., supervisors, teachers, individuals or peers), or more generalized, targeting anyone and anything. Such, behaviour can be an isolated event or periodic (Garba, Ogunode, Musa, & Ahmed, in Usman, Oguche & Linus, 2024). According to Okolo (2019) maladaptive behaviour means a way of behaving, manners, and treatment shown towards others which does not conform to the norms of the society. In other words, maladaptive behaviour is socially defined as problem, a source of concern, or as undesirable by the norms of conventional society and the institutions of adult authority, and its occurrence usually elicits some kinds of social control response. Furthermore, maladaptive behaviour appears as everyday phenomenon in our present-day society particularly among the senior secondary school students irrespective of their stages of socialization and cognitive development. This has caused the society to be much worried about the future of younger generations as fathers and mothers of tomorrow.

### Types of Maladaptive Behaviour

Maladaptive behaviours in students can appear in countless ways. Some categories and examples are explained below.

**i. Stereotypic behaviour:** Is an abnormal behaviour frequently seen in people or laboratory primates. The behaviour is considered an indication of poor psychological well-being in these humans or animals. As it is seen in captive animals but not in wild animals, attention has been focused on the situations in which this behaviour develops (Mason & Rushen, 2018). This behaviour in human includes hand play, rocking, echolalia weaving; box-walking; pacing; headtossing; self- mutilation. This varies according to environment in which individual grows, and seem to increase anxiety and stress. These behaviours have an inappropriately directed goal but are not learned, as the behaviour is never reinforced. Weaving, for example, achieves a physical sensation like walking somewhat, but the person has never achieved the real goal of walking forwards or relieving frustration.

**ii. Ritualistic Behaviour:** An attempt to regulate something concrete and controllable because the person cannot identify and control a problem and often manifests in compulsive behaviour.

**iii. Self-Injury:** Self-Injury is also termed self-mutilation, self-harm or self- abuse. The behaviour is defined as the deliberate, repetitive, impulsive, non-lethal harming of oneself. Self-injury includes: cutting, scratching, picking scraps or interfering with wound healing, burning, punching self or objects, infecting oneself, inserting objects in body opening, bruising or breaking bones, some forms of hair pulling, other various forms of bodily harm.

**iv. Tantrums:** Is an uncontrolled outburst of anger and frustration, typically in a young child. It is a combination of two or more maladaptive behaviours. The examples include: screaming, crying, and dropping to the ground.

**v. Depression:** An act of violence to another person or object. Examples: hitting, kicking, biting, slapping, pinching, grabbing, and pushing.

**vi. Running/Darting** - running out of the classroom, away from the area, or away from adults.

**vii. Compliance/Following Directions/Opposition:** lack of cooperation with instructions/demands.

**viii. Verbally Inappropriate Behaviour:** disruptive to classroom, peers or individual learning/success. The examples include: name calling, swearing, screaming, whining, and crying.

**ix. Substance Abuse and Maladaptive Behaviour:** Substance abuse represents a complex maladaptive behaviour pattern, often stemming from a confluence of genetic, environmental, and psychological factors. Individuals may turn to substances such as alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism for underlying issues like stress, trauma, or mental health disorders. The cycle of addiction often leads to increasingly dysfunctional behaviours, including neglect of responsibilities, strained relationships, and legal troubles. Maladaptive coping mechanisms further perpetuate the addiction, as individuals struggle to break free from the destructive cycle. Socioeconomic disparities can exacerbate substance abuse, with limited access to resources for recovery and higher stress levels contributing to continued maladaptive behaviours.

**x. Socio-Economic Factors and Maladaptive Behaviour:** Maladaptive behaviours are significantly influenced by socio-economic conditions. Economic instability, poverty, and lack of education can contribute to stress, hopelessness, and diminished self-esteem, increasing susceptibility to maladaptive coping strategies. Individuals facing economic hardship may resort to impulsive or risky behaviours such as theft, substance abuse, or aggressive actions as a means of addressing immediate challenges. Moreover, the absence of social support networks in economically disadvantaged communities can further entrench maladaptive behaviours, perpetuating cycles of dysfunction and limited opportunity.

**xi. Fighting and Maladaptive Behaviour:** Physical aggression and fighting are often expressions of maladaptive behaviour, driven by underlying emotional turmoil, inadequate conflict resolution skills, or exposure to violence. Individuals prone to fighting may have experienced childhood trauma or grown up in environments where aggression is normalized. Maladaptive coping mechanisms such as resorting to physical violence to resolve conflicts can lead to legal consequences, strained relationships, and perpetuation of violent cycles within communities.

Addressing the root causes of aggression through therapeutic interventions and skill-building can mitigate maladaptive behaviours associated with fighting.

**xii. Cultism and Maladaptive Behaviour:** Involvement in cults or extremist groups reflects a form of maladaptive behaviour characterized by manipulation, dependency, and conformity. Vulnerable individuals, often seeking belonging or purpose, may be drawn into cults that exploit their psychological needs and offer false assurances of identity and community. Cult involvement can lead to a range of maladaptive behaviours, including isolation from mainstream society, rigid adherence to harmful ideologies, and susceptibility to coercion or violence. Breaking free from cultism often requires intensive psychological support and deprogramming to reintegrate individuals into healthier social structures.

**xiii. Depression and Maladaptive Behaviour:** Depression is a prevalent mental health condition associated with maladaptive behaviours such as social withdrawal, self-harm, and substance abuse. Individuals experiencing depression may struggle with pervasive feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and low self-worth, prompting maladaptive coping mechanisms to alleviate emotional distress. Substance abuse can temporarily numb emotional pain, while self-isolation perpetuates the cycle of depression. Maladaptive behaviours linked to depression underscore the critical need for holistic mental health interventions, including therapy, medication, and social support, to address underlying emotional vulnerabilities and foster adaptive coping strategies.

**Characteristics of Senior Secondary School Students with Maladaptive Behaviour** The features of individuals with maladaptive behaviour include the followings:

1. They are unable to build or maintain satisfactory relationship with peers and teachers;
2. They are generally moody or unhappy in situations where other children express excitement and happiness;
3. Truancy is common among maladaptive individual;
4. The students may exhibit inappropriate behaviour under normal conditions;
5. They are often dependent on teachers and peers. He hardly attempts a new task without reassurance by somebody;
6. Anxiety;
7. Task avoidance;
8. Negative over reaction;
9. Low self-esteem.

Again, some of the causes may also include: disobedience to teachers and school's rules and regulations; stealing other students' property; staying in hostel during lesson; wearing of unauthorized assorted dress; maltreatment of junior students; smoking; alcohol consumption; drug consumption; involvement in secret cult activities; participation in students' unrest; participation in examination malpractices; immoral relationship with female students; unauthorized exit from school.

### **Causes of Students' Maladaptive Behaviour**

There are a number of factors that causes students' maladaptive behaviours. Some of them includes:

#### **i. Family Background**

The family background of some Students characterized by frequent fighting between parents, lack of parental love and affection, divorce, and different forms of deprivations, psychologically and materially could lead to maladaptive behaviours. In addition, children from polygamous background tend to be maladapted than those from monogamous background. Students from broken homes also exhibit maladaptive behaviour especially when both parents are separated and cannot reinforce and motivate these adolescents.

**ii. Socio-economic Status of Parents**

Students' maladaptive behaviour has also been linked to poverty arising from low socioeconomic status of parents. Therefore, students from poor homes are usually deprived of some basic needs of life. The fact that poor parents may not be able to satisfy all their needs, the children may take to other means such as stealing and the likes to provide for themselves and satisfy their materials quests.

**iii. Peer Influence**

Students follow the dictates of their peers. This is described as 'peer uniformity' that is they want to conform to the group's 'norms' because they want to belong. They usually don't bother whether these attitudes they try to conform to are in line with societal value or not (Omeje, 2005). This to some extent has contributed to maladaptive behaviour usually exhibited by these adolescents.

**iv. Influence of Mass Media.**

Students of today are greatly influenced by what they watch from films (Home videos) and certain presentations by the mass media. Students have greater attraction to view human sexuality films and related programmes. Some of these students who watch some of these films usually want to 'try out' what they have watched hence, resulting in maladaptive behaviour.

**v. The Unmannered Attitude:**

The Unmannered attitude of some teachers and inadequate support services like overcrowded lecture halls, unequipped laboratories, libraries and hostel accommodation where they are available may lead to students' maladaptive behaviour. Some teachers with loose manners often influence students negatively. Besides, dysfunctional school administration and hostile leadership style could cause students' maladaptive behaviour.

**Maladaptive Behaviour and Academic Achievement**

Academic achievement of a child could be defined as the learning outcomes of the child. It is the outcome of determination, and hard work, of students in academic pursuit, Pandey (2018), defined academic achievement as the achievement of the students in the subjects they study in the school. This determines the students' status in the class. This gives children an opportunity to develop their talents, improve their grades and prepare for future academic challenges. Academic achievement refers to a person's achievement in a given academic area (e.g. reading or language arts, mathematics, science and other areas of human learning. Kathryn (2010), stated that academic achievement relates to academic subjects a child studies in school and the skills the child is expected to master in each. Academic achievement refers to excellence in all academic discipline, in a class as well as extra-curricular activities. It includes excellence in sporting behaviour, confidence, communication skills, and others. On other hand, Steinberg (2005), is of the opinion that academic achievement encompasses students' ability and performance; it is multidimensional; it is intricately related to human growth and cognitive, emotional and social development; it reflects the whole child; it is not related to a single instance, but occurs across time and levels,

through a student's life in public school and into post- secondary years and working life. Moreso, academic achievement refers to how well a student is accomplishing his tasks and studies. Academic achievement is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals (Scott, 2012). Grades are certainly the most well-known indicators of academic achievement. Grades are the student's "score" for their classes and overall tenure. Grades are most often a tallying or average of assignment and test scores and may often be affected by factors such as attendance an instructor opinion of the student as well. Grading systems vary greatly by school; common scales include a percentage from 1-100, lettering systems from A-F, and grade point averages (GPA) from 0- 4.0 or above. Academic achievement in school is investigated in a number of ways. Regular grading of students by taking written and oral tests, performing presentations, submission of homework and participating in class activities and discussion. Teachers evaluate in the form of assignment, test and examination to describe how well a student has done. Adesemowo (2005), noted that poor academic achievement is a performance that is adjudged by the examiner and some significant others as falling below an expected standard. The extents to which parents encourage their wards in their academic works may affect the level of achievement of their ward which would reduce the cases of maladaptive behaviours among students. Lack of parental supervision gives the growing child freedom that could be dangerous. The adolescent engages in activities including delinquent acts without knowing the consequences which sometime lead them to exhibit maladaptive behaviour.

### **Techniques for Managing Maladaptive Behaviours**

Some strategies that can be used to manage students' maladaptive behaviour in schools include the following:

#### **1. Counselling Curriculum in Schools.**

Counselling is a nature therapeutic that is aimed at helping individuals (student's) resolve an already existing crisis. Milner and Palmer (2001), noted that counselling denote a professional relationship between a trained counsellor and a client. This relationship according to them is usually person-to-person, although it may sometimes involve more than two people. It is fashioned out to help clients to understand and clarify their views of their lives and to learn to reach their self-determined goals through resolution of problem of an emotional or interpersonal nature. It was also observed by Adegoke (2004) that counselling curriculum is a total and comprehensive approach that integrates a curriculum of counselling into the educational process for all students in the school, and counselling in schools should not be viewed as peripheral, tangential or something to be tolerated. Counselling should not be undermined, as it serves as one of the major strategies through which maladaptive individuals can be assisted to desist from such behaviours.

#### **2. Reinforcement**

Reinforcement is any event or stimulus which will increase the probability of a response recurring. It could also be explained to mean a process of strengthening or emphasizing a feeling or idea or a habit to cause a process to

increase its intensity (Onwuegbu & Okobia, 2004). There are basically two types of reinforcement, they are positive and negative reinforcement which can both be used as corrective measures. However, for it to be effective in the correction of adolescents' maladaptive behaviour, the child's background must be seriously taken into consideration.

### **3. Counselling Students on Moral Values**

Moral values enable individuals to determine whether their relationship with others is appropriate and reasonable. Moral curriculum is being advocated here because students need to be taught to imbibe virtues like truth, patience, honesty, kindness, loyalty, respect and patriotism. This will go a long way in easing tension and anxieties that can lead to maladaptive behaviours (Ochaigha, 1999). Other techniques that can be adopted in controlling maladaptive behaviour include:

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The following theories were used in this study: (i) Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977) (ii) Walberg's theory of Academic Achievement (1981).

#### **Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977)**

It was during his studies on adolescent depression that, Bandura became interested in vicarious learning, modelling, and imitation. He stressed the importance of observational learning, imitation, and modelling. His theory recognized the importance of integration in terms of interaction between behaviour cognitions and the environment. Bandura's work emphasizes the importance of social influences but also a belief in personal control, "people with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Albert Bandura believed that behaviour is generally, a function of one's personality and the environment. He posits that man is born with some innate potential which the environment conditions tend to alter as in the case of maladaptive behaviour and that one can influence his or her environment using the personality qualities. Consequently, as adolescents interact within the environment, the adolescents consciously or unconsciously observe and imitates and displays behaviour of models. He further notes that there is interrelationship between man's personality, the behaviour and environmental factors. This theory, if applied to the adolescent, could be an explanation for the seeming relationship that may exist among peer pressure, time management and academic performance. The implication is that for any adolescent who is influenced by positive peer pressure, who utilizes time judiciously there is a tendency for the person to do better in his academics than the adolescent who do otherwise. This theory is therefore relevant to this study in the sense that, it will help students, to acquire the capacity of solving problem either by observation, imitation and modelling. It will also help students to learn the characteristics that make up their personality through observation and imitation. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory is a relevance tool in understanding the relationship between maladaptive behaviour and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory

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(FCT), Abuja. The theory emphasizes the role of observation, imitation, and social interactions in developing behaviour, including both adaptive and maladaptive patterns. Observational learning involves individuals learning through observing others' behaviours and the consequences of those behaviours. Exposure to maladaptive behaviours can influence students' own behaviour, such as substance abuse, aggressive behaviour, or academic dishonesty. Modeling, on the other hand, involves individuals imitating behaviours they see being rewarded or positively reinforced. In the academic setting, students may adopt maladaptive behaviours if perceived as leading to social approval or avoidance of academic pressure. Vicarious learning and reinforcement also play a role in shaping behaviour and achievement outcomes. Students with low self-efficacy may be more susceptible to engaging in maladaptive behaviours as coping mechanisms for academic challenges or stress, while those with high self-efficacy are more likely to persist in academic tasks and seek adaptive strategies to overcome obstacles. To study the influence of maladaptive behaviour on academic achievement of senior secondary school students in FCT, Abuja can apply Bandura's Social Learning Theory to identify influential models, explore how observed consequences of maladaptive behaviours influence students' behavioural choices and academic outcomes, and examine the role of self-efficacy beliefs in mitigating or exacerbating the effects of maladaptive behaviours on academic achievement. Bandura's Social Learning Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay between social influences, maladaptive behaviours, and academic achievement among senior secondary school students.

### Review of Previous Studies

Empirical studies related to this study are hereby reviewed.

Adikwu, Oguche, Usman and Oguche (2023) influence of child abuse and Neglects on maladaptive behaviour and academic achievement of students in Nigeria: implications for guidance. The design employed for this study was a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all the students attending federal university in Nigeria. A sample size of 650 students was selected for this study. The study revealed that sexual exploitation, child trafficking, child emotional abuse amongst others were some of the various child abuse and neglects in Nigeria. The study further revealed that bullying and cyber bullying, being a prospective abuser of other children, substance abuse, acts of cultism amongst others were some of the influence of child abuse and neglects on maladaptive behaviours amongst students in Nigeria. Poor academic achievement, difficulty in concentration amongst others were some of the influence of child abuse and neglects on academic achievement of students in Nigeria. The study recommended that government at all levels should create workshop for both teachers and students on the physical and psychological influences of child abuse and neglects in order to prevent incidence of child abuse and neglects and address the maladaptive behaviours amongst students as well as the menace of poor academic achievement amongst the students. Joshua, Usman and Oguche (2024) explored influence of social media and peer group on maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Federal

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Capital Territory, Abuja. The design employed for this study was a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all the students attending federal university in Nigeria. A sample size of 322 students was selected for this study. The study revealed that social media has both negative and positive influence on maladaptive behaviours among secondary school students. Findings of the study also revealed that peer pressure has both negative and positive influence on maladaptive behaviours among secondary school students. The findings of the study further revealed that male and female respondents differ significantly on the influence of social media on maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in FCT-Abuja. The findings of the study equally revealed that respondents from rural and urban areas differ significantly on the influence of peer group on maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in FCT-Abuja. The study recommended that mass media especially the visual ones should be careful in what to feature and what not to, since most youth imitate and tend to exhibit a lot of what they borrow from these agents of information. As Nigeria is a developing nation, effort should be directed against polluting the characters of our youths since they are the hope of the nation. Dansidi, Usman and Oguche, (2024) examined the influence of harmful widowhood practices on academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria: implications for Guidance. The study was guided by one specific objective, one research question and two null hypotheses. The research design for this study was a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study comprised of all secondary schools in Nigeria. A sample size of three hundred and seventy (370) respondents was sampled for the study. The instrument was a selfdesigned questionnaire titled “Influence of Harmful Widowhood Practices on Academic Achievement Questionnaire (IHWPAAQ). Frequency counts and percentages was used to analyse the demographic data while Mean scores and Standard Deviations was used to answer the research questions also t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed among others that harmful widowhood practices play key role on students’ academic performance as well as their academic achievement as the practices often leads to depression, substance abuse, emotional abuse among others which often lead to low self-esteem, gender inequality and school dropout. The study recommended among others that the Counsellors and other stakeholders in education should make more efforts to provide adequate counselling services for victim of harmful widowhood practices in order to bring to the barest minimum the negative influence it has on students, this effort should be irrespective of gender or location. Usman, Oguche and Linus (2024) conducted a study on the effect of asymmetric warfare on maladaptive behaviour and academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria: implications for guidance. The design employed for this study was a descriptive survey and ex post facto research design. The population of the study consisted of all secondary school students in North-central, Nigeria. A sample size of 453 students was selected for this study. The study revealed that School dropout, acts of absenteeism, substance abuse, stealing, destruction of school facilities, sexual and unwanted pregnancy are some of the effects of asymmetric warfare on maladaptive behaviours among secondary school students in Nigeria. The study further revealed that Poor

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academic achievement, difficulty in concentration, high numbers of out of school children, academic anxiety amongst others are some of the effects of asymmetric warfare on academic achievement among secondary school students in Nigeria. creation of meaningful jobs for the youths, creation of information and sensitization on the consequences of asymmetric warfare on students as well as national development, adequate provision of counselling for students are some of the possible solutions the menace of asymmetric warfare in North-central, Nigeria. The study recommended amongst others that Government and other stakeholders in education should make more efforts toward creating information and sensitization on the consequences of asymmetric warfare on students' academic achievement so as to eradicate or bring to the barest minimum the menace of poor academic achievement among secondary school students. Apeh, Usman and Afu (2024) examine the incidences, factors and consequences of child abuse on academic achievement of senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Two objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The design employed for this study was a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 70,162 students from the six area councils of FCT-Abuja. A sample size of 381 students was selected for this study. A simple random sampling technique was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. The instrument was validated by the two experts in in the department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja. The stability of the items produced an index value of 0.90. The data collected was analyzed using simple percentages; frequency count; mean score and standard deviation for research questions while hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistics. The study revealed that stress due to social conditions such as unemployment, illness, poor housing conditions, death of a family member are some of the factors responsible for child abuse in FCTAbuja. The study further revealed that child abuse has consequences such as minor injuries, severe brain damage, difficulty in concentrating and even death of the child. The study recommended that efforts should be made to reduce the existing child abuse in FCT, Abuja by showing care about the welfare of the students and providing the basic needs for the learners to sustain and improve the academic achievement in respective of gender and location in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The study further recommended that government at all levels should create workshop for both teachers and students on the physical and psychological consequences of child abuse in order to prevent child abuse. All the above reviewed work centred on maladaptive behaviour in relation to the basic psychological needs of students in secondary education while the present study focused on the influence of maladaptive behaviour and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in FCT Abuja Nigeria. Both studies focused on different direction but shared some similarity in terms of maladaptive behaviour and academic achievement with different methodology, scope and location.

### Research Design

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This study adopted a descriptive survey design and Ex-post facto research design to collect data from the subjects on the influence of maladaptive behaviours on academic achievement of senior secondary school students in FCT-Abuja. This type of research design is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and organizing data from a few people or items considered to be representatives of a whole group. The design is considered appropriate for the study because the researcher did not plan to manipulate the study variables but to study them as they happen naturally.

### Population of the Study

The population for this study comprised all SS 1 students in FCT-Abuja. The total number of SS1 students in all Government Senior secondary schools in the six (6) Area Councils in F.C.T Abuja is 70,162 while the total number of SS1 students with maladaptive behaviour in the selected schools is 2,815 (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). Below are the distributions of the population according to the six Area Councils of FCT, Abuja

### Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The sample size of two hundred and eighty-two students (282) representing 10% of the total number of students with maladaptive behaviour was sampled from the population of 2,815 students with maladaptive behaviour in the selected school. The sample size was based on Glenn (2012) who specified 10% as appropriate sample sizes for specific populations. A sample is a random selection of members of a population. It is a smaller group drawn from the population that has the characteristics of the entire population. The observations and conclusions made against the sample data are attributed to the population. The information obtained from the statistical sample allows statisticians to develop hypotheses about the larger population. Using a stratified random sampling technique, all senior secondary school students who have written Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) was used for the study. Stratified random sampling ensures that each subgroup of a given population is adequately represented within the whole sample population of a research study. In a proportionate stratified method, the sample size of each stratum is proportionate to the population size of the stratum. The sampling procedure for this study is stratified random sampling. The technique was used because it gave each student the same chance of selection at each successive stage. The different features of the study area (Abuja) where people of different ethnic circumstances, socioeconomic status and levels of education are represented to ensure that this research work covered a wide range.

### Instrumentation

The research instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire titled; Students' Maladaptive Behavioural Questionnaire (SMBQ) designed by the researcher. This self-structured questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the respondents. This instrument contains two sections. Section A sought for demographic data while section B covered the items on maladaptive behaviour among senior secondary school students. Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results of students in four subjects were used for the academic achievement:

English Studies, Mathematics, Basic- Science and National Value. These were considered appropriate for the study because it is a standardized test that made use of Students' Academic Report Format (SARF) which showed the school, state and year of examination.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

To ensure the validity of the instrument, one of the instruments, the questionnaire was validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation in the Faculty of Education, University of Abuja to ascertain the face, construct and content validity. By the comments of the supervisors and experts on their observations, criticisms and corrections, some of the items were recast, before the final copy of the instrument was designed and subjected to reliability testing. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot test conducted by the researcher using thirty (30) respondents from Government Secondary School Yebu in Kwali Area Council of FCT- Abuja, who were not part of the main sample for the study. A test re-test procedure was used for the reliability study. The test was administered to the students. Two weeks later, the same test was also re-administered to the same students. The two results from the pilot test were obtained and correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ), to see the similarity or differences of the scores. The reliability Coefficient of 0.89 (see appendix v) was obtained which was adjudged that the instrument was reliable for the study because it consistently measured what it was supposed to measure.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the Head of Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education University of Abuja addressed to principals of the selected schools to enable the researcher access to the respondents. The data for the study were collected with the help of two research assistants who were briefed on how to distribute and collect back the instrument (questionnaire). The objective was to ensure error free activity and cover the various schools on time. All the copies of questionnaire were collected immediately after the administration and completion by the researcher and checked if appropriately filled by the participants after which it was tabulated ready for statistical analyses.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected were analyze using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistic such as frequency count, percentages, mean score and standard deviation were used for the analysis of demographic data and research questions. While inferential statistics such as t-test, Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used to test the hypotheses. Hypotheses 1-2 were tested using t-test, hypotheses 3-4 were tested using ANOVA and hypotheses 5 was tested using PPMC. The decision rule was any response of 2.50 and above were adjudged as agreed while response below 2.50 were adjudged as disagreed for research questions.

### **Presentation of Data**

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The data analyzed and presented in this chapter are answers to research questions and tests of hypotheses. The researcher distributed two hundred and eighty-two (282) copies of the questionnaire but after collection three copies were invalid giving a total of two hundred and seventy-nine (279) valid ones.

### Demographic Data

This section presents a brief description of the respondents in respect of such variables as gender, location, parental socio-economic status and parental educational level of the respondents.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents based on Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	157	56
Female	122	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

Table 1 showed the distribution of respondents based on gender. The number of male respondents were 157 (56.27%), while the female respondents were 122 (43.73%). This means that there were more male respondents than female respondents in this study.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on Location**

Location	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Urban	146	52
Rural	133	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

Table 2 showed the distribution of respondents based on location. The number of urban respondents were 146 (52%), while the rural respondents were 133 (48%). This means that there were more urban respondents than rural respondents in this study.

### 4.2.2 Answers to Research Questions

**Research Question One:** What are the maladaptive behaviours among Senior Secondary School Students in FCT-Abuja?

**Table 3: The common maladaptive behaviours among Senior Secondary School Students in FCT-Abuja are: N=279**

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std Dev	Decision
5.	Bullying of fellow students	2.65	0.93	Agreed
6.	Going contrary to school rules and regulations	2.56	1.03	Agreed
7.	Insulting an elder	2.76	0.97	Agreed

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8.	Absenting from school without permission	2.52	1.02	Agreed
9.	Substance abuse	2.75	0.97	Agreed
10.	Armed robbery	2.80	0.99	Agreed
11.	Sexual abuse	2.60	0.98	Agreed
12.	Fighting of fellow students	2.61	1.05	Agreed
13.	Self-harm	2.53	0.92	Agreed
14.	Uncontrol anger	2.50	0.90	Agreed

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**Sectional Mean    2.63    0.98    Agreed**

Table 3 showed the common maladaptive behaviours among Senior Secondary School Students in FCT-Abuja. The mean shows the respondents agreement with the items. The sectional means for the items in respect of the common maladaptive behaviours among senior secondary school students in FCT-Abuja was 2.63 which is greater than 2.50 decision rules that 2.50 and above be adjudged agreed and below be disagreed, this shows that there are maladaptive behaviours among Senior Secondary School Students in FCT-Abuja.

### Test of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between male and female students as regards to maladaptive behaviours among secondary school students in FCT-Abuja.

**Table 4: t-test results on the significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students as regards to maladaptive behaviours among senior secondary school students in FCT-Abuja.**

Variables	N	X	SD	df	t-value	Sig.(P)	Decision
Male	157	2.52	1.06	277	6.835	.001	Significant
Female	122	2.74	0.90				

**significant at 0.05 level (p<0.05)**

The analysis on Table 4 was carried out to determine whether there is any significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students as regards to maladaptive behaviours among secondary school students in FCT-Abuja. A significant value of .001 (less than the 0.05 level of significance) was recorded. This shows that there was a significant difference. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students as regards the maladaptive behaviours among secondary school students in FCT-Abuja.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between students from rural and urban areas on the various maladaptive behaviours among senior Secondary School students in FCT Abuja.

**Table 5: t-test results on the significant difference between the mean ratings of rural and urban students on the various maladaptive behaviours among senior secondary school students in FCT-Abuja**

Variables	N	X	SD	df	t-value	Sig.(P)	Decision
Rural	146	2.69	1.02	277	4.332	.015	Significant
Urban	133	2.57	0.96				

### Significant at 0.05 level ( $p < 0.05$ )

The analysis on Table 5 was carried out to determine whether there is any significant difference in the mean ratings of rural and urban students as on the various maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in FCT-Abuja. A significant value of 0.05 (less than the 0.05 level of significance) was recorded. This shows that there was a significant difference. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of rural and urban students as regards to maladaptive behaviours among secondary school students in FCT-Abuja.

### 4.3 Summary of Findings

The following are major findings of the study

1. Findings revealed that there are maladaptive behaviours among Senior Secondary School Students in FCT-Abuja such as, bullying of fellow students, going contrary to school rules and regulations, insulting an elder, absenting from school without permission, drug abuse, armed robbery, abusing fellow student sexually, fighting of fellow students, self-harm and uncontrol anger
2. The study also revealed that maladaptive behaviours among senior secondary school students in FCT-Abuja is higher among male students than their female counterparts.
3. Findings showed that maladaptive behaviours among Senior Secondary School Students in FCT Abuja was higher in the rural areas than the urban

### Conclusion

Based on the above findings of the study maladaptive behaviour was found to have significant difference with academic achievement of students in senior secondary schools in the study area. More so, there is a significant difference among students as regards to maladaptive and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in FCT-Abuja on the basis of student's gender, location, parental socio-economic status and parental educational level.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on results of findings:

1. There are maladaptive behaviours among Senior Secondary School Students in FCT-Abuja such as, bullying of fellow students, going contrary to school rules and regulations, insulting an elder, absenting from school without permission, drug abuse. The study recommended that parents and other stakeholders in education should make more to inculcate the right attitude and values in the Lives of the students in order to bring the issues of maladaptive behaviours amongst senior secondary school students in FCT-Abuja, to the barest minimum if not eradicated.
2. There was a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students as regards the maladaptive behaviours among secondary school students in FCT-Abuja. The study recommended that school counsellors should initiate a programme about the dangers of maladaptive behaviour in their various schools.
3. In order to control the issues of maladaptive behaviours amongst senior secondary school students in FCT-Abuja, the study recommended that, more efforts should be made by all the stakeholders in education to address all forms of maladaptive behaviours in amongst students and avert the long-term effects which often time, is exhibition of unwanted behaviours and psychological trauma. This effort should be irrespective of location.

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