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University of Cape Coast

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC CHALLENGES OF ADOLESCENTS IN  
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE CAPE COAST METROPOLIS

BY

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## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date.....

Name: .....

### Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down in the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name: .....

Co-Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name: .....

## ABSTRACT

This study was done to investigate the social and academic challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. A descriptive research design was employed. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was established using the Cronbach alpha method. Reliability coefficient obtained was .72. A sample of 367 respondents was selected from five public senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis via purposive, stratified and simple random sampling procedures. The quantitative data were analyzed using means and standard deviations, independent samples t-test and one way analysis of variance, ANOVA. The study revealed that generally, students in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis were faced with many social and academic challenges. Furthermore, the study revealed that there were significant differences in the social and academic challenges of adolescents on the basis of gender, age and class levels. It was therefore, recommended that counsellors should be more sensitized about the challenges the students in the senior high schools face. Also, housemasters, housemistresses, teachers, parents and other stakeholders should play a significant role by putting measures in place to assist adolescents in their social and academic challenges. The study also includes implications for counselling.

**KEY WORDS**

Adolescents

Academic Challenges

Behaviour

Development

Relationship

Social Challenges

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## DEDICATION

To my family

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content	Page
DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
KEY WORDS	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEDICATION	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF ACCRONYMS	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	6
Purpose of the Study	8
Research Questions	9
Research Hypotheses	9
Significance of the Study	11
Delimitations	11
Limitations	12
Definition of Terms	12
Organisation of the Study	13
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction	15
Theoretical Review	15

Conceptual Review	15
Empirical Studies	15
Theoretical Framework of the Study	16
Social Theory of Adolescence	16
Behavioral Theory of Adolescence	18
Psychoanalytic Theory of Adolescence	20
Psychosocial Theory of Adolescence	21
Conceptual Review	25
Concept of Adolescence	25
Concept of Individual Variability Conception of Adolescence	27
Interpretation of Conceptual Framework	28
Conceptual Framework of the Study	28
Review of Related Empirical Literature	29
Academic challenges	29
Challenges of Schooling	33
Career Planning Challenges	35
Personal-Social Challenges	37
Peer Relationships	39
Family Relationships	45
Gender Studies	49
Age Studies	51
Grade or Class Level Studies	52
Studies on Residential Status	53
Sources of help used by adolescents for managing social and academic challenges	55

Chapter Summary	57
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHOD	
Introduction	59
Research Paradigm	59
Research Design	60
Study Area	60
Population	61
Sample and Sampling Procedures	63
Data Collection Instrument	65
Validity of the Instrument	67
Reliability of the Instrument	68
Ethical Consideration	68
Data collection Procedures	70
Data Processing and Analysis	70
Chapter Summary	71
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	
Overview	72
Statistical Analysis of Demographic Data	72
Analysis of the Main Data	75
Research Question 1	75
Research Question 2	78
Research Question 3	82
Research Hypothesis 1	84
Research Hypothesis 2	86
Research Hypothesis 3	87

Research Hypothesis 4	90
Research Hypothesis 5	93
Research Hypothesis 6	94
Research Hypothesis 7	96
Research Hypothesis 8	98
Chapter Summary	99
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
Overview of the Study	101
Summary of Findings	102
Conclusions	106
Recommendations	108
Implication for Counselling	109
Suggestions for Further Research	110
REFERENCES	111
APPENDICES	132
APPENDIX A	133
APPENDIX B	137
APPENDIX C	138
APPENDIX D	139

## LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Population Distribution according to School Gender, and Residential Status	62
2	Population Distribution according to class level	62
3	Distribution of Respondents by class level	65
4	Descriptive analysis of the social challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis (n=367)	76
5	Descriptive analyses of the academic challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis (n=367)	78
6	Descriptive analysis of the sources of help used by adolescents for managing their social and academic challenges (n=367)	82
7	Result of t-test analysis comparing adolescents Social Challenges on the basis of gender	84
8	Result of t-test analysis comparing adolescents Academic Challenges on the basis of gender	86
9	Test of Homogeneity of Variances	87
10	Robust Tests of Equality of Means	88
11	Summary of the ANOVA results	89
12	Test of Homogeneity of Variances	90
13	Robust Tests of Equality of Means	91
14	Summary of the ANOVA results	91

15	Result of t-test Analysis Comparing Adolescents' Social Challenges on the Basis of Residential Status	93
16	Result of t-test Analysis Comparing Adolescents' Academic Challenges on the Basis of Residential Status	95
17	Result of t-test Analysis Comparing Adolescents' Social Challenges on the basis of Ages.	97
18	Result of t-test Analysis Comparing Adolescents' Academic Challenges on the basis of Ages.	98

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Conceptual Framework	28
2	Gender Distribution of the respondents	73
3	Residential status of respondents	73
4	Class level of respondents	74
5	Age Distribution of Respondents	75

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

APA – American Psychological Association

NCDPI – North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

AAUW – American Association of University Women

AVA – American Vocational Association

SHS – Senior High School

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background to the Study**

Adolescence is the period of life between the ages of 10 and 19 years (World Health Organization, 2008). This period usually coincides with entering middle school or senior high school. It covers the period where changes take place in an individual's life in terms of physical, social and cognitive development (Burke, Brennan, & Roney, 2010). These evolutionary changes represent both a stimulus and a challenge for the development of human beings, as well as a source of difficulties (Schulenberg, Maggs, & Hurrelmann, 1997). Poorly managed changes may lead to social and academic worries of adolescents (Valverde, Lyubansky & Achenbach, 2012).

Adolescence is seen as an important period for youth as they transition into adulthood. Adolescents, like other age groups, face problems. Teachers and parents must understand the types of problems that adolescents face in order to help them enjoy the great and wholesome adventure of growing up in an incident free manner. Sexual, emotional, intellectual and social changes that adolescents experience have important social and psychological implications for them. Adolescents need to adjust to these changes and be aware continually of the effect that life in general (political, economic, social and moral) have on the growth of young people (Stiles, 1995).

Professionals who work with adolescents need to know what is normative and what represent early or late physical development in order to help prepare the adolescent for the changes that take place during this time of

life. Even in schools where sex education is taught, many girls and boys still feel unprepared for the changes of puberty, suggesting that these important topics are not being dealt with in ways that are most useful to adolescents (Coleman & Hendry, 1999).

According to the American Psychological Association (2002), the many changes experienced by an adolescent can be grouped into five major categories. These are physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and behaviour. With physical development, adolescents experience a growth spurt, which involves rapid growth of bones and muscles. New concern with physical appearance and body image, both adolescent boys and girls are known to spend hours concerned with their physical appearance (Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (ReCAPP), 2007). They want to "fit in" with their peers yet achieve their own unique style as well.

Many adolescents experience dissatisfaction with their changing bodies (ReCAPP, 2007). Weight gain is a natural part of puberty, which can be distressing in a culture that glorifies being thin. In response, some adolescents begin to diet obsessively (ReCAPP, 2007). About 20% of all females aged 12-18 engage in unhealthy dieting behaviours. Some of these adolescents develop eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia. Risk factors for girls developing eating disorders include: low self-esteem, poor coping skills, childhood physical or sexual abuse, early sexual maturation, and perfectionism (American Psychological Association (APA), 2002).

In their cognitive development, dramatic shift in thinking from concrete to abstract gives adolescents a whole new set of mental tools (ReCAPP, 2007).. They are now able to analyse situations logically in terms of cause and effect. They can appreciate hypothetical situations. This gives

them the ability to think about the future, evaluate alternatives, and set personal goals. They can engage in introspection and mature decision-making (ReCAPP, 2007). As a result of their growing cognitive abilities, most developing adolescents will become more independent, take on increased responsibilities, such as babysitting, summer jobs, or household chores, shift their school focus from play-centered activities to academics, begin to consider future careers and occupations, look to peers and media for information and advice, begin to develop a social conscience: becoming concerned about social issues such as racism, global warming and poverty, develop a sense of values and ethical behaviour, recognizing the value of traits such as honesty, helpfulness, caring for others (APA, 2002).

As adolescents begin to exercise their new reasoning skills, some of their behaviours may be confusing for adults (ReCAPP, 2007). It is normal for them to argue for the sake of arguing, jump to conclusions, be self-centred, constantly find fault in the adult's position.

Adolescents are faced with the large task of establishing a sense of identity when we look at their emotional development (ReCAPP, 2007). The new cognitive skills of maturing adolescents give them the ability to reflect on who they are and what makes them unique. Identity is made up of two components: **Self-concept:** The set of beliefs about oneself, including attributes, roles, goals, interests, values and religious or political beliefs (ReCAPP, 2007). **Self-esteem:** How one feels about one's self-concept. The process of developing a sense of identity involves experimenting with different ways of appearing, sounding and behaving (ReCAPP, 2007). Each adolescent will approach this exploration in his or her own unique way.

Adolescents must also develop relationship skills that allow them to get along well with others and to make friends (ReCAPP, 2007). The specific skills that they need to master as part of their emotional development include; recognizing and managing emotions, developing empathy, learning to resolve conflict constructively and developing a cooperative spirit (ReCAPP, 2007). One of the greatest social changes for adolescents is the new importance of their peers. This change allows them to gain independence from their families. By identifying with peers, adolescents start to develop moral judgment and values, and to explore how they differ from their parents (APA, 2002).

Young adolescents are very concerned with being accepted by a peer group. This great desire to belong can influence some to engage in activities that they normally would not consider. By middle adolescence, the intensity of involvement with a peer group gives way to more intimate friendships and romances. Peer groups may remain important particularly for adolescents belonging to ethnic minority groups. For these teens, peer groups provide a much-needed sense of belonging within the majority culture (APA, 2002).

The relationship between adolescents and their parents is changed by the adolescent's social development. However, the shift in the adolescent's social world from family to peers does not lessen the importance of the family in the adolescent's life. Family closeness has been confirmed as the most important protective factor against certain high-risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol and drug use, and early initiation of sexual intercourse. The adolescent's new desire for independence leads to increasing conflicts between adolescents and their parents. Minor conflicts and bickering are considered to be normal as teens and their parents adjust to their changing relationship. The

characteristics of an adolescent's community can also have a great impact on his or her social development.

All of the developmental changes that adolescents experience prepare them to experiment with new behaviours (ReCAPP, 2007). This experimentation results in risk-taking, which is a normal part of adolescent development (Hamburg, 1997; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Engaging in risk-taking behaviour helps adolescents to shape their identities, try out their new decision-making skills, develop realistic assessments of themselves and gain peer acceptance and respect (Graber, Lewinsohn, Seeley & Brooks-Gunn, 1997). Unluckily, some of the risks that adolescents follow may pose a real threat to their health and well-being. These include motor vehicle accidents, pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, and cigarette smoking. Adolescents need guidance to channel the drive toward risk-taking behaviour into less dangerous and more constructive pursuits.

Social and academic problems are more common during adolescence than at any other time during childhood. Multiple systems are involved in this preparation and orientation, resulting in a complex process that influences adolescent's thinking and planning about adulthood and future goals. Therefore, 'adolescence' can potentially serve as a window of opportunity to influence positive life trajectories (Masten, Obradovic, & Burt, 2006) at a time when significant decisions concerning life can be more strategically made (Stattin & Kerr, 2001). Thinking about the future and constructing perception of oneself in the future might have a bigger role during adolescence than during other developmental stages of life (Trempla & Malmberg, 2002).

## Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is often conceptualized as a crucial period for youth in preparation for adulthood. Recent data suggest that the transition to adulthood is one of the most active time frames for defining one's identity and personal aspirations (Padilla-Walker, Barry, Carroll, Madsen, & Nelson, 2008). As they (adolescents) reach this stage, they encounter some challenges in their social and academic life.

The social challenges encountered by adolescents include among other things the difficulties with their choices of career since it forms part of an individual's subjective view of his or her future (Seginer, 2009). It forms part of the search for identity of adolescents and therefore forms part of the social challenges of adolescents. In their choice of career, because there are no vocational trainings to guide them as to what they will be able to do, they end up in the wrong careers. They do not identify their interest, their capabilities, their strengths and weaknesses as well as the type of career or vocation that will suit their personalities. In their relationship with the opposite sex, as they mature into adulthood, there is a natural attraction for the opposite sex. The girls tend to be more interested in boys and vice-versa. Their relationship with the opposite sex becomes more important to them than anything else and they end up getting much more hurt when there is a breakup. During these stages, their emotions and feelings direct them, thus making it difficult to resist sex, alcohol and drugs.

In their relationship with their parents, because of the rapid neurological, cognitive and social changes that occur in adolescence, a social-cognitive dilemma is created for the youth: the integration of new and diverse experiences in relation to the world and oneself. Adolescence also presents an

attachment dilemma. In other words, maintaining connection with parents while at the same time exploring new social roles away from the family and developing attachment relationships with peers and romantic partners create challenges for them. They tend to listen more to their peers than take advice from their parents (Padilla-Walker et al., 2008). In their academic life, they face challenges in relation to their study habits and behavioural problems; deviance, disturbances, crises, violence, unrest and all anti-social behaviours (Ryan, Deci & Grolnick, 1995). The researcher has observed that several young people are caught in these issues. These challenges if they remain unchecked can affect the adult lives of students and ultimately affect the very fiber of society.

In Ghana, some studies have been carried out to assess the challenges faced by adolescents. This includes studies such as that of Agbemafah (1991), Dickson (1991), Forde (1997), Glozah (2013) and Akwei (2015). All these studies found that adolescents face several challenges socially and academically. However, most of these studies have focused on only one aspect of the challenges faced by adolescents. The studies have either focused on academic challenges or personal-social challenges alone. The current study therefore sought to bridge this gap by combining both social and academic challenges in a single study.

Also, to the best knowledge of the researcher, a study on social and academic challenges of adolescents had not been conducted in the Cape Coast Metropolis where the researcher undertook the study. Hence, in view of the myriads of social and academic challenges that adolescents face (Padilla-Walker et al., 2008; Ryan, Deci & Grolnick, 1995), the researcher investigated

the social and academic challenges of adolescents in Senior High School in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the social and academic challenges of adolescents in Senior High School in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To identify the social challenges of adolescents in Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis.
2. To identify the academic challenges of adolescents in Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis.
3. To identify the sources of help for SHS students' facing social and academic challenges.
4. To determine whether there was any difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of gender.
5. To determine whether there was any difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of gender.
6. To determine whether there was any difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of class levels.
7. To determine whether there was any difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of class levels.
8. To determine whether there was any difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students.
9. To determine whether there was any difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students.

10. To determine whether there was any difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of age.

11. To determine whether there was any difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of age.

### **Research Questions**

The following were asked in order to get a proper focus for the study:

1. What are the social challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis?
2. What are the academic challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis?
3. What are the sources of help used by adolescents for managing their social and academic challenges?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were postulated to further guide the conduct of the study:

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of gender.
- H<sub>11</sub>: There is a significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of gender.
- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of gender.
- H<sub>11</sub>: There is a significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of gender.
- H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of their class levels.

- H<sub>13</sub>: There is a significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of their class levels.
- H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of their class levels.
- H<sub>14</sub>: There is a significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of their class levels.
- H<sub>05</sub>: There is no significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students.
- H<sub>15</sub>: There is a significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students.
- H<sub>06</sub>: There is no significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students.
- H<sub>16</sub>: There is a significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students.
- H<sub>07</sub>: There is no significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of ages.
- H<sub>17</sub>: There is a significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of ages.
- H<sub>08</sub>: There is no significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of ages.
- H<sub>18</sub>: There is a significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of ages.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study was concerned with the social and academic challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast metropolis.

For the students, the findings and recommendations of the study may help to better inform them. In counselling, information service is useful because students find it difficult to plan, make appropriate choices and decisions without information. However, the availability of information enables students to make better and well-informed choices and decisions (Buku, 2016). It may also help them understand the manifestations of social and academic challenges in their adolescent stage. It may hopefully enlighten them on ways of managing these challenges as they are in this stage of their lives.

For parents, the findings may likely be helpful in gaining knowledge and understanding about their children as they reach this stage of their life. On the basis of that, parents may be in a better position to relate with their children and wards concerning their choices of work as well as their relationships with the opposite sex.

Finally, it is hoped that the findings may help school counsellors to pay more attention to their students by organising forums for discussing relevant issues concerning adolescents, their social challenges and academic challenges as well as behavioural challenges so that they (students) can well manage themselves and seek advice from counsellors when the need arises.

### **Delimitations**

The study focused on social and academic challenges of students. The study was delimited to schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. But the study sought to find out the challenges these adolescents face based on their gender,

age, class level and their residential status. The researcher emphasised on the mixed public senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

### **Limitations**

The results of this study must be viewed within the context of several limitations. First, the analysis of the study relied on self-report information. Students might either over-report or under-report their views regarding variables under study. This suggests future research to be conducted using varied data collection such as observation, interview guide etc.

The study continues to highlight the importance of developing a standard methodology to conduct research of this nature. Since descriptive survey data can only tell incidence influence of certain variables at the time of data collection, using the descriptive survey therefore subjected the study to limitations. Specifically, the descriptive survey did not afford the researcher the opportunity to predict cause and effect relationship of the various challenges.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Academic Challenges** – In this study, academic challenges are difficulties students face in their academic work including finding time to study, understanding course content and maintaining a high degree of motivation. Along with meeting these challenges, students often struggle to balance academic demands with work, personal responsibilities and social experiences.

**Adolescents** – In this study, adolescence refers to the period of life with specific health and developmental needs and rights. Specifically, the adolescents in this study are students within 13-19 years and in senior high school.

**Behaviour** - Behaviour is used in this study to refer to the range of actions and mannerisms made by individuals in conjunction with themselves or their environment.

**Development** – This is used to refer to the process in which someone grows or changes and becomes more advanced.

**Identity formation** – This refers to the development of the distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity in a particular stage of life in which individual characteristics are possessed and by which a person is recognized or known.

**Relationship** – In the context of this study, it refers to a strong, deep, or close association or acquaintance between two or more people or a state of affairs existing between those having relations or dealings.

**Social Challenges** - Social challenges refer to problems that people have interacting with people in society or engaging in normal social behaviors.

### **Organisation of the Study**

This thesis is organised into five chapters. The thesis starts with chapter one which presents the introduction and provides a background to the study and then discusses key research issues such as statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, research hypotheses, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study and the definition of concepts, Chapter two is the literature review; literature on the social and academic challenges of adolescents. It includes an introduction, theoretical review, conceptual review, conceptual framework and empirical studies on the social and academic challenges of adolescents. In chapter three, the research methods are outlined including the research design, study area, population, target population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instrument,

validation of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, ethical consideration, data collection procedures and data processing and analysis. Chapter four is the data analysis and discussion, and finally, Chapter 5, overview of the study, a summary of finding, conclusions and recommendations and suggestions for further research are offered.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter reviews literature relevant to the study. The chapter includes three sections. In the first section, major theories of adolescents are presented. The second section presents the conceptual framework and the third section presents empirical studies on social and academic challenges of adolescents.

#### **Theoretical Review**

1. The social theory of adolescence.
2. The behavioural theory of adolescence.
3. The psychoanalytic theory of adolescence.
4. The psychosocial theory of adolescence.

#### **Conceptual Review**

1. Concept of adolescence.
2. Concept of individual variability among adolescents.
3. Nature of day and boarding schools.

#### **Empirical Studies on:**

1. Academic challenges faced by adolescents.
2. Personal Social challenges faced by adolescents.

Relationship with peers

Relationship with family

Career planning

Factors that influence Academic and Social Challenges of Adolescents.

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Class levels
4. School status (Boarding school and Day school)

Sources of help for facing academic and social challenges of students

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

In this section, some of the theories related to the study have been reviewed. The theories include the social theory of adolescence, behavioural theory of adolescence, psychoanalytic theory of adolescence and psychosocial theory of adolescence.

### **Social Theory of Adolescence**

Erikson's theory has the core concept as the acquisition of an ego-identity, and the identity crisis an essential characteristic of adolescence. Although a person's identity is established in ways that differ from culture to culture, the accomplishment of this developmental task has a common element in all cultures. In order to acquire a strong and healthy ego-identity, Erikson was cited in Muss that the child must receive consistent and meaningful recognition of his achievements and accomplishments (Muss, 1975).

Erikson (1968) sees adolescence purely from the social perspective. According to this theory, the adolescent finds it extremely difficult to identify himself and the environment. Identity formation is therefore seen as a source of tension. There is the need for the adolescent to understand himself in terms of what he can do and what he cannot do; whether he is measuring up to expectation or not. If the adolescent is not measuring up to expectation, the

crisis arises. The sociological theory sees the adolescent as performing a specific or transitory role. Specific roles include his relationship with his family, peer groups, the authority, and his relationship as an individual within the society, where the relationship between the adolescent and the said group is not cordial problem arises.

Erikson describes adolescence as cited in (Muuss, 1975) as the period during which the individual must establish a sense of personal identity and avoid the dangers of role diffusion and identity confusion. This implies that there is the need for the individual to make an assessment of his or her assets and liabilities and how they want to use them. Adolescents must be able to answer questions for themselves about where they came from, who they are, and what they will become. Identity, or a sense of sameness and continuity, must be searched for (King, 2004). In our understanding of identity, it is not given to the individual by society, nor does it appear as a maturational phenomenon; it must be acquired through sustained individual efforts. Unwillingness to work on one's own identity formation carries with it the danger of role diffusion, which may result in alienation and a lasting sense of isolation and confusion. The virtue to be developed is fidelity. Adhering to one's values contributes to a stable identity (Muuss, 1975).

The positive outcome of the identity crisis depends on the young person's willingness to accept his past and establish continuity with their previous experiences. To know their identity, adolescent must find an answer to the question: "Who Am I?" Other questions that adolescents must be able to answer include: "Where am I going?" "Who am I to become?" There must be a commitment to a system of values - religious beliefs, vocational goals, a philosophy of life, and an acceptance of one's sexuality. Only through the

achievement of these aspects of ego-identity can it be possible for the adolescent to move into "adult maturity," achieve intimacy of sexual and affection love, establish deep friendships, and achieve personal self-abandon without fear of loss of ego-identity (Muuss, 1975). Erikson believes that human development adheres to the principle of epigenesis which means that everything emerges from basic ground plan in parts, with each part experiencing a period of ascendancy, finally forming an integrated whole.

He outlines eight stages of development, each stage being conflictual and having the possibility and if they resolve these conflicts, a positive self – concept is formed. But if the conflict persists or is unresolved, then a negative or dystonic element is incorporated into a person's identity, leading to a negative self –concept and psychological problems. However, he states that both syntonic (positive) and dystonic are necessary for there to be satisfactory personal adaptation. Identity issues are never resolved and may be affected by role changes and major life events, depending on changing needs and circumstances. Optimal identity formation should include a commitment to roles, values, and sexual orientation that reflect an individual's particular abilities and needs. The inability of adolescents to find out their identity can lead to some social and academic challenges in their schools and lives. The relevance of this theory to the current study lies in the fact that identity formation among young people has an influence on the experiences they have or encounter in school. The influence can be seen in how they interpret the events surrounding their lives.

### **Behavioural Theory of Adolescence**

Of all the behavioural theories of adolescence, the one propounded by Bandura in 1964 is the most comprehensive. The theory states that the

adolescent period is not a period of turmoil and stress. According to the theory, teenagers who come from stable, loving families have a relatively easy time during adolescence. By the time they reach puberty, Bandura insists, such teenagers have been so well socialized, that is, encouraged and rewarded so often for conforming to and displaying desirable behaviour that even sex does not present much of a problem (Bandura, 1964).

While normal teenagers may experience some anxiety about sex and wish they had more reliable information, most identify with their parent's standards of conduct. The theory explained that those adolescents, who do experience turmoil during adolescence, are poorly socialized. An aggressive young troublemaker is not simply suffering normal pains but instead is a victim of family learning habits. His parents have not provided him with the proper training. He is likely to come from unstable and conflict-ridden home, home in which fights and arguments were lamentably common occurrences. In relating this theory to the current study, it can be realised that the kind of home environment that a student comes from can influence the kind of challenges that he or she will have in school. Thus, if the person was poorly socialized, he is likely to experience a lot of social challenges especially as he deals with his peers and teachers within the school. Such a person might have difficulty making friends in school (Bandura, 1964). According to Bandura, what marks adolescence are the social and cultural pressures, attitudes and expectations that influence adolescents. An adolescent has a range of behaviors that arise from what he or she learns within and from particular social and physical environments. Thus, the focus is on the external rather than the internal influences on adolescents' behavior.

In its summary, Bandura argued that most human behaviour is learned through example, either intentionally or accidentally. Thus, individuals learn by observing other people and modeling their behaviours after the models. It is because of this that the environment in which an individual is exposed to have a bearing on their experiences in life especially school. The socialisation of the individual is therefore important and influential in the challenges he/she experiences. The implication of the study requires that teachers and parents to concentrate on positively reinforcing an adolescent's appropriate behavior and where possible ignoring minor misbehavior. This is to shape an adolescent's behavior in the direction the parent or teacher desires. The teacher or parent has to be vigilant and observe in order to note appropriate behavior so as to reward or reinforce that behavior. The teacher or parent must be clear as to what target behaviors they expect the adolescent to achieve and ensure that the adolescent is also clear as to what is expected. This theory therefore had relevance to the current study.

### **Psychoanalytic Theory of Adolescence**

Freud paid relatively little attention to adolescent development only to discuss it in terms of psychosexual development. He shared a common idea with that of Hall's evolutionary theory: that the period of adolescence could be seen as phylogenetic. According to Freud and psychoanalytic theory, the stages of psychosexual development are genetically determined and are relatively independent of environmental factors (Muuss, 1975).

Freudian Psychoanalysis emphasises sexual and aggressive drives which need to be controlled and redirected and sees an individual's psychosexual development as proceeding through stages, that is oral, anal, phallic-oedipal, latency and puberty. If individuals do not proceed through these stages

satisfactorily, they become fixated at a particular stage and resort to infantile behaviour or at stressful times regress to such behaviour. Freud believed that adolescence was a universal phenomenon and included behavioural, social and emotional changes not to mention the relationships between the physiological and psychological changes, and the influences on the self-image. He also stated that the physiological changes are related to emotional changes, especially an increase in negative emotions, such as moodiness, anxiety, loathing, tension and other forms of adolescent behaviour. This implies that the period of adolescence is a period where one can easily experience social and academic challenges.

Overall, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory is relevant to the current study because Freud argued that the period of adolescence is the period of development for students but also a period where the individual is exposed to a lot of difficulties emotionally, behaviorally and socially.

### **Psychosocial Theory of Adolescence**

The psychosocial theory of adolescent has Erikson as being a proponent of this theory. This theory is seen as one that gives comprehensive details about the growth and development of the adolescent. It views adolescence as a stage in which the younger child begins to develop an awareness of what he has become and also begins to recognize what he could be (Korna, 2012). The core concept of Erikson's theory is the attainment of an ego-identity, and the identity crisis is viewed as an essential characteristic of adolescence. Although a person's identity is established in ways that differ from culture to culture, the accomplishment of this developmental task has a common element in all cultures. In order to acquire a strong and healthy ego-identity, the child must receive regular and meaningful recognition of his achievements and

undertakings (Muuss, 1975).

According to Erikson in Korna (2012), the major personality development during adolescence is that of self-identity without which the youth drops into role confusion. According to his theory of adolescence, the recognition of continuity and sameness in a person's personality even when in different situations and when reacted to differently by individuals, leads to identity. Erikson states the period during which the individual must establish a sense of personal identity and avoid the dangers of role diffusion describes adolescence and identity confusion (Erikson, in Muuss, 1975). The implication is that the individual has to make an assessment of his or her assets and liabilities and how they want to use them.

Adolescents must answer questions for themselves about where they came from, who they are, and what they will become. Identity, or a sense of sameness and continuity, must be searched for. Identity is not given to the individual by society, nor does it appear as a maturational phenomenon; it must be acquired through sustained individual efforts. Unwillingness to work on one's own identity formation carries with it the danger of role diffusion, which may result in seclusion and a lasting sense of isolation and confusion (Muuss, 1975). The virtue to be developed is fidelity. Adhering to one's values contributes to a stable identity (Muuss, 1975).

According to Erikson, in a period of rapid social change, the older generation is no longer able to provide adequate role models for the younger generation. Even if the older generation can provide adequate role models, adolescents may reject them as inappropriate for their situation. Therefore, Erikson believes that the importance of the peer group cannot be overemphasized. Peers help adolescents find answers to the question "Who

Am I?" as they depend on social feedback as to what others feel and how they react to the individual. Therefore, adolescents "are sometimes perversely, often curiously, and preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are and with the question of how to connect to earlier nurtured roles and skills with the ideal examples of the day" (Erikson, 1950).

Pubescence, according to Erikson, is characterized by the rapidity of body growth, genital maturity, and sexual awareness. Because the latter two aspects are qualitatively quite different from those experienced in earlier years, an element of discontinuity with previous development occurs during early adolescence (Muuss, 1975). Youth is confronted with a "physiological revolution" within himself that threatens his body image and interferes with the formation of an identity. Erikson maintains that the study of identity has become more important than the study of sexuality was in Freud's time (Muuss, 1975).

The concern for many adolescents is the need to settle the question of vocational identity. During the preliminary attempts to establish a vocational identity, some role diffusion frequently exists. Adolescents at this stage hold glamorized and idealized conceptions of their vocational goals, and it is not uncommon that goal aspirations are higher than the individual's ability warrants. Frequently, vocational goal models are chosen that are attainable for only a few: movie heroes, rock musicians, athletic champions, car racers, astronauts, and other glamorized "heroes." In the process, the adolescent over-identifies with and idolizes his heroes to the extent that he yields his own identity and presumes he has theirs.

At this point, according to Erikson, a youth rarely identifies with parent; they often rebel against their dominance, their value system, and their intrusion into their private life, since they must separate their identity from that of their family. The adolescent must assert their autonomy in order to reach maturity (Muuss, 1975). When the search for an identity fails, the adolescent experiences self-doubt, role diffusion, and role confusion; and the adolescent may indulge in self-destructive one-sided preoccupation or activity. Such an adolescent may continue to be morbidly preoccupied with what others think of them, or may withdraw and no longer care about themselves and others. This leads to ego diffusion, personality confusion and can be found in the delinquent and in psychotic personality disorganization. In its most severe cases, according to Erikson, identity diffusion can lead to suicide or suicide attempts. Once the personal identity is established, then the adolescent can move on to find intimacy or separation in interpersonal relationships (Muuss, 1975).

On the other hand, inability to establish stability particularly regarding sex roles and occupational choice leads to role confusion. The conception states that the way in which the adolescent resolves his conflict varies from culture to culture. It also asserts that each person regardless of the experiences he may share with other of his culture resolves his nuclear conflicts somewhat differently. Erikson considers adolescence to be a period of special significance, at that point in life, it is supposed to recapitulate all the preceding nuclear conflicts of childhood and anticipate all those of adulthood (Korna, 2012). Thus, from this view, students in their adolescence have a high probability of experiencing numerous social and academic challenges.

In conclusion, Erikson's stage theory of psychosocial development continues to produce a profound effect on the discipline of psychology offering deep insight into the progression of the human experience. Regardless of criticisms directed towards this developmental theory, it is difficult to deny that it will ever be possible to truly offer assistance to adolescents with challenges if there was no concept of psychosocial development to reference throughout the care process. Erikson's psychosocial theory of adolescence may not be by all accounts flawless, however it certainly serves as a valuable tool in beginning to understand the complexities and progressive nature of the adolescent period of life.

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Concept of Adolescence**

Adolescence is seen as a bridge between childhood and adulthood. Okorodudu (2003) opines that it is a time of rapid development, discovering one's real self, defining personal values and finding one's vocational and social direction. It is one of the most fascinating and complex transitions in the life span of man, a time of expanding horizons, and emerging independence; a time of metamorphosis from childhood to adulthood. Its beginning is associated with profound biological, physical, behavioural, and social transformations (Melgosa, 1995; Adegoke, 1998). The adolescence period is characterized by various developmental changes. However, adequate machinery should be put in place to meet the needs and demands of adolescents in this modern age of science and technology, computer and telecommunication advancement.

Any period of change is likely to be accompanied by potential difficulties. Adolescence is a time of emotional turmoil, mood liability,

gloomy introspection, great drama and heightened sensitivity. It is a time of rebellion and behavioral experimentation, and it is a period of strain and stress fraught with many problems (Blair, Jones, Simpson, & Denga, 2000, Okoye, 2000; Okpala, 2000). Globally speaking, the period of adolescence ranges from the age of about 12 to 21 years. Adolescents have experienced thousands of hours of interaction with parents, peers, and teachers in their previous 10-13 years of development. Still, new experiences and developmental tasks appear during adolescence. Relationship with parents takes a different form, moments with peers become more intimate and dating occurs for the first time (Santrock, 2008). The adolescent's thoughts are more abstract and idealistic.

Biological changes trigger a heightened interest in body image. There is a long history of worrying about how adolescents will turn out in 1984, Stanley Hall proposed the storm and stress view that adolescence is a turbulent time charged with conflicts and mood swings. Adolescents of today face demands and expectations as well as risk and temptations, that appear to be more numerous and complex than those faced by adolescents only a generation ago (Santrock, 2008). A cross-cultural study by Offer and his colleagues in Santrock (2008), supported the contention that most adolescents have positive images about themselves and that most adolescents have problems or are disturbed in some way. Some public attitudes about adolescence results from a combination of personal experience and exposure to media portrayals, of which none of them produce an objective picture of how normal adolescents develop. During a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, it is probably the most challenging and tasking phase in the developmental process of the human organism (Uwakwue, in Korna, 2012).

Adolescents who are faced with challenges concerning the task of biological sexual and physical maturity are often traumatic (Denga, 2010).

It is a fact that delinquency rates soar during the period of adolescence. Teachers who understand adolescents and the problems they encounter can do much to help them make a successful adjustment to adult status. However, it seems that schoolteachers, because of lack of understanding actually frustrate adolescents and contribute to their general personal-social problems or challenges. Thus, the period of adolescence is a period where student are most vulnerable to all forms of personal-social challenges.

### **Concept of Individual Variability Conception of Adolescence**

A German psychologist called Spranger promulgated the individual variability conception. This conception emphasizes the uniqueness of the individual. It states that there are basically three patterns of growth that may emerge during adolescence. Adolescents who follow the first pattern experience the storm and stress phenomenon. For adolescents, the transition from childhood to adulthood is very traumatic. On the other hand, there is the teenager who passes through adolescence untouched. The group represents a slow continuous pattern of development. These teenagers move quietly and peacefully into adult life without visible signs of conflict or distress. Finally, the third group shows the pattern that seems to be at their own development. They may experience crisis, but they overcome them by consciously and actively trying to master them. This conception of adolescent makes it stand clear on the issue of adolescent turmoil. Thus, adolescence may or may not be stressful, depending on the type of young person under consideration. In other words, different adolescents have different social and academic challenges.



problem solving for adolescents, the Cognitive theory of Aaron Beck, states that the role of the counsellor is oriented toward problem solving, and not the escalation of problems.

## **Review of Related Empirical Literature**

### **Academic Challenges**

Many young people in schools face a variety of academic challenges, which do not fall into the category of learning disorders, learning difficulties or learning problems. Academic challenges in this context refer to challenges of motivation, study and examination. These academic challenges vary from minor difficulties to major challenges, and as a result, studying and achievement are affected. The academic stress that adolescents experience is considerable and can sometimes lead to severe side effects such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and constant feelings of being overwhelmed (Noddings, 2003; Lewis, Huebner, Malone, & Valois, 2011). Many times, a teenager's academic stress is felt in combination with other conflicts that might be felt in social settings, a particular peer relationship, or at home. Because academic responsibilities exist at school (among peers) and at home (among family), this stress can overwhelm teens, making them feel that they're failing in multiple aspects of their lives. And as the struggle to find a sense of self is an ever-present aspect of an adolescent's life, this feeling of failure can be debilitating and depressing. There's a vast array of academic issues that teens face, especially because it's common for teens today to be inundated with all the different demands on their time, including: family, friends, sports other extracurricular activities, and school (Noddings, 2003; Lewis et al., 2011). It's important to note that academic stress is not limited to students who are performing poorly at school, but is also strongly felt by

students who are currently succeeding, who feel the pressure to continue succeeding despite any upcoming challenges, or, students who have always done well in the past, who feel pressure to continue doing well. Though every student feels some amount of pressure and stress, some adolescents experience stress that increases to a severe degree, to a point which it has negative effects on multiple aspects of their lives (McMahon & Patton, 1997). Some of the effects that extreme academic challenges commonly show in adolescents include, but are not limited to: a sense of there never being enough time, fear of being disliked, fear of failure, anxiety surrounding managing time, constant worry about grades among others.

In a study conducted by Cerna and Pavliushchenko (2015) on the topic Influence of Study Habits on Academic Performance of International College Students in Shanghai, It was revealed that low performing students miss at least three classes per term, are normally late, sit at the back of the classroom, don't take notes in class and never look for the teacher after class-hours. The researchers conducted this class observation during spring and autumn 2014; a special attention was given to seating location (back or front of the classroom), class participation and interaction with other students among others. This study confirms that adolescents study habits, which is a part of their academic challenges that they face, has negative impacts on their academic performance as well.

Gopi, Shakeer, and Ravi (2013), conducted a study on the topic "A study on help seeking behavior of their common problems among adolescent girls of government junior college in rural field practice area of S. V Medical College". The objective of the study was to assess the perceived health problems and help seeking behavior of adolescent girls. The results indicated

that Fear and concern about future career, Lack of concentration, Tension attending classes and exams, Not getting good marks, Parents intervention in career choice, and Being unable to follow classes were some of the academic challenges these adolescent girls faced.

In a book written by Nicolson and Ayers (2004), titled *Adolescent Problems; a guide for parents and counselors*, they came out with contributory factors to adolescents' academic problems as Emotional difficulties, Anxiety, The suffering and stress, physical illnesses, motivational difficulties and study difficulties.

The academic challenges of students have generated research interest for over a long period with a lot of revelations. Although, adolescent students face several issues during their adolescent years, academic challenges appear to be one of the main issues that adolescents contend with (Moffitt et al., 2011; Duckworth, Quinn, & Tsukayama, 2012).

Similarly, the study of Peterson, Duncan and Canady (2009) which was an 11-year mixed-method, longitudinal study of 121 children revealed that students had experienced many negative events and situations during their school years, however, academic challenges was their most difficult experiences. The report of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI] (2004) about challenges of students in senior high school was no different. The report showed that the experiences of students in senior high school were relatively many but the most particular was having poor grades in tests.

The study of Thalagola and Rajakpase (2004) brought to light some academic challenges of students. Their study showed that about 3% of school adolescents were worried that their academic performance was poor compared

to others while a majority (nearly 60%) rated themselves as average. Others thought their performance to be better than others. There was also a clear inverse relation with the proportion who rated themselves as poor in academic achievements when compared to others, with improving socio-economic status. Those who felt pressurised due to parents and teachers' persistence of improved academic performance rose from 29% among early adolescents to 46% among late adolescents and no gender difference was observed in this regard. About 40% to 60% of adolescents seemed to react positively to the academic pressure exerted on them by their parents and teachers while about one fifth demonstrated negative reactions. Whereas the study of Thalagola and Rajakpase (2004) looked at academic challenges in the context of whether students perform better or not, the current study looked out for not only performance but also the factors that can interfere with the performance of the students.

Middle school and high school students with higher life satisfaction are likely to have more positive attitudes toward school in general and their teachers, including reporting positive academic experiences, than students with average life satisfaction (Lewis, et al., 2011; Gilman & Huebner, 2006; Gilman, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2000). Specifically, students with high life satisfaction were significantly more likely to report positive perceptions of their teachers than students with average life satisfaction (Gilman & Huebner, 2006).

Furthermore, there is a bi-directional relationship between life satisfaction and cognitive engagement (Noddings, 2003; Lewis et al., 2011). Students who had more positive emotions had greater cognitive and psychological engagement, including positive student-teacher relationships,

while students with frequent negative emotions had lower engagement levels (Reschly, Huebner, Appleton, & Antaramian, 2008; Lewis et al., 2011). Reschly et al, (2008) found that teacher-student relationships were a significant mediator in this relationship between positive affect and engagement with school. When teachers are not supportive, negative student outcomes may result. Students who move from high-efficacy teachers to low-efficacy teachers devalue their academic performance more than students who experience no change in teacher efficacy (Eccles, Midgley, & Adler, 1991).

Students who saw teachers to be non-supportive lowered their opinion of the value of the corresponding subject material taught (Eccles et al., 1991; Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1988). This indicates that the decline in motivation often seen as students move to higher grades in school may be related to negative student-teacher relationships (Eccles et al., 1991). Stressful teacher-student relationships have been reported to traumatize students, to cause students to negatively view course material, and to cause anxiety and withdrawal in students (Sava, 2002).

This implies that, teachers also have a role to play when it comes to the social and academic challenges that adolescents face. Having teachers who are not supportive, will eventually results in negative student outcomes. Academic challenges being a major issue of concern for senior high school students is not surprising because during adolescence education is the main preoccupation of young people and as such can generate a lot of stress if it is not going well as expected.

### **Challenges of Schooling**

For most adolescents, school is a prominent part of their life. It is here that they relate to and develop relationships with their peers and where they

have the opportunity to develop key cognitive skills. For some youth, it is also a source of safety and stability. Some of these qualities that characterize families of adolescents who perform well are; a strong sense of attachment, bonding, and belonging, and a feeling of being cared about; also characterize adolescents' positive relationships with their teachers and their schools.

One additional factor, adolescent view of teacher fairness, has also been found to be associated with positive adolescent development. These factors, more than the size of the school, the type of school (example public, private), or teacher–pupil ratio, have been found to be strongly associated with whether adolescents are successful or are involved with drugs or delinquency or drop out of school (Resnick, 1997). Because schools are such a perilous setting for adolescents, it is very important for professionals who work in other settings to team up with the school psychologist, counsellor, or social worker of an at-risk adolescent to help create a supportive system of care.

During adolescence, young people move from elementary school to junior high school and then to senior high school. Each of these transitions can present challenges both to academic performance and psychological wellbeing (Seidman, Aber, & French, 1998). Declines in academic performance are common following the move to middle or junior high school, a transition that can be quite disruptive for some adolescents. For some, this signals the beginning of a process of disengaging from school. Declines in self-esteem are also common. Although most will “bounce back” later, for some this weakening will continue, increasing their risk for lower grades and even failure in high school. Although the transition to senior high school is not as dramatic, some students will continue to disengage at this stage. Professionals should be alert to the difficulties that adolescents can have with school

transitions and be ever ready to provide additional support and guidance during these periods in their lives.

Having a college degree has become increasingly important for economic success. Disturbingly, some groups are being left behind, particularly African American adolescents and adolescents who come from families with lower incomes (U.S. Council of Economic Advisors, 2000). Professionals can help to make these teens aware of the financial and other assistance available to them to obtain a college degree and provide them with access to resources to overcome the economic and social barriers that can make it more difficult for them to succeed academically. They also need adults in their lives who believe in their potential as college-bound students, particularly if they come from homes where they will be the first to attend college. Without at least one adult reaching out to them early in their junior high school career, these young people may not see college as being within their range of possibilities. College is, however, only one option for youth after high school. With regards to the current study, it can be seen that schooling at all levels presents a challenge both in terms of personal social and academic areas.

### **Career Planning Challenges**

Vocational training is another important area to consider. It is one aspect of an adolescent search for identity which is connected to the social challenges of adolescents. Increased emphasis is now being placed on linking students to community job training while they are in high school and in preparing them for vocational training beyond high school. According to the American Vocational Association, 9,400 post-secondary institutions currently offer technical programs that provide training ranging from the culinary arts to

computer technology (Daggett, 2002). Students who are not drawn to college should be directed to explore these options. If not, they are likely to drift into easily accessible jobs that initially seem to offer high pay given the youth's limited experience. Although the ease with which these jobs are obtained can make them very attractive, in the long run, they are unlikely to provide the resources necessary to allow a young adult to live independently, much less to support a family (Jaffe, 1998). Despite the greater flexibility in career goals today, gender and gender stereotyping often influence vocational choice.

In an interview conducted by McMahon and Patton (1997) using students aged 3 to 18, in an educational urban private school in Australia. McMahon and Patton found that except among the youngest children, boys had more restrictive ideas than girls about proper occupation for each sex. Boys knew more about the requirements for male occupations and girls about the female ones. Older adolescent boys found school career programs helpful, while girls did not (McMahon & Patton, 1997).

A 1992 report by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Educational Foundation claimed that schools shortchanged girls by steering them away from science and mathematics and into gender-typed pursuits. Even girls who did well in science and mathematics were less likely than boys to choose careers in those fields. Six years later, a follow-up study reported that girls were taking more science and math than before and doing better in those subjects. According to the National Center for Education Statistics in AAUW (1998), male and female high school seniors are equally likely to plan careers in math or science, but boys are much more likely to expect to go into engineering (AAUW, 1998). A large number of students and the small number of guidance counsellors in many schools virtually

guaranteed that many students would fall through the cracks in terms of career planning. Therefore, regardless of one's professional role, it is helpful to inquire about and encourage adolescents to pursue post-secondary education and career training. The confusion regarding the choice of career also presents some form of challenge to the adolescent. This challenge could be academic as in not knowing which course to choose or social as in requiring the adolescent to adopt a particular lifestyle. For instance, if the career choice demands more studies, the adolescent will have to cut down on leisure time to get enough time to study.

### **Personal-Social Challenges**

The literature on personal-social challenges of students has been comprehensive and insightful. Some of them are reviewed in this section. Kesting and Seidel (2005) studied the need for personal social counselling among secondary school students in Vandeikya Local Government Area of Benue State seeking to answer four research questions. The subject for the study was 200 senior high school students selected through random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. The data collected were analysed using mean. The results of the analyses showed that: the provision of personal social counselling enables students to make an adequate transition from school to work environment, to be properly adjusted within work environment, enhances productivity and efficiency, leads to job satisfaction and creates a division of labour. The researchers also found that school counsellors play roles like organising excursion, advising students, workshops or seminar, group activities as well as drama in the provision of personal social counselling need.

In another related study, Bikom (2004) investigated the impact of

personal-social counselling on secondary school students career choice in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River state. The major need for undertaking this study was as a result of the increasing rate of frustration faced by youths on personal social counselling as regards the choice of careers. Three research questions and three hypotheses were postulated to guide the study. The sample in the study consisted of 200 senior secondary school students that was made up of one hundred males and one hundred females randomly selected from five secondary schools of Cross River State in Boki Local Government Area.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire, with the hypotheses tested using the independent samples t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that personal-social counselling had significant influence on the student's choice of career whiles in the senior secondary school. The study also showed that parents attitude towards personal social counselling affected the career choice of secondary school students. Even though the study of Kesting and Seidel (2005) was comprehensive enough, specific challenges that students encountered in their personal social life were not highlighted. The current study seeks to address that aspect of the lives of students.

Further, Galibraith and McEuen (2001) investigated the factors influencing personal social counselling among secondary school students in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue state. Four research questions guided the study. The study employed a survey design. A total of 200 respondents were used for the study. Data were analysed using frequency counts and percentage. It was found out that certain factors like, counsellors' neglect or rather not paying attention to personal social counselling influenced greatly

students in secondary school. It was recommended that urgent steps be taken to provide adequate personal social counselling services in all secondary schools in Ukum Local Government Area. The relevance of counselling to students specifically to their personal social lives was clearly established by Mike and Sam. The current study is also anticipated to narrow down the impact of counselling on the personal social lives of students in Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Kumi-Kyereme, Awusabo-Asare and Darteh (2014) conducted a study on the views of adults on adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) problems and challenges. The study was based on 60 in-depth interviews conducted among adults in Ghana in 2005. Adults were purposively selected based on their roles as parents, teachers, health care providers and community leaders. The study found that the major ASRH problems were teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. The implication is that sexually related issues such as teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS were social challenges of adolescents. The studies reviewed implied that students in senior high schools experience some personal social challenges that demand attention from counsellors and other guidance coordinators within the schools.

### **Peer Relationships**

One of the most obvious changes in adolescence is that as they mature, their attention drifts from the family to the peer group. It is very important to note that this reduced rate at which adolescents have contact with family does not mean that family closeness has assumed less importance for the adolescent (O’Koon, 1997). In fact, family closeness and attachment has been confirmed as the most important factor associated with not smoking, less use of alcohol

and other drugs, later initiation of sexual intercourse, and fewer suicide attempts among adolescents (Resnick, Bearman, & Blum, in APA, 2002).

For adolescents to establish greater independence from their parents, thus being able to do things and take decisions by themselves, they orient themselves toward their peers to a greater extent than they did in earlier stages of development (APA, 2002). Those professionals whose role is to advise parents can help reassure them that increased peer contact among adolescents does not mean that parents are less important to them, but that the new focus on peers is an important and healthy new stage in their child's development. They can also educate parents about the importance of positive peer relationships during adolescence (APA, 2002).

Peer groups perform a number of important functions throughout adolescence. They provide a temporal reference point for adolescents to develop a sense of identity. Through identification with peers, adolescents begin to develop moral judgment and values (Bishop & Inderbitzen, 1995) and to define how they differ from their parents (Micucci, in APA, 2002). During this time, teens also strive often covertly, for ways to identify with their parents. Another important function of peer groups is to provide adolescents with a source of information about the world outside of the family and about themselves (Santrock, in APA, 2002).

Peer groups also serve as a powerful reinforcer during adolescence as sources of popularity, status, prestige, and acceptance. Being accepted by peers has important implications for adjustment both during adolescence and into adulthood. One study found, for example, that fifth graders who were able to make at least one good friend were found to have higher feelings of self-worth at age 30 when compared to those who had been friendless (Bagwell,

Newcomb, & Bukowski, 1998). Positive peer relations during adolescence have been linked to positive psychosocial adjustment. For example, those who are accepted by their peers and have mutual friendships have been found to have better self-images during adolescence and to perform better in school (Hansen, Giacoletti, & Nangle, 1995; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). On the other hand, social isolation among peer-rejected teens has been linked to a variety of negative behaviors, such as delinquency (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990). Again, adults who had personal problems during adolescence appear to be at much greater risk for psychosocial difficulties during adulthood (Hansen et al., 1995).

The nature of adolescents' involvement with peer groups changes over the course of adolescence. Younger adolescents usually have at least one primary peer group with whom they identify with members who are usually similar in many respects, including sex (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990 as cited in APA, 2002). During this time, involvement with the peer group tends to be most intense, their conformity and concerns about acceptance are at their peak. Concern with how their peers see them can become all consuming to adolescents (APA, 2002). The intense desire to belong to a particular group can influence young adolescents to go along with activities in which they would otherwise not engage (Mucucci, 1998; Santrock, 2001). Adolescents need adults who can help them resist peer pressure and find substitute "cool enough" groups that will accept them if the group with which they seek to belong is undesirable (or even dangerous). The need to belong to groups at this age is too strong to simply ignore (APA, 2002).

During middle adolescence (ages 14-16 years), peer groups tend to be more gender mixed. Less agreement and more tolerance of individual

differences in appearance, beliefs, and feelings are normal (APA, 2002). By late adolescence, peer groups have been replaced by more intimate dynamic relationships, such as one-on-one friendships and romances that have grown in importance as the adolescent has matured (Micucci, in APA, 2002). For some adolescents from ethnic minority groups, higher importance may be placed on peer groups throughout adolescence, particularly when they are in the minority in a school or community, as the group may provide a much needed sense of belonging within the majority culture (Spencer & Dornbusch, 1990).

Adolescents differ in the number of friends that they have and in how much time they spend with their friends. Introverted youth tend to have fewer but closer friendships, and boys and girls differ with regard to the kinds of activities they engage in most frequently with their friends (APA, 2002). Generally, boys tend to participate in more action-oriented pursuits, and girls spend more time talking together (Smith, in APA, 2002). Individuals of both sexes, however, appear to value the same qualities in a friend: loyalty, frankness, and trustworthiness (Claes, in APA, 2002).

Several studies have also indicated that adolescent girls value intimacy, the feeling that one can freely share one's private thoughts and feelings, as a primary quality in friendship (Bakken & Romig, 1992; Clark & Ayers, in APA, 2002). Boys also speak of the high importance of intimacy in friendship (Pollack & Shuster, 2000). One review of studies revealed that white adolescent girls tend to reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings to friends more so than do boys, and that they accept more social support from friends. However, this gender difference does not appear to hold for African American adolescents (Brown, Way, & Duff, in APA, 2002). The relevance of this gender review was to establish how students of both genders relate to their

peers. Even though the finding was exciting, this was not a specific objective of the current study.

Nwakoby (2010) investigated the relationships among peer pressures, time management and academic performance of in-school adolescents in Delta state. In pursuance of the above-mentioned objectives, six research questions were posed and one hypothesis suggested. Subjects for the study consisted of 600 in-school adolescents from the three senatorial zones in Delta State. They were composed using random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher made questionnaire titled peer pressure and time management. The data were analysed using mean scores and standard deviation while the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using the independent samples t-test.

The findings showed that a higher percentage of in-school adolescents experienced a moderate level of peer pressure and time management. This is followed by a lower percentage of in-school adolescents with low peer pressure as well as time management. However, a significant number of in-school adolescents experienced a high level of time management but not peer pressure. Male in-school adolescents had a high mean of peer pressure while female in-school adolescents had a high mean of peer pressure and time management. Female in-school adolescents performed slightly higher than the male in-school adolescents academically. There were no significant relationships among levels of peer pressure, time management and academic performance of in-school adolescent.

Gressey (1991) conducted a study of the peer education and peer group members among 308 students of senior secondary in Anambra State using survey research design. Results showed that more than 50.9% of the peer

group members revealed associated with one another and benefited from services provide by their fellows. He also found out that peers were involved in socialization, considerably sociable interactions, and unwritten code of conduct to be followed by those who wished to remain in the group. Peers who participated in delinquent behaviour together; they were involved in deviant transactions at the same time and in the same place. In some cases, such mutual participation was required by the nature of the delinquent activity. This was exemplified in the performance of heterosexual behaviour. He also said that in some cases mutual participation was required because peers formed a network for supplying one another with essential goods and services and found in the distribution of illicit drugs. The above finding was supported by Kandel (1998) in a study carried out on peer influence and the use of marijuana. Kandel found that peers played crucial role in adolescent's use of drug. Responses as regards youth's participation of their friend's behaviour were elicited.

To have a friend presupposes that one has the social skills to make and keep that friend. With most adolescents, the essentials of those skills are in place, and peer groups and friendships allow them to further improve those skills (APA, 2002). For a small subset of adolescents, however, this is not the case. Some adolescents may be rejected by their peers and this rejection can have serious negative effects, such as misbehavior, drug abuse, dropping out of school and aggression (Asher & Cole, in APA, 2002).

For adolescents who lack social skills, adults who informally coach them in the appropriate skill areas can be lifesavers. Discussions about how to initiate conversations with peers, give genuine compliments, be a good listener, share private information appropriately, and keep confidences can go

a long way toward enhancing social skills (APA, 2002). Professionals who come in contact with youth with major discrepancies in social skills should take the time to find help for these adolescents. Youth who lack social skills who also develop aggressive behaviours are likely to need professional help to eliminate their aggressive and disruptive behaviours (Coie & Dodge, in APA, 2002).

However, youths who lack social skills but who do not exhibit behaviour problems need help just as the youths who are acting out in antisocial ways, such as by getting into fights or having problems in school (APA, 2002). They may not be making as much “noise” in the community as these youth, but they are still at risk for long-term difficulties if their problems do not receive attention during adolescence (APA, 2002). The literature points clear that there are several challenges that adolescents can experience within the circle of their relationship with their peers. Even though most of these challenges are personal social, they have the tendency of affecting the academic work of the adolescents.

### **Family Relationships**

Families today can take many forms—single parent, shared custody, adoptive, blended, foster, traditional dual parent, to name a few. Regardless of family form, a strong sense of bonding, closeness and attachment to family have been found to be associated with better emotional development, better school performance and engagement in fewer high-risk activities, such as drug use (Resnick, Bearman, Blum, Bauman, Harris, Jones, Tabor, Beuhring, Sieving, Shew, Ireland, Bearinger, & Udry, 1997; Perry, in APA, 2002). For more than half of families in the United States, divorce is a fact of life. For divorce to have negative effects on adolescents, it will depend on a number of

factors, not the divorce itself.

Although it is true that adolescents from divorced families exhibit more adjustment problems than adolescents from intact families (Conger & Chao, in APA, 2002), evidence suggests that most adolescents are able to cope well with their parents' divorce (Emery, 1999). The factors that appear to have the greatest impact on coping, include whether parents can harmoniously parent after the divorce (Hetherington, 2000) and whether the economic problems that often occur after a divorce and lead to other stresses, such as having to move locations, can be kept to a minimum (Emery, in APA, 2002).

Parents often ask professionals how they should modify their parenting practices as their children become older. It appears that parents, who are warm and involved, provide firm guidelines and limits, have appropriate developmental expectations, and encourage the adolescent to develop his or her own beliefs tend to be most effective (APA, 2002). These parents tend to use reasoning and persuasion, explain rules, discuss issues, and listen respectfully. Adolescents who come from families with this style of parenting tend to achieve more in school, report less depression and anxiety, score higher in measures of self-reliance and self-esteem, and be less likely to engage in delinquent behaviours and drug abuse (Sessa & Steinberg, 1991; Carlson, Uppal & Prosser, 2000; Steinberg, 2001). It should be noted, however, that the level of parental supervision and monitoring necessary to promote healthy adolescent development can differ depending on the characteristics of the adolescent's peer and neighborhood environments (APA, 2002). For example, setting stricter limits may in fact be desirable for adolescents who live in communities where there is a low level of adult monitoring, a high level of danger and higher levels of problem behaviour

among peers, such as in some inner-city, high crime neighborhoods (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2000).

During adolescence, parent–adolescent conflict tends to increase, particularly between adolescent girls and their mothers. This conflict appears to be a necessary part of gaining independence from parents while learning new ways of staying connected to them (Steinberg, 2001). Daughters, in particular, appear to strive for new ways of relating to their mothers (Debold, Weseen, & Brookins, 1999). In their search for new ways of relating, daughters may be awkward and seem rejecting. Understandably, mothers may withdraw, and a cycle of mutual distancing can begin that is sometimes difficult to disrupt. If parents can be reassured that the awkwardness their teen is displaying is not rejection and can be encouraged to stay involved, a new way of relating may eventually evolve that is satisfying for all.

The family seemed to be a strong influence on adolescents. The study of Thalagola and Rajakpase (2004) showed that the majority of school adolescents perceived their families as intimate and close (60%) and considered family as refuge (52%) for a problem (APA, 2002). Again, a larger proportion of the respondents were proud of their families. For a significant proportion their hero was a family member. The study of Thalagola and Rajakpase (2004) made some further revelations. Mothers were identified as the most trusted and liked personal confidantes of adolescents irrespective of age and sex and socio-economic status (APA, 2002). Nearly 75% of adolescents in their study also thought they could depend on their families and admitted that they would love to spend time with their families. All these positive indicators improved further with increasing age.

However, about 4% of adolescents reported serious problems with the

family and wished to be away from it. About 40% were ambivalent, somewhat neutral and had less warm feelings towards their families. Nearly one-third were worried about their relationship with family members, felt left out of the family and felt that their parents put too many restrictions on their lives. About one-fifth was ashamed of their family in general or of a parent. Finally, only 40% of the adolescents in their study felt that their parents were supportive of their decisions, whereas an approximately similar proportion stated that their parents did not accept their suggestions on family matters. With these very insightful revelations from the study of Thalagola and Rajakpase, the current study would specifically consider how the relationship students have with their parents affect their social and academic life.

Parent-teen conflict tends to peak with younger adolescents (Lauren, Coy, & Collins, 1998). Two kinds of conflict typically occur spontaneous conflict over day-to-day matters, such as what clothes the adolescent is allowed to purchase or wear and whether homework has been completed, and conflict over important issues, such as academic performance (APA, 2002). Interestingly, the spontaneous conflict that occurs on a day-to-day basis seems to be more distressing to parents than to the adolescents (Steinberg, 2001). This is important for parents to keep in mind. Parents often give greater meaning to conflict-laden interactions, construing them to be rejections of their values or as indicators of their failures as parents (APA, 2002). Adolescents, on the other hand, may see the interaction as far less significant just another way of showing Mom or Dad that they are individuals or just as a way to blow off steam. Professionals can help parents understand that minor conflict or bickering is normal and that these exchanges do not mean that they are not skilled or effective parents (Steinberg, in APA, 2002).

Akwei (2015) sought to investigate the impact of dysfunctional families on the psychological wellbeing of the adolescent with the moderation effect of social support. The study used a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the dynamics of dysfunctional family and social support and how they both influence adolescents' psychological wellbeing. The study sampled 201 students from junior and senior high schools to participate in the survey. The data collected were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics, correlational and ANOVA to explore patterns of association among variables. The result of the study revealed that adolescents' from a functional family scored high on psychological wellbeing and there was a negative relationship between parental conflict and adolescents' psychological wellbeing. The findings of Akwei imply that parental and family relationships can present a challenge to adolescents.

Overall, the studies reviewed indicate that family relationships can mediate the challenges that students may have in their personal social or academic life. This provides basis for confirmation or otherwise by the current study.

### **Gender Studies**

Studies in the field of challenges of students have also explored the gender differences that may or may not exist. French (1990) found that gender differences existed in the academic challenges of students. However, Zettergren (2003) did not find any significant gender difference in the academic challenges of students. He concluded from his findings that both boys and girls were of superior academic standard. Similarly, the study of Aderi, Maleak, Ishak, and Jdaitawa (2013) showed that no differences between male and females existed on academic challenges scale. The findings

of Aderi et al. serves as a good basis for the current study since both studies aimed at testing the gender difference in the academic challenges experienced by students in senior high schools (APA, 2002).

Further, with regards to the gender difference in personal social challenges, longitudinal research has shown that feelings of self-esteem tend to decrease somehow as girls become adolescents, with different patterns emerging for different ethnic groups (Brown, in APA, 2002). The difference between the study of Brown and that of the current study is in the fact that Brown's study was longitudinal while the current study is cross-sectional. In early adolescence, some studies have shown that boys tend to have higher global self-esteem than girls (Bolognini, Plancherel, Bettschart, & Halfon, 1996; Chubb, Fertman, & Ross, 1997). Because of differences in how boys and girls are socialized in our society, male and female adolescents may also differ in their specific needs for help from professionals in promoting identity formation (APA, 2002). For example, some adolescent girls may need help learning to become more assertive or in expressing anger. Adolescent boys, on the other hand, may need to be encouraged to have cooperative rather than competitive relationships with other males and helped to understand that it's okay to feel and express emotions other than anger (Pollack & Shuster, 2000).

Glozah (2013) conducted a study to examine how academic stress and perceived social support influence the psychological wellbeing of Senior High School students in Ghana. A sample of 226 male and female students participated in the study. The general health questionnaire, student life-stress inventory and perceived social support from family and friends scales were used to assess psychological wellbeing, academic stress and perceived social support respectively. The results indicated that perceived social support

buffered the effects of academic stress on psychological wellbeing. Girls reported higher scores on perceived social support but reported more depression. Boys reported higher academic stress and better psychological wellbeing, and these have been attributed partly to the socialisation role of gender. Girls had more social challenges than boys even though they had high social support. Boys on the other hand had more academic challenges than social challenges. Thus, from the findings, gender difference was observed in both social and academic challenges. Gender studies have constantly been carried out in terms of challenges of students because, inherently, males and females could have different ways of dealing with issues and as such the current study's objective of investigating into this matter is not wrongly placed.

### **Age Studies**

The age differences that exist in the challenges of students have also been explored. The study of Aderi et al. (2013) found that significant differences between age groups on academic challenges existed. Similarly, age has been found to be an important factor in student's challenges and successful adjustment (Grebennikov & Skaines, 2009). Significant differences in age have also been found in personal challenges of students such as anxiety and depression (Muris, Schmidt, & Merckelbach, 2000; Muris, Schmidt, Engelbrecht, & Perold, 2002; Essau, Muris, & Ederer, 2002). Contrary to these findings, Aderi et al. (2013) found no differences between age groups in terms of their social challenges. Since most of the respondents in the study of Aderi et al. were homogenous in terms of age, the lack of difference in personal social challenges was not surprising. On that basis, the current study

aimed at selecting the sample for the study without bias. This would make the findings more beyond doubt.

Previous research suggests that as adolescent age, they deploy a broader range of coping strategies (Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Harding, & Wadsworth, 2001). However, results on the developmental changes in the kinds of coping adolescents use is less clear. Although most studies show that emotion-focused coping increases with age (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993), not all studies agree (Stern & Zevon, 1990). Similarly, some studies suggest that problem focused coping increases with age during adolescence (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993), whereas others have not found such change (Blanchard-Fields, Chen & Norris, 1995).

Some reviews of the topic present contradictory conclusions as well (Hauser & Bowls, 1990). One reason for these mixed findings may be that the coping modes that adolescents deploy are closely associated with the kinds of situations they are facing (APA, 2002). If the situations that adolescents face as they grow older vary across their developmental environments, this may explain the different patterns of age differences that have emerged in different studies (APA, 2002). The results of the current study have been added to literature in the field of age and challenges of students.

### **Grade or Class Level Studies**

In terms of grade or class level, some studies have sought to identify the differences in the academic and personal social challenges of students. McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Dickey, and Braun (2008) found that, differences existed in the academic work and problems of students in different grades and insisted that there is a great need to assess and support the academic and behavior needs of students as they start high school. The study of Ludwig

(2007) showed that the academic challenges of students might not be all that different in magnitude in terms of grade level.

Again, Trei (2006) citing the study of Miles and Stipek who used data from a study conducted from 1996 to 2002 of about 400 children found that children had poor reading in the early grades and also poor reading in higher grades. In essence, the study concluded that no difference existed in the challenges of students in terms of grade level. The current study was different from the study of Miles and Stipek because the current study is cross-sectional while the study of Miles and Stipek was longitudinal. With regards to personal social challenges Trei (2006) concluded from the findings of Miles and Stipek that children in early grades were rated as relatively aggressive just as those in the higher grades.

Thus, personal social challenges did not vary across different grade levels. From the forgoing studies, the current study can go in any direction. Thus, either finding a difference in challenges of students in terms of grade level or not.

### **Studies on Residential Status**

The issue of whether residential status of students affects their challenges has been long researched with several significant findings. Most of these studies have found that students living in campus residential settings had different academic challenges than students living in off-campus housing (Flowers, 2004; Nicpon et al., 2007; de Araujo & Murray, 2010). Specifically, students living on campus were found to be better academically than those living outside campus. Other studies have also confirmed that students living on campus had different issues with regards to academic work. The study of Pascarella, Terenzini, and Blimling (1994) and Turley and Wodtke (2010) all

found significant differences in the academic work of students, with the indication being that students living on campus coped better academically than the students outside campus. Contrasting all these, Grayson (1997) found no differences in the academic challenges of students living on campus and those who lived off-campus. In comparison to the current study, most of the studies reviewed had students living in hostels as part of the students living on campus. However, the current study considered students living in hostels as non-residential on the school campus.

In terms of personal social challenges, differences have been observed between the students who live on campus and those who lived out of campus (Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Allen, Robbins, Casillas, & Oh, 2008). The difference has been explained to be due to several things. For instance, it has been claimed that the quantity and quality of interactions with peers, teachers, and other members of campus communities have been shown to correlate highly with a variety of positive educational and developmental outcomes (Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Again, students who are more integrated and connected are more likely to have positive views about their institution and education and are more motivated to learn and perform well and also to remain at their institution (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993).

Further, students' subjective experience of connectedness with their campus community is also significantly correlated with better social relations and other educational outcomes (Allen et al., 2008). Many studies have also found out that student in campus residential settings are more involved in campus activities and have an easier time forming meaningful relationships on campus than those living off campus (Pascarella et al., 1994; Buote et al.,

2007). Although on-campus and off-campus students may have similarly sized social networks, on-campus students are more likely to form new social acquaintances, and interactions with their social network are more likely to take place on campus (Hays & Oxley, 1986). It has been seen how this study confirmed the studies turned out on the previous findings. Thus, the results from the current study confirmed the claims of previous studies.

### **Sources of help used by Adolescents for Managing Social and Academic Challenges**

Extensive research has been carried out on the sources of help or support available to adolescents for managing their social and academic challenges. The study of Gallagher, Gollin, and Kelleher (1992) found that students preferred receiving help in the forms of either individual counselling or printed materials. Other studies have revealed that students have a strong preference for close friends or relatives over counsellors as sources of help in times of challenges (Wills & DePaulo, 1991; Rule & Gandy, 1994). Similarly, Duncan, Duncan, and Strycker (2005), parents, family members (brothers, uncles and grandparents), friends and teachers are the main sources of support for adolescents. In line with all of these studies, Soliman (1993) found that professional helpers, such as counsellors and social workers, were least sought-out for help.

Research have recognized a number of factors contributing to students' preferences for help or sources of support such as gender, social norms and cultural beliefs (Al-Krenawi, Graham, Al-Bedah, Kadri, & Sehawail, 2009) and self and public stigma (Vogel, Wester & Larson, 2007). However, some of the factors carry more weight than others. The views of adolescents are not altered by cultural differences. For instance, the study of Morrison, Laughlin,

Miguel, Smith, and Widaman (1997) on Hispanic adolescents' preference for social support on salient concerns in their daily lives made some revelations. It was found that parents and teachers were major sources of support and information, in particular for matters of schoolwork and relationships with peers and teachers at school. Again, peers were also found to be the preferred source of help for non-academic issues such as “looks” and getting along with other students.

In South Africa, Nicholas (2002) reported that most students prefer to seek professional help outside the school, often from religious helpers. In Ghana, Apreko (2010) also reported that only a few students seek support from professionals like teachers and counsellors. The current study is no different from all the studies carried out about the sources of support for students, especially with regards to access to both professional and non-professional help. The respondents of the current study have access to professional sources of support like counsellors and also have access to non-professional help like family and friends. This was no different from the other studies carried out in other locations.

In terms of gender, regardless of culture or ethnicity, research findings have suggested that female students are more likely to seek counselling than men (Al-Samadi, 1994; Fischer & Farina, 1995; Rule & Gandy, 1994; Al-Krenawi et al., 2009). However male students are more likely to seek professional help for problems related to work, achievement, and finance, whereas women were more likely to seek professional help for interpersonal problems (Wills & DePaulo, 1991). The studies reviewed imply that overall students do not prefer to seek help from professionals especially counsellors.

Students prefer to seek help from informal sources such as parents or family and friends.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed literature related to the study. The review was done in three sections. This included the theoretical framework, the conceptual framework and the review of related empirical studies. The social theory of adolescence, the behavioural theory of adolescence, the psychoanalytic theory of adolescence and the psychosocial theory of adolescence were reviewed in this chapter. The concept of adolescence, concept of individual variability among adolescents as well as nature of day and boarding schools were reviewed.

Previous related empirical studies were also reviewed. The review showed that adolescent students face several issues during their adolescent years, with academic challenges being the main issues that adolescents contend with (Moffitt et al., 2011; Duckworth, Quinn & Tsukayama, 2012). The review also showed that students in senior high schools experience some personal social challenges that demand attention from counsellors and other guidance coordinators within the schools.

Further, the literature points clear that there are several challenges that adolescents can experience within the circle of their relationship with their peers. The studies reviewed also indicated that family relationships can mediate the challenges that students may have in their personal social or academic life. It was also found that academic challenges vary on the basis of age, grade level and residential status (Aderi et al., 2013; McIntosh et al., 2008; Flowers, 2004). Personal-social challenges also vary according to age, grades and residential status (Essau et al., 2002; Trei, 2006; Pascarella &

Terenzini, 2005). In terms of sources of help, the review showed that students prefer to seek help from informal sources such as parents or family and friends rather than professionals such as counsellors (Duncan et al., 2005; Morrison, et al., 1997).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the procedures by which data required for the study were collected and analysed. The chapter specifically explains the research paradigm, research design, study area, population, target population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, and the data processing and analysis.

#### **Research Paradigm**

This study was based on the positivist paradigm. According to Crowther and Lancaster (2008), as a general rule, positivist studies usually adopt deductive approach and relates to the viewpoint that researcher needs to concentrate on facts. Positivism depends on quantifiable observations that lead themselves to statistical analysis. Quantitative research makes use of questionnaires, surveys and experiments to gather data that is revised and tabulated in numbers, which allows the data to be characterised by the use of statistical analysis (Hittleman & Simon, 1997).

The positivist or quantitative approach was deemed appropriate for the study because it enables the researcher to measure variables on a sample of subjects and express the relationship between variables using effect statistics such as correlations or differences between means. In this sense, the positivist approach helped to quantify the data obtained regarding the social and academic challenges of adolescents.

## **Research Design**

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Descriptive survey involves collecting data in order to test a hypothesis or answer research questions concerning the current status of the subject of study (Gay, 1992). Descriptive survey is a scientific tool through which relationships between variables are determined and follow-up questions can be asked and items that are not clear can be explained, enabling the researcher to make generalisations based on the representative sample chosen. Not only is descriptive survey objective, it also observes, describes and documents aspect of a situation as it occurs naturally. The descriptive survey makes use of randomisation so that errors may be estimated when population characteristics are inferred from observation of samples (Wallen, 2000). The design was seen as appropriate for the study because of the nature of the topic, which required that data be collected through self-report measures, as well as large amounts of data being collected within a short period of time.

The main difficulty with the design, however, was demand characteristics, as respondents tried to give responses in ways that reflect their idea of what responses the researcher wants from them. Despite these inherent disadvantages, it was deemed the most appropriate design for this study since it helped to specify the nature of the given phenomena (social and academic challenges of adolescents) with a description of the situation using a specified population.

## **Study Area**

The research was located in Cape Coast in the Central Region of Ghana. Cape coast being the first capital of the then Gold Coast, has been known as the place where education is held up high. Currently, there are eleven public

senior high schools including six single sex and five mixed schools in the metropolis. Most of the students in the senior high schools are adolescents within the age group of 13 and 19. The Cape Coast Metropolis was ideal for the study because education is important in the metropolis. The researcher sampled five public senior high schools from the 11 senior high schools in the Metropolis.

### **Population**

Bryman (2006) defined population as any set of persons or subjects that possess at least one common characteristic. The population of this study consist of all public senior high school students in Cape Coast Metropolis with their estimated population of about 16, 778 students.

Target Population on the other hand refers to the empirical units such as persons, objects, occurrences and others used for the study. The target population is the group of interest to the researcher. It is the group from whom the researcher would like to generalise the results of the study. The target population consisted of all mixed public senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. According to the GES, Cape Coast Metropolitan Directorate of Education (2016), the target population at the time of this study was 8,462 students. The accessible population was made up of males and females in the selected mixed public senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. These schools were, Academy of Christ the King, Efutu Senior High, Ghana National College, Oguaa Senior High and University Practice Senior High School (GES; Cape Coast Metropolitan Directorate of Education, 2016).

**Table 1: Population Distribution according to School, Gender, and Residential Status**

School	Day		Boarding		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Academy of Christ					
SHS	300	550	358	200	1408
Efutu SHTS.	475	541	275	231	1522
Ghana National Coll.	177	160	857	1643	2837
Oguaa SHTS	377	313	210	254	1154
University Practice					
SHS	547	685	138	171	1541
Total	1876	2249	1838	2499	8462

Source: GES, Cape Coast Metro (2016)

**Table 2: Population Distribution According to Class Level**

School	Form 1		Form 2		Form 3		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Academy of							
Christ SHS	226	292	242	268	179	201	1408
Efutu SHTS.	226	241	298	312	230	215	1522
Ghana Nat. Coll.	303	622	386	647	370	509	2837
Oguaa SHTS	233	137	206	206	225	147	1154
University							
Practice SHS	250	326	220	272	155	318	1541
Total	1238	1618	1352	1705	1159	1390	8462

Source: GES, Cape Coast Metro (2016)

## Sample and Sampling Procedures

A sample is a representative of a population. Purposive sampling was employed to select 5 mixed public schools out of the total 11 public senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Purposive sampling is the procedure which involves intentional selection of a sample based on some criterion. The reason for using purposive sampling was to get males and females as well as day and boarding students who were in the same environment since the instrument for data collection in the study had a section for relationship with the opposite sex. Since purposive sampling aims at sampling information rich respondents, it was believed that the experiences of the students would put them in the right position to provide the responses required in the study.

After purposive sampling, proportional stratified sampling was carried out. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for a population size of about 8,000, the sample size to be used is 367. There are three classes in a Senior High School namely, SHS One, SHS Two and SHS Three. All the three classes were considered for the study.

To get an equivalent proportion of student participants from the schools, Babbie's (2001) formula was used to determine the sample for each school.

The formula is 
$$s = \frac{(n)}{N} \times k$$

Where  $s$  stands for the sample to be selected from a school;

$(n)$  stands for the entire population of the school;

$N$  stands for the size of the target population (8462); and

$K$  stands for the sample size (367).

Hence, for Academy of Christ Senior High School whose student population was given as 1408 students, applying the Babbie's (2001) formula, gave the outcome shown below:

$$\begin{aligned} s &= \frac{(n)}{N} \times k \\ &= \frac{1,408 \times 367}{8,462} \\ &= 61 \text{ (approximately)} \end{aligned}$$

Also, to get an equivalent proportion of student participants from the classes, Babbie's (2001) formula was used to determine the sample for each class level. The formula is  $s = \frac{(n)}{N} \times k$

Where  $s$  stands for the sample to be selected from a class;

$(n)$  stands for the entire population of form one students;

$N$  stands for the entire population of the school; and

$K$  stands for the number of students to be selected from each school.

Hence, for Academy of Christ Senior High School form one class, whose student population was given as 518 students, applying the Barbbie's (2001) formula, gave the outcome shown below:

$$\begin{aligned} s &= \frac{(n)}{N} \times k \\ &= \frac{518 \times 61}{1408} \\ &= 22 \text{ (approximately)} \end{aligned}$$

The researcher divided the entire population for each school by the total number of the target population (8462) and multiplied by the sample size needed (367), to get the proportion for each school and the sample for each level was also determined by the researcher by dividing the total number of students in each level by the sum of all three levels and multiplied by the number of students to be selected from each school. An example was

illustrated earlier. In each school, the students were grouped into strata; day students and boarding students. Thus, the students were put in homogeneous stratas of ‘day’ and ‘boarding’.

After the residential status stratification, the actual respondents for the study were selected via simple random sampling (Lottery Method) to get the actual respondents for each school and class level. Pieces of papers had “Yes” and “No” written on them. Students who picked “Yes” were included for the study and students who picked “No” were not included. In doing this, there was no scientific procedure for gender selection. The students were selected at random using the sample sizes obtained for each strata.

Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents by school and class level.

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by School and Class Level**

School	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	Total
Academy of Christ				
SHS	22	22	17	61
Efutu SHS	20	27	19	66
Ghana National Coll.				
Oguaa SHTS	40	45	38	123
University Practice				
SHS	16	18	16	50
SHS	25	21	21	67
Total	123	133	111	367

Source: Field Data, Acquah (2017)

### **Data Collection Instrument**

The research instrument used for the study was questionnaire summing up to 367. Questionnaire is one of the most commonly used data-collection instrument in survey research. Questionnaire is a formulated series of

questions arranged in a pre-determined order and commonly used in survey research. According to Burns (2000), a proper construction of the questionnaire is essential to its success and generally, the researcher must consider his or her informational needs and the characteristics of the participants. It consisted of three sections namely: Sections A, B and C (Appendix A). Section A comprised general information (demographic data) of the respondents such as class, sex and age, day or boarding and program of study.

Section B contained items requesting respondents to state the extent to which they face certain social challenges. Section C was made up of items requesting respondents to state the extent to which they face some academic challenges. A four-point, Likert-type rating scale was provided for the respondents to indicate the strength of their opinions in Sections B and C as follows: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The scale ratings were assigned weight as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) was 4, Agree (A) was 3, Disagree (D) was 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) was 1.

The highest score possible on any item = 4.0, the case where respondents indicate that they strongly agree with the item. The lowest score possible on any item = 1.0, the case where respondents indicate that they strongly disagree with the item. Hence, the mid-point of these two extreme scores is  $\frac{4-1}{2} = \frac{3}{2}$  or 1.50

In other words, the cut-off point is either  $4.0 - 1.50$  or  $1.0 + 1.50$ , which in either case is 2.50.

This cut-off point (2.50) was used for deciding whether a social or academic challenge was a serious or a mild one. Hence, if respondents scored

2.50 or higher, the challenge was a serious one. However, if the score was below 2.50, then the challenge was assumed to be or mild.

The instrument was pilot-tested in order to check understanding, ambiguity and correct any misunderstandings, which came up due to the framing and construction of the items and also because it was self-developed. The pilot testing was conducted in Cape Coast International School. The reliability of the instrument was established through this means to make sure that the instrument measured what it meant to be measured and also internally consistent within itself.

### **Validity of the Instrument**

Validity refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of a test score entailed by proposed uses of the test (Amedahe & Gyimah, 2013). Validity summarises the results of one's assessment which one interprets and not the instrument or procedure itself.

Content-related evidence and face-validity were used to ensure validity of the instrument. This was achieved by giving the instrument to experts in the Department of Education and Psychology and the Department of Guidance and Counselling at the University of Cape Coast, with knowledge in educational research to do this. Also, a pilot study was conducted with a mixed private senior non-participants high school in the Cape Coast Metropolis. This is because they are a homogenous group of people with many similarities in demographic terms but would still be comprised of unique individuals. This was very effective for determining the validity of the assessment tool.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

Reliability refers to the consistency and exactness with which some trait is measured. Reliability is a group characteristic not an individual one. The type of reliability used was internal consistency method. In doing this, a pilot test was carried out and the reliability was tested using the Cronbach alpha coefficient. The coefficient alpha that was obtained was .72 (Appendix B) indicating a strong reliability of the instrument. The instrument was therefore deemed reliable for the study.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Research ethics refers to the correct rules of conduct necessary when carrying out research. It is the researcher's responsibility to protect participants from detriment and also to assure them of confidentiality. The primary responsibility for the conduct of ethical research lies with the researcher. Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of their research participants is not affected by the research. Research relationships should be characterised, whenever possible, by mutual respect and trust. This study was therefore submitted for ethical clearance and approval was sanctioned by the College of Education Ethical Review Board.

Punch (2009) was of the opinion that researchers should be mindful of ethical issues especially in social research because it is concerned with data about people. Consideration for moral issues and respect for participants is essential in social research. Hence, in this research, several ethical issues were taken into consideration. The researcher addressed all ethical concerns, which include informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality.

The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to consent or decline to engage in the research. The ethical considerations describe the need for participants to understand the aims, objectives and potential harm that such involvement may have on them (Seidman, 2006). Ethical concern also spelt out that they had the right to withdraw even after consent has been given; this was in line with Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) and Mertens (2010), who stated that informed consent arises from the participant's right to freedom. In this study, the purpose of the study was carefully reviewed with each participant before they were involved in the research.

Anonymity of study respondents was also highly taken into consideration in the present study. Oliver (2010) pointed out that anonymity is a vital issue in research ethics because it gives the participants the opportunity to have their identity concealed. In this research, fictitious names were used for identification purposes, which cannot be traced to the participants. Codes were also adopted where necessary to ensure anonymity of information and harm. In order not to unnecessarily invade the privacy of participants, the researcher made prior visits to schools before the data collection commenced. Neither names nor any identifiable information from respondents was taken as a way of ensuring the ethical principle of anonymity in social research. This was to prevent possible victimisation of respondents where certain responses may be viewed as unpalatable to other stakeholders.

On the issue of confidentiality, efforts were made to maintain confidentiality of the responses from the participants. Participants were made aware that their responses would be kept secret, and that no one known to them would have access to the information provided and none of the

respondents' names were to be recorded in the study. All references were duly acknowledged to prevent plagiarism.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data were collected from senior high school students. To achieve this goal, the researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the Head of Department of Guidance and Counselling at the University of Cape Coast, soliciting for the assistance of the Headmasters/Headmistresses of Senior High Schools for the effectiveness of the study. The researcher visited the selected schools to seek permission and arranged for convenient days and time for the administration of the questionnaire. During the administration, the students were briefed on the objectives of the study and the need to respond sincerely to the items. The copies of the completed questionnaire were collected by the researcher after the participants had used 15 minutes to answer administered questionnaires. The researcher gave students who were selected on the basis of day, boarding, male, female, and class levels enough time to give their responses to the questionnaire given to them. The researcher encouraged the students to provide honest responses since the study was for academic purposes and was also going to be useful to them as adolescent students.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

Data obtained from the study was analysed using percentages. Tables made up of frequencies and percentages were constructed from the coded schemes. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent sample t-test and ANOVA) were used in analysing the data. Analyses were done according to each research question. The Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 22.0 was used to aid in the data analysis. Before performing the desired data transformation, the data were

cleaned by running consistency checks on every variable. Corrections were made after verification from the questionnaire and the database was generated.

Research questions one, two and three were analysed using frequencies and percentages. Hypotheses one, two, five and six were analysed using Independent Samples t-test. Hypotheses three, four, seven and eight were analysed using One Way ANOVA.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter described the research methodology that the researcher used to generate data for this study. The chapter started with a detailed description of the research design and study area. The population and the target population were identified; sample and sampling procedures used to select participants were explained. Data collection instrument, validation of the instrument, and reliability of the instruments were also discussed. Finally, ethical consideration, data collection procedures, data processing and analysis were clearly delineated.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Overview

This chapter presents the procedure for analysing data gathered through questionnaires and discussion of the study findings. The purpose of the study is to identify the social and academic challenges of adolescents in Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. To materialise this, Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviation) and Inferential statistics (Independent samples t-test and ANOVA) were deemed appropriate for the analysis. The analysis was done based on the research questions and hypotheses set for the study.

#### Statistical Analysis of Demographic Data

This section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit the personal information of the respondents (SHS students). These demographic data include the respondent's age, sex, level and residential status. The data were presented using pie graphs.







This research question sought to find out the social challenges faced by adolescents. Means and standard deviations were used for the analysis. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Descriptive Analysis of the Social Challenges of Adolescents in Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis (n=367)**

Item number	Social Challenges of Adolescents	Mean	Std. D	Rank
19	I sometimes feel rejected by my friends	3.39	1.13	1 <sup>st</sup>
21	I have fear and concern about the future	3.18	.84	2 <sup>nd</sup>
9	I easily get hurt or offended by others	3.14	.83	3 <sup>rd</sup>
18	I easily get irritated at the least provocation	2.96	.73	4 <sup>th</sup>
17	I feel am not attracted to the opposite sex	2.88	1.17	5 <sup>th</sup>
10	I have difficulty getting along well with others	2.70	.84	6 <sup>th</sup>
20	I prefer to spend less time with my family	2.60	.86	7 <sup>th</sup>
13	I have my parents intervening in my choice of career	2.49	.96	8 <sup>th</sup>
14	I have few friends I relate with	2.47	.86	9 <sup>th</sup>
11	I do not have people I always share my problems with	2.44	.95	10 <sup>th</sup>
15	My friends often intimidate me	2.42	1.06	11 <sup>th</sup>
22	I have a bad temper	2.37	.76	12 <sup>th</sup>
16	I have difficulty keeping my friends	2.35	1.03	13 <sup>th</sup>
7	I always feel embarrassed when I talk about sex or people talk about sex to me	2.19	.90	14 <sup>th</sup>
8	I feel shy	2.19	.80	14 <sup>th</sup>
3	I always disagree with my parents	2.14	.89	16 <sup>th</sup>
12	I sometimes drink alcohol when I get disturbed	1.88	.84	17 <sup>th</sup>
4	My parents do not educate me on trendy social issues	1.85	.81	18 <sup>th</sup>
1	I am afraid of the future	1.77	.82	19 <sup>th</sup>
2	My parents insist on choosing a career for me	1.76	.43	20 <sup>th</sup>
6	I do not get all my basic needs from my parents	1.67	.47	21 <sup>st</sup>
5	My parents always choose my friends for me	1.45	.50	22 <sup>nd</sup>

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017)

Table 4 presents the social challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. It can be seen from the table that only seven of the 22 social challenges (that is 31.8% or nearly one-third) were higher than the cut-off point mean of 2.50; hence, they were assumed to be severe or serious challenges. The remaining 15 of the 22 social challenges (that is 68.2%) were mild or light ones. All means which are higher than the cut-off mean value of 2.50, indicate that adolescents are face with some social challenges that are severe whereas all means which are less than the cut-off mean value of 2.50 indicate that adolescents are faced with some social challenges which are mild.

The social challenge with the highest mean value and by implication, the most severe one was “*I sometimes feel rejected by my friends*”. It had a mean of 3.39 and a standard deviation of 1.13 and was ranked as 1<sup>st</sup> on Table 4. It was followed in 2<sup>nd</sup> place by the social challenge item “*I have fear and concern about the future*” with a mean value of 3.18 and a standard deviation of .84. In the third place was the social challenge item “*I easily get hurt or offended by others*” (Mean= 3.14, SD= .83). It was followed in the 4<sup>th</sup> place by the social challenge item “*I easily get irritated at the least provocation*” (Mean= 2.96, SD= .73). Other social challenges followed as indicated in Table 4.

The mildest social challenge was “*my parents always choose my friends for me*” (Mean= 1.45, SD= .50). It was ranked last as the 22<sup>nd</sup> item. Next to it in the 21<sup>st</sup> position was the social challenge “*I do not get all my basic needs from my parents*” (Mean= 1.67, SD= .47). The social challenge in the 20<sup>th</sup> position was “*My parents insist on choosing a choosing a career for*

me”. (Mean= 1.76, SD= .43). Next to it in the 19<sup>th</sup> position was the social challenge “*I am afraid of the future*” (Mean= 1.77, SD= .82).

The findings of the study reveal that, peer groups serve as powerful reinforcer during adolescence as sources of popularity, status, prestige, and acceptance. Being accepted by peers has important implications for adjustment both during adolescence and into adulthood (Bagwell, Newcomb, & Bukowski, 1998), and being rejected by their peers can have serious negative effects, such as misbehavior, drug abuse, dropping out of school and aggression (Asher & Cole, in APA, 2002). The findings of the study point out clearly that several challenges that adolescents experience fall within the circle of their relationship with their peers. Even though most of these challenges are personal social, they have the tendency of affecting the academic work of the adolescents.

**Research Question 2:** What are the academic challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

This research question sought to identify the academic challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The data was analysed using means and standard deviations. The results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Descriptive Analyses of the Academic Challenges of Adolescents in Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis (n=367)**

Item number	Academic Challenges of Adolescents	Mean	Std. D	Rank
24	I am unable to concentrate when studying	3.88	5.67	1 <sup>st</sup>
39	I find it difficult speaking up in class discussions	3.21	.59	2 <sup>nd</sup>
42	I find my teachers difficult in understanding me	2.92	1.23	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Table 5 Continued

23	I have no idea of the courses I could read in the university	2.86	.85	4 <sup>th</sup>
43	I always forget what I am taught in class	2.83	1.19	5 <sup>th</sup>
32	I miss my classes often	2.77	.92	6 <sup>th</sup>
27	I do not score enough good grades	2.74	1.21	7 <sup>th</sup>
31	I get stressed up very often	2.70	.46	8 <sup>th</sup>
33	I am unable to take notes in class	2.65	.76	9 <sup>th</sup>
40	I do not have a conducive place for my studies	2.60	1.17	10 <sup>th</sup>
38	I do not study effectively during tests and exams	2.60	1.17	10 <sup>th</sup>
25	I get tensed in class	2.50	1.17	12 <sup>th</sup>
26	I get scared writing examination	2.44	.95	13 <sup>th</sup>
35	I fear to sit in front during classes	2.43	.75	14 <sup>th</sup>
28	I have no idea of the cut off points for admission in the university	2.32	.73	15 <sup>th</sup>
44	I always forget what I learn during prep hours	2.28	.74	16 <sup>th</sup>
37	I am slow when it comes to reading my notes	2.28	.74	16 <sup>th</sup>
41	I am unable to prepare well before I go for classes	2.27	1.21	18 <sup>th</sup>
36	I find it difficult spending enough time with my books	2.25	.92	19 <sup>th</sup>
34	I am unable to see my class teacher after class hours	2.21	.59	20 <sup>th</sup>
30	I often get anxious when a teacher enters the class	2.00	.00	21 <sup>st</sup>
29	I am unable to follow well in class	1.83	.38	22 <sup>nd</sup>

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017)

Table 5 presents the academic challenges of adolescents in Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. It can be seen from the table that

twelve of the 22 social challenges (that is 54.5% or more than half) were higher than the cut-off point mean of 2.50; hence, they were assumed to be severe or serious challenges. The remaining ten of the 22 social challenges (that is 45.5%) were mild or light ones. All means which are higher than the cut-off mean value of 2.50, indicate that adolescents are face with some academic challenges that are severe whereas all means which are less than the cut-off mean value of 2.50 indicate that adolescents are faced with some academic challenges which are mild.

The academic challenge with the highest mean value and by implication, the most severe one was “*I am unable to concentrate when studying*”. It had a mean of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 5.67 and was ranked as 1<sup>st</sup> on Table 4. It was followed in 2<sup>nd</sup> place by the academic challenge item “*I find it difficult speaking up in class discussion*” with a mean value of 3.21 and a standard deviation of .587. In the third place was the academic challenge item “*I find my teachers difficult in understanding me*” (Mean= 2.92, SD= 1.23). ). It was followed in the 4<sup>th</sup> place by the academic challenge “*I have no idea of the courses I could read in the University*” (Mean= 2.86, SD= .85). Other academic challenges followed as indicated in Table 5.

The mildest academic challenge was “*I am unable to follow well in class*” (Mean= 1.84, SD= .38). It was ranked last as the 22<sup>nd</sup> item. Next to it in the 21<sup>st</sup> position was the academic challenge “*I often get anxious when a teacher enters the class*” (Mean= 2.00, SD= .00). The academic challenge in the 20<sup>th</sup> position was “*I am unable to see my class teacher after class hours*”. (Mean= 2.21, SD= .59). Next to it in the 19<sup>th</sup> position was the academic

challenge “*I find it difficult spending enough time with my books*” (Mean= 2.25, SD= .92).

Overall, the findings from Table 5 imply that most of the students had challenges with concentration during studies, speaking up in class discussion, teachers not understanding them and knowledge of courses to read in the university. These findings did not come as a surprise. This is because in most cases, adolescents have their minds occupied with several issues and as such may have difficulty concentrating. Again, for most adolescents there is always a struggle with self-esteem and as such, they may struggle speaking up in class during discussions.

In addition, adolescents also have the view that adults do not usually understand them. This could be the reason why the respondents indicated that they found their teachers difficult in understanding them. In terms of knowledge concerning university courses, most schools usually do not organise guidance programmes to educate their students on tertiary education. This finding therefore calls for strengthening the guidance programmes in senior high schools.

The findings from the present is not in isolation, however, it lends to support the work of Moffitt et al. (2011) and Duckworth et al. (2012) who found out that most adolescents face academic challenges and these challenges appear to be one of the main issues that adolescents contend with. Similarly, the findings of the presents study are in consonance with the findings of Thalagola and Rajakpase (2004) which brought to light some academic challenges of students. Their study showed that school adolescents were worried that their academic performance was poor compared to others while a majority rated themselves as average. Others thought their performance to be

better than others. The similarity between the findings of the current study and the findings of the previous studies could be attributed to a general academic challenge facing in-school adolescents, regardless of their location or culture.

**Research Question 3:** What are the sources of help used by adolescents for managing their social and academic challenges?

This research question was meant to identify the sources of help used by adolescents in managing their social and academic challenges. Means and standard deviations were used in analysing the data. The results are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Descriptive Analysis of the Sources of help used by Adolescents for Managing their Social and Academic Challenges (n=367)**

Item number	Sources of Help	Mean	Std. D	Rank
	When I am faced with challenges, I			
46	Seek advice from my teachers	3.25	1.07	1 <sup>st</sup>
47	Speak to my parents	3.05	1.06	2 <sup>nd</sup>
45	Seek advice and help from my peers	2.86	.89	3 <sup>rd</sup>
48	Go to the counsellor in my school to resolve it	2.69	.73	4 <sup>th</sup>
49	Talk to nobody	2.64	1.04	5 <sup>th</sup>
	Mean of means	2.93	.95	

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017)

Table 6 sought to find the sources of help used by adolescents for managing their social and academic challenges. The results show that the adolescences get support about the academic and social challenges from many sources. However, the degree of their support varies. Support from teachers recorded the highest mean and standard deviation (M=3.25, SD= 1.073) showing that most of the adolescents seeks support from their teachers when

in need. Their parents followed this. The mean and standard deviation of (M=3.05, SD=1.063) shows that aside the teachers, the adolescent seek some support from their parents. The findings also revealed that when adolescents are faced with challenges, just a few of them prefer not to talk to anybody about it. The mean and standard deviation (M=2.64, SD= 1.034) shows that.

The findings imply that overall, the respondents received support from teachers the most. This could be because students in senior high schools (particularly boarders) spend most of their time with teachers and so teachers are their most immediate point of call in times of difficulties and challenges. Aside teachers, students also received support from parents. Even though students received support from teachers, there are some issues that students might feel could be best handled by their parents. The findings also indicate that there are situations that students might feel could be best discussed among peers. From the findings it can also be realized that seeking help from counsellors was not given priority by most students. This could signal that guidance and counselling coordinators in senior high schools should put in effort to make counselling easily accessible for students.

The findings of the present studies agree with previous studies that even though adolescents are faced with academic and social challenges in school, however they have their sources of support. For example, the study of Wills and DePaulo (1991) as well as Rule and Gandy (1994) made some revelations. They all found that students had a strong preference for close friends or relatives over counsellors as sources of help in times of challenges. The implication is that adolescents prefer to talk to their peers more than seeking help from counsellors. Further, the present findings are in agreement with the findings of Duncan, Duncan, and Strycker (2005) that parents, family

members (brothers, uncles and grandparents), friends and teachers are the main sources of support for adolescents. The similarity among the findings as well as the findings of the current study could be attributed to the belief that seeking help from persons you know is more comfortable than from people perceived to be strangers. As a result, a student may be more comfortable discussing a personal issue with a family member or friend and even teacher than with a professional counsellor.

### Research Hypothesis 1

H<sub>0</sub> 1: There is no significant difference in adolescents’ social challenges on the basis of gender.

The study sought to find out the differences in students social challenges with respect to their gender. The independent sample t-test was deemed appropriate. The results are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: Result of t-test Analysis Comparing Adolescents’ Social**

**Challenges on the Basis of Gender**

Gender	N	Mean	Std. D	df	t-value	Sig
Male	197	50.9	4.82	374	2.58*	0.01
Female	170	58.75	14.73			

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017) \* Significant,  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Table 7 presents results of t-test analysis comparing adolescents’ Social Challenges on the basis of gender. From the Table 7, the t- test is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which stated, that “there is no significant difference in students’ social challenges on the basis of gender” was therefore rejected;  $t (df = 374) = 2.58, p < .05$ . Therefore, the alternate hypothesis that “there is significant difference in students’ social challenges on the basis of gender” was upheld. This implies that there was

significant difference between males and females with respect to the social challenges faced. Hence, females had a higher mean value of social challenges than males in the selected schools.

The findings confirm popular opinion that females usually have more personal-social challenges than males. In most societies, adolescent girls mostly have to deal with self-esteem issues, physical and physiological changes in their body (menstruation) and opposite sex relationships more than boys. These issues could be responsible for the differences in the social challenges of adolescent boys and girls. Again, the differences in gender socialization in society could be responsible for the differences in the social challenges of male and female students.

The finding of the present study confirms the findings of several studies. For instance, Bolognini et al. (1996) and Chubb, Fertman, and Ross (1997) indicated that boys tend to have higher self-esteem than girls. This implies that females usually struggle with self-esteem issues than males. The findings of the current study again support the report of the APA (2002) that because of differences in how boys and girls are socialized in our society, male and female adolescents may differ in their specific needs for help. For instance, some adolescent girls may need help learning to become more assertive while adolescent boys may need help becoming more cooperative instead of competitive (Pollack & Shuster, 2000). All these findings point to the fact that male and female adolescents vary in their social challenges.

## Research Hypothesis 2

H<sub>0</sub>2: There is no significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of gender.

The study sought to find out the differences in students' academic challenges with respect to their gender. The independent sample t-test was deemed appropriate for the analysis. The results are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8: Result of t-test Analysis Comparing Adolescents' Academic Challenges on the Basis of Gender**

Gender	N	Mean	Std. D	df	t-value	Sig
Male	206	51.9	5.82	374	3.59*	.000
Female	170	57.75	13.73			

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017) \* Significant,  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Table 8 presents the t- test analysis of the dependent and independent variables of the study (Gender and Academic Challenge respectively). From Table 8, the results of males and females with regards to their perception of academic challenges are significant at 0.05 level of confidence interval. The null hypothesis, which stated that, “there is no significant difference in students' academic challenges on the basis of gender” was therefore rejected;  $t(df = 374) = 3.59, p < .05$ . Therefore, the alternative hypothesis that “there is significant difference in students' academic challenges on the basis of gender” was upheld. This implies that there was significance difference between males and females with respect to their academic challenges faced. The conclusion is therefore that females have higher academic challenges than males.

Academically, it is popular opinion in Ghana that women have had more challenges than men. It is in this sense that most tertiary institutions have different cut-off points for males and females during admission processes. In

most of these instances, the cut-off for males is always higher than females reinforcing the idea that females may have more academic challenges than males. This was confirmed in the current study.

In consonance with the present study, French (1990) found out that gender differences existed in the academic challenges of students. However, the findings of the current study contradicted that findings of Aderi, Jdaitawi, Ishak and Jdaitawi (2013) that no differences between male and females existed on academic challenges scale. Further, the findings of the present study also contrasted the findings of Zettergren (2003) that there was no significant gender difference in the academic challenges of students. From these findings, it can be inferred that studies conducted on the difference between males and females in terms of academic challenges have shown inconsistent results.

### Research Hypothesis Three

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference in adolescents’ social challenges on the basis of their class level.

The study sought to find out the differences between the class levels with regards to the social challenges they face in school. One- way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The results are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9: Test of Homogeneity of Variances**

Class levels- Social Challenges			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.261	3	364	.106

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017) \*\* Significant,  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Table shows the Significance value (Sig) for Levene' test is 0.106 which is greater than the alpha or critical value of  $p= 0.05$  shows that the assumption of homogeneity has not been violated for this sample that is [ $F (3, 373) = 2.261, p= .106$  at the .05 alpha level] hence, the **Robust Test of Equality of Means** was also conducted in the analysis.

**Table 10: Robust Tests of Equality of Means**

Class Levels – Social Challenges				
	Statistic <sup>a</sup>	df1	df2	Sig.
Welch	1.799	3	237.46	.000
Brown-Forsythe	1.853	3	359.00	.000

a. Asymptotically F distributed. \*\* Significant,  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Table 10 shows the result of the Robust Tests of Equality of Means. This test was used because the assumption of the homogeneity of variances had not been violated sample [ $F (3, 364) = 2.261, p= .106$  at the .05 alpha level]. In this test, the Welch statistic or the Brown-Forsythe statistic for the equality of group variances based on performing an ANOVA on a transformation of the response variable were used to check the significance level (Sig). The Welch statistic or the Brown-Forsythe statistic is the F statistic resulting from an ordinary one-way analysis of variance on the basis that the result is significant. That is  $F (3, 237.464) = 1.799, p> .000$  at the .05 alpha level. Hence One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to find out whether they were statistically significant differences among the class level under investigation.

**Table 11: Summary of ANOVA results Comparing respondents’ Social Challenges on the Basis of Class Level**

Class Levels –Social Challenges					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	84.129	2	42.065	1.841	.160
Within Groups	8524.509	364	22.854		
Total	8608.638	366			

Source: Field Survey, (Acquah 2017)

Table 11 presents the results of the ANOVA test. The overall *F* ratio for the One-way ANOVA is not significant at the Sig value of  $p=0.05$ . It is evident from the test that the *F*-ratio (1.841) is not significant ( $p = .160$ ) at the .05 alpha level. That is  $f(366 \text{ df}) = 1.841, p > .05$ . This implies that there was no significant difference among the mean scores in terms of the class levels with regards to their social challenges. This therefore implies that the null hypothesis which stated as “there is no significant difference in students’ social challenges on the basis of their class level” was accepted. Therefore, the null hypothesis was upheld and the alternate hypothesis that “there is significant difference in students’ social challenges on the basis of their class level” was rejected. This confirmed the fact there is no difference among the three classes (Form 1, 2 & 3) with respect to their social challenges on campus.

The findings imply that regardless of the class level of students, their social challenges remain the same. This finding could be because for most of the students in senior high schools, the social challenges do not vary as they

go up in class level. They all have to deal with self-esteem issues, opposite-sex relationships and other personal difficulties.

The current study is in support with the study of Trei (2006) who concluded from the findings of Miles and Stipek that students in early years of high schools were rated as relatively aggressive just as those in the higher grades. Thus, personal social challenges did not vary across different grade levels. This indicates that there is no difference in social challenges with regards to the social challenges faced by adolescents at the SHS level in terms of their class.

#### Research Hypothesis Four

H<sub>04</sub> There is no significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of their class level.

The study sought to find out the differences between the class levels with regards to their academic challenges. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used. The results are presented in Table 12.

**Table 12: Test of Homogeneity of Variances**

Class levels- Academic Challenges			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.177	3	364	.115

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017) \* Significant,  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

From Table 12, the Significance value (Sig) for Levene' test is 0.115 which is greater than the alpha or critical value of  $p = 0.05$  shows that the assumption of homogeneity has not been violated for this sample that is [ $F(3, 364) = 2.177, p = .115$  at the .05 alpha level] hence, the **Robust Test of Equality of Means** was also conducted in the analysis.

**Table 13: Robust Tests of Equality of Means**

Class Levels – Academic Challenges				
	Statistic <sup>a</sup>	df1	df2	Sig.
Welch	.099	3	233.747	.003
Brown-Forsythe	.094	3	344.907	.004

a. Asymptotically F distributed. \* Significant,  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Table 13 shows the result of the Robust Tests of Equality of Means. This test was used because the assumption of the homogeneity of variances had not been violated sample [ $F(3, 364) = 2.177, p = .115$  at the .05 alpha level]. In this test, the Welch statistic or the Brown-Forsythe statistic for the equality of group variances based on performing an ANOVA on a transformation of the response variable were used to check the significance level (Sig). The Welch statistic or the Brown-Forsythe statistic is the F statistic resulting from an ordinary one-way analysis of variance on the basis that the result is significant. That is  $F(3, 233.747) = 0.099, p > .003$  at the .05 alpha level. Hence One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to find out whether they were statistically significant differences among the class level under investigation.

**Table 14: Summary of ANOVA results Comparing Respondents’ Academic Challenges on the Basis of Class Levels.**

Class Levels – Academic Challenges					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	31.237	2	15.618	.095	.103
Within Groups	61116.040	364	163.850		
Total	61147.277	366			

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017)

Table 14 presents the results of the ANOVA test. The overall  $F$  ratio for the One-way ANOVA is not significant at the Sig value of  $p = 0.05$ . It is evident from the test that the  $F$ -ratio (.095) is not significant ( $p > .103$ ) at the .05 alpha level. The null hypothesis which stated that “there is no significant difference in students’ academic challenges on the basis of their class level” was accepted. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis that “there is significant difference in students’ academic challenges on the basis of their class level” was not accepted. Hence, there was no significant difference among the mean scores of the class levels with regards to their academic challenges.

This finding appeared a little surprising since students in different class levels are expected to encounter different academic challenges. However, the finding could be explained to be due to the fact that the study was not focused on specific difficulties in terms of subject content but rather general academic challenges. As such, in spite of the differences in class levels, students were academically challenged in the same way.

The findings of the present study confirm the findings of Ludwig (2007) that the academic challenges of students may not be all that different in magnitude in terms of grade level. In a similar vein, the findings of the current study support the conclusion of Miles and Stipek in Trei (2006) that no difference existed in the academic challenges of students in terms of grade level of adolescents. Contrary to these, the present study contradicts the findings of McIntosh et al. (2008) that differences existed in the academic work of students in different grades and insisted that there is a great need to assess and support the academic needs of students in high school. This contradiction could be explained to be due to differences in the instrument that was used in the measurement of academic challenges.

### Research Hypothesis Five

H<sub>05</sub>: There is no significant difference in adolescents’ social challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students.

This hypothesis sought to identify the difference in the social challenges of students on the basis of their residential status (day or boarding). An Independent samples t-test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 15.

**Table 15: Result of t-test Analysis Comparing Adolescents’ Social Challenges on the Basis of Residential Status**

Residenti al Status	N	Mean	Std. D	df	t-value	Sig
Day	106	47.00	5.075	269	-29.7*	.000
Boarder	261	54.37	4.074			

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017) \* Significant,  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Table 15 presents the results of t- test analysis of the independent and dependent variables of the study (Residential Status and Social Challenges respectively). From Table 15, the day students recorded a mean and standard deviation of (M=47.00, SD= 5.075) and boarders also recorded the mean and standard deviation (M=54.37, SD=4.074). From the mean comparison, it can be concluded that the boarders are identified as having higher social challenge than day students.

The t-test is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which stated that “there is no significant difference in students’ social challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students” was rejected;  $t (df =269) = -29.7, p < .05$ . Therefore, the alternate hypothesis that “there is statistically significant difference in students’ social

challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students” was upheld. This implies that there was significance difference between boarding students and day students with respect to their social challenges faced. The conclusion is therefore that boarding students have higher social challenges than day students.

In senior high schools, boarding students are likely to have more social challenges than day students because of several reasons. For instance, boarding students have to manage the difficulty of adapting to a new environment as well as new friends and roommates. Again, the absence of the family support system for boarders can make them prone to more social challenges.

The findings in the current study confirm the findings of Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) that students who are residents on school campuses are faced with more social challenges than students who reside outside the school campus. Similarly, the findings of the present study are in consonance with the findings of Tinto (1993) that student residents are more vulnerable to social challenges than non-residents. The similarity between the findings of the current study and the previous studies could be attributed to the fact that living on school campus or outside school campus presents students with different situations and circumstances. Therefore, the social challenges of these two categories of students are likely to be different.

### **Research Hypothesis Six**

H<sub>06</sub>: There is no significant difference in adolescents’ academic challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students.

This hypothesis was meant to find out the difference in adolescents academic challenges on the basis of their residential status. An independent samples t-test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 16.

**Table 16: Result of t-test Analysis Comparing Adolescents’ Academic Challenges on the Basis of Residential Status**

Residential Status	N	Mean	Std. D	df	t-value	Sig
Day	106	49.00	5.077	269	-12.4*	.000
Boarder	261	59.56	13.99			

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017) \* Significant,  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Table 16 presents the results of t- test analysis of the independent and dependent variables of the study (residential status and academic challenges respectively). From Table 16, the t-test is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which stated that “there is no significant difference in students’ social challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students” was rejected;  $t (df =269) = -12.4, p < .05$ . Therefore, the alternate hypothesis that “there is significant difference in students’ academic challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students” was upheld. This implies that the boarding students are identified as having higher academic challenges than day students.

A difference was observed in the academic challenges of boarding students and day students with boarding students facing higher academic challenges than day students. This finding could be attributed to the fact that for boarding students, they are responsible for their own caretaking and so sometimes managing academic work and other personal activities might present a challenge to them. Again, the findings could be due to the fact that

during prep hours, students are not mostly monitored and supervised by teachers so end up misusing the hours of study for other unimportant things unlike the day students who get constant monitoring from parents to study effectively.

The finding in the present study is in support of the finding of Flowers (2004) that students living in campus residential settings had more academic challenges than students living off-campus housing. In a similar vein, the finding confirms the finding of Nicpon et al. (2007) and De Araujo and Murray (2010). They all pointed out that students residing on school campus are faced with more academic challenges than students residing outside school campus.

In contrast, the finding of the current study disagrees with the findings of Pascarella et al. (1994) and Turley and Wodtke (2010). They indicated that students living on campus coped better academically than the students outside campus. Even though these studies observed a difference in the academic challenges of students residing on school campus and those residing outside school campus, the direction of the difference was not the same as the current study. Thus, students residing outside school campus faced academic challenges than students residing on school campus.

### **Research Hypothesis Seven**

H<sub>0</sub>7: There is no significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of ages.

This hypothesis sought to identify the difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of their ages. An independent samples t-test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 17.

**Table 17: Result of t-test Analysis Comparing Adolescents’ Social Challenges on the basis of Ages**

Ages	N	Mean	Std. D	df	t-value	Sig
13-15	119	57.49	2.22	373	24.7*	.000
16-19	248	49.93	3.63			

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017) \* Significant,  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Table 17 presents the results of t- test analysis of the dependent and independent variables of the study (adolescents’ social challenges and ages respectively). From Table 17, the t-test is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which stated that “there is no significant difference in students’ social challenges on the basis of age” was rejected;  $t(df = 373) = 24.7, p < .05$ . Therefore, the alternate hypothesis that “there is significant difference in students’ social challenges on the basis of age” was upheld. This implies that the students between the ages of 13-15 were identified as having higher social challenge than students within 16-19.

In terms of age, students within the ages of 13 to 15 are in their early adolescence. As such, they might have more social struggles than students in their late adolescence. This could be the reason why the study found a significant difference in the social challenges of students on the basis of their ages.

The findings of the present study support the findings of Grebennikov and Skaines (2009) that age was an important factor in student’s challenges and successful adjustment socially. This implied that age difference existed in the social challenges of students. On the other hand, the findings of the current study contradicted the findings of Aderi et al. (2013) that no differences existed in the social challenges of students on the basis of their ages. This

contradiction could be attributed to differences in the characteristics of the sample in the present study and that of Aderi et al. (2013).

**Research Hypothesis Eight**

H<sub>08</sub>: There is no significant difference in students’ academic challenges on the basis of ages.

This hypothesis sought to establish the difference in the academic challenges of students on the basis of their ages. An independent samples t-test was conducted. The results have been presented in Table 18.

**Table18: Result of t-test Analysis Comparing Adolescents’ Academic Challenges on the basis of Ages**

Ages	N	Mean	Std. D	df	t-value	Sig
13-15	119	70.76	5.410	356	26.6*	.000
16-19	248	60.10	9.510			

Source: Field Survey, Acquah (2017) \* Significant, p < .05 (2-tailed)

Table 18 presents the results of t- test analysis of the dependent and independent variables of the study (adolescents’ academic challenges and age respectively). From Table 18, the t-test is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which stated that “there is no significant difference in students’ perception of academic challenges on the basis of ages” was therefore rejected;  $t (df = 356) = 26.6, p < .05$ . Therefore, the alternate hypothesis that “there is significant difference in students’ social challenges on the basis of ages” was upheld. This implies that students between the ages of 13-15 were identified as having higher academic challenge than those within 16-19.

In senior high schools, students in their early adolescence are likely to struggle academically because they are considerably young than their

counterparts in late adolescence. In this regard, the finding that there was age difference in the academic challenges of students on the basis of their ages is understandable. The findings of the current study support the findings of Aderi et al. (2013) that significant differences between age groups on academic challenges existed. The similarity between the findings of the current study and that of Aderi et al. implies that age has a bearing on the academic challenges of students.

### **Chapter Summary**

A sample of 367 students was involved in the study. The study found that adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis faced social challenges such as rejected by friends, fear and concern about the future and easily getting hurt or offended by others. The study also showed that adolescents in Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis faced academic challenges such as inability to concentrate, difficulty speaking up in class discussions and lack of knowledge on university courses.

Further, the study showed that adolescents sought for help mostly from their teachers, their parents and peers. It was also found that there were significant differences between male and female senior high school students in the Cape Coast Metropolis when it comes to social challenges. The study revealed again that, there was a significant difference between male and female senior high school students in the Cape Coast Metropolis in their academic challenges.

In addition, there was no significant difference existing between adolescents of different levels in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis in their social challenges. There was also no significant difference in the academic challenges of students on the basis of their class level. The

findings of the study revealed further that there was a significant difference in the social challenges of students on the basis of whether they are boarding or day students. Similarly, there was a significant difference in the academic challenges of students on the basis of whether they are boarding or day students.

Moreover, there was a significant difference in the social challenges of the respondents on the basis of their age groups. The study showed also that there was a significant difference in the academic challenges of the students on the basis of their age groups.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Overview of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify the social and academic challenges faced by adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis, in the Central Region of Ghana. The study aims at finding out the social and academic challenges that these adolescents in senior high schools face.

The study was guided by the following research questions and hypotheses:

#### Research Questions:

1. What are the social challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis?
2. What are the academic challenges of adolescents in senior high school in the Cape Coast Metropolis?
3. What are the sources of help used by adolescents for managing their social and academic challenges?

#### Hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of gender.
3. There is no significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of their class level.
4. There is no significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of their class level.

5. There is no significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students.
6. There is no significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students.
7. There is no significant difference in adolescents' social challenges on the basis of ages.
8. There is no significant difference in adolescents' academic challenges on the basis of ages.

The study, which was a descriptive survey, was made up of 367 respondents selected from five public senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis namely Ghana National College, Efutu Senior High School, Oguaa Senior and Technical School, Academy of Christ the King School and the University Practice Senior high school.

### **Summary of Findings**

The first research question for the study identified the social challenges of Adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The findings of the study showed that adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis faced social challenges. The results indicated that the major challenges that adolescents in senior high schools were faced with included the following: *“I sometimes feel rejected by my friends”*, *“I have fear and concern about the future”*, *“I easily get hurt or offended by others”*, *“I feel am not attracted to the opposite sex”*, and *“my friends often intimidate me”*, among others.

The second research question for the study identified the academic challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The findings of the study showed that adolescents in Senior High Schools in

the Cape Coast Metropolis faced academic challenges. The major academic challenges that these adolescents in senior high schools faced included the following: *“I am unable to concentrate when studying”*, *“I find it difficult speaking up in class discussions”*, *“I find my teacher difficult in understanding me”*, and *“I have no idea of the course I could read in the university”*, among others.

Research question three was to identify the sources of help for adolescent students facing social and academic challenges. From the results, it was evident that adolescents sought for help mostly from their teachers first of all, then from their parents second. Peers and Counsellors followed in third and fourth places respectively. Talking to nobody was the least used source of help. They preferred to seek help from their teachers first probably when it came to matters of schoolwork, academics and social life. However, they preferred to speak to their parents probably when it comes to all issues. Seeking advice and help from their peers was the third option when they were faced with challenges. They preferred to speak to their peers probably when it came to matters of relationship. Going to their school counsellor to resolve it was the fourth option. Though counselors are supposed to be the professional helpers, they were they fourth option adolescents in senior high schools preferred to seek help from. Talking to nobody was their last alternative when they are faced with crises and challenges.

The first hypothesis compared the social challenges of adolescents in senior high school on the basis of gender. The findings of the study revealed that, there were significant differences between male and female senior high school students in the Cape Coast Metropolis when it comes to social challenges. It was evident that females had higher social challenges than males

in the selected schools where the study was conducted. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the respective alternate hypotheses that there was a significant difference in students' social challenges on the basis of gender.

The second hypothesis compared the academic challenges of adolescents in senior high school on the basis of gender. The findings of the study revealed that, there was a significant difference between male and female senior high school students in the Cape Coast Metropolis in their academic challenges. It was shown that females had higher academic challenges and higher social challenges than males in the selected schools where the study was conducted. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternate hypotheses that there was a significant difference in students' academic challenges on the basis of gender.

The third hypothesis compared the social challenges of adolescents in senior high school on the basis of their class level. The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant difference existing between adolescents of different levels in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis in their social challenges. The null hypothesis was accepted that there was no significant difference in students' social challenges on the basis of class level.

The fourth hypothesis compared the academic challenges of adolescents in senior high school on the basis of their class level. The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant difference in the academic challenges of students on the basis of their class level. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted.

The fifth hypothesis compared the social challenges of adolescents in senior high schools on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day

students. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant difference in the social challenges of students on the basis of whether they are boarding or day students. It was evident that boarding students faced social challenges more than day students. Thus, the fifth null hypotheses was rejected in favour of the respective alternate hypothesis that there was a significant differences in students' social challenges on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students.

The sixth null hypothesis compared the academic challenges of adolescents in senior high schools on the basis of whether they are boarding students or day students. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the academic challenges of students on the basis of whether they are boarding or day students. Boarding students faced more academic challenges compared with the day students. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The seventh hypothesis compared the social challenges of adolescents in senior high schools on the basis of their age. The findings showed that there was a significant difference in the social challenges of the respondents on the basis of their age groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternate hypotheses that there was a significant difference in students' social challenges on the basis of their age groups.

The eighth hypothesis compared the academic challenges of adolescents in senior high schools on the basis of their age groups. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant difference in the academic challenges of the students on the basis of their age groups. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected in favour of the alternate hypothesis.

## Conclusions

The study sought to find out academic and social challenges of adolescents in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. In general, it can be concluded that adolescent students in senior high schools encounter several social and academic challenges. Specifically, the following conclusions are drawn from the findings of the study:

1. The main social challenges encountered by students in senior high schools include *“feeling of being rejected by friends”, “having fear and concern about the future”, “easily getting hurt or offended by others”, “easily getting irritated at the least provocation” and “didn’t feel attracted to the opposite sex”*. From these findings, it can be concluded that most of the social challenges that adolescent students in senior high schools encounter has to do with their relationship with other people. This means interpersonal relationships present a major social challenge for adolescents.
2. The findings of the study showed that the main academic challenges faced by students included *“unable to concentrate when studying”, “had difficulties speaking up in class discussions”, and “found their teachers difficult in understanding them”*. From these findings, it can be concluded that classroom concentrations and interactions in the classroom present academic challenges to students.
3. The study revealed that adolescents sought help mostly from their teachers, parents and peers and counsellors in that order. From the findings, it can be concluded that students preferred to receive help from more informal sources or individuals they knew personally rather than from helping professionals like counsellors.

4. In terms of social challenges, it can be concluded from the findings of the study that females face more challenges than males. This means females more prone to several social difficulties than males.
5. Academically, it can be concluded from the findings that females are faced with more challenges than males. Thus, males have an ease managing academic difficulties than females.
6. It is again concluded from the findings of the study that residential status (day or boarding) affects students' social challenges. Specifically, students who reside on school campuses are more vulnerable to social challenges than their counterparts who reside outside school campus.
7. Further, it is concluded that the academic challenges of students vary depending on their residential status. Students who are boarders face more academic challenges than day students.
8. The social challenges of students in senior high schools do not vary depending on the class levels of the students. Therefore, students experience the same social challenges regardless of their class levels.
9. It is concluded from the findings that students of different class levels are likely to experience the same academic challenges. Thus, the class level of students does not cause variations in the academic challenges experienced by the students.
10. It can be concluded from the findings that students vary in the social challenges that they experience on the basis of their ages. Therefore, students of different ages do not face the same social challenges, with younger adolescents facing more social challenges than older adolescents.

11. Finally, it can be concluded from the findings of the study that students vary in their academic challenges on the basis of their age groups. More specifically, younger students are likely to have more academic challenges than their older counterparts.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been made based on the findings and conclusions drawn.

1. Counsellors should be more sensitised about the social challenges of students, most especially in terms of interpersonal relationships since the study showed that students faced more of such issues. The counsellors will be in a position to help students more.
2. Counsellors should also focus on the academic challenges of students especially in terms of how students can concentrate and participate in class.
3. Teachers should receive guidance training so that they can be able to provide support to students since they are the people that students prefer to seek help from the most. The training received can make teachers more proactive when it comes to the social and academic challenges of the students. Teachers can guide students in their choice of career as well as the respective universities and programs they should read in the University
4. Counsellors in schools should not ignore the place of gender in planning guidance programmes for their students.
5. Housemasters and housemistresses in school have a big role to play because the study revealed students in the boarding house are faced with social and academic challenges. These individuals should take it

upon themselves to relate to students as parents child since they serve as their parents in school. This will make students feel free when approaching housemasters and housemistresses should they encounter any difficulty while in school.

6. Counsellors and school authorities should not discriminate in guidance programmes on the basis of the class levels of students.
7. Counsellors and school authorities should organise guidance programmes that are suitable to help meet the challenges of students according to their different ages. This will make guidance programmes more suitable for students of different ages.

### **Implications for Counselling**

1. Counsellors and school guidance coordinators must recognise that though adolescents have their individual differences, they all encounter challenges in their school life and social life. The study showed that adolescents in senior high schools face challenges, one way or the other, in their academics as well as in their social life so counsellors must be ready at each point in time to assist them with their challenges.
2. The present findings of the study revealed that females experience more social challenges than males. Females are likely to feel shy to seek advice from counsellors and guidance coordinators. Counsellors should organize talk shows and programmes for the female students so that they can feel free to express themselves and their ideas on some of the challenges they face.
3. Counsellors should avail themselves to students by creating a warm, congenial and friendly environment to make it easier for students to seek help from them. Counsellors can do this by visiting classes when

they have free periods in order to have group counselling sessions with them so they can be able to identify students who have challenges and meet them later for individual or group counselling sessions deal with them individually.

4. Counsellors should also organize relationship talk and seminars for these students because it is at this stage that they form romantic relationships with the opposite sex.
5. In academics, the counsellors should give information to students on topics such as study habits and skills for learning. The findings of this study revealed that the first year students face more academic challenges, followed by the second year students, then to the final year students. If counsellors emphasize on the acquisition of these skills strategies from the time students are admitted to school, they will have no difficulty in their academic as they go through their studies in school.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

On the basis of the current study and the findings emanating from it, the following suggestions are made for further studies:

1. The effect of adolescents' financial and socio-economic statuses on their social and academic challenges could be the focus of a future study.
2. The study can be extended to cover junior high school adolescents' social and academic challenges and the results compared with those of their senior high school counterparts.
3. The study can also be replicated in different districts and regions in Ghana to make the findings more comprehensive and all-embracing.

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## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A**

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**

**Questionnaire to Ascertain Social and Academic Challenges of  
Adolescents in Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis**

**INSTRUCTION:** This questionnaire is designed to gather data on social and academic challenges faced by adolescents in Senior High Schools in Cape Coast Metropolis. The data so gathered will be used for statistical purposes only and will be treated with strict confidentiality. This is why your name is not required. Please supply information to every item on the questionnaire, as it is true of you.

**Section A: Personal Data**

In each of the items in 1 to 4 please tick (✓) the option that applies to you:

1. **Class:** SHS 1 ( ); SHS 2 ( ); SHS 3 ( )
2. **Age:** 13 – 15 ( ); 16 – 18 ( ); 19 and above ( );
4. **Gender:** Male ( ); Female ( )
5. **Residential Status** Day student ( ); Boarder ( )

Please react to each of the following statements by ticking (✓) the column corresponding to the option that is most true of you among the following. Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

**Section B: Social Challenges faced by adolescents**

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
1	I am afraid of the future				
2	My parents insist on choosing a career for me				
3	I always disagree with my parents				
4	My parents do not educate me on trendy social issues				
5	My parents always choose my friends for me				
6	I do not get all my basic needs from my parents				
7	I always feel embarrassed when I talk about sex or people talk about sex to me				
8	I feel shy				
9	I easily get hurt or offended by others				
10	I have difficulty getting along well with others				
11	I do not have people I always share my problems with				
12	I sometimes drink alcohol when I get disturbed				
13	I have my parents intervening in my choice of career				
14	I have few friends I relate with				
15	My friends often intimidate me				
16	I have difficulty keeping my friends				
17	I feel am not attracted to the opposite sex				
18	I easily get irritated at the least provocation				
19	I sometimes feel rejected by my friends				
20	I prefer to spend less time with my family				
21	I have fear and concern about the future				
22	I have a bad temper				

**Section C: Academic Challenges faced by adolescents**

	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
23	I have no idea of the courses I could read in the university				
24	I am unable to concentrate when studying				
25	I get tensed in class				
26	I get scared writing examination				
27	I do not score enough good grades				
28	I have no idea of the cut off points for admission in the university				
29	I am unable to follow well in class				
30	I often get anxious when a teacher enters the class				
31	I get stressed up very often				
32	I miss my classes often				
33	I am unable to take notes in class				
34	I am unable to see my class teacher after class hours				
35	I fear to sit in front during classes				
36	I find it difficult spending enough time with my books				
37	I am slow when it comes to reading my notes				
38	I do not study effectively during tests and exams				
39	I find it difficult speaking up in class discussions				
40	I do not have a conducive place for my studies				
41	I am unable to prepare well before I go for classes				
42	I find my teachers difficult in understanding me				
43	I always forget what I am taught in class				
44	I always forget what I learn during prep hours				

**Sources of Help**

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
	When I am faced with challenges, I;				
45	seek advice and help from my peers				
46	seek advice from my teachers				
47	speak to my parents				
48	go to the counsellor in my school to resolve it				
49	talk to nobody				

## APPENDIX B

### Reliability Coefficients for Pupils Questionnaire

#### Reliability Statistics

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Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.726	53

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APPENDIX C

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES  
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Telephone: 0332091854  
Email: [dgc@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:dgc@ucc.edu.gh)



UNIVERSITY POSTOFFICE  
CAPE COAST, GHANA

Our Ref :

Your Ref:

26 / 09 / 2016

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION  
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

We introduce to you Mr. /Mrs./ Miss. PHILOMINA ADOMPA ADOVAH..., A student from the Department of Guidance and Counselling , University of Cape Coast. He/She is pursuing PhD/M.Phil in Guidance and Counselling.

As part of his/her requirement, he /she is expected to work on a thesis titled:

SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC CHALLENGES OF  
ADOLESCENTS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN  
THE CAPE COAST METROPOLIS

He/She has decided to carry out his/her study at your institution/establishment for the project.

We would be most grateful if you could provide him/her the necessary assistance for the study. Any information provided will be treated as confidential.

Thank you.

Dr. Bakari Yusuf Dramanu  
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Dr. Bakari Yusuf Dramanu

APPENDIX D

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES  
**ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD**



UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE  
CAPE COAST, GHANA

Our Ref: CES-ERB/ucc.edu/17/8

Your Ref: .....

Date: 10.03.17

Chairman, CES-ERB  
Prof. J. A. Omotosho  
jomotosho@ucc.edu.gh  
0243784739

Vice-Chairman, CES-ERB  
Prof. K. Edjah  
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0244742357

Secretary, CES-ERB  
Dr. (Mrs.) L. D. Forde  
lforde@ucc.edu.gh  
0244786680

Dear Sir/Madam,

**ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH  
STUDY**

The bearer, Ms. Philomena Adomaa Acquah..... Reg. No. ED/6CP/15/0005 is an M.Phil /Ph.D student in the Department of Guidance and Counselling..... College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. He/She wishes to undertake a research study on the topic Social and academic challenges of adolescents in senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis.....

The Ethical Review Board (ERB) of the College of Education Studies (CES) has assessed the proposal submitted by the bearer. The said proposal satisfies the College's ethical requirements for the conduct of the study.

In view of the above, the researcher has been cleared and given approval to commence his/her study. The ERB would be grateful if you would give him/her the necessary assistance that may be needed to facilitate the conduct of the said research.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. (Mrs.) Linda Dzama Forde  
(Secretary, CES-ERB)