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Males, females, parenting styles, and academic performance of secondary school students in Ekiti state Nigeria: an empirical investigation

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ABSTRACT

Owing to the poor academic performances of students in Secondary Schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria, the study examined gender differences and the influence of parenting styles on the academic performances of secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. A sample of 116 participants comprising of 62 males and 54 females with ages ranging from 13 to 16 years and a mean age of 15.2 years was drawn from among the students of Christ School, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. The 20 items Parental Care Scale developed by Baumrind (1971) to measure what children perceive as the styles or approaches that their parents dominantly use in taking care of them was administered on the students and it was found out that parenting style influences children's academic performances, with authoritative parenting style being most influential [$t(113) = 20.95, p < .01$]. No significant difference was found in the academic performances of males and females owing to differing parental styles. Findings were therefore discussed in light of available literature and recommendations were made.

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Introduction

Youths of today will invariably be leaders of tomorrow. And a healthy and virile nation is hinged on the human capital development of the nation (Krueger and Lindahn, 2001). This is a function of the academic achievement of people in such a nation. Awopegba (2002) maintained that human capital formation transcends mere acquisition of intellectual ability through formal education system but it has to do with the transformation of total man to enhance his productivity. Educational, academic, and social excellence of any nation rests on the socialization process, pattern, and style adopted by inhabitants of such nation. The roles of the family as an important institution of socialization and personality development is well documented (e.g. Shaffer, 2005, Lamanna and Riedmann, 2003; and Sullivan and Thompson, 1994). The personality development of children which culminates in their desire for achievement is dependent on parents as agents of socialization (Banmrand, 1991) and on the environment (Lewin, 1936).

Parenting calls upon enduring personality and associated characteristics including intelligence, traits and attitudes, motivation to become involved with children, and child care knowledge and skills. Spera (2005) implied that the demands that parents make of their children and the ways they respond to the children's accomplishments can influence the children's will to achieve. Chao (2001) showed that parents, through their styles of parenting, build critical foundations for various aspects of children's development and achievement.

David McClelland (1953) in his book 'the achievement motive' proposed that parents who stress independence training and who warmly reinforce such self-reliant behaviour will contribute in a positive way to the growth of achievement motivation. Rosen and D'Andrade (1959) while buttressing

McClelland's propositions were also quick to suggest that direct achievement training (encouraging children to do well) is at least as important to the development of achievement motivation as is independence training.

Banmrand (1991) identified three basic parenting styles based on how high or low parents are in their demandingness or responsiveness and she argued that parents at one time or another use all the three styles but tend to rely on one major approach. The styles are authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles. Each of the styles is characterized by specific standards which parents adopt in taking care and nurturing their children.

Ekiti State, in Nigeria, is popularly referred to as the 'fountain of knowledge' and 'land of honour'. This is because there is always an average of one professor in every extended household. Yet the ranking of academic performances of secondary school students in the state through West African Examination Council, Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WAEC, SSCE) and the National Examination council of Nigeria (NECO) are not quite encouraging. The students do not seem to be at their best, most especially in their performances in English Language, Mathematics and in Literature in English. For example, in the 1994 May/ June West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination of Christ School, Ado-Ekiti, 16.4 percent, 19.4 percent and 0 percent respectively made credit/ merit passes in English Language, Mathematics and Literature in English, while 17.9 percent, 32.1 percent and 90.9 percent of students totally failed the subjects respectively; and Christ School, Ado-Ekiti is adjudged as one of the best public secondary schools in Ekiti State. The school was founded over 50 years ago. It is also worthy to note that in the Nigeria Educational System, failure in English Languages and, or Mathematics is regarded as failure in all subjects since a

secondary school leaver cannot advance in his/ her academic pursuit without a credit pass in these subjects.

The rather non-performance of students in the core subjects (i.e. English Language and Mathematics) is attributable to either, or both the parents and, or their teachers. However, there is a solace in the fact that Ekiti State Schools' teachers are being consistently credited as trying their best to see good students' outcome.

This therefore calls for a shift in paradigm to the parents. This study therefore purpose to find out the individual and collective effect of parenting styles on the academic performances of Secondary School Students in Ekiti State.

In line with the purpose of present study therefore, it was hypothesized that:

- Parenting styles will significantly influence secondary school students academic performances in Ekiti State, and that;
- There will be a significant difference in the academic performance of males and females with differing parental involvements.

Methodology

Research Participants: One hundred and Sixteen (116) participants comprising of 62 males and 54 females participated in the study. They were drawn from the population of students in Senior Secondary One and Two (SS I and SS II) of Christ's School, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. Participants' age ranges from 13 to 16 years and their mean age is 15.2 years.

Measure: The Parental Care Scale (PCS) developed by Baumrind (1971) was used. The Scale is a 20-item inventory designed to measure what children perceive as the styles or approaches that their parents dominantly use in taking care of them. The principal styles are:

- Authoritarian parenting in which parents have absolute standards to which they demand unquestionable obedience from their children,
- Permissive parenting where in parents are generally non-controlling and non threatening but only make few demands on their children and impose little discipline, and;
- Authoritative parenting where- in parents set clear standards for their children to follow and are willing to listen to the opinions and feelings of their children which are appropriately expressed.

Baumrind reported an internal consistency alpha coefficient of 0.86 for the scale while Omoluabi (2002) obtained a concurrent validity coefficient of 0.73 for it by correlating Parental Care Scale (PCS) and Hudson's (1982) Index of Family Relations (IFR).

Items on PCS are scored by awarding 1 Point for each correct response in each of the three categories of parenting styles. Items for the categories are:

- Authoritarian style: 1 point for each Yes marked in items 2, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 19.
- Permissive style: 1 point for each YES marked in items 3, 4, 6, 7, 13, 16 and 18.
- Authoritative style: 1 point for each YES marked in items 1, 5, 8, 10, 17 and 20. Correct points for each of the parenting categories are added to obtain clients' score for the parenting style. And African norms (mean scores) obtained by Omoluabi (2002) are the basis for interpreting clients' scores. Scores higher than the norms indicate the dominance of the particular parenting style.

Data collection procedure: After obtaining permission from the principal of the school (Christ's boys school, Ado-Ekiti

Nigeria), copies of the PCS were administered on the SS I and SS II students individually. Results of the student's first term examination were also obtained to establish their academic performances. The students' teachers were interviewed to ascertain whether there are significant variations in their previous and present academic performances and responses gotten showed that the students academic performances has been consistent over times.

Methods of Data Analyses and Research Design: The study is an ex-post facto research in which variables (parenting styles) were not directly manipulated to see their effects on academic performances (the dependent variable) because all events have happened before present investigation. However, the independent groups' research design was employed and t-test for independent samples' statistic was used for the analysis of data for the study.

Results

Table 1: t-test summary table showing the effect of parenting styles on the academic performances of secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria

Variables	Academic Performance status	Mean (X)	Standard Deviation (SD)	t
Authoritarian Parenting	High	14.6	1.8	5.83
	Low	12.5	2.9	
Authoritative Parenting	High	52.6	3.7	20.95
	Low	36.7	0.88	
Permissive Parenting	High	18.14	3.03	11.99
	Low	26.4	6.07	
df = 114, P<.05				
Global Parenting		3.19	1.39	30.74
df = 113, P<.01				

Table II: t-test summary table showing differences between academic performances of males and females with different parental involvements

Variables	Sex	Mean (X)	Variance (S ²)	t	p
Authoritative Parenting	Male	85.87	187.4	1.05	>.05
	Female	82.29	253.2		
Authoritarian Parenting	Male	54.94	193.6	0.52	>.05
	Female	53.83	255.2		
Permissive Parenting	Male	53.75	202.6	0.90	>.05
	Female	55.70	247.7		
df = 114, P>.05					

Discussion of results, conclusion and recommendation

Results of data analysis in the present study as shown in table one showed that parenting styles affect the academic performances of secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria [t (114) = 30.74, p<.01]. It was found out that although each of the parenting styles affect children's academic performances, nonetheless, a comparison of the mean (x) scores indicated that children whose parents are authoritative in their style of parenting scored significantly higher mean scores (52.6 and 36.7 respectively for high and low authoritative parenting styles) in their academic performances than their counter parts whose parents are either permissive or authoritarian.

Table one also revealed that permissive parenting style is next in its influence on children's academic performances, to authoritative parenting styles. This, thus, suggest that the most preferred style of parenting in terms of its capability for better outcome for children, academically is the authoritative parenting style. McClelland (1953) proposed that growth and achievement motivation of children will be positively influenced of parents training involvements. In a similar vein, Cotton and Wiklund

(2001), Zellman and water man (1998), Tunde – Ayinmode and Adegunloye (2011), and Brooks, Bruno, and Burns (1997) in their researches have found out and indicated that family involvements improves facets of children's education and psychosocial outcomes. The result of study that authoritative parenting style more significantly affects the academic performances of secondary school students is consistent with previous studies (e.g. Park and Bauer, 2002; Simons and Conger, 2007; and Slaten, 2006) which found that authoritative parenting style promotes school achievement. Durkin (1995), while justifying for the importance of authoritative parenting style in achieving better academic outcome for students argued that parents with authoritative parenting style give emotional security to their children with a sense of calm and autonomy and they assist their children to be successful in their school activities. And Baumrind (1991) explained that authoritative parents set clear standards for their children to follow and are willing to listen to the opinions and feelings of their children when appropriately expressed.

That authoritative parents are supportive of their children in this way encourages the children to do well academically. Rigid monitoring of children tend to demotivate children to succeed (Cooper, Lindsay, and Nye, 2000). Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, and Fraleigh (1987), found that Asian American parents were more authoritarian than European Americans parents and that for both European and Asian Americans, the authoritarian parenting style was more associated with lower academic grades. This, thus, suggest that parents, rather than being too absolute in their set standards, should although set clear standards, nonetheless, they should encourage independence, individuality, open communication, and recognize the rights of their children.

Findings from the present study have found no significant difference in the academic performances of male and female students based on differing parenting styles. This, thus, suggests that irrespective of sex of students, a most important factor in their academic achievements is the style adopted by the parents in nurturing and monitoring the children.

The implication of findings from the present study is that parents play a very significant role in determining the level of academic achievements of their wards and children. It is of utmost importance therefore that the parents be armed with the essential skills and equipped with appropriate knowledge to be able to properly guide and guard their children for positive developments needed for a better children's outcome both academically and psycho-socially.

That Nigeria, the acclaimed 'giant of Africa' is still socio-economically and technologically backward despite her over fifty – two (52) years of independence can be directly traced to Nigerian's parenting styles that perhaps, must have been largely authoritarian in nature, demotivating independence and achievement. This, invariably impacts on Nigeria children's academic achievements, behaviour, and motivation.

It is therefore suggested that Nigerian's should be enlightened on the practice of parenting and the implications that accrue from parenting styles on children's outcome and societal gains.

Overall, the result of this study, although an eye opener educationally and scientifically, is not all inclusive since only a paltry 116 students of a secondary school in Ado Ekiti, Nigeria were used. Further research needs to be done in this area to involve more students across the senatorial districts, and in geo-

political zones in Nigeria and even examine family structure, socioeconomic status, and the parents on their knowledge of parenting and their practices.

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