

Assessment of Parenting Styles on School Attendance and Academic Performance of Nomadic Children in Selected Settlements in Nigeria

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Abstract *The study examined parenting styles on school attendance and academic performance of nomadic children in selected settlements in Nigeria. The study used 120 (44 male, 76 female) pupils between the ages of 10 and 13 from eight government primary schools that are from nomadic homes. The study made use of Baumrind's thirty items on parenting styles and the pupils' class attendance register and total examination scores in eight subjects in the previous two terms. Three hypotheses were generated, tested and analyzed using Chi-square and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistics. The results show that pupils from authoritative parenting home attend school most and they also performed academically best out of the three parenting styles used in the study. It was concluded that all necessary things being put in place, when parents dialogue and carry children along in their decision making and partake in the children's concerns, they tend to perform better especially in their academics. Therefore, teachers can use parents/teachers' association forum to encourage parents to be more warm and friendly with their children at home, and government should provide necessary amenities that would make nomadic pupils want to stay more in school and learn.*

Keywords: *Parenting Styles, School Attendance, Academic Performance, Nomadic Children, Nigeria.*

1. Background

In the bid of accepting and expressing universal human right by allowing every citizen to have formal education, the Nigerian government launched the Nomadic Educational Policy (NEP) in 1989, which was aimed to provide free and compulsory primary education to the children of nomadic people from Fulani of the North especially (Usman, 2006). The nomads are mostly Fulani from the Western region of sub-Saharan Africa, densely populated in the Northern part of Nigeria. They are of three categories, the pastoralists (herdsmen or cattle rearers), the fishermen (mostly found around the riverine areas) and the migrant farmers. The pastoralists or cattle rearers are addressed in this study. Nomadic profession (the pastoralists) entails migrating from one location to the other in search of green pastures to feed their cattle. In most cases it requires the entire family migrating in the process, thereby limiting the children especially to acquire formal education in a school setting. According to UNESCO (2008) and Muhammad and Abbo (2010), there are 9.4 million nomads including 3.1 million school age children, and about 7 million are pastoralists and others are fishermen in Nigeria. However, as at the time of this study there has not been an existing data on the population of the pastoralists in the Southwest Nigeria; but there is an obvious evidence of their presence in the region whereby the pastoralists go

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about herding their flocks. Some of them are given a place to settle on the outskirts of the town, while some deliberately settle near by farmers on their farm lands, and some of these settlement areas are named after them. Their settlement areas are locally referred to as 'Aba Fulani' or 'Gaa Fulani' meaning Fulani settlement where they reside with their cattle, and often times the natives go to them to buy sheep and cows.

In Nigerian government efforts to render free and equal education to all school age children, several attempts were made to introduce education to the nomads and to sustain their interest. For instance, the Federal Government promulgated Decree 41 of 1989 which established the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE); and the commission was saddled with the responsibility of providing the nomads with relevant and functional basic education, knowledge and skills that will be productive to them and the nation in general (Osokoya, Atinmo, Sarumi, Lawal, Ajayi & Osokoya, 2010).

Despite these laudable efforts of the government to educate the nomadic children, it is reported that they have not achieved much success especially in the Northern part of Nigeria where the nomads are mostly concentrated (Usman, 2006). Having inaugurated a commission to see to the affairs of the body (nomadic) holistically, Aderinoye, Ojokheta & Olojede (2007) identified some of the approaches that were adopted by the commission such as on-site schools whereby schools are mounted within the vicinity of the nomads. Classes are held under the trees or make-shift raft tents and mats. Shift school system is another approach to schooling the nomadic children. This method is similar to shift school system except that students are allowed to run morning and afternoon shifts in order to make it convenient and attractive to them. Another approach that was adopted by the commission is mobile schools. Iro (2006) described mobile schools as collapsible classrooms which can be assembled or disassembled within thirty minutes and carried conveniently by pack bulls. The entire school materials including furniture and teaching aids can be assembled and transferred from one school point to another; although motor caravans are being used instead of animals. In other words, this type of school is moved from one point to the other as the nomads migrate. In conjunction with mobile school is mobile learning. UNESCO (2004) in Aderinoye et.al. (2007) gave the ownership statistics of radio and television in Nigeria as 37.0 percent owned only radio, and 1.3 percent owned only TV sets. Nearly forty-eight percent (47.8%) owned both radio and TV sets, as 13.9 percent had neither. Aderinoye et.al. (2007) concluded that findings from the study revealed that radios are easily affordable, accessible, and often more handy to use (especially the transistor radio) than TV. The outcome of this study gave an identical description of how the Fulani pastoralists make use of radio by carrying it along while they lead their flocks to pasture. Having this information and to further improve the education of the nomads, the commission introduced education programme on the radio without disrupting the herding activity of the nomads. This can briefly be described as 'learn while you work'. This method appeared more successful when compared with on-site, shift and even mobile schooling. This was corroborated by Muhammad, et.al (2010) in their pilot study of the use of radio school reported to have recorded a significant rise in the pupils' regular attendance in school.

Having had such activity by National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in ensuring proper education for the nomads, it is still reported that its success has not reached the expected objective of the establishment of the commission. Some of the failures are attributed to low levels of enrolment of the students, high drop out rate of the students, inadequate teachers, inadequate instructional materials and infrastructure, inadequate supervision and inspection of schools, and funding (Department of Programme Development and Extension, National Commission for Nomadic Education (DPDENCNE, undated). But earlier on, Denga (1983) in his reference to Ezeoma (1983) gave reasons why cattle Fulani parents did not send their children to formal schools organized outside their camps because of long distances of free schools from their camps. Further, the children were involved in herding, and the fact that nomadic Fulani families are constantly on the move in search of grazing grounds and water for their cattle in the dry North; also, they have no land to call their own. These and many more would have been responsible for the failure of the project.

Despite these obvious reasons that are hampering the success of this commission, a striking and unequivocally observation is made by some analysts/researchers on the likelihood of this commission to breakthrough eventually. For instance, Iro (2006) in an interview observed that about eighty percent of the pastoral nomads were willing to go to school. Likewise, Wright (1988) in Iro (2006) reported that some of the nomads are beginning to tilt towards Western education so as to have representatives in governance and policy making which has over the time left them at the mercy of their counterparts that are well educated making policies and taking decisions for them. With this understanding of the nomads wanting to go to school perhaps might be responsible for the reason why some of them don't hesitate to enroll their children in school whenever they migrate down Southwest of the country. The pastoralists in the South West now adopt a temporary-permanent settlement system whereby they take their flocks for grazing on daily basis and they come back to their huts in the evenings. This becomes practicable for them because South West is noted for its forest, grasses and water; invariably the pastoralists don't have to go for days or weeks before they feed their flocks, thereby making the entire family to be in migration process. In addition, their wives engage in selling cheese that is milked from their cows at

public motor parks, this is locally called 'wara' to further support the family. It is in this process that some of their children are made to enroll in schools within the vicinity of their settlement. The nomads that are considered in this study are not the seasonal migrants, neither are they settled in the region permanently. Having believed in formal education and enrolling their children in schools, these investigators see the need to look into how the nomads' parenting method might affect the academic performance and school attendance of these children. However, as at the time of this study, these researchers have not come across the use of parenting styles with academic performance of nomadic children both home and abroad, but it is believed that there is a lot of work done on parenting styles and nomadic activity independently that could be fused together to see if it would produce any meaningful research results.

Parenting goes beyond fathering or mothering a child, it is a complex activity that comprises a lot of specific behaviors that work independently and collectively to influence the life of an individual child. Parenting behaviors are acquired as a result of the parenting pattern that is inherited from one's parents or caregivers, the particular style of parenting that is popular in one's culture, and specifically, man's biological, emotional, socio-economic and psychological make up. All these including the child's personal traits determine the style of parenting that parents adopt. Many researchers have worked on parenting styles deriving their constructs from Baumrind's (1991) three main approaches – authoritative, authoritarian and permissive based upon two aspects of parenting behaviour 'warmth and control'.

2. Authoritarian Parents

Authoritarian parenting could also be called strict parenting, or monologue type of parenting where parents alone determine their children's activity. Parents in this classification have high expectations for compliance to parental rules and instructions and give room for just little open discussion between the parent and the child. Authoritarian parenting is restrictive, the parent expects the child to follow their directions and to appreciate and respect their work and effort. Authoritarian parents expect much of their children; they are very demanding and give orders. "They are obedience- and status-oriented, and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation" (Baumrind, 1991). This type of parents provides disciplined and ordered environments with obviously declared rules. Children are expected to follow the strict rules established by the parents without explaining the reason behind the laid down rules or set boundaries. Punitive measures are often meted on the children when such laid down rules are not adhered to. Such parents take full charge of the child's life and insist that their orders be carried out as instructed without giving further explanations for their instructions. Authoritarian parents are less responsive to their children's wants. Also, they are often likely to beat a child rather than talk about the issue.

3. Authoritative parents

Authoritative parenting, which could also be referred to as "assertive democratic" "dialogue" or "balanced" parenting, is a child-centered approach that embraces high expectations of maturity. Authoritative parents are able to comprehend their children's emotions and educate them on how they can be controlled. Parents are usually attentive to their children, and they often help them to find proper ways of solving their problems. Even though authoritative parenting encourages children to be independent, it still places limits and has power over their actions. Authoritative parents are the type of parents that watch and teach clear standards for their children's behaviour, they are firm, but not interfering, either are they restrictive. Their methods of discipline are encouraging, rather than punitive. They want their children to be self-confident, socially responsible, self-regulated and cooperative (Baumrind, 1991). Similar to authoritarian parents, those with an authoritative parenting style set rules and guidelines that their children are expected to adhere to, but this parenting style is much more democratic. Authoritative parents are responsive to their children's needs and are willing to engage in open dialogue with their children and listen to questions raised by them. This category of parents is often nurturing and forgiving. Authoritative parents set restrictions or boundaries and demand maturity, and when punishing a child, explanations are given for punishment. They measure the punishments meted on their children vis-à-vis the offence and they are consistent in their discipline.

4. Permissive Parents

Permissive parenting style otherwise known as "nondirective" or "laissez-faire" is one of the styles used by parents in nurturing their children. These parents are accepting and warm but exert little control. They do not set limits, and allow children to set their own rules and schedules and activities. They do not demand the high levels of behavior as authoritarian or authoritative parents. Danny, (2007) described permissive parenting in three ways: as a parent who is

lazy or lacks knowledge to enforce discipline; a parent who just thinks that all things will become better with time; and a parent who neglects the discipline due to personal problems as being a single parent, health issues, work, addiction and depression. In further research by some psychologists (Maccoby and Martin, 1983), under the construct of permissive style of parenting came up with further division as indulgent and neglect.

5. School Attendance

School attendance in this study simply refers to the number of times pupils attend school in the last two terms of the three terms of one academic session. The total number of school days in first term was 65 and second term was 67 that pupils were meant to attend school. It implies that pupils must have attended school 132 times as at the time of this study. This record was gotten from the class teachers of the participants that were used in the study. The class attendance was obtained by the class teachers by taking attendance of the pupils in the classroom first in the morning as they come to school and the last in the afternoon as the school closes.

6. Academic Performance

Academic performance is the expected result of the academic activity of the individual pupil. In this study however, the pupils' academic performance was based on the academic results of the pupils in the last two terms, obtained from their class teachers. The pupils offer eight subjects in a session on term basis (English Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, Elementary Science, Bible Knowledge, Cultural & Creative Arts, Yoruba Language, and Health Education). The expected total score for each subject is 100% including continuous assessment and other rated or measurable academic activity, therefore the highest total score for all the subjects in a term is 800 and 1,600 for the two terms. However, to be considered academically fit in the school system and be slated for the next class promotion, pupils must score 40% marks and above in each subject. Therefore, to be considered for good academic performance in this study, a pupil must have scored 320 marks and above in a term and a minimum of 640 in the two terms that were considered in this study.

7. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised for this study:

1. There will be no significant relationship between parenting styles and school attendance.
2. There will be no significant relationship between parenting styles and academic performance.
3. There will be no significant relationship between school attendance and academic performance.

8. Participants

The study made use of 120 (44-male and 76-female) primary (5 and 6) pupils with age range of 10 and 13 years purposively selected from eight schools in two rural settings from two states in Nigeria (Osun and Ogun). The pupils were identified as children of nomadic parents who have settled within the regions for over five years and they have allowed their children to attend schools. The pupils were approached in their various primary schools having sought the consent of the head teachers in conjunction with their class teachers who helped in the interpretation of the questionnaire items to the pupils. They also released the last two terms' internal examination scores of the pupils and the attendance registers showing daily attendance of the pupils to the researchers.

9. Instruments

The instrument used was the adapted version of Baumrind (1991) 'Parental Authority Questionnaire' (PAQ), thirty statements describing behaviors representative of authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting, and permissive parenting. The pupils' age (10 & 13 years) and level of education was considered in the understanding of the items of the questionnaire and this made the researchers seek the assistance of teachers in their schools that speak both Hausa and Yoruba languages to interpret the questions to them. However, the thirty items of the questionnaire was pilot tested with a similar set of students (30) in another rural setting and a reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient method.

10. Design

The design for this study was the descriptive survey carried out in an ex-post facto approach in that the variables that were identified in the study were facts on ground as school attendance; academic performance and parenting styles of the pupils were visible and could be measured with the use of a battery of scales.

11. Data Analysis

The statistical procedure used in analyzing the data generated for the three hypotheses were Chi square and Pearson Moment Product revealing the proportions of the results.

12. Results

The results are presented according to the hypotheses and in the tables below.

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant relationship between parenting styles and school attendance.

Table 1. Chi-Square showing the Relationship between Parenting Styles and School Attendance

Parenting Styles	School Attendance				X ²	df	P
	<40 times Attendance	40-77 times Attendance	78-116 times Attendance	116 -132 times Attendance			
Authoritative	9 22.5%	8 20.0%	9 22.5%	14 35.0%	1027	6	>.05
Authoritarian	15 44.1%	8 23.5%	5 14.7%	6 17.6%			
Permissive	15 32.6%	16 34.8%	9 19.6%	6 13.0%			
Total	39 32.5%	32 26.7%	23 19.2%	26 21.7%			

The table above reveals that children from authoritative parenting style have the highest no of school attendance (116-132 days, 35.0%), while children from authoritarian parenting style have the highest no of low school attendance (<40 days, 44.1%) and children from permissive parenting style fall within the class of low school attendance (<40 days: 32.6% and 40-77 days: 34.8%). This implies that children from authoritative home attend school most followed by authoritarian and permissive respectively. The hypothesis therefore upholds that there is a significant relationship between parenting styles and school attendance.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant relationship between parenting styles and academic performance.

Table 2. Chi-Square showing the relationship between Parenting Styles and Academic Performance

Parenting Styles	Academic Performance			X ²	df	P
	High Performance (960-1,600)	Average Performance (641-960)	Low Performance (<640)			
Authoritative	23 57.5%	12 30.0%	5 12.5%	25.33	4	.05
Authoritarian	10 29.4%	14 41.2%	10 29.4%			
Permissive	6 13.0%	15 32.6%	25 54.3%			
Total	39 32.5%	41 34.2%	40 33.3%			

The table above reveals the academic performance of the pupils with authoritative having the highest no of pupils with a record of high academic performance (23 pupils: 960-1,600,) followed by authoritarian having the same population of pupils that fall between high performance (10 pupils: 960-1,600) and low performance (10 pupils: <640), and permissive having the largest population of pupils that fall under low academic performance (25: <640). This implies that pupils from authoritative parenting style have the best academic performance. The hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between parenting styles and academic performance is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant relationship between school attendance and academic performance.

Table 3. Pearson r showing the correlation between school attendance and academic performance

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	R	Sig.(2 tailed)
Students' Attendance in Two Terms	120	95.2500	21.02270	.749	.000
Students' Overall Performance in the Two Terms	120	877.4833	393.73514		

The table above reveals that there is a significant relationship between school attendance and academic performance ($r = .749$, sig. = .000.). It implies that the more pupils attend school, the better their academic performance in school.

13. Discussion

Findings of the analysis above show that authoritative parenting style had the highest percentage population of pupils that attended school. This finding corroborates the description of authoritative parents that they want their children to be self-confident, socially responsible, self-regulated and cooperative (Baumrind, 1991). It further implies that the type of friendly and warm relationship that exists between parents and children under authoritative style that allows discussion, disagreement and settlement through verbal communication will likely make such children want to appreciate and obey their parents by being prompt in school thereby leading to good performance. As shown in table 2, authoritative parenting style had the largest number of pupils that performed academically best out of the three groups. This is much expected from the fall out of prompt school attendance, because it is hoped that the more pupils go to school to learn, the more likely they will excel. Results of table 3 also shows the correlation between school attendance and academic performance. It reveals that the more the pupils attend school the more and better academically they perform. Most parenting research findings have also been in favor of authoritative parenting style which is known for firmness and

warmth. The style allows children to be independent yet the parents maintain the limits and controls on their action. Querido, Warner and Eyberg (2002) examined the relations between parenting styles and child behaviour problems in African American preschool children and their result showed that authoritative style was most predictive of fewer child behaviour problems. Steinberg (2001) in Kokpo (2007) asserted that developmental psychologists overwhelmingly endorse authoritative parenting as the optimal parenting style for raising adolescents. Kokpo (2007) and Wargo (2007) in Kokpo (2007) both concluded that authoritative parenting style promotes teen's exposure to positive activities and reduces teen's opportunities for engaging in delinquent and risky behaviours. Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman and Roberts (1987), Leung, Lau and Lam (1998) and Boreja (1998) in Tiller, Garrison, Block, Cramer and Tiller (2002) reported that permissive parenting style was negatively associated with higher grades of the students but authoritative was positively associated, authoritarian style was negatively related to academic achievement of the adolescents and the adolescents of authoritative parents were more effective in learning and study strategies respectively. However, the latter (Tiller, et al, 2002) delved into families with young elementary school-aged children having had a lot of researches and literature on the adults with parenting styles. Hence, the authors made use of parenting styles and cognitive development of the young children, and their findings were in support of previous studies that authoritative parenting styles predicted better cognitive development of the children. The finding of this study also tallied with Tiller et al's (2002) finding that authoritative parenting style children attend school most and they performed best when compared with other types of parenting styles (authoritarian and permissive). In the same vein, this study found authoritative parenting style to be most positively associated with class attendance and good academic performance of nomadic children in Nigeria.

14. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is concluded that there are different types of parenting style that are often adopted by parents in parenting their children, among are authoritative, authoritarian and permissive as indicated by Baumrind (1991) which was used in this study. It is further concluded that pupils from authoritative parenting home attended school most and they performed best in their academics when compared with other pupils from authoritarian and permissive homes.

It is recommended therefore that going by the policies of the Nigerian government, where formal education is not a privilege but a right, government should further put in place the basic infrastructures that will make school attractive to pupils so that with the appropriate parenting style (authoritative) at home, children will attend school regularly and they will likely do well in their academics. Also, parents should further know that it is in friendly atmosphere that a child can learn and perform best. Therefore, parents should cooperate and relate with their children in a friendly manner in order to get the best optimal result from them both in their academics and other areas of life. In the same vein, teachers should encourage more parents/child cordial relationship which could be established during Parents' Teachers' Association (PTA) meetings to pass across to them the benefits that could be derived from being friendly and humane with their children at home.

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