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Parenting Style and Primary School Pupils' Reading Achievement in South-Western Nigeria

Fakeye, David O.

Department of Teacher Education, Faculty of Education,

University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

E-mail: Fako4best@yahoo.com

Abstract

Scholars outside Africa have acknowledged the influence of parenting styles on children's academic achievement in general and language achievement in particular but such studies are inconclusive as they came up with conflicting findings. It is in line with this trend that this ex-post facto research investigated the impact of parenting style in Primary school pupils' Reading Achievement in South-Western Nigeria. The study involved 2400 primary five pupils from 20 randomly sampled public primary schools in South-Western Nigeria. In addition to some research questions, two null hypotheses namely: There is no significant difference in the reading achievement of pupils from different parenting style and there is no significant variation in the reading achievement of male and female pupils from different parenting style. Two instruments viz: parenting style Questionnaire and Reading Achievement Test were used for the study. The results revealed that there is no significant difference in the reading achievement of pupils from different parenting style ($F_{,,wu} = 2.22; p > 0.05$) and that there is variation in the

reading achievement of male and female pupils from different parenting style but the variation is not significant (t-value = 0.913, df = 2370, $p > 0.05$). Based on these findings, it is recommended that in the process of reading instruction, teachers at Primary school level in Nigeria should concentrate on other factors that affect pupils' achievement in reading than parenting styles in their effort to improve reading proficiency of their pupils.

Key words: Parenting style, reading, achievement, authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent

Introduction

The central position of reading in the educational pursuit of a child has been widely acknowledged by scholars (Cooper, 2002; Alegbeleye, 2004). This, perhaps, is because reading is a skill not limited to language learning but an indispensable tool for acquisition of knowledge generally in all the school subjects.

Research findings have revealed the serious problem of reading at all levels of education in Nigeria (Jiboku, 1991; 1998; Alegbeleye, 2004; Idogo, 2005; Icheku, 2012). These research findings have also revealed that a large number of elementary school pupils lack literacy skill, especially reading, which they require in their formal and informal learning situations due to their parenting style. A separate study carried out by International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IAEEA) in 1990 and 1991 on how students read also found that Nigerian students (aged 14) who participated in the study were low achievers. Scholars (Ajayi, 2004; Idogo, 2005; Adebisi, 2012) have traced this problem to weak foundation the pupils have in reading at the primary school level.

In what appears to be a radical departure from the lines of thought of the above-mentioned scholars, scholars (Fantuzzo *et al*, 2000; Oduolowu & Leigh, 2012) beam their searchlight on family involvement as a key factor in early childhood education in which they report that parental involvement is linked to children's school readiness. In the views of McWayne (2002), simple interactions, such as reading

to young children, may lead to greater reading knowledge and skills.

On parental involvement, developmental psychologists have shown interest in how parents influence the development of children's social and instrumental competence (including early literacy) which they refer to as parenting style. The term parenting style is coined by Baumrind (1989) to capture normal variations in parents' attempts to control and socialize their children. She elucidates further that parenting style captures two important elements of parenting namely, parental responsiveness and parental demandingness. Parental responsiveness has to do with the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands. On the other hand, parental demandingness refers to the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family while by their maturity demand, supervision, interdisciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys (Baumrind, 1989).

The import of the foregoing, as Guarian (2007) puts it is that parenting style is complex and it refers to the broad pattern of actions, rather than to a single act. Several research works have been done on parenting style and academic motivation (Steinberg et al, 1992; Weiss and Schwarz, 1996; strange Brendt, 1999; Jacob, 2004). The philosophical state of a child has been shown to be a determinant of ability to learn effectively (Baumrind, 1989), while the type of home a child comes from, the parenting style prevailing in such a home, are some of the home factors that could affect the psychological state of a given child and also influence such a child outcomes (Nancy, 1999; Gadsden et al., 1997; Oduolowu and Leigh, 2012).

To this end, the 4 major types of parenting styles are:

- Indulgent parents (permissive, non-directive and lenient)
- Authoritarian parents (obedience and status-oriented and expect their orders obeyed without explanation)

- Authoritative parents (assertive, but not intrusive and restrictive)
- Uninvolved parents (low in both responsiveness and demandingness (Nancy 1999; Baumrind, 1991).

These parenting styles differ in the extent to which they influence the child's psychological and emotional development (Guarian, 2007; Oduolowu & Leigh, 2012). In such areas as children's early reading, Gadsden and Bowman (1999) conclude that parenting style determines parents' participation in literacy activities and their perceptions of the role that they can play in their children's literacy development which invariably may affect children's preparedness for school. These factors also may influence the direct and subtle messages that parents send to their children about the value achievability and power associated with literacy, schooling and knowledge.

Studies have shown that parenting styles are related to children literacy achievement. Guarian (2007) reports that children differ not only in their literacy abilities but also in their literacy experiences and literacy preparation as a result of variations in their family relationships and family resources. This study further suggests that the benefits of authoritative parenting and the detrimental effects of uninvolved parenting are evident in their reading ability during the pre-school years and continue throughout adolescence and into early childhood. This further explains the extent to which parenting style affects the child's' learning and his early engagement with books and schooling.

Early literacy development is a significant area where the impact of parenting style can be felt. Dickinson and Tabours have identified a range of early literacy behaviours that are associated with children's' early engagement with texts and success in reading as oral language development including book reading; phonemic awareness activities and exposure to the alphabets. This perhaps is so in view of the fact that children's' development of early literacy begins at birth and relies on a range of environmental stimuli among which is parenting style.

One important factor that may bring about variations in the impact of parenting style on academic achievement in general is the sex of the child. Several studies have lent credence to this claim. For instance, Weiss and Schwarz (1996) and Reanev *et al.* (2002) found that demandingness appears to be less critical to girls than boys. On the other hand, some other scholars (Chao, 1994; Darling and Steinberg, 1993) found no difference in the extent to which parenting style impacts on girls and boys.

The problem

Early literacy development has been linked to a range of environmental stimuli of which parenting style is the most prominent. Hence, this study examined the relationship between parenting style and reading achievement of pre-primary school pupils. The extent to which sex of the child contributes to variation in reading achievement was also examined.

Research questions: Two research questions that guided the study are:

1. What types of parenting style are related to Primary Pupils Achievement in reading in Nigeria?
2. How does the relationship between parenting style and achievement in reading vary between boys and girls?

Null Hypotheses:

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the Reading achievement of pupils from permissive, authoritarian, authoritative and uninvolved parents.

Ho₂: There is no significant variation in the Reading Achievement of male and female pupils from different parenting style in their academic achievements in Reading.

Significance of the study

The study will hopefully contribute to an increased understanding of the relationship between different types of parenting style and

children's early literacy development in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study will provides a new direction for solving the problem of poor reading among the elementary school pupils in Nigeria. Besides, Nigerian teachers and parents will be more informed about such home factors that determine pupil reading achievement.

Research design

The study adopted an ex-post facto design to examine the relationship between parenting style and primary school pupils reading achievement

Materials and methods

The study involved 2400 primary 5 pupils in 20 randomly selected public primary schools in South Western part of Nigeria made up of Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States. The sample consisted of 1120 boys and 1280 girls. A self- designed questionnaire and achievement test in reading in English Language were the instruments used for data collection. The questionnaire has 2 parts A and B. Part A deals with demographic data of the pupils such as gender, age and school name Part B consists of 4 sections with each section dealing with different parenting style. Each section contains 5 items making a total of 20 items. These items are so structured such that an individual child could score highest in just one of the sections in Part B which by implication, stands for the parenting style with which he/she is brought up. A three-point modified Likert scale was used for scoring the part B of the questionnaire viz: Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Not sure (NS).

The achievement test in reading in the English language consists of 20 multiple-choice items which were prepared from their class reading book. The two instruments were test-run and their reliability checked. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire is .763, using Cronbach alpha while that of the achievement test is 0.820 using KR 20 method.

With the permission of the English language teachers of the selected schools, the instruments were administered on the selected pupils to be filled independently. In the process, reading and explanation

assistance was given to any pupil that signified having problem in reading or/and understanding any of the items. The completed questionnaires were collected back immediately. In all a total of five weeks was spent on the study.

Data generated were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentages, mean and standard deviation In addition, inferential statistics of t-test. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Analysis of Variance (AN'OVA) were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What types of parenting style are related to children's early literacy in reading in English Language?

Table 1 reveals that out of the four types of parenting styles examined, pupils from permissive parents had the highest mean score in Reading Achievement (26.6) followed by pupils from authoritative (24.45), followed by pupils from uninvolved parents (22. 13) while pupils from authoritarian had the lest men score (17.82). Therefore, permissive parenting style produced the children with highest achievement in reading in English.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics showing the average performance of pupils from different parenting style

Parenting styles	N	Mean	Standard D
Authoritative	1570	24.25	15.58
Uninvolved	230	22.13	18.06
Permissive	150	26.60	11.58
Authoritarian	450	17.82	16.49
Total	2410	22.70	15.91

p>0.05

Research Question (RQ2): How does the relationship between parenting style and achievement in reading vary between boys and girls?

Table 2 reveals that there is a significant, negative relationship between the parenting styles and reading achievements of the pupils ($r = -0.134$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that the favoured parenting style (authoritative) produced pupils with low reading achievements while the less favoured parenting style (permissive) produced pupils with high reading achievements. The relationship is statistically significant.

Table 2: Summary of relationship between parenting style and achievement in reading in English

Variable	N	Mean	Std.D	R	P	Remark
Parenting style	2400	1.78	1.19	-0.134	0.038	Sig.
Reading score	2400	22.7	15.91			

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the academic achievement in reading of pupils from permissive, authoritarian, authoritative and uninvolved parents.

Table 3: ANOVA table on parenting style and pupils reading achievement

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P	Remark
Between group	1662.864	3	5542.88	2.22	.086	Not sig.
Within groups	588669.9	2396	2494.33			
Total	60528.963	2799				

$p > 0.05$

Table 3 reveals that the difference between the mean scores between the groups is not significant ($F_{(3,23900)} = 2.22, p > 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis 1 is not rejected.

HO₂:- There is no significant variation in the scores of male and female pupils from different parenting style in their academic achievements in Reading.

Table 4: Summary of t-test tables showing variation in achievement scores of male and female students

Variable	N	Mean	Std.D	T	DF	P	Remark
Reading score							
Male	1070	2402	16.33	.913	233	0.362	Not Sig.
Female	1280	22.11	15.66				

Table 4 shows that there is variation between male and female pupils in their achievement in reading but the variation is not significant ($t_{\text{value}} = 0.913, df = 2390; p > .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis 2 is not rejected.

Discussion

The first research question is: *what types of parenting style are related to children's early literacy in reading in English language?* It was found out that pupils from permissive parents scored highest in Reading Achievement. This finding contradicts the submission of Nancy (1999) and Baumrind (1989) that pupils from indulgent parents perform poorly in cognitive test.

This finding might be as a result of the fact that any child from permissive parent, that excels in reading would be those that are very interested in it, hence they would perform well in it. Children from permissive parents are not under any external forces from parent to

learn reading. This implies that their effort in the subject is intrinsically driven. Hence, they tend to perform better than any other person in the subject. Another reason might be due to the geographical and cultural differences between the Nigerian homes and that of America where earlier studies were carried out.

The second research question is: *how does the relationship between parenting style and achievement in reading vary between boys and girls?* It was discovered that there is a significant negative relationship between the parenting styles and the pupils' achievement in reading. This finding corroborates the finding of Tiller *et al.* (2005) that parenting styles (the authoritative) produced children with low achievement in reading while the less favoured parenting style-the permissive-produced the children with highest achievement in reading. This informed the negative relationship. The parenting styles dictate the educational support a child would get at home which could affect such child academic achievement (Nancy, 1994). This might be the reason behind the significant relationship found between the parenting styles and the pupils' achievements in reading.

The first null hypothesis is, *there is no significant difference in the academic achievement in reading of pupils from permissive, authoritarian, authoritative and uninvolved parents.* It was found out that no significant difference existed between the groups in their achievements in reading.

This finding is in line with the submission of Tiller *et al.* (2004) that parenting styles is not a good predictor of cognitive ability of a child. In this particular study the difference between the highest mean score and the lowest is 8.76 which is found to be insignificant statistically. This might be as a result of the weaknesses associated with the permissive parenting style that has been found not to support the children educationally. Parents that are always responsive but not demanding from the children could not sustain, in the children, the spirit of endurance, persistence and the will power to continue when the going is tough. These are the spirits that could make a learner to

be a consistent and unflinching achiever in reading. Since these spirits are lacking in the children from permissive parents, it could be the reason why they were not clear winners in reading cognitive tests.

The second hypothesis is: *there is no significant variation in the scores of male and female pupils from different parenting style in their academic achievements in reading.* It was found out that the difference between male and female pupils in reading is not significant. This finding is in line with the findings of Raimi (2001), Pomerentz et al. (2002) and Fenneima (2000), that no significant difference exists any longer between male and female achievements in language especially in secondary schools.

This could be as a result of viable teaching strategies that are adopted in teaching in the schools nowadays. There has been a shift from teacher centred to learner-centred strategies. This gives room for the idea of constructivism whereby pupils are allowed to construct their own knowledge and dictate their learning. They are able to learn in their own ways and in less abstractive methods.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that in the process of building the cognitive ability to primary school pupils on reading and literacy less emphasis should be placed on the parenting styles which the children are exposed to or the gender of the children. The teachers should concentrate on other factors that could affect the pupils learning. Child-centred strategies should be adopted in teaching reading so as to checkmate the effect of many moderator variables like gender and parenting styles of primary school pupils.

Conclusion

The results of this study are pointers to the fact that parenting styles are not clear predictors of pupils, achievements in reading even though they are related positively to reading. They also show the fact that authoritative parenting style favours cognitive ability of the children more than permissive. This study also shows clearly that gender is not

a serious factor that could affect the achievement of ht primary school pupils in reading from whatever parenting style.

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