

Laissez-Faire Parenting Style, Self-Determination and Academic Adjustment among Public Secondary School Students in Abuja Metropolis, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

¹Imam Umar Adam
uaimam1@gmail.com

¹Grace Tokunbo
waleeyat1@yahoo.com

¹Department of Guidance and Counselling
Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Abstract

This study examined the relationship among laissez-faire parenting style, self-determination and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Abuja metropolis. Two (2) objectives and two (2) hypotheses guided the study. The population of this study is made up of all 6,672 senior secondary II students of public senior secondary schools in Abuja metropolis. The sample for this study is 361 students. Proportionate sampling technique was used in the selection of sample from the ten (10) sampled schools. Two main instruments were used for data collection. They are parenting styles and academic adjustment scales. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the study hypotheses. Results indicated that a negative relationship exists between Laissez-Faire parenting styles and academic adjustment whereas positive relationship existed between self-determination and academic adjustment. It was recommended that teachers, counsellors and parents should create an enabling physical and social atmosphere for students to adapt to the school norms for the attainment of the desired objectives.

Keywords: parenting, styles, self-determination, academic adjustment.

Introduction

Traditionally, education is viewed as the exclusive job of the experts in the education sector. As a result, parental involvement has not been valued as having any major influence on adolescents' academic achievement. In the contemporary world, schools have shifted from restricted professionalism to open a debate on actual parental involvement in school life, which has enabled closer ties to be developed between the home and the school; translating into enhanced attendance and higher academic achievement. Hung (2007) states that parental involvement is a democratic concern in terms of individual's rights, and as a way of making the educational system more self-governing and developing more power at the local level, allowing for greater accountability by schools to the society. Hung (2007) adds that, in general, society needs to increase its level of educational involvement, and that this starts with the support by the parents. Among other conditions, parents should respond, support, control, supervise

and guide their children towards academic adjustment. It is believed that parenting activities such as nurturing and educating matter more to the child than the structural functions of the family (Hamner & Turner 2001).

Parenting is one of the complex tasks every parent wants and hopes to succeed in. It forms the basis of a family environment without which it is not possible for parents to fulfil their roles and duties in society (Kordi & Baharudin, 2010). Parenting can be simply defined as the process or the state of being a parent; once an individual has a child, such an individual is involved in the process of parenting. However, it is not that simple, as according to Morrison (2009), parenting is "the process of developing and utilizing the knowledge and skills appropriate to planning for, creating, giving birth to and rearing or providing care for offspring". This definition implies that parenting starts when there is a plan for it and it involves not just bringing up the children but also providing care for them.

Parenting style is a psychological construct representing standard strategies that parents use in the rearing of their children. The range and depth of emotions which parents display to their children, build up the psychological interior of their children (Barnhart, Raval, Jansari & Raval, 2013). Every parent has their own parental values, beliefs and practices which can affect student's behaviour towards school activities. According to Ibia (2010), education is aimed at changing the behaviour of learners. It is believed that when learners respond positively to teaching-learning process, learning has taken place. Ashiono and Mwoma (2014) found a significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and children's performance. Authoritarian parenting style was negatively correlated to children's performance in curriculum activities. According to Otu (2012), each secondary school setting is a bundle of behaviour emanating from different parenting styles; some parents lay trust and beliefs on schools as the only avenue that could influence students' behaviour. Parenting styles are the emotional climate in which parenting practices take place (e.g., a display of empathy, tone of voice, a burst of anger, etc.). The goal of parenting is to nurture the child to eventually regulate his/her behaviour. Due to the fact that students spend their early childhood with their parents, it may seem logical to state that the family environment has a great influence on their lives. These parenting styles include authoritative, autocratic, laissez-faire, democratic and uninvolved.

Authoritative parents have rules, and they use consequences, but they also take their children's opinions into account. They validate their children's feelings while also making it clear that the adults are ultimately in charge. Authoritative parents invest time and energy into preventing behavioural problems before they start. They also use positive discipline strategies to reinforce good behaviour, like praise and reward systems. Children with parents who demonstrate this style tend to be self-disciplined and think for themselves. This style is believed to be most beneficial to children. Autocratic refers to a rigid parenting style also known as the authoritarian style. Autocratic parents want their children to be well-behaved and successful, but their strict manner of parenting does not allow for much flexibility. Authoritarian parents expect children to live up to their

demands without explanation. This type of parenting does have its benefits, but the child of an autocratic parent may suffer adverse effects such as low self-esteem.

Laissez-faire is a French term meaning "to let people do as they please." Applied to parenting, the term refers to a permissive style in which parents avoid providing guidance and discipline, make no demands for maturity, and impose few controls on their child's behaviour. Democratic parenting style is derived from the ideas of Alfred Adler, in which the parent guides the child's development in an accepting but steady manner and fosters a climate in which cooperation, fairness, equality, and mutual respect between parent and child are assumed. Uninvolved parents tend to have little knowledge of what their children are doing. There tend to be few rules. Children may not receive much guidance, nurturing, and parental attention. Uninvolved parents expect children to raise themselves. They don't devote much time or energy to meeting children's basic needs. Uninvolved parents may be neglectful, but it's not always intentional. They lack knowledge about child development. And sometimes, they're simply overwhelmed with other problems, like work, paying bills, and managing a household. Children with uninvolved parents are likely to struggle with self-esteem issues. They tend to perform poorly in school. They also exhibit frequent behaviour problems and rank low in happiness.

For the purpose of this research, the focus is only on laissez-faire; reason being that children trained with the parenting styles lack guidance and discipline, show the habits of immaturity and have no controls on their behaviours. The study was guided by the Baumrind (1970) theory of parenting styles, which became particularly interested in the connection between parental behaviour and the development of instrumental competence, which refers to the ability to manipulate the environment to achieve one's goals. Other researches also indicated the role of parenting styles to psychosocial adjustment among adolescents, where families are said to act as socializing agents for children. The family has the greatest socializing influence on children (Ngwiri, 2008). This is because through words or deeds of parents, children's personality is shaped and their ways of doing things become habitual. Moreover, it is the prime responsibility of the parents to socialize their children in order to conform to societal standards and be able to function successfully in the community. Academic adjustment refers to meeting educational goals; in the current study, academic adjustment was determined in terms of demands innate to the school experience (Shaw, 2008). Adequate academic adjustment suggests that the student is applying himself or herself to academic work and meeting institutional requirement (Shaw, 2008).

Self-determination requires that people accept their strengths and limitations, be cognizant of forces acting on them, make choices, and determine ways to satisfy needs (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Will and self-determination are linked: to be self-determining, people have to decide how to act on their environment. Self-determination beliefs represent an important component of student motivation and they have an influence on students' academic achievement and school behaviour (Amare, 2001). These beliefs reflect the students' perceptions of their own ability to accomplish an academic task,

which consequently leads to academic success. Research has identified various factors that may have a great influence on the development of students' academic self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) stated that personal, social, and contextual variables can serve as factors which enhance self-determination. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), self-determination theory explores the innate psychological needs and inherent tendencies that surround self-motivation, or that which drives an individual from within to act or behave. Self-determination theory includes a continuum that describes the level of autonomy an individual experiences while engaging in a given task (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination emerges across the life span as attitudes which enable them to become causal agents of their own lives. Self-determination has been positively associated with academic identity (Yailagh et al., 2014).

Statement of the problem

It was generally observed by the researchers that academic performance among secondary school students has been the concern of teachers, students, parents and counsellors over the years. Generally, as children move from primary level to the university, they become more stressful due to lengthy syllabus, too much homework, and tight time schedule. This stress alongside the type of parenting they experience at home can influence their self-determination and academic adjustment phenomena. From general observations, some students in the study area tend to be stressed up by their parents' influences and lack of motivations on their self-determinations, as well as problems of adjustment in their academics. This could culminate to undesirable academic outcomes. Therefore, it is against this backdrop that the researchers seek to investigate the relationship between parenting styles, self-determination and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Abuja metropolis in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

1. To evaluate the relationship between Laissez-Faire parenting style and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Abuja metropolis.
2. To determine the relationship between self-determination and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Abuja metropolis.

Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between Laissez-Faire parenting style and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Abuja metropolis.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between self-determination and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Abuja metropolis.

Methodology

This research employed correlational research design in investigating the relationship among laissez-faire parenting style, self-determination and academic adjustment of secondary school students in Abuja metropolis. This design is a form of research undertaken when dealing with the understanding of relationships between variables and systematic collection of data or information from a population through the use of personal

interview, opinion scale, questionnaire and/or observation. This study involved an investigation of the entire population of people by collecting data from a sample drawn from the population and assuming that the sample is a true representation of the entire population. The population of this study is made up of all 6,672 Senior Secondary II (SS II) students of public senior secondary schools in Abuja metropolis. The sample for this study is 361 students of public senior secondary schools in Abuja metropolis. The sample selection was guided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Two main instruments were used for data collection. They are parenting styles and academic adjustment scales. Parenting styles have ten (10) items with five-point likert scale. Academic adjustment scale was adapted from Bell (2012) and has ten (10) items with also five-point likert scale. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the study hypotheses.

Presentation of results

A total of 361 copies of the instruments were distributed, only 360 copies were duly returned, meaning that, there is mortality of one instrument. Therefore, the analysis is based on the returned copies of the instruments.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between Laissez-Faire parenting style and academic adjustment.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Laissez-Faire parenting styles and academic adjustment

Variables	N	Mean	STD	Df	Correlation index	P
Academic Adjustment	360	38.266	2.766	359	-0.879**	0.011
Laissez-Faire parenting styles	360	35.255	2.822			

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

The outcome of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics revealed that a significant inverse relationship exists between Laissez-Faire parenting style and academic adjustment. Reasons being that the calculated p-value of 0.011 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance at a correlation index (r) value of -0.880. This shows that the relationship between the two variables is inversely proportional implying that the higher the level of Laissez-Faire parenting styles, the lower the academic adjustment of the students and vice versa. Consequently, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Laissez-Faire parenting style and academic adjustment is hereby rejected.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between self-determination and academic adjustment.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between self-determination and academic adjustment

Variables	N	Mean	STD	Df	Correlation index	P
Academic Adjustment	360	38.266	2.766	359	0.810**	0.002
Self-determination	360	76.383	5.713			

**correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Outcome of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics revealed that significant relationship exists between self-determination and academic adjustment. Reasons being that the calculated p-value of 0.002 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance at a correlation index (r) value of 0.810. This shows that the relationship between the two variables is directly proportional implying that the higher the level of Self-determination, the higher the academic adjustment of the students and vice versa. Consequently the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between self-determination and academic adjustment of students, is hereby rejected.

Discussion of findings

Finding of the study indicates that significant relationship exists between Laissez-Faire parenting style and academic adjustment, at a correlation index (r) value of -0.879. The relationship between the two variables is inversely proportional implying that the higher the use of laissez-faire parenting style, the lower the academic adjustment of the students and vice versa. This is in line with Ashiono and Mwoma (2014) who found a significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and children's performance. Authoritarian parenting style was negatively correlated to children's performance in curriculum activities. Findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between parenting styles and children's performance in preschool activities. There was a significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and children's performance where $r = 0.882$ and $p = 0.00 < 0.01$. Authoritarian parenting style was negatively correlated to children's performance in curriculum activities where $r = -0.261$ and $p = 0.002 < 0.01$. There was no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and children's performance. It was therefore concluded that parenting styles significantly influence children's performance in preschool curriculum activities.

Another finding of this study indicates that significant proportional relationship exists between self-determination and academic adjustment at a correlation index (r) value of 0.810. This shows the relationship between the two variables are directly proportional, implying that the higher the level of self-determination, the higher the academic adjustment of the students and vice versa. This is in line with Yailagh et al. (2014) who examined the relationship between self-determination and academic identity in the elementary students and reported that self-determination and academic identity have positive learning outcomes. The relationship between self-determination and academic identity as associated with academic achievement among elementary school children

(sixth and fifth grade) was examined in this study. The results showed that the relationship between self-determination and academic identity among elementary students appeared to be strong, positive and significant at the 0.01 level with a standardized path coefficient value of 0.58. The results also indicate that academic identity in the elementary students may be viewed as mediating the relationship between self-determination and academic achievement as measured by grade point average (GPA).

Conclusion

Self-determination has very strong impact on academic performance such as making plans for reaching one's goals as well as not giving up easily on anything. Laissez-faire parenting style has negative influence on students' academic adjustments. The main laissez-faire parenting style include lack of effective communication between students and their parents as well as inability of parents to set any rules to guide their children's behaviour. The level of academic adjustment of the students is high, especially as most attend class regularly and also take notes while in class.

Recommendations

From the results, it was recommended that:

1. Parents should develop effective communication with their children and be concerned about the behaviour of their children especially those that negatively affects their children's academic adjustments.
2. Students should be motivated and encouraged to attend class regularly through intrinsic and extrinsic motivational incentives. Students should be guided to realize their optimum self-determination through guidance and counselling, and with the help of teachers and parents.

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