

Parental Child Rearing Style and Students' Dishonest Behaviour

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Abstract: The study was aimed at determining the influence of child rearing styles on the manifestation of dishonest behaviour among senior secondary school students in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria. A sample of 600 senior secondary III students (300 males and 300 females) were used for the study. The subjects ranged from 12 years of age to 21 years. The Child Rearing Questionnaire (CRQ) developed by the researchers was used for data collection. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistics was used in testing the study hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the data analysis showed that child rearing style has a significant influence on the three aspects of dishonest behaviour namely lying, stealing and truancy. Students reared with autocratic and laissez-faire rearing styles manifested greater degree of dishonest behaviours than those from democratic homes. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that parents should adopt more of the democratic child rearing style than either autocratic or laissez-faire rearing style in the upbringing of their sons and daughters.

Key words: Child rearing styles, students, dishonest behaviours, parents

INTRODUCTION

The manifestation of dishonest behaviour among students has remained an age long problem in the Nigerian secondary school system. It comprises attitudes or acts potent in the deceit of people and include such behaviours as lying, stealing and truancy just to mention a few. Dishonest behaviour covers a wide spectrum of delinquency, which deviates from acceptable social norms. According to Isangedighi (1997), it is a behaviour that involves a retraction from rules that govern behaviour. The pervading nature of dishonest behaviour in schools have reached such a stage, that elicit bitter complains from School authorities and teachers. School authorities and teachers see such behaviour as resulting from a breakdown of parental control and the erosion of noble traditional values. Parents most times also push the blame to the school contending that the responsibility of educating children rest on the school. Although, that is the case, the assumption remains that the home environment largely determines and shapes the behaviour of children.

Reports from the mass media and juvenile courts, show increasing rate of delinquency in schools. Those

who frequently visit remand homes and detention centres, would be surprised to see an ever growing population of adolescent inmates (Ekpo, 1996; 1997; Balogun, 1997). A good number of school children roam about in the streets in their school uniforms when they are expected to be in classroom learning. Very often, they are found falling victim to all manner of dishonest practices. Many end up in Police custody or juvenile courts. The schools through the ministry of education had introduced corporal punishment, expulsion and suspension as means of curbing these excesses, yet the problem seems to be escalating. It was against this background that this study was carried out to determine whether child rearing style could be a factor in explaining why dishonest behaviour is frequently observed among Nigerian secondary school students.

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of child rearing style on Senior Secondary School student's dishonest behaviour in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria. The dishonest behaviour isolated for the study were lying, stealing and truancy. A null hypothesis was formulated and tested. The hypothesis was: child rearing style does not have a significant influence on students' manifestation of dishonest behaviour.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Subjects: A total sample of 600 senior secondary school three students were used as the study subjects. The subjects 300 of whom were males and 300 females ranged in age from 14-18 years.

Data collection: A survey questionnaire titled Students opinion questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire had three sections. Section A elicited from the respondents, their demographic information such as age, sex, school type and class. Section B was designed to measure child rearing style, it consisted of 18 items in likert-type scale. Section C was designed to measure the various dishonest behaviours such as lying, stealing and truancy. It also consisted of eighteen items each with a point likert-type scale.

RESULTS

The hypothesis was tested using the One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

The survey data were collated and analyzed using the One Way Analysis of Variance. As shown in Table 1, the results of the data analysis shows that the majority of the subjects (305 = 57%) were products of families whose parents were inclined to using authoritarian style of parenting, while 263 (44%) and 32 (5.33%) of the respondents were from homes whose parents tended to use democratic and laissez-faire rearing styles, respectively.

The result of the statistical analysis shows that there is a significant difference among subjects reared under autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire child rearing background. Table 1 shows that respondents brought up under the three styles of child rearing differ significantly in each dimension of the dishonest behaviour under investigation. These dimensions include lying ($f = 136.26$, $df = 2, 597, 599$, $p < 0.001$); stealing ($f = 89.98$, $df = 2, 597, 599$, $p < 0.001$) and truancy ($f = 123.28$, $df = 2, 597, 599$, $p < 0.001$).

A pair wise multiple comparison analysis using the Fisher's LSF analysis (Table 2) shows that:

- A significant difference exists between respondents from autocratic child rearing families and those from democratic homes in lying, stealing and truancy. In each case, the autocratically reared subjects are more vulnerable.
- A significant difference exists between subjects reared under democratic child rearing style and their counterparts reared under the laissez-faire rearing style in lying, stealing and truancy. In each case, those who are brought up under laissez-faire families are the more vulnerable.

Table 1: Analysis of variance: Influence of child rearing style on dishonest behaviour

Child rearing style	No	Mean	SD	
Lying				
Autocratic	305	21.89	7.56	
Democratic	263	12.21	6.35	
Laissez-faire	32	20.72	7.63	
Total	600	17.58	8.50	
Stealing				
Autocratic	305	16.82	8.83	
Democratic	263	9.15	4.22	
Laissez-faire	32	18.75	8.32	
Total	600	13.56	8.15	
Truancy				
Autocratic	305	19.26	9.36	
Democratic	263	9.48	4.84	
Laissez-faire	32	21.34	10.01	
Total	600	15.09	9.20	
Source of variation	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F-ratio
(a) Lying				
Between groups	13574.41	2	6787.20	136.26*
Within group	29737.59	597	49.81	
Total	43312.00	599		
(B) Stealing				
Between groups	9206.21	2	4603.10	89.98*
Within groups	30541.63	597	51.16	
Total	39747.84	599		
(c) Truancy				
Between Groups	14821.24	2	7410.62	123.28*
Within Groups	35887.43	597	60.11	
Total	50708.67	599		

*Significant at 0.001 level

Table 2: Result of Fishers Least Significant Difference (LSD) Analysis of the influence of child rearing style on students' dishonest behaviour

	Child rearing style		
Child rearing style	Autocratic (n = 305)	Democratic (n = 263)	Laissez faire (n = 32)
Lying			
Autocratic	21.89 ^a	9.69 ^b	1.17
Democratic	16.30 ^{a*}	12.21	-8.51
Laissez-faire	0.89	-6.44 [*]	20.72
	MSW = 49.81		
Stealing			
Autocratic	16.82 ^a	7.67 ^b	-1.93
Democratic	12.74 ^{a*}	9.15	-9.66
Laissez-faire	-1.45	-17.17 [*]	18.75
	MSW = 51.16		
Truancy			
Autocratic	19.26 ^a	9.78 ^b	-2.08
Democratic	14.99 ^{ac}	9.48	-11.86
Laissez-faire	1.44	-6.59 [*]	21.34
	MSW = 60.11		

a = Group means are placed along diagonal; b = Differences between group means are placed above diagonal; c = Fishers t-values are placed below diagonal; * = Significant at .05 level (critical t=1.96)

- The difference between respondents reared under autocratic and laissez-faire rearing styles in respect of the manifestation of the study variables of lying, stealing and truancy is not statistically significant in each case.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the statistical analysis it is clear that neither the use of autocratic nor laissez-faire

rearing style is helpful in reducing children's tendency to lie, steal or play truant. The credible thing for parents who desire honest behaviour from their children is to adopt democratic practices in their interaction or dealings with their offspring. Essentially, the home environment determines what the child grows into. This to a large extent depends on how parents relate with their offspring or how democratic they are in influencing their behaviours. Isangedighi (1996, 1997) asserts that the home provides the child's first social setting in which mutual liking, love and affection are nurtured between parents and offspring. Such nurturing is more assured when parents are democratic in their approaches. To Onyejiaku (1991) it is the family that imparts social values, beliefs, customs and codes of behaviour to children and plays important role in moulding the individual's personality and behaviour. However, the effectiveness of parental actions in moulding desirable behaviour in children depends largely on the approaches adopted. The more democratic parents are in their dealings with the children or ward, the more socially accepted the children's behaviour output. Bloom (1978) and Ezewu (1987) remind one that the kind of relationship existing between parents and their children especially during adolescent years may affect their overall well being and development. In their studies, Lovell (1983) and Durojaiye (1984) found out that child rearing style, family stability and parental attitude among other things have significant influence on student's delinquent behaviour including dishonesty and truancy.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses aspects of behaviour that are very common among Nigerian school going children and various steps taken in school have not proved very effective in stamping them out. That is why there is need to fall back on what parents do at home as a way of helping children improve upon their attitudes and behaviour. The result of this study is important in directing attention to parental child rearing styles as a means of finding solution to some undesirable behaviour manifested by children in school.

Of utmost importance is the need for parents to be aware that autocratic or laissez-faire style of parenting may breed truancy and dishonest behaviours in children. Children need helpful interaction with parents and important others. The more democratic parents are in their interactions with their offspring, the more would they be able to nurture in them desirable attitudes and behaviour. Given the Nigeria situation one may not look only in the direction of the home for improved behaviour of students.

It is therefore, recommended that:

- Government at all levels should carry out an awareness campaign on the influence of child rearing styles on student's dishonest behaviours through the Ministry of Women's Affairs and other non governmental organization. It should be stressed that parents should be made to understand the proper ways of bringing up their children
- Church leaders should be made to be aware of the existing problems and therefore should organize marriage seminars with emphasis on child rearing styles. There is also need to adopt the democratic rearing style which will go a long way to reduce dishonest behaviours among the students
- Parent-Teachers Association (PTA) should be used as a forum where parents can discuss their children's problems (dishonest behaviours) and possibly strategize on how to forestall these problems
- Parents should endeavour to develop a positive relationship with their children. Since the home is the child's first social setting, there is need for parents to facilitate mutual liking, love, warmth, affection with their children. This will in turn help the children to feel more secured and, develop trust in their parents.

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