

INFLUENCE OF PARENTING STYLES ON COGNITIVE COMPETENCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENUGU EDUCATION ZONE OF ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The present study sought to find out the influence of parenting styles on the cognitive competence of secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Population of the study was 4,886 JSS 2 students in the area. Sample of the study was 487 JSS2 students drawn through multi-stage sampling technique. Two instruments were developed, validated and used to collect data for the study. They are: Students' Cognitive Ability Test (SCAT) and the Students' Perceived Parenting style Scale (SPPSS). Data collected for the study were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and ANOVA analyses. The findings of this study revealed that parenting styles significantly influenced the cognitive competence of secondary school students. It was revealed that authoritative parenting style had the highest positive influence on the cognitive competence followed by the authoritarian parenting. It was recommended that parents should adopt authoritative parenting style which strikes a balance between parental warmth and parental control and fosters the cognitive competence of the children.

Background of the Study

The world today is fast changing, competitive and technologically demanding. For a society to thrive and cope with the fast developing world there is need to focus on how to develop and equip school children with the necessary skills as that is the only confidence a society can have for competing effectively in the knowledge economy of the present world. One's cognitive competence could go a long way in influencing the overall wellbeing of one's social, academic and psychological aspects of life.

Unfortunately, the ongoing rise in the crime rate and exhibition of maladaptive and delinquent behaviours of students; coupled with the increasing low performance in the academic pursuit of our children and youths do not in any way show that Nigeria will survive the knowledge

economy of twenty first century (Oji 2011, Imogie 2010). Studies revealed that the personal wellbeing of the child is a product of their cognitive abilities/competence (Okoiye, Opara & Okezie, 2014).

Cognitive competence constitutes the cyclical process of assimilation and accommodation which indicates an individual can manipulate their personal experiences as well as organize and adapt their thought to guide their behaviour (Sun & Hui, 2011). According to Willis (1996), cognitive competence is the ability to develop and apply the cognitive skills of self-talk, reaching and interpretation of social cues, using steps for problem solving and decision making, understanding the perspective of others, understanding behavioural norms, as well as a positive attitude towards life and self awareness.

Cognitive competence as conceptualized by Runco (2003) is composed of two core components which include: critical thinking and creative thinking. Runco continued that critical thinking is the self-regulated cognitive skills to master and capitalize on to achieve better task-performance, generate precise solutions to problem and make right decisions. On the other hand, critical thinking refers to reasoning and making inferences and creative thinking means stretching one's spectacles, evaluating multiple ideas and alternatives and generating novel and practical ideas. Cognitive competence encompasses all the skills involved in both critical and creative thinking. Cognitive competence constitutes the cyclical ability of assimilation and accommodation which indicates that people can manipulate their personal experiences as well as organize and adapt their thought to guide their behaviours (Sun & Hui, 2011).

Cognitive competence can therefore be seen in the context of this study as a learner's ability to make use of previous knowledge and proactive behaviours for information processing and problem solving. This construct (cognitive competence) goes beyond ability to manipulate and strategize information; to involve the ability to internalize, self – regulate and transfer the cognitive skills to construct knowledge and make sense of the surrounding (Sun & Hui, 2012). Therefore, it can be deduced that developing effectively in these areas (of internalizing; self-regulation; and transfer of cognitive skills; of constructing knowledge; and making sense of the surrounding as well as using cognitive structures process and overt behaviours) could mean that an individual will have the skill to contribute creditably to the society.

A careful observation however reveals that these skills involved in cognitive competence are farfetched among children of Nigeria society in general and those of Enugu area in particular. This can be proven by the decline in educational standard in general and in particular, poor performances

and achievements in schools at all levels as well as examination malpractices to mention but a few (Ekesionye, 2012; Rotimi 2011; Okoiye, Opara & okezie, 2014). Evidence shows that an average of 46% of all the students who sat for Junior Basic Education (JBE) Examination between 2013 and 2014 failed English and mathematics (Enugu Zonal Office, Post Primary School Management Board). On the other hand, an average of 41% of all the students who sat for West African Examination Council (WAEC) Examination from 2011 to 2014 failed English and mathematics (Chief Examiner's report, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014). This increasing poor achievement of the students in external examinations as it is evidenced from the WAEC chief examiners reports indicated that students lack the quantum of cognitive competence required to compete effectively in the society. It is also evidenced that students with high cognitive competence would equally be skilled in problem solving which in turn will help them to be successful academically (Sun & Hui, 2011).

To build a better society therefore, (Obialo, 2010) suggested that improving the students' cognitive competence is pivotal but incomplete without a social setting. He maintained that cognitive competence cannot be developed outside a social setting. This simply means that every society starts from family and by so doing, cognitive development of the child may be considered as pivotal factor which without family psychodynamics could be difficult to achieve. In view of this, research tend to observe that parents are the primary source of family psychodynamics contributing to cognitive and emotional development in infancy, early, middle late childhood through adolescence (Okeke, 2001; Onah, Onyishi & Umeano, 2014). This suggests that both cognitive and social development/competence can be affected at the early stage in the home and are carried to high school (Campbell, 1995).

Parenting style is a construct which arose in the 1960s after the work of Baumrind on what she called parenting styles (Baumrind, 1967). Parenting style according to Woolfolk (2011) is the way by which the adults interact and discipline children. Aquilino (2001) perceived parenting styles as the special ways parents adopt in bringing up their children. Invariably, Lerner, (2002) asserts that parenting is a complex activity which involves teaching the child specific behaviours that jointly influence the child's development. Parenting style is therefore, all the strategies adopted in order to promote the normal development of the child. Parenting styles involves the ways through which the parents offer their children physical, mental and psychological supports which they require for normal development until they are fully mature.

Support which the parents offer their children can be in form of parental warmth/responsiveness which involves responding appropriately to the child's needs; or parental control demandingness, which involves

controlling the child's behaviours (Lerner, 2002). Parental warmth refers to 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. Parental demandingness on the other hand refers to the claims the parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole by their maturity, which may include supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys.

Based on the level of parental warmth/demandingness and responsiveness; four parenting styles have been generally identified. These parenting styles include: authoritarian parenting; authoritative parenting; indulgence or permissive parenting; and uninvolved parenting patterns.

Authoritarian parenting according to Woolfolk (2011), is a style in which parent applies cold and controlling interaction. Parents who use this style maintain high control and low warmth. The children are expected to be mature and do what the parent says "because I said so". There is no much talk about child's emotion. Punishments are strict but not abusive (Eze & Ngwoke 2010; Banmind, 1999). According to Woolfolk (2011), children from authoritarian parents are more likely to feel guilty or depressed and develop shyness – social inhibition later in life.

On the other hand, Authoritative parenting style applies both demanding of obedience and responsive to needs of the child such parents are assertive; set clear limits, enforce rules and expect mature with their children. They listen to concerns, give reason for rules and allow more democratic decision making (Woolfolk, 2011). Woolfolk added that authoritative parents respect their children, understand them, monitor their welfare, among others. In the view of Eze and Ngwoke (2010) children of authoritative parents are believed to be self – reliance, self-controlled, cheerful and friendly, cooperative, purposive and cope well with stress. To Mandara (2006) children from authoritative parenting style could be associated with higher cognitive competence.

Permissive parenting style is also called indulgent or non directive parents. Permissive parents allow their children preference to take priority over their ideas and they rarely require them to conform to expected standard. Woolfolk (2011) stated that they are warmth and nurturing, but they have few rules or consequences for their children and expect little in the way of mature behaviour, "they are just kids". This is supported by Verenikina, Vialle and Lysaght(2011) that permissive parents has very casual and easy going approach towards their children and cognitive competence. Because they are unguided and poorly disciplined, they may not be able to make use of their previous knowledge and proactive behaviours for problem solving. Children

of such parents tend to be aggressive, low in self reliance and self control, rebellious, domineering and aimless. Levine (2004) pointed out that such children perform poorly in school, socially and cognitively. Another study by Kambo (2006) found out that students from permissive parenting indicated poor cognitive ability.

Neglectful or uninvolved parenting style is adopted by parents who are not particularly supportive of their children. Such parents display ambivalent attitude in the likes of their children and may be emotionally detached from them. Children of neglectful parents have been observed to have low self esteem, impulsive and regressive (Weiten and Loiyd, 2003).

Explanations of these parenting styles as discussed from the proceedings make it clear that parenting styles may affect the students' cognitive competence within the school and in the society. This is seen from the research which revealed that children who did not acquire reasonable level of social, cognitive and even emotional competence stand a long term risk of poor school performance, delinquency and conduct disorders in childhood and adolescence; and emotional difficulties during adulthood (Huffman, Mehlinger & Kerivan, 2000). The most consistent learning environment of the child adolescent apart from the school is the home. Invariably, Nwachukwu, Enweremuzo & Amadi, (2014) posit that the way forward in life for the adolescents is internalized informally in the home and formally in the school. On the other hand, the way children are brought up in the home at early stage and at school may have effect on their cognitive ability. This makes it clear that family/home factors contribute immensely to the child's development. Parenting styles could constitute the principal factor at home that affects the child's over all development. Children brought up by authoritative parents may likely develop strong cognitive ability.

Gender as a moderating variable of this study cannot be overlooked. Gender is a range of characteristics used to distinguish between male and female particularly in the cases of men and women, masculine and feminine attributes assigned to them. According to Ngozi (2011), the term gender neither means males nor females but relates to cultural attributes of both males and females. In view of Offorma (2004), gender is a social construct, it is not biologically determined but a concept equivalent to race or class. In this study, gender is a socio-cultural attributes and roles assigned to men and women so as to guide them for parenting as well as other family related responsibilities. There have been controversial gender reports on cognitive competence of students. In line with this, Algren and Elichhom (2009) investigated on influence of gender in cognitive competence of students. The report revealed no significant difference of male and female in cognitive competence of the

students. A study by Gibb (2008) reported that females achieved more than males in cognitive competence. Considering the place of parenting in the life of the child and the inconclusive reports on gender and cognitive competence, the researchers decided to take up the study to find out the influence of parenting styles on students' cognitive competence using gender as a moderating variable.

Research Questions

The following research questions are posed to guide the study.

1. What is the influence of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parenting styles on the cognitive competence of students?
2. Is gender a factor on the influence of parenting styles on cognitive competence of students?

Research Hypotheses

To guide the study, two null hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at 0.05 (5%) level of significance

HO₁; There is no significant difference in the mean cognitive competence scores of students nurtured under authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting styles.

HO₂; Gender is not a significant factor on the influence of parenting styles on cognitive competence of students?

Method

The study used ex-post facto research design. This study was carried out in Enugu East L.G.A, Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. Three (3) Local Government Areas in the zone include: Enugu North, Enugu East and Isi-Uzo. Enugu East L.G.A was chosen because of the students low cognitive performance as revealed in their Junior Basic Education Examination (JBEE) results (Post Primary School Board Enugu Zonal office, 2014). The population of the study was 4,886 junior secondary school class two students (J.S.S.2) in Government owned secondary schools in Enugu East local government area of Enugu State. The sample size for the study is 487 junior secondary class II students obtained through simple random sampling technique. Two instruments: Students' Cognitive Ability Test (SCAT) and Students' Perceived Parenting Style Scale (SPPSS) developed by the researchers were used to collect data. Item of the instruments have a response option of Strongly Agreed (SA=4), Agreed (A=3), Disagreed (D=2) and Strongly Disagreed (SD=1). Students' Perceived Parenting Style Scale (SPPSS) has four clusters with 10 item for each cluster and was meant to identify students from different

parenting style background. While Students' Cognitive Ability Test (SCAT) is made up of 10 item objective questions. The internal consistency estimate obtained for SPSS using Cronbach Alpha was 0.73 while 0.75 was obtained for SCAT using Kuder Richardson K-R20. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer research questions while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at $P \leq .05$

Results

Table 1; Mean and standard deviation of students' cognitive competence according to parenting styles.

Parenting Style	N	Mean CC score	Std Deviation
Authoritative parenting style	97	71.2062	14.7471
Authoritarian parenting style	161	69.1056	16.2917
Permissive parenting style	136	50.2353	14.8150
Uninvolved parenting style	93	38.1075	18.5779

Data in table 1 show the number of students nurtured under different parenting styles, their mean cognitive competence scores and standard deviation. Data revealed that students of authoritative parents were 97 in number, with the highest mean cognitive competence score of 71.2062 and standard deviation 14.7471. On the other hand students of Authoritarian parenting style were 161 with mean cognitive competence score 69.1056 and standard deviation 16.2917. It also shows that students of permissive parents were 136 and had mean cognitive competence score of 50.2353 and standard deviation of 14.8150. The data further revealed that students of uninvolved parents were 93 in number and had mean cognitive competence score of 38.1075 and standard deviation 18.5779.

Table 2; summary of one way ANOVA statistics showing difference in students cognitive competence according to parenting styles.

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Cog. Comp. Between groups	81719.967	3	27239.989	105.484	.000
Within groups	124728.48	483	258.237		
Total	206448.44	486			

Data in the table 2 show that there is significant difference in the mean cognitive competence scores of students nurtured under authoritative,

authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parenting styles. This is because the f-calculated of 105.484 is significant at .000 which is under the chosen .05 level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 2b; multiple comparisons of students, cognitive competence scores according to parenting styles.

(i)Parenting Style.	(j)Parenting Style	Mean diff (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Authoritative P. Style	Authoritarian	2.1006	2.0654	.793
	Permissive	20.8708	2.1356	.000
	Uninvolved	33.0986	2.3321	.000
Authoritarian P.Style	Authoritative	-2.1006	2.0654	.793
	Permissive	18.8703	1.8715	.000
	Uninvolved	30.9906	2.0930	.000
Permissive P.Style	Authoritative	-20.9708	2.1356	.000
	Authoritarian	-18.8703	1.8715	.000
	Uninvolved	12.1277	2.1623	.000
Uninvolved P.Style	Authoritative	-33.0986	2.3321	.000
	Authoritarian	-30.9980	2.0930	.000
	Permissive	-12.1277	2.1623	.000

Table 2b shows that the students of authoritative and uninvolved parenting styles had the highest post mean difference compared to other pairs. This implies that authoritative and uninvolved parenting style contributed most to the significance.

Table 5; Mean and standard deviation of students’ cognitive competence scores of males and females

Gender of Students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Males	251	58.0797	21.2586 .5262
Females	236	58.6059	19.9395

From the above table 5, the males had a mean cognitive competence score of 58.0797 and standard deviation of 21.2586 while the females had a mean cognitive competence score of 58.6059 and standard deviation of 19.9395. So there was difference in the mean between the males and females .5262 in favour of the females. To further address the research question, hypothesis 3 was tested;

Table 6: t-test for equality of cognitive competence mean according to gender.

Cog. Comp.	t-test for Equality of means				
	T	Df	Mean diff	Std Error diff	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	-281	485	-.5262	1.8705	.779

Data in the table 6 above reveal that gender as a factor in the study does not significantly influence the cognitive competence of students. This is revealed by the mean difference of $-.5362$ which is significant at $.779$ and not at $.05$ level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean cognitive competence of students.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed among others that parenting styles significantly influence the cognitive competence of the students. There is also significant difference in the cognitive competence according to specific parenting styles, like Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive and Uninvolved parenting styles. It was revealed that authoritative parenting style had the highest positive influence on the cognitive competence of the students. This happened because parents with authoritative style actively support and cared for the needs of their children by listening to them and democratically redressing matters affecting them especially in academics. The result agrees with that of Tiller, Garrison, and Block, (2003), which revealed that parenting styles were better predictors of child's cognitive development than Socio-economic factors. This result also agrees with Mandara (2006) which said that students from authoritative parenting style are associated with higher cognitive competence. The next is followed by the authoritarian parenting which revealed that the students had slightly positive influence on the cognitive competence. This result also agree with that of Tiller, Garrison, and Block(2003), which revealed that parenting styles were better predictors of child's cognitive development than Socio-economic factors. Students of Permissive and uninvolved parents were found to have a very low cognitive competence. That is, Permissive and uninvolved parenting style had negative influence on students' cognitive competence. This happened because permissive parents have very casual and easy going approach towards their children and cognitive competence. This result agrees with Kambo (2006) which indicated that students from permissive parenting had poor cognitive

ability as compared to their counterparts who perceived their parents as authoritative or authoritarian. Thus, the result contradicts that of Tiller, Garrison, and Block,(2003), which revealed that parenting styles were better predictors of child's cognitive development than Socio-economic factors.

The findings of this study revealed that the influence of gender on the cognitive competence of students was not significant. This indicated that gender as a factor in the study had no significant influence on the cognitive competence of the students. This result tallies with that of Algren & Elichhorn (2009) who in their study recorded no significant difference in cognitive competence of the students. However, the study contradicts that of Gibb(2008) that females achieved more than males in cognitive competence.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, the following conclusions are made. Parenting styles influence the cognitive competences of the students at various levels. Authoritative parenting style has the greatest positive influence because parents were very accommodating, responsive and encouraging to their children especially in cognitive competence. This was followed by authoritarian style where parents respond strictly with their children with regards to cognitive competence. Hence, it is agreed that authoritarian parenting style has low and discouraging cognitive competence. Permissive and uninvolved parenting styles have negative influence on the cognitive competence of the students. Thus, it is agreed that parents with permissive and uninvolved parenting style are not responsive and committed to build up the students' cognitive competence. Gender has no significant difference in the cognitive competence of students. Any difference in the cognitive competence of students is as a result of other factors such as parenting education.

Recommendations

Some recommendations of this study are clearly presented as following:

1. Parents should adopt parenting styles that will foster the cognitive competence of their children. Parents should adopt or use authoritative parenting style since it has been found to be more effective in enhancing students' cognitive competence.
2. Seminar and workshops should be organized for parents to educate them on how best to bring up their children so as to achieve high cognitive competence. This could be done through the help of Parent Teachers Association (PTA), the government or other related

professionals. Parent education programme should be introduced in Nigeria. The parents' education should focus basically on positive form of discipline, information about children developmental stages and activities to enhance children's cognitive competence.

3. Teachers should trace extreme poor performances of the students to their homes with effect to correcting any anomalies.

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