The Nigerian Educational Psychologists Vol. 22 No. 1, August, 2025. pp. 159-169

PARENTING AND HOME ENVIRONMENT AS CORRELATES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN ORLU EDUCATION ZONE OF IMO STATE

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Abstract

This paper investigated parenting and home environment as correlates of secondary school students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State. Correlational survey design was adopted for the study. The population comprised of all the 20,342 secondary school students in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State, while 392 students formed the sample based on Taro Yamane formula for determining sample size from finite population. The students were selected through accidental sampling technique. Two instruments were used to collect data for this study. They are: Parenting and Home Environment Scale (PHES) and Students' Social Behaviour Scale (SSBS). The validity of the instruments was ensured through experts' suggestions and guidance from Educational Psychology, Measurement & Evaluation Department, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State. The experts helped in critiquing and modifying the items to suit the objectives of the study. A single-administration reliability and Cronbach Alpha ensured the reliability of PHES (0.78) and SSBS (0.81). The data collected were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The result revealed that there is a strong, positive, and significant relationship between parenting, home environment, and students' social behaviour. Therefore, improvements in parenting practices and the home environment would likely lead to better social behaviour in students. Additionally, the home environment significantly predicted a high proportion of the variance observed in students' social behaviour. It was recommended among others, that parents should create a more supportive and conducive home environment by considering factors such as emotional warmth, communication, stability, and the availability of resources to promote positive behavioural development in their children.

Keywords: Home Environment, Parenting, Social Behaviour

Introduction

Parents play a crucial role in a child's life as their most immediate caregivers. Educated parents are often better equipped to understand their children's educational needs and abilities, which enables them to support their early learning effectively (Codjoe, 2017). This early involvement significantly influences a child's proficiency in various areas of knowledge (Spinelli, Lionetti, Setti & Fasolo, 2021). In addition to academic support, parents are responsible for socializing their children, teaching them how to adapt to their socio-cultural environment. They could achieve this by monitoring behaviour and reinforcing culturally appropriate responses. Parents also serve as key role models in helping children manage negative emotions and cope with distress in culturally relevant ways. As Utti (2016) points out, parenting is one of the primary agents in adolescent socialization. Okpako (2014) defines parenting as the act of child-rearing, which encompasses training, nurturing, and educating children. It involves providing essential care for children's health, nutrition, emotional support, and developmental needs (Smetana, 2017).

Parenting is not just about physical care; it is the process of fostering a child's physical, emotional, mental, and social development. Effective parenting provides emotional support during times of stress and helps build confidence in non-stressful situations. Supportive and sensitive parenting instills a sense of security and self-assurance in children. Parents who promote reasonable rules and encourage self-directed exploration help children thrive both socially and intellectually. Sensitive parenting, characterized by responsiveness, positive reinforcement, approval, and encouragement, significantly impacts children's emotional and behavioural development (Asikhia, 2020; Douglas, 2012; Chukwudi, 2013). When parents are sensitive and supportive, children learn to regulate their emotions more effectively. On the other hand, children who lack proper parental guidance are more likely to exhibit internalizing symptoms, such as sadness, anxiety, and loneliness, as well as externalizing behaviours like impulsivity, aggression, and difficulty maintaining friendships. Harsh, aggressive, or intrusive parenting has been associated with these negative outcomes, as well as problematic peer relationships (Dush et al., 2018). Positive parenting, along with the development of self-control, is essential for a child's social development. Zvara et al. (2018) emphasized that children need a supportive and nurturing environment to mature and reach their full potentials.

The environment plays a crucial role in shaping personal growth, with a healthy environment fostering positive development and an unhealthy one contributing to societal problems. Over the past few decades, students' discipline and behavioural issues have become more prevalent. Research has shown that a positive social environment is key to improving students' behaviour, academic achievement, and

motivation. It also impacts the formation of attitudes toward decision-making, equality, justice, caring, and discipline (Debs, 2016). A supportive home environment and strong parental role modelling are vital for promoting healthy behaviours in children, influencing their dietary habits, emotional security, and academic motivation. Studies have found that the home environment has a stronger effect on children's eating habits than their physical activity levels (Fantuzzo et al., 2020). A nurturing family environment provides children with emotional stability, aiding their academic progress, especially during times of developmental change. Unfortunately, many children do not experience such environments. Some face domestic violence, which is a widespread social issue across all social strata (Debs, 2016). This highlights that children learn by observing their parents' behaviours—both good and bad. The home is considered one of the most powerful influences on a child's development, affecting cognitive abilities, school readiness, academic achievement, and emotional adjustment (Fantuzzo et al., 2020). The home environment encompasses a child's family background, including parents' education, occupation, socio-economic status, and the socializing resources available (Parveen, 2017).

A home environment consists of both physical and psychological factors. The physical aspect includes basic necessities such as housing, food, and safety, while the psychological aspect involves family interactions, mutual respect, and emotional support. Both have a significant influence on a child's overall development (Mukama, 2020; Muola, 2020). Key factors influencing the home environment include family structure, parental authority, educational status, attitudes toward children, and financial stability (Codjoe, 2017; Mukama, 2020; Muola, 2020). Parveen (2017) found that a child's early home environment significantly affects their development into adulthood. Supportive parental attitudes enhance children's academic performance and overall development, while family interactions improve children's linguistic, social, and intellectual skills. Children from supportive home environments tend to be more confident and sociable, better able to adjust to various environments, which positively impacts their academic performance (Parveen, 2017; Bandhana & Sharma, 2012). Conversely, children in less supportive environments often struggle academically and socially. Home is the most influential social unit, shaping an individual's behaviour, skills, attitudes, and virtues, which are critical for adult life. The home is where adolescents first learn about family relationships by observing interactions among parents, grandparents, and siblings. Healthy family relationships, emotional support, and care from family members contribute to a child's well-being (Ali, 2013).

Researchers have identified several characteristics of a conducive home environment, including parental involvement, time spent with children, intellectual stimulation, and emotional rewards. In contrast, negative factors like physical punishment, neglect, and deprivation can hinder a child's development. Parental guidance and aspiration for their children's success are essential for shaping their behaviour and emotional responses. Adolescents' perceptions of their family influence their behavioural and emotional outcomes (Parveen, 2017; Bandhana & Sharma, 2012). A positive home environment is crucial for achieving academic success, professional fulfillment, and emotional well-being. Research by Wang et al. (2019) found that adolescents raised in restrictive and unsupportive home environments struggle with problem-solving, decision-making, and emotional regulation. On the other hand, children from nurturing, permissive homes develop stronger empathy, critical thinking, self-awareness, and social competence. Families that involve children in decision-making foster self-confidence, which contributes to their social and academic development (Codjoe, 2017; Hussain & Naz, 2013; Ewumi, 2016). Imitation is a powerful learning tool, and children observe their parents' behaviours, from watching TV to daily routines, which shape their learning experiences. Studies by Clark and Goyder (2017) emphasize that a positive home environment is a critical factor in students' academic success. They argue that the teaching and learning process in schools is incomplete without the support of a stable home environment.

The home is the child's first learning environment, providing the foundation for socialization and education. According to Ali (2013), the home is the most important human institution for socializing children, shaping their behaviour and developmental outcomes. It offers emotional warmth, intellectual stimulation, and a safe physical space for children to grow. Chukwudi (2013) asserts that parents who provide a warm, responsive, and stimulating environment accelerate their children's intellectual development. Children need stable, supportive environments to enhance their cognitive, emotional, and physical growth. In contrast, unstable or chaotic home environments have detrimental effects on children's health and development (Douglas, 2012). Children are more motivated to learn when their home environment is rich with interesting activities that spark curiosity and offer moderate challenges. As the earliest and most influential learning environment, the home plays a key role in shaping children's social-behavioural competence during their early developmental years.

Social behaviour competence is a key characteristic in individuals who are capable of establishing and maintaining positive relationships, fulfilling social demands, and achieving group goals. This includes cognitive control, emotional expression,

empathy, prosocial behaviours, and emotional regulation, which are central to non-cognitive abilities (Józsa & Barrett, 2018). Research indicates that children from two-parent families tend to score higher in social-emotional development compared to those from single-parent families, and children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to face issues such as social isolation and low self-esteem (Wang et al., 2019; Spinelli et al., 2021). Additionally, factors like family possessions and book collections have been shown to enhance children's collaborative skills, further promoting social-behaviour competence (Tang et al., 2021).

The family climate and parenting style also significantly influence social-behaviour development. For instance, children raised in homes with frequent spousal conflict are more likely to develop negative behaviours, impacting their peer interactions and social development (Wang et al., 2019). Conversely, positive parenting styles have been linked to better social adjustment and behavioural development (Taleb, 2013; Haslam et al., 2020). Bandura's social learning theory (1977) emphasizes that children learn behaviour through observation of family interactions, which influence both academic and social learning. The home environment, in combination with school and broader social settings, plays a crucial role in shaping children's social-behaviour competence. Children raised in stimulating home environments are better equipped to develop essential social skills (Wu et al., 2018; Ng & Bull, 2018). While genetics influence brain development, the social environment shapes how children use their cognitive abilities. Environmental factors such as family structure, culture, and access to education and recreational spaces all contribute to the development of social behaviour.

The social behaviour of secondary school students has become a matter of increasing concern in recent times. The influence of parenting and the home environment plays a crucial role in shaping students' behaviour both within and outside school settings. However, in the Orlu Education Zone of Imo State, there has been a noticeable decline in students' social conduct, which has raised concerns among educators, parents, and policymakers. Despite the well-recognized link between a supportive home environment, effective parenting, and positive student outcomes, it appears that these factors may not be adequately influencing students' social behaviour in this region. This problem underscores the need to explore the relationship between parenting styles, home environment factors, and the social behaviour of secondary school students in Orlu Education Zone. This study sought to investigate parenting and home environment as correlates of secondary school students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent does parenting relates with secondary school students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State?
2. To what extent does home environment relates with secondary school students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study at 0.05 alpha level:

1. Parenting does not significantly relate with secondary school students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State.
2. Home environment does not significantly relate with secondary school students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State.

Method

Correlational survey design was adopted for the study. The population comprised of all the 20,342 secondary school students in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State, while 392 students formed the sample based on Taro Yamane formula for determining sample size from finite population. The students were selected through accidental sampling technique. Two instruments were used to collect data for this study. They are: Parenting and Home Environment Scale (PHES) and Students' Social Behaviour Scale (SSBS). The validity of the instruments was ensured through experts' suggestions and guidance from Educational Psychology, Measurement & Evaluation Department, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State. The experts helped in critiquing and modifying the items to suit the objectives of the study. A single-administration reliability and Cronbach Alpha ensured the reliability of PHES (0.78) and SSBS (0.81). The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Moment correlation coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0.

Results

Table 1: Summary of the correlation coefficient on parenting and students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State

Variable	R	R-square	Remarks
Parenting **Social behaviour**	.621	.386	Positive relationship

The results on Table 1 show that parenting related positively with secondary school students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State. This implies that improvement in parenting would lead to increased secondary school students' social

behaviour. Also, parenting predicted high proportion (38.6%) to the variance observed in secondary school students' social behaviour.

Table 2: Significance correlation on parenting and students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State

Variable	R	t	p-value	Decision
Parenting Social behaviour	.621	11.221	.000	Significant

*****Significant at $p < 0.05$

From the result of the t-test for correlation as shown in Table 2, the statement of hypothesis 1 is rejected; implying that parenting significantly relate with secondary school students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State. This is because, the p-value ($t = 11.221$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) is less than 0.05 alpha level.

Table 3: Summary of the correlation coefficient on home environment and students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State

Variable	R	R-square	Remarks
Home environment Social behaviour	.781	.609	Positive relationship

The results on Table 3 show that home environment related positively with secondary school students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State. This implies that improvement in home environment would lead to increased secondary school students' social behaviour. Also, home environment predicted high proportion (60.9%) to the variance observed in secondary school students' social behaviour.

Table 4: Significance correlation on home environment and students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State

Variable	R	t	p-value	Decision
Home environment Social behaviour	.762	14.321	.000	Significant

*****Significant at $p < 0.05$

From the result of the t-test for correlation as shown in Table 4, the statement of hypothesis 2 is rejected; implying that home environment significantly relate with secondary school students' social behaviour in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State. This is because, the p-value ($t = 14.321$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) is less than 0.05 alpha level.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed a strong, positive, and significant relationship between parenting, home environment, and students' social behaviour. Therefore, improvements in parenting practices and the home environment would likely lead to better social behaviour in students. Additionally, the home environment significantly predicted a higher proportion of the variance observed in students' social behaviour than parenting. This finding aligns with established research in developmental psychology and educational studies. Parenting practices and the home environment are often considered crucial in shaping a child's social behaviour. Studies have consistently highlighted the importance of parental involvement in children's socio-emotional development. For instance, Smetana (2017) emphasizes that responsive and sensitive parenting, which includes emotional support and guidance, enhances children's ability to navigate social environments, thus promoting better social behaviour. Similarly, Zvara et al. (2018) observed that children raised in supportive home environments tend to develop stronger social competencies, including empathy and cooperation, which are critical aspects of social behaviour.

On the other hand, the finding that the home environment predicted a higher proportion of the variance in students' social behaviour than parenting can also be supported by studies that emphasize the role of the broader environment. For example, Fantuzzo et al. (2020) suggest that the overall quality of the home, including access to resources, the physical environment, and emotional security, has a profound impact on a child's social and emotional development. Children who grow up in homes where they feel safe and valued are more likely to exhibit positive social behaviours, such as cooperation and self-regulation, compared to those from less supportive environments.

However, some scholars might argue for the primary role of parenting over the home environment. Bandura's social learning theory (1977) posits that children primarily learn social behaviours by observing and imitating their parents. Therefore, while the home environment is important, it is the parenting practices within the home that actively shape the child's behaviour. Wang et al. (2019) also found that children who experience positive parenting styles—characterized by warmth and consistent discipline—tend to have better social adjustment, even in less than ideal home environments. Therefore, both parenting and the home environment play significant roles in influencing students' social behaviour. However, the finding that the home environment may have a greater impact on social behaviour than parenting alone can be substantiated by research that underscores the comprehensive influence of a stable and supportive home on children's emotional and social development. Nevertheless, the interplay between parenting and the home

environment is complex, and focusing on improving both areas is critical for fostering positive social behaviours in children.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that a strong, positive, and significant relationship exists between these factors, with improvements in both likely to enhance students' social development. However, the home environment appears to have a more substantial impact on students' social behaviour than parenting alone, suggesting that the overall quality of the physical and emotional surroundings in which students are raised plays a critical role in shaping their social competencies. This conclusion is supported by research that emphasizes the importance of a stable, resourceful, and emotionally secure home environment for fostering positive social behaviour in children. However, while the home environment is crucial, effective parenting remains essential for providing the guidance and role modelling necessary for children's social learning and development. Therefore, interventions aimed at improving students' social behaviour should focus not only on enhancing parenting practices but also on improving the quality of the home environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Schools and community organizations should collaborate with parents to create programs that educate families on the importance of a supportive, stable, and resource-rich home environment.
2. Parents should create a more supportive and conducive home environment by considering factors such as emotional warmth, communication, stability, and the availability of resources to promote positive behavioural development in their children.

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