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The Impact Of Parenting Styles And Family Size As Predictors Of Conduct Disorders In Pre-Primary Schools In North West Nigeria

¹Tanko Linus & ²Yakubu Umar Ahmed

¹Department of Early Childhood Care and Education
Kaduna State College of Education, Gidan Waya, Nigeria

²Department of Primary Education
Kaduna State College of Education, Gidan Waya, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Parents are seen, to a large extent, as custodians of children, thereby providing a natural environment for the overall development of the child. Thus, parents play a crucial role in nurturing children from all angles. This study examines the influence of parenting style and family size as on conduct disorder in pre-primary schools in the North-West region of Nigeria. For the purpose of carrying out this research, a "correlational survey design" was used. The study's target population consists of pupils in nursery three from public pre-primary schools in the Northwest region of Nigeria. A sample size of 378 nursery 3 pupils was used for the study, employing a proportionate random sampling technique. Relevant information was gathered through a structured questionnaire, which serves as the research's data collection tool. The data collected were analysed using percentages, mean scores and standard deviations, and all hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) at a 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study revealed that all three parenting styles have a significant influence on conduct disorder, while family size also has an impact on conduct disorder among pre-primary school pupils in North West Nigeria. Based on the findings, recommendations were made that workshops and seminars be held to educate parents on the importance of adopting authoritative parenting techniques. Also, parents should try to have a moderate (1-5) family size for the sake of their children because when the number of children in a family increases, the level of parental care decreases.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Family Size, Conduct Disorder, Pre-primary School

INTRODUCTION

Parenting styles play a significant role in moulding an individual's personality and behaviours. The styles parents use in nurturing their children may have a positive or negative impact on their conduct (Tanko, 2025). Parenting, as it has been in the past, remains very demanding and challenging today. Over the years, family life has undergone significant changes, presenting new challenges for parents and prompting the question of whether child-rearing practices should be adapted (Burns & Gottschalk, 2019). Fostering and employing suitable parenting skills can help children in a family against any tumultuous conduct and perform well academically (Peterson, 2022). With a suitable parenting attitude, a family can remain on track regardless of unavoidable drawbacks that may interrupt the smooth flow.

Parenting can be difficult and even devastating, yet with patience and perseverance, parents can still guide their children down the right path by utilising important parenting skills. The Conduct of parents and their actions inculcate character. Peterson (2022) further emphasises that, if everybody in a family benefits from effective parenting, children and adults will equally develop and influence life skills such as honesty, kindness, empathy, motivation, cooperation, independence, and self-control to succeed in life. The conduct and actions that parents use in moulding their children's personality depend on the kind of parenting styles used in nurturing them. A suitable parenting style will have a positive influence on the child, while an ineffective or harmful parenting style will have a similarly negative impact on the child. Parenting style is employed to encapsulate common differences in parents' efforts to socialise and monitor their children (Baumrind, 2013). The researcher believes that typical parenting styles revolve around monitoring and supervision, which parents might vary in the way they socialise and exercise control over their children. It relates to how parents encourage adherence to laws and societal norms as well as responsiveness, which is correlated with their level of engagement with their offspring (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2018).

Additionally, Gidado and Anyio, (2025) refer to parenting styles as a mental concept that denotes the standard approaches parents employ in nurturing their children. Wherever the right parenting style is employed in any family, the home is likely to raise well-organised children; however, in situations where this is not actualised, the opposite will be the case. Based on the definitions provided by various researchers so far, it can be inferred that the approaches or styles parents use in nurturing children may have a positive or negative impact on their conduct. As parents utilise these different styles of parenting in training or nurturing children, their conduct and personality are easily moulded. Many scholars have recommended various styles of parenting; nevertheless, for the sake of this investigation, the author will only focus on the three (3) most important styles of parenting, which comprise authoritarian, authoritative and permissive.

Authoritarian parenting styles are linked with parents who are frequently harsh and strict to their children and demonstrate little warmth to them. Authoritarian parents express their expectations for their children through rules and orders, but do not communicate the reasons behind these rules to their children (Baidoo-Anu, et al., 2019). Authoritarian parenting follows a dictatorial style involving the highest degree of control over children and very low levels of warmth. Parents who adopt such styles expect strong obedience from their children and favour punitive discipline in response to acts of rebellion (Samson et al, 2020). They are usually found setting strict rules to abide by and monitoring their child's time, as well as their activities, both during the day and night (Baidoo-Anu et al., 2019).

Empirical studies showed that authoritarian parenting styles are found to relate to conduct disorder (Samson et al, 2020; Hoshiar, John, and Nadja, 2015; Igbo and Anselm, 2014). Other studies found no relationship between parenting style and conduct disorder (Hosokawa and Katsura, 2018; Okorodudu, 2014)

Authoritative parents, on the other hand, are warm, responsive, demanding and involved with their children. They set clear limits for their children, but they also show the children respect and allow them to be independent. Parents using this style set high but realistic goals for their children and provide them with support to reach those goals (Keshavrz & Baharudin, 2019). Authoritative parents establish and impose moral rules for children to follow, but support parental authority with justification and explanation for why rules are imposed (Baumrind, 2013).

Many researchers believe that an authoritative parenting style has a significant influence on conduct disorder (Singh and Sihag, 2022; Adaku and Anayo, 2021; Noreen et al., 2021), while others argue that an authoritative parenting style has no significant influence on conduct disorder (Mensah and Gyimah, 2018; Okorodudu, 2014). The advantages of authoritative parenting may differ depending on the particular ethnic group.

Similarly, permissive parents are described as warm, responsive and have high nurturing abilities, but lack parental control and expect few mature behaviours from their children. Permissive parents are lenient towards their children's impulses, desires and actions. These parents have few demands and allow their

children to do whatever they want (Baumrind, 2013). Permissive parents are high on parental responsiveness but low on demandingness. Tolerance, warmth, and acceptance are characteristics of these parents, although they do not exert authority or great control over their children in terms of enforcing rules. They make few or no demands for responsibility and orderly behaviour. They believe that their children should be free to make their own choices in life, and as a result, many children become selfish (Samson et al., 2020).

The researcher observed from several studies which stated that permissive parenting styles have a significant influence on conduct disorder (Samson et al., 2020; Hosokawa & Katsura, 2018; Okorodudu, 2014). The finding is contrary to that of Singh and Sihag (2022), who conducted their research in India and found that permissive parenting has no significant impact on children's behaviour. The review of the literature also led us to the conclusion that the effects of parenting practices might be different between nations.

Family size is crucial to this study, as it is believed that children from smaller homes are more likely to excel in school than those from larger families (Odok, 2013). Family size refers to the aggregate number of residents who are connected via blood, marriage, or adoption (Bell, 2014). According to Farlex dictionary (2023), family size is "a fundamental group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children". Ella, Odok, and Ella (2015) further defined "family size" as the total number of offspring in a family.

Furthermore, the researcher highlighted that family size refers to the total number of people living in a particular family. In a family of seven or more members, the size of the family is considered significant, while a family of three or fewer members is considered small (Adongo et al., 2022). In addition, a research study carried out by Adongo et al. (2022) showed that the basic needs for parental care and education in small families are satisfied with a relatively small allotment of the family's earnings compared to extensive families. To them, family size, has a significant influence on conduct disorder. That is to say, a moderate family has a more positive impact on academic performance than a large family. The finding is in agreement with the findings of Adongo et al. (2022), who revealed that children who come from large family households are more likely to participate in conduct disorder than teenagers from small households. Yockey et al. (2019) also supported this by revealing that family factors, such as larger family size, are responsible for children's misbehaviour. Additionally, Mweemba (2011) in another research revealed that pupils exhibited a wide range of abnormal behaviours as a result of family influence. This result highlights the significance of family size in shaping the quality of education and its perceived impact on conduct disorder.

The academic literature showcases several terms employed concurrently, but all of them have similar implications: conduct disorder, behaviour disorder, behaviour problem, disruptive behaviour, abnormal behaviour, oppositional defiant disorder, among others. Thus, conduct disorder is a term that refers to persistent and prototypical behaviour that goes against the privileges of other individuals or infringes on the developmentally appropriate rules or norms of a given society (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Furthermore, Samson et al. (2020) viewed conduct disorder as improper actions that hinder children's ability to operate and navigate the learning environment. Stressing further, the researcher upheld that conduct disorder is a behaviour that does not correspond with the conventional values that a given society recommends for its group. Therefore, conduct disorder manifests differently in individuals from various backgrounds, yet its similarities persist across diverse socio-cultural contexts.

The most prevalent type of conduct disorder among pre-primary pupils in Nigeria is moral disorder. These types of conduct disorders are unacceptable in the classroom and our society as a whole, and they are of significant concern to educators, psychologists, school counsellors, sociologists, as well as the government (Oruche, 2013). Stealing, skipping school, engaging in illegal activities, loitering around, lying, making noise, and fighting are examples of moral disorder (Paul, 2016; Kama, 2015). In addition, conduct disorder within educational institutions has grown out of control and is now affecting every aspect of the educational system like wildfire. It has an impact on children's physical, emotional, and intellectual development. Thus, to avoid its adverse effects, this abnormal conduct needs to be restrained.

Commencing primary education is a significant milestone for many children, as they must leave their homes for the first time and enter a new learning environment. They may experience shock as a result of inadequate preparation to deal with new learning events and settings. For this reason, the Nigerian government has fully endorsed the establishment of one-year pre-primary education in the official school system (FME, 2021; UNESCO, 2017).

Statement Of The Problem

The rise in conduct disorder among pre-primary school pupils nowadays has drawn the attention of educators, researchers, curriculum developers, educational officials, public writers, and all levels of government. It is a nationwide concern that requires urgent attention. In the research area, pre-primary school pupils typically engage in conduct disorder such as frequent temper tantrums, loitering about, getting angry easily, not being able to follow simple rules, being aggressive toward peers, disposition to fight or hurt others, feeling scared or unhappy, stealing, lying, unnecessary crying, inattentiveness, and inactive in class, to name a few.

The majority of the problems that contribute to these destructive behaviours of pupils in pre-primary school stem from their family settings; therefore, the need to investigate pupils' abnormal conduct in schools must begin with the parents, as the home serves as the most potent agent for education and, obviously, the cornerstone of any child. This is because training begins at home before attending school, making the home the primary educational agent.

Although the aforementioned research has offered detailed insights into the topic of children's parental experiences, relatively little has been documented regarding how parenting styles and family size impact conduct disorder in pre-primary school students in North-West Nigeria. Thus, this study, therefore, seeks to address this vacuum in the literature by concentrating on the influence of parenting styles and family size on conduct disorder among pre-primary school pupils in North-West Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the researcher in the study:

1. What is the influence of parenting style and conduct disorder among pre-primary school pupils in North West, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of family size on conduct disorder among primary school pupils in North-west, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: Parenting styles have no significant influence on conduct disorder exhibited by pre-primary school pupils

H₀₂: Family size has no significant influence on conduct disorder exhibited by pre-primary school pupils.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, a descriptive survey design was used. This methodology gathers, examines, and interprets information collected from a sample believed to represent the total population, allowing for the study of a group of individuals or objects in their natural environments (Akpakwu, 2019). The adoption of 'descriptive survey design' is justified because, in a short amount of time, it enables comprehensive data collection on a broad population, identifying and reporting the current state of affairs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this reason, just an adequate number of samples of the population have been drawn for analysis. The method is considered the most suitable for this research, as it aims to determine the influence of parenting styles on academic performance in pre-primary school pupils in North-west Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The study targeted pupils in Nursery Three (3) drawn from public pre-primary schools in the North West, Nigeria. The study area has a total of nine thousand, three hundred and eighty-two (9,382) public pre-

primary schools with a total population of one hundred and eighty-four thousand, six hundred and eighty-two (184,682) nursery three pupils (FME, 2023).

Sampling Size and Sampling Procedure

A sample size of three hundred and seventy-eight (378) nursery three (3) pupils was used in the study using a proportionate random sampling technique. The justification for choosing this figure from this population aligns with Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) affirmation. A simple random sampling technique was also used to select two (2) pre-primary schools in each of the three (3) senatorial zones of the seven (7) states, making a total of 42 pre-primary schools. The justification for using a simple random sample was driven by the idea that every element in the overall population has an equal and distinct likelihood of being included in the sample. Similarly, caregivers of the forty (42) pre-primary schools selected will equally be sampled for the study. Additionally, a sample of 378 parents, one per each pre-primary school pupil, chosen from the 42 pre-primary schools sampled in North West, Nigeria, were sent a questionnaire in an envelope on behalf of the child to complete regarding their parenting styles.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The study's instruments were validated, and a trial test was conducted to assess the reliability of the instruments. Data were gathered using a 37-item parenting style questionnaire developed by the researcher, which employed a four-point rating system. Similarly, to determine the pattern of academic performance of pre-primary school pupils in the North West, the academic records of pupils for the first and second terms of the 2024 academic session were collected and analysed.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Permission was received from the headteachers of the various schools to conduct the study. The researchers provided the respondents with the instrument immediately and detailed instructions on how to complete the questionnaires. “Statistical Package for Social Sciences” (SPSS) was used to organise and prepare data for analysis. The analysis of data was done using percentages, mean scores and standard deviations to answer the research questions. In addition, ‘Analysis of Variance’ (ANOVA) was also used to test the study hypotheses at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$.

RESULTS

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: Parenting styles have no significant influence on conduct disorder exhibited by pre-primary school pupils in North-west, Nigeria.

Table 1: ANOVA Computation of Parenting Style on Conduct Disorder

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.865	3	3.288	3.184	0.02
Within Groups	386.188	374	1.033		
Total	396.053	377			

One-way ANOVA was calculated to investigate the influence of parenting style on conduct disorder. The findings in Table 1 show that there was a significant influence of parenting style on conduct disorder of pre-primary school pupils at $p = 0.02 < 0.05$. Because of this test, the “null hypothesis” was rejected ($F = 3.184$; $p < 0.05$; $df = 3$). This result implies that parenting style has a bearing on conduct disorder exhibited by pre-primary school pupils in North-west, Nigeria.

Table 2: Means of Conduct Disorder Based on Parenting Style

Conduct Disorder		
Authoritarian	Mean	2.48
	N	102
	Std. Deviation	1.012
Authoritative	Mean	2.44
	N	129
	Std. Deviation	.991
Permissive	Mean	2.47
	N	147
	Std. Deviation	1.042

Table 2 indicates the mean score of conduct disorder based on parenting style. The authoritarian parenting style has a total mean score of 2.48, the authoritative parenting style has a total mean score of 2.44, and the permissive parenting style has a mean score of 2.47. The authoritarian style of parenting, therefore, has the highest mean, followed by the permissive style, and the authoritative style has the least. This is an indication that authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are the leading factors responsible for conduct disorder among pre-primary school pupils in North-West Nigeria.

H₀₂: Family size has no significant influence on conduct disorder exhibited by pre-primary school pupils in North-west, Nigeria.

Table 12: ANOVA Computations of Family Size on Conduct Disorder

		Sum	of	Mean		
		Squares	Df	Square	F	Sig.
1-3mebers	Between Groups	7.444	3	2.481	3.848	.020
	Within Groups	18.056	28	.645		
	Total	25.500	31			
4-6members	Between Groups	3.089	3	1.030	1.065	.366
	Within Groups	137.247	142	.967		
	Total	140.336	145			
7-10members	Between Groups	6.740	3	2.247	2.462	.068
	Within Groups	79.392	87	.913		
	Total	86.132	90			
10-above	Between Groups	2.190	3	.730	.758	.520
	Within Groups	101.094	105	.963		
	Total	103.284	108			
Family Size	Between Groups	58.355	3	19.452	24.440	.000
	Within Groups	297.659	374	.796		
	Total	356.013	377			

One-way ANOVA was calculated to investigate the influence of family size on conduct disorder. The findings in Table 12 show that there is a significant influence of family size on conduct disorder by pre-primary school pupils at $p = .000 < 0.05$. Because of this test, the “null hypothesis” was rejected ($F = 24.440$; $p < 0.05$; $df = 3$). This result suggests that the size of the family has an impact on the conduct disorder exhibited by pre-primary school pupils in the North-West region of Nigeria.

Table 13: Means of Conduct Disorder Based on Family Size

Family Size	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1-3 member(s)	2.50	1.14	32
4-6 members	2.32	.750	146
7-10 members	2.70	1.01	91
Over 10 members	2.95	1.21	109
Total	2.61	1.03	378

Table 13 indicates the means of conduct disorder based on the family size of pre-primary school pupils in North-West, Nigeria. The mean for 1-3 members under family size is 2.50, and the standard deviation is 1.14; the mean for 4-6 members under the family size is 2.32, and the standard deviation is .750, the mean for 7-10 members under family size is 2.70 and the standard deviation is 1.01, the mean for 10 and above members under the family size is 2.95, and the standard deviation is 1.21. This is an indication that 7-10 members and above 10 members are the highest with conduct disorder among pre-primary school pupils in North-West Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study's findings showed that all three types of parenting styles have a significant influence on conduct disorder in pre-primary school pupils in North-western Nigeria. One-way ANOVA was calculated to investigate the influence of parenting style on conduct disorder. The findings in Table 1 show that there was a significant influence of parenting style on conduct disorder of pre-primary school pupils at $p = 0.02 < 0.05$. This result implies that parenting style has a bearing on conduct disorder exhibited by pre-primary school pupils in North-west, Nigeria. This validates prior studies (Gidado & Anyio, 2025; Kumuyi et al., 2021; Samson et al., 2020; Hoshiar et al., 2015) on the relationship between parenting styles and conduct disorder. The authoritarian style of parenting, therefore, has the highest mean, followed by the permissive style, and the authoritative style has the least. This is an indication that authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are the leading factors responsible for conduct disorder among pre-primary school pupils in North-West Nigeria. This finding is contrary to the finding of Hosokawa and Katsura (2018), who found no relationship between parenting style and conduct disorder. The literature review also led us to the conclusion that the effects of parenting practices might differ between nations.

On the other hand, family size, according to this research, has a significant influence on conduct disorder exhibited by pre-primary school pupils in North-west, Nigeria. The finding is in agreement with the findings of Wireko (2022), who reveals that children who come from large family households are more likely to participate in conduct disorder than teenagers from small households. Yockey et al. (2019) also supported this by revealing that family factors, such as larger family size, are responsible for children's misbehaviour. Furthermore, Mweemba (2011) in another research revealed that pupils exhibited a wide range of abnormal behaviours as a result of family influence. For instance, when the number of children in a family increases, the level of parental care decreases, and as the number of children rises, the family becomes overcrowded, resulting in additional financial strain and conduct disorder (Kantarevic & Mechoulan, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were derived from the study's findings: analysis of the responses from the pupils' parents revealed that, contrary to expectations, all parenting styles had a significant influence on the conduct disorders of pre-primary school pupils. Similarly, it has been established that pupils' conduct disorder is influenced by family size. This implies that family size may increase the likelihood of a child developing conduct disorder, and this, in turn, may affect the child's quality of life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions have been made in light of the study's findings:

1. Workshops and seminars should be held to educate parents on the need to adopt authoritative parenting techniques in order to lower the number of pupils with conduct disorders and to lessen the workload for teachers in classroom settings.
2. Parents should try to have a moderate (1-5) family size for the sake of their children because when the number of children in a family increases, the level of parental care decreases, and as the number of children rises, the family becomes overcrowded, resulting in additional financial strain and an increased likelihood of conduct disorder.
3. Parents should constantly look out for their children's needs, and educational administrators should sensitise pupils about issues related to conduct disorder and the repercussions that follow.
4. Teachers should develop the habit of observing pupils well in order to identify those with conduct disorder to direct them to school counsellors for the needed conduct modifications before it is too late.
5. The government should introduce parenting education programs like the family-centred curriculum. This can help parents become better instructors and parents to their children.

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