Relationship between Home Environment and Child Deviant Behaviours in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between home environment and child deviant behaviours in Rivers state, Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational research design. A stratified non-proportionate random sampling technique was used to select 300 married teachers' having children under their care. The mean and standard deviation were evaluated. Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses using the Statistical Package for Service Solution (SPSS). Results from the study showed that there is a significant relationship between home environment variables such as family socioeconomic status, poor attitude of extended family members' and home media and Deviant Behaviour. The result from this study also showed that poor attitudes of extended family members such as smoking, gossiping, bad advice, over pampering and moral bankrupt will negatively affect the child. The findings also revealed that uncontrolled television viewing, addiction to games, exposure to pornography through unregulated home media, school absenteeism, uncontrolled use of internet at home and unregulated television viewing can have negative effects on the child. Furthermore, the family economic status such as inability to provide basic needs by parents, family poverty and unmet needs can result to deviant behaviours such as stealing, disrespect and street begging in children. It is therefore recommended that families should be sensitized on the destructive aspects of the extended family structure on child behaviours. In addition, families should regulate the use of home media by children.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A home is a place where a person or group of persons has adopted as a living place. Greg [1] described that the home is a living space used as a permanent or semi-permanent residence for an individual, family, household or several families. The home is made of humans; usually with parents and their offspring [2]. It is usually a place in which an individual or a family can rest and be able to store personal property. Home environment refers to aspects of peoples' domestic lives that contribute to their living conditions. These factors may be physical (poverty, psychological conditions due to parenting; social circumstances (living alone) or wider cultural patterns of life related to the location (suburban environments, urban environments [3]. Home environment has been theorized to have serious impact on the behaviour of children [4].

Deviant behaviours in children include those acts or attitudes that deviate from normal behaviours expected of children, and which negate moral standards [5]. These behaviours are usually unacceptable in the immediate society. There are numerous behaviors that can be classed as negative amongst children depending on the situation and activity, including lack of initiative, being irresponsible, aggression and playing the victim [2]. These negative behaviors can apply to work, learning habits or even dealing with things like addiction. Some commonly known negative behaviours in children include lying, stealing/piffery, bullying, gangsterism, defiance, disrespectful behaviours, substance abuse, aggression, school absenteeism etc. These attitudes have negative impacts on the development of the child, and can determine the level of wellbeing for both the child, especially parents [6, 2].

A healthy, safe home is essential for a child to grow, learn and explore. On the other hand, a negative or unhealthy home can have detrimental effects on a child's intellectual, social and emotional development [7]. Research has shown that a negative home environment during the early years of life can lead to impaired development, including poor language skills, behavioral problems, deficits in school readiness [2]. The home environment entails emotional warmth displayed by parents while interacting with their children. It is made of individuals and members of that household, and the external members of the environment including neighbours [8]. According to Ameen [9], structural composition such as family economic status, level of education of parents, the presence of mass media in the home and the presence of extended family members define the home. These variables individually, or collectively impact on the behavior of the child as he/she grows in their midst.

A child's early home environment has also been linked to longer-term outcomes, including high school graduation, teen parenthood, adult employment and earnings [2]. Brain imaging studies suggest that growing up in a disadvantaged or stressful environment can cause the brain to develop differently [9]. Studies of young children have identified distinct patterns of brain activity associated with family income and other socio-economic factors that relate to social and emotional development, cognitive ability, and learning and memory. Although there has been great interest in how the family environment affects the development of persons with a developmental disability, there is a parallel body of research suggesting that the direction of effects are just as likely to flow from child to parent as from parent to child [2, 10, 11]. An enriching and stimulating home environment fosters healthy growth and brain development by providing a child with love, emotional support, and opportunities for learning and exploration. In families where only one parent is present, there are often fewer economic and emotional resources. Competing demands at work and at home can hinder a parent's ability to provide an environment conducive to learning and development of positive attitudes in children [7].

The extended family system is an inextricable aspect of the home in Africa. Elkin and Handel [12] defined the family as the first unit with which children have a continuous contact and the first context in which socialization patterns develop. Phelan [13] described the extended family as the most sensitive environment for the development of a child. The Family Pediatrics Report [14] also explained that the development of children is significantly influenced by interpersonal relationships within the extended family. Within the extended family, there are toxic behaviors that potentially destroy family relationships, and subsequently impact negatively on the child. For example, insults and criticism can impact

negatively on the growing child. An insult contains negative words said to verbally degrade another person's characters [15]. When insults are thrown at family members, there is an immediate chasm within the family, and children are quick to grab things [16]. In an extended family filled with grown-ups, teenagers, and children, it can be very difficult to maintain the sense of unity [12]. Everybody has personal preferences and different schedules on a daily basis. Certain activities can unintentionally make another feel upset or disappointed. No doubt, the extended family plays significant roles in family living, and the upbringing of the child. Also, the presence of other adult members of the extended family system can influence the behavioural outcomes of the child. For example, a 'smoking uncle' or a loquacious aunty or niece living in a home with younger children, and with unguarded attitudes, can negatively influence the children.

The display of negative behaviours amongst young children and youths is on the increase and this gives serious concern to families and the society. Many young children can easily be seen displaying violent attitudes, bullying, stealing and gansterism amongst the many on daily basis. Street fights and pick-pocketing are major characteristics of children in Rivers State. In many cases, families have grown weary and cannot influence a change by these children. Many parents rarely have time for their children, and may not even know when a child is driving towards unacceptable societal standards. Neighbours usually may not show concern especially when everyone is cautious about being a victim of attack. Child prostitution and substance abuse is also rampant among young girls and boys of secondary school ages. How much home characteristics such as extended family, neighbours' attitudes, home media, economic status and parental education will impact child behaviours may not be known without an independent assessment. While research remains a major tool for finding solutions to most of societal problems, studies investigating the relationship between the home environment and child behavioural outcomes have emanated from developed countries. Hence, attempts to apply recommended programmes in a structurally different society may prove problematic. The present study therefore seeks to investigate if there is any correlation between aspects of the home environment and behavior problems of children in Rivers State.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Child development theories focus on explaining how children change and grow over the course of childhood. Such theories center on various aspects of development including social, emotional, and cognitive growth. The following theories were used for this study: Applied Behavior Analysis, Social Learning Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Developmental Theory and Piaget's Cognitive Developmental Theory.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The correlation research design was used for the research because correlational designs have the advantage of allowing the researcher to study behavior as it occurs in everyday life [17].

2.2 Area of Study

The study area was Rivers State which is one of the 36 states of Nigeria, located in the heart of the Niger Delta region of the country. It has 23 local government areas. According to census data released in 2006, the state has a population of 5,198,716, making it the sixth-most populous state in the country according to the National Bureau of Statistics. This area was ideal for this study because it provides an ideal social setting where families are confronted with several behavioural problems for children.

2.3 Study Population and Sample

The study population consisted of teachers in the state who have children. According to the report by Statistical Year Book of Rivers state, there are a total of 9,322 teachers in the state; out of this figure, 7,772 who are married with children under their care.

The sample size for this study was calculated using Cochrane formula according to Wordu and Wachukwu-Chikodi [18] for determining sample size in a research.

$$No = \frac{Z^2 Pq}{d^2}$$

Where; No= Minimum sample size

z = Standard normal deviation 1.96 which corresponds to 95% confidence level
P = Prevalence = 26.6% or 0.266

d = desired level of precision 5% or 0.05

q = 1-P = (1-0.266) = 0.734 (q is a constant, a design effect for research that has not been conducted on the target population in sampled area).

Thus n= $\frac{1.96^2 \times 0.266 \times 0.734}{0.05^2}$ =$\frac{3.84 \times 0.266 \times 0.734}{0.0025}$ =300

The sample therefore comprised of 300 teachers which were selected using a simple random sampling technique and stratified non-proportionate random sampling techniques.

2.4 Instruments

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled 'Home Environment and Child Behaviour Questionnaire' (HECBQ). The responses to HECBQ were designed on a 4 point rating scale of measurement of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), with values 4, 3, 2, and 1. HECBQ has two sections. Section A addressed the demographic variables while section B focused on the independent relationship between home media, family socioeconomic status and extended family members' attitude and child negative behaviours.

2.5 Validation of the Instrument

The HECBQ was subjected to face validation in order to ascertain the relevance in the present study. In view of this, the instrument was given to three experts in Measurement and Evaluation department, the department of Home Economics and Hotel Management, as well as an expert in Early Childhood Development, both from the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. The validates were required to check the suitability of language, its clarity, relevance of items to the study, and total coverage in addressing research questions; bearing in mind the purpose of the study. Those who participated in the validation were not part of the study proper.

2.6 Reliability of the Instrument

The HECBQ was subjected to trial testing using 30 respondents from institutions and ministries in Cross River State which were different in location from the area of the study. This is because both areas have similarities in structural definitions. The internal consistency of the items was determined using Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach's alpha =0.87). The reason for the use of this method is that it required single administration of the instrument to establish internal consistency estimate of the items.

2.7 Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained through the administration of the instrument was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses. Any response with a mean value of 2.50 and above was accepted, while any mean score of below 2.5 was rejected. For the hypotheses to be positive, the correlation result had an r value of 0 to +1.0 (accepted); while a negative correlation had an r value of 0 to -1.0 (rejected).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the relationships between extended family members' poor attitude and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State?

Table 1 below shows the mean ratings and standard deviation the relationships between extended family members' poor attitude and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State. The data revealed that the respondents' scores on items 13-18 were accepted because they had grand mean scores of 2.50 and above which is the cut-off mark. The standard deviation ranged between 0.82 and 0.98 indicating that the respondents were not far from their opinions. The table also showed that the highest mean score was 3.82 (item 5) while the lowest mean score was 3.01 (item 6).

Research Question 2: What are the relationships between home media and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State?

Table 2 below show the mean ratings and standard deviation on the relationships between home media and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State**.** The data revealed that the responses to items 19-24, were accepted because they had grand mean scores of 2.50 and above. The standard deviation ranged between 0.69 and 0.99. The table also showed that the highest mean score was 3.45 (item 3) while the lowest mean score was 2.71 (item 6).

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation on the relationships between extended family members' poor attitude and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State

S/N.	Extended family members' poor attitude	Male n=150			Female n=150		
		$\overline{X}$	SD	RMK	$\overline{X}$	SD	RMK
1.	Uncles that smoke will negatively influence children around them.	3.03	0.82	A	3.52	0.97	A
2.	Gossiping in extended families will affect negative behaviours in children.	3.03	0.88	A	3.46	0.82	A
3.	The presence of many members of the extended family will make the child avoid role play.	3.09	0.82	A	3.23	0.86	A
4.	Bad advice from an extended family member will negatively affect the child.	3.22	0.83	A	3.41	0.89	A
5.	Grandparents over pampering can negatively affect a child.	3.82	0.98	A	3.05	0.96	A
6.	Aunties that are morally bankrupt will influence female children to engage in premarital sex.	3.32	0.93	A	3.01	0.85	A
	Grand Mean	3.25	0.88	A	3.28	0.89	A

Keys: $\overline{X}$ = Mean; n= Sample; A= Accepted

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation on the relationships between home media and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State

S/N.	Home Media	Male n=150			Female n=150		
		$\overline{X}$	SD	RMK	$\overline{X}$	SD	RMK
1.	Uncontrolled television viewing will make children lose interest in their studies.	3.33	0.69	A	3.32	0.82	A
2.	Addiction to games will make children not useful at home.	3.32	0.73	A	3.34	0.84	A
3.	Children could be exposed to pornography through unregulated home media.	3.45	0.99	A	3.32	0.84	A
4.	School absenteeism will result from addiction to television.	3.22	0.81	A	3.21	0.97	A
5.	Uncontrolled use of internet at home could lead to cybercrimes.	3.23	0.88	A	3.43	0.82	A
6.	Children can develop negative attitudes from unregulated television viewing.	2.71	0.75	A	2.99	0.79	A
	Grand Mean	3.19	0.80	A	3.27	0.85	A

Keys: $\overline{X}$ = Mean; n= Sample; A= Accepted

Research Question 3: What are the relationships between family economic status and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State?

Table 3 below showed the mean ratings and standard deviations on the relationships between family economic status and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State. The data revealed that the respondents accepted all items (1-6) because these items had grand mean scores of 2.50 and above. The standard deviation ranged between 0.69 and 0.89 indicating that the respondents were not far from their opinions. The table also showed that the highest mean score was 3.45 (item 5) while the lowest mean score was 2.91 (item 6). The grand mean was 3.24.

3.2 Hypotheses

Ho$_1$: There is no significant relationship between poor attitudes of extended family members' and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State.

Table 4 shows the correlation analysis between extended family members' poor attitude and deviant behavior. The result of the correlation revealed a significant relationship (P<0. 05) between poor attitude of extended family members and Deviant Behaviour (DB) in Rivers State. As a result, based on the decision rule, (P<0.05) and with a Pearson's correlation coefficient of =0. 900, H$_0$1 was rejected. The implication of this is that, there is a significant relationship between poor attitude of extended family and Deviant Behaviour (DB) in Rivers State.

Ho$_2$: There is no significant relationship between home media on child deviant behaviours in Rivers State.

Table 5 shows the correlation analysis between home media and deviant behavior. The result of the correlation revealed a significant relationship (P<0. 05) between Home Media (HM) and Deviant Behaviour (DB) in Rivers State. As a result, based on the decision rule, (P<0.05) and with a Pearson's correlation coefficient of =0. 981, H$_0$2 was subsequently rejected. The implication of this is that, there is a significant relationship between Home Media and Deviant Behaviour in Rivers State.

Ho$_3$: There is no significant difference relationship between family economic status and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State.

Table 6 below shows the correlation analysis between family economic status and deviant behavior. The result of the correlation revealed a significant relationship (P<0. 05) between Family Economic Status and Deviant Behaviour in Rivers State. As a result, based on the decision rule, (P<0.05) and with a Pearson's correlation coefficient of =0.832. Hypothesis 3 was subsequently rejected. The implication of this is that, there is a significant relationship between Family Economic Status and Deviant Behaviour in Rivers State.

3.3 Discussion of the Findings

From the result on the relationships between poor attitudes of extended family members' and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State, the findings were revealed as follows: uncles that smoke will negatively influence children around them ($\overline{X}$ 3.03, 3.52); gossiping in extended families will affect negative behaviours in children ($\overline{X}$ 3.03, 3.46); the presence of many members of the extended family will make the child avoid role play ($\overline{X}$ 3.09, 3.23); bad advice from an extended family member will negatively affect the child ($\overline{X}$ 3.22, 3.41); grandparents over pampering can negatively affect a child ($\overline{X}$ 3.82, 3.05); aunties that are morally bankrupt will influence female children to engage in premarital sex ($\overline{X}$ 3.32, 3.01).

The organization of the family has direct effect on the children. The first social relationship of children is the family where children acquire their first experiences of being treated as persons in their own right. Children receive care for their dependency and attention for their sociability. The kind of care and attention children receive during their early years of life affect their handling of important issues, such as trust vs. distrust and autonomy vs. disunity. Children growing up in a household shared with other siblings learn that they have to share the resources of the household. Children learn the ways in which their cooperation is sought and welcomed and the ways in which they may compete for what they want [19]. In an extended family filled with grown-ups, teenagers, and children, it can be very difficult to maintain the sense of unity [19]. Everybody has personal preferences and different schedules on a daily basis. Certain activities can unintentionally make another feel upset or disappointed.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation on the relationships between family economic status and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State

S/N.	Family economic status	Male n=150			Female n=150		
		$\overline{X}$	SD	RMK	$\overline{X}$	SD	RMK
1.	Inability to provide basic needs by parents can make lead to stealing.	3.33	0.89	A	3.32	0.72	A
2.	Female children can seek get involved in sexual relationships to meet needs.	3.32	0.73	A	3.34	0.74	A
3.	Family poverty can cause frustration-aggression in children.	3.45	0.89	A	3.32	0.74	A
4.	Unmet needs can lead to disrespect to parents.	3.22	0.71	A	3.21	0.77	A
5.	Children can learn to steal if their needs are not met over time.	3.23	0.73	A	3.43	0.82	A
6.	Family poverty can lead to street begging by children.	2.91	0.69	A	3.02	0.73	A
	Grand Mean	3.24	0.77	A	3.37	0.75	A

Keys: $\overline{X}$ = Mean; n= Sample; A= Accepted

Table 4. Correlation analysis between poor attitudes of extended family and deviant behaviour in Rivers State

Variables	Correlation	Respondents	
		Poor attitudes of Extended Family	Deviant Behaviour (DB)
Poor attitudes of Extended Family	Pearson Correlation	1	.900[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Deviant Behaviour (DB)	Pearson Correlation	.900[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5. Correlation analysis between home media (HM) and deviant behaviour (DB) in rivers state

Variables	Correlation	Respondents	
		Home Media (HM)	**Deviant Behaviour (DB)**
Home Media (EF)	Pearson Correlation	1	.981[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Deviant Behaviour (DB)	Pearson Correlation	.981[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6. Correlation analysis between family economic status (FES) and deviant Behaviour (DB) in rivers state

Variables	Correlation	Respondents	
		Family Economic Status (FES)	**Deviant Behaviour (DB)**
Family Economic Status (FES)	Pearson Correlation	1	.832[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Deviant Behaviour (DB)	Pearson Correlation	.832[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The findings on the relationships between home media and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State were revealed as follows: uncontrolled television viewing will make children lose interest in their studies ($\overline{X}$ 3.33, 3.32); addiction to games will make children not useful at home ($\overline{X}$ 3.32, 3.34); children could be exposed to pornography through unregulated home media ($\overline{X}$ 3.45, 3.32); school absenteeism will result from addiction to television ($\overline{X}$ 3.22, 3.21); uncontrolled use of internet at home could lead to cybercrimes ($\overline{X}$ 3.23, 3.43); children can develop negative attitudes from unregulated television viewing ($\overline{X}$ 2.71, 2.99). An individual child's developmental level is a critical factor in determining whether the medium will have positive or negative effects. Not all television programs are bad, but data showing the negative effects of exposure to violence, inappropriate sexuality and offensive language are convincing [16]. Still, physicians need to advocate continued research into the negative and positive effects of media on children and adolescents. Many children abuse home media; with parents showing less concern.

Finally, the findings on the relationships between family economic status and child deviant behaviours in Rivers State showed the following: inability to provide basic needs by parents can make lead to stealing ($\overline{X}$ 3.33, 3.32); female children can seek get involved in sexual relationships to meet needs ($\overline{X}$ 3.3, 3.34); family poverty can cause frustration-aggression in children ($\overline{X}$ 3.45, 3.32); unmet needs can lead to disrespect to parents ($\overline{X}$ 3.22, 3.21); children can learn to steal if their needs are not met over time ($\overline{X}$ 3.23, 3.43); family poverty can lead to street begging by children ($\overline{X}$ 2.91, 3.02).

Poverty has a strong link with children's outcomes. Children raised in poverty are much less likely to have these crucial needs met than their more affluent peers are and, as a result, are subject to some grave consequences. Deficits in these areas inhibit the production of new brain cells, alter the path of maturation, and rework the healthy neural circuitry in children's brains, thereby undermining emotional and social development and predisposing them to emotional dysfunction [16]. When needs are not met, children, especially adolescent become eager to look elsewhere for support.

4. CONCLUSION

Child deviancy is a major social problem which raises serious concern for families, general public and government. Although many believe that teachers and lecturers have more time for their children, and more involved in parenting, observation by this research showed that many of these teachers and lecturers' children are involved in one deviant behaviour or the other. Young children of secondary school ages are commonly involved in some crimes and deviant behaviours which portend menace to the society. With the socio-economic pressure on parents, many parents and older family members rarely have time for their children. This study showed that there is a significant relationship between home environment and deviant behaviour in Rivers State. It is therefore recommended that families must be sensitized on the destructive aspects of the extended family structure on child behaviours. Families should also regulate the use of home media by children and families should be encouraged to prioritize children's basic needs in order to keep them 'home'.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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