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## **Relationship between Child Rearing Pattern and Secondary School Students' Study Habits**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between child rearing pattern and study habit of secondary school students in selected schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study intended to achieve the following objectives: investigate if any relationship exists between childrearing pattern and secondary school students' study habits. The results indicate that Autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire child rearing patterns had significant relationship with students study habits. An obvious implication was that Teachers' awareness of this would enable them and guidance counselors to better attend to students' study habit problems.*

### **Introduction**

It is one thing to bring a child to this world through sexual relationship between the opposite sexes; it is a different ballgame to rear such a child to maturity. Child rearing, by dictionary definition is the act of bringing up or caring for a child to maturity (Procter, 1978). Families, by nature, have been vested with the task of bringing up and caring for children whenever they (families) are blessed with them. Ezewu (1983) identified child rearing as the next most important function of the family after child bearing. Dressler and Carns (1973) equally recognized care, protection and early socialization of children as the second and general function of families. These functions as identified by Dressler and Carns are also aspects of child rearing.

Child rearing patterns or parenting types have been categorized into three: Autocratic or Authoritarian, Democratic or Authoritative, and laissez-faire or permissive (Duer and Parke (1970); Baumrind (1971); and Amajirianwu (1981). Irrespective of the terms used in illustrating each of the identified patterns, the characteristics and attributes associated with each group have been consistent. Parents who predominantly rely on the autocratic child rearing lay much emphasis on getting immediate and long-range obedience from their children. The relationship which exists between such parents and their children is such that places value on controlling the child's behavior (Baumrind, 1966). Democratic parents on the other hand approach the act of child upbringing with

some measures of flexibility. Children from such homes are allowed considerable freedom with their discipline, and control altered to meet their need and not wishes.

Closely related to the democratic type of child rearing is the laissez-faire. Parents that are in favor of this parental practice typically rely on reasoning and manipulation as against overt demonstration of power. Children are recognized as individuals and need to be encouraged to become independent. The home or the family is therefore, the first social environment which the child knows. It is a unit of the larger social environment where the child learns about the norms and mores, and how best to behave in the larger society. From early childhood, children take in information about the roles and relationship of people and things in their environment. Consequently, adults teach children in the course of their daily interaction with them directly or indirectly.

One important art to learn by children in the course of their interaction with adults is the art of studying. The child needs an enabling environment in order to develop good study habits. Put more succinctly, the child-rearing pattern of the parents would be seen to be an important factor in achieving good study habits. This position is yet to be proved beyond reasonable doubts. In contribution to this end, this study aims at investigating the relationship between child rearing pattern and study habits of secondary school students in Rivers State of Nigeria. To further this purpose, we ask the following research questions to guide the conduct of this study. What is the relationship between autocratic child rearing pattern (ACRP) and study habit? What is the relationship between democratic child rearing pattern (DCRP) and students' study habit? What is the relationship between laissez-faire child rearing pattern and students' habit? This paper attempts to provide answers to the above questions.

## **Theoretical Issues And Literature Review**

### **Role of Parents in Child Rearing**

Parents are the pillars on which the family unit is upheld. They therefore, provide the necessary raw materials needed for the child's character formation. This is so because; a child's first contact in life is naturally with the parents (excluding the medical personnel). His/her knowledge of self, others, right and wrong concepts are facilitated by the way the parents are able to carry out their God-given responsibilities of bringing him/her up. Where parents are able to realize their duties towards their children and carry them out effectively, the children will likely turn out to be good citizens (Ezewu, 1983). The researcher agrees with this view because, the home experiences are more or less the foundation blocks upon which subsequent experiences and influences are built or acted upon.

In other words, in addition to providing the enabling environment for good character formation, the parents are also required to set standards and define clearly what should or should not be done by

the child. The entire family atmosphere as created by parents, should to a large extent determine how well-adjusted a child that comes from such family would be. His/her ability to comport himself/herself, solve problems that may confront him/her as well as carry out responsibilities that might come his/her way in the process of growth, depends on how the individual was handled as a child. Dressler and Carns (1973) supporting the above view, opined that a child learns a good deal of what he/she needs to know from the family. The early childhood experiences afford him/her opportunity for this knowledge which helps the child to become a productive adult in future. This view is in line with Freud's conception of human character development as discussed in Uba (1987). Freud held that an individual develops his character based on the type of relationship that existed between him/her and the parents during early childhood.

This is not to say that the family is the sole agent for shaping an individual's life or behaviours. It is just that the childhood family experiences can make or mar the child's ability to get on well with children from other backgrounds and fulfill the expected societal roles at various stages of development. This depends on how such experiences are patterned. Dressler and Carns (1973) maintained that families provide a milieu within which such a child can interact with others on closer terms. The socialization process comes into focus at this juncture. This is obvious because, it tends to be a true reflection of people's philosophies, goals, aspirations and desires in relation to what they want their future to look like (Ezewu, 1983). The stimulation of these ideals are mainly achieved through the way and manner the children within that social setting are brought up. The onus of realizing all these rests primarily on the shoulders of the parents especially at the early stage of life.

The question then becomes: How do parents go about instilling, inculcating and eternalizing the socially accepted values into their children. In their explanation of why it is possible for a child's rearing pattern to be reflected in his/her behaviour outside of his home, Cole and Hall (1970, p. 392) observed.

The child who has been actively rejected by his parents is passive towards authority, docile, outwardly decorous since only by such behaviour, can he escape their nagging and punishment. He is also hostile, withdrawn, fearful, frustrated, insecure, stubborn and passively resistant.

Similarly, some students that have been brought up under very strict and rigid homes where they are meant to be seen and not heard sometimes tend to show evidence of lack in initiatives. This is so because they have been brought up to obey rules and regulations. They, therefore, tend to wait for directives or instructions before they can take up responsibilities.

With the fore-going discussion, there is no doubt that the interaction between some environmental, physical and other factors bring about children's character formation. This is in line with Oko's (1999) view that the way a child is groomed contributes to his development and formation of achievement motives in life itself. If parental child rearing pattern so influences the life of the individual – particularly children there is therefore, the need to examine its relationship to students.

### **Study Habits and Child Rearing Pattern**

Gardner (1978) defined study habits as those commonly used terms which describe behaviours that are associated with learning. He explained that these stimulus elicited patterns of responses are acquired by repeated sequence of activities. This agrees with Child's (1978) definition of habit which according to him is an automatic type of response pattern which is prompted by sequence of activities until such sequence becomes spontaneous. According to him habits could be associated with different aspects of human endeavours which the researcher considers studies to be part of-hence study habits.

In Child's discussion of factors which he thought could affect the efficiency of learning for retention, he identified study habits among other things. According to him, no way has been identified as the best suited for every individual; rather, he puts it thus: "successful patterns of behaviour most suited to our personal make-up and external constraints become established as habits of responding", p. 144. In other words, one's study habits are just those behaviours that are relevant to learning which one has as a result of repeated responses become adjusted to. Study habits could therefore, be said to be individually acquired. These are through patterns of activities which when carried out successfully become repeated and consequently result to habits.

Study habit is an indispensable aspect of the learning process. Effective study habit results in positive learning outcomes while defective study habit results to poor learning outcomes. For study habit to be considered effective, the following fundamental components and more should be evidently present; drawing up and abiding to daily study schedule, full involvement in teaching and learning processes, inculcating good reading habit, promptly doing and turning in class work and assignment, jotting down points while the teacher is teaching and during private studies etc. (Kemjika 1998). Good study habits are essential ingredients for excellent academic performances for every student. When students excel in schools academically, parents are usually elated. The tendency most times is to attribute the reasons behind such brilliant performances to heredity, parental competence or efforts to that regard. Thus, one hears such comments like "that was how the father or mother excelled in academics during his or her days".

On the contrary, when the performances are below parental expectation, the teachers, schools and government are blamed. By so doing, they tend to forget the fact that the decision to acquire formal education yields greater dividends when it is backed-up by good study habits that are capable of making striking impression. Study habits may, as a matter of fact, make or mar one's academic pursuit, depending on how positive or negative they are. Poor and defective study habits have been reported among many secondary school students. Investigating the study habits of secondary school students in Benin City, Onomuodeke (1988) found out that majority of the students has defective study habits. Poor study habits as observed by Kemjika (1998) definitely ends in poor academic performances. This observation is in line with Onyejiaku (1987) who opined that ineffective study techniques were among the major factors responsible for poor grades or academic failures. The crumbling of the house in biblical story of a man who built his house without proper planning and adequate foundation is a good illustration of what the fate of a student who has bad or poor study habit can be. In other words, a student who has not prepared adequately to pass has prepared to fail.

Formation of good study habit does not come that easily. Frantic effort backed by determination and self-discipline are required to achieve any desire to that effect. Parenting or child rearing pattern which is the primary focus of this study, has a lot to offer in the way a child carries out responsibilities or tasks in life. Fontana cited in Okwubunka (1993) stated that basic values are likely acquired by children in their early years. Some of the virtues identified were obedience, honesty, problem solving, hard work among others. Since study habits have been acknowledged as part of the factors that determine good academic performances, a child's attitude towards his/her studies, success or hard work could be linked to the type of up-bringing he received. In her own opinion, Okwubunka (1993) opined that children tend to be their true selves when they are outside the confines of their homes. This is why some children tend to have dual personalities:- one they assume when their parents are around (the type they know their parents want), and another (their real selves) they exhibit out of their parents' sight.

Children who portray this type of dual personality characteristics may in some way be manifesting their type of upbringing. For instance, a child that is denied the opportunity of self-expression at home may go out to be noisy and pompous. On the other hand, that same child may true to his/her rearing pattern be shy and withdrawn outside home thereby portraying a true characteristic of his/her upbringing. Similarly, some children whose parents have not shown love, care or interest in them may also translate similar attitude to their studies and other undertakings. Cole and Hall (1970) supporting the views expressed above, stated that when a child's behavior is observed away from home, one may be able to guess the type of parenting he/she received. This is so according to them, because the child's behavior is to some extent a true reflection of the environment he/she has lived

in. The way a child develops depends largely on the people around him. He learns the values and skills required for social living from them. Apparently, every family does not carry out its task of socialization with equal effectiveness or success. This could be explained by the fact that man is a product of his environment since the nature of the home or family he/she comes from to a great extent determines the type of person he/she will be.

A child's response to learning and academic commitment at school depends more on his family orientation before his exposure to formal education. Nei (1965) said that faulty environment produces faulty learning. One may not totally agree with the above view because with all the inadequacies in our environment, some students are still excelling academically. However, Baumrind's research results as reported in Weiss and Schwarz (1996) showed that good adjustment in children was associated with parents who use firm consistent discipline and are warm and supportive. These characteristics described here suit the democratic or authoritative family type. Steinbert, Elmen and Mounts (1989) expressed the view that consistent wide range of positive adolescent outcomes in the areas of better academic performance, increased competence, self-esteem, less deviance and autonomy are greatly influenced by the type of parenting they received.

From the foregoing discourse, it is evident that some people are of the opinion that the type of parenting a child received has a lot to offer in the way or level of commitment to his/her academics or any other life venture. This informs the need to carry out this present study on relationship between child rearing pattern, study habits and career choice of secondary school students with a view to suggesting areas of changes and empowerments as the case may be.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The design for this study was correlational research. It was aimed at finding out the relationship between child rearing patterns and study habits of secondary school students. Nworgu (1991) defined correlational research as a study aimed at establishing the relationship, which exists between two or more variables.

### **Area of the Study**

The study was carried out in Rivers State which is one of the states in the Niger-Delta area of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The state consists of 23 local government areas with Port Harcourt as the Capital City. Rivers State was chosen for this study because of the researcher's years of working experience in the state's secondary school system.

**Population of the Study**

The population for the study consisted of all the senior secondary class three (SSIII) students in all the 240 public secondary schools in Rivers State. They were about 3000 in the 2000/2001 academic session when this study was conducted. These groups of students were chosen because they have been in secondary schools for over five years and were expected to have formed their individual study habits.

**Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The sample of this study was 410 SSIII students. This was drawn through simple random sampling by slips of papers. Out of the 240 secondary schools in Rivers State, 30 schools, were selected through simple random sampling. In each of these schools, one arm of SSIII class was randomly selected. All the students in the selected classes were administered with the instruments. 10, 12, 15 and 20 students were subsequently selected through copies of the instruments they responded to.

**Instruments for Data Collection**

The data was collected with two instruments. One of them was Child Rearing Pattern Questionnaire (CRPQ) developed by the researcher. This was a 30-item likert type scale. It required the respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement i.e strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) to their parents use of child rearing patterns identified by the researcher. The other one instrument was Study Habits (SHI). This is a standardized instruments developed by Bakare. The SHI was a self-report inventory which enabled the respondent to describe habits that affected his/her use of study time. The inventory has 45 items posed as direct questions. The respondent was required to provide answers to five-point response scale on how regularly he/she behaved in the stated ways. The highest possible score on SHI was 225 while the lowest was 45.

**Validation of the Instrument**

Copies of the CRPQ were sent to three specialists in Guidance and Counselling and two in Measurement and Evaluation for face validation. The resource persons were requested to assess the instrument in relation to relevance to the study and clarity of words. Their inputs were noted and suggested corrections affected in the final version of the CRPQ.

As standardized instrument, the inventory (SHI) was validated after three years of experimentation and corrections it was subjected to before its final acceptance (Bakare, 1977).



### **Reliability of the Instruments**

The reliability coefficient of CRPQ was determined with a test-retest reliability. Some copies of the instruments were administered to 60 SSIII students from schools that were not used in the study. This was done with a view to eliminating contamination. The instrument was re-administered after a two-week interval. The data generated was correlated and a test-retest reliability of 0.78 was obtained.

The reliabilities of SHI as recorded in the manual were 0.83  $P < .05$  and 0.64  $P < .05$  at different reliability tests conducted by Bakare.

### **Procedure for Data Collection**

The researcher administered the questionnaire with the assistance of guidance counselors and teachers in the schools used for the study. The participation of these professional colleagues in the administration of the instruments helped tremendously in sustaining the students interest to complete them (instruments). Most of the instruments were collected on the spot while a few were collected a day or two after. The questionnaire and inventories were then scored. The data generated were collated for statistical analysis.

### **Scoring of the Instrument**

The CRPQ had 30 items. Autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire child rearing patterns had 10 items respectively. These items have negative and positive statements. For the positive statements, strongly agree (SA) was scored 5 points, agree (A) had 4, Neutral (N) scored 3, Disagree (D) had 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) scored 1. For any negative item, strongly agree (SA) was scored 1, Agree (A) scored 2, Neutral (N) scored 3, disagree (D) scored 4 and strongly disagree (SD) scored 5. A student's score on each of the child rearing patterns was obtained by adding the scores of the items that elicited information on it. The maximum score for each of the child rearing patterns was 50 while the minimum was 10. For the SHI, the comprehensive scoring form was utilized. The alternative answers were scored on a 5 point scale depending on whether it was positive or negative question. The positive/desirable practice was scored thus: almost Never 1, less than half the time 2, about half the time 3, more than half of the time 4, almost always 5. For the negative practice, the reverse of the scores obtained. The various scores from the different sections were totaled and recorded.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected were analyzed with mean, standard deviation and Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation,  $r$ . Pearson  $r$  was used in the testing of the 6 null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

## Presentation of Data and Results of the Hypotheses

We present and analyze the data following the dictates of the research questions that yielded three associated hypotheses.

### Relationship between Autocratic Child Rearing Pattern and Students Study Habit

In the introductory part of this paper we asked research question in respect of the relationship between autocratic child rearing pattern and study habit? This research question was answered with Pearson r as shown in Table 1, panel 1. The data in Panel 1 indicated that autocratic child rearing pattern had a mean of 66.205 and standard deviation of 8.426. Study habit had the mean of 65.268 and standard deviation of 7.820. Pearson r for autocratic child rearing pattern and study habit was 0.713.

The relationship between autocratic child rearing pattern and students study habit can be captured under a null hypothesis as follows: "There is no significant relationship between autocratic child rearing pattern and students study habit." This null hypothesis was tested with Pearson r at 0.05 alpha level and df 408. The summary of the result was shown in Table 1, Panel 2.

**Table 1, Panel 1: Mean, Standard deviation and Pearson r for the Relationship Between Autocratic Child Rearing Pattern (ACRP) and Study Habits.**

	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	r
Autocratic Child Rearing Pattern	66.205	8.426	410	0.713
Study Habit	65.268	7.820	410	

**Table 1, Panel 2: Summary of Pearson r for the Relationship Between Autocratic Child Rearing Pattern and Students' Study Habits.**

	$\bar{X}$	SD	r-cal	r-crit	df	Alpha Level
Autocratic Child Rearing Pattern	66.205	8.426				
Study habit	65.268	7.820	0.713	0.195	408	0.05

Panel 2 showed that the value of r calculated (i.e., 0.713) was greater than the critical value of r at 0.05 alpha level and df of 408 (i.e., 0.195). In the light of this, the null hypothesis one was rejected. Hence the relationship between autocratic child rearing pattern and study habit was significant.

### Relationship between Democratic Child Rearing Pattern and Students' Study Habit

Earlier we asked a second question: What is the relationship between democratic child rearing pattern (DCRP) and study habit? The observations in respect of Research question two were summarized in Table 2, Panel 1. The data presented in Table 2 above showed the mean and standard deviation of democratic child rearing pattern as 65.563 and 7.460 respectively. On the other hand, study habit had a mean of 65.268 and a standard deviation of 7.820. Pearson r for the two variables was 0.526.

The relationship between democratic child rearing pattern and students' study habit was captured in the following hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between democratic child rearing pattern and students' study habit." The null hypothesis two was tested with Pearson r at 0.05 alpha level and df of 408. Summary of this test was presented in Table 2, Panel 2.

**Table 2, Panel 1: Mean, standard deviation and Pearson r for the Relationship Between Democratic Child Rearing Pattern and Study Habits.**

	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	r
Democratic child rearing pattern	65.563	7.460	410	0.526
Study Habit	65.268	7.820	410	

**Table 2, Panel 2: Summary of Pearson r for the Relationship between Democratic Child Rearing Pattern and Study Habits of Students**

	$\bar{X}$	SD	r-cal	r-crit	df	Alpha Level
Democratic Child Rearing Pattern	65.563	7.460				
Study habit	65.268	7.820	0.526	0.195	408	0.05

The data on Table 2 showed that the calculated r value of 0.526 was greater than the critical value of r at 0.05 alpha level and df of 408 (0.195). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This meant that the relationship between democratic child rearing pattern and study habit was significant.

### Relationship between Laissez-Faire Child Rearing Pattern and Students' Study Habit

What is the relationship between laissez-faire child rearing pattern (LFCRP) and study habit?

This was the substance of Research question three whose descriptive statistics are shown in Table 3, Panel 1. The data presented in Table 3 above showed the mean of laissez-faire child rearing pattern to

be 64.783 while the standard deviation was 8.107. 65.268 and 7.820 were the mean and standard deviation of study habit. Pearson r for LFCRP and study habit was 0.441.

The relationship between laissez-faire child rearing pattern and students' study habit was expressed in the hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between laissez-faire child rearing pattern and students' study habit." The null hypothesis three was tested with Pearson r at 0.05 alpha level and df of 408. The summary of the result was shown in table 3.

**Table 3, Panel: Mean, Standard deviation and Pearson r for the Relationship Between Laissez-faire Child Rearing Pattern and Study Habits**

	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	r
Laissez-faire child rearing pattern	64.783	8.107	410	0.441
Study Habit	65.268	7.820	410	

**Table 3: Summary of Pearson r for the Relationship Between Laissez-faire Child Rearing Pattern and Students' Study Habits.**

	$\bar{X}$	SD	r-cal	r-crit	df	Alpha Level
Laissez-faire Child Rearing Pattern	64.783	8.107				
Study habit	65.268	7.820	0.441	0.195	408	0.05

Table 3 indicated that the value of r calculated which was 0.441 was greater than the critical value of r at 0.05 alpha level and 408 df. Hence the relationship between laissez-faire child rearing pattern and study habit was significant. The null hypothesis 3 was therefore rejected.

### Discussion of Findings

The result of the analyzed data derived from the above hypothesis showed (in table 1, panel 2) that the calculated r value of 0.713 was greater than the critical value of r at 0.05 alpha level and 408 df (i.e. 0.195). The null hypothesis was rejected. This meant that there was significant relationship between autocratic child rearing pattern and students' study habit. This result tend to be at variance with Montemayor's (1986) study which among other things highlighted the characteristics of adolescents reared in autocratic families as dependent and unable to take decisions and execute them. The formation of good study habit demands a great deal of self-discipline which one has to take firm stand on. Children reared in autocratic homes have much demands made of them by

parents (Hilgard, 1972). These demands include compliance to rules and regulations which good study habit forms part in the secondary school system.

There is no significant relationship between democratic child rearing pattern and students' study habit. The result of the data as reflected in table 1 showed that calculated  $r$  value of 0.526 was greater than the critical value of  $r$  (0.195), at 0.05 alpha level and  $df$  of 408. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This meant that there was significant relationship between democratic child rearing pattern and students' study habit. The significant relationship between democratic child rearing pattern and study habit did not come as a surprise. This pattern of child rearing has been highly favoured by authors as one that provides opportunities for mutual understanding and trust between parents and their children. Adults allow their children considerable freedom and alter their control and discipline to meet the needs not wishes of developing individuals (Baumrind 1971). It is therefore natural that a student's study habit would be congruent to the parenting style he receives. Since parents try to explain and justify the demands made on their children as being to the best of their interest (children's), it is expected that they (children) would inturn internalize those behaviours and habits that should meet parental approval. This view tend to agree with Baumrind (1968) position that children reared democratically are expected to comply with reasonable demands. Good study habit is not only a reasonable demand but a gate-way to academic and career success.

There are no significant relationship between laissez-faire child rearing pattern and students' study habit. The result in table 3 indicated that the calculated  $r$  value of 0.441 was greater than the critical value of  $r$  at 0.05 alpha level and 408  $df$  which was 0.195. The null hypothesis was thus rejected. This meant that laissez-faire child rearing pattern had significant relationship with student's study habit. In other words, students brought up under the laissez-faire child rearing pattern have good study habit. This result seemed to be inconsistent with Baumrind's study as reported in Weiss and Schwarz (1996). The adolescents brought up under laissez-faire child rearing pattern were said to be less achievement oriented and less competent than their children counterparts. As it is typical of the adolescents to assert their ability to be independent in a bid to get detached from parental apron strings, it may not be quite surprising that the students used for this study, (majority of who are adolescents) would have results that correlated with laissez-faire child rearing pattern. In line with the above view, Ogwudire (1984) observed that the latitude allowed the children in laissez-faire families provides them with opportunity to be creative and self reliant.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

The following conclusions were drawn in the light of the findings of this study: Autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire child rearing patterns had significant relationship with students study habits. The result of the work has some implications for parents, students, teachers and counselors. In the first

instance, autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire child rearing patterns were found to have significant relationship with students' study habits. Teachers' awareness of this would enable them and guidance counselors to better attend to students' study habit problems. They will also be better equipped to advice and counsel parents on the need to vary their approaches to child rearing in order to positively affect their children's attitude towards studies. This will naturally lead to better academic performances on the part of the students.

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