

The Influence of Family and Parent Types on the Child Rearing Practices of Parents: Nigerian Experience

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Abstract: This study investigated the influence of family and parent types on the child rearing practices of parents of children in day care centres in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Two research questions were answered and two hypotheses were tested. The population studied consisted of 12080 parents of children (age from birth to 3 years) in the 604 government approved crèche/nursery schools in the State. A sample of 1200 parents (respondents) was drawn from this population using multistage random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a 51-item Child Rearing Practice Scale (CRPS) with Pearson's average reliability coefficient of 0.84 adapted to evaluate child rearing practices under the five domains of child rearing related to infancy, namely: feeding, cleaning, protection, stimulation and monitoring of growth and development. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while one-way analysis of variance and independent t-test were used where appropriate to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 significant level. The findings revealed that family-type and parent-type of parents of children in day care centres in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria significantly influence the child rearing practices of such parents. Parents of children from extended family do significantly better in child rearing practices than their nuclear family counterparts, while those of two-parent families do significantly better than their single parent and step-parent counterparts. The findings are of practical essence to day care centres, social welfare centres, government and some non-governmental organizations.

Key words: family type, parent type, child rearing, mother.

1. Introduction

The role of families and parents in providing their children with basic needs through child rearing practices is very crucial in bringing up children. Wendorf (2004) warned that we as parents literally have in our hands the ability to create a violent culture or a peaceful one. As in many parts of Africa, Nigeria today is bedevilled with criminality and problem behaviours such as vandalization of public property, kidnapping or abduction, ritual killings, corruption, robbery, examination misconduct, fraud, divorce, lack of respect for law and order and a host of other anti-social behaviours. The country has witnessed violence of serious dimensions such as violent conflict in Niger Delta as a result of skewed revenue sharing formula and accumulative instinct of public officers at all levels of government, political, ethnic and religious violence resulting to wanton destruction of lives and property;

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Boko Haram insurgence in the North East with devastating consequences on human life and socioeconomic activities that threatens Nigeria's continued survival as a nation (Enweremadu, 2014); domestic violence such as rape, acid attacks, molestation, wife battery and corporal punishment which has been on a nationwide increase in the past three years from 21% in 2011 to 30% in 2013 (CLEEN Foundation, 2014). Nigeria Watch (2014) reported that between 1st June 2006 and 31st May, 2011, there were 7,645 incidents of violence in Nigeria resulting to 30,375 deaths; and a total of 21,394 deaths due to violence between June 12, 2011 and August 31, 2014 (NST, 2014). These problems can be traced back to the socialization process of the child in his or her early years of life. Hence Nwankwo (2011) citing Bukoye (2004) has decried the parent-child relationship in some Nigerian families in which incidences of child neglect and abuse such as excessive corporal punishment in the name of discipline, emotional abuse, social neglect and even gender discrimination are common place. The degree of care and love a child receives in the early years dictates a child's sense of relationship to the society and to himself or herself. A child cannot care for or nurture others if he or she is not cared for or nurtured first.

The family and parent types of the children as part of the social environment in which the children are cared for or nurtured and from where they draw their models matter a lot in determining the successful rearing of such children. The problem is that if the social environment of a particular family structure does not relatively facilitate the child rearing practices of parents, and if no measures are taken to identify and improve such social environment in which such parents rear their children, the society will be adversely affected on the long run. Hence the need to investigate the influence of various family and parent types on the child rearing practices of parents of children in day care centres in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Child rearing refers to bringing up children by parents or parent substitutes (Saramma & Thomas, 2010). That is, child rearing describes the way parents bring up their children. It consists of practices derived from cultural patterns and beliefs. According to Iliya (2000), it includes the type of control, degree of care and emotional tone of the home. It is probably the most challenging responsibility for a mother during her child's infancy. Evans and Myers (1994) remarked that successful child rearing is essential for the child's overall development and realization of self-esteem. In line with this view, Darling and Steinberg (1993) said that how a child is raised or the parenting style influences his behaviour and psychological development and affects how successful he can be later in life. When an infant is a newborn, parenting involves caring for his basic needs, but as a child progresses through infancy to her first birthday, parenting differs among families. The early experiences with child rearing are formative and contribute to the child's temperament as he grows up.

In Africa, even though other elder members of the family also contribute to child care, the mother is the primary caregiver for infants (Armar-Klemesu, Reul, Maxwell, Levin, & Morris, 2000). In fact, the important components or major domains of child care are maternal activities that promote the children's physical, intellectual and psycho-social development so that they may grow up to express their full potentials. Saramma and Thomas (2010) identified such major domains or components of child rearing during infancy as feeding, meeting the needs of cleaning and protection including prevention of accidents and injuries, providing appropriate infant stimulation, and monitoring growth and development.

1.1 Some Theoretical Motivations

Maslow (1970) in his theories of self-actualization and motivation wanted to understand why certain people are successful? His "Hierarchy of Needs" visualized in a pyramid, explained the spectrum of human needs, from basics like food to complex social needs like respect. Maslow theorized that a person could not achieve higher

needs without satisfying basic ones. He postulated that all humans had basic needs, and that until those needs were met, all other needs would be perceived as subsets of those needs.

Maslow's theory of Hierarchy of Needs, which is readily applicable to a growing baby emphasized five levels of human development for the attention of parents especially at the early age when they are not yet capable of providing for any of these needs themselves (Campbell, 2014). Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be broken down into two categories: the instinctual needs and the growth needs. The first four levels on Maslow's hierarchy, the instinctual needs, are the most applicable to babies and children. These are the needs that, if not fulfilled, will gain importance and focus as a child becomes highly compelled to fill them. The levels, which fall into the instinctual needs category are physiological, safety and security, social needs and esteem.

The physiological needs include nutrition, oxygen, hydration, shelter, rest and human touch. This level involves meeting an infant's most basic needs so that he can be nurtured to a higher stage of development. The need for food, shelter, and warmth are the basic needs to be provided by families and parents for the survival of the child. Without meeting these needs which are associated with psychological development of children, an infant will likely suffer from a failure to thrive, and he will not be able to develop trust in his care givers (Campbell, 2014). After the physiological needs sets in the other three needs, safety and security, social needs, and self esteem, in that order.

Once a child has his or her physical needs satisfied, feels safe and loved, he or she wants to be respected by his peers. The esteem level on the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs will occur when a baby enters childhood. This is the stage when he will begin to focus on his own self-worth. Between age 9 months and age 3, a baby makes tremendous strides toward mastering his world. A secure baby explores his world, confident that his achievements will be admired. Encouragement and respect by families and parents are important, as is positive discipline and the opportunity to learn life skills. During this tier, children will begin to build upon confidence and independence. At this level, Maslow's hierarchy of children's basic needs emphasize the duty of families and parents to promote self esteem and support achievements in their younger children possibly by using rewards and praise. Fulfilling all these basic needs may vary from family to family and parent to parent, depending on circumstances, family and parent types. It is therefore of interest to examine the extent to which parents of children (age birth-3) from different family and parent types in daycare centres in Akwa Ibom State meet the instinctual needs of such children.

1.2 Concluding Remarks on Maslow's Theory

According to the above Maslows hierarchy of needs, a child without adequate nourishment cannot strive for affection and a sense of belonging; he is physiologically stuck in the first level of development. A child who never received consistent love is incapable of striving for self-respect and the respect of others, as these needs rely first on the ability to give and receive love. Maslow further proposes that self-actualized, conscious people are naturally connected to the planet, have the capacity to be concerned with global issues, and can appreciate the beauty in nature and in living.

If this theory holds true, as evidence seems to indicate, proponents of Attachment Parenting are making invaluable strides to improve the future of the society. And, as Wendorf (2004) asserts "if bonding in the early years dictates a child's sense of his relationship to the world and himself, then baby-parent bonding is critical, in the development of both strong individuals and ultimately, a peaceful, harmonious community". Consistent response to the baby's needs; smoother parent-baby interactions; ability to read the baby's cues and anticipate his needs; and inclusion of the baby in parent's daily social interactions; contribute to an infant's sense of trust,

confidence, and security. A confident baby who receives consistent, unconditional love and whose needs are respected and met is able to become a caring, considerate, and independent member of society. Wendorf (2004) therefore warned that we as parents and families literally have in our hands, the ability to create a violent culture or a peaceful one. Our future rests in the hands of the children we raise, the values we impart on them, and the way they learn to perceive their relationship with the planet. The survival of our planet is determined by how we choose to raise our children!

Hence in order to change the destructive path which some youths in Nigeria are currently on, we need to cherish our young, nurture and help them maintain their connection to humanity, and ultimately, to the planet. A child cannot care for others if he or she is not cared for first. She cannot nurture another without being nurtured herself. Children who mature without these basic needs become adults incapable of giving unconditional love, support, and sympathy and who toe the path of destruction and other vices in the society.

From the foregoing review, this researcher was motivated to investigate how family type and parent type influence the child rearing practices of parents with children in day care centres in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This is because it appears that in response to the varied challenges posed by the different family and parent types, more children in Nigeria in general and in Akwa Ibom State in particular are now cared for in child care centres even from as early as six weeks of age. Unfortunately, as observed by Oduolowu (2000) and which is also evident from Maslow's Theory of Needs, no agency can be a complete substitute for family life in terms of the intimacy of education, care, training and discipline it gives. Hence, it is certain that day care centers in Nigeria in general and Akwa Ibom State in particular cannot serve as a complete substitute for parents in terms of providing adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, industries, etc). One is therefore concerned that the challenges posed by the different family or parent types are likely to exact some kind of influence on the child rearing practices of those parents with children in daycare centres in Akwa Ibom State. That is, in the context of the significant differences in the family and parent types, how are children from such families or parents now raised relative to the challenges of the five domains of child rearing practices, namely: quality feeding, cleaning, protection, stimulation, and monitoring growth and development? The family types and parent types investigated are extended family, nuclear family, two-parent family, single-parent family, and stepfamily.

2. Research Questions

The following research questions were posed and answered in this study:

- (1) Does family type influence the child rearing practices of parents with children in day care centres?
- (2) Does parent type influence the child rearing practices of parents with children in day care centres?

3. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- (1) Family type does not significantly influence the child rearing practices of parents with children in daycare centres.
- (2) Parent type does not significantly influence the child rearing practices of parents with children in daycare centres.

4. Research Method

4.1 Area of Research

The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State. The state, named after the Qua Iboe river occupies a total land mass of about 8000 square kilometers with coastline of about 129 kilometers long in the South-South part of Nigeria, lying between 4°33' and 5°33' North, and longitude 7°33' and 8°33' East. The state has a population of over 5 million people. It was created in 1987 from the former Cross River State and is currently the highest gas and oil producing state in the country. The state capital is Uyo with over 500, 000 inhabitants. It has 31 local government areas divided into 3 senatorial districts of Eket, Ikot Ekpene and Uyo.

4.2 Population and Sampling

The population of the study consisted about 12080 parents of pupils (age from birth-3) in the 604 government approved daycare centres/creches in the three senatorial districts that make up the state (Ministry of Education, Akwa Ibom State, 2013).

A multistage random sampling technique was used in selecting 60 schools from urban and rural settings in the 3 senatorial districts, representing about 10% of the 604 Government approved crèche/nursery schools in the state. Because of the unequal number of schools in the three senatorial districts proportional stratified random technique was used to draw the 10% from each district. 1200 parents were drawn from the associated 60 schools at about 10% per school. To select the 10% of the pupils (age from birth-3years) whose parents were used from the total population in each of the schools in the sample. Hat and draw method was used for each parent to pick a piece of paper marked "Yes" or "No".

The number of the folded papers marked "yes" corresponded to only 10% of the total population of pupils (age from birth-3) in each of the schools in the sample, others had "no". Parents were allowed to pick the paper as many times as possible depending on the number of children (from birth-3) they had in the sample school(s). Parents that picked "yes" formed the sample.

4.3 Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection for this study was a 51-item Child Rearing Practice Scale (CRPS) adapted from the Child Rearing Practice Scale developed by Saramma and Thomas (2010) to evaluate child rearing practice under the five domains of child rearing related to infancy, namely: feeding, meeting the needs of cleaning, protection including prevention of accidents and injuries, providing appropriate infant stimulation, and monitoring growth and development. The instrument CRPS was divided into three parts A, B and C. Part A sought information on the parent's/child's family socio-demographic data which included type of family, and type of parents in the family.

Parts B and C consisted of 51 items that covered the five major child rearing domains related to infancy, namely: feeding (items 1–8 and 10–16), cleaning (items 17–24), protection (items 25–36), infant stimulation (items 37–47) and monitoring growth and development (items 9 and 48–51). The items were scored based on the behaviour response of the mothers on these four domains. Out of the 51 maternal behaviours in the CRPS, 9 (items 1–9) were dichotomously scored (Section B: Yes = 1, No = 0 questions) while the remaining 42 (items 10–51) were rated on a 5-point scale of Always (A) = 4, Often (O) = 3, Occasionally (K) = 2, Rarely = 1 and Not at all (N) = 0 (Section C). Items 6, 7, 26, 28 and 29 were negative items while the rest were positively framed (see Appendix A). For the negative items, the scores were reversed, i.e., Yes = 0, No = 1 point, Always (A) = 0 point,

Often (O) = 1 point, Occasionally (K) = 2 points, Rarely (R) = 3 points, Not at all (N) = 4 points. The Maximum CRPS score was calculated as the sum total of the scores in Sections B and C and ranged from 0 to 184 with maximum of 16 points from Section B and maximum of 168 points from Section C. High scores indicated better child rearing practices. A score below 92 representing 50% performance on the child rearing scale was regarded as low; a score between 92 and 111 was regarded as average, while a score above 111 (60%) was regarded as high.

4.4 Validation and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument, Child Rearing Practices Scale, CRPS was submitted to one expert in Early Childhood & Special Education and two other experts in Measurement and Evaluation for vetting. Each expert was requested to evaluate whether or not the individual items in CRPS (56 items) were indeed relevant and covered the five domains of child rearing practices related to infancy (birth-3yrs). These experts vetted the instrument to ensure that it appropriately covered the five domains of child rearing practices. They also checked for content validity to ensure that the items satisfactorily measured the variables under consideration. Their observations, criticisms and vetting helped in modifying, excluding and/or replacing some items after which they certified 51 items as relevant.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest reliability technique. This was done by administering the instrument (Questionnaire) to a sample of 50 parents with children in day care centres in Uyo who were not part of the main study. The questionnaire for each of the 50 respondents was coded and the respondents were requested to take note of their code numbers. The instrument was re-administered to the same group of parents after two weeks. After the re-administration, the two sets of responses were scored and the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient for each of the items of the CRPS was computed and tested for significance at the 0.05 level (two-tailed) using Statistical Package for Social Science, SPSS. The result shows that the reliability coefficient for the 51 items of the instrument ranged from 0.7 to 1.0 and that the correlation for each item of the CRPS was significant at the 0.05 level. Thus the CRPS has a computed average reliability coefficient of 0.84 which is sufficiently high.

4.5 Administration of the Instrument

To administer the questionnaire in the 60 schools, the researcher was assisted by teachers in the schools and some research assistants engaged in each of the 15 Local Government Areas in the sample. The researcher inducted the research assistants on how to administer the instrument. Respondents who could not read, were assisted by the researcher/research assistant to complete the questionnaire. The completed copies of questionnaire were retrieved within 24 hours. Out of the 1200 copies of instrument administered, the researcher was able to retrieve 1082. This gave a response rate of about 90% which was very satisfactory for a survey of this nature.

5. Data Analysis and Results

The data gathered in this study was analysed by computing the mean, standard deviation, independent t-test and univariate analysis of variance using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Independent t-test and univariate analysis of variance were used to determine whether the sub-variables of family type and parent type of children as appropriate, significantly influenced the child rearing practices of the parents with children in daycare centers while the means and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions.

Research Question 1: Does family type influence the child rearing practices of parents with children in day care centres?

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviations of the CRPS Scores of Parents Based on Extended and Nuclear Family Types

Family Type	N	Mean (\bar{X})	Std Deviation
Extended Family	309	119.80	30.15
Nuclear Family	773	106.14	28.55
Total	1082	112.97	29.35

Table 1 shows that parents of children from extended family type obtained a mean score of 119.80 and standard deviation of 30.15 on the Child Rearing Practices Scale (CRPS) while parents of children from nuclear family type obtained a mean score of 106.14 and standard deviation of 28.55 on the same scale. That means that family type influences child rearing practices of parents in such a way that parents of children from extended family type obtained higher mean score (performed better) than parents of children from nuclear family type on the scale of child rearing practices.

Hypothesis 1: Family type does not significantly influence the child rearing practices of parents with children in daycare centres.

Table 2 Independent Samples Test of the CRPS Scores of Parents Based on Extended and Nuclear Family Types

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
										95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	
Observed Equal Variances	.91	.34	6.33	891	.00	13.66	2.16	9.43	17.89	
Equal Variances Not Assumed			6.18	437.78	.00	13.66	2.21	9.32	18.00	

Decision: Significant at $p < 0.05$

As seen in Table 2, the Independent t-Test shows a p-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05. This implies that the mean difference in the child rearing practices of parents of children in day care centres between family types (Extended family and Nuclear Family) is significant. That means that parents of children from extended family system performed significantly better than parents of children from nuclear family system in child rearing practices.

Research Question 2: Does parent type influence the child rearing practices of parents with children in day care centres?

Table 3 Means and Standard Deviation of the CRPS Scores of Parent Types

Parent Type	N	Mean (\bar{X})	Std Deviation
Mother Only	190	101.89	25.02
Mother & Father	789	125.01	29.74
Step-Mother	103	92.12	12.85
Total	1082	106.34	22.54

Table 3 shows that parents of children from two-parent family (mother and father) scored 125.01 on the average with a standard deviation of 29.74 on the CRPS while parents of children from mother only family obtained a lower mean score of 101.89 with a standard deviation of 25.02 on the same scale. The least child rearing practices mean score of 92.12 with a standard deviation of 12.85 on the CRPS was obtained by parents

who are step-mothers to the children in daycare centers. This means that parent type influences child rearing practices in such a way that two-parent family type (mother and father) has the best positive influence on the childrearing practices of parents compared to single-parent family type of mother-only or step-mother parent type of step-mother only. However, the result shows that single parents who are mothers performed better than step-mothers on the same child rearing practices scale.

Hypothesis 2: Parent type does not significantly influence the child rearing practices of parents with children in daycare centres.

Table 4 Univariate Analysis of Variance of the CRPS Scores of Parents Based on Parent Type (Single Mother, Mother & Father, and Step-Mother Family Types)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Parent Type	157100.45	2	78550.22	101.84	0.000*
Error	832238.13	1079	771.31		
Total	1.60	1082			
Corrected Total	989338.57	1081			

R-Squared = 0.159

Decision: * = Significant at $P < 0.05$.

The Univariate analysis of Variance in Table 4 shows a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. This means that there is an overall significant influence of parent type on the child rearing practices of parents with children in daycare centers. The result further shows that about 15.9% of the total variance in child rearing practices of parents can be attributed to parent type. Since more than two groups of parent types are involved, a Post Hoc test becomes pertinent to determine which of the parent types significantly influences the child rearing practices of parents.

Table 5 Multiple Comparisons Analysis for Parent Type

					95% Confidence Interval	
Parent Type I	Parent Type (J)	Mean Difference(I-J)	Std. Error	p-Value	Lower Boundary	Upper Boundary
Mother only	Mother & Father	-23.12*	2.24	0.000	-27.53	-18.72
	Step- Mother	9.77*	3.40	0.004	3.11	16.44
Mother & Father	Mother	23.12*	2.24	0.000	18.72	27.53
	Step- Mother	32.90*	2.91	0.000	27.19	38.61
Step-Mother	Mother	-9.77*	3.40	0.004	-16.44	-3.11
	Mother & Father	-32.90*	2.91	0.000	-38.61	-27.19

Decision * = The Mean Difference is significant at $P < 0.05$.

From Table 5 each of the p-values of the mean difference for each of the mother types is less than 0.05 and is therefore significant. This means that each of the parent types (Mother, Mother & Father, Step-Mother) contributed significantly in influencing child rearing practices of the parents.

6. Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the influence of family and parent types on the child rearing practices of parents of children in day care centers in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The findings of the study were as follows:

The analysis of data on the influence of family type on the child rearing practices of parents shows that the result was significant as the p-value for family type was 0.00 which is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis of no significant influence of family type on child rearing practices of parents was therefore rejected. The result implies that family type significantly influences the child rearing practices of parents. Moreover, since from Table 1, the means and standard deviations of the child rearing practices scores were 119.80 and 30.15, respectively for parents of children from extended family system but 106.14 and 28.55, respectively for parents of children from nuclear family, it means that parents of children from extended family performed significantly better than their counterparts from nuclear family.

These findings are supported by the findings of Wusu and Isiugo-Abanihe (2006) that in the extended family system in Nigeria, child rearing support are given by close relations in terms of emotion, time, finance and other material support and the cost of child rearing and training is spread among family members whereas in the contemporary society dominated by nuclear family system, child rearing support by family members is no longer a common practice and child rearing cost rest largely on the biological parents of the child. Such shared responsibility for child rearing that is operational in the extended family system could explain why parents of children from extended family system perform significantly better than their counterpart from nuclear family in child rearing practices as considered in this research.

There is no doubt that a situation in the nuclear family system where for instance, the mother is the cook, maid, babysitter and sometimes money maker, such mother might have a tendency to burn out from attempting to meet family needs and this obviously would affect negatively on her child rearing practices. This is because without any assistance, that will leave little time for nurturing and caring for children. Stress, depression, anxiety or other problems can all be a problem of nuclear family burn out. This researcher further observed from the data of Table 1 that the ratio of children from extended family system to nuclear family system was 252:641 (Approximately 2:5). That means that about 70% of children in the day care centres in Akwa Ibom State are children from nuclear family system. This finding corroborates the findings of Wuse and Isiugo-Abanihe (2006) who observed that lack of support from other family members accounted for high patronage of crèche and day care centers by parents especially the working class mothers.

The findings that about 70% of the families of children in day care centers in Akwa Ibom State come from nuclear families and that the parents from such nuclear families do not perform as well as parents from extended families in child rearing appears to strengthen the earlier findings that there has been a steady decline in parental presence at home such that even in rural areas, both the man and woman are bread winners. The effect is that the role of child rearing might have been entrusted in the wrong hand of caregiver which might not augur well for the child's emotional health and moral development as some of the care givers may have negative behaviors which the child could internalize as acquired values.

Analysis of data presented in Table 4 and Table 5 show that the type of parent (single parent or two-parents or step-parent) is a significant factor influencing child rearing practices of parents. Moreover, it shows that the mean differences between the child rearing practices scores of the three different types of parents are significant. It then means from Table 3 that two-parent type (mother and father) significantly offers the best child rearing services compared to single-parent type (step-mother). The result of this study is consistent with that of Amato (2005) who found that children in step families receive less child rearing attention than children with continuously married parents and about the same level of attention as children of single parents. Although the data of this research suggest that children may be better off in terms of child care if single parents (mothers) care for them

rather than step-parents (step-mothers), Aronson and Huston (2004) found no significant difference between children in single parent families and step-parent families. On the other hand, Blake (1981) reported that among African Americans, children living with step parents were better off in many respect than those children living with single parents. Some other family characteristics and factors such as the presence of other adults may have accounted for the inconsistent research results on the comparative influence of single parents and step-parents on child rearing practices. However, consistent with earlier results, children in single-parent families and step-parent families receive less child rearing attention than children in two-parent families. This would partly be because single parents and step parent families tend to have much lower incomes than two-parent families. The result of this study suggests that two-parent families should be promoted as a means of ensuring improved child rearing practices.

7. Summary

This study investigated the influence of family and parent types on the child rearing practices of parents of children in daycare centres in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Existing literature (Wusu & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2005, 2006) revealed among other things that there was a steady increase in nuclear family system and a rising number of single parents who could not afford to feed their children with quality food. It further revealed that the mother-child bond is weakening because the care of the child was left earlier than before in the hands of other caregivers. In view of Maslow's Theory of Heirarchy of Needs which emphasized five levels of human needs for the attention of parents especially at the early age of children development when they are not yet capable of providing for any of those needs themselves, this researcher was motivated to investigate the extent to which the family types and parent types of children in day care centres in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria influence the child rearing practices of such parents. The findings showed that Family type significantly influenced the child rearing practices of parents in such a way that parents of children from the extended family system performed significantly better in child rearing practices than parents of children from nuclear family system. Also parent-type significantly influenced the child rearing practices of parents in a way that two continuously married caregivers (mother & father) performed significantly better than single parent caregivers (mother only) in child rearing practices while single parent caregivers in turn performed significantly better than the step-parent (step-mother) caregivers.

8. Implications and Conclusion

The findings of this research has brought to the fore the importance of child rearing practices and some of those family variables that could significantly influence effective child rearing practices. This is because children are emotionally dependent on their parents to provide their needs and regulate their emotions. When babies are born, they utterly depend on their parents to eat, speak or move Bonding or lack of it dictates a child's sense of relationship to the world and him/herself.

Our future rests in the hands of the children we raise. A child cannot care for or nurture others if he or she is not cared for or nurtured first. Children who mature without their basic needs significantly met become adults incapable of giving unconditional love, support and sympathy. Incidentally, as revealed in this study, the extent to which parents are able to care for and nurture such children by providing their needs of feeding, cleaning, protection, stimulation, growth and development depends on the family and parent types of such children. The

implication of the findings of this research to early childhood education cannot therefore be over emphasized. Parents will discover from this study how their family structures could influence the extent to which they could provide good care or nurture for their children and therefore make necessary adjustments in the interest of proper upbringing of their children. They will discover that effective parental care cannot be divorced from the nature of the family structure and characteristics.

Parents will see the need to embrace extended family collaboration where many relatives living together could also work towards a common goal of raising the children. This is particularly important since the research result showed that about 70% of the population studied live in nuclear family system with lower performance in child rearing practices than parents of children from extended family system.

Another implication of the findings of this study is that any programme or policy intervention that will assist parents improve on their performance in child rearing practices will be more beneficial to parents of children from nuclear families than extended families. It will also be more beneficial to children growing up in single-parent and step-parent families than children living with two continuously married biological parents who already receive better parental care.

Furthermore, a consideration of the nature of the family and parent types of a child is necessary in any assessment or programme on how well a child was reared by parents.

The further implication of this study is that early childhood and special education providers, family and community based interventions and even caregivers, should consider children in family context. This is because the result of this study pointed to the fact that children could be vulnerable to decreased parental care and possible unmet needs as a result of their family and parent types.

The result of this finding means that the techniques of child rearing by parents that have to do with feeding, cleaning, protection, infant stimulation, growth and development will go a long way to facilitate or hinder the child's optimum growth and development depending on the family and parent types.

This study has amply drawn our attention to numerous standard child rearing practices and the important aspects of the responsibilities of parents towards their children during infancy which have implication for the emotional, physical, social and even intellectual development of the children later in life. It also raises serious concern on the extent to which families and parents of various backgrounds with children aged birth-3 years in day care centres in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria meet up with their responsibilities of feeding, cleaning, protecting and monitoring the growth and development of their children.

The findings of this study shows that the ability to nurture such people depend on family and parent types. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, community and extended family support of mothers have waned, forcing parents to rely on others to supplement their child rearing so that mothers can continue to feel valued by the society. But the important lesson to learn from the findings of this study and as supported by Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Needs is that irrespective of the challenges, the functions of families and parents in providing basic care for their children needs to be re-emphasized so that they will not transfer their duties totally to the child care centres.

Families and parents in Nigeria need to return to our natural, biological, and instinctive way of parenting. Babies are born utterly dependant, unable to eat, speak, or move without assistance. They are also emotionally dependent on their parents to affirm their existence, to regulate their emotional responses, and to model appropriate love and attachment. It is in the consistency of this relationship that babies learn to feel safe, to trust others, and ultimately, to trust themselves and become independent and self-assured. This autonomy, security, and confidence enables babies to grow into children and adults who respects the norms and values of their society and

who can afford to look beyond themselves and their own needs. A person who is loved can give love; a person who is supported can assist others. These are the people Nigeria needs — loved, supported, nurtured, independent — to care for our society and our future. Only such people could be free from criminality and other social and problem behavior presently experienced in Nigeria.

9. Recommendations

To attain a high level of child rearing practices that would eventually lead to social adjustment in the child, parents should try their best to maintain intact families for the proper upbringing of their children. In case of separation by death or divorce, effort should be made by the parents to meet up with the rearing of the child. The environment should be stimulated from time to time by exposing children from nuclear families, single-parents and step parents to film shows and plays.

Caregivers in crèches and daycare centres should understand that the children found in their classrooms come from different family and parental background. Hence, the caregivers have to keenly observe each child and note the deficient patterns of his/her behavior as a result of deficiencies in child rearing practices so as to plan strategies to bridge the unacceptable patterns of behavior due to poor child rearing practices or reinforce or strengthen what the family has started.

The findings of this research will provide awareness to parents and to early childhood educators to know how the family and parent types considered in this research would influence significantly child rearing practices. This knowledge might not only be of practical essence but could also be used to enrich the curriculum of early childhood education in Nigeria.

Parents should as much as possible take advantage of the services and assistance obtainable from the extended family system in enhancing their child rearing practices. Interventions and family life programmes that could increase the number of children reared by continuously married biological parents should be mounted, encouraged and intensified by government, churches, and social welfare societies and communities through marriage courses, awareness programmes and other services. Such interventions should be geared toward strengthening marriage, decreasing the rate of divorce and improving the well-being of families so as to decrease mortality rate of parents.

Social welfare centres, government and some non-governmental organizations and schools should pay special attention to children growing up in single-parent and step-parent families since the weight of research evidence suggests that such families increase children's risk of a variety of cognitive, emotional and social problems because of poor child rearing practices by their parents. To create a violent-free society, in Nigeria, proper attention and social support should be given to families and parents by government and non-governmental organizations to provide the instinctual needs of their children especially at infancy.

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