

Nigerian Parents and the Development of Rural School Youth

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ABSTRACT The study investigated the role performance of parents in school youth development among rural communities of Oyo State, Nigeria. Data were collected from one hundred and eighty six parents and their school youths aged between 11 and 18 years. Two-stage sampling technique was employed to select four zones in the state. Based on the population of household in the four zones, one hundred and eighty six parents were randomly selected for interview. Data collected include personal and socio-economics characteristics of parents, the level of role performance by parents, and parent's performance in school youth development. Descriptive statistics using frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the data. Pearson's correlation and Spearman's rank correlation analysis were used to determine the relationship between the socio-economic characteristic of parents and the level of development of school youth, and the congruence between role perception and role performance of parents. The study revealed among others, that variables such as parent's marital status ($r = 0.167$), educational level ($r = 0.188$), religion ($r = 0.096$), income level ($r = 0.172$), cosmopolitaness ($r = 0.088$) and membership of child's school Parents' Teacher Association (P.T.A) ($r = 0.162$) had positive and significant relationship with their level of role performance. Also, highly significant relationship was established between the level of development of rural school youth and level of role performance by the parents ($r = 0.118$).

INTRODUCTION

Two critical needs of the world's community as identified by Gobeli (1996) are the need for sustainable development and the need to improve the condition of the rural youth and indeed all youth. Thus, the rural youth is an important factor to be reckoned with in development programmes or efforts. This category of human population has been recognized as a potent force in agricultural and rural development programmes which are yet to be tapped to the advantage of rural communities in Nigeria (Ijere, 1988; Jibowo, 1989; Umaru, 1992; Torimiro, 1999).

The contributions of the rural youth within the school system to developmental efforts in his community cannot be underestimated. These include providing a strong labour force in agricultural production activities as well as community development programmes.

Jibowo (1989) noted that the rural youth constitute a potent force in development because they possess a number of characteristics which when nurtured and utilized, are invaluable assets to rural development. The youth according to Arokoyo (1992) and Torimiro (1995) are characterized by their state of mind, their preference for boldness, love for adventures, proneness to

change, and so on. These are characteristics, which their parents can harness and develop so as to bring out a positive change to the rural areas. If these youth are basically educated within the formal school system, their contributions to developmental efforts within the rural areas where they live will be worthy of note. The onus of accomplishing this social task is primarily on their parents.

Thus, the Nigerian youth need be more guided correctly so that when they grow to be adults, they will not go astray in this fast changing world most especially now when they are confronted with diverse economic problems. The sort of experiences the youth pass through in their various communities should be as appropriate and meaningful as possible. It will be quite worrisome what the future may look like in the rural areas if the youth are not well guided. It is therefore the primary responsibility of parents to provide their youth with worthwhile experiences in order to enhance their development. Many of the parents consider education of their children as an investment in human capital. Though, they are largely illiterates and take up farming as full time vocations, they strive to send their children to school so that the overall benefit of education - both personal and social, will be accruable to them and their community.

This paper identifies the roles played by parents in the cognitive, social, physical, and emotional and moral development of their school youth. Specifically, the socioeconomic characteristics of the parents were examined, while their role perception and performance in developing the school youth were determined. The relationship between the level of role performance and selected personal and socioeconomic characteristics, as well as level of school youth development was established. Congruence between role perception and role performance was also established.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Oyo State, Nigeria. Youth within the age range of 11 and 18 in rural schools and their parents were selected for the study.

Multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. In the first stage, six Local Government Areas (LGAs) were selected using the table of random numbers, while two communities were chosen in each LGA. Proportionate sampling was employed to select households in each community and one hundred and eighty six parents (and their school youth) were randomly selected and interviewed for the study (see Table 1). Structured pre-tested

interview schedule was used to elicit information on respondents' socioeconomic characteristics such as age, sex, educational level and household size, as well as role perception and role performance by parents, development indicators of school youth, level of role performance by parents and the constraints to role performance. Data was collected between February and May 2002.

Descriptive statistics involving frequency counts and percentages were used to summarize study variables, while Pearson's correlation (r) and coefficient of determination (r^2) were used to establish strength of association between variables. Spearman's rank order correlation was used to determine the congruence between role perception and role performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents: The results revealed that the age range of parents was between 35 and 70 years with a mean age of 60 years. About 43 percent fall within the class interval of 56 and 65 years old, while only eight-percent fall within the age range of 35-45 years old. Over half i.e. 85.48 percent of the parents were male while the remaining 14.52 percent were female. This is in agreement with the findings of Jibowo *et al.* 1996, that a high percentage of adult males are involved in farming

Table 1: Sampling procedure of parents and school youth in the study area

Zone	Local Govt.	Rural communities	*Population	Household	Proportionate sample of rural households selected	Total sample of parents (and school youths) selected per zone
Oyo	Afijio	Atan	1058	226	11	25
		Imini	1313	281	14	
Saki	Kajola	Iwere-oke	1674	357	18	75
		Idiko Ago	1531	327	16	
	Oorolope	Aba Sooro	1824	390	20	
Ibadan/ Ibarapa		Aba oloko	1915	409	21	59
	Akinyele	Ajibode	1427	304	15	
		Iroko	1173	250	13	
	Ibarapa central	Maya				
		Isale Baale Lanlate	1405	300	15	
Ogbomoso	Ogo-Oluwa	Idewure Olamokun	1405	310	16	27
			1264	270	14	
Total	6	12	1252	268	13	186
			17,286	3692	186	

Source: Field Survey, 2002

Source: National Population Commission census 1991: Final Result, Oyo state.

than their female counterpart. For the school youth, 62.90 percent were male while 37.10 percent were female. This agrees with the findings of Fafunwa (1980) which indicated that there is a low enrolment of girls in Nigerian schools compared to their male counterparts. Majority (80.11%) of the parents was married while 14.52 percent, 5.38 percent and 4.84 percent were widowed, divorced and separated respectively. About 59 percent had no formal education, 7.53 percent had incomplete secondary education while none had complete secondary education. This is an indication that majority of the parents were illiterates, that is, they could neither read nor write. For the school youth 18.28 percent were in primary school while 81.72 percent were in secondary school. About sixty-six percent of the respondents were Christians, 32.26 percent were Muslims while only 1.61 percent were traditional worshippers. Households had between 7 and 11 members with mean of 9. About 11.83 percent of the household had less than 6 members while 32.26 percent had 12 and above. This finding deviates from that of Osotimehin et al. (1999) in which the household with 12 and above members was rated as the most frequent. Majority (68.28%) of these households had between 1 and 2 school youth while 29.08 percent had between 3 and 4 school youth. Very few (1.08%) of the households had between 5 and 6 school youth while 1.61 percent had between 7 and 8. These few are the polygamous parents who have many wives and consequently a large household size.

Majority (88.17%) had spent well over 20 years in their various communities and has had the opportunity to travel out of their communities while 11.83 percent indicated that they have never travelled out of their communities. This is an indication that they have had a level of exposure to life beyond their communities and this may bring about greater awareness towards role performance.

The findings further revealed that 60.22 percent of the parents earn below ₦7000 monthly while 39.78 percent earn above ₦7000 (about 55 US dollars), which is the Nigerian minimum wage. This very low income has serious implications for role performance especially with the provision of necessary textbooks for school youth, payment of prescribed school fees and the provision of good and adequate nutrition among others.

About 84.41 percent of the parents belonged to rural community associations, while 15.59

percent indicated non-membership of such associations. Also 71.51 percent indicated membership of their child's school Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) while 28.49 percent indicated non-membership. Membership of associations is capable of promoting the exchange of ideas and opinions which may further enhance positive role performance while membership of child's school PTA affords parents the opportunity to contribute positively to the academic achievement of their school youth and thereby promoting their general development.

2. Level of Role Performance by Parents in Developing the School Youth: Table 2 shows twenty-one (21) identified roles performed by parents in developing rural school youth. These include: enforcement of discipline, guidance and absence of coercive control, clear structure and rule setting in the household, limit setting, provision of good and adequate nutrition, provision of clothes and shoes, consistently enforcing rules, monitoring and supervision, acceptance and problem solving, warm, supportive and non-critical relationship, payment of prescribed school fees, purchase of school texts and writing materials, development of home condition that supports learning, parental involvement in youth organization, more parent-child time together, parental encouragement of independence, parental commitment to family, visitation to child's school, training child in religious beliefs, training child in socio-cultural values and training the child in societal values. The roles that were very much performed included: enforcement of discipline (77.96%), giving approval, guidance and absence of coercive control (77.96%), monitoring and supervision (52.15%) training child in socio-cultural values (65.59%) while roles that had a very little level of performance included the purchase of school texts and writing materials (48.39%), parental involvement in youth organization (26.88%), more parent-child time together (20.97%), parental encouragement of independence (35.48%) and visitation to child's school (68.28%).

This distribution is an indication that the parents want their youth to be morally upright while their cognitive development may suffer slow pace of development.

3. Role Perception and Performance of Parents in School Youth Development: The respondents were asked to identify their roles as

they perceived and as they performed them towards developing their school youth.

Table 3 shows that all the respondents perceived enforcement of discipline, guidance

and absence of coercive control, clear structure and rule setting in the household, provision of good and adequate nutrition, provision of clothes and shoes, monitoring and supervision, accep-

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by level of role performance (n = 28)

<i>Roles</i>	<i>Very much</i>	<i>Much</i>	<i>Little</i>	<i>Very little</i>	<i>None</i>
Enforcement of discipline	145(77.96)	41(22.04)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Approval, guidance and absence of coercive control	145(77.96)	41(22.04)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Clear structure and rule - setting in the household	46(24.73)	71(38.17)	53(28.50)	16(8.60)	0(0.00)
Limit setting	28(15.05)	54(29.03)	48(25.81)	37(19.89)	19(10.22)
Provision of good and adequate nutrition	73(39.25)	67(36.02)	46(24.73)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Provision of cloth and shoes	19(10.21)	51(27.42)	116(62.37)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Consistently enforced rules	35(18.82)	73(39.25)	58(31.18)	13(6.99)	07(3.76)
Monitoring and supervision of the youth	97(52.15)	64(34.41)	25(13.44)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Acceptance and problem - solving	32(17.20)	50(26.88)	60(32.26)	44(23.66)	0(0.00)
Warm, supportive and non-critical relationship	80(43.01)	63(33.87)	43(23.12)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Payment of prescribe school fees	54(29.03)	38(20.43)	55(29.57)	39(20.97)	0(0.00)
Purchase of school texts and writing materials	14(7.53)	21(11.29)	52(27.96)	99(53.22)	0(0.00)
Development of home condition that supports learning	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	30(16.13)	66(35.48)	90(48.39)
Parental involvement in youth organization	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	52(27.96)	84(45.16)	50(26.88)
More parent - child time together	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	72(38.71)	75(40.32)	39(20.97)
Parental encouragement of independence	23(12.37)	39(20.97)	58(31.18)	0(0.00)	66(35.48)
Parental commitment to family	48(25.81)	73(39.25)	65(34.94)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Visitation to child's school	16(8.60)	0(0.00)	20(10.75)	23(12.37)	127(68.28)
Training child a religious belief	87(46.77)	63(33.87)	23(12.37)	13(6.99)	0(0.00)
Training child in social-cultural beliefs	122(65.59)	64(34.41)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Training child in societal values	46(24.73)	58(31.18)	63(33.87)	19(10.22)	0(0.00)

Table 3: Distribution of parents by roles perception and roles performance (n=186)

<i>Roles</i>	<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Perception</i>	<i>Performance</i>
Enforcement of discipline	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Approval, guidance and absence of coercive control	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Clear structure and rule - setting in the household	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Limit setting	145(77.96)	126(67.74)
Provision of good and adequate nutrition	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Provision of cloth and shoes	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Consistently enforced rules	179(96.24)	179(96.24)
Monitoring and supervision of the youth	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Acceptance and problem - solving	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Warm, supportive and non-critical relationship	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Payment of prescribe school fees	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Purchase of school texts and writing materials	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Development of home condition that supports learning	157(84.41)	96(51.61)
Parental involvement in youth organization	165(88.71)	136(73.12)
More parent - child time together	179(96.24)	147(79.03)
Parental encouragement of independence	162(87.10)	120(64.52)
Parental commitment to family	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Visitation to child's school	154(82.80)	59(31.72)
Training child a religious belief	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Training child in social-cultural beliefs	186(100.00)	186(100.00)
Training child in societal values	186(100.00)	186(100.00)

n = 186

Source: Data Analysis, 2003

tance and problem solving, warm, supportive and non-critical relationship, payment of prescribed school fees, purchase of school texts and writing materials, parental commitment to family, training child in religious beliefs, socio-cultural values and societal values. Between 77.96 percent and 96.24 percent perceived the setting of limits, consistent enforcement of rules, development of home condition that supports learning, parental encouragement of independence, parental involvement in youth organization, visitation to child's school and more parent-child time together. The rate of performance of these roles among the respondents was high as indicated by 51.61 percent of them. The only role that recorded the lowest rate of performance was visitation to child's school as claimed by 31.72 percent of the respondents. This may not be unconnected with the low literacy level of the respondents.

The result in Table 4 shows a positive and significant relationship between the level of role performance and respondent's marital status ($r = 0.167$), educational level ($r = 0.188$), religion ($r = 0.096$), income level ($r = 0.172$), cosmopolitaness ($r = 0.088$) and membership of child's school Parents Teachers Association ($r = 0.162$). This implies that these factors impel parental role performance. A negative and significant relationship however exists between parents level of role performance and their age ($r = -0.355$), sex ($r = -0.123$), household size ($r = -0.236$), years of community residence ($r = -0.161$) and number of school youth in household ($r = -0.220$). This means that these factors are capable of hindering parental role performance.

Table 5 shows that 81.72 percent of the rural

school youth exhibited high development in physical maturity and puberty changes, while 63.44 percent and 52.69 percent each were developing highly in all aspects of moral development. These include personal values and ethics, a sense of accountability and citizenship, and meaningful application of values. The physical well being and development of the school youth is enhanced because their parents are farmers who provide their households with fresh farm produce and other food items which affords the school youth the opportunity to feed well. The rural nature of the parents also places a lot of value in traditions, belief systems, norms and values of the society. They therefore passed on these to their youth through informal teachings and also ensure the development of good personal values and ethics in them so as to become good citizens in the society. The development of cognition in the rural school youth is not so much pronounced (See Table 5) and this may not be unconnected with the rural nature of their environment, which does not pose a challenge towards proper cognitive development. Though the parents are not found wanting in the provision of necessary aids for their youth, these are rather inadequate to foster proper development of cognition in the youth. A positive and significant relationship was established between the level of role performance by parents and the level of development of rural school youth at the 5% level.

Statistically, significant congruence was established between the role perception and role performance by parents. This shows a rank correlation coefficient (r_s) = 1 which implies that

Table 4: Relationship between parent's level of role performance and selected socioeconomic characteristics

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Correlation coefficient</i>	<i>Coefficient of determination (r^2)</i>	<i>t- value</i>
Age	-0.355*	0.1122	-1.668
Sex	-0.123*	0.0151	-1.738
Marital status	0.167*	0.0279	2.139
Educational level	0.188*	0.0353	0.026
Household size	-0.236*	0.0557	-0.302
Years of community residence	-0.161*	0.0259	-1.141
Religion	0.096*	0.0092	-1.108
No. of school youth in household	-0.220*	0.0484	-1.613
Income level	0.172*	0.0296	0.697
Cosmopolitaness	0.088*	0.0077	-0.198
Membership of community association	0.083	0.0069	0.02
Membership of child's school PTA	0.162*	0.0058	2.388

Source: Data Analysis, 2003

Sample size (n) = 186

* Significant at 0.05 level

Table 5: Distribution of rural school youth by level of development*

<i>Development indications</i>	<i>Highly developing</i>	<i>Moderately developing</i>	<i>Just developing</i>	<i>Not developing</i>
<i>Cognitive Development</i>				
1. Expansion in Knowledge	0	34(18.28)	152(81.72)	0
2. Critical thinking and reasoning skills	0	34(18.28)	152(81.72)	0
3. Competence in academic achievement	0	54(29.03)	132(70.97)	0
<i>Social Development</i>				
1. Communication and negotiation skills	0	29(15.59)	157(84.41)	0
2. Meaningful relationships with peers and adults	24(12.90)	63(33.87)	99(53.23)	0
3. Exploration of adult rights and responsibilities	43(23.12)	93(50)	50(26.88)	0
4. Search for role models, heroes and heroines	30(16.13)	51(27.42)	80(43.01)	25(13.44)
<i>Physical Development</i>				
1. Physical maturity and puberty changes	152(81.72)	21(11.29)	13(6.99)	0
2. Habits promoting life-long physical fitness	26(13.98)	91(48.92)	38(20.43)	31(16.67)
3. Taking and managing appropriate physical risks	26(13.98)	91(48.92)	38(20.43)	31(16.67)
<i>Emotional Development</i>				
1. A sense of personal identity	40(81.72)	21(11.29)	13(6.99)	0
2. A sense of personal autonomy and control	40(21.5)	82(44.09)	57(30.65)	7(3.76)
3. Coping, decision and stress management skills	85(45.7)	64(34.41)	37(19.89)	0
<i>Moral Development</i>				
1. Personal values and ethic	98(52.69)	55(29.57)	33(17.74)	0
2. A sense of accountability and citizenship	118(63.44)	41(22.04)	27(14.52)	0
3. Application of values and beliefs in meaningful ways	98(52.69)	55(29.57)	33(17.74)	0

Source: Data Analysis, 2003

Note: () represent percentages; *Multiple responses were recorded

the parents have a clear understanding of their roles in developing the rural school youth and this is in agreement with their performance of such roles.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study it was concluded that there was no significant difference in the way the parents perceived their roles and the way they performed such roles towards the development of their school youth. The high correlation value obtained between role perception and role performance signifies a high understanding of roles perceived and roles performed by parents.

The positive and significant correlation between parents' level of role performance and level of development of school youth implies that parents' performance of their roles is capable of enhancing the development of their youth. The study however elucidated some constraints to effective role performance by the parents to include their poor/inadequate financial position, illiteracy/ low educational level, large family size, marital disharmony/family dysfunction and family structure/single parenting.

This implies that relevant government

institutions, community based organizations and non-governmental organizations need to organize effective adult educational programmes for rural parents, which will serve to improve their literacy level and consequently enhancing their level of role performance. They should also come to the aid of these farm parents through the provision of loans and subsidized farm inputs. This will serve to encourage the parents to produce more that will consequently improve their earnings and standard of living. This will enable them to be favourably disposed to perform their roles better.

Parental/family practices that serves to monitor and control youth's behaviour in a caring and consistent manner, provide them support and encouragement and allow them psychological and emotional independence is highly recommended. These will include among others a good quality of parent-child relationship and not allow for marital disharmony or family dysfunction to foster positive developmental outcomes in their youth.

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