

## Gauging over Parenting on Children Learning Efficacy in Lagos

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**Abstract:** This study has assessed over parenting practices in Lagos and how this has affected children learning efficiency. Using 75 parents and 375 secondary school students as participants, survey method was used to obtain required information by the process of interviewing and questionnaires. A mixed method of research was adopted involving quantitative and qualitative approaches to arrive at conclusions. The research hypothesis had stated that over parented children are the male in gender, academically sounder than the non overprotected ones but socially naive. This had three corollaries stated in the null form. These were tested along with four research questions. The results provided that there is no significant relationship in the degree of over parenting between male and female children; there is no significant difference in the academic performance between over parented children and their counterparts who are not but significant difference existed in the degree of social naivety between children of over parenting parents and their counterparts who are with no traces of over parenting. Improvements in the school system with emphasis in the provision of boarding facilities for all children were suggested and further study of the character and their effect on children learning efficacy.

**Key words:** Learning efficacy, participants, relationship, gender, socially native, Nigeria

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### INTRODUCTION

**Background to the study:** Over parenting is a term that applied to describe a situation of parents being so protective of their children so, desperate for them to succeed in life that they will do everything in their power to help them on their way and avoid anything potentially unpleasant. Over parenting can start right from babyhood with newborns nestling under protective buggy canopies to minimise their exposure to germs in the atmosphere or not being allowed to taste certain foods lest they develop, god forbid, some kind of allergy. In childhood, they may be ferried to school by car and carefully taxied to every extracurricular activity thus avoiding the perils of crossing the road or the suspicious character lurking near the school gates. This often may extend into teenage years and Mum and/or Dad might be the co-researchers of school projects, the procurer of part-time jobs, the defence counsel for disagreements with teachers and at all times, insist on the necessary security of the mobile phone; the longest umbilical cord in history.

A range of metaphorically-inspired neologisms has sprung up for the description of the overzealous parents themselves. Over-parenting has been depicted as the curse of the time because it is presumed to be a situation whereby parents hover over their kids every move, ready

to swoop when any risk or stress or spontaneity strikes; a role that is thought of to be detrimental to the healthy development of the children. This is why the British calls it helicopter parenting and the popular expression in US English is helicopter parents. The concept, lawnmower parents is also used to caption parents who smooth and mow down every obstacle in their child's path. In a similar vein, the same phenomenon in Scandinavia is referred to as curling parenthood describing parents who sweep away all their child's difficulties.

Parents who over-parent make all the decisions for their child. Therefore, the over-parented child is a protected and spoiled child that lacks real confidence and is unable to take risks or make decisions.

Perhaps, the reasons why parents do over parent may seem genuine in the globalized world with many uncertainties and dreads. Some of the growing tendency to over parent is the fact that these days, people are having fewer children and most gets pretty late to start to have children too. Thus, such children are considered to be so precious while the parents who would have become economically stable have sufficient funds to fritter on the child (Cline and Fay, 1990). So, also the improvements in information technology which has turned the world into a global village provides prompt news of happenings around the world with the media selectively preferring to

report more of the horrific occurrences. This fosters parents' fear about children's safety. Additionally, the world has become so highly competitive with more dependency on qualifications obtained in schools that have limited spaces for intending students and also a job market that have limited employment spaces that apart from the high class only excelling members of the working class may secure a space. Parents want a good future for their children and so may indulge in doing almost anything to secure that for them.

It is often assumed that spoiling and over parenting is synonymous. This is not so. According to Covey (1997), over parenting is driven by the demands of the adult, the focus of which may extend beyond just things (like toys) or on rules that is not necessarily something the child has asked for but things that soothes the parental anxiety. It may have the effect of spoiling a child by giving a child an impression that that any demand made by him/her will be met. For instance, a parent that is overwhelmed by anxiety for a child's achievement may call a teacher to protest a grade given to the student (his/her child), query why the child had been punished for a misdeed or why a pencil had been missing at school or be mad at the teacher because the child's school uniform is roughened at the end of a day's schooling. The overprotected children typically face heavy academic schedules as well as strenuous extracurricular activities. Spoiling on the other hand exposes the failure of parents to enforce limits or making provision of excess material things. A spoiled child may be self-cantered, throw frequent temper tantrums have a low tolerance for frustration and grow up having problems controlling anger.

Over parented children often turn out into individuals without a sense of self who grow up into overly compliant individuals without coping skills because everything has been done for them by anxious parents. They are pervasively weak from within (Goleman, 1995). Usually, spoiling on the other hand is an occasional and not a pervasive problem. The over parented grow-up to become so prone to risk and are unable to make decisions on their own. They, like the spoilt children too have a low tolerance for frustration.

As ugly as over parenting is it is a common feature of the human race today. Everyone seems to be so scared of the future and as such make assiduous efforts to secure a future for the child who is deemed to enjoy and not to strain for anything. Perhaps this is why corruption is so rampant today as each person struggles not only for him/herself but also for generations of his/her progeny (Bowles *et al.*, 2008).

On examination days at the UTME examination centres, admission offices at the secondary schools and even the tertiary institutions, it is common site to see parents in large numbers holding the hands of their grown up children to enter into all offices and overbearing on the children to provide answers to the questions directed at the children by the officers. A number of studies have shown that parents are highly involved in determining future career and even the choice of spouse for their children. These are features of over parenting and it is highly entrenched in the culture of most child rearing practices, the world over.

This study seeks to ascertain whether is indeed a phenomenon that is common with parents in Lagos and why it may be so. It seeks to determine the assumption that over parenting is a curse. In addition, it seeks to explore the possibility that schools encourage over parenting. Could over parenting be the basis for the series of malpractices in the world and indeed schools today and indeed why most business executives and world leaders, particularly in Africa, refuse to leave office until their children are old enough to take over the mantle of leadership whether or not the children have the wherewithal to govern efficiently? The failures associated with these drives have been the bane of development in many countries of the world (Gosta, 1999). A large number of world economies are yet under autocratic, tyrannical or monarchical governments. In most parts of the world, hereditary customs are patriarchal and there seems to be much ruckus about patterning the male child to be a mirror of the father, culminating into over parenting.

**Problem of the study:** The problem underlying this study is the inability to establish the presence, prevalence and extent or forms as well as its probable consequences of over parenting on school related behaviour of children in Lagos suburbs. This culminates into ascertaining the commonality of over parenting; the different patterns of over parenting in what areas of a child's life this occurs and its relative efficiency in the child's wellbeing. It is expected that in this way, authentic information regarding over parenting that will be useful for research and planning that will enhance child rearing practices as well as socialization and minimizing the malpractices in the schools, particularly examination malpractices will be made available.

**Research questions:** In the attempt to provide answers to the problems of the study, the following questions are asked:

- Is over parenting a common feature in child rearing practices in Lagos?

- Is over parenting selectively expressed to male and female children?
- What are the implications of over parenting on the school-related efficiency of children in Lagos?
- Is there any relationship between over parenting and examination malpractices in the schools?

**Hypotheses:** In the attempt to provide answer to the problem and the questions of the study, so as to be able to fulfil the purpose for which it was undertaken, the following informed conjecture was made: over parented children are the male in gender, academically sounder than the non overprotected ones but socially naive.

This hypothesis is further clarified in the subsequent corollaries that are specified in the null form for ease of statistical manipulations of the resulting data:

- There is no significant relationship in the degree of over parenting between male and female children
- There is no significant difference in the academic performance between over parented children and their counterparts who are not
- There is no significant difference in the degree of social naivety between children of over parenting parents and their counterparts who are with no traces of over parenting

**Purpose of the study:** This study is being undertaken to establish the presence, prevalence and extent or forms as well as the probable consequences of over parenting on school related behaviour of children in Lagos suburbs. The study seeks to establish further, the commonality of over parenting; the different patterns and features of over parenting as well as identifying the point in time in the life of the child that over parenting do begin to manifest as well as to determine the relative efficiency relative efficiency of the over parented child over the non over parented ones. The objective here is to provide authentic information regarding over parenting practices that will be useful for research and planning so as to enhance child rearing practices as well as socialization and minimize the malpractices in the schools, particularly examination malpractices.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Research design:** Descriptive Research Method was adopted in carrying out this study. This involved the use of surveys and quasi experimental designs. In an attempt to obtain dependable data, the state was segmented into zones of the rich and the poor. From these zones, three opulent private secondary schools and three other public schools were selected purposively as samples. Two classes were selected at each of the schools (SS2A and

SS2B). In all, 150 students (93 males and 57 females) participated from the private schools while 205 were sampled in the public schools (107 males and 98 females).

**Instrumentation:** The Parenting Study Inventory (PSI) was used to obtain required data for the study. This is a battery of tests from which Parenting Study Inventory B ( $r = 83$ ) was administered to these students. This was a parallel inventory to Parenting Study Inventory A ( $r = 81$ ) which was administered to 120 parents. The goal of the exercise is to determine the parenting style of the parents as reported by the children (on PSI B) and as reported by the parent on PSI A. At the end, extreme cases were selected and this provided for 25 over parented children and 24 children without traces of over parenting. The academic record of these students for four consecutive terms was obtained and the mean was obtained. Six proctors were involved in the study. These worked along with the school teachers to assist in the data gathering process.

**Scoring and analyzing of the data:** In order to prevent other factors that may confound with over parenting such as economic status, environmental constraints, family stability and health, the first classification that was done involved distinguishing children who have both parents living together amicably and with similar capacity to take good care of their children as well as sorting out children that are indeed healthy. Two sets of data emerged in the data scoring, representing the measure of identifying the characteristics of over parenting and the over parenting parents as well as revealing the over parented students. The academic record of the two extremes: the over parented and the non-over parented was provided too. The descriptive measures were employed in determining the characteristics of over parenting and areas of parenting in which over parenting seem to be more impressed while the t-test were used in establishing whether or not differences existed between the sample means of students' academic performance.

Are you the sort of parent who wouldn't dream of letting your kids play outside on the street? Do you drive them everywhere, anxious about the perils of public transport? Is every minute of their free time taken up with enhancing activities? Would you contact your child's teacher to query what you felt was an undeservedly low grade? If so, you may have perhaps unwittingly, fallen into the trap of over parenting.

## **RESULTS**

In the attempt to provide answers to the research questions and resolve the problems of the study so as to

have the purpose attained, the accruing data from the investigations that were conducted were organized within the framework specified in each research questions as well as in the hypotheses.

**Descriptive reports answering the research questions**

**Research question 1:** Is over parenting a common feature in child rearing practices in Lagos? Responses to this question provided a mean of 2.9302, SD = 0.6759, N = 41. This is translated to 58.6% in the affirmative.

**Research question 2:** Is over parenting selectively expressed to male or to female children? The responses to this question provided that over parenting parents acted similarly with their male and female children without bias (mean = 2.3688; SD = 0.6524 for male children and mean = 2.3646; SD = 0.5472 for female children, respectively).

**Research question 3:** What is the implications of over parenting on the school-related efficiency of children in Lagos? A tally on this question provided that children of over parenting parents have the tendency to:

- Turnout into individuals without a sense of self
- Grow up into overly compliant individuals without coping skills
- Grow up to become so prone to risk
- Be unable to make independent decisions
- Have low tolerance for frustration
- Perform poorly in academic tasks when there is no without assistance
- Become self willed once they grow older and are far from the parents
- Become poor at self management and management of scarce resources
- Parents of over parented children will go to all lengths to secure a future for their children even without the child being enthusiastic about it

**Research question 4:** Is there any connection between over parenting and examination malpractices in the schools? The respondents to this question seem to

resolve that there is strong association between over parenting and examination malpractices in the schools with a mean of 2.5 or 50% in the affirmative.

**Hypotheses testing:** The main hypothesis for the study had stated that children of over parenting parents are academically sound but socially naive relative to children with no traces of over parenting. This hypothesis was further clarified in the subsequent three corollaries that are specified in the null form for ease of statistical manipulations of the resulting data:

- There is no significant difference in the academic performance between over parented children and their counterparts who are not
- There is no significant relationship in the degree of over parenting between male and female children
- There is no significant difference in the degree of social naivety between children of over parenting parents and their counterparts who are with no traces of over parenting

**Hypothesis 1:** The second null hypothesis had stated that there is no significant relationship in the degree of over parenting between male and female children. In order to test this null hypothesis, the mean score of the data obtained in respect of parenting practices made towards the male and the female child was contrasted (degree of over parenting towards the male child x degree of over parenting towards the female child. The results provided that no significant difference existed between the means,  $t = 16$ ,  $SD = 0.70498$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $N_1 = 17$ ,  $N_2 = 17$ ,  $\alpha = 0.01$  (Table 1). The result was supplemented with the paired samples correlations test. This returned  $r = 0.602$  (Table 1 and Fig. 1).

**Hypothesis 2:** In order to test the first null hypothesis (there is no significant difference in the academic performance between over parented children and their counterparts who are not) the academic performance scores of the two categories of junior secondary school students participants in the study was contrasted: children of over parenting parents x children of non-over

Table 1: Table of means, SD and t-test on the relative degree of over parenting between male and female over parented children in Lagos State

Source <sup>a</sup>	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	p-value		
Over parented male	17	2.3553	0.70498	0.17098	16	-0.468	<0.01		
Over parented female	17	2.4312	0.78356	0.19004	-	-	-		
Pair <sup>b</sup>	N		Correlation						
Over parented male x Over parented female	17		0.602		0.011				
99% CIF									
Pair <sup>c</sup>	N	Mean	SD	SE	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Over parented male x Over parented female	17	0.07588	0.66804	0.16202	0.54912	0.39735	-0.468	16	0.648

<sup>a</sup>Paired samples statistic; <sup>b</sup>Paired samples correlations; <sup>c</sup>Paired samples test

Table 2: Table of means, SD and t-test on relative academic performance between over parented children and non-over parented children in Lagos State

Source	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	p-value
Over parented	25	50.6000	13.8564	2.7713	47	0.262	<0.01
Non-over parented	24	49.4167	17.6288	3.5985	-	-	-

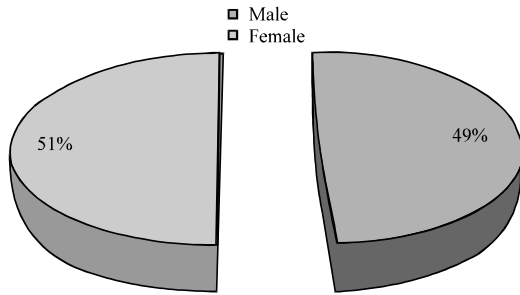


Fig. 1: Relative over parenting between male and female children

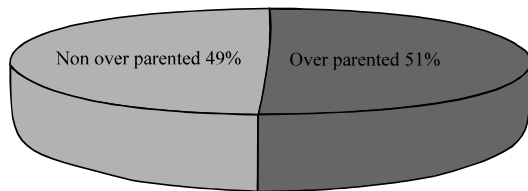


Fig. 2: Relative academic performance between the over parented and non over parented students

parenting parents. The independent t-test was used to test for statistically significant difference between the means. The result showed that no significant difference existed between the means at  $\alpha = 0.01$ ,  $t = -7.777$ ,  $df = 9$  (mean = 2.73; SD = 0.9218) (Table 2 and Fig. 2).

**Hypothesis 3:** The third hypothesis had stated that there is no significant difference in the degree of social naivety between children of over parenting parents and their counterparts who are with no traces of over parenting.

In order to test this null hypothesis the scores of student participants on social awareness tagged which was obtained through their responses to Sections A and B of the PSI B with  $r = 0.87$  was used. In this case, the scores of the over parented students were compared with the scores of their counterparts who were not over parented. Using independent samples t-test, significant difference was observed between the means on measures of naivety for over parented as well as the non over parented children,  $t = -4.327$ ,  $N1 = 20$ ,  $N2 = 20$ , Mean 1 = 2.0500, Mean 2 = 3.8000, SD1 = 1.35627, SD2 = 1.19649,  $df = 38$  at  $\alpha = 0.05$  (Table 3 and Fig. 3).

Table 3: Table of means, SD and t-test on the degree of social naivety between children of over parenting parents and their counterparts who are with no traces of over parenting

Source	N	Mean	SD (SE)	df	t	p-value
Over parented	20	2.0500	1.35627	0.30327	-4.327	<0.05
Non-over parented	20	3.8000	1.19649	0.26754	-	-

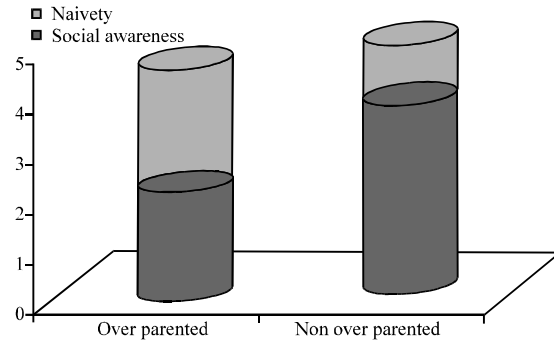


Fig. 3: Degree of naivety of the over parented and the non over parented

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study had provided that:

- Over parenting a common feature in child rearing practices in Lagos?
- Over parenting is not selectively expressed to male or to female children but that over parenting parents acted similarly with their male and female children without gender bias
- The implications of over parenting on the school-related efficiency and the general wellbeing of children in Lagos is that children of over parenting parents would likely turn out to be:
  - Individuals without a sense of self
  - Overly compliant individuals without coping skills
  - So prone to risk
  - Unable to make decisions on their own
  - Of low tolerance for frustration
  - Highly dependent on others
  - Poor at self management
  - Shy away from responsibilities
  - Possible perpetrators of examination malpractices in the schools

There is no significant relationship in the degree of over parenting between male and female children. It is interesting that no significant relationship existed in the degree of over parenting between male (2.36) and female children (2.43). Could this be an indication of societal shift from a patriarchal custom or that parents are more focused

on raising the female child more carefully to avoid being stained by the threatening ruffians around the streets but not for seeing both the male and the female child as being equal?

There is no significant difference in the academic performance between over parented children and their counterparts who are not. With a mean of 50.60 and 49.42 in the academic performance of the over parented and the non over parented, respectively it is remarkable that no significant difference existed in the academic performance of the over parented who under normal circumstances attended the best schools have all required school facilities with private tutors to help with school assignments, experiences limited hardship and is almost pampered in all areas and the non over parented who is often left to struggle along with the other teeming population of children in overpopulated classrooms, no school bus, inadequate school resources and facilities. Does it mean that all such money spent is of no real effect? Perhaps, the use of normative reference in determining the academic performance of students in this study is the reason for the observed result. May be if in future studies, criterion referenced tests are used and the results are based on tests that have better external validity, a likely shift in the position may be made apparent.

Significant difference existed in the degree of social naivety between children of over parenting parents and their counterparts who are with no traces of over parenting. The over parented children exhibited a high degree of naivety (2.05 or 0.6 naivety on naivety scale) compared with their counterparts who whose parents do no over parent (3.80 or 0.2 naivety), they tend to be simple, trusting, innocent, childlike, inexperienced, ingenuous, guileless, unsophisticated, gullible, somewhat foolish, credulous and unwise. They are less discerning, not so sharp or smart or astute or cunning. They are not clever enough for the age. Perhaps this is because it is their parents that make all the decisions for the child. Therefore, the over parented child is a protected and spoiled child is not as shrewd as the ones who are not over parented; the child lacks real confidence and is shielded from personality building circumstances that requires one to take risks or to make decisions.

By implication, over parenting which stems out of the fear of threat to the life and wellbeing of children may ultimately constitute a threat to the life and wellbeing of the children themselves. Human beings are social animals who would only be able to maximize their humanity in a

social setting where people interact for mutual benefit. this is a globalized world where the influx of information at the finger tip of everyone the road to liberty is assured no more via the visa but via the internet, the telephone, the television and fax machine, etc. the freedom to explore should not be so curtailed. At school the child should not only learn from reading but through aggression, conflict, competition and cooperation. These qualities cannot be maximized by a depraved mind that is told just what to do but is not free to determine what is right.

### **CONCLUSION**

Most parents today are so perturbed and hinged about the schooling of their children that schooling and career makes out clearly a great mismatch; a case for which schooling disturbs the education of children. Perhaps such parents had forgotten that it is the same people that they are shielding their children away from that those children would still have to be dealing with in the future. This study has revealed the necessity for the educational sector to intervene in developing total person development programmes by improving the schools and to initiate a boarding school system for all students so as to allow for better handling of children by professionals who could help to build balanced personalities that will be able to manage well the future of the societies so that it will not die of social decay, attrition and atrophy in the name of sophistication.

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