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INFLUENCE OF FAMILY SIZE AND PARENT' SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON THE  
PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN  
UNITED KINGDOM

By

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***ABSTRACT***

*The study assessed the influence of family size and parents' socio-economic status on the personality development of pupils in public primary schools in United Kingdom. Two purposes of the study, two research questions and two hypotheses were raised. The study adopted a survey design method. The population of the study comprised all public primary school teachers in United Kingdom. A sample of 237 teachers participated in the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw the sample. The instruments used for the study was titled "Home Environment and personality Development Questionnaire (HEPDQ)". It was recommended that despite the family size, parents should pay adequate and equal attention to their children. On the basis of socio-economic status of the parents, parents should endeavour to provide basic facilities to their children as well as enforce discipline when necessary in order to enhance their moral development and not leave them to the prangs of deliquescent.*

**Keywords: Family size, socio-economic status, personality,**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Personality according to Prayer and Fadiman (2005) is an individual's pattern of thinking, feeling and acting. Generally, the way a person behaves is a reflection of his personality. The personality of a child develops in a very process which certainly can be improved further by proper guidance of parents and teachers (Gregg 2003).

Also the influence of home on the total development of a child is controvertible because the child inherits some behavioural traits from the parents. During its formative years, the child learns his values, receives moral training and socially acceptable mores or traditions from parent who are the child's first teachers. In view of Ajila and Olutola (2007), the size of the home affects the individual since the parents are the first socializing agents in an individuals' life. This is because the family background and context of a child affects his relation to life situations and his level of performance. Certainly, we cannot ignore the influence of family size on children's educational achievements. Pupils attending inner city schools appear particularly vulnerable based on the problem of increase in family size. Reynolds (1976) claimed that family size contribute to the development of a child as well as the environment of a child. He further submitted that, the social backgrounds of pupils determine their effort in school.

Moreover, how well a child is nourished or how poorly a child's is fed depends on the status of the parents. The provision of basic needs or the deprivation impacts on the personal, psychological and social development of the child (Ekeruo, 1998). If a child is brought up by ambivalent parents who did not show love to him, he will not appreciate love in his life and will show it to nobody. If a child is over protected, he will possess a dependent personality. If a child grows up in a good home, he will likely develop a congruent personality and healthy adjustment. A broken home is likely to produce a delinquent and maladjusted child.

Obinaju (2002) justified the above view when she quipped that if an individual's learning history is punctuated with failures, crisis in the family, frustrations, serious illness, financial difficulties to pay his way in school and emotional disturbance, his personality development will be deranged. Accordingly, Brown (2011) states that play forms one of the important element of child's personality development. It is a medium that provides the child an opportunity for fullest self-expression, freedom and pleasure. It is helpful in developing habits sharing co-operation, mixing up with others, being assertive and posses leadership quality. A child, who takes part in sports and other competitions, may have to go different places with the team. Quite naturally, while staying with the fellow players learns all these qualities of sharing, co-operation and so on.

### **Statement of Problem**

Social development of a child is a function of the family size, socio-economic status of the parent, relationship between the members of the family and other factors not covered in this research work. This spells the influence the home exerts on a child. Naturally, every child misbehaves from time to time. This is always distressing to parents because they would like to be perfect parent of perfect children (Ekeruo, 1998).

Most children have poor personality because they feel something is missing in their lives. What's missing may be love, or attention or a simple thing like food and clothing. They may show their anger by being irritating and hostile to others, being sad and moody, unsecure, scared or jealous. They might steal as a way to deal with the deprivation. Still, some children lack self – control. They might see something they want to take it without thinking first about what might happen. They might not think to buy the object or ask to borrow it. Hence this study which aims at assessing the influence of family size and parent socio economic status on personality development of pupils in public primary schools in United Kingdom.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study was primarily designed to establish the influence of family size and parent socio economic status on personality development of pupils in public primary schools in United Kingdom.

Specifically, the study intends to;

- i) Determine the influence of family size on the social development of pupils in public primary schools in United Kingdom.
- ii) Determine the influence of parental socio economic status on the moral development of pupils in public primary schools in United Kingdom.

### **Research Questions**

In order to provide a guide to achieving the purpose of this study, the following research questions were posed.

- i) Is there any influence of family size on the social development of pupils?
- ii) Is there any influence of parental socio-economic status on pupils' moral development?

### **Research Hypothesis**

For investigation of the research questions, the under-listed null hypotheses were formulated:

- i. There is no significant influence of family size on the social development of pupils.
- ii. Parental social-economic status has no influence on the moral development of pupils.

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Social Learning Theory**

Social learning theory, explains human behaviour in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influence. The components underlying observational learning are:

- (1) Attention, including modeled events (distinctiveness affective, valence, complexity, prevalence, functional values) and observer characteristics (sensory capacity, arousal level, perceptual set, past reinforcement);
- (2) Retention, including symbolic, coding, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal, motor rehearsal;
- (3) Motor Reproduction; including physical capabilities, self-observation of reproduction, accuracy of feedback; and
- (4) Motivation, including external, vicarious and self - reinforcement (Bandura, 1997:29).

This is because social learning theory encompasses attention, memory and motivation, it spans both cognitive and behavioural framework. It depends largely on the individual attitudes and behaviours.

Social learning theory has been applied extensively to the understanding of aggression and psychological disorders, particularly in the context of behaviour modification (Bandura, 1997: 31). It is also the theoretical foundation for the technique of behaviour modeling, which is widely used in training programmes. In recent years Bandura, (1997), has focused his work on the concept of self-efficacy in a variety of contexts (p.20). He says social learning incorporates principle of behaviourism as well as social cognitivism. That is, the individual is motivated to engage in behaviour whose outcome is valued in which they feel capable of performing effectively. For instance, if a child should learn how to speak English, he or she has to be motivated to play around peers who speak English always and from there the child imbibes some knowledge of English but where he or she depends solely on what the teacher teaches in school

without interacting with others, the learning outcome would be less than 1. The home environment therefore plays significant role in a child.

### **Family size and social development of children**

The home environment or family size has been recognized as having a lot of influence on the child's social development (Nzewuawah 1995; Ajila and Olutola 2007). Ichado (1998) stated that parent's constant disagreement affects children emotionally and this could lead to poor social development.

The family lays the psychosocial, moral and spiritual foundations in the overall development of the child. While the mother's significant role in this cannot be over-emphasized, studies on father-child relationship suggest that the presence of a father in the home influences significantly the development of a child (Agulanna 1999). Thus, parenthood is a responsibility requiring full co-operation of both parents who must ensure the total development of their offspring(s). In most cases children from larger families are found to perform poorly socially than children from smaller families as family size is of the essence.

Family size in this context refers to the total number of children in the child's family in addition to the child himself. However, the family type that a child comes from either monogamous or polygamous family usually has impact on the child's social development. It is important to note that either of the family type (monogamous or polygamous) dictates the size of the family. It is assumed that polygamous family is as common among well-educated families as well as among poorly-educated families. It is equally common among professional and managerial fathers of the top of the occupational hierarchy. It is the unskilled workers at the bottom of the ladders that the practice of polygamy is prominent. But it is equally common among intellectually oriented families living in homes full of recent books as well as families without a single book in their houses.

Erikson (2000) reporting a study conducted by a group of scientists on infants raised by their natural mother clearly showed that the level of the child's emotional and intellectual development was directly related to the amount and quality of his interaction with his mother; the mother – child relationship. The effectiveness of this relationship is a function of the family size, as it is easier to work with a few family members than a larger one probably, 8-10 children. Bowlby (1998) proposes five infantile instincts to explain the importance of the mother child tie. These are; establishing smiling, clinging and following. Failure to establish mother child attachment due to mother absence or neglect result in abnormal personality development. The father's closeness to the child is also important in the development of a normal personality. The influence of the father is probably most important in connection with the child's sexual development. Parental personality, attitude and character influence the developing child.

Members of a family tend to influence the personality development of fellow members. Where parent exert a feeble control and influence on the children as the number increases, the siblings become the commanders of the child and his personality is greatly influenced by them. He initiates the sibling's behaviour (Denga, 2002). Accordingly, Alutu (2002) posits that siblings generally wield significant influences in the intellectual, emotional and social behaviour of a child. An individual develops normally if he or she experiences unconditional positive regards from a significant others. Parental attention significantly declines as the number of sibling's increases and later born children perform less well than their earlier born siblings. Hence family size has a tremendous effect on the overall personality of a child.

However, Powell and Steelman (1993) and Van Ejick and DeGraaf (1995) argued that children's attainment depends on inputs of time and money from their parents: the more children there are in the family, the less of both inputs. These inputs are not money alone, but other essential things like time, attention, resource dilution and so on. However, Booth and Kee (2006) confirmed that children from larger families have lower levels of education. Research on the effect of sibling's size and position has been based on a theory of the allocation of parental resources as presented in Becker (1981) confirmed that differences were found in family size and social development pupils achievement in academic.

Some babies seem to come into the world as social beings -- outgoing and quick to smile at familiar faces, while other infants are more subdued. Could simple genetics account for the differences? Child development begins well before a child is born and each newborn infant is unique themselves, right from the start. Genetic makeup must surely be responsible for some inherent variances in the temperament and sociability of young babies, but as they grow and develop, parental and other family influences are sure to help shape children and impact their social growth and development. Brown (2011) further stated that it is necessary that parents watch how the child interacts with the family members, friends, neighbours, classmates etc and they must encourage them to mix-up with other to eradicate these shyness and sense of loneliness.

### **Empirical Review on influence of family size on child's social development**

A study of the effect of family size on the social development of a child was conducted in California by McCormick (2003) with the sample size of 450. The finding of the study showed that large family size exerts higher influence on the social development of a child than small family size. He further observed in his study that 79% of the respondents also agreed that the large family does not only create negative impact on the children but it also play a very good role like social development, self concept and general development of children.

### **Parental Socio-economic status and moral development of children**

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a multidimensional construct that includes not only measures of material wealth, but also education and social prestige. Parental SES can affect an individual from very early development in uterus as well as throughout life. Stress, nutrition, parental care and cognitive stimulation have been suggested as some of the factors that mediate the impact of Socio Economic Status on both brain structures and cognitive functions across development (Hackman et. al., 2010)

In many homes, moral development of a child is taken seriously as a spoilt child is seen as a stain or blemish on the overall family (Anwana 2001). The socio-economic status has a great influence on pupil psychological, emotional, social and moral development (Ajila and Olutola 2007). Children with high Socio Economic Status background typically have fewer older siblings and, thus, are likely to receive more parental attention. While parents with higher Socio Economic Status more often engage in highly interactive activities with their children, low socio economic status parents more often engage in joint activities that involve lower levels of interaction and spend more of the joint time with media consumption. Only in terms of joint everyday activities such as talking or having meals together differences are small.

With respect to parenting style, parents with higher socio economic status are less likely to use inconsistent parenting practices and a parenting style that is characterized by psychological control. Inconsistent parenting practices include, e.g., threatening a child with a punishment without actually implementing it or the absence of consistent rules of behavior for a child. An example of a parent who is exerting psychological control is, e.g., a parent who does not talk to his child for a while because the child did something wrong. Moreover, in families with higher income, parenting styles that are less strict (e.g., rely less on punishment) and characterized by emotional warmth (e.g., praising a child or showing a child that parents love him or her) are significantly more likely to prevail.

The Concept of morality is essentially a social phenomenon; yet its development in an individual relates to a host of factors like motivation, practices of child-rearing adopted by the parents, general social milieu, culture of the society in which one happens to live, individual traits like intelligence, sociability etc. The individual and the social group have always passed on to the young their values and views about what is right and what is wrong. Without this kind of value transmission families and larger human groups would cease to function as effective units. For this reason, the moral and value education of the young has never been far from the minds of the adult community. Pupils go on learning values through hidden curriculum. But quite often what is learnt through such unstated value curriculum is obedience to authority and the awareness that adults do not conform to their own standards and values which they profess to others, thereby creating more value confusion among children. In order to solve such problems parents and teachers should be consistent in their disciplinary approach.

A study on relationship between socio-economic status of parents and their wards' academic performance found a strong and consistent relationship between family disadvantage and low attainment at school. More worrying still, this relationship became more marked as the children grew older. Other researchers had similarly emphasised the impact of socio-economic status of parents on moral development of pupils'. Rutter (1966), for example, noted the effect of parental ill-health, and in particular psychiatric ill-health. Galloway (1985a) found a very high rate of social disadvantage, combined in many cases with evidence of psychiatric problems, in families of children who were persistently absent from school. Conversely, children from stable, achievement-orientated families start school with the dual advantages that teachers see their parents as cooperative and also that their parents are able to reinforce at home what they do in school.

### **Empirical study on the influence of parents' socio-economic status on the moral development of pupils**

Jones (2001) used a sample size of 1,230 pupils in primary schools in South Africa. The study which was to find out the effect of parental socio economic status on the moral development of pupils in public primary schools in Ghana was using an Expost-Facto research design and stratified random sampling technique to select the respondents. His result demonstrated a positive impact of parental socio economic status on the pupils' moral development. Greater percentage (about 72% of pupils) agreed on the benefit derived from parental socio economic status. Furthermore it was observed that children who were from wealthy home tend to lack moral decadence while those from average home were more moral and disciplined. The study also showed the strength and weakness of the children, based on their classes of socio-economic status.

### **Summary of Literature review**

To some extent, a child inherits its responsibility from its parents. According to (Brown 2011), the main factors that contribute to a child's personality include child's physical traits, child's intellectual qualities, attitude, behavior pattern, feelings and aspirations, commitments and convictions. How the child's personality will develop, to a great extent, depends on the way he is allowed to socialize, interact with others emotionally during his childhood. The parents behavior with him or her, how the child is brought up, the amount of care and love it gets from its parents, the contribution made by the schools and the facilities provided to the child for his physical growth and mental development have significant roles in the personality development of a child (Gregg 2003).

### **Conclusion**

There is significant influence of family size on the social development of pupils. Besides, it is obvious that parental social-economic status has influence on the moral development of pupils.

### **Recommendations**

It was recommended that despite the family size, parents should pay adequate and equal attention to their children. It is also necessary that parents watch how the child interacts with the family members, friends, neighbours, classmates etc and they must encourage them to mix-up with others to eradicate shyness and loneliness and create a sense of confidence.

Parents should also encourage cooperative plays as it provides the child an opportunity for fullest self-expression, freedom and pleasure. Such actions are helpful in developing good habits, sharing, co-operation, and mixing up with others easily, being assertive and possessing leadership quality. A child, who takes part in sports and other competitions, may have to go different places with the team.

On the basis of socio-economic status of the parents, parents should endeavour to provide basic facilities to their children despite the socio economic status, and also enforce discipline when necessary in order to enhance their moral development and not leave them to the prangs of deliquescent as every parent wants to be a perfect parent of a perfect child.

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