POSITIVE PARENTING AND THE OVERALL WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

Angela OKOJIDE
angelaokojide@gmail.com

lujide ADEKEYE
jide.adekeye@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

Agatha NWABUEZE
nwabuezeca@gmail.com

Department of Psychology
Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State

Abstract

This study aims to determine positive parenting on the overall well-being of children. Positive parenting considers the balance of showing affection and exercising discipline toward the child. Two research questions and hypotheses were formulated and tested to achieve this objective. The study design was a cross-sectional descriptive survey with 250 parents participating. The instrument used for data collection was the Nicomachus positive parenting (NPP) questionnaire which measures various dimensions of positive parenting styles such as nurturing values, strength identification and boosting, parenting context, and involvement in parenting approach towards the child and parental attitudes. The data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviation and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Results show that many parents are involved in positive parenting styles. It also reveals a significant difference in fathers' and mothers' four dimensions of positive parenting. It was recommended that counsellors, health professionals, teachers, parents and all the stakeholders involved in child upbringing should give adequate attention to parenting styles and create more awareness among the parents through various platforms on the importance and implications of their parenting styles. The study concludes that parenting styles are crucial to a child's development.

Keywords: Children, Counselling, Influence, Parenting, Positive, Well-being

Introduction

Parenting is a crucial determinant of children's emotional and social adjustment and educational, cognitive and physical development (Rahmah, et al., 2022). Parents' attitudes and emotions greatly impact their children's behaviours, especially from 7 to 13 years (Sarwar, 2016). According to Nandhini et al (2021), parents greatly influence their children's character development and how successful they will become when they get old.

Positive parenting is a viewpoint that sees and reacts to positive behaviours in children rather than paying attention to negative behaviours. It concerns bringing out the best in children by emphasising their strengths and strong points. It is an act that celebrates and encourages children instead of stressing and preventing bad behaviours. Positive parenting considers the balance of showing

affection and exercising discipline toward the child.

Counselling offers parents the help and ideas to work with different counselling approaches more confidently to cope with difficulties or problematic situations and to learn how to maintain positive changes over time. Positive parenting is based on social learning theory which states that we are role models for our children and that if we want to bring up calm children, we should also be calm and show calm attitudes towards them all the time. Thus, teaching them to do as you do and not to do as you say. Counselling for positive parenting, therefore, aims at achieving a loving and gentle approach to parenting that help to build healthy relationships between parents and children and appreciable harmony and well-being in family life.

Research Questions
Two research questions were stated to achieve the objectives of the study. They include:
1.   What is the extent of the parent's nurturing of values and identifying children's strengths?
2.   To what extent do parents' context and involvement influence children's development?

Hypotheses
Two hypotheses were formulated for the study.
1.   There is no significant difference in nurturing values and identification of children's strengths between fathers and mothers.
2,   There is no significant difference in parental context and involvement between fathers and mothers.

Literature Review
Positive Parenting
Positive parenting is a parenting style that continuously brings better results. It is a way parents raise their wards to be empowered, resilient, fulfilled individuals. In positive parenting, instead of ruthless disciplinary actions and reprimands for misbehaviors or misconduct, parents focus on positive discipline, developing acceptable behaviour rather than punishment when a child misbehaves. The benefit of this approach is that you can always work on good behaviours in children, not only when the child misbehaves. A positive parenting approach helps children to develop independence and self-esteem. This is basically because the children are actively involved in their behaviour development. It also allows children to have and develop good interpersonal communication skills with their parents and build a trusting bond with them. Studies have shown that children who enjoy positive parenting have a lower level of childhood depression than children exposed to harsh discipline styles (Daniella, et al., 2006). Positive parenting enhances important social and emotional skills such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, sense of belongingness, decision-making skills and autonomy. It helps children to adjust better in schools, increases optimism and reduces behavioural problems (Sandler, et al., 2015). Knox, Burkard and Cromly (2013) and Sandler, et al. (2015) opined that positive parenting help children to have reduced risky behaviours and better job prospects and supports positive development.

Seay, Wyona et al. (2014) define positive parenting as "a continual relationship of a parent(s) and a child or children that includes caring, teaching, leading, communicating and providing for the needs of a child consistently and unconditionally". The definition suggests that positive parenting involves

guiding, caring, nurturing, leading, consistent, teaching, regular communication, affection and unconditional love, among other qualities. Godfrey (2019) proposed that positive parenting sees all children as born good, humane, and want to do the right thing. He also believed that positive parenting aims to teach/instil discipline in children so that their self-esteem is built and promotes a mutually respectful parent-child relationship. Thus, promoting warmth, thoughtfulness, and love, not permissiveness.

Okorn, et al (2022) study revealed that positive discipline from parents is related to higher levels of child social-emotional difficulties externalizing and internalising behaviour and that children who have highly supportive parents show higher levels of social competencies. Positive parenting emphasises the kind of parenting that nurtures the development of children's core internal strengths rather than concentrating on their weaknesses and shortfalls (Marilyn, 2020). Research has shown that positive parenting is associated with various aspects of healthy child development, which continues far beyond childhood (Nicholson, 2019). There are several benefits of positive parenting for the well-being of children. They include School adjustments, improved motivation, psycho-social functioning, better social efficacy, reduced depressive symptoms and improved self-esteem (Joussemet, et al., 2008; Duineveld, et al., 2017). Sandler, et al. (2015) also noted that positive parenting helps reduce behavioural problems and increase adolescents' competencies, coping capacities and job aspirations. It allows children in good decision-making skills and believes in themselves.

Nurturing of Values by Parents

Parenting and nurturing are commonly used in child development and socialisation processes. It is generally believed in all cultures that parenting and nurturing children begin in the family at birth. Still, it has also been revealed that the actual nurturing starts with the mother in the womb before birth. However, the nurturing and upbringing of children begins with the parents in their immediate environment. Parents could do these as the nuclear family, grandparents, relatives, non-parental childcare personnel, or other significant persons. In raising children, certain practices like clothing, feeding patterns, dinks, shelter and cultural practices and values are inculcated into the children. The acceptable and unacceptable norms and values are directly or indirectly into the children by family members. Nurturing also means that other things make up a child, which differentiates them from other children apart from that which nature had made him/her to be. The environment where the child is raised and nurtured makes the child different from others. The parents provide all the basic needs of a child, and all efforts made by parents to do these are referred to as parenting. These basic needs are not only physical, biological, psychological, mental, and educational but also the need for affection, fostering of values such as discipline, respect for elders, responsibilities and other values acceptable in the child's immediate environment. Nurturing, therefore, refers to all the Labour and activities of raising children.

Values describe all the fundamental/core beliefs that guide one's behaviours and goals, which measure the overall success of an individual's life. In our contemporary world, values start in childhood as parents teach what they believe is the most important virtue in life and, as such, live as role models. Parents teach these important values through the way they live and work. These values influence their priorities, the way they behave, the things they value and the way they establish their success in life. When people do things and behave match their values, they are happy and fulfilled,

but when these do not go along or ally with their values, they become unhappy and frustrated. Parents consciously identify their values and inculcate them in their children as they grow up. These values include diligence, hard work, fairness, discipline, carefulness, patience, generosity, philanthropy, self-control, and humility.

Parents, the first and primary socialisation agents, greatly influence their children and their children's values. They impact their attitudes and behaviours. As children grow up, they pick up these family or parental values as they observe their parents and other significant persons in their environment. To indoctrinate the right values in children, parents must act or live by example, and their conduct and behaviours must reflect what they teach because they serve as role models. Inculcating good values in children is not very easy. It takes some time to learn. Parents require a good level of patience with their children to be able to teach effectively. Also, when parents repeatedly do the right thing, children will copy and do them. They need to do more rather than talk. Forcefully engaging the children to do something may not yield good results. Parents should learn to keep things positive. A positive frame of mind is crucial in child nurturing, especially in the early years. Adopting a positive frame of mind makes the home environment happy, enjoyable and comfortable. Children who regularly enjoy good cuddling and communication grow up to become more confident individuals.

Another way to inculcate values into children is by being realistic with expectations. Children make mistakes at one time or another, and parents should learn to deal with them patiently and kindly. Growing children are inexperienced and usually learn what they observe in their immediate environment. They will eventually learn to do what you expect them to do if our expectations are realistic. Parents obviously should have some expectations, but they should not be forceful expectations. If parents' unrealistic expectations surpass the children's potential, it can harm their development and self-image. Therefore, parents should be patient and allow their children's skills and interests to develop, especially in their formative years. In addition, parents should encourage family bonding. Family time is essential for growing children. They should consciously introduce other family members to them and explain how they are related to them. This helps them learn how to relate, value people around them, and the importance of family bonding.

Furthermore, parents are encouraged to set strong ground rules for their children. Parents need to set down rules for them, especially when they have started school. Make a routine timetable, and set out fixed times for play, study, rest and other extracurricular activities. Also, parents should try to make the routine flexible and not too strict when allocating time for study and play. Having enough time for play, like sports, helps children's physical and mental development. Besides, make children understand certain things. Explain why they should eat certain food and not some. Educate them on good nutrition, giving, contentment and others. Another crucial area of positive parenting and nurturing is the reward. Parents should learn to reward their children when they behave well. When a child is rewarded for good behaviour, it will help motivate he/she to always be on their best behaviour. However, parents should avoid rewarding with material things like chocolates, gifts and the like. Rewards can be intangible or non-material things. A hug, praise, and words of appreciation can do the magic. In addition to rewards, parents can also show and teach respect. Respecting older siblings, elders, and grandparents are important virtues children should imbibe. Teach them how to manage pocket money and be responsible.

Strength Identification and boosting

Identifying strengths and boosting are strategies parents apply to identify and develop their children's strengths to boost their learning and well-being. The identification of children's strengths is imperative for their success and well-being. Assisting children to recognise and act on their strengths and abilities helps them to improve their achievements and well-being outcomes. A strength-based approach seeks to spot and nurture positive qualities in children (Water, 2015). When parents identify their children's strengths and work with them to actualise them, it prepares them for future success and, simultaneously, gives the parents a sense of joy and fun. Rahmah, et al. (2022) opined that children learn through interaction with adults and friends by playing games and doing things they like which also motivates their curiosity. These help them to develop their strengths, potential, abilities, social competencies and independence.

Parenting Context and Involvement in Child Development

Parenting context is crucial in shaping children's expression of temperament. Their environment predisposes different areas of a child's growth and development. Children's emotional development is also influenced by their biological, family setting, school, community and culture. It has been noted that when parents or other significant persons display good emotions, the children will likely develop good social competence and emotions. Fadillah et al (2016) stated that a father's emotions greatly influence their children's emotional development from childhood to adulthood. So, parents must establish positive emotions and independence in their children early on. When a child enjoys positive reinforcement, strengths become a potential source of positive emotions. Parent involvement in children's development is an important prerequisite for a child's development. This is vital and allows parents to discover the strength and weaknesses of their children.

Methods

Research Design

A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used for the study.

Population

The study participants comprised 250 parents from Lagos State of which 248 were fathers and 249 mothers.

Measures

The instrument used for data collection was the Nicomachus positive parenting (NPP) questionnaire which measures various dimensions of positive parenting styles such as nurturing values, strength identification and boosting, parenting context and involvement in parenting approach towards the child.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviation and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Data Collection

The authors administered the instrument to parents with the assistance of colleagues who served as research assistants.

Data Analyses

Data collected were analysed using the descriptive statistics method by making extensive use of frequencies, percentages and ANOVA to describe the exact nature of positive parenting under the four dimensions.

Interpretation of Findings

The discussion and interpretation of the study were based on the data gathered from 250 participants following the two research questions and hypotheses guiding the study. Tables showing the frequencies and their corresponding percentages for each item were constructed.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent of parents' nurturing of values and identifying children's strengths?

Table 1: Nurturing Values and Strength Identification and Boosting

S/N	Items	$\overline{X}$	SD	%
	Nurturing Values			80.8%
1	Encouraging children to keep their sense of humour even in hard times	4.1960	1.28225	
2	Encouraging children to fight for what is fair	4.2920	.89551	90.8%
3	Inciting children always to tell the truth	4.8480	.44008	98.8%
4	Urging children to retry things they weren't successful at in the past	4.6880	.66966	94.4%
5	Urging children to be enthusiastic about everything they do	4.3280	.73113	96.4%
6	Inciting children to read books	4.7640	.53427	97.6%
7	Encouraging children to do the right thing even when there is no personal gain	4.4200	.57700	98.4%
8	Encouraging children to motivate and support others when they participate in group activities	4.6880	.68155	94.4%
9	Urging children to give a second chance to other people	4.3960	.75993	86.4%
	Strength Identification and Boosting			
10	Readiness to see into children's strengths	4.3600	.65736	93.6%
11	Some children's strengths stand out more clearly than others	3.8200	.98768	54.4%
12	Sufficiently aware of children's strengths	3.9480	.94066	77.2%
13	Encouraging children to study something related to their character strengths	3.9560	.94532	79.2%
14	Making sure that children's extracurricular activities cultivate their character strengths	3.9040	.91769	73.2%

Table 1 shows the parental values and their relationship with their children in their activities. Item 3 has the highest percentage, 98.8%, followed by item 7, which has 98.4%. These show that most parents encourage their children always to tell the truth and do the right thing. Items 6, 5, 4, 10 and 2 range from 97.6% - 90.8%, which reveals that parents encourage their children to study hard, fight for what is fair, enthusiastic and not relent in their efforts to succeed in life.Items 13, 2, & 14 show that parents are not adequately aware of their children's strengths and not encouraging them enough to study and do things related to their strengths. Finally, item 11 has the lowest percentage (54.45), showing that parents have no clear idea of their children's strengths or differentiate them from others. Research Question 2: What is the extent of parents' context and involvement in their children's development?

Table 2: Parenting Context and Involvement

S/N	Items	$\overline{X}$	SD	%
	Parenting Context			
15	Not having problems in marriage or personal relationship	4.0280	1.34851	71.2%
16	A good relationship with extended family members	4.3680	1.03773	86.4%
17	Husband/partner supports when in need	4.3360	1.10453	86.4%
	Involvement			
18	Helping children do their homework	3.9920	.88718	84.4%
19	Getting children to their extracurricular activities	4.2600	3.36298	85.6%
20	Often get briefed by child's teachers	3.6120	1.37879	72.0%

Table 2 shows the parenting context and involvement, which talk about the shaping behaviours of their children based on their relationship with them and members of their family and the involvement of parents in the upbringing of their children. Items 16, 17, 18 and 19 range from 84.4% - 86.4%. This shows most parents have a good family relationship, support one another and are involved in their children's academic achievement and extracurricular activities. Moreso, items 16 and 20 have 71.2% and 72.8%, which reveals a good family relationship. They also get brief feedback from their children's teachers. The results show how important parenting context and involvement are in the development and well-being of our children.

Hypotheses
1. There is no significant difference in nurturing of values and identification of children's strengths between fathers and mothers

Table 3: Nurturing of values and identification of children's strengths
ANOVA

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Encouraging children to keep their sense of humour even in hard times	Between Groups	41.196	1	41.196	27.747	.000
	Within Groups	368.200	248	1.485		
	Total	409.396	249			
Encouraging children to fight for what is fair	Between Groups	14.097	1	14.097	18.839	.000
	Within Groups	185.587	248	.748		
	Total	199.684	249			
Inciting children always to tell the truth	Between Groups	.002	1	.002	.013	.911
	Within Groups	48.222	248	.194		
	Total	48.224	249			
Urging on children to retry things, they weren't successful in the past	Between Groups	.289	1	.289	.644	.423
	Within Groups	111.375	248	.449		
	Total	111.664	249			
Urging children to be enthusiastic about everything they do	Between Groups	7.973	1	7.973	15.803	.000
	Within Groups	125.131	248	.505		
	Total	133.104	249			
Inciting children to read books	Between Groups	1.428	1	1.428	5.087	.025
	Within Groups	69.648	248	.281		
	Total	71.076	249			
Encouraging children to do the right thing even when there is no personal gain	Between Groups	4.193	1	4.193	13.212	.000
	Within Groups	78.707	248	.317		
	Total	82.900	249			
Encouraging children to motivate and support others when they participate in group activities	Between Groups	.009	1	.009	.019	.889
	Within Groups	115.655	248	.466		
	Total	115.664	249			
Urging children to give a second chance to other people	Between Groups	3.102	1	3.102	5.467	.020
	Within Groups	140.694	248	.567		
	Total	143.796	249			
Readiness to see into children's strengths	Between Groups	.316	1	.316	.730	.394
	Within Groups	107.284	248	.433		
	Total	107.600	249			
Some children's strengths stand out more clearly than others	Between Groups	4.510	1	4.510	4.692	.031
	Within Groups	238.390	248	.961		
	Total	242.900	249			
Sufficiently aware of children's strengths	Between Groups	.117	1	.117	.132	.716
	Within Groups	220.207	248	.888		
	Total	220.324	249			

Encouraging children to study something related to their character strengths	Between Groups	.714	1	.714	.798	.373
	Within Groups	221.802	248	.894		
	Total	222.516	249			
making sure that children's extracurricular activities cultivate their character strengths	Between Groups	.042	1	.042	.049	.824
	Within Groups	209.654	248	.845		
	Total	209.696	249			

Table 3 shows the ANOVA conducted to compare the differences between fathers and mothers in nurturing values and identifying children's strengths. Significant differences were found in: encouraging children to keep their sense of humour even in a hard time at P<.05, {F(1,248)= 27.74,p=0.000, encouraging children to fight for what is fair, at p<.05, {F(1,248)=18.839, p=0.000, urging children to be enthusiastic, atp<.05, {F1,248)=15.803,p=0.000, inciting children to read their books, at p<.05 {F(1,248)=5.087,p=0.025, and encouraging to do the right at P<.05, {F(1,248)=13.212,p=0.000. Furthermore, the result shows that a significant difference exists in urging the children to give a second chance to others at P<.05, {F(1,248)=5.467,p=0.020, and knowing if their children's strength stands out from others at P<.05, {F(1,248)=4.692,p=0.031.

Hypotheses 2: There is no significant difference in parental context and involvement between fathers and mothers.

Table 4: Parental Context and Involvement Anova

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Not having problems with marriage or personal relationship	Between Groups	60.358	1	60.358	38.142	.000
	Within Groups	392.446	248	1.582		
	Total	452.804	249			
Having a good relationship with extended family members	Between Groups	16.946	1	16.946	16.731	.000
	Within Groups	251.198	248	1.013		
	Total	268.144	249			
Husband or partner supports when in need	Between Groups	19.236	1	19.236	16.766	.000
	Within Groups	284.540	248	1.147		
	Total	303.776	249			
Helping children do their homework	Between Groups	1.927	1	1.927	2.462	.118
	Within Groups	194.057	248	.782		
	Total	195.984	249			
Getting children to their extracurricular activities	Between Groups	.003	1	.003	.000	.986
	Within Groups	2816.097	248	11.355		
	Total	2816.100	249			
Often get briefed by children's teachers	Between Groups	14.465	1	14.465	7.817	.006
	Within Groups	458.899	248	1.850		
	Total	473.364	249			

Table 4 shows the ANOVA conducted to compare the differences in parental styles under the dimensions of parental context and involvement among fathers and mothers. Results reveal significant differences in not having problems in marriages or personal relationships (p<.05 {$F_{(1,248)}$ = 38.142, p = 0.000), and having good relationships with extended family members, at p<.05 {91,248) = 16.766, p = 0.000. A significant difference was also found in getting briefed by children's teachers at p<.05 {$F_{(1,248)}$ = 7.819, p = 0.000.

Discussion

The findings support the fact that positive parenting is vital in determining children's self-regulation and well-being. Sandler, Wolchik, Tein & Weinslow (2015) opined that positive parenting helps children adjust better in schools, increases optimism and reduces behavioural problems. Parenting style is an essential feature in children's development and well-being. Similarly, parenting styles influence children's emotional, interpersonal, and academic adjustments. Therefore, parents, teachers and all stakeholders in the children's nurturing process should give adequate attention to parenting styles and create more awareness among the parents through various platforms on the importance and implications of their parenting styles on their children's development and well-being.

Implication for Counselling

The counselling implication for positive parenting is that:
1. Parents should be encouraged to teach their children how to be resilient and encourage them to attempt and retry things even when they do not succeed on the first attempt.
2. Children should be taught to do the right thing even when they have nothing to benefit from.
3. Parents should be taught to encourage their children to study hard and do things that interest them according to their abilities and strengths.
4. The importance of emotional stability should be communicated to parents so that they can make a conscious effort to increase it at every opportunity. Children should be taught to accept failure in good faith and allow failure to teach them success.
5. Parents should be aware of the importance of communicating and learn to build a good interpersonal relationship with their children's teachers and caregivers as this will help them get feedback about their children's progress regularly at school.
6. The effective use of the Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapeutic Approach will be a useful strategy for family counsellors to promote more positive parenting among parents by identifying and consequently altering their harmful thoughts and ideas, enhancing emotional functioning and increasing family values.
7. Counsellors can also apply psychoanalytical family therapy to understand the adaptive and maladaptive psychological development of parents and family members, explore their past and how it affects their present and redirect their thoughts more beneficially through corrective emotional experiences.

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