

PARENTING PRACTICES DURING ECONOMIC MELTDOWN IN BASIC SCHOOLS IN AMUWO-ODOFIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated parenting practices during the economic meltdown in basic schools in Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. The research was anchored on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the influence of environmental factors on individual behaviour and adaptation. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, utilizing a self-structured questionnaire titled *Parenting Practices during Economic Meltdown (PPEM)*, administered to 200 parents across 20 public and private schools selected through multistage sampling. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (percentages, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Chi-square). Findings revealed that economic hardship has significantly altered parenting practices, with a shift toward more permissive, authoritarian, or neglectful parenting styles. Challenges such as financial drain, mental health issues, limited parental involvement in children's education, and increased vulnerability of children to deviant behaviour were identified. A statistically significant relationship was also found between parenting practices and children's emotional well-being. The study concludes that the economic downturn has adversely affected the quality of parenting and child development, leading to negative outcomes in education, emotional stability, and family cohesion. Based on the findings, the study recommended increased government intervention through subsidies, support services, community-based programs, and parental education to mitigate the effects of economic hardship on families and enhance children's well-being and academic success.

Keywords: Academic performance, basic education, economic meltdown, emotional well-being

Introduction

The role of parenting in shaping children's development cannot be overstated. However, the prevailing economic meltdown in Nigeria has posed significant challenges to parenting practices. Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area, a bustling urban district with a blend of mixed classes, diverse ethnic groups, a blend of traditional and modern practices in Lagos State, is not exempt from the harsh realities of the economic downturn. Parenting practices encompass the behaviours, strategies, and methods parents adopt in raising and nurturing their children, and they play a pivotal role in shaping children's development. Parenting, as both a natural and socially constructed role, extends beyond mere caregiving to include the emotional, psychological, educational, nutritional, economic, and social well-being of the child. According to Teti et al. (2017), parenting is regarded as the oldest profession, intrinsically tied to emotionally demanding responsibilities that are often aligned with the cultural values and belief systems of a given society.

This multifaceted role of parenting becomes even more critical when considering children enrolled in basic schools, who are at a sensitive stage of cognitive, emotional, and social development. At this stage, the quality of parenting significantly influences children's growth trajectories. However, economic stress particularly during periods of financial downturn exacerbates challenges within the family system and has been shown

to adversely affect children's learning capacity, emotional stability, and overall well-being. In this context, Ogwazu et al. (2023) emphasized that during early childhood, adequate nurturing, care, and health are indispensable for a child's holistic development and long-term success. Basic Education in Nigeria, as outlined in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), is designed for children aged 0 to 15 years and encompasses Early Childhood Care and Development Education (0–4 years), pre-primary education (5–6 years), primary education, and junior secondary education (6–15 years). This foundational stage coincides with children's most formative years, thus necessitating the reinforcement of effective parenting practices that meet both home and school demands particularly in times of economic instability.

Parenting practices encompass the range of behaviours, strategies, and roles parents adopt in nurturing their children. These include authoritative, authoritarian, permissive (indulgent or neglectful), and helicopter parenting styles, each having varying implications for child development. Parenting, as both a natural responsibility and a socially constructed role, extends beyond basic caregiving to encompass the emotional, psychological, educational, nutritional, economic, and social wellbeing of the child. Teti et al. (2017) described parenting as the oldest profession, one intricately tied to emotionally intensive responsibilities shaped by cultural values and beliefs. Children enrolled in basic education are at a critical stage of cognitive, emotional, and social development, where the quality of parenting can greatly influence their growth trajectories. However, recent shifts in parenting practices, largely driven by economic hardship, have raised concerns. Many families under financial strain are becoming less consistent with discipline, more indulgent, or overly protective (Ogwazu, 2015; Chikezie & Onyekachi, 2021). Economic stress has contributed to an increase in authoritarian or neglectful parenting, as financial burdens reduce the capacity for emotionally responsive and engaged parenting. Baumrind (1991) identified authoritative parenting marked by a balance of behavioural expectations and emotional responsiveness as most beneficial to child development. This has been echoed by Ogwazu (2015), who emphasized its role in fostering both behavioural control and emotional support. Black et al. (2016) further highlighted that a stimulating home environment featuring reading, singing, and storytelling enhances children's cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes. Likewise, Washbrook (2010) noted that nurturing, resource-rich environments promote intellectual growth. In line with this, Ogwazu and Nwakaibie (2022) found that active parental involvement in learning supports school attendance, improves mental health outcomes, and strengthens parent-teacher collaboration.

Despite these benefits, the ongoing economic meltdown in Nigeria has constrained parents' ability to provide such nurturing environments. As noted by Chikezie and Onyekachi (2021), financial hardship undermines access to learning materials, increases emotional distress at home, and reduces parental participation in school-related activities. Many families have had to transfer children from private to public or low-fee schools, reducing the quality of education received. Essential needs such as nutritious meals, educational supplies, and extracurricular engagement are often sacrificed, directly impacting children's development and wellbeing. Parental involvement in school life has also suffered. Financial hardship leaves many parents unable to monitor academic progress or communicate with teachers. Behaviour management within the home becomes increasingly strained. Happer, et al. (2009) found that despite working extended hours, many parents still struggle to meet their children's basic needs. Similarly, Raikes and Thompson (2005) argued that poverty weakens intra-family relationships, reduces parental self-efficacy, and necessitates changes in school arrangements.

Furthermore, Black et al. (2017) observed that families under financial duress may resort to harmful coping strategies, such as substance abuse, which negatively affect parenting quality. The prevailing economic crisis in Nigeria marked by inflation, unemployment, and limited access to essential services has deepened these challenges. Onwe and Onwe (2019) noted that economic downturns significantly impact family income, infrastructure, education, and overall quality of life, particularly under the administrations of President Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023) and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. These challenges undermine Nigeria's progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goals 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and 4 (Quality Education) (UN, 2015). In many households, food insecurity has worsened. Families have adopted survival feeding patterns locally described as "1-0-1," "0-1-1," or even "0-0-1"—with some parents skipping meals entirely for the sake of their children.

These distressing economic conditions have also reduced access to education. Rising numbers of children are withdrawn from school or delay enrolment as parents struggle to afford tuition, uniforms, or transportation. In some extreme cases, children are pushed into street begging at markets, bus stops, and bridges, increasing their vulnerability to assault, trafficking, and deviant behaviour. Similar consequences were observed during the Asian financial crisis of 1997, where school enrolment fell, child mortality rose, and food insecurity increased (Cader & Perera, 2011; UNICEF, 2008b).

In some families, extreme poverty has led to fragmentation. Wedge (2013) found that parents sometimes relinquish children to informal foster care or relatives due to inability to meet their basic needs. Laumann (2015) further reported that such children are at heightened risk of abuse, identity struggles, and social exclusion. Economic hardship has a direct impact on behaviour management and moral upbringing. Many parents, due to financial pressure, become inconsistent or disengaged in their disciplinary methods, exposing children to social vices and deviance. Teti et al. (2017) argued that a family's economic situation affects not just parenting styles but also emotional responsiveness. Parveen et al. (2018) and Lötter (2007) asserted that poverty predisposes children to immoral behaviours such as prostitution and substance abuse, often in a desperate bid for survival. These experiences constitute Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which may persist into adulthood and span generations. Lia and Skjølberg (2004) warned that poverty can lead children to participate in violent or criminal acts, including recruitment by terrorist groups. Omede and Omede (2015) linked a lack of moral upbringing to rising insecurity, while Onuoha (2014) maintained that early moral guidance is critical to preventing radicalization and cultism. While Dermott and Pomati (2019) argue that poverty does not automatically result in poor parenting, Wahlbeck et al. (2017) and Ferguson et al. (2007) emphasized the mental health toll that economic stress takes on parents, which ultimately affects children's cognitive and emotional development.

Insecurity across Nigeria further complicates these issues. It not only deters school attendance but also erodes parents' confidence in the safety of their children. Many are forced to juggle demanding work schedules with constant anxiety about their children's well-being. Ogwazu et al. (2023) noted that the fear instilled by insecurity has disrupted commercial activities and deepened socio-economic instability. This study is anchored on Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), which posits that human behaviour is shaped through a dynamic interaction between personal factors, environmental influences, and behavioural patterns. Bandura emphasized the role of observational learning, self-reflection, and self-regulation, proposing that individuals are not merely reactive to their

environment but are capable of proactively constructing solutions based on observed experiences and internal cognitive processes. At the core of Social Cognitive Theory is the belief that individuals learn not only through direct experience but also by observing others, evaluating the consequences of actions, and mentally simulating potential outcomes. Through conceptualisation and motivation, people develop strategies for coping and problem-solving without necessarily undergoing trial and error. These cognitive processes become especially relevant in environments marked by stress or adversity. In the context of this study, the theory is particularly useful as it helps explain how parents, faced with economic challenges, develop adaptive parenting strategies by observing, reflecting, and adjusting their behaviours. The economic meltdown in Nigeria has compelled many parents to become resourceful in managing limited resources, modifying their disciplinary approaches, and redefining their roles within the family and school system in response to external pressures.

Statement of the problem

Economic instability has become a persistent and deepening crisis in Nigeria, severely affecting families' ability to meet their basic needs. Inflation, unemployment, and reduced access to essential goods and services have created an environment where parents are increasingly unable to provide stable care, education, and emotional support for their children. This socio-economic strain raises critical concerns about how parents adapt their parenting practices under financial pressure and how these adaptations affect children's academic performance, emotional well-being, and moral development. Emerging evidence suggests that many parents, in response to financial hardship, have adjusted their parenting styles often shifting from authoritative to authoritarian or neglectful approaches. These shifts, while often unintentional, result from limited resources, time constraints, and the emotional toll of economic hardship. Parents are forced to make difficult decisions, such as moving their children from private to low-cost or free-fee-paying schools, cutting back on nutritious food, educational supplies, and healthcare all of which are vital for holistic child development. Moreover, parent-school collaboration has weakened, as financial stress limits parental engagement in school activities and communication with teachers. The capacity to monitor children's academic progress and provide structured home learning environments has also diminished. Behaviour management within the home has been adversely affected, with many parents reporting less consistency and control, leading to an increase in deviant behaviours, moral decline, and emotional instability among children. In more extreme cases, some families have resorted to street begging in public places such as parks, bridges, and bus stops. These children, exposed to social hazards and instability, often exhibit signs of stress, anxiety, and insecurity, which disrupt their cognitive and emotional development. The cumulative effect of these conditions reflects a broader crisis in parenting amidst economic hardship. In view of these interconnected challenges, this study investigated parenting practices during economic meltdown in basic schools in Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. It aims to explore how families are coping with socio-economic pressure, the mechanisms adopted by parents in raising school-aged children, and the broader implications for educational access, behavioural outcomes, and child well-being.

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to examine parenting practices during the economic meltdown in basic schools in Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. The study specifically seeks to:

1. determine strategies on parenting practices during economic meltdown.
2. identify the challenges parents face in implementing effective parenting practices during economic hardship.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the strategies employed by parents in managing parenting practices during the economic meltdown?
2. What are the major challenges confronting parenting practices during economic hardship?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between parenting practices and pupils' emotional well-being during the economic meltdown.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate parenting practices during economic hardship. The target population comprised all parents of pupils in Lagos State. A multistage sampling technique was employed for the study. In the first stage, Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area was purposively selected due to its socio-economic diversity, featuring a blend of mixed income classes, multi-ethnic groups, varied occupational backgrounds, and urban characteristics that combine traditional and modern parenting patterns. In the second stage, 20 schools (10 public and 10 private) were purposively selected to reflect the realities of both fee-paying and free-fee paying educational settings. Within each school, 10 parents were randomly selected, resulting in a final sample of 200 parents (100 from public schools and 100 from private schools). The study was guided by two research questions, one theoretical framework (Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura), and one hypothesis. Data were collected using a 12-item, self-structured questionnaire titled *Parenting Practices during Economic Meltdown (PPEM)*, and developed by the researchers. The instrument was validated by three experts in Early Childhood Education, Psychology, and Measurement and Evaluation, whose inputs were used to revise the final version. The questionnaire was distributed and retrieved during Parent-Teacher Forum to ensure a high return rate and minimize response bias. For reliability, the instrument underwent trial testing with 20 parents outside the sample schools, yielding a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency.

Results

Demographic Distribution of Parents by Occupation and Educational Qualifications

Occupation	Number	Percentage (%)	Qualifications	Number	Percentage (%)
Self-employed (business, politician, entrepreneur)	102	51.0	Senior school Certificate examination and below (SSCE)	70	35.0
Public servant	98	49.0	Above SSCE	130	65.0
Total					
Total	200	100		200	100

The demographic table shows that 51% of respondents are self-employed while 49% are public servants. Additionally, 35% possess SSCE or below qualifications, and 65% hold qualifications above SSCE. This suggests that the population of parents in Amuwo-Odofin is relatively educated and economically diverse.

Research Question One: What are the strategies employed by parents in managing parenting practices during the economic meltdown?

Table 1: Strategies Adopted by Parents during Economic Meltdown

Item Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	MEA N	SD
Economic meltdown has pushed parents to now adopt permissive parenting by not addressing children's excesses at home and in school as before.	87 (43.5%)	98 (49%)	10 (5%)	05 (2.5%)	3.33	0.75
Some parents are now indulging their children by adjusting their disciplinary methods and behaviour management in response to economic stress.	63 (31.5%)	85 (42.5%)	27 (13.5%)	25 (12.5%)	2.93	0.85
Some parents now adopt authoritarian parenting and are unnecessary hard on their children.	77 (38.5%)	73 (36.5%)	29 (14.5%)	21 (10.5%)	3.03	0.81
Parents' high poverty and hardship status often pushes them not to be firm on discipline.	81 (40.5%)	83 (41.5%)	19 (9.5%)	17 (8.5%)	3.14	0.80
Some parents adopt helicopter parenting hovering, intervening and being too controlling.	75 (37.5%)	91 (45.5%)	15 (7.5%)	19 (9.5%)	3.11	0.78
Most parents are overly over-protective of their children.	73 (36.5%)	89 (44.5%)	25 (12.5%)	13 (6.5%)	3.11	0.77
Grand Mean/SD					3.10	0.79

Interpretation Data collected from table 1; items 1-6 which identifies strategies adopted by parents during economic meltdown reveals that parenting strategies have significantly shifted during the economic meltdown. The highest mean score (3.33) was for the shift toward permissive parenting. Other notable strategies include helicopter parenting (3.11), overprotection (3.11), and reduced disciplinary firmness (3.14). The grand mean of 3.10 suggests that a majority of parents have modified their parenting practices in response to economic constraints.

Research Question Two: What are the major challenges confronting parenting practices during economic hardship?

Table 2: Challenges Faced in Parenting during Economic hardship

Item Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	MEAN	SD
Economic meltdown has caused great financial drain on the finances of parents.	85 (42.5%)	93 (46.5%)	13 (6.5%)	09 (4.5%)	3.27	0.71
Children whose parents face economic hardship are easily lured into immoral activities such as harlotry, gangsters and perpetrators of terrorism.	83 (41.5%)	89 (44.5%)	17 (8.5%)	11 (5.5%)	3.22	0.75
Economic meltdown has subjected some parents to working for longer hours in order to make ends meet.	87 (43.5%)	93 (46.5%)	13 (6.5%)	07 (3.5%)	3.30	0.70
Economic meltdown affects some parents' ways of interacting with their children. They hardly have time for them again or their academic progress.	75 (37.5%)	85 (42.5%)	23 (11.5%)	17 (8.5%)	3.09	0.77
Some parents who face economic challenges are likely to have mental health related problems.	79 (39.5%)	91 (45.5%)	19 (9.5%)	11 (5.5%)	3.19	0.76
Economic meltdown has pushed a great number into poverty and increasing inflation, fuel pump price and food.	97 (48.5%)	99 (49.5%)	03 (1.5%)	01 (0.5%)	3.46	0.62
Grand mean/SD					3.26	0.72

Data collected from table 2, items 7-12 indicates that the greatest parenting challenges include poverty and inflation ($M = 3.46$), extended work hours ($M = 3.30$), and financial strain ($M = 3.27$). The grand mean of 3.26 suggests a high level of consensus that economic meltdown poses serious obstacles to effective parenting, especially regarding supervision, discipline, academic support, and mental health.

Hypothesis

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between Parenting Practices and Pupils' Emotional Well-being

Table 3: Chi-Square Test of Relationship between Parenting Practices and Pupils' Emotional Well-being

Variable	N	df	X ² (chi square)	p-value	Decision
Parenting practices × Emotional well-being	200	3	16.78	0.001	Reject Ho ₁

As shown in Table 3, a Chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between parenting practices and pupils' emotional well-being. The result showed a statistically significant relationship, $\chi^2 (3, N = 200) = 16.78, p = .001$. This indicates that changes in parenting practices due to economic meltdown are significantly associated with pupils' emotional responses. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussions

The findings from the analysis provide substantial insights into the effects of economic hardship on parenting practices in Amuwo-Odofin LGA. The study found that parenting styles have shifted, with a notable increase in permissive, authoritarian, and helicopter parenting. These shifts are largely a response to economic strain, as parents attempt to adapt to financial limitations (Ogwazu, 2015; Baumrind, 1991). Parents are becoming less consistent with discipline, often either too lenient or overly harsh. This aligns with the assertions of Teti et al. (2017) that economic stress compromises responsive parenting and affects children's emotional security. This finding also supports Omede and Omede (2015), who argued that when parents fail to instil core values such as hard work, honesty, discipline, and contentment, it signals a breakdown in moral upbringing and increases the risk of societal insecurity. Onuoha (2014) further highlighted that a child's moral upbringing plays a crucial role in shielding them from radical ideologies and extremist behaviours. These perspectives affirm that economic hardship can erode the foundation of responsible parenting, leaving children vulnerable to negative influences.

The challenges identified ranging from financial drain, lack of academic supervision, mental health struggles, to reduced parent-child interactions corroborate previous research by Harper et al. (2009) and Ferguson et al. (2007), who found that economic crises negatively affect parenting quality, family cohesion, and child development outcomes. This is consistent with the findings of Lia and Skjølberg (2004), who asserted that children from poverty-stricken homes are easily lured into deviant acts and even life-threatening activities, driven by economic desperation. Ferguson et al. (2007) also found that financially stressed parents often experience mental health difficulties, which negatively impact children's cognitive and emotional development. Likewise, Raikes and Thompson (2005) observed that poverty affects parents' ability to meet basic family needs, disrupts family relationships, and often forces changes in children's schooling, all of which strain the parenting process. The significant chi-square result indicates that emotional well-being of pupils is directly influenced by the nature of parenting received, particularly during financially stressful periods. This affirms the position of Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the importance of environmental factors and observational learning in behavioural outcomes.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the ongoing economic meltdown has profoundly impacted parenting practices in Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area of Lagos State. The economic strain has forced many parents to deny their children access to quality education, balanced nutrition, and emotional support, thereby increasing children's vulnerability to insecurity, exploitation, and psychosocial risks. Findings revealed that financial hardship has led to noticeable shifts in parenting styles, with many parents adopting authoritarian or neglectful approaches as coping mechanisms. Moreover, the economic burden has diminished parents' capacity to meet the holistic needs of their children, as many are emotionally and physically exhausted from working extended hours or taking on multiple jobs. These pressures have disrupted family dynamics, strained parent-child relationships, and significantly affected children's academic performance and emotional well-being. Ultimately, the economic crisis has weakened the foundation of effective parenting, placing both parents and children in a state of heightened vulnerability.

Recommendations

In light of the findings from this study, the following recommendations are proposed to mitigate the impact of economic hardship on parenting practices and child development

1. Schools and community leaders should foster active collaboration among parents by sourcing support from government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and philanthropic individuals to alleviate the economic burden on families.
2. The government should subsidize essential items such as school supplies and nutritious food to reduce the financial strain on parents and support children's educational and health needs.
3. Government efforts should focus on promoting agriculture by securing farmlands and supporting local farmers. Transitioning towards a more production-driven and export-oriented economy will help stabilize the national economy and ensure food security.
4. Government and NGOs should implement financial aid and targeted social welfare programs to support families experiencing economic hardship, thereby enhancing parental capacity and child welfare.
5. Schools should offer regular counselling services to assist children dealing with emotional, behavioural, or academic difficulties arising from family financial stress.
6. Community organizations and religious bodies should establish or strengthen local support networks to provide direct assistance and peer support to struggling families.
7. Parenting workshops should be conducted regularly to equip parents with effective, context-appropriate strategies for nurturing children during economic crises.

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