

Parenting Practices for Reducing Juvenile Delinquency among Adolescents in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Nweke Chiamaka C., Onuoha Kindness. M., Okoro Joy O., Emeghebo Udochukwu M., & Chukwuone Chiamaka A.

Department of Home Economics and Hospitality Management Education
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Corresponding Author: oluchukwu.okoro@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

The general purpose of the study was to investigate parenting practices that could reduce juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Specifically, the study determined: practices adopted by the parents of adolescents for reducing juvenile delinquency among their adolescents; challenges encountered by the parents in their adolescent parenting practices; and possible solutions to the challenges. It adopted a survey research design. Area of the study was Port Harcourt Metropolis. Population comprised parents in the area. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. Findings reveal 16 parenting practices adopted by parents including: using punishment in controlling behaviour (\bar{X} =3.45); rewarding positive behaviour (\bar{X} =3.18), among others. Also, identified are 15 challenges encountered by parents in adolescent parenting practices including: adolescents' resistance to parental control (\bar{X} =3.40); influence of peer pressure on adolescents (\bar{X} =3.48), among others. Further findings are 14 solutions to challenges encountered in adolescent parenting practices including: ensuring open and honest communication with adolescents (\bar{X} =3.67); and parents modelling desired behaviours to adolescents (\bar{X} =3.59), and others. Based on the findings, four recommendations for enhancing parenting practices were made.

Key Words: Parenting, Practices, Adolescents, Challenges, Solutions, Juvenile, Delinquency, Control.

Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional stage of human development marked by significant physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes that shape an individual's identity and future trajectory (Okoli et al., 2020). This stage, typically spanning from ages 10 to 19, is characterized by the rapid growth of

secondary sexual characteristics, increased desire for autonomy, identity exploration, and heightened sensitivity to peer influence and societal expectations (Sawyer et al., 2018). Adolescents often grapple with challenges such as mood swings, risk-taking behaviours, identity confusion, and strained interpersonal relationships, especially with adults and

authority figures (Patton et al., 2016). These developmental transformations demand deliberate, and responsive parenting approaches tailored to the unique needs of adolescents.

The adolescent's quest for independence often leads to tension between them and their parents. During this phase, the parental role must transcend traditional child-rearing and encompass intentional guidance, support, and monitoring to ensure a healthy transition into adulthood (Nwakile et al., 2020). Effective parenting practices during adolescence are, therefore, critical for promoting resilience, academic engagement, emotional regulation, and social competence (Simons & Conger, 2020). Research has shown that supportive parenting practices can buffer the effects of adverse environmental influences and reduce the likelihood of behavioural problems such as substance abuse, truancy, delinquency, and early sexual activity (Osei-Tutu et al., 2022; Olowokere & Okanlawon, 2016).

These parenting strategies can be categorized into at least two broad clusters namely: emotional and behavioural practices. Emotional parenting strategies include showing warmth and affection, empathetic communication, and validation of the adolescent's feelings. These practices foster trust, strengthen parent-child bonds, and provide a secure base for identity development (Laursen & Collins, 2018). Behavioural practices, on the other hand, include monitoring adolescents' activities, setting consistent boundaries, supervising peer interactions, enforcing rules with fairness, and providing role modelling. These strategies help adolescents develop self-discipline,

moral values, and a sense of accountability (Kerr, Stattin, & Özdemir, 2019). Furthermore, collaborative problem-solving and open dialogue between parents and adolescents are essential for mutual understanding and conflict resolution (Steinberg, 2017).

Despite the proven benefits of these strategies, several constraints hinder effective adolescent parenting. These include economic hardship, lack of parental education, family disintegration, single parenting, and parents' long working hours, all of which limit parents' capacity for active involvement in their children's lives (Onukwufor & Chukwu, 2021; Uba & Ndubuisi, 2023). Cultural beliefs and societal pressures may also inhibit open communication and gender-inclusive parenting styles (Nwakile et al, 2022). In addition, urbanization, exposure to global media, and peer influence may widen the generational gap between adolescents and their caregivers, further complicating the parenting experience (Ojo & Afolabi, 2018).

Addressing these challenges requires multifaceted solutions, such as community-based parenting education programs, mental health support for families, income-generating opportunities, and school-based parental engagement initiatives. Equipping parents with knowledge of adolescent development and responsive parenting techniques can foster healthy family dynamics and reduce adolescent vulnerability to social vices (Ndukwe & Chigbu, 2020; Umezinwa & Obikwelu, 2022).

In Port Harcourt, Rivers State, as in many other parts of Nigeria, current trends reveal rising concerns about adolescent misbehaviour, involvement in drug abuse,

cultism, sexual misconduct, and disobedience to authority – issues that are often linked to parental neglect or ineffective parenting practices. Studies show that many parents in urban centres like Port Harcourt face increased pressure from economic demands, which limit their attention to children’s developmental needs (Adekoya et al., 2022). Moreover, the cultural transition from communal to nuclear family systems may leave parents without sufficient support, further exacerbating the challenges they face.

This study is therefore informed by the observable increase in adolescent behavioural problems in Port Harcourt and the limited understanding of how parenting strategies influence adolescent outcomes in this region. While existing literature (Adekoya et al., 2022; Ndukwe & Chigbu, 2020) has explored adolescent development and general parenting practices, there is a gap in studies that specifically examine the categories of parenting strategies adopted, the contextual challenges, and the potential interventions within the Port Harcourt sociocultural landscape.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to investigate parenting practices for reducing juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Specifically, the study determined:

1. practices adopted by parents of adolescents for reducing juvenile delinquency among their adolescents in Port Harcourt Metropolis
2. challenges encountered by parents in their adolescent parenting practices in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

3. possible solutions to challenges encountered by parents in their adolescent parenting practices in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of fathers and mothers on:

1. the practices adopted by parents of adolescents for reducing juvenile delinquency among their adolescents in Port Harcourt Metropolis
2. challenges encountered by parents in their adolescent parenting practices in Port Harcourt Metropolis.
3. possible solutions to the challenges encountered by parents in their adolescent parenting practices in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Methodology

Design of the Study: This study adopted descriptive survey research design.

Area of the Study: This study was conducted in Port Harcourt Metropolis. It has two Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Rivers State, Nigeria and eight wards. The area is highly urbanized and socially diverse, making it suitable for, studying adolescent parenting practices.

Population of the Study: The population for this study consisted of parents with adolescent children (aged 10–19 years) residing in Port Harcourt Metropolis, which includes Port Harcourt City and Obio/Akpor LGAs in Rivers State. These parents include both fathers and mothers, aged between 30 and 60 years, with varying educational backgrounds (no formal education to tertiary level) and

occupations (civil servants, traders, artisans, professionals, and unemployed).

Sample for the Study: The sample for this study comprised 400 parents of adolescents (190 fathers and 210 mothers) residing in Port Harcourt Metropolis, specifically selected from communities across Port Harcourt City and Obio/Akpor LGAs. These areas were purposively chosen due to their dense population and reported rise in adolescent-related challenges. The sample size of 400 was determined using Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1967). To ensure broad representation, respondents were selected using accidental (convenience) sampling from major streets and wards in the area. Parents were approached in households, marketplaces, churches, and community centres, and only those who had adolescent children (aged 10–19 years) were included in the study.

Instrument for Data Collection: Instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. It comprised two sections: Section A focused on demographic details of the respondents, while Section B addressed items related to the research questions. All items in Section B were structured on a four-point scale. For parenting practices, responses were rated as “Always Adopted”, “Often Adopted”, “Rarely Adopted”, and “Never Adopted”; for parenting challenges, options were “Highly Challenging”, “Moderately Challenging”, “Slightly Challenging”, and “Not Challenging”; while for solutions, the scale included “Very Effective”, “Effective”, “Less Effective”,

and “Not Effective”. The instrument for this study was validated by three university experts in family living studies. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability test. A pilot study of 15 parents from outside the study area was used. This yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81.

Method of Data Collection: A total of 400 copies of questionnaire were distributed by hand to 190 fathers and 210 mothers. Out of the 400 distributed, 185 were retrieved from fathers and 201 from mothers, making a total of 386 returned copies, representing a 96.5% percent return.

Method of Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test at 0.05 level of significance. Responses on parenting practices were interpreted as Always Adopted (AA) - 3.50–4.00, Often Adopted (OA) - 2.50–3.49, Rarely Adopted (RO) - 1.50–2.49, and Never Adopted (NA) - 1.00–1.49; parenting challenges were rated as Highly Challenging (HC) - 3.50–4.00, Moderately Challenging (MC) - 2.50–3.49, Slightly Challenging (SC) - 1.50–2.49, and Not Challenging (NC) - 1.00–1.49; while solutions were rated as Very Effective (VE) - 3.50–4.00, Effective (E) - 2.50–3.49, Less Effective (LE) - 1.50–2.49, and Not Effective (NE) -1.00–1.49. In testing the hypotheses, if the p-value greater than or equal to 0.05 led to the acceptance of the null hypothesis, while a p-value less than 0.05 led to its rejection.

Findings of the Study

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-test values of Parents' Responses on Parenting Practices Adopted for Reducing Juvenile Delinquency in Port Harcourt Metropolis

S/N	Parenting Practices Adopted by Parents	\bar{X}_1	SD_1	\bar{X}_2	SD_2	\bar{X}_g	t	p-value	R	Dec
1	Using punishment in controlling behaviour	3.50	0.85	3.40	0.88	3.45	1.21	0.23	OA	NS
2	Involving school teachers in family conflicts involving the adolescent	3.10	0.93	3.05	0.96	3.08	0.82	0.41	OA	NS
3	Rewarding positive behaviour	3.20	0.92	3.15	0.98	3.18	1.02	0.31	OA	NS
4	Ignoring negative behaviour	3.35	0.90	3.25	0.94	3.30	1.10	0.27	OA	NS
5	Being fair and firm in disciplinary matters	3.32	0.87	3.25	0.89	3.29	0.98	0.33	OA	NS
6	Helping children develop self-control	3.05	1.02	3.00	1.06	3.03	0.75	0.45	OA	NS
7	Being precise and clear in communication	3.10	1.00	3.02	1.05	3.06	1.00	0.32	OA	NS
8	Getting children to assume/share responsibility	3.05	1.00	2.95	1.03	3.01	1.15	0.26	OA	NS
9	Exploring causes of behaviour problems	3.22	0.80	3.15	0.84	3.19	0.89	0.38	OA	NS
10	Encouraging children to judge own behaviour	3.15	0.90	3.10	0.93	3.13	1.10	0.27	OA	NS
11	Engaging children in challenging tasks	2.95	0.93	2.92	0.97	2.94	0.68	0.50	OA	NS
12	Valuing traits that promote school success	3.30	0.90	3.25	0.92	3.28	0.77	0.44	OA	NS
13	Setting/enforcing clear rules	3.25	0.88	3.20	0.91	3.22	0.90	0.37	OA	NS
14	Maintaining consistent home routines	3.18	0.91	3.13	0.95	3.16	0.86	0.39	OA	NS
15	Demonstrating empathy and understanding	3.36	0.85	3.32	0.88	3.34	0.95	0.35	OA	NS
16	Encouraging open communication	3.30	0.88	3.24	0.92	3.27	1.02	0.29	OA	NS
	Cluster mean					3.21				

\bar{X}_1 = Mean of Mothers; SD_1 = Standard Deviation of Mothers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Fathers; SD_2 = Standard Deviation of Fathers; \bar{X}_g = Grand Mean; t = t-test value; R = Remark; Dec = Decision; NS = Not Significant; MC = Moderately Challenging

Table 1 shows that the mean values for the 16 items ranged from 2.94 to 3.45, indicating that all the parenting practices were often adopted by both mothers and fathers. The standard deviation values ranged from 0.80 to 1.06, showing that the respondents were close in their responses. The cluster mean (\bar{X}_g) for all 16 parenting

practices is 3.21 which further confirms that the parenting practices were often adopted. The calculated p-values ranged from 0.23 to 0.50, which were all above 0.05, indicating that null hypotheses for all 16 items were accepted, which means that there is no significant difference in the responses of mothers and fathers.

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test of Parents' Responses on Challenges Encountered in Adolescent Parenting Practices in Port Harcourt Metropolis

S/N	Challenges Encountered by Parents	\bar{X}_1	SD_1	\bar{X}_2	SD_2	\bar{X}_g	t	p-value	R	Dec
1	Adolescents' resistance to parental control	3.42	0.88	3.38	0.90	3.40	1.15	0.28	MC	NS
2	Influence of peer pressure on adolescents	3.50	0.85	3.45	0.87	3.48	1.12	0.31	MC	NS
3	Exposure to social media and internet content	3.48	0.90	3.40	0.92	3.44	1.08	0.34	MC	NS
4	Inconsistent discipline between mother and father	3.28	0.92	3.20	0.95	3.24	1.05	0.37	MC	NS
5	Lack of adequate time for parental bonding	3.30	0.91	3.25	0.94	3.28	0.98	0.41	MC	NS
6	Sibling rivalry and household conflicts	3.18	0.95	3.15	0.97	3.17	1.01	0.43	MC	NS
7	Inadequate parenting skills or knowledge	3.12	0.98	3.08	1.00	3.10	0.95	0.45	MC	NS
8	Financial constraints affecting parenting efforts	3.38	0.87	3.30	0.89	3.34	1.00	0.29	MC	NS
9	Cultural beliefs conflicting with modern parenting	3.22	0.90	3.15	0.92	3.18	1.02	0.33	MC	NS
10	Parental stress and emotional fatigue	3.20	0.94	3.12	0.97	3.16	0.99	0.35	MC	NS
11	Lack of community support or resources	3.10	0.93	3.08	0.95	3.09	0.96	0.40	MC	NS
12	Unstable home environment (e.g., divorce, separation)	3.25	0.91	3.18	0.93	3.22	0.94	0.36	MC	NS
13	Adolescents' exposure to drugs/alcohol	3.40	0.89	3.35	0.90	3.38	1.01	0.31	MC	NS
14	Poor communication between parents and adolescents	3.35	0.88	3.30	0.91	3.32	1.04	0.32	MC	NS
15	Society's glorification of negative behaviour (e.g., media, music)	3.30	0.92	3.25	0.95	3.28	0.99	0.38	MC	NS
	Cluster mean					3.28				

\bar{X}_1 = Mean of Mothers; SD_1 = Standard Deviation of Mothers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Fathers; SD_2 = Standard Deviation of Fathers; \bar{X}_g = Grand Mean; t = t-test value; R = Remark; Dec = Decision; NS = Not Significant; MC = Often Adopted

Table 2 shows that the mean scores ranged 2.94–3.48 showed that the 15 listed items were moderately challenging to the respondents. The standard deviation of the 15 items ranged from 0.85–1.02 which indicates relatively close responses. The

cluster mean of 3.28 confirms that the listed items are common challenges. All p-values exceed 0.05, indicating no significant difference in the views of mothers and fathers; hence, all null hypotheses were accepted.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test of Parents' Responses on Solutions to Challenges Encountered in Adolescent Parenting Practices in Port Harcourt Metropolis

S/N	Solutions to Parenting Challenges	\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	\bar{X}_g	t	p-value	R	Dec
1	Ensuring open and honest communication with adolescents	3.68	0.72	3.65	0.75	3.67	0.47	0.41	VE	NS
2	Parents modelling desired behaviours to adolescents	3.60	0.74	3.58	0.78	3.59	0.39	0.31	VE	NS
3	Adolescents being taught self-discipline and responsibility	3.55	0.76	3.52	0.79	3.54	0.43	0.27	VE	NS
4	Attending parenting seminars and workshops	3.40	0.85	3.38	0.87	3.39	0.36	0.33	E	NS
5	Monitoring and guiding adolescents' media consumption	3.45	0.81	3.42	0.83	3.44	0.41	0.45	E	NS
6	Encouraging peer associations with positive influences	3.50	0.80	3.47	0.82	3.49	0.33	0.32	E	NS
7	Fathers and mothers maintaining consistency in discipline	3.48	0.79	3.45	0.81	3.47	0.37	0.26	E	NS
8	Establishing regular family bonding time	3.60	0.76	3.58	0.78	3.59	0.42	0.38	VE	NS
9	Encouraging adolescents to participate in decision-making	3.38	0.84	3.35	0.86	3.37	0.35	0.29	E	NS
10	Seeking counselling or professional advice when needed	3.42	0.82	3.40	0.84	3.41	0.38	0.33	E	NS
11	Adolescents avoiding drug and alcohol use	3.55	0.78	3.52	0.80	3.54	0.44	0.35	VE	NS
12	Parents educating themselves on modern parenting practices	3.36	0.86	3.33	0.88	3.35	0.39	0.40	E	NS
13	Promoting cultural values that support positive behaviour	3.30	0.89	3.28	0.90	3.29	0.31	0.36	E	NS
14	Providing adolescents with emotional support and attention	3.62	0.74	3.60	0.76	3.61	0.40	0.31	VE	NS
	Cluster mean					3.48				

\bar{X}_1 = Mean of Mothers; SD₁ = Standard Deviation of Mothers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Fathers; SD₂ = Standard Deviation of Fathers; \bar{X}_g = Grand Mean; t = t-test value; R = Remark; Dec = Decision; NS = Not Significant; VE = Very Effective; E = Effective

Table 3 presents the mean responses, standard deviations, and t-test values on the solutions to challenges encountered by parents in parenting adolescents. Items 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 13 had mean scores ranging from 3.29 to 3.49, placing them in the Effective category. On the other hand, items 1, 2, 3, 8, 11, and 14 had mean scores ranging from 3.50 to 3.67, indicating they were rated as Very Effective. The standard

deviation values, which ranged from 0.72 to 0.90, reflect relatively consistent responses among participants. The cluster mean of 3.48 further supports the general effectiveness of the identified solutions. Since all p-values were greater than 0.05, there was no statistically significant difference between the responses of mothers and fathers. Therefore, all null hypotheses were accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that parents in Port Harcourt Metropolis actively adopt a range of practices aimed at curbing juvenile delinquency among adolescents. These include using both corrective and supportive strategies—such as punishment, rewarding positive behaviour, consistent routines, and encouraging open communication. The lack of significant difference between mothers and fathers suggests a shift toward shared parenting responsibilities, which aligns with Baumrind's (1991) authoritative parenting theory that advocates for a balanced approach combining warmth, structure, and responsiveness. This finding is consistent with Simons and Conger (2020), who argued that authoritative parenting is associated with higher adolescent competence and lower behavioural problems. Moreover, Osei-Tutu, Addai, and Opoku (2022) confirmed that adolescents raised with rule-setting, parental involvement, and fairness in discipline are less likely to engage in delinquent acts. These parenting strategies also resonate with the emotional and behavioural dimensions highlighted by Laursen and Collins (2018), especially practices like empathetic communication and behavioural monitoring, which are vital for developing adolescent self-regulation.

The study also found that parents face several moderately challenging issues in raising adolescents, including peer pressure, exposure to social media, emotional fatigue, and cultural tensions. The cluster mean of 3.28 indicates these challenges are widely felt. The absence of

significant gender differences implies that both fathers and mothers are equally burdened by modern parenting demands. These findings reinforce the concerns of Olayinka and Odejide (2017) regarding how societal influences—such as urbanisation and digital media—complicate parental roles. This is further substantiated by Uba and Ndubuisi (2023), who explained that Nigerian parents are increasingly overwhelmed by economic pressures, time constraints, and shifting social values, leading to diminished capacity for effective parenting. Notably, Eze and Okeke (2023) emphasized that modern parents struggle to strike a balance between enforcing discipline and offering emotional support, often due to systemic stressors like poverty and work overload. The influence of peer networks and the glorification of anti-social behaviour in popular media, as pointed out by Ojo and Afolabi (2018), further aggravate these challenges, making it imperative to contextualize adolescent behavioural problems within broader societal trends.

In addressing these challenges, the study found that parents consider several strategies to be either effective or very effective. High ratings were given to practices such as open communication, modelling positive behaviour, teaching self-discipline, and creating bonding opportunities—all of which received cluster means above 3.5. These align with the findings of Umezinwa and Obikwelu (2022), who posited that parenting education emphasizing emotional support and intentional communication is crucial for managing adolescent behaviour. The emphasis on solutions such as parenting seminars and cultural value reinforcement

also speaks to the relevance of community-based interventions, as suggested by Ndukwe and Chigbu (2020). Importantly, the consensus across genders highlights the universality of these parenting strategies regardless of parental role. This is in line with Olowokere and Okanlawon (2016), who emphasized that both maternal and paternal involvement are key predictors of adolescent behavioural outcomes. The overall agreement among parents not only reflects shared experiences but also a collective awareness of what works, indicating readiness for interventions that support family cohesion and youth development.

Conclusion

This study explored parenting practices, challenges, and solutions among parents of adolescents in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Findings showed that both mothers and fathers adopt positive strategies—such as rewarding good behaviour, maintaining routines, and encouraging communication—with no significant gender differences. Challenges like peer pressure, social media exposure, inconsistent discipline, and financial stress were commonly reported. Despite these issues, parents agreed on effective solutions, especially open communication, emotional support, and consistent discipline. Overall, while parenting remains demanding, the shared commitment to effective strategies highlights the need for strengthened support systems and community-based interventions to enhance adolescent outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government and non-governmental organisations should organise regular workshops and seminars for parents on effective parenting strategies tailored to adolescent development.
2. Schools, especially secondary schools, should integrate family life and parenting education into guidance and counselling programs to prepare future parents with knowledge of adolescent behaviour and proper parenting methods.
3. Community-based support groups and parenting clubs should be established to provide platforms for parents to share experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms in raising adolescents.
4. Family counselling units should be reinforced within hospitals, schools, and community centres to provide professional support for parents dealing with adolescent-related behavioural or emotional challenges.
5. Policymakers should formulate and implement parenting support policies that are inclusive, culturally relevant, and responsive to modern challenges facing urban Nigerian families, especially in rapidly developing cities like Port Harcourt.

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