



## TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES ON CHILDREN'S PERSONALITY TRAIT DEVELOPMENT IN ODEDA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*The family has an important role in developing a child's attitudes, beliefs, opportunities, habits and personality traits and also plays a critical function in determining who a child becomes and what he or she accomplishes. Dysfunctional families hurt children as they become withdrawn and socially isolated. This research investigates teachers' perceptions on the impacts of dysfunctional families on children's personality trait development in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State. A descriptive research design and a quantitative methodological approach were used in this study. A well-structured and standardized questionnaire on the above construct was used to collect data from 120 teachers. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of percentage, mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that Teachers were knowledgeable of what a dysfunctional family is, with majority (96.7%) agreeing that a family can be dysfunctional, 87.5% also agreed that a family where one or both parents does not meet family obligations is dysfunctional. The findings also revealed that teachers are aware of the importance of personality traits in the developmental stages of children with 82.5% of the teachers agreed that children with healthy personality traits are more creative, attentive in classrooms and are easy to teach. Teachers' perception is that dysfunctional families play negative roles in children's personality trait development. Consequent on these findings, it is recommended that Government and NGOs in charge of education should organize programmes annually to sensitize more teachers and parents on the impacts of dysfunctional families in children's personality trait development.*

**Keywords:** Perception, Dysfunctional Family, Personality Development, Traits, Children

### INTRODUCTION

Personality development is seen as the development of organized pattern of behaviours and attitudes that makes a person distinctive (Capsi, Roberts and Shiner, 2005). It occurs by the ongoing interaction of temperament, character and environment. It can also be defined as a process of developing and enhancing one's personality. Personality helps an individual to gain confidence and high self-esteem (Parachi, 2015). The development of personality traits appears to be intensely influenced by the stability of the family environment children experience (Spitzer, Meyer and Herrmann-Lingen, 2016) as early life experiences, such as disruptions in the family or its structure, could turn as an obstacle to a child's personality development. A trait can be thought of as a relatively stable characteristic that causes individuals to behave in certain ways.

The personality trait of a person is a set of qualities, beliefs, feelings, thoughts, attitudes, emotions and ideas that distinguishes a person from others; a characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, or behaving that tends to be consistent over time and across relevant situations (Capsi, Roberts and Shiner, 2005). Understanding of personality traits includes individuals' characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. Strategic points of agreement have surfaced on how particular behavioural tendencies are organized into broader traits (personality structure), how personality traits modify over time (personality development) and how personality traits impact significant life outcomes (Shiner and DeYoung, 2013). It can also be seen as a means of developing and enriching one's personality. It assists the individual to gain confidence and high self-esteem (Schilling, Weidner, Schellong et al., 2015). For many years social scientists have tried to discover

the reasons why people behave the way they do and how their personalities shape such behaviours (Soto, John, Gosling and Potter, 2011).

According to Meng, Luen and Abidin (2023), there is a widespread belief that if the factors responsible for shaping a person's personality are controlled right in childhood, a person can have a well-rounded personality. Personality traits can be conceptualized to be healthy or unhealthy and have been applied in research to measure personality development and behavioural problems in children (Currie and Stabile, 2006). According to Zitny and Halama (2011) the development of personality starts during childhood, but this development could be significantly affected by family disruptions. Personality development can be assessed through various methods, including meta-analytic techniques. Zerach (2015) highlights patterns of mean-level changes across the Big Five personality traits of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness.

Family is described as a privileged setting of personality formation and bonding therefore, it has an essential role in the development of toddlers and adolescents (Mohd and Ansa, 2013). The concept of family has been changing, and some important evolutions concerning sexual differentiation, biological factors, and the function of men and women have been evolving. These changes are going to have repercussions on the family structure as well as on its functioning (Pearson, Campbell, Howard et al, 2018).

For a long time, the child occupied a peripheric place in the family. However, as time goes, the child becomes central in the family life (Thomsen, Lessing and Greve, 2017). It is within the family that children have their first relationship experiences, therefore, the family has a very important role in the development of children (Kiff, Lengua and Zalewski, 2011). Ideally, children should grow up in an atmosphere that makes them feel lovable and valuable. Children who grow up in such an environment are believed to be emotionally healthy and turn out to have healthy relationships later in life. However, when children are raised in an environment full of abuse, and constant criticism and their needs are curbed they might develop low self-esteem and poor self-image. Thus, they will grow up with believing such an attitude is normal and accept it as a way of life.

According to Wortman, Lucas and Donnellan (2012), a family is considered dysfunctional when persistent neglect, misbehaviour and conflict are present. Modern psychology characterizes such families as having fear-based systems due to the high levels of emotional disturbance among members, often associated with child neglect and abuse. Tackett et al. (2012) also define a dysfunctional family as one where ongoing and repeated conflict, misbehaviour and neglect or abuse by parents occur, causing other family members to view these harmful behaviours as normal aspects of life. Children raised in such families may come to view the dysfunctional environment as normal. In contrast, a functional family provides an environment that nurtures the growth of each member, fostering emotional well-being and ensuring a safe space for personal development. This supportive atmosphere enables individuals to thrive and reach their full potential. (Meng et al., 2023)

A dysfunctional family has both an immediate and long-term impacts on personality development (Shira, 2016). The negative impact on children can persist even after they have grown up and left the challenging family environment. Children from dysfunctional families may develop at an uneven pace, showing good behaviour but struggling with self-care. They are also more likely to experience moderate to severe mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts (Odigie, 2013). In many cases, there is strong evidence that family dysfunction disrupts children's social-emotional development and behaviour, leading to long-lasting negative effects.

A child, as in the Nigeria constitution (1999) and the Child Rights Act (2003), is any human being below the age of eighteen years. Also, according to the Oxford Dictionary, a child is a young

human who is not yet an adult between the stages of birth and puberty or between the developmental period of infancy and puberty. Gidado and Diffang, (2023) define a child as somebody under a lawfully stipulated age who is considered not to be responsible for his/her actions. Therefore, family and school, which are the first socializing environments for children, have great responsibilities to ensure that children develop healthy personalities as they pass through the different developmental stages.

Teachers are the first people from whom the child learns social skills in school and they must ensure that a child is comfortable and guided through the early concepts and developmental skills of life. Teachers serve as second parents for a child and are saddled with the responsibility of nurturing children's learning and giving them various experiences to face this challenging world. As the child grows and develops mastery of various skills, a teacher becomes the real leader in nurturing the child's interest and learning to make him/her more independent (Majumdar and Choudhurg, 2015). The relationships and interactions between the teachers and children are dynamics and play an essential role in determining the success of these children. The teacher as a motivator also plays the role of an entertainer; this approach helps the teacher employ a variety of acting techniques, forms of expression, and imagination to involve children in the learning process (Oxford et al., 1998).

Consequently, teachers' perceptions on the impacts of dysfunctional families on children personality trait development is important as they can help children from dysfunctional homes to promote healthy personality development by providing material and activities in the classroom that will address some of the individuals' needs. The teachers' perceptions could also influence the verbal and non-verbal communication between the teacher and children from dysfunctional families, since the teacher will also serve as a motivation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Dysfunctional families have become a colossal problem in modern-day society. Dysfunctional families are branded by multiple conflicts, neglect, poor communication, secrecy, tense relationships, chaos, abuse and lack of empathy to the level that the emotional and physical needs of the family members are not met, especially children. Although there are no flawless families and people do not decide which family to belong to, the level of dysfunction and lack of coherence in some families is a course of concern. Conflicts are frequently between parents, parent-child conflict or sibling rivalries. Life in a dysfunctional family is a commotion of ambiguity and instability, as well as a precarious space for family members. Instead of expressing their distress and positively settling issues, members in some dysfunctional families standardize their conditions and adapt to condoning unacceptable behaviour such as abuse, victimization and conflict. The negative dynamics that are found in dysfunctional families have adverse outcomes on the growing personality of children and create a negative perspective of life generally. This means the family can influence the growth and development of the child positively or negatively. There are several studies such as the problematic families and the causes of dysfunctional families, the impact of dysfunctional family on the mental health of children, the relationship between dysfunctional family dynamics and depression symptoms among young adults and the cost of growing up in a dysfunctional family but majority of these studies were carried out in USA, Kenya, Zimbabwe with little in Nigeria and paucity of study on the perception of teachers on the effects of dysfunctional family on the personality trait development of a child in this locale. This study, therefore, investigates teachers' perception on the impact of dysfunctional families on children's personality trait development in Odeda Local Government area of Ogun State



### **Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of the study investigated teachers' perceptions on the impacts of dysfunctional families on children's personality trait development in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State.

To actualize the objectives above, the study

1. Assessed teachers' perceptions on dysfunctional families.
2. Examined teachers' perceptions of children's personality trait development.
3. Investigate teachers' perceptions on the impacts of dysfunctional families on children's personality trait development

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the teachers' perceptions of a dysfunctional family?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions of personality trait development?
3. What are the teachers' perceptions of the impacts of dysfunctional families on children's personality trait development?

### **METHODS**

The study adopted descriptive survey research. The suitability of this design is to obtain descriptive and self-reported information on the impacts of dysfunctional families on children's personality trait development. The area used for this research is Odeda Local Government. The LGA is a sub-urban settlement and one of the Twenty LGAs in Ogun State of Nigeria. It was created out of Egba Division council in October 1955 by the Action group control western Nigeria government of Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo the first premier of the region. It has its headquarter at Odeda, a place situated along Abeokuta-Ibadan Road, with a total number of 10 districts (Aigbagba, Alabata, Ilugun, Itesi, Obantoko, Obete, Odeda, Olodo, Opeji and Osiele). It is about 10 kilometers from the State Capital, Abeokuta. Odeda LGA hosted about Eleven Public Junior Secondary Schools, Twelve Public Primary Schools and Twenty-five Private Primary Schools which make the locale suitable for this study.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents for the study. The researchers used the existing division of the Odeda LGA into ten districts/areas. A purposive sampling technique was used to select two schools with the highest number of teachers from each district, and 120 teachers were selected comprising both private and public primary and junior secondary schools through balloting. A questionnaire adapted from Kelly and Emery (2003) was the instrument used for this study. The instrument was titled **"Teachers' Perception of the Effect of Dysfunctional Family on Children's Personality Trait Development" (TPEDFCTD)**. The questionnaire is divided into four sections. Sections A – D. Each section is described below: The first section A, elicited information from the teachers on their age, gender and teaching experience. The second section B, is an 11-item questions constructed to gather information from the teachers on their perceptions of dysfunctional families. Section C is an 11-item questions on teachers' perceptions of personality trait development of children. Section D is a 10-item question on the roles of dysfunctional family in the personality development of children. Sections B - D were rated on a five-point Likert scale of "strongly agree (SA, 5), Agree (A, 4), Undecided (Un, 3), Disagree (DS, 2), Strongly disagree (SD, 1). The instrument was validated by three experts and the advice of the experts helped the researchers to modify and select the final instrument items

used for the study. A pilot study was carried out in 2 primary schools, using 13 teachers in Abeokuta North Local Government Area. Abeokuta North was selected because the respondents have the same characteristics as the respondents under study. The reliability of the instruments was determined Using Cronbach's Alpha reliability check for various sections of the instrument, which yielded the following indexes: Section B (0.92), section C (0.80) and Section D (0.77). The overall alpha value is (0.80), showing that the questionnaire is reliable

The researchers adopted an on-the-spot delivery method during the administration of the instruments with the help of the research assistants who were earlier briefed on how to administer the instruments to the selected teachers. This exercise lasted for two weeks and 120 copies of the questionnaire were successfully retrieved. The same was subjected for analysis using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science). Descriptive analysis comprising of frequency tables, percentage, mean and standard deviation was used.

## RESULTS

### Research question 1: What are teachers' perceptions of dysfunctional families?

**Table 1: Teachers' perceptions of dysfunctional families**

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A family can be dysfunctional	50(41.7)	66(55.0)	2(1.7)	1(.8)	1(.8)
A family where one or both parents does not meet family obligation is dysfunctional	26(21.7)	79(65.8)	9(7.5)	4(3.3)	2(1.7)
A dysfunctional family is characterized by marital instability	43(35.8)	68(56.7)	4(3.3)	3(2.5)	2(1.7)
A dysfunctional family, over-protect/neglect their children	22(18.3)	57(47.5)	27(22.5)	13(10.8)	1(0.8)
A dysfunctional family does not meet children needs	21(17.5)	62(51.7)	23(19.2)	11(9.2)	3(2.5)
A dysfunctional family bring marital conflicts into parenting	51(42.5)	61(50.8)	2(1.7)	6(5.0)	
A dysfunctional family is characterized by an alcoholism father/mother	13(10.8)	50(41.7)	35(29.2)	19(15.8)	3(2.5)
A dysfunctional family is characterized by poverty/poor socio-economic status of the parent	12(10.0)	32(26.7)	37(30.8)	35(29.2)	4(3.3)
A dysfunctional family is characterized by the educational status of the parent	3(2.5)	31(25.8)	29(24.2)	50(41.7)	7(5.8)
A dysfunctional family is characterized by unhappy children	15(12.5)	87(72.5)	12(10.0)	2(1.7)	4(3.3)
A dysfunctional family is characterized by children who are uncared for	20(16.7)	83(69.2)	9.2	4(3.3)	2(1.7)

The result in table 1 shows that teachers have the knowledge of dysfunctional families, 96.7% of the respondents agreed that a family can be dysfunctional, 87.5% of the respondents also agreed that a family where one or both parents does not meet family obligation is dysfunctional. Majority

(92.5%) of the respondents agreed that a dysfunction family is characterized by marital instability, over-protection/neglect (65.8%), not meeting children's need (69.2%) and marital conflict (93.3%). This therefore implies that teachers have the perception and awareness of what dysfunctional family is and that it truly exists in our society. This study is supported by the findings of Marmorstein, (2015) that the family is tasked with meeting the basic needs of its members and that Family being dysfunctional can occur as a result of the family not being able to meet the needs of its members. Also, Pearson et. at (2018) findings that dysfunctional hierarchy exists when parents fail to exercise their leadership responsibility in a family. The findings of Schilling, et.al. (2015) see the signs of family dysfunction in conflicts, misbehaviours and continuous abuse of individual family members making other members to adapt such actions.

**Research question 2:** What are teachers' perceptions of children's personality trait development?

**Table 2: Evaluation of teachers' perception of children's personality trait development**

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I know about personality trait	35(29.2)	73(60.8)	0(-)	6(5.0)	6(5.0)
Healthy personality trait is important for child development	11(9.2)	69(57.5)	0(-)	26(21.7)	14(11.7)
I like teaching children with good personality trait	31(25.8)	68(56.7)	12(10.0)	8(6.7)	1(0.8)
Children with healthy personality trait are easy to teach	32(26.7)	77(64.2)	0(-)	9(7.5)	2(1.7)
Children with healthy personality trait demonstrate leadership skill	34(28.3)	68(56.7)	1(0.8)	13(10.8)	4(3.3)
Children with healthy personality trait are self-confident	40(33.3)	71(59.2)	3(2.5)	5(4.2)	1(0.8)
A well-developed personality trait is an advantage to the child	49(40.8)	40(33.3)	19(15.8)	10(8.3)	2(1.7)
An imaginative/sensitive child has healthy personality trait	11(9.2)	67(55.8)	1(0.8)	7(5.8)	34(28.3)
Children with good personality traits are respectful/attentive	22(18.3)	77(64.2)	1(0.8)	5(4.2)	14(11.7)
Children with good personality trait are very interested/eager to work	24(20.0)	86(71.7)	2(1.7)	7(5.8)	1(0.8)
Children with healthy personality trait have good achievement tendencies	25(20.8)	83(69.2)	2(1.7)	1(0.8)	9(7.5)

The result in table 2 above revealed that teachers have knowledge of children's personality trait development. This implies that teachers are aware of the importance of personality trait in the developmental stages of children. Majority (82.5%) of the teachers agreed that they love teaching children with healthy personality traits because they are more creative, attentive in classrooms and are easy to teach. This study is supported by the findings of Soto et.al. (2011) and Chen and

Liu, (2014) who revealed that dysfunction in families will produce children with low personality and low social status who cannot cope with their assigned functions, their adaptive capacity is significantly reduced. According to them Children with unhealthy personality trait are more likely to be low-educated and have had their first child at a younger age.

**Research question 3:** What are the teachers' perceptions on the impacts of dysfunctional families on children's personality trait development?

**Table 3: Teachers' perceptions on the impacts of dysfunctional families on children's personality trait development**

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The child will not be able to concentrate/have attention problem	34(28.3)	80(66.7)	1(0.8)	1(0.8)	4(3.3)
The child will have little/no interest in normal activities	29(24.2)	83(69.2)	0(-)	1(0.8)	7(5.8)
The child will have social isolation; secluded and fearful	31(25.8)	71(59.2)	0(-)	6(5.0)	12(10.0)
The child will be aggressive	14(11.7)	59(49.2)	0(-)	31(25.8)	16(13.3)
The child will not be able to think well	39(32.5)	58(48.3)	0(-)	10(8.3)	13(10.8)
The child will withdraw from peers	61(50.8)	43(35.8)	0(-)	6(5.0)	10(8.3)
The child will be underactive/energy deficient	12(10.0)	41(34.2)	1(0.8)	49(40.8)	17(14.2)
The child will have delinquent behaviors	26(21.7)	66(55.0)	1(0.8)	18(15.0)	9(7.5)
The child will be depressed	20(16.7)	59(49.2)	3(2.5)	28(23.3)	10(8.3)
The child will feel lonely and traumatized	36(30.0)	71(59.2)	2(1.7)	8(6.7)	3(2.5)

Table 3 of this study shows the teachers perceptions on the impacts of dysfunctional families on children's personality trait development. From the above results, it is very clear that teachers believe that dysfunctional families play negative roles in the personality trait development of children. The results revealed that children from dysfunctional families with personality trait maldevelopment will not be able to concentrate/have attention problems (95.0%) and little/no interest (93.4%). and 85.0% of the respondents agreed that the child would feel lonely. This implies that dysfunctional family have a role the personality trait development of children. Likewise, the of the family, the support, care, response and activities in the home contribute to the self-concept of the children. This study aligns with the findings of Thomsen et al. (2017), who defined a dysfunctional family as any circumstance that disrupts the family unit, adversely impacting a child's cognitive, behavioural, and emotional development. Such disruptions place the child's development at significant risk, often stemming from the parents' inability to effectively manage the home and living environment.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that dysfunctional families exist and teachers were aware of it. Teachers also have the knowledge of personality traits in children's development. The study has also provided insight into teachers' perceptions of dysfunctional families and how it affects children's personality trait development. It is also concluded that Dysfunctional families have negative



effects on the personality trait development of children, it weakens children personality traits, primarily because it is associated with abuse, violence and lower levels of economic, care and parenting resources.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- i. Teachers should leverage their understanding of dysfunctional families to identify and support children from such backgrounds in their teaching practices.
- ii. Teachers and school administrators should educate parents on the crucial role of fostering positive personality trait development in children.
- iii. The government and educational NGOs should initiate awareness campaigns to educate families about the impact of dysfunctional family dynamics on children's personality development.



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