

Parenting Style and Student Performance according to the Size and Structure of the Family: The Case of Togolese Students

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Abstract



The objective of this article is to test whether there is a relationship between educational style and school performance as a function of family size and structure. To achieve this objective, a sample of 944 students is drawn using the non-probability 'all-or-nothing' sampling technique. Participants responded to a sociodemographic and parenting style scale questionnaire by Steinberg & al. (1992) translated into French by Deslandes & al. (1995). The data collected were subjected to statistical processing with the calculation of Student's t-tests, Snedecor's F-test and Pearson's r-test. The results show that :

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- family size does not influence educational style or school performance;
- the style of education varies according to whether the students come from a single-parent (single father or single mother), two-parent or adoptive family ($F(3; 940) = 3.80; p < .01$);
- there is a difference between the different groups that define family structure and school performance ($F(3; 940) = 2.58; p < 0,05$);
- adolescent academic performance is positively associated with parenting style ($r = 0.07, p = 0.02$).

Keywords: Parenting style; family size; family structure; school performance; students; Togo.

1.0 Introduction

In lower secondary education, for example, 22% of pupils repeat their classes according to the Directorate of Educational Planning and Evaluation (2019). In terms of possible causes of such a situation, the same directorate blames the plethora of pupils in classes and the shortage of teachers. As a solution, it advocates the construction of new classrooms and the recruitment of sufficient teachers. It is therefore understandable why the Togolese state is investing heavily in the construction of classrooms through its various PERI projects and teacher training in the various teacher training colleges and the regular recruitment of teachers. In spite of all this, it is sad to note that, for decades, the situation does not seem to be improving. Investing essentially in the institutional factor seems to us insufficient because the problem of poor internal efficiency is a function of three types of interacting factors. These are institutional factors, personal factors and family factors. This study delves into family factors to understand the fate of Togolese pupils. But long before us and throughout the world, the literature provides sufficient information that certain family characteristics have a positive influence on young people's academic performance (Deblois & *al.* 2008). Benbiga & *al.* (2013) even speaks of a consensus in studies on the link between family context and students' academic achievement. Indeed, according to Deblois & *al.* (2008; pp. 248-249), "family factors likely to influence the development of a student's human capital can be classified into three components: human, economic, and social. The human component refers to the family potential to build a rich cognitive environment to support a child's learning. The economic component represents the material resources that support the academic development of students, while the social component is defined as the quantity and quality of interactions between a child and parents in the school domain. Benbiga & *al.* (2013) report the studies by Fuchs and Wosmann (2004) and Yayan & Berberoglu, (2004) which show that the level of parental education is not only the most significant of all the characteristics of the family environment but also represents a major source of disparities in pupil performance. Parental education, according to Dornbusch et al. (1990) is also the family characteristic that predicts most of the variance in student performance. Similarly, Schiller et al. (2002) show that educated parents appear to be more able to provide their children with important pedagogical and social support for academic success, compared to parents with lower levels of education. With regard to the economic dimension understood through the

socio-professional category to which one belongs, economic capital appears to be clearly correlated with educational success (Da-Costa Lasne, 2012). But if we compare the explanatory power of cultural and economic capital at primary and secondary level, the effect of financial resources on school careers is considerably weaker than the effect of parental cultural resources according to De Graaf & al. (2000 in Da-Costa Lasne, 2012). As for Thompson & Johnston (2006), they find that students with higher socio-economic levels (number of books at home, etc.) are more advantaged in OECD countries (Benbiga & al., 2013). Some studies such as Cooper & al. (2000), Epstein & Van Voorhis (2001) and Hoover-Dempsey & al. (2001) show significant correlations between forms of parental involvement in homework help and academic achievement (Arapi & al., 2018; Laurens, 1992).

Among the panoply of family characteristics related to educational achievement that exist in the literature, this study emphasizes parenting style, family structure and family size, which are barely addressed in the Togolese context (Bawa, 2011). Indeed, the parenting or upbringing style "corresponds to a constellation of attitudes that are communicated to the child and that create an emotional climate through which parental behaviours are expressed. Thus, parenting style is, in part, expressed through parenting practices that represent behaviours from which children can infer the parents' emotions" (Deslandes & Royer, 1994; p.65). Baumrind (1978) is credited with being the first researcher to develop a theoretical model of parenting styles based on the parents' value system of warmth and emotional guidance, firmness and clarity of discipline, maturity requirements, and good communication between children and their parents (Joseph, 2015). When these aspects are not balanced, the mode of education is said to be 'authoritarian' or 'laissez-faire'. Otherwise, it is said to be 'democratic'. Parenting style is an important variable in the study of family influence on educational success (Deslandes and Royer, 1994). It has been shown that adolescents raised in democratic families perform better in school than their peers from authoritarian or permissive families (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1992; Lamborn & al., 1993; Steinberg & al., 1989 in Deslandes & Royer, 1994). Deslandes & al. (1999), in their study of the relationship between parenting style, family characteristics (income, parental education, parental education, and family structure), academic achievement, and parental involvement in school follow-up, found that parenting style was a better predictor than family structure or parental

education of high school academic achievement. Is there variation in academic performance by family structure? Deslandes & *al.* (2004) were able to show that children from non-traditional families (single-parent and blended families), compared to children from traditional (two-parent) families, have lower academic performance and experience more disciplinary problems: absences, suspensions, school adjustment (Deslandes & Cloutier, 2005). In this study, family structure refers to two-parent, single-parent, adoptive or blended families. Regarding family size (the number of children in the family), several studies, according to Benbiga & *al.* (2013) show that the increasing number of children in the family leads to less favourable outcomes for children.

2.0 Purpose of the Study

The simultaneous consideration of the three determinants of educational style, structure and family size in the Togolese context (which has not yet been done to our knowledge) leads us to set ourselves the purpose of this study is to verify whether there is a relationship between educational parenting style and school performance according to family structure and size.

2.1 Research Questions

From this purpose, we deduce the following research questions:

- i. Is parenting style a function of family structure and size?
- ii. Do students' educational performance vary according to family structure and size?
- iii. Are educational style and academic performance related?

3.0 Materials and Methods

3.1. Framework of the Study

This study focused on public and denominational colleges in the Ogou (Atakpame) educational district. Atakpame is a town located about 350 km from Lomé. It is part of the Plateaux region, which has the largest number of schools at both primary and secondary levels and the most inspections at the primary level. The pupil/classroom ratio is higher than

the national average (59 to 55). This region is the best off in terms of working conditions (Source: Directorate of Educational Planning and Evaluation, 2019).

3.2. Population and Sample: The study population is represented by all the pupils in the 4th classes of twenty-two general education colleges in the Ogou Prefecture. In total, we counted 2,715 pupils. From this total we drew 944 subjects (average age = 14 years) using the "all-round" sampling technique which consists of taking into account the pupils encountered who are willing to participate in the survey. The characteristics of our sample are: 38.7% boys and 61.3% girls; 51.6% urban residents and 48.4% rural residents.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments: Three different data collection instruments were used to measure the different variables involved in this study.

The characteristics of the sample were informed using the sociodemographic questionnaire, which collected information on the gender of the pupils, their place of residence (town or country), and the level of education of their parents.

To measure the style of parenting education we used the Parenting Style Scale of Deslandes & al. (1995) which is a translation of the Parental Style Scale developed by Steinberg & al. (1992). This scale includes a total of twenty items grouped into three subscales, namely parental involvement (12 items), parental guidance (6 items) and encouragement of independence (6 items). The responses to the first eighteen items are based on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1- Strongly disagree to 4- Strongly agree. As for the last two (19 and 20), the answers range from 1- Never to 3- Often. After the test is completed, all points for each item are added up. At the end, the higher the total score, the more friendly the style of education.

A fidelity study on these three subscales conducted by Bawa (2018) reveals quite satisfactory internal consistency indices (λ_2 from 0.59 to 0.80). Factor analyses in principal components with "varimax" rotation indicate that this scale adapted to Togo compares perfectly with the American or Quebec version.

The school performances correspond to scores in mathematics and French obtained from the mathematics and French scales developed by Bawa (2018) who took care to check all

their psychometric qualities. The use of scale scores rather than class scores is a recommendation by Clemence (2006) that avoids interference from teachers' personalities in the evaluation process. Both scales were developed on the basis of the mathematics and French curricula of the 4th grade. Each scale includes twenty items corresponding to short exercises. For each item, the subject must choose from three proposed answers, only one of which is good.

When a subject responds correctly to all items on one of the scales, he or she receives a score of 20. At the end, the subject's performance is determined from the average score of the scores obtained on the two scales. The higher the average score, the better the subject's performance and the more successful the subject is. Otherwise, the subject is in a situation of academic failure.

3.4. Methods of Data Analysis: Analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to test whether there is a significant difference between means of continuous variables: Student's t-test and Snedecor's F-test are designed to judge the degree of association between two and more means of continuous variables, respectively. The bi-variate correlation analysis was performed to test the degree of association between two continuous variables without assuming that one variable has an effect on the other. Here, the Pearson correlation coefficient r was used.

4.0 Results

4.1 Style of Education According to Family Size

Table 1: ANOVA: Education Style and Family Size (N = 944)

Family size	Mean	Standard Deviation
Family Size	64,64	6,50
Large family	65,01	6,01

Table 1 shows that the differences between the observed means (64.64 for small families and 65.01 for large families) are not significant ($t(942) = -.81; p = .42$). It is inferred that family size does not influence the style of education.

4.2 Educational Style According to Family Structure

Table 2: ANOVA: Educational style and Family Structure

Family structure	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
Father alone	92	63,50	6,78
Mother alone	225	65,60	5,79
Both	394	65,23	5,66
Tutor	233	64,26	6,88
Total	944	64,90	6,15

The results in Table 2 show that students living with the single mother have a higher average education style score than others. It is 65.60 for those living with a single mother and 63.50 for those living with a single father. In two-parent families, students score 65.23 compared to 64.26 for those who are adopted. The F test applied to these different groups shows a significant difference $F(3; 940) = 3.80; p < .01$. With $\eta^2 = 0.012$, family structure explains 1.2% of the variation in the education style score. It can be concluded that parenting style varies according to whether the students come from a single-parent (lone father or lone mother), two-parent or adoptive family.

4.3 Variation in School Performance According to Family Size

Table 3: ANOVA: Family size and school performance (N = 944)

Family size	Mean	Standard Deviation
Small family	11,84	2,28
Large family	11,79	2,63

Table 3 shows that the differences between the observed means of 11.84 for small families and 11.79 for large families are not significant ($t(942) = 0.27; p = .79$). Family size does not influence students' academic performance.

4.4 Variation in Academic Performance According to Family Structure

Table 4: ANOVA: family structure and academic performance

Family structure	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
Father alone	92	11,74	2,44
Mother alone	225	11,54	2,48
Both	394	12,07	2,57
Tutor	233	11,64	2,57
Total	944	11,80	2,54

At a threshold $p = .05$, we can say that the value of $F(3; 940) = 2.58$ shows that there is a difference between the different groups that define family structure. As for the average school performance scores, they range from 12.07 for students from two-parent families, 11.74 for students from single-father families, 11.54 for students from single-mother families, and 11.64 for students from adoptive families.

4.5 Are Educational Style and Academic Performance Related?

Table 5: Correlations between style of education and school performance

	1	2
1- Parental Style	1	-
2- Academic performance	0,073*	1

*. The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral).

Pearson's correlation analysis (Table 5) shows that better academic performance of adolescents is positively associated with parenting style ($r = .07, p = 0,05$).

5.0 Discussion of Findings

The objective of this research is to verify whether there is a relationship between educational style and school performance according to family structure and size. A number of questions have been posed with this objective in mind.

To the first question of whether educational style is a function of family structure and size, the results show that there is no relationship between educational style and family size. For example, being warm or authoritative for one parent does not take into account the number of dependent children. On the other hand, we found a significant relationship between parenting style and family structure, confirming what Deslandes & *al.* (2004) found. It goes without saying that two-parent families offer the warm parenting style to the adolescents in their care much more than single-parent or adoptive families. In single-parent families, two situations arise: In the first case, it goes without saying that in single-parent families, the absence of the second partner in the home means that the only parent wants to play all the roles with the child. Thus, for the single parent, it is necessary to be able to educate the child. This is how any inappropriate action by the child is severely punished. The child is subjected to coercive and restrictive educational rules and considered "like a small animal that must be trained" (Joseph, 2015).

In a second case, in single-parent families there is a total lack of care. The child is left to his or her own devices. The parent resigns his or her educational responsibilities at home to devote himself or herself to work. The let-to do and permissive styles are the hallmark of these types of homes. At the same time, in adoptive families, the child is under the yoke of parents who are not the child's own. When the couple has children, the latter are preferred to the adopted child who is subject to harsh rules. When the couple has no children, often instead of cherishing the adopted child, they are instead subjected to abuse bordering on slavery. The child becomes the one who does everything: cleaning, cooking, laundry, shopping in the city... When there is a breach in the child's behaviour, the child is deprived of

food, beaten or even sent away from home. Such authoritarian upbringing is recurrent in adoptive or blended families (Bawa, 2011).

The answer to the second question is also mixed. Indeed, there is no significant relationship between school performance and family size. The opposite result was expected, following the example of Benbiga & al (2013) and Downey (1995). Indeed, the increasing number of children in the family leads to less favourable outcomes for children because it dilutes the resources and time allocated to each child (Teachman & al., 1996). These children have higher rates of problem behaviour and lower levels of academic achievement. We found a significant relationship between school performance and family structure in favour of two-parent families. Hetherington, Camara & Featherman (1983) found more failure and delays in progress in single-parent families. These families are most often characterized by divorce, separation, death, which are particular situations that are sources of suffering, anguish, anxiety, lack of attention, in short, innumerable uncertainties that act on students, resulting in an inability to concentrate for school work (Bawa, 2011).

Finally, we found a significant relationship between educational style and academic performance. This result is similar to that of Steinberg & al. (1989), Dornbusch & Ritter (1992), Lamborn & al. (1993) and Deslandes & Royer (1994). Gbati (1988) obtained the opposite result. All of these studies show that a positive home environment, positive attitudes towards education and school, and high expectations of academic achievement have a noticeable effect across different socio-economic backgrounds (Terrill & Ducharme, 1994). Expressions of praise, help, approval, encouragement, cooperation, expressions of tenderness, and physical affection (Manscill & Rollins, 1990) have a decisive effect on academic performance.

6.0 Conclusion

This study shows that the style of education on the one hand and school performance on the other does not vary according to family size. On the other hand, not only are educational style and academic performance related, but both variables are well associated with family structure. In order to achieve these results, 944 pupils in the 4th grade had to be

mobilized and subjected to a sociodemographic questionnaire, parental style and performance scales in French and mathematics.

All of our results shed some light on the place of educational style variables, family size and family structure in understanding school performance in Togo. Despite their relevance, these results do not hide the limitations that call for more caution in their generalization, particularly the possibility of social desirability in the responses to the parenting style scale. By way of perspective, future studies could take care to construct an instrument on parental style based on culturally ingrained indicators rather than drawing inspiration from the Western model.

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