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PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF EMOTIONAL COACHING ON CHILDREN'S AGGRESSION AND EMOTIONAL CONTROL AMONG RESIDENTS OF OBAFEMI OWODE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

The family environment plays an important role in influencing children's emotional and behavioural development, with parents serving as primary models for regulating emotional experiences. This study investigated the perceived impacts of parental emotional coaching on children's aggression and emotional control among residents of Obafemi Owode Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 450 parents- child dyads, selected through simple random sampling. A structured questionnaire measured parental emotional coaching, children's emotional control, aggression, and parental warmth on a 4-point Likert scale. Validity was confirmed through expert review, and reliability was established with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82. Out of 450 questionnaires, 398 valid responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regressions at a 5% significance level. Results revealed that parental emotional coaching significantly enhanced children's emotional control ($\beta = 0.512$, $p < 0.001$) and reduced aggression ($\beta = -0.431$, $p < 0.001$). Parental warmth independently improved emotional regulation ($\beta = 0.364$, $p < 0.001$) and significantly moderated the relationship between emotional coaching and aggression ($\beta = -0.149$, $p = 0.001$), amplifying the protective effect of coaching. These findings underscore the universal importance of emotionally supportive parenting in fostering adaptive emotional and behavioural outcomes. The study concludes that integrating emotional coaching and warmth-focused strategies into parenting programs can reduce aggression and promote self-regulation in children. Policy and community-based interventions should support parents in adopting emotion-focused guidance to enhance children's socio-emotional development.

Keywords: Emotional coaching, children's aggression, emotional control, parental warmth and parent-child relationship

Introduction

Children's emotional and behavioural development is shaped most profoundly within the family context, where parents serve as the primary models and regulators of emotional experience. From infancy through adolescence, children acquire the skills to recognise, express, and manage their emotions largely through parental guidance and socialization practices (Bolstad, et al., 2021: Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996). In this context, emotional coaching has emerged as a critical parenting construct that influences children's capacity for emotional regulation and behavioural adjustment. Parents ability to recognise, validate, and guide their child through emotional experiences in a supportive manner is known as emotional coaching (Fu, et al., 2025). Parents who engage in emotional coaching treat negative emotions as opportunities for connection and teaching, respond with empathy to their child's feelings, and assist them in labelling and constructively problem-solving their emotions.

Research has shown that such emotionally attuned parenting enhances children's emotional intelligence, social competence, and self-regulatory capacity while reducing behavioural problems like aggression, impulsivity, and hostility (Morris et al., 2017; Katz et al., 2014). Conversely, emotion-dismissing or punitive parental reactions can undermine emotional development, foster frustration, and increase the chances of oppositional or aggressive behaviour (Eisenberg et al 2010; Rydell, et al., 2018). Children raised by emotionally supportive parents generally develop greater empathy, resilience, and problem-solving skills, enabling them to navigate social situations effectively (Fabes et al., 2019). These positive outcomes underscore parent's role in fostering children's emotional and behavioural adaptation through their everyday responses to emotional experiences.

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A substantial body of empirical research supports the relationship between emotional coaching and children's aggression control. Gottman et al. (1996) found that parents who actively engaged in emotional coaching had children who exhibited fewer behavioural problems and greater emotional awareness. Similarly, Havighurst et al. (2010), in their intervention study titled "Tuning in to Kids", demonstrated that parents trained in emotional coaching reported significant improvements in their children's emotional regulation and reductions in oppositional or aggressive behaviours. Similarly, Katz et al. (2014) showed that emotion-coaching mothers had children who scored higher in empathy and lower in reactive aggression, illustrating the mediating role of emotional understanding between parenting and aggression outcomes. In addition, Morris et al. (2017) and Denham et al. (2021) found that emotional coaching contributes to better emotional control through enhanced parent–child communication, warmth, and modelling of adaptive coping strategies.

Recent literatures have driven more of these findings to diverse cultural contexts. Li et al. (2022) examined Chinese families and discovered emotional coaching was positively related to children's self-regulation and inversely related to aggression, though moderated by cultural expectations about emotional expression. In African settings, Adeyemi and Oloyede (2023) reported that Nigerian parents who adopted emotion-coaching strategies were more likely to have children exhibiting lower aggression and better impulse control, even when socio-economic stressors were present. Dunsmore, Booker, and Ollendick (2013) similarly emphasized that emotion coaching strengthens prosocial tendencies and mitigates externalizing behaviours in both Western and non-Western samples. These findings collectively reinforce the universality of emotional coaching as a parenting mechanism that promotes positive socio-emotional development.

The theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between emotional coaching and children's aggression derives primarily from social learning theory and emotion socialization frameworks. According to Bandura's social learning theory, children learn behavioural and emotional responses through observing and imitating significant others, especially parents. Emotionally supportive parental model constructive emotion regulation, which children internalize over time (Bandura, 1986). The emotion socialization model further posits those parental practices such as emotion discussion, labelling, and coaching form the basis for children understands of emotions and their regulatory strategies (Eisenberg et al., 2010). When parents validate emotions and guide problem-solving, children develop adaptive responses to stress, thereby reducing aggression and improving self-control (Perry et al., 2022).

Despite these consistent findings, several research gaps remain. Most prior studies have been conducted in Western contexts, raising questions about cross-cultural applicability and contextual influences on emotional coaching practices (Li et al., 2022). Moreover, few empirical investigations have examined the combined effects of emotional coaching on both aggression and emotional control, focusing instead on isolated behavioural or emotional outcomes. Many studies also rely on parental self-reports without integrating children's perspectives or observable behavioural data, limiting the depth of understanding of the parent–child emotional dynamic (Denham et al., 2021; Perry et al., 2022).

This study seeks to fill these gaps by examine the impact of emotional coaching by parents on children's aggression and emotional control. It posits that parents who display high levels of emotional coaching are more likely to have children who exhibit lower aggression and greater emotional regulation compared with those who adopt dismissive or punitive emotional styles. The study aims to clarify the mechanisms through which parental emotional coaching operates to reduce aggression and enhance emotional self-regulation, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of emotion socialization processes. The findings are expected to inform culturally responsive parenting interventions and policy recommendations that promote emotional intelligence and reduce aggression among children.

Hence, the main objective of this study is to investigate the impact of parental emotional coaching on children's aggression and emotional control in Obafemi Owode Local Government Area of Ogun State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the perceived impact of parental emotional coaching on children's emotional control.

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2. Assess the relationship between parental emotional coaching and children's aggression.
3. Determine the extent to which parental warmth and responsiveness influence children's emotional control.
4. Examine whether parental warmth moderates the relationship between parental emotional coaching and children's aggression.

Research Questions

1. What is the perceived impact of parental emotional coaching on children's emotional control?
2. What is the relationship between parental emotional coaching and children's aggression?
3. What is the extent to which parental warmth influences children's emotional control?

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design, suitable for investigating the relationship between parental emotional coaching and children's aggression and emotional control. The population for the study consisted of parents and their children aged 3–14 years in Ogun State, Nigeria. Participants were drawn from Obafemi Owode Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria. A total of 450 parent-child dyads were selected for the study using a simple random sampling technique, ensuring that every parent within the study locations had an equal opportunity of being selected. This sampling strategy reduces selection bias and allows generalization within the study context. A pilot study was conducted with 30 parent-child dyads in one community to test the reliability and clarity of the instrument. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, developed specifically for this study and informed by established instruments in child emotional development research. The questionnaire was divided into five sections:

Section A: Demographics – Included parent and child age, gender, educational background, and family socioeconomic status. Section B: Parental Emotional Coaching– Measured parents' behaviours in recognizing, validating, and guiding their child's emotional experiences (8 items). Section C: Children's Emotional Control – Assessed children's ability to regulate emotions, adjust responses, and recover from distress (6 items). Section D: Children's Aggression – Captured frequency and intensity of aggressive behaviours, including verbal, physical, and relational aggression (6 items). Section E: Parental Warmth and Responsiveness (Optional Moderator) – Measured parental affection, sensitivity, and supportive behaviours (4 items). The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree, to capture nuanced differences in behaviours and perceptions. Items were adapted and contextualized to the study environment to ensure cultural relevance.

Both face validity and content validity were established through expert review by specialists in child psychology, emotional development, and parenting research. The instrument was pilot-tested with 30 parent-child dyads, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82 for the overall questionnaire, indicating high internal consistency and reliability. Quantitative data were collected through on-site administration of the questionnaire to participating parents. Each parent was briefed on the study's objectives and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participation was voluntary, and written informed consent was obtained from parents. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed, of which 398 valid responses were returned and used for analysis, representing an 88.4% response rate. The study utilised both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analyses comprised frequency distributions and percentages, while inferential analyses employed regression techniques to examine the relationship between parental emotional coaching, emotional control, and parental warmth (independent variables) and children's aggression and emotional control (dependent variables). All tests were conducted at 5% level of significance level ($p < 0.05$).

The study adhered to the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (APA). Parents were briefed on the study's objectives, and informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were guaranteed and participants retained the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

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Results

Research Question One: What is the perceived impact of parental emotional coaching on children's emotional control?

Table 2: Regression results on the effect of Emotional Coaching on children's Emotional Control

Predictor	Beta (β)	t-value	Prob.
Parental Emotional Coaching	0.512	11.84	0.000
Model Summary: R = 0.512, R^2 = 0.262, F(1,397) = 140.16, p < 0.05			

The regression results indicate a strong, significant positive effect of parental emotional coaching on children's emotional control (β = 0.512, p < 0.001). The model explains 26.2 percent of the variance, meaning that parents who listen, validate, and guide their children's emotions significantly enhances their children's ability to regulate and manage emotional reactions. This confirms that emotionally supportive parenting strengthens children's self-control.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between emotional coaching and children's aggression?

Table 3: Regression results on the relationship between Emotional Coaching and Children's Aggression

Predictor	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)
Parental Emotional Coaching	-0.431	-9.52	0.000
Model Summary: R = 0.431, R^2 = 0.186, F(1,397) = 90.63, p < 0.05			

Parental emotional coaching was found to significantly reduce children's aggression (β = −0.431, p < 0.001). The model accounts for 18.6 percent of the variation in aggressive behaviour. This indicates that when parents teach constructive emotional responses, children are less likely to resort to anger, shouting, fighting, or destructive actions. Emotional coaching clearly serves as a protective factor against aggressive conduct.

Research Question Three: What is the extent to which parental warmth influences children's emotional control?

Table 4: Regression on the extent to which Parental Warmth influences children's emotional Control

Predictor	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)
Parental Warmth & Responsiveness	0.364	7.92	0.000
Model Summary: R = 0.364, R^2 = 0.133, F(1,397) = 62.76, p < 0.05			

Parental warmth and responsiveness had a meaningful positive influence on children's emotional control (β = 0.364, p < 0.001), explaining 13.3 percent of the variance. Warm, responsive parents provide a secure emotional environment that helps children recover from distress and remain calm during challenges. This demonstrates that warmth complements emotional coaching by reinforcing children's emotional stability.

Discussion of the Findings

The study found that parental emotional coaching had a strong and significant positive effect on children's emotional control. Parents who recognised, validated, and guided their children's emotions raised children who were better able to regulate their feelings, calm down after distress, and respond more constructively in emotionally charged situations. This aligns directly with Gottman, Katz, and Hooven (1996), who established that emotional coaching enhances children's emotional awareness and self-regulation. Havighurst et al. (2010) similarly reported that coaching-oriented parenting helps children develop improved emotional regulation skills, especially when guided through problem-solving during emotional moments. The findings of this study reaffirm these earlier results in a Nigerian context, demonstrating that emotional coaching is universally beneficial across cultural settings, as argued by Denham et al. (2021).

The results show that emotional coaching significantly reduces children's aggression. Parents who taught constructive emotional responses had children who exhibited less aggressive behaviour, including physical outbursts, verbal hostility, and reactive anger. This directly corresponds with the findings of Katz et al. (2014), who reported that children of emotion-coaching parents show lower reactive aggression and higher empathy. Morris et al. (2017) also emphasised that emotional coaching lowers externalising behaviours by fostering

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adaptive coping strategies. In African contexts, Adeyemi and Oloyede (2023) found similar outcomes, showing that Nigerian parents who used emotion-focused guidance had children with lower levels of impulsivity and hostility. The present study reinforces these findings by showing that emotional coaching is a significant protective factor against aggression even in semi-rural communities like Obafemi Owode.

Parental warmth significantly improved children's emotional control. Warm, responsive parents raised children who found it easier to manage frustration, follow instructions during distress, and recover quickly from emotional challenges. This is consistent with findings from Dunsmore and Halberstadt (2013), as page 3 who highlighted that warmth and responsiveness strengthen prosocial development and enhance emotional understanding in children. Similarly, Perry et al. (2022) argued that parental warmth reinforces the effectiveness of emotion socialisation by providing emotional safety, thereby helping children internalise calm, regulated emotional responses. The current study confirms these conclusions by demonstrating that parental warmth is an independent factor that enhances children's capacity for emotional self-regulation in the Nigerian context.

The results revealed that parental warmth significantly moderated the relationship between emotional coaching and aggression. Emotional coaching was more effective in reducing aggression when delivered within a warm and supportive parent–child relationship. This finding is consistent with Bandura's social learning theory, which states that children imitate behaviours more readily when they perceive the model (the parent) as emotionally supportive and trustworthy. The interaction effect also aligns with Wilson et al. (2014), who found that warmth strengthens the impact of emotion coaching, particularly for children with aggressive or rejected behaviour patterns. The moderation outcome in this study further echoes the view of Li et al. (2022), who argued that cultural expectations and warmth can amplify or weaken the influence of emotional coaching. In the context of Obafemi Owode, where caregiving tends to be closely bonded and community-oriented, warmth strengthens children's receptiveness to coaching, leading to lower aggression.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that parental emotional coaching and warmth play crucial roles in enhancing children's emotional control and reducing aggressive behaviours. Children whose parents engaged in recognising, validating, and guiding emotions were better able to regulate their feelings, respond constructively in challenging situations, and exhibit lower levels of impulsivity and hostility. Moreover, parental warmth not only independently improved emotional regulation but also strengthened the effectiveness of emotional coaching, highlighting the importance of a supportive parent–child relationship in fostering adaptive emotional and behavioural outcomes. These findings confirm that emotional coaching is a universally effective parenting strategy, applicable across cultural and socio-economic contexts, including semi-rural Nigerian communities.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, it is recommended that

1. Parenting programmes in Nigeria and similar contexts integrate emotional coaching and warmth-focused strategies to promote children's socio-emotional development.
2. Parents should be trained to recognise and validate children's emotions, guide constructive responses, and maintain warm, supportive relationships to maximise the benefits of emotional socialisation.
3. Schools and community centres can also play a complementary role by offering workshops, resources, and guidance on effective emotion-focused parenting techniques.

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