

**AFRO-PARENTING CULTURE AND THE IMPACT & EARLY
INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION PATTERNS ON FAMILIES IN
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN SOCIETIES.**

By

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ABSTRACT

This study examined Afro-parenting culture and the impact and early influence of communication patterns on families in sub-Saharan African societies, with a focus on examining key cultural values of Afro-parenting, communication patterns within African families, to evaluate how cultural norms influence communication patterns adopted in Sub-Saharan families, and to compare traditional and modern communication trends in Afro-parenting. A descriptive survey design was used through a structured questionnaire distributed online to African parents and guardians, with 40 valid responses analysed through both qualitative insights and quantitative methods, including chi-square tests. Findings reveal that the core values of Afro-parenting remain discipline, obedience, respect for elders, and religious or moral upbringing. However, respondents also acknowledged a gradual shift toward modern parenting practices that emphasise emotional expression, openness, and reduced authoritarian control. While traditional communication patterns remain dominant, particularly the authoritarian and authoritative styles, many parents reported integrating more supportive and expressive approaches. This study's result shows that cultural expectations have continued to exert a huge impact on parental authority and communication. However, modernisation is driving a hybrid (integrated) model that mixes traditional and modern values. It was concluded that Afro-parenting is experiencing change, emphasising the need to ensure a balance between cultural heritage and changing parenting practices towards fostering healthier parent-child communication across families in sub-Saharan Africa.

KEYWORDS: Afro-parenting, Family Communication, Parenting styles, Cultural values, Sub-Saharan Africa,

INTRODUCTION

Parenting is a universal concept. However, its interpretation varies across regions due to factors such as religion, culture, socio-economic status, and parental background (Bornstein, 2015). Of these, culture is the most important in determining parenting practices. It shapes attitudes, norms, and how children and parents communicate, as indicated by Murray et al. (2019). In Africa, parenting is rooted in shared traditions. The extended family plays a major role in raising children (Murray et al. 2019). This aligns with the proverb, "*A single hand cannot nurse a child.*" In this context, children learn discipline, obedience, respect for elders, and moral or religious guidance (Adinlofu, 2009; Degbey, 2012). Communication often follows authoritarian and authoritative patterns that stress respect and adherence rather than emotional expression.

Modernization is changing Afro-parenting. Urbanisation, exposure to global practices, and digital media now introduce new values, such as emotional openness, negotiation, and child autonomy (White, 1977). Despite this, much of the literature portrays traditional African parenting as rigid or focuses on its flaws. Few studies address how cultural norms shape communication or how these patterns evolve.

This research bridges this academic and knowledge gap by exploring Afro-Parenting culture and its impact on early communication patterns among families in Sub-Saharan African societies. Investigating this study provides insight into how cultural heritage and modern-day influences shape parent-child communication in Africa today.

AFRICAN PARENTING

In traditional African societies, parenting extends beyond the nuclear family. The extended family system ensures that child-rearing responsibilities are shared among relatives, neighbours, and community members (Adinlofu, 2009). Even when children lose their parents, this communal model offers social, emotional, and economic support to them. According to Degbey (2012), various components make up the core values of African parenting, which are respect for elders, obedience, discipline, and shared duty. These values are transferred via daily communications, engagement, moral instruction, and religious teachings. Hence, parenting is viewed as both a biological duty and a cultural duty, which is grounded in shared identity.

COMMUNICATION PATTERN IN AFRICAN FAMILIES

According to Bireda and Pillay (2017), in African families, parent-child communication typically involves both authoritarian and authoritative styles. Parents are regarded as authority figures whose instructions are expected to be followed without question (Serpell & Nsamenang, 2014). Obedience and respect are identified, and children are usually not encouraged to openly challenge elders. However, cultural norms do not solely emphasise control. Communication also carries elements of guidance and moral instruction, where children are socialised into values of respect, spirituality, and social responsibility (Onwauchi, 1972). While warmth and emotional bonding have historically been less prominent, recent trends indicate that African parents, particularly in urban and modernised contexts, are gradually adopting more supportive and expressive communication styles.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Traditional Afro-parenting has historically relied on communal child-rearing and authoritative communication styles that emphasise discipline, respect, and obedience. However, modernisation, urbanisation, and exposure to global influences are reshaping these practices. Increasingly, many African parents are adopting more flexible methods that promote emotional expression and discussion with children. In spite of this shift, scholarship on African parenting often presents conventional practices as strict, rigid, and out-of-date, with limited focus on their cultural importance or their influence on communication. This results in a knowledge gap because while conventional parenting values are now and then dismissed, however, there is a lack of extensive research conducted on the enduring impact on child development and family dynamics. As a result, there is a need for a clearer understanding of how traditional and contemporary practices interact is germane to appreciating the changing environment of Afro-parenting in sub-Saharan Africa.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This research intends to investigate Afro-parenting as both a cultural tradition and a changing practice, while focusing on its impact on parent-child communication. In particular, this research examines:

- key cultural values of Afro-parenting
- communication patterns within African families

- how cultural norms influence communication patterns adopted in Sub-Saharan families
- the comparison between traditional and modern communication trends in Afro-parenting.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the core values of Afro-parenting in sub-Saharan African families?

What are the communication patterns adopted by African parents in sub-Saharan Countries?

How do cultural norms influence parenting communication?

What are the effects of traditional and modern communication styles in Afro-parenting?

HYPOTHESIS

H₁: Parenting style experienced in childhood is not related to how strongly traditional practices are applied at home.

H₂: There is a significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondents with regard to the communication style adopted by them.

H₃: There is a significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondents with regard to cultural perceptions of parental authority.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN:

This study employed a descriptive survey design with a mixed-methods approach. The design was selected to capture both measurable patterns of parenting values and deeper insights into parent–child communication in sub-Saharan Africa.

POPULATION AND AREA OF STUDY:

According to World Population Review, the estimated population of sub-Saharan Africa is above 1.2 billion as of 2025. The focus was on parents and guardians across sub-Saharan Africa, with most responses obtained from West Africa, particularly Nigeria. Individuals aged 24-60 years with parenting or guardianship roles are the targeted population for this study.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants with direct parenting or guardianship experience. An online platform, using Google Forms, was adopted to distribute the structured questionnaire among diverse participants; however, this approach might have excluded those without internet access. An online structured questionnaire was used, and a total of 40 valid responses were obtained from the participants, which were analyzed for this study. Due to non-response or missing data for specific questions, the operational sample size (N) for certain analyses (such as Tribe and Number/Age of Children) may be slightly lower than 40. The actual (N) is reported for each table. However, it still offers an exploratory understanding of Afro-parenting practices and communication patterns.

INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

The use of structured digital questionnaire was employed, and comprised five sections. This includes demographics, Afro-parenting values, communication patterns, cultural influences, and a comparison of traditional versus modern methods. The survey questionnaire comprised both open-ended and closed-ended questions, and was analysed using descriptive and chi-square analyses.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests to assess associations between variables. Although the relatively small sample size posed a limitation, chi-square was chosen because it is appropriate for categorical data and useful for identifying preliminary relationships in exploratory studies. To address the small cell sizes, results were interpreted with caution, and only tables where expected counts were sufficiently robust (generally >5) were considered reliable. The justification for applying the Chi-square was to identify likely associations and patterns that warrant additional study with broader and more representative samples, rather than to make wide generalisations.

The chi-square statistical method was applied to test the research hypotheses.

The formula is: $X^2 = \sum (f_o - f_e)^2$

f_e

Where:

f_o = observed frequency

f_e = expected frequency

Σ = summation

X^2 = chi-square statistic

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study's outcomes are presented below based on the research questions formulated.

Table 1: Demographics of Participants.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
Under 25	—	—
25-34	16	40%
34-44	19	47.5%
44-54	4	10%
55 and above	1	2.5%
Total	40	100%
Gender		
Male	13	32.5%
Female	27	67.5%
Total	40	100%
Country of Residence		
Nigeria	31	77.5%
Ghana	4	10%
Cameroon	1	2.5%
Zambia	1	2.5%

Sierra Leone	1	2.5%
United Kingdom	2	5%
Total	40	100%
Tribe		
Yoruba	14	43.8%
Igbo	5	15.6%
Edo	2	6.3%
Calabar	1	3.1%
Hausa	1	3.1%
Igala	1	3.1%
Isoko	1	3.1%
Nupe	1	3.1%
Rivers	1	3.1%
Taroh	1	3.1%
Tarok	1	3.1
Tiv	1	3.1%
Urhobo	1	3.1%
Waja	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%
Number of Children		

0	3	8.1%
1	7	18.9%
2	18	48.6%
3	6	16.2%
4	3	8.1%
Total	37	100%
Children Age Group		
0-5	19	51.4%
6-10	14	37.8%
11-18	14	37.8%
19 and above	2	5.4%
Total	37	100%

The majority of respondents were between the ages of 34–44 (47.5%) and 25–34 (40%), with more females (67.5%) than males (32.5%). Most participants resided in Nigeria (79.5%), and nearly half (48.6%) had two children. Over half of the children reported by participants were aged 0–5 years.

Research Question 1: What are the core values of Afro-parenting in sub-Saharan African families?

Table 2: Afro-Parenting Values(N: 40)

S/N	Afro-parenting Values	Male (n)	Female (n)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Rank
	Obedience and discipline	7	10	17	42.5%	1=
	Religious/moral upbringing	4	13	17	42.5%	1=
	Respect for elders	4	9	13	32.5%	3
	Communal Living/shared responsibility	3	7	10	25%	4
	Independence and self-expression	3	6	9	22.5%	5
	Emotional Bonding & support	4	3	7	17.5%	6

Table 3: Parenting Style Experienced by Respondents in Childhood (N: 40)

S/N	Parenting Style	Male(n)	Female(n)	Frequency(n)	Percentage	Rank
	Strict and authoritative	6	15	21	53.8%	1
	Supportive but structured	5	8	13	33.3%	2
	Emotionally Expressive	—	3	3	7.7%	3
	Distant or reserved	1	1	2	5.1%	4

Discipline, obedience, and religious or moral upbringing emerged as the most frequently cited values (42.5% each). The data also showed that the participants indicated respect

for elders, constituting 32.5%, while independence, self-expression (22.5%), and emotional bonding (17.5%) were less prominent. Furthermore, the data showed that the childhood experiences of parenting styles mirrored this pattern, with over half (53.8%) indicating being raised under a rigid and authoritative style, while just 7.7% remembered emotionally expressive parenting. ($\chi^2 = 12.57$, $df = 9$, $p > 0.05$).

The result of the Chi-square analysis conducted validated that childhood parenting style had no significant association with the degree of traditional practices presently adopted at home($\chi^2 = 12.57$, $df = 9$, $p > 0.05$). Since the p-value is greater than the a level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting that an individual's recollection of their own upbringing does not significantly predict their current application of traditional Afro-parenting values.

Research Question 2: What are the communication patterns adopted by African parents in sub-Saharan Countries?

Table 4: Age Respondents Began Intentional Communication with Their Children

S/N	Age	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
	From birth	24	60%	1
	Around 1-2	8	20%	2
	Age 3-5	5	12.5%	3
	After school age	3	7.5%	4

Table 5: Communication Style Adopted by Respondents with Their Children

S/N	Communication Style	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)	Rank
	Authoritative	18	46.2%	1
	Authoritarian	10	25.6%	2
	Permissive	10	25.6%	3

	Neglectful	1	2.6%	4
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The dataset showed that the majority of parents indicated starting intentional communication with their children right from birth (60%), while 53.8% of the participants engaged in everyday discussions with regards to feelings and opinions, which implies increasing openness in family interactions. Regarding communication style, authoritative parenting constituted 46.2%, which was the most prevalent, which is followed by authoritarian (25.6%) and permissive (25.6%). The data showed that neglectful communication was rare (2.6%). In particular, half of the parents (50%) permitted their children to ask questions and contest rules freely, while 42.1% allowed it infrequently. The result of the Chi-square conducted revealed no significant gender difference in communication styles adopted ($\chi^2=3.10$, $df=3$, $p>0.05$).

Research Question 3: How do cultural norms influence Parenting communication?

Table 6: Cultural Perceptions of Parental Authority

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
	Absolute	28	71.8%	1
	Negotiable	8	20.5	2
	Equal	3	7.7%	3

The dataset showed that parental authority was extensively viewed as absolute (71.8%), with a smaller percentage seeing it as negotiable (20.5%) or equal (7.7%). The data in Table 6 showed that respect and silence before elders (47.4%) and physical discipline (42.1%) were the most influential cultural practices influencing communication. Nonetheless, 42.1% of parents agreed that cultural expectations at times can result in limited open communication; however, 36.8% indicated no limit, which means there is a gradual transition in norms. The result of the Chi-square performed indicates no significant gender difference in perceptions of parental authority ($\chi^2 = 0.08$, $df = 2$, $p > 0.05$).

Table 7: Cultural Practices Influencing Parents' Communication Approach with Children

S/N	Cultural practices	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
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	Respect and Silence in front of elders	18	47.4%	1
	Physical discipline	16	42.1%	2
	Shared parenting roles	10	26.3%	3
	Religious Traditions	7	18.4%	4
	Taboos around discussing emotions or sex	6	15.8%	5
	All	2	5.2%	6

Research Question 4: What are the effects of traditional and modern communication styles in Afro-parenting?

Table 8: Parents' Self-Assessment of Their Parenting Style

S/N	Parent assessment	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
	A mix of traditional and modern	24	61.5%	1
	Mostly traditional	10	25.6%	2
	Mostly modern	5	12.8%	3

Table 9: Perceptions of the Positive Influence of Traditional Communication Styles on Children Today

S/N	Response options	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
	Yes, they teach respect and structure	16	41%	1=
	Somewhat, but needs updating	16	41%	1=
	No, they hinder emotional growth	7	17.9%	3

The dataset showed that the majority of the respondents (61.5%) described their approach as a mix of traditional and contemporary parenting, while 25.6% indicated mostly traditional and 12.8% indicated mostly modern. When asked about traditional communication styles, 41% of the participants felt they continue to teach respect and structure, while an equal proportion (41%) thought they needed updating. A smaller share (17.9%) regarded them as hindering emotional growth.

Table 10: Summary of Chi-Square Analysis for Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Variables	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Statistical Conclusion (at $\alpha=0.05$)
H1 (Parenting style experienced in childhood is not related to how strongly traditional practices are applied at home.)	Childhood Parenting Style vs. Current Traditional Application	12.57	9	$p>0.05$	Fail to Reject H1 (No significant association)
H2 (There is a significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondents with regard to the communication style adopted by them.)	Gender vs. Communication Style Adopted	3.1	3	$p>0.05$	Reject H2 (No significant gender difference)
H3 (There is a significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondents with regard to cultural perceptions of parental authority.)	Gender vs. Cultural Perceptions of Authority	0.08	2	$p>0.05$	Reject H3 (No significant gender difference)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study's results found that core values are entrenched in discipline, obedience, respect, and religion, although+234 901 180 8190 modern traits such as self-expression are emerging.

The result showed that communication is shifting from predominantly authoritarian to more authoritative and expressive patterns.

Also, this study's result indicates that cultural norms are significantly linked with parent–child interaction, particularly views of authority. However, modernisation is introducing flexibility.

Lastly, this study's results revealed a hybrid parenting model that mixes conventional and contemporary approaches.

DISCUSSION

The findings highlight both the enduring strength of cultural values and the emerging influence of modernisation on parent–child communication. Consistent with earlier studies (Amos, 2013; Adinlofu, 2009), the results confirm that Afro-parenting continues to emphasise discipline, obedience, and moral upbringing as its core values. These align with Baumrind's (1967, 1991) descriptions of authoritarian and authoritative styles, which were also reflected in respondents' own childhood experiences. However, the relative absence of emotional bonding as a core value reinforces previous arguments that African parenting has historically prioritised compliance and respect over emotional expression (Bireda & Pillay, 2017).

Findings revealed that communication styles are being shaped by modernisation, as shown by most parents who indicated daily conversations with their children and a greater inclination to permit questioning or disagreement. This simply means a shift to more open and emotionally supportive communication. This result is consistent with Effiong and Usoroh (2020) and Adzovie & Adzovie (2020), who in their studies discovered that exposure to education, media, and urban living results in promoting new communication dynamics among African families.

Furthermore, this study's result validates the enduring role of cultural norms in influencing authority, as revealed by the majority of the participants who viewed parental authority as absolute. This result is consistent with the works of Onwauchi (1972), who observed hierarchical family structures. Practices like respect for elders and physical discipline are extensively supported. Nevertheless, the result that the majority of parents perceive these norms as restraining open communication simply means a

steady cultural negotiation, where both traditional and contemporary coexist. Last of all, the birth of a hybrid parenting model, which was mentioned by above 60% of the sampled participants, suggests that Afro-parenting is not static and neither is it entirely substituted by contemporary methods. Instead, it is changing into a combined form that keeps respect while combining discussion and emotional expressiveness. This perspective was corroborated by Harwood et al. (2017), who posited that parenting styles are dynamic and adapt to social change, while still entrenched in cultural contexts.

To conclude, this study's results have contributed to the extant body of literature on African parenting as it showed that Afro-parenting is not just an artefact of the past but an adaptive cultural system that responds to modern-day tensions. Parents' challenges lie with striking a balance between the benefits of traditional discipline and communal duty due to the increasing need for openness and emotional support in child development.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated Afro-Parenting culture and its impact on early communication patterns among families in Sub-Saharan African societies. This study's result indicates that Afro-parenting is deeply entrenched in traditions of discipline, obedience, respect, and moral upbringing. This implies the enduring role of cultural norms. Concurrently, modernisation has ushered in a high level of openness, emotional expressiveness, and negotiation in parent-child connections. This has led to a hybrid parenting model that integrates both modern and conventional methods. Three contributions were highlighted in this study. First off, this study's results showed empirical data that communication patterns among African families are changing but are shaped by cultural expectations of authority and respect. Furthermore, this study's result indicates that modern-day parenting qualities are being selectively applied, with parents striving to balance between flexibility and emotional support, together with conventional discipline. Lastly, this study shows the pressure between cultural continuity and adaptation as it offers a more nuanced perception than the often one-sided representations of African parenting as either strict or obsolete.

In practice, this study's result indicates that parenting interventions, community initiatives, and policy frameworks in sub-Saharan Africa must be aimed at supporting positive areas of tradition like respect and communal duty, while as well fostering emotional openness and supportive communication. By doing so, Afro-parenting can adapt to contemporary realities without losing its cultural identity.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

Various limitations were encountered. First off, there was a limitation with the sample size, as it was relatively small when compared to the targeted sample of 100 participants. For this reason, the result might not apply across sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the geographical representation of the participants was skewed in favour of Nigeria, which means that the perceptions of individuals from other regions in sub-Saharan Africa were not captured. Thirdly, since a questionnaire survey was used via a digital platform, parents without reliable internet access might be excluded, thereby creating a biased sample towards more urban and digitally connected individuals. Finally, since this study's data was self-reported, therefore, there is the likelihood of response bias, especially in demographic details or sensitive issues like discipline. In spite of these limitations, the research offers positive and beneficial exploratory insights into Afro-parenting and communication. Future research can address these limitations using larger, more diverse, and longitudinal studies, which will help in reinforcing the evidence base and deepen knowledge of how parenting practices are changing on the African continent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

This research recommends that African parents must preserve core Afro-parenting values like respect, discipline, and communal responsibility while combining more open and emotionally supportive communication. Additionally, it is recommended that parents start intentional communication from infancy by nurturing the confidence and emotional growth of children.

The study recommends that alternative approaches such as dialogue, positive reinforcement, and emotional bonding should be encouraged to foster healthier parent-child relationships.

Government and community-based programmes should incorporate culturally sensitive parenting education, helping families adapt traditional practices to modern social realities.

FUTURE SUGGESTIONS

Future studies should be conducted with a larger and more diverse participants across different economic classes, cultural groups, and regions of Africa. This would help to strengthen the reliability of findings and also capture a wider variety of parenting. In addition, there is also a need for there to be a comparative study by comparing not only African parenting practices among African regions but also exploring how the African practices differ from other cultures and practices. This would highlight which values are uniquely African, which are shared globally, and which might be changing under the pressures of modernisation. Instead of capturing parent and child communication at just the early stages, future studies should follow the families over several years to track how these communication practices evolve as the children grow. This would show whether parents who begin intentional communication early have much more strong emotional bonds and whether these practices influence long-term outcomes like the children's confidence, academic performance, or social attitude.

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APPENDIXES

[QUESTIONNAIRE – Afro-Parenting Culture and the Impact & Early Influence of Communication Patterns on Families in Sub-Saharan African Societies](#)

1

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In traditional African societies, parenting extends beyond the nuclear family. The extended family system ensures that child-rearing responsibilities are shared among relatives, neighbours, and community members (Adinlofu, 2009). Even when children lose their parents, this communal model offers social, emotional, and economic support to them. According to Degbey (2012), various components make up the core values of

African parenting, which are respect for elders, obedience, discipline, and shared duty. These values are transferred via daily communications, engagement, moral instruction, and religious teachings. Hence, parenting is viewed as both a biological duty and a cultural duty, which is grounded in shared identity.

COMMUNICATION PATTERN IN AFRICAN FAMILIES

According to Bireda and Pillay (2017), in African families, parent-child communication typically involves both authoritarian and authoritative styles. Parents are regarded as authority figures whose instructions are expected to be followed without question (Serpell & Nsamenang, 2014). Obedience and respect are identified, and children are usually not encouraged to openly challenge elders. However, cultural norms do not solely emphasise control. Communication also carries elements of guidance and moral instruction, where children are socialised into values of respect, spirituality, and social responsibility (Onwauchi, 1972). While warmth and emotional bonding have historically been less prominent, recent trends indicate that African parents, particularly in urban and modernised contexts, are gradually adopting more supportive and expressive communication styles.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Traditional Afro-parenting has historically relied on communal child-rearing and authoritative communication styles that emphasise discipline, respect, and obedience. However, modernisation, urbanisation, and exposure to global influences are reshaping these practices. Increasingly, many African parents are adopting more flexible methods that promote emotional expression and discussion with children. In spite of this shift, scholarship on African parenting often presents conventional practices as strict, rigid, and out-of-date, with limited focus on their cultural importance or their influence on communication. This results in a knowledge gap because while conventional parenting values are now and then dismissed, however, there is a lack of extensive research conducted on the enduring impact on child development and family dynamics. As a result, there is a need for a clearer understanding of how traditional and contemporary practices interact is germane to appreciating the changing environment of Afro-parenting in sub-Saharan Africa.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This research intends to investigate Afro-parenting as both a cultural tradition and a changing practice, while focusing on its impact on parent–child communication. In particular, this research examines:

- key cultural values of Afro-parenting
- communication patterns within African families
- how cultural norms influence communication patterns adopted in Sub-Saharan families
- the comparison between traditional and modern communication trends in Afro-parenting.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the core values of Afro-parenting in sub-Saharan African families?

What are the communication patterns adopted by African parents in sub-Saharan Countries?

How do cultural norms influence parenting communication?

What are the effects of traditional and modern communication styles in Afro-parenting?

HYPOTHESIS

H₁: Parenting style experienced in childhood is not related to how strongly traditional practices are applied at home.

H₂: There is a significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondents with regard to the communication style adopted by them.

H₃: There is a significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondents with regard to cultural perceptions of parental authority.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN:

This study employed a descriptive survey design with a mixed-methods approach. The design was selected to capture both measurable patterns of parenting values and deeper insights into parent–child communication in sub-Saharan Africa.

POPULATION AND AREA OF STUDY:

According to World Population Review, the estimated population of sub-Saharan Africa is above 1.2 billion as of 2025. The focus was on parents and guardians across sub-Saharan Africa, with most responses obtained from West Africa, particularly Nigeria. Individuals aged 24-60 years with parenting or guardianship roles are the targeted population for this study.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants with direct parenting or guardianship experience. An online platform, using Google Forms, was adopted to distribute the structured questionnaire among diverse participants; however, this approach might have excluded those without internet access. An online structured questionnaire was used, and a total of 40 valid responses were obtained from the participants, which were analyzed for this study. Due to non-response or missing data for specific questions, the operational sample size (N) for certain analyses (such as Tribe and Number/Age of Children) may be slightly lower than 40. The actual (N) is reported for each table. However, it still offers an exploratory understanding of Afro-parenting practices and communication patterns.

INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

The use of structured digital questionnaire was employed, and comprised five sections. This includes demographics, Afro-parenting values, communication patterns, cultural influences, and a comparison of traditional versus modern methods. The survey questionnaire comprised both open-ended and closed-ended questions, and was analysed using descriptive and chi-square analyses.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests to assess associations between variables. Although the relatively small sample size posed

a limitation, chi-square was chosen because it is appropriate for categorical data and useful for identifying preliminary relationships in exploratory studies. To address the small cell sizes, results were interpreted with caution, and only tables where expected counts were sufficiently robust (generally >5) were considered reliable. The justification for applying the Chi-square was to identify likely associations and patterns that warrant additional study with broader and more representative samples, rather than to make wide generalisations.

The chi-square statistical method was applied to test the research hypotheses.

The formula is: $X^2 = \frac{\sum (f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$

f_e

Where:

f_o = observed frequency

f_e = expected frequency

Σ = summation

X^2 = chi-square statistic

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study's outcomes are presented below based on the research questions formulated.

Table 1: Demographics of Participants.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
Under 25	—	—
25-34	16	40%
34-44	19	47.5%
44-54	4	10%
55 and above	1	2.5%

Total	40	100%
Gender		
Male	13	32.5%
Female	27	67.5%
Total	40	100%
Country of Residence		
Nigeria	31	77.5%
Ghana	4	10%
Cameroon	1	2.5%
Zambia	1	2.5%
Sierra Leone	1	2.5%
United Kingdom	2	5%
Total	40	100%
Tribe		
Yoruba	14	43.8%
Igbo	5	15.6%
Edo	2	6.3%
Calabar	1	3.1%
Hausa	1	3.1%

Igala	1	3.1%
Isoko	1	3.1%
Nupe	1	3.1%
Rivers	1	3.1%
Taroh	1	3.1%
Tarok	1	3.1
Tiv	1	3.1%
Urhobo	1	3.1%
Waja	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%
Number of Children		
0	3	8.1%
1	7	18.9%
2	18	48.6%
3	6	16.2%
4	3	8.1%
Total	37	100%
Children Age Group		
0-5	19	51.4%
6-10	14	37.8%

11-18	14	37.8%
19 and above	2	5.4%
Total	37	100%

The majority of respondents were between the ages of 34–44 (47.5%) and 25–34 (40%), with more females (67.5%) than males (32.5%). Most participants resided in Nigeria (79.5%), and nearly half (48.6%) had two children. Over half of the children reported by participants were aged 0–5 years.

Research Question 1: What are the core values of Afro-parenting in sub-Saharan African families?

Table 2: Afro-Parenting Values(N: 40)

S/N	Afro-parenting Values	Male (n)	Female (n)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Rank
	Obedience and discipline	7	10	17	42.5%	1=
	Religious/moral upbringing	4	13	17	42.5%	1=
	Respect for elders	4	9	13	32.5%	3
	Communal Living/shared responsibility	3	7	10	25%	4
	Independence and self-expression	3	6	9	22.5%	5
	Emotional Bonding & support	4	3	7	17.5%	6

Table 3: Parenting Style Experienced by Respondents in Childhood (N: 40)

S/N	Parenting Style	Male(n)	Female(n)	Frequency(n)	Percentage	Rank
	Strict and authoritative	6	15	21	53.8%	1
	Supportive but structured	5	8	13	33.3%	2
	Emotionally Expressive	—	3	3	7.7%	3
	Distant or reserved	1	1	2	5.1%	4

Discipline, obedience, and religious or moral upbringing emerged as the most frequently cited values (42.5% each). The data also showed that the participants indicated respect for elders, constituting 32.5%, while independence, self-expression (22.5%), and emotional bonding (17.5%) were less prominent. Furthermore, the data showed that the childhood experiences of parenting styles mirrored this pattern, with over half (53.8%) indicating being raised under a rigid and authoritative style, while just 7.7% remembered emotionally expressive parenting. ($\chi^2 = 12.57$, $df = 9$, $p > 0.05$).

The result of the Chi-square analysis conducted validated that childhood parenting style had no significant association with the degree of traditional practices presently adopted at home($\chi^2 = 12.57$, $df = 9$, $p > 0.05$). Since the p-value is greater than the a level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting that an individual's recollection of their own upbringing does not significantly predict their current application of traditional Afro-parenting values.

Research Question 2: What are the communication patterns adopted by African parents in sub-Saharan Countries?

Table 4: Age Respondents Began Intentional Communication with Their Children

S/N	Age	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
	From birth	24	60%	1
	Around 1-2	8	20%	2

	Age 3-5	5	12.5%	3
	After school age	3	7.5%	4

Table 5: Communication Style Adopted by Respondents with Their Children

S/N	Communication Style	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)	Rank
	Authoritative	18	46.2%	1
	Authoritarian	10	25.6%	2
	Permissive	10	25.6%	3
	Neglectful	1	2.6%	4

The dataset showed that the majority of parents indicated starting intentional communication with their children right from birth (60%), while 53.8% of the participants engaged in everyday discussions with regards to feelings and opinions, which implies increasing openness in family interactions. Regarding communication style, authoritative parenting constituted 46.2%, which was the most prevalent, which is followed by authoritarian (25.6%) and permissive (25.6%). The data showed that neglectful communication was rare (2.6%). In particular, half of the parents (50%) permitted their children to ask questions and contest rules freely, while 42.1% allowed it infrequently. The result of the Chi-square conducted revealed no significant gender difference in communication styles adopted ($\chi^2=3.10$, $df=3$, $p>0.05$).

Research Question 3: How do cultural norms influence Parenting communication?

Table 6: Cultural Perceptions of Parental Authority

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
	Absolute	28	71.8%	1
	Negotiable	8	20.5	2
	Equal	3	7.7%	3

The dataset showed that parental authority was extensively viewed as absolute (71.8%), with a smaller percentage seeing it as negotiable (20.5%) or equal (7.7%). The data in Table 6 showed that respect and silence before elders (47.4%) and physical discipline (42.1%) were the most influential cultural practices influencing communication. Nonetheless, 42.1% of parents agreed that cultural expectations at times can result in limited open communication; however, 36.8% indicated no limit, which means there is a gradual transition in norms. The result of the Chi-square performed indicates no significant gender difference in perceptions of parental authority ($\chi^2 = 0.08$, $df = 2$, $p > 0.05$).

Table 7: Cultural Practices Influencing Parents' Communication Approach with Children

S/N	Cultural practices	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
	Respect and Silence in front of elders	18	47.4%	1
	Physical discipline	16	42.1%	2
	Shared parenting roles	10	26.3%	3
	Religious Traditions	7	18.4%	4
	Taboos around discussing emotions or sex	6	15.8%	5
	All	2	5.2%	6

Research Question 4: What are the effects of traditional and modern communication styles in Afro-parenting?

Table 8: Parents' Self-Assessment of Their Parenting Style

S/N	Parent assessment	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
	A mix of traditional and modern	24	61.5%	1
	Mostly traditional	10	25.6%	2

	Mostly modern	5	12.8%	3
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Table 9: Perceptions of the Positive Influence of Traditional Communication Styles on Children Today

S/N	Response options	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
	Yes, they teach respect and structure	16	41%	1=
	Somewhat, but needs updating	16	41%	1=
	No, they hinder emotional growth	7	17.9%	3

The dataset showed that the majority of the respondents (61.5%) described their approach as a mix of traditional and contemporary parenting, while 25.6% indicated mostly traditional and 12.8% indicated mostly modern. When asked about traditional communication styles, 41% of the participants felt they continue to teach respect and structure, while an equal proportion (41%) thought they needed updating. A smaller share (17.9%) regarded them as hindering emotional growth.

Table 10: Summary of Chi-Square Analysis for Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Variables	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Statistical Conclusion (at $\alpha=0.05$)
H1 (Parenting style experienced in childhood is not related to how strongly traditional practices are applied at home.)	Childhood Parenting Style vs. Current Traditional Application	12.57	9	$p>0.05$	Fail to Reject H1 (No significant association)
H2 (There is a significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondents with regard to	Gender vs. Communication Style Adopted	3.1	3	$p>0.05$	Reject H2 (No significant gender difference)

the communication style adopted by them.)					
H3 (There is a significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondents with regard to cultural perceptions of parental authority.)	Gender vs. Cultural Perceptions of Authority	0.08	2	$p > 0.05$	Reject H3 (No significant gender difference)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study's results found that core values are entrenched in discipline, obedience, respect, and religion. Although modern traits such as self-expression are emerging.

The result showed that communication is shifting from predominantly authoritarian to more authoritative and expressive patterns.

Also, this study's result indicates that cultural norms are significantly linked with parent-child interaction, particularly views of authority. However, modernisation is introducing flexibility.

Lastly, this study's results revealed a hybrid parenting model that mixes conventional and contemporary approaches.

DISCUSSION

The findings highlight both the enduring strength of cultural values and the emerging influence of modernisation on parent-child communication. Consistent with earlier studies (Amos, 2013; Adinlofu, 2009), the results confirm that Afro-parenting continues to emphasise discipline, obedience, and moral upbringing as its core values. These align with Baumrind's (1967, 1991) descriptions of authoritarian and authoritative styles, which were also reflected in respondents' own childhood experiences. However, the relative absence of emotional bonding as a core value reinforces previous arguments that African parenting has historically prioritised compliance and respect over emotional expression (Bireda & Pillay, 2017).

Findings revealed that communication styles are being shaped by modernisation, as shown by most parents who indicated daily conversations with their children and a greater inclination to permit questioning or disagreement. This simply means a shift to more open and emotionally supportive communication. This result is consistent with Effiong and Usoroh (2020) and Adzovie & Adzovie (2020), who in their studies discovered that exposure to education, media, and urban living results in promoting new communication dynamics among African families.

Furthermore, this study's result validates the enduring role of cultural norms in influencing authority, as revealed by the majority of the participants who viewed parental authority as absolute. This result is consistent with the works of Onwauchi (1972), who observed hierarchical family structures. Practices like respect for elders and physical discipline are extensively supported. Nevertheless, the result that the majority of parents perceive these norms as restraining open communication simply means a steady cultural negotiation, where both traditional and contemporary coexist. Last of all, the birth of a hybrid parenting model, which was mentioned by above 60% of the sampled participants, suggests that Afro-parenting is not static and neither is it entirely substituted by contemporary methods. Instead, it is changing into a combined form that keeps respect while combining discussion and emotional expressiveness. This perspective was corroborated by Harwood et al. (2017), who posited that parenting styles are dynamic and adapt to social change, while still entrenched in cultural contexts.

To conclude, this study's results have contributed to the extant body of literature on African parenting as it showed that Afro-parenting is not just an artefact of the past but an adaptive cultural system that responds to modern-day tensions. Parents' challenges lie with striking a balance between the benefits of traditional discipline and communal duty due to the increasing need for openness and emotional support in child development.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated Afro-Parenting culture and its impact on early communication patterns among families in Sub-Saharan African societies. This study's result indicates that Afro-parenting is deeply entrenched in traditions of discipline, obedience, respect, and moral upbringing. This implies the enduring role of cultural norms. Concurrently, modernisation has ushered in a high level of openness, emotional expressiveness, and negotiation in parent-child connections. This has led to a hybrid parenting model that integrates both modern and conventional methods. Three contributions were

highlighted in this study. First off, this study's results showed empirical data that communication patterns among African families are changing but are shaped by cultural expectations of authority and respect. Furthermore, this study's result indicates that modern-day parenting qualities are being selectively applied, with parents striving to balance between flexibility and emotional support, together with conventional discipline. Lastly, this study shows the pressure between cultural continuity and adaptation as it offers a more nuanced perception than the often one-sided representations of African parenting as either strict or obsolete.

In practice, this study's result indicates that parenting interventions, community initiatives, and policy frameworks in sub-Saharan Africa must be aimed at supporting positive areas of tradition like respect and communal duty, while as well fostering emotional openness and supportive communication. By doing so, Afro-parenting can adapt to contemporary realities without losing its cultural identity.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

Various limitations were encountered. First off, there was a limitation with the sample size, as it was relatively small when compared to the targeted sample of 100 participants. For this reason, the result might not apply across sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the geographical representation of the participants was skewed in favour of Nigeria, which means that the perceptions of individuals from other regions in sub-Saharan Africa were not captured. Thirdly, since a questionnaire survey was used via a digital platform, parents without reliable internet access might be excluded, thereby creating a biased sample towards more urban and digitally connected individuals. Finally, since this study's data was self-reported, therefore, there is the likelihood of response bias, especially in demographic details or sensitive issues like discipline. In spite of these limitations, the research offers positive and beneficial exploratory insights into Afro-parenting and communication. Future research can address these limitations using larger, more diverse, and longitudinal studies, which will help in reinforcing the evidence base and deepen knowledge of how parenting practices are changing on the African continent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

This research recommends that African parents must preserve core Afro-parenting values like respect, discipline, and communal responsibility while combining more open and emotionally supportive communication. Additionally, it is recommended that parents start intentional communication from infancy by nurturing the confidence and emotional growth of children.

The study recommends that alternative approaches such as dialogue, positive reinforcement, and emotional bonding should be encouraged to foster healthier parent-child relationships.

Government and community-based programmes should incorporate culturally sensitive parenting education, helping families adapt traditional practices to modern social realities.

FUTURE SUGGESTIONS

Future studies should be conducted with a larger and more diverse participants across different economic classes, cultural groups, and regions of Africa. This would help to strengthen the reliability of findings and also capture a wider variety of parenting. In addition, there is also a need for there to be a comparative study by comparing not only African parenting practices among African regions but also exploring how the African practices differ from other cultures and practices. This would highlight which values are uniquely African, which are shared globally, and which might be changing under the pressures of modernisation. Instead of capturing parent and child communication at just the early stages, future studies should follow the families over several years to track how these communication practices evolve as the children grow. This would show whether parents who begin intentional communication early have much more strong emotional bonds and whether these practices influence long-term outcomes like the children's confidence, academic performance, or social attitude.

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APPENDIXES

QUESTIONNAIRE – Afro-Parenting Culture and the Impact & Early Influence of
Communication Patterns on Families in Sub-Saharan African Societies

1

V