



Exploring the Influence of Parental Roles on Societal Dynamics: A Church-Centric Analysis

Ebenezer Ahenkan Owusu¹ 

¹ Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

ABSTRACT

Several fingers point at the degradation of societal values, especially in the aspect of ethics and morality. The elders have now coined a saying, “Oh! the good old days” whenever issues of poor morals and ethics of the young ones come up. Recognizing the pivotal role of parents in shaping the values, morals, and societal norms, particularly within the context of family units guided by religious principles, this study explored the multifaceted impact of parental roles on broader societal structures through the lens of the church. The research methodology employed a quantitative research design with descriptive research analysis. The study found that society benefits from children who grow in parental affection, warmth, and love. Also, less contact time with parents actually affects open connection to stimulate emotional control which is key to coexistence in the society. It is evident that the church is practically at the center of the key traditional ceremonies that are used to impact morals, ethics, and culture in the young ones – naming ceremony, baptism, confirmation (puberty rites), marriage (both customary and ordinance) as well as funerals. The study concludes that the influence of parenting on the society cannot be overemphasized. Whatever an individual is or would be is rooted in how every individual interacts with his/her immediate environment. This study contributes to scholarship by offering a nuanced understanding of how parental roles, framed within the church, can shape the broader societal dynamics.

Correspondence

Ebenezer Ahenkan Owusu

Email: oae.eben@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

The major responsibility of the family which is the microcosm of the society is procreation and nurturing of young ones to integrate into the society. The family is held in its right form by marriage as John Stott explains, marriage is recognised and regulated by human institutions which identify it as the basic unit of humanity. The institution of marriage which is founded by God has the upbringing of children in a right environment filled with love and discipline to contribute to the positive growth of society since there would be a reciprocal commitment of service in love.¹

In the creation story of the Bible, God asked man to "...be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it..." (Gen. 2:15, HCSB). God's design of family life is to ensure the continuity and prosperity of both the human race and other created beings, "...work it and watch over it." (Gen. 2:15, HCSB). The family is charged with ensuring that God's created world is habitable - a place of peace, love,

¹ John Stott, *Issues Facing Christianity Today*, (London: Marshall Pickering, 1999), 319.

hope, friendship and being each other's keeper. Family is therefore a vital institution in the society since the individuals that are brought forth in families are the ones that make up the society. All humans are naturally not the same with differences in genetics, emotional makeup, preferences, understanding, language, faith, interest, etc. The beauty of creation is embedded in this human diversity creating individual uniqueness. The way one perceives things and the approach employed in dealing with situations may not necessarily be the same.

The onus lies much in the hands of the parents since their actions and inactions affect (directly or indirectly) the society, community, and the nation at large. Parenting is an important aspect of human development as it is the basic nurturing for the individual. The passages of life are controlled and managed by parents and to a large extent the families. For instance, in Ghana, the naming ceremony teaches the child to be truthful and directed to take after the family norms and values. Puberty rites teach and expose the young ones to forming healthy relationships, teaching them about homemaking, marriage, sex, family life, and many more. Marriage rites enlighten the individual to be responsible and prepare her/him for family life – raising children and caring for the family among others. Finally, the observance of befitting burials given to an individual during funeral rites is indicative of how well the person lived on earth. All these propel good behaviour and attitude from the individual in the society.

Every developing society or nation is held high by responsible citizens, hence, in his 2017 inaugural speech, the then President of the Republic of Ghana, H. E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo called on all Ghanaians to “be citizens and not spectators.”² Responsible citizens are raised in responsible homes manned by responsible parents with good moral principles and attitudes highly drawn from socially sensitive religions.

Scholars have contributed to the area of parental roles in the development of the society. However, the great influence of the Church has not been given much prominence to shape the society God wants. The focus of this paper is to address, among others, the nuance of parental role shaped within the framework of Christianity would produce the expected society. This paper develops a contextual theology of parenting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Childbirth

In the book, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, John Locke propounds the theory of ‘tabula rasa.’ He explains that the human mind at birth has nothing but is like a ‘white sheet’ ready to imbibe anything the environment offers. Thus the brains of children are filled with what they observe around them and the meaning they make out of them.³ The philosopher brings to the fore that the mind is void of concepts except as spawned by experience - internal and external.⁴ He insisted that everything that is known by man comes from his sensory experience – seeing, touching, hearing, smelling, and tasting. Out of these, the mind constructs complex ideas.⁵ His position is that nurturing must be toward the child's inclination, especially toward curiosity and play. For instance, a child needs not to be beaten for playing with fire; the burn she/he receives will discipline her/him. In discussing the agents of socio-cultural functions of the child, educationists explain the indispensable role of religious bodies.⁶

Parenting

A lot of research has been done on the topic of parenting and various definitions have been established to define the term. Parenting involves ‘child-rearing,’ developing relationships, establishing fruitful

² The inaugural speech of the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo on January 7, 2017 at the Independence Square, Accra. www.mop.gov.gh, accessed on February 15, 2021.

³ Robert Duschinsky, “Tabula Rasa and Human Nature,” *Philosophy* 87, no. 4 (October 4, 2012): 509–29, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819112000393>.

⁴ Duschinsky, “Tabula Rasa and Human Nature,” 509-529.

⁵ Duschinsky, “Tabula Rasa and Human Nature,” 509-529.

⁶ R. Opoku Agyemang, J. G. Assiedu-Kotwi, and Michael Sarpong Duah, *Principles and Practice of Education JED 111, Diploma in Basic Education by Distance Learning* (Jackson College of Education, , n.d.).

family life, and helping the children socialize appropriately with their environments.⁷ The Webster's Dictionary delineates parenting as the practice of working as parents and nurturing children.⁸ Parenting is the skill of taking care of children as a mother and/or father.⁹

Parenting is sourced from the Latin verb *'parere'* which means to develop, raise, or educate. The word is more focused on the action rather than the one doing it.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Masud and Speight say that the word parent denotes a biological relation though 'to parent' is an active verb, which signifies the progressive activities undertaken by parental figures toward children.¹¹ It is noted that people apart from parents may significantly perform parenting activities towards a child. Such persons may be referred to as "caregivers".

According to Hammer and Turner, there is a dichotomy between parenting and parenthood as the latter has to do with being a father or a mother who has brought forth.¹² Parenting is deeper than just being a parent to nurturing or raising children. Raising children can be done by relatives, as well as non-relatives meanwhile, parenting takes on more activities such as relational rapport.¹³ Hammer and Turner concluded that parenting is the role accomplished by a person who holds a parental position to aptly and positively facilitate development in every facet of the life of their children. It is the principal technique parents use to socialize their children into society.¹⁴

Types of Parenting Styles

Baumrind's findings indicated a close connection between the parenting style adopted and the behaviour of children. She indicates that child development is the outcome of the adopted parenting style. In her study with preschoolers, they displayed diverse types of behaviour and each one was exceedingly connected with a precise type of parenting style.¹⁵ With extensive observations, consultations and evaluation, she originally came out with three (3) parenting styles, permissive, authoritarian and authoritative.¹⁶ Maccoby and Martin on the other hand extended their three parenting style models using a two-dimensional framework: They opened it up by adding "neglectful/uninvolved parenting."¹⁷

⁷ Saovakon Virasiri, Jintana Yunibhand, and Waraporn Chaipayaw, "Parenting: What Are the Critical Attributes?," *Journal of the Medical Association of Thailand* 94, no. 9 (2011): 1109.

⁸ International Webster's Dictionary, *Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Languages. Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition* (Naples, Florida: Trident Press International, 2003).

⁹ Randolph. Quirk, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (London: Longman, 1978).

¹⁰ Masud Hoghugh, "Parenting—an Introduction," in *Handbook of Parenting: Theory and Research for Practice* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2004), 2–18.

¹¹ M Hoghugh and A N P Speight, "Good Enough Parenting for All Children—a Strategy for a Healthier Society," *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 78, no. 4 (1998): 293–96.

¹² Tommie.J. Hammer and Pauline.H. Turner, *Parenting in Contemporary Society*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1996).

¹³ Turid Suzanne Berg-Nielsen and Are Holen, "From Clinical towards Research Interview: Parenting Problems with Troubled Adolescents," *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 44, no. 4 (2003): 319–29.

¹⁴ Hammer and Turner, *Parenting in Contemporary Society*.

¹⁵ Parenting styles commonly used in psychology today are mostly based on the work of Diana Baumrind, a Developmental Psychologist at the University of California at Berkeley, in the 1960s. E.E. Maccoby and J.A.Martin have also contributed by refining Baumrind's model in the 1980s; "4 Types of Parenting Styles and Their Effects," Parenting, "4 Types of Parenting Styles and Their Effects," Parenting for Brain, February 22, 2021, <https://www.parentingforbrain.com/4-baumrind-parenting-styles>.

¹⁶ Diana Baumrind, "Child Care Practices Antecedent Three Patterns of Preschool Behavior.," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 1967.

¹⁷ Parenting, 4 Types of Parenting Styles and Their Effects.



Figure 1: A diagrammatic expression of the four types of parenting style¹⁸

According to Connor and Scott, children and adolescents from authoritative parents are seen to be highly sociable and academically competent. On the other hand, children with parents who are authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved exhibit significantly worse personalities. However, they add that children of authoritarian parents demonstrate typically the most troubled adjustment among the four.¹⁹ These works bring to the fore how the well-being of children is linked to parental care.

Parenting and Social Development

The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that the first hundred (100) days of the individual's life is the most critical period where the health, welfare and efficiency of the child take shape. The full neurons of a baby's brain are formed at the time of birth. By the age of two under parental control, massive numbers of brain neuronal connections are formed which are later trimmed due to the most frequently used one.²⁰

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the strategic plan for the world's evolution to address its biggest challenges. It is evident that the majority of the goals address issues of early childhood and young children. The SDG's quest to solve worldwide problems is tackling issues with direct or indirect influence on childhood development in the environment. The WHO admits that parenting in the early life of the individual is essential to solving almost all the social issues facing society today.²¹ Therefore, the study of parental roles in the societal dynamics in the Christian perspective in Ghana is essential since it brings to the fore the direct responsibility of the Church to the achievements of the SDGs. According to the WHO, five SDGs targets (goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 16) which have been set to guide national programming and investment could be achieved if there is fundamental sustenance of child upbringing.

¹⁸ Psychology In Action, "Sustaining Community - Parenting Style," accessed February 27, 2021, <https://sustainingcommunity.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/parenting-style-v-21.jpg27/02/20>.

¹⁹ Thomas G. O'Connor and Stephen B.C. Scott, *Parenting and Outcomes for Children* (London: York Publishers, 2007).

²⁰ World Health Organization, "United Nations Children's Fund, World Bank Group," *Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development: A Framework for Helping Children Survive and Thrive to Transform Health and Human Potential*, 2021.

²¹ World Health Organization, "United Nations Children's Fund, World Bank Group."

The Quadruple Nature of Raising Children

In his presentation on the topic; “Futuristic Perspective of the Church’s Ministry to Children” Puplambu talked about the four-pillar support of raising the young ones. He gave them a home, school, community (physical and virtual) and church. The functions of these segments bring out the holistic being of the individual to be productive in the course of society.²² He explains that the school and to a large extent the community, do pull the child into their own domain mostly with their backing powers to overshadow the rest. “Other segments in the quadruple are benign, to say the least, they can be ignored easily.”²³ He explains that, like a table, with any leg(s) deformed, or absent, the child may become dysfunctional in the society. He explained that the school which is now the pivot for raising children has also been weakened in many legislative instruments and other conventional public opinions.

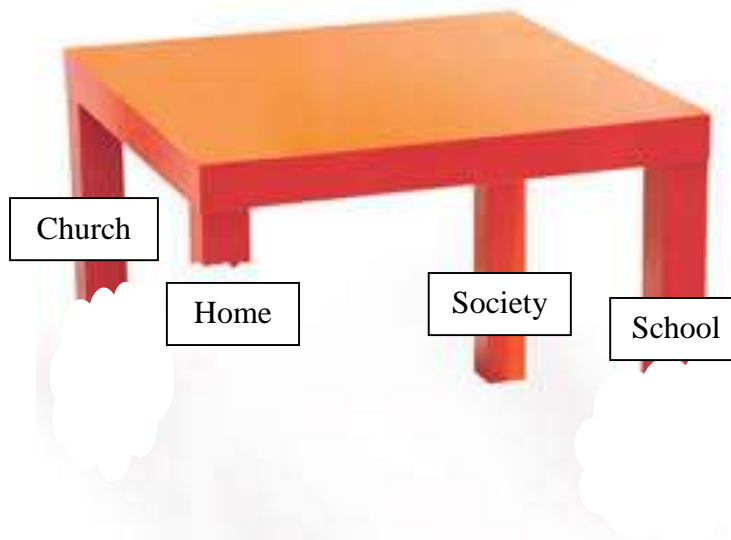


Figure 2: A Dysfunctional home Table

What the School Has Become

Explaining what the Ghanaian schools have become, he stated that,

- a) Teachers are warned not to use canes, neither do they have the right to give corporal punishment to correct a misbehaving student.
- b) Heads and teachers who try to correct students who go wayward have their good intentions being misconstrued often leading to their interdiction and sometimes loss of their jobs.²⁴
- c) Parents roar against teachers who mistakenly hurt a student they are trying to correct to the extent that some have the said teacher locked behind bars for some days when the unfortunate happens in the correction process.
- d) It is evident that the student has the right to hurt a teacher and it will amount to nothing.²⁵

The New School Order

As a result of what the schools have become, this is the new school order;

1. When a student is late for school, a teacher won't question him/her.

²² Gideon B Puplambu, “National Consultation on Children’s Ministry, 100 Years of Children’s Service & Beyond,” Facebook , October 15, 2021, <https://web.facebook.com/PRESBYOFFICIAL/videos/1000251147186306>.

²³ Puplambu, “National Consultation on Children’s Ministry, 100 years of Children’s Service & Beyond.”

²⁴ Ghana News, “ Headmaster & Teacher Beaten by Angry Residents of Kokofu,” NewsGhana24, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://newsghana24.com/teacher-beaten-by-angry-residents-of-kokofu/>.

²⁵ Myjoyonline, “SHS Student Beats Teacher to Pulp, Stabs Security Man with Broken Bottle,” Myjoyonline.com, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://www.myjoyonline.com/shs-student-beats-teacher-to-pulp-stabs-security-man-with-broken-bottle/?param=>.

2. When a student is absent from school, a teacher won't question him/her.
3. When a student goes out of school without an exeat, a teacher won't question him/her.
4. When a student is not serious about studies, a teacher won't take steps to correct him/her.
5. When a student is caught smoking, drinking, fighting, or fornicating, a teacher won't reprimand him/her.
6. When a student fails to clean the school or apply personal hygiene, a teacher won't admonish him/her.

The teacher will protect his/her salary at all costs and will not give any room for his/her suspension, interdiction, or dismissal by attempting to correct a wayward student. The teacher will only pity sick students and give general advice when necessary. Students who refuse the advice will be left corrupted to their own destruction.²⁶

What the Home Has Become

According to Puplambu, it is generally perceived that the Ghanaian home has lost responsible fatherhood and caring motherhood. The home has been reduced to a house: a restaurant/chop bar and a sleeping place due to the busy schedules of parents and this is to the detriment of the wards God has blessed them with.²⁷

Biblical Overview on Parenting

Gary points to the Biblical importance of the family when it comes to parenting the individual from the perspective of the church. Children are regarded as gifts and must be handled and honoured. Parents are expected to raise their children (gifts) as responsible people for God.^{28,29}

Mbiti notes three relationships between the African Traditional Religion and Christianity. "One is that which clearly overlaps with Christianity and which therefore does not conflict with it. The second is that which clearly falls outside of Christian teachings and practice. The third is the area of uncertainty which does not seriously injure the presence of Christianity or interfere with the profession of the Faith."³⁰ These findings build on the fact that the primal religion which is intertwined with the African cultures does not entirely oppose the Christian standard of living. There are some aspects that support the principles of Christian living and are compatible with the Gospel. The Church should therefore play its role as a major stakeholder in the societal development of the Ghanaian child.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study was a quantitative approach which ensured a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.³¹ The primary source of data was gathered through a questionnaire given to a purposefully sampled population of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Ashtown Congregation, Mbrom. The secondary sources involved the use of publications such as journals, books, articles, and other unpublished works. The constituency of the research was the whole of the Kumasi metropolise, but for effective work, the researcher adopted the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Ashtown Congregation, Mbrom. In this study, sixty (60) persons were sampled comprising, thirty (30) parents and thirty (30) youth.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Session of the Congregation. Participants were provided informed consent and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Special care was taken to respect cultural and religious sensitivities during data collection and analysis. The statistical analysis technique used was descriptive statistics to analyze the data gathered. This provided insights into

²⁶ Puplambu, "National Consultation on Children's Ministry, 100 years of Children's Service & Beyond."

²⁷ Puplambu, "National Consultation on Children's Ministry, 100 years of Children's Service & Beyond."

²⁸ Collins R. Gary, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed. (Illinois: Zondervan Publishing House, 2007).

²⁹ Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide 3rd Ed.* (USA: Tyndale, 2007), 214.

³⁰ John S Mbiti, "Christianity and Traditional Religions in Africa," *International Review of Mission* 59, no. 236 (1970): 430-40.

³¹ DJS Research, "Quantitative Research Design," accessed March 17, 2020, <https://www.djsresearch.co.uk/glossary/item/Quantitative-Research-Design#:~:text=Quantitative research design is aimed,the aim of qualitative research.>

patterns and correlations between parental roles, the perspective of children and societal outcomes. The data was analysed thematically.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Table 1- Parent relationship with children

What is your relationship with the child?	Number	Percentage %
Biological	27	91
Adoptive	1	3
Step-Parent	1	3
Care Giver	1	3
Other...	0	0

Source: *Writer's construction from the survey.*

Table 1 sought to gather data on the relational connection between parents and their wards. 91% indicated that they are biological parents. Adoptive parents, step-parents and caregiver parents were 3% each. This shows that the overwhelming majority of the parent respondents gave birth to the child and have raised them. Meanwhile, there are still yet other children who are not being raised by their biological parents. As the literature reviewed indicated, the word parent denotes a biological relation meanwhile, parenting is based on the action rather than the one doing the action. In practice, the church's participation in parenting the child is apt and appropriate since parenting is about nurturing but not the nature of the individual. The role of the Church bridges the possible gap between children who are raised by biological and those with other caregivers. The Church under consideration can easily align to this since their Reverend Ministers are referred to us as *Papa* (males) and *Mama* (females) meaning 'Father' and 'Mother' respectively.

Spouses of the respondents may have a different relationship with the child in question. Table 2 sought to know the spouses' relationship. 27 spouses representing 91% are biological parents. Meanwhile, 3% is an adoptive parent, step-parent, and caregiver. The relationship of both parents to the child offers a conducive environment for nurturing the child.³² The data shows that the majority live with their biological parents. Scholars are of the view that parenting requires emotion, attitude, and value attachment with the ward. When all these factors are present, effective parenting is assured.

Table 2 – Child Development

In general, how well would you say your child is doing in life?	Number	Percentage
A wonderful child doing great in life	24	80
A normal child with a normal amount of troubles	3	10
A child with potential but having some troubles	1	3
A child who is really struggling in life	0	0
Don't know	2	7
Other, specify ...	0	0

Source: *Writer's construction from the survey.*

Parents were asked to give their personal assessment of their children. How well their wards are doing is expressed in Table 3, 80% said their wards are doing wonderfully great in life. 10%, 3% and 7% indicated normal children, a child with potential but with troubles going through life and parents who cannot tell how well their children are doing in life respectively. This shows that the majority of the respondents take a key interest in their wards and their performance while some do not bother themselves with that. Parents who do not take a key interest in their wards' wellbeing are negligent of their duty. Such children grow up being irresponsible and have trouble adjusting to social norms as they always fight their way irrespective of the consequences.³³

³² Pupilampu, "National Consultation on Children's Ministry, 100 years of Children's Service & Beyond".

³³ Connor and Scott, *Parenting and Outcomes for Children*, 8.

Table 3 – Monitoring social activities

How often do you monitor your child's television and movie watching?	Number	Percentage %
Always	20	67
Sometimes	7	23
Rarely	1	3
Never	2	7
Don't know	0	0
Other, specify ...	0	0

Source: *Writer's construction from the survey.*

How parents monitor their wards and television – the programmes and contents of what they watch were solicited. Table 3 gives data on how often the parents monitor their wards on television. 20 respondents (67%) always monitor what their wards watch on television. 23% of the respondents monitor them sometimes and 3% rarely engage in monitoring. 7% of the respondents indicated that they do not monitor at all, in that case, the ward can watch anything on the blind side of the parents. Television programmes are flooded with adverts with calls to get rich quickly from pastors and mallams, profanity, nudity, violence, and many more. These are shaping the thoughts of children for the society. The recent spate of violence being meted out by the youth in society can certainly be attributed to the influence of these television programmes.

Table 4 – Monitoring Internet usage

How often do you monitor your child's internet use?	Number	Percentage %
Always	11	36
Sometimes	8	27
Rarely	2	7
Never	3	10
Does not have access to the Internet	6	20
Don't Know	0	0
Other, specify ...	0	0
Total	30	100

Source: *Writer's construction from the survey.*

The internet is another major influence on child upbringing today. How parents monitor their wards is represented in Table 4 above. 36% of the respondents indicated that they are able and are always monitoring them to ascertain what they watch. 27% and 7% showed that they sometimes and rarely monitor respectively. Meanwhile, 20% said their wards do not have internet access, and 10% of the respondents indicated that they never monitor what their wards do on the internet at all. The internet is flooded with content that contradicts the doctrines of the church. This is where children learn to practice illicit sexually related acts – bestialism, LGBTQI+. They engage in insulting national leaders, watching pornography etc.

Table 5- Child Development

1. Do you spend quality time with your child?	Number	Percentage %
Always	23	77
Sometimes	5	16
Rarely	2	7
Never	0	0
Total	30	100

Source: *Writer's construction from the survey.*

The next question was asked to find out the quality of time parents spend with their children. No one indicated that they never spend quality time with their wards and that is good to know. 77%, 16% and 7% indicated that they always, sometimes and rarely spent quality time with their wards respectively. Children develop confidence and courage at school and other places they may find themselves through the encouragement and guidance they attain from their parents.

Table 6 – Child Monitoring

Do you know where your child is and who he/she is with at all times?	Number	Percentage
a. Always	25	83
b. Sometimes	5	17
c. Rarely	0	0
d. Never	0	0
Total	30	100

Source: Writer's construction from the survey.

Table 6 solicited the general monitoring of the children of the respondents. The data gives a positive outlook of 83% of the respondents always know of the whereabouts of their ward at all times. 5 persons representing 17% of the parent respondents indicated that they sometimes do know where their wards are. Encouragingly, none of the respondents rarely or never know their ward's movements. Parent's full knowledge about their whereabouts would help them to keep their eyes on who they are with and what possibly may be happening. Meanwhile, as has already been observed, knowing where they are but with no knowledge of what they are doing is a failure in parenting.

Table 7 – Child discipline

How often do you enforce your opinion even when your child disagrees?	Number	Percentage %
Always	9	30
Sometimes	19	63
Rarely	0	0
Never	2	7
Total	30	100

Source: Writer's construction from the survey.

Getting data on the style of parenting that is generally practiced by the respondents, 30% indicated that they always enforce their opinions on their wards. 63% percent indicated sometimes they impose their opinions. Two (2) of the respondents (7%) indicated that they never impose their opinions at all on their wards. From this data, it can be seen that 30% use the parents are authoritarian parents who go with the "because I say so" style of parenting. This form of parenting is known to make the child bossy and delineates them from being compassionate and loving to others. Some other parents showed their practical engagement with the permissive type. They hesitate to dissatisfy their wards or make them uncomfortable. They, therefore, train self-centered children whose actions adversely affect society. This notwithstanding, the data indicated that 63% of the parents actively engaged their wards which is synonymous with Baumrind's authoritative type of parenting. This style of parenting is confrontational, characterized by measured reasoning, interactions and addressing of concerns. This makes such children socially adoptive.

Table 9- Discipline of Children

Do you use the cane on your child when she/he does wrong?	Number	Percentage %
Always	4	13
Sometimes	16	53
Rarely	3	10

Never	7	24
Total	30	100

Source: *Writer's construction from the survey.*

Table 9 illustrates data on the use of canes as a form of correction for their children. 13% of the respondents always use canes when their wards go wrong. 53% being the highest said they sometimes do use the cane on their wards. 10% and 24% of the respondents indicated that they rarely and never use the cane respectively. This gives a higher percentage of parents who actually use the cane as a form of corrective measure on their children. The data above shows that a total of 78% still find the need to use canes to beat their wards when they go wrong. They fall under the authoritarian type of parenting.

Table 10. Involvement of children in the decision-making process of the home

How often do you involve your child in the decision-making process at home?	Number	Percentage %
Always	8	27
Sometimes	18	60
Rarely	0	0
Never	4	13
Total	30	100

Source: *Writer's construction from the survey.*

In response to this question, 8 respondents representing 27% said they always involve their children. 60% of them said they sometimes do that. 4 persons representing 13% of the respondents totally neglect their children when decisions are being taken at home. Neglect of children's opinions put creates complexes in them, especially, inferiority complex. They feel inadequate and shelves their skills and talents from society.

Table 11 – Parenting Styles

Where do you draw your style of raising your child?	Number	Percentage %
Own experience	21	70
Neighbours	0	0
Church	7	30
Other, specify ...	0	0
Total	30	100

Source: *Writer's construction from the survey.*

Table 11 explains the data on the source of the respondents' style of raising their wards. Out of their own upbringing experiences, 21 of the respondents representing 70% go with it. 7 of them representing 30% indicated that they draw their style from the church. In the case of drawing inspiration from neighbours, none of the respondents do. Scholars have come up with some other factors that influence the development of the individual which include "social context and temperament of the child." From the data, the remaining 30% rely on the church for ways of interacting and dealing with parenting. The church is therefore a knowledge hub to teach and inspire parents on different ways of dealing with different children.

From Table 12, 13 of the respondents representing 43% say the church always guides them. 47% and 3% indicated that they sometimes and rarely receive parenting guidelines from their church respectively. Meanwhile, 7% of the respondents say they never receive anything on parenting from the church. More specifically, the data above indicates that the majority believe the church is doing well in providing guidelines for parents on how to raise the young ones. The contribution of the church to parenting should be emphasized.

Table 12 - The adequacy and experience of Parents in training their children

Do you feel adequate and experienced in raising your child?	Number	Percentage %
Always	5	17
Sometimes	10	33
Rarely	4	13
Never	11	37
Total	30	100

Source: Writer's construction from the survey.

The low self-confidence or inferiority complex of the parent in raising their wards goes a long way to affect their children. Table 12 gathered data on the adequacy and experience of the parent respondents in their duty to raise their wards. 17% said they are always in a state of inadequacy and inexperienced for the task. 33% said it is a feeling they have sometimes while 13% said they rarely feel so. 37% of the parent respondents said they never feel inadequate and inexperienced in any way when it comes to nurturing their wards.

Since temperamental behaviours directly or indirectly influence the parents' relationship and style of raising their children, confidence and adequacy determine how resourced parents are to meet their tasks. The data shows that 83% of parents are not adequately resourced to confidently raise their young ones. Most often such parents become too aggressive on little errors their wards commit. Their understanding of the stages of development of their wards and how to deal with them is woefully inadequate. This can be checked through engagement with the Church and other helpful sources.

Table 13 provides the percentage of parents who have had and have not received tutorials on how to parent their wards. 60% of the respondents said yes they have while the remaining 40% go with no tutorials. This confirms that the society which includes the church offers some form of training on how to parent the young ones. It becomes a voluntary move to seek knowledge on how to raise the young ones. All stakeholders must be involved with this aspect because the future of the children depends on how they are trained today.

Table 14 - Sources of parents' tutorials

If yes, where was that?	Number	Percentage
Home	2	11
Church	14	77
School	1	6
Media	1	6
Total	18	100

Source: Writer's construction from the survey.

With 60% of the parent respondents who have had some tutorials on parenting, they indicated where such lessons might have come from. 11%, 6% and 6% indicated their sources as home, school and media respectively. Meanwhile, 77% of those who have received some tutorials said they received them from the church. This data shows that many Christian parents rely on the church for tutorials, guidance and direction to parent their wards. The church which teaches about Christ's love is strategically positioned to restrain crime and violent acts in the society by raising parents and guardians who stimulate empathy and emotional control.

The question of parents' knowledge of a parenting style they may be practicing was sought. 4 persons representing 13% indicated that yes, they have a planned style of parenting their children. Meanwhile, the remaining 26 representing 87% said no to any style of parenting. From the datasheets, three (3) of those who stated yes attributed their parenting styles to 'education' while the other one (1) talked about imbibing 'Christian principles'.

A greater number of Ghanaians hardly follow a strict type of parenting as elaborated by scholarship. It is mostly dependent on the parent's disposition on how to treat the child or ward to

bring them up to an expected end. Only a few actually consider the effect of their actions and inactions on the upbringing of their wards.

DISCUSSIONS

The act of parenting goes beyond just bringing forth the young ones. Hamner and Turner indicated differences between parenting and parenthood saying the latter has to do with being a father or a mother who has just brought forth.³⁴ Majority of Ghanaian children are found to be with their biological parents with some others being handled by caregivers or other relations. This underscore the needed relational rapport for the positive influence of parents on their wards to integrate into the society. On the role of the Church, equipping the parents with the needed knowledge and skill will bring forth the expected outcome. The onus now falls on the church to provide the needed education to curb what the home has become as described by Puplampu.³⁵

The four identified styles of parenting in the literature review produce different behavioural traits to the society. As stated, the argument favours the authoritative parenting style. The findings indicate that majority of the parents do spend some time with their wards, a good number monitor their use of the internet and know at every point in time where their children may be. Evident from the data analysis shows that, the style of parenting practiced is highly authoritative and permissive blended with some form of authoritarian. Parents who do not take a key interest in their wards' wellbeing are negligent of their duty. Such children grow up being irresponsible and have trouble adjusting to social norms as they always fight their way irrespective of the consequences.³⁶ Majority of the parents indicated that their style of parenting is mainly from their own experience. This correlates with the high number of parents who engage in corporal punishment as a corrective measure. This is the point the Church comes in to enlighten parents to equip them with the needed knowledge on responsible parenting skills. With the instituted generational groups of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, parenting topics could be discussed at the Young Adults, Men's, and Women's Fellowships as well as Young Peoples' Guild level to equip them to honour their duty to God's glory.

Considering the kind of devastating effect on the society, community, nation and the world at large, when proper parenting is thrown into the bin, national policies must factor this subject in consideration. From the data presentation, many parents do not have full confidence in how they are raising their children. Again, a good number only rely on how they were raised as their guide. They mostly try to improve or lower their experience, which either over pampers or subject wards to harsh treatments. As noted from the literature review, the WHO admits that parenting in the early life of the individual is essential to solving almost all the social issues facing society today.³⁷ The quadruple pillars expounded by Puplampu must be resourced holistically to aid the achievement of the five SDGs (goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 16). It must be noted that society is not getting better because of the shift in responsibility of parenting the child.

In a population where over 71% profess to be Christians, Mbiti's observation on the relationship between the African Traditional Religion and Christianity can aid us in raising the young ones. Since the Church and tradition correlate in so many facets of life, with a good number aligned to the former, their role and influence should be the springboard. The Christian fraternity must collaborate to educate and empower the general public on parenting strategies to bring out the best in these perfect gifts of God to humanity. If indeed, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows"³⁸, as the Bible tells us, then, proper parenting of the young is the start point to bring out the perfection in every individual for the societal good.

³⁴ Hamner and Turner, *Parenting in Contemporary Society*.

³⁵ Puplampu, "National Consultation on Children's Ministry, 100 years of Children's Service & Beyond."

³⁶ Connor and Scott, *Parenting and Outcomes for Children*, 8.

³⁷ WHO, "Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development", 25.

³⁸ James 1:17, New International Version.

RECOMMENDATIONS

First of all, parents in Ghana must be offered some form of training and education on understanding their young ones and ways to parent them. Effective ways of raising children with different make-up and abilities must be laid on the table for all parents to curb the prolific social menace. The practice of one style fits all without considering the different abilities and capabilities is a disservice to the society. The study recommends parenting education for all parents and prospective parents.

Secondly, the church as a well-organized institution should consciously and intentionally offer well-structured parenting training sessions for Christian parents. Just as there is a well-structured session to prepare young couples for marriage, it is time the church considers the same for parents and prospective parents. The society that everyone envisages can be possible through such an intervention.

Thirdly, the church should develop some study materials for parents. A simple guide to parenting in Christ. Just like the Bible study materials they provide for services. There should be allocated times for parenting education in churches to equip parents with the requisite knowledge and skills to integrate the young ones into the society.

Again, the study recommends that the government should establish parenting educational institutions under one of its ministries, probably, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, to equip parents especially parents with convicted children. Second-cycle and tertiary educational institutions in Ghana should consider a prerequisite academic programme on parenting. Moreover, looking at the devastating results of bad parenting on society so far, as a matter of urgency, a national parenting policy must be developed to supervise and certify individuals to parent their wards.

In addition, the study recommends that the church must take the responsibility to deliberately stimulate the school – both teaching and non-teaching staff, in its ministry to children. This means the church which historically initiated or brought the school system into our country, must get involved to redirect our children onto the right path to uphold the very purpose of establishing Christian schools. In effect, the church must play the role of connecting all stakeholders – home, school, society and church, to the holistic development of the individuals within the country.

Finally, the study recommends that the church's ministry to children for social, emotional, economic, physical, and of course spiritual growth must begin with an intentional ministry to parents, especially the young parents.

CONCLUSION

Indeed, the defect of the superstructure must surely be dealt with from the foundation. The exploration of parenting roles through a church-centric analysis has unveiled the profound impact these roles have on shaping societal dynamics. The values, beliefs, ethics, morals and practices instilled in children by parents within the Christian context not only contribute to individual development but also play a significant role in the broader fabric of society. The government is called upon to direct its focus on solving and developing the nation to the very nucleus where and how the individual expected to execute this task is coming. As churches continue to evolve to help solve contemporary challenges, helping parents and prospective parents understand the intricate relationship between parenting roles and societal influences becomes increasingly crucial for fostering a harmonious and thriving community.

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ABOUT AUTHOR

Rev. Ebenezer Ahenkan Owusu is a Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and is currently their Public Relations Officer. He holds a Diploma in Basic Education (UCC), BA. Education-Science (Winneba), an M.Div. (Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon), M.Phil in Religious Studies, (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi). His research interest are: Church and Society, Public Theology, Ethics, Christian Education, Ethics, Pastoral Theology, Religion, Culture and Health.