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Exploring the Correlation between Parenting Styles and Social Adjustment among Adolescents in Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship between parenting styles and social adjustment among adolescents in Rivers State, Nigeria. It was guided by four research questions and four hypotheses. The research design for the study was the correlational survey design. The area of study of this research was Rivers State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all adolescents in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The sample for the study was 400 adolescents, arrived at using the Yamane (1967) formula for selecting sample size. Multi-stage sampling method was used for sampling the respondents. The Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ) and Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) were administered to gather data. The instruments were validated for face and content validity. Cronbach's Alpha Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instruments which were trial tested on 30 respondents who were not part of the study sample. The Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ) yielded a reliability coefficient of .696 while, the Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) yielded .726. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the analysis of data. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to answer the research questions. While the hypotheses were tested at .05 significant level using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The findings of the study revealed that there were significant positive relationships between authoritative, authoritarian, and neglectful parenting styles and social adjustment. However, no significant relationship existed between permissive parenting style and social adjustment. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that; parents should strive to adopt an authoritative approach by combining clear expectations with emotional support and open communication. This balance fosters a nurturing environment conducive to adolescents' social and emotional development

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are naturally social beings and constantly interact with others to meet their various needs. This interaction is predicated by various factors including the home environment and significant others, like parents. And for adolescents who are neither adults nor children, the place of parents in their lives is indispensable. Parents determine the developmental course of their offspring through various forms of interaction like parenting styles. Parenting styles are said to be the way through which parents raise their children.

Parenting styles may be defined as any behaviour that parents exhibit in relation to proper upbringing and how they perceive their own behaviour toward their children (Naima, 2012). Tam, Chong, Kadirvelu and Khoo (2012) posit that parenting style is a pattern of attitudes that parents exhibit toward the upbringing of their children. According to Gawas (2021) the term parenting style refers to the different methods that parents take into consideration to develop the social behaviours of their children. Basically, parenting style is conceived to be actions performed by parents to influence the behaviour of their children, whether covert (that is, in patterns of attitude), or overt (as seen in behaviours or methods adopted).

The concept of parenting styles was introduced by psychologist Diana Baumrind in the 1960s. She conducted extensive research on parenting and identified three main parenting styles based on two dimensions: parental demandingness (control) and parental responsiveness (warmth). Parental demandingness refers to the extent to which parents set rules, establish expectations, and exercise control over their children's behaviour. Parents high in demandingness are more likely to establish clear guidelines, enforce rules, and expect obedience. They often have high standards for their children's behaviour and may use discipline to maintain control. The opposite dimension of parental responsiveness refers to the emotional support, warmth, and sensitivity that parents provide to their children. Parents high in responsiveness are attuned to their children's needs, provide emotional support, and are nurturing and affectionate. They are often more open to communication, listen to their children, and provide encouragement and praise.

Baumrid (1966) introduced three types of parenting styles; permissive, authoritarian and authoritative and later on in the 1980s neglectful/non indulgent was introduced by Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin. Permissive parents are low in demandingness and high in responsiveness. They are very lenient and indulgent, often avoiding confrontation and allowing their children a great deal of freedom. They may be more like a friend than an authority figure. "The permissive parent attempts to behave in a nonpunitive, acceptant and affirmative manner toward the child's impulses, desires, and actions. She consults with him about policy decisions and gives explanations for family rules" (Baumrid, 1966, p. 889). Permissive parents are warm and indulgent, but tend to have few rules or boundaries. They may be more lenient and less likely to enforce discipline.

The second parenting style is the authoritative parenting style. Authoritative parents are both demanding and responsive. They set clear rules and expectations for their children, but they are also warm, supportive, and responsive to their child's needs. They encourage independence and provide explanations for their rules. Authoritative parents are warm, responsive, and nurturing, but also set clear and consistent expectations. They encourage independence and provide guidance. Students raised by authoritative parents tend to be more self-reliant and confident in their abilities. They are likely to have a clear sense of direction and goals in their careers. They are more likely to seek out opportunities for personal and professional growth and take initiative in their career development.

Authoritarian parenting style is the third type. Authoritarian parents are highly demanding but not very responsive. They set strict rules and expect obedience without much room for discussion. They may not be as warm or nurturing as authoritative parents. Authoritarian parents are strict, demanding, and often have high expectations. They may not be as nurturing or responsive as authoritative parents. Students raised in authoritarian households may be more driven to meet external expectations and may excel in structured and competitive environments. However, they may struggle with independent decision-making and may be more likely to conform to societal norms and expectations in their career choices.

Although not included in the model of parenting styles by Baumrid (1966), the neglectful parenting style is the fourth type. Neglectful parents are low in both demandingness and responsiveness. They provide little guidance, attention, or support to their children. They may be preoccupied with their own concerns and may not meet their child's basic needs. According to Williams and Sánchez (2012), uninvolved parents are either self-involved or too busy to fulfil basic needs such as food and shelter. They expect their children to be responsible for their own fate. Parents who use this parenting style show their children very little affection, attention, mental and moral support, protection, and monitoring. Parents know almost nothing about their offspring.

Gawas (2021) avers that parenting styles are aimed at influence the social behaviour of children. This implies that, parenting styles determine the manner and pattern of behaviour of adolescents in social settings. The process by which adolescents cope with and adapt to the demands of their social environments can be said to be social adjustment. It encompasses how well people manage interpersonal relationships, navigate societal norms, and cope with changes in their social contexts. It includes an individual's ability to exhibit good communication, social and interpersonal skills. According to Nyamayaro and Saravanan (2013) social adjustment is how well a student copes with the interpersonal and societal demands that are inherent in the university environment. Social adjustment is a critical factor in determining students' success and well-being in educational settings. It involves students adapting to their social environments, managing relationships, and fulfilling the demands of their academic roles.

Recent research has highlighted the significant impact of parenting styles on the social adjustment of adolescents. Different parenting approaches, such as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful styles, have distinct influences on how adolescents interact with their social environment and develop their social skills. For instance, Gimenez-Serrano, García and García (2021) in a study found that adolescents from authoritative (high warmth, moderate control) and indulgent (high warmth, low control) families generally exhibited better social adjustment compared to those from authoritarian or neglectful families. These styles were also found to be linked to higher self-esteem, better emotional self-concept, and lower hostility and nervousness. More so, adolescents from indulgent and authoritative families tend to have better social and emotional adjustment, higher academic competence, and greater family involvement compared to those from authoritarian and neglectful families (Martínez-Ferrer et al., 2019). Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts and Dornbusch (1994) posit that authoritarian or neglectful parenting styles are associated with poorer social and academic outcomes. Adolescents from neglectful families tend to exhibit higher levels of behavioural problems and lower psychosocial development over time. Furthermore, authoritarian parenting is also linked to higher involvement in cyber-aggression among adolescents. Conversely, indulgent and authoritative parenting styles are related to lower engagement in such behaviours (Martínez-Ferrer et al., 2019).

Generally, parenting styles can have varying influence on the adjustment and overall development of adolescents. And in the current study, the researcher aims to explore the relationship between parenting styles and the social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Statement Of The Problem

Adolescence is a critical developmental period marked by significant physical, emotional, and social changes. During this phase, the relationship between parenting and adolescents' social adjustment is crucial and a thing of concern to all stakeholders. Parenting styles and practices have profound impacts on an adolescent's ability to navigate social environments. Effective social adjustment, which includes forming healthy relationships, managing social challenges, and exhibiting adaptive social behaviours, is vital for adolescents' overall well-being and future success. More so, the researcher has observed, and also, previous researchers have revealed that parenting styles have predicative influences on the social adjustment and overall well-being of adolescents. It is on the premise that the current study aims to explore the relationship between distinct parenting styles and the social adjustment of adolescents across senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered to guide the study;

- 1. What is the relationship between authoritative parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State?
- 2. What is the relationship between authoritarian parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State?
- 3. What is the relationship between permissive parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State?
- 4. What is the relationship between neglectful parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance;

- 1. There is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State.
- 2. There is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State.
- 3. There is no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State.
- 4. There is no significant relationship between neglectful parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The research design for the study was the correlational survey design. The area of study of this research was Rivers State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all adolescents in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The sample for the study was 400 adolescents, arrived at using the Yamane (1967) formula for selecting sample size. Multi-stage sampling method was used for sampling the respondents. The Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ) and Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) were administered to gather data. The instruments were validated for face and content validity. Cronbach's Alpha Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instruments which were trial tested on 30 respondents who were not part of the study sample. The Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ) yielded a reliability coefficient of .696 while, the Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) yielded .726. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the analysis of data. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to answer the research questions. While the hypotheses were tested at .05 significant level using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between authoritative parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State?

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation between Authoritative Parenting Style and Social Adjustment among Adolescents in Rivers State.

Variables	N	R	P-value	Remark
Authoritative Parenting Style	400	.204	.000	Weak positive relationship.
Social Adjustment				

Table 1 reveals that the Pearson's correlation coefficient, r = .204 and p-value = .000. This result indicates a weak positive linear relationship between authoritative parenting style and social adjustment among adolescents. This means that as authoritative parenting style increases, psychosocial adjustment tends to increase slightly, but the relationship is not strong.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between authoritarian parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State?

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation between Authoritarian Parenting Style and Social Adjustment among Adolescents in Rivers State.

Variables	N	R	P-value	Remark
Authoritarian Parenting Style	400	.214	.000	Weak positive relationship.
Social Adjustment				

Table 2 reveals that the Pearson's correlation coefficient, r = .214 and p-value = .000. This result indicates a weak positive linear relationship between authoritarian parenting style and social adjustment among adolescents. This means that as authoritarian parenting style increases, psychosocial adjustment tends to increase slightly, but the relationship is not strong.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between permissive parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State?

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation between Permissive Parenting Style and Social Adjustment among Adolescents in Rivers State

Variables	N	R	P-value	Remark
Permissive Parenting Style	400	059	.241	Very weak negative relationship.
Social Adjustment				

Table 3 reveals that the Pearson's correlation coefficient, r = -.059 and p-value = .241. This result indicates a very weak negative linear relationship between permissive parenting style and social adjustment among adolescents. This means that as permissive parenting style slightly increases, social adjustment tends to decrease slightly, but the relationship is extremely weak and almost negligible.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between neglectful parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State?

Table 4: Pearson's Correlation between Neglectful Parenting Style and Social Adjustment among Adolescents in Rivers State

Variables	N	R	P-value	Remark
Neglectful Parenting Style	400	.133	.008	Very weak positive relationship.
Social Adjustment				

Table 4 reveals that the Pearson's correlation coefficient, r = .133 and p-value = .008. This result indicates a weak positive linear relationship between neglectful parenting style and social adjustment among adolescents. This means that as neglectful parenting style increases, social adjustment tends to decrease slightly, but the relationship is weak.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 5: Pearson's Correlation between Authoritative Parenting Style and Social Adjustment among Adolescents in Rivers State.

Variables	N	R	P-value	Remark	
Authoritative Parenting Style	400	.204	.000	Significant.	
Social Adjustment				_	

Table 5 reveals that the Pearson's correlation coefficient, r = .204 and p-value = .000. This result indicates a weak positive linear relationship between authoritative parenting style and social adjustment among adolescents. The p-value of .000 implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and social adjustment. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 6: Pearson's Correlation between Authoritarian Parenting Style and Social Adjustment among Adolescents in Rivers State.

Variables	N	R	P-value	Remark	
Authoritarian Parenting Style	400	.214	.000	Significant.	
Social Adjustment				-	

Table 6 reveals that the Pearson's correlation coefficient, r = .214 and p-value = .000. This result indicates a weak positive linear relationship between authoritarian parenting style and social adjustment among adolescents. The p-value of .000 implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and social adjustment. There is no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State. Therefore, the null

hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 7: Pearson's Correlation between Permissive Parenting Style and Social Adjustment among Adolescents in Rivers State.

Variables	N	R	P-value	Remark	
Permissive Parenting Style	400	059	.241	Not significant	
Social Adjustment				-	

Table 7 reveals that the Pearson's correlation coefficient, r = -.059 and p-value = .241. This result indicates a very weak negative linear relationship between permissive parenting style and social adjustment among adolescents. The p-value of .241 is much higher than the significance threshold of 0.05. This suggests that the correlation is not statistically significant. In other words, there is a relatively high probability (24.1%) that the observed correlation could have occurred by chance, assuming there is no real association between the variables in the population. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State is accepted.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between neglectful parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 8: Pearson's Correlation between Neglectful Parenting Style and Social Adjustment among Adolescents in Rivers State.

Variables	N	r	P-value	Remark	
Neglectful Parenting Style	400	.133	.008	Significant	
Social Adjustment					

Table 8 reveals that the Pearson's correlation coefficient, r = .133 and p-value = .008. This result indicates a weak positive linear relationship between neglectful parenting style and social adjustment among adolescents. The p-value of .008 is less than .05. This suggests that the correlation coefficient is statistically significant, meaning it is unlikely to have occurred by chance alone. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between neglectful parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section covers the discussion of the major findings of the study.

The first finding of the study revealed that there is significant positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State. This finding implies that the adoption of the authoritative parenting style by parents resulted in the increase of social competencies in their offspring. Research consistently demonstrates that adolescents from authoritative families tend to have better social and emotional adjustment compared to those from other parenting styles. For instance, Giménez-Serrano et al. (2021) found that adolescents raised by authoritative parents showed superior social adjustment and internalization of social values. This study also noted that authoritative parenting fosters a strong emotional self-concept and reduces negative behaviours such as nervousness and hostility. Additionally, Martínez-Ferrer et al. (2019) observed that adolescents from authoritative families exhibited higher levels of academic competence and family involvement. These adolescents were less likely to engage in cyber-aggression, indicating better overall social adjustment. Similarly, Chen et al. (1997) highlighted that Chinese children with authoritative parents had higher social competence and academic performance, underscoring the universal benefits of this parenting style.

The second finding of the study revealed that there is significant positive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State. Authoritarian parenting style is said to be low on warmness, making the parents seem like disciplinarians. However, in certain cultural settings, authoritarian parenting may promote better social adjustment among adolescents by

instilling discipline, respect for authority, and a strong adherence to social norms. This style can provide clear expectations and consistent enforcement, which might help adolescents navigate social structures effectively. For instance, a study by Aymerich et al. (2018) found that in Spanish adolescents, higher levels of hostility were observed in those from authoritarian and authoritative families compared to those from indulgent families. This suggests that authoritarian parenting might enforce social norms effectively, albeit through stricter means (Aymerich et al., 2018). In a Chinese context, Chen et al. (1997) observed that authoritarian parenting was positively associated with academic and social adjustment. Chinese children from authoritarian households displayed better social competence and school performance, likely due to the emphasis on discipline and respect for authority embedded in this parenting style. This is consistent with findings from Smith and Moore (2013), who reported that in Jamaican adolescents, authoritarian parenting was linked to diminished psychological and behavioural adjustment. However, within culturally congruent contexts, the strict and structured environment provided by authoritarian parenting might offer a sense of security and clear expectations for adolescents.

The third finding of the study revealed that there is no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State. This finding implies that the increase or decrease permissiveness of parents had no bearing with the psychosocial adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State. Recent research has explored the complex dynamics between permissive parenting and adolescent social adjustment, often revealing nuanced outcomes. For example, a study by Giménez-Serrano et al. (2021) examined various parenting styles and their effects on social and personal adjustment across different life stages. They found that while indulgent (permissive) parenting was associated with positive outcomes in emotional self-concept and lower levels of nervousness and hostility compared to authoritarian styles, it did not significantly impact social adjustment measures such as internalization of social values or behaviours. Similarly, Perez-Gramaje et al. (2020) found that indulgent and authoritative parenting styles both led to better outcomes than authoritarian or neglectful styles, particularly for aggressive adolescents. However, they noted that indulgent parenting did not show a distinct advantage in promoting social competence or reducing maladjustment, suggesting that its effects might be neutral in terms of social adjustment. Further, Musitu-Ferrer et al. (2019) analyzed the relationships between different parenting styles and adolescents' empathy and connectedness with nature. They observed that while adolescents from permissive (indulgent) families showed high levels of empathy and connection with their environment, these traits did not necessarily translate into broader social adjustment metrics like school performance or peer relationships.

The fourth finding of the study revealed that there is significant positive relationship between neglectful parenting style and social adjustment of adolescents in Rivers State. Neglectful parenting often involves minimal interaction, supervision, or emotional support. Traditionally, this style is linked to negative outcomes like poor academic performance and behavioural issues. However, under specific conditions, neglectful parenting may allow adolescents to develop independence and self-reliance, potentially fostering better social adjustment in some cases. Giménez-Serrano et al. (2021) investigated various parenting styles and their impact on social adjustment beyond adolescence. They found that although indulgent and authoritative styles generally lead to better social outcomes, neglectful parenting was not always associated with the worst outcomes. In fact, in some contexts, it did not significantly harm social adjustment, suggesting that adolescents might develop coping mechanisms or independence that contribute positively to their social skills. Also, Perez-Gramaje et al. (2020) examined the relationship between parenting styles and the adjustment of aggressive and non-aggressive adolescents. They noted that neglectful parenting led to poorer outcomes compared to indulgent and authoritative styles. However, the study highlighted that in certain scenarios, adolescents under neglectful parenting might develop a degree of autonomy and resilience that could contribute to aspects of social adjustment, particularly if they receive support from other sources like peers or extended family.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study underscores the significant impact of different parenting styles on the psychosocial adjustment of adolescents. It reveals that authoritative, authoritarian, and neglectful parenting styles each have notable effects on how adolescents adapt socially and emotionally. Conversely, permissive parenting does not show a significant relationship with psychosocial adjustment in adolescents.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents should strive to adopt an authoritative approach by combining clear expectations with

- 1. Parents should strive to adopt an authoritative approach by combining clear expectations with emotional support and open communication. This balance fosters a nurturing environment conducive to adolescents' social and emotional development.
- 2. Parents practicing authoritarian styles should consider integrating more warmth and support into their interactions. Encouraging open dialogue and showing empathy can help mitigate the rigid aspects of this style and promote better psychosocial outcomes.
- 3. Interventions should focus on increasing parental engagement and support. Providing resources and guidance to neglectful parents can help them become more involved and responsive, thereby improving their children's social and emotional development.
- 4. Parents with a permissive style should introduce more consistent boundaries and expectations while maintaining their supportive nature. Establishing clear guidelines and consequences can provide the necessary structure to help adolescents thrive socially and emotionally.

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