



Parenting Style, Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Health of Nigerian Children

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author AEO designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author ABC managed the analyses of the study. Author OOA managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aim: Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been defined as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and connect emotions to oneself and in relation to others. Research findings show that parenting style could potentially contribute to or hinder the lifetime success of a child well into adulthood including leadership roles. The influence of parenting style on the emotional intelligence and psychological health of the Nigerian child has not been given adequate research attention.

Study Design: Exploratory /Descriptive survey design.

Methodology: Purposive sampling technique was used to select 332 (*mean age* = 14) in-school adolescents who responded to Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), Parenting Style Dimension Questionnaire (PSDQ) and General Health Questionnaire -12 (GHQ-12). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis.

Results: Observed patterns for low, high and very high levels respectively are: authoritative parenting style (45.5%, 41.6%, and 12.9%), authoritarian parenting style (53%, 30.7% and 16.3%); permissive parenting style (64.2%, 20.7% and 15.1%). Authoritative as well as authoritarian

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parenting styles were observed to significantly predict Emotional Intelligence. Permissive parenting style failed to significantly predict Emotional Intelligence. Authoritative parenting style failed to significantly predict psychological distress, while authoritarian as well as permissive parenting styles were significant predictors of psychological distress.

Conclusion: Authors conclude that a child's emotional intelligence and psychological health status are products of parenting style.

Keywords: Parenting style; emotional intelligence; psychological health; children.

1. INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and the emotions of others. It is generally said to include three skills: emotional awareness; the ability to harness emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problem solving; and the ability to manage emotions, which includes regulating your own emotions. Parents' emotional expressiveness and the emotional climate that they create through their parenting styles provide guidelines to children regarding the use of emotion in the regular everyday social interactions. The family play pivotal and specific role of parenting in the development of a child's emotional intelligent. Noticeably, parents want to help their children to move through different developmental stages successfully. Research has shown that the influence of parents on children does not decline as they grow into adolescents [1,2].

Parenting style is a psychological construct that is defined as standard strategies used by parents to bring up their children. Baumrind's parenting styles focus on two main elements of parenting: it reflects that parents are responsive and demanding. The responsiveness of parents is also referred to as parental supportiveness and warmth. This is, "the extent in which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulatory behaviour and self-assertiveness by being attentive, supportive, and compliant to children's needs and demands" [2]. When parents are demanding, this refers to behavioural control, "the claims, parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys" [2]. Baumrind [3,4,2] in a series of studies identified three parenting styles namely authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. These three styles vary according to the degree of warmth and control exercised and is useful in understanding its contribution to emotional wellbeing of children. Each parenting style

creates a different emotional climate thereby contributing to the development of emotional intelligence.

During the socialization process parents provide the first context for recognition and communication of affective messages. These affective messages are communicated to children with the expectation that they will be able to interpret and respond to them. The four major parenting styles are authoritarian, authoritative, indulgent or permissive and uninvolved. Authoritarian parents are highly controlling in the use of authority and rely on punishment but are not responsive. They value obedience and do not tolerate give and take relationships with their children. Authoritarian parents do not expect their children to express disagreement with their decisions and rules and do expect them to obey without explanation [5].

Authoritative parents are warm and communicate well with their children; they are both demanding and responsive. Parents of this style are able to stay in authority and expect maturity from their children. They respect their children's opinions and independence while also maintaining their own positions. This parenting style permits children enough freedom of expression so that they can develop a sense of independence but know the boundaries of rules and obey them [6, 4]. Both authoritative and authoritarian parents have high expectations of their children but use control in different ways [5]. Indulgent parents are warm and accepting but their main concern is not to interfere with their children's creativity and independence; these parents are more responsive than demanding. They demand little in terms of obedience and respect for authority. They are nontraditional and lenient, they do not require mature behaviour, they allow considerable self-regulation and avoid confrontations [5].

Uninvolved parents are low in demand and responsive behaviour. In extreme cases, this parenting style might include both rejecting-

neglecting and neglecting parents. This parenting style is viewed as the worst of the four. Parents in this style do not establish rules nor do they even care in which direction the child's behaviour is headed [5]. In order to fully understand the difference in parenting styles, an example from Maccoby and Martin [5] indicates how each parent demonstrates how they would react to a situation. Baumrind's parenting styles have been found to predict child wellbeing in terms of social competence, academic performance, psychosocial development and problem behaviour. Research using parent interviews, teacher interviews, and child report consistently finds these characteristics associated with each parenting style [2].

Emotional intelligence refers to the capacity for recognizing one's own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships [7,8]. Unlike intelligence quotient (IQ) which changes little after adolescent years, emotional intelligence (EI) is largely learnt, is not fixed genetically or develops in early childhood but continues to develop and is predominantly environmentally determined [9]. Emotionally intelligent person is skilled in four areas such as identifying, using, understanding and regulating emotions [10]. Those with higher emotional intelligence (EI) perform better academically as they have developed empathy and social skills [9,10]. Though there is no direct link between a student's retention capacity and Emotional Intelligence (EI), students equipped with a proper level of Emotional intelligence (EI) are more likely to succeed academically than those who have relatively high Intelligence quotient (IQ) and yet lack emotional intelligence. Be it an ability or personality trait, emotional intelligence follows a predictable pattern of development from infancy to adolescence.

During adolescence there is an increased awareness of complex emotional cycles. Adolescents use complex strategies to independently regulate emotions and slowly become aware of the need for mutual and reciprocal emotional self-disclosure in making and maintaining relationships. In the present study, identifying, using, understanding and regulating emotions [10] or abilities to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from hindering the ability to think to empathize and to hope [9] is conceptualized as interpersonal

awareness, intrapersonal awareness, interpersonal management, and intrapersonal. Several studies have shown the positive outcome of parenting style on emotional intelligence but the focus has been on only one parent that is the mother [11,12,13]. As children grow into adolescence they are more vulnerable to emotional problems and how they deal with their emotions and the emotions of others could be dependent on the parenting style engaged in by their parents. Many researchers have noted that it is not the specific discipline practices that are important in predicting child welfare but rather the overall pattern of parenting [14].

The purpose of this study is to determine the patterns of parenting style and emotional intelligence and prevalence of psychological distress, find out the extent to which parenting style predicts emotional intelligences, ascertain the degrees to which each of the domains of parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) predict emotional intelligence and severity of psychological distress among in school children in Osun state southwestern Nigeria.

1.1 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. Authoritative parenting style will independently and significantly predict Emotional Intelligence among the in-school children in Osun state Nigeria.
2. Authoritarian parenting style will independently and significantly predict Emotional Intelligence among the participants.
3. Permissive parenting style will independently and significantly predict Emotional Intelligence among the respondents.
4. Authoritative parenting style will independently and significantly predict Psychological Distress among the participants.
5. Authoritarian parenting style will independently and significantly predict Psychological distress among the respondents.
6. Permissive parenting style will independently and significantly predict Psychological distress among the participants.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Participants

A cross sectional survey design was employed in the study. The population comprised of secondary school children selected from five schools in Ede Osun state, southwestern Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was adopted in this study. Random sampling technique was used to select Ede south Local Government Area (LGA) from Osun West senatorial district. Furthermore a random sampling technique was employed to select five secondary schools in the LGA. Lastly a purposive sampling technique was adopted to select seventy participants from each of the school. Of the returned questionnaires only three hundred and thirty two were properly answered. These were used for the study.

2.2 Measures

Three research instruments were used in data collection. The instruments were written in English language hence there was no need for translation to a Nigerian language since the respondents could read and understand the English language.

Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale [WLEIS] [15] designed to rate the emotional intelligence of self and others. It is a 16 item scale with 4 dimensions. The first is the Self-Emotion Appraisal (cronbach's alpha of .79) which assesses individuals' ability to understand and express their own emotions. The second is the Others' Emotion Appraisal (cronbach's alpha of .77) which measures peoples' ability to perceive and understand the emotions of others. The third dimension is Use of Emotion (cronbach's alpha of .76). This denotes individuals' ability to use their emotions effectively by directing them toward constructive activities and personal performance, the fourth dimension is Regulation of Emotion (cronbach's alpha of .82) which refers to individuals' ability to manage their own emotions. The WLEIS was measured with a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Previous research has found support for the underlying four-factor structure, reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity of the WLEIS scores [15,16].

Parenting Style Dimension Questionnaire (PSDQ) by Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen, and Hart, [17] is a 32 item instrument, with 3 sub

scales, measured on a 5 points likert scale ranging from never – always. The questionnaire is focused on parenting behaviors relating to interactions with their child. Higher scores indicated a more frequent use of the described behavior. Internal consistency reliability for the scales [17] are: Authoritarian. 82, authoritative .86 and permissive. 64. The psychometric properties were found acceptable for Nigerian samples. In this study parenting style refers to parental figure which was defined by whom the child live with which includes both parents, single parents and guidance.

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) is a 12 item instrument by Goldberg and Williams [18] used to identify psychological distress. It has five response categories of 1 "Better than usual", to Worse than usual". Overall high scores consistently indicate high level of psychological distress. GHQ-12 has a Guttman Split-Half reliability coefficient of 0.75 reliability coefficient, and a Cronbach's α value of 0.73. The scale also has a Spearman-Brown coefficient of 0.88. The GHQ scales have been validated with clinical [19] and non-clinical samples [20]. The GHQ-12 was shown to be measurement invariant (i.e., to measure the same construct) across gender [21] and between adults and adolescents [22]. GHQ-12 has been used by many Nigerian investigators [23,24,25].

2.3 Data Analysis

Collected data was analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS 23). Descriptive statistic (frequency count and percentages) were used to organize, summarize and describe the demographic characteristics of respondents, while inferential statistic (linear regression analysis) was employed to test the hypotheses.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

A total of 332 children were selected for this study. They were made up of 140 males and 192 females. The age distributions were between ages 9 to 19 years with mean age of 14 years. The distribution by father's occupation showed that 38% (126) were civil servant, 50.3% (167) were self-employed while 11.7% (39), artisan. Distributions by mothers' occupation returned the 31% (103) were civil servant; 64.8% (215) were

self-employed while 4.2% (14) were artisan. 94.6% (314) of the respondents have mother in a marriage relationship, while, 5.4% (16) had mother as single parent. 74.4% (247) of the participants were from Monogamous family while 25.6% (84) were from polygamous homes. Participants caregivers showed that 81.% (268) stayed with both parents, 1.8% (6) lived with their fathers alone, 9.9% (33) have mother as only caregiver, 3.9% (13) were in custody of some close relations who were not their parents and finally 3% (10) had guardians as caregivers.

Patterns of observed parenting style as summarized in Table 1 are authoritative parenting style (45.5%, 41.6% and 12.9%), authoritarian parenting style (53%, 30.7% and 16.3%); permissive parenting style (64.2%, 20.7% and 15.1%) for low, high and very high levels respectively.

Patterns of perceived EI as summarized in Table 2 revealed that 27.7% of the participants manifest very low EI, 56% had average EI while 16.3% had very high EI.

3.2 Test of Hypotheses

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether authoritative parenting style independently and significantly predicted EI among the participants. The result summarized in Table 3 revealed that authoritative parenting

style independently and significantly predicted EI among the participants [$F(1, 332) = 33.69, p = .000$]. The analysis further reveals an R^2 of .093 indicating that 9.3% variance of EI among the in-school children in Osun state Nigeria is influenced by authoritative parenting style.

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether authoritarian parenting style independently and significantly predicted EI among the participants. The result reveals that Authoritarian parenting style independently and significantly predicted EI among the participants [$F(1, 332) = 13.05, p = .000$]. The analysis summarized in Table 4 further returned an R^2 of .038 indicating that 3.8% variance of EI among the in-school children in Osun state Nigeria is influenced by authoritarian parenting style.

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether permissive parenting independently and significantly predicted Emotional Intelligence (EI) among the in-school children in Osun state Nigeria. The result summarized in Table 5 revealed that permissive parenting style did not independently and significantly predicted EI among the participants [$F(1, 332) = 1.66, p = .198$]. The analysis further reveals an R^2 of .005 indicating that 0.5% variance of EI among the participants is influenced by permissive parenting style.

Table 1. Patterns of perceived parenting style among the sample

Parenting style	N= 332		
	Patterns %		
	Low	High	Very high
Authoritative	45.5	41.6	12.9
Authoritarian	53.0	30.7	16.3
Permissive	64.2	20.7	15.5

Table 2. Patterns of perceived emotional intelligence among the Nigerian in-school adolescents

Emotional Intelligence	N = 332		
	Patterns (%)		
	Very low	Average	Very high
	27.7	56.0	16.3

Table 3. Linear regression analysis of authoritative parenting style on EI

	N=332						
	B	β	T	sig	R^2	F	P
(constant)	53.69		8.90	.000			
Authoritative Parenting Style	.61	.31	5.80	.000	.093	33.69	.000

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the degree to which authoritative parenting independently and significantly predicted PD among the in-school children in Osun state Nigeria. The result summarized in Table 6 returned that authoritative parenting style failed to significantly predict PD among the participants ($R^2 = .00$, $p = .874$). The analysis in further reveals that 0% variance in severity of PD is explained by the authoritative parenting style.

A linear regression analysis was carried out to ascertain the extent to which authoritarian parenting independently and significantly predicted PD the participants. The result summarized in Table 7 reported that that authoritarian parenting style significantly predict severity of PD among the participants ($R^2 = .01$, $p = .075$). The analysis further shows that 1% variance in severity of PD is explained by the authoritative parenting style.

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether permissive parenting independently and significantly predicted severity of psychological distress among the in-school children in Osun state Nigeria. The result summarized in Table 8 showed that permissive parenting style independently and significantly predicted psychological distress among the participants ($R^2 = .015$, $p = .025$). The analysis further reveals 1.5% variance of psychological distress among the participants is influenced by permissive parenting style.

4. DISCUSSION

Majority of the participants fall within low and average emotional intelligence. This is similar to finding on adolescent in rural Indian community [26] who reported that students in rural communities had low EI in the domain of self-awareness, motivation, and social skills. The

Table 4. Linear regression analysis of authoritarian parenting style on EI

	N=332						
	B	β	T	sig	R ²	F	p
(constant)	74.92		19.59	.000			
Authoritarian Parenting Style	.31	.20	3.61	.000	.038	13.05	.000

Table 5. Linear regression analysis of permissive parenting style on EI

	N= 332						
	B	β	T	sig	R ²	F	p
(constant)	90.79		41.55	.000			
Permissive Parenting Style	-.29	-.07	-1.29	.198	.005	1.66	.198

Table 6. Linear regression analysis of authoritative parenting style on PD

	N =332						
	B	β	T	sig	R ²	F	p
(constant)	33.06		9.12	.000			
Authoritative Parenting Style	-.01	-.01	-1.16	.874	.000	.025	.874

Table 7. Linear regression analysis of authoritarian parenting style on PD

	N = 332						
	B	β	T	sig	R ²	F	P
(constant)	28.66		12.91	.000			
Authoritarian Parenting Style	.09	.10	1.78	.075	.010	3.18	.075

Table 8. Linear regression analysis of permissive parenting style on PD

	N= 332						
	B	β	T	sig	R ²	F	p
(constant)	29.99		24.12	.000			
Permissive Parenting Style	.29	.12	2.25	.025	.015	5.05	.025

result of this study revealed that composite parenting style is a strong independent predictor of Emotional Intelligence among the participants. Previous studies consistently returned strong relationships between parenting style and children and adolescents behavior [27,28,29]. Wang and Sheikh-Khalil [30] found that parental involvement helped to boost emotional functioning among children and mental health both directly and indirectly through behavioral and emotional engagement. Stack, Serbin, Enns, Ruttle, and Barrieau's [31] in a longitudinal study established parenting style significantly influenced either the development of competent emotional functioning or problematic emotional functioning in children as they grow older and across generations.

We also found in this study that authoritative domain of parenting style is a strong independent predictor of EI among the participants. This research finding is in agreement with most previous studies which found authoritative parenting as being associated with positive behavioural outcomes such as increased competence, autonomy, and self-esteem as well as better problem solving skills, better academic performance, more self-reliance, less deviance, and better peer relations [32,33,34,35,2]. A hallmark of emotional intelligence is the capacity to recognize one's own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships. Emotional intelligence (EI) is largely learnt, and continues to develop and is predominantly environmentally determined [6]. Children nurtured in environments that values and instills responsiveness and accountability as is found in the authoritative parenting will, all things being equal, manifest high emotional intelligence.

Contrary to some previous studies which linked the authoritarian parenting style with negative behavioural outcomes including aggressive behaviour, decreased emotional functioning, depression and lower levels of self-confidence [36,37,38,39] our research finding showed that authoritarian domain of parenting style is a strong independent predictor of EI of Nigerian children, indicating that as authoritarian parenting style increases, Emotional Intelligence also increases. The plausible explanation to this difference in our research finding is the social cultural difference in the child rearing practices prevalent in the population of study.

Our research finding which revealed that permissive parenting style is a weak predictor of EI is in agreement with previous studies [40,41]. The permissive parent indulges the child placing little or no demand on obedience to authorities, respect for self and others and shy away from confrontation with child on negative and maladaptive behaviours [5]. The permissive parent has been positively correlates with delinquent and aggressive behaviour. Poor supervision, neglect, and indifference are all indulgent parental practices that play a crucial role in engaging in future delinquency. Children from indulgent homes report a higher frequency of involvement in deviant behaviours, such as drug use and alcohol use, school misconduct and emotional, impulsive, nonconforming behaviours [40,41], difficulty in various areas of emotional development and have feelings of insecurity [37].

Authoritative parenting style failed to significantly predict PD among the participants while authoritarian parenting style was found to significantly predict PD among the participants. This implies that authoritative parenting style enhances psychological health while authoritarian style of parenting promotes psychological distress. This is in agreement with previous research findings [42,43,44,45,46].

Finally, our research finding reveals that permissive parenting style independently and significantly predicted psychological distress among the participants. This supports previous researches which suggest that a lack of involvement, as well as poor monitoring and supervision of children's activities, strongly predicts antisocial behavior [47]. Parents of children with antisocial behaviour are likely to be less positive, more permissive and inconsistent, and use more violent and critical discipline [48]. Among the various parenting styles, permissive parenting style is reported as the most positively associated with antisocial behavior and psychological distress including drug use [49, 33], inconsiderate and disrespectful treatment of parents, struggle with the interpersonal aspects of their emotional development, are emotionally dependent on others [37], poor self-esteem and depressive symptoms, [50], criminal behavior [49,51], behavioral problems in school [49] and bullying [34,35] in adolescents.

5. LIMITATIONS

The purposive sampling technique used in this study was a limitation. There is a possibility that

a different result might be arrived at if a more probability method had been used. Also a larger sample size which includes participants from other socio-cultural background and geopolitical regions of the country would be more representative of a Nigerian study.

Also participants were restricted to in-school children which limit the generalization of the finding. Finally the study results were based on questionnaires and self-reported perceptions of participants on self and parenting style which may not have been measured accurately.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The finding of this present study shows that majority of the participants fall within low and average emotional intelligence level. Also this study revealed that parenting style is a strong independent predictor of Emotional Intelligence among in-school children in Ede Province of Osun state southwestern Nigeria. Furthermore, authoritative parenting style as well as authoritarian parenting style is independent strong predictors of EI among the children. Permissive parenting style is returned as a weak predictor of EI, but on the other hand, as a strong predictor of psychological distress among the participants. Hence, the emotional intelligence of the Nigerian child is a product of parenting style.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Public enlightenment programmes aimed at educating parents on the effects of the various parenting styles on the emotional intelligence and psychological health status of their children will be beneficial in promoting the authoritative style of parenting. Further studies that using the same methodology on a larger sample focused on preschool and in school children from other social cultural setting within Nigeria is recommended.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study carried out investigations that involved human elements, thus ethics of research for human subjects were observed. The researcher reviewed online regulatory and informational documents on human-subject protection and passed the examination on responsible conduct of human studies and was issued a Certificate for Bioethics and Research by the Nigerian National Code of Health Research Ethics. Judging that the respondents were below the age of eighteen

and therefore cannot make decisions of this magnitude for themselves, a consent letter was requested from the office of the permanent secretary, Ministry of Education, Oshogbo Osun state. Approval /introductory letters were issued which was presented to head teachers in the selected schools before the commencement of data collection. The purpose of the exercise was explained to the selected children and they were assured of confidentiality. Selected samples had the option of declining in participation if they chose to. Participants were handled with absolute care with cognizance of their human value, dignity and in line with the child rights act.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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