

Permissive and Authoritarian Parenting Styles as Predictors of Moral Behaviour Among Secondary School Adolescents in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijeld.2013/vol11n35871>

Published March 19th 2023

Citation: Wilcox, U.N. and Chujor C. J. (2023) Permissive and Authoritarian Parenting Styles as Predictors of Moral Behaviour Among Secondary School Adolescents in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria, *International Journal of Education, Learning and Development*, Vol. 11, No.3, pp.58-71

ABSTRACT: *The study investigated parenting styles, emotional support and moral behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state. A sample of 800 students from a population of 15,337 junior secondary school students was used for the study. Simple random and proportionate stratified sampling techniques were used to compose the sample. Six research questions were answered while six corresponding null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Three instruments were used for the study. They are the Moral Behaviour Questionnaire (MBQ), the Parenting Styles Survey (PSS), and the Parental Emotional Support Questionnaire (PESQ). The instruments were validated by the researcher's supervisor and three experts in Psychological Measurement and Evaluation. The reliabilities of the instruments were tested using Cronbach alpha reliability method of internal consistency. Reliability coefficient of the items in the authoritative parenting style at 0.66; authoritarian parenting style at 0.61; permissive parenting style at 0.73; uninvolved parenting style at 0.74; parental emotional support at 0.77; and the moral behaviour at 0.65 were high enough to guarantee their use for the study. Research questions 1 to 5 were answered using simple regression while their corresponding null hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with regression. Research question 6 was answered using multiple regression while its corresponding null hypothesis was tested with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results of the study are that parenting styles and parental emotional support predict moral behaviours of students. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made, one of which is that parents, especially mothers should be more intentional in spending time and getting involved with their children so as to enhance the development of their children's moral behaviour. This study has established empirically that the parenting styles predict moral behaviour.*

KEY WORDS: parenting styles, moral behaviour, permissive, authoritarian

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a time of exploration and experimentation with social and personal identities. Perhaps, no other period of life is as exciting and also bewildering as adolescence. In fact, except for infancy, more changes occur during this period (Rathus, 2006). Adolescence is a transitional period when young people are neither children nor adults. In terms of definition, the concept adolescence has been defined by various authors according to how they perceive this very important period of development. Feldman (1994) defined adolescence as the period in human development between childhood and adulthood during which many physical, social and cognitive changes takes place. On the other hand, Philipchalk and McConnell (1994) defined adolescence as that developmental period which begins with the onset of puberty, and extends to the achievement of adulthood. Puberty in this definition refers to the period during which maturity of the sexual organs occur. Furthermore, Rathus (2006) defined adolescence as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, a coming of age. These definitions put together imply that adolescence represents the age period between childhood and adulthood in a particular society. It is a period of time when an individual neither has the privileges of childhood nor the freedom of adulthood. Various authors do not seem to be in agreement on the exact age adolescence begins and when it ends. Feldman (1994) posits that puberty which marks the onset of adolescence begins at about 11 or 12 years for girls and 13 or 14 years for boys. Santrock (2005) on the other hand, sees the onset of adolescence to be around ages 10 – 12 years and its end at 18 – 21 years of age.

Moral behaviour focuses on adolescents' ability to differentiate between good and bad as they grow in their different cultural settings. Moral development in adolescence is a complex issue that flows from both cognitive and behavioural dimensions. From infancy, through childhood, to adolescence and adulthood, the way and manner a child interacts with people in the environment shows the level of moral development he has achieved. These include honesty, respect for oneself, and others, tolerance and self-control. Moral judgment depends on the level of cognitive abilities because as the level of cognitive abilities increases the understanding and judgment of principles of morality also increases. Children in childhood tend to view right and wrong from the perspectives of rewards and punishment. Kohlberg calls such judgements pre-conventional. In middle childhood, conventional thought tends to emerge, and children begin to judge right and wrong in terms of social conventions, rules, and laws. In adolescence, many individuals become capable of formal operational thinking, which

allows them to arrive conclusions about what they should do in various situations by reasoning from ethical principles. And many of these individuals engage in post conventional moral reasoning. In the post-conventional level, moral reasoning is based on the person's own moral standards (Kohlberg, 1981). Moral development and behaviour in adolescence occurs as they learn at home, school and in the society.

Moral values can be divided into two different categories: universal moral values and non-universal moral values. Universal moral values are those values that are shared by all people regardless of the cultural and moral position occupied by them. Examples of universal moral values include those enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, such as liberty and equality. As decent and responsible members of the international community, we have a responsibility to adhere to these values and to commend them to others. Non-universal moral values are not as binding as the values referred to above. These are either inherent in or peculiar to a particular culture or nationality. Though it may not be as binding as those of universal moral values, but communities have a way of sanctioning erring individuals. This sanction serves as moral constraint on individual actions in the community. Moral constraints are rational constraints and so acting immorally is a way of being irrational. So, African societies including Obio-Akpor, Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria, as an organized and functioning human community, have undoubtedly evolved ethical systems, ethical values, principles and rules intended to guide social and moral behaviours.

Morality is a system of beliefs, values, and underlying judgments about the rightness or wrongness of acts which the psychologists call conscience. Moral development is part of the psychological aspects and other spheres of the individual; it develops gradually, and the individual's environment influences it. Moral development refers to the development of a sense of values and ethical behavior which is as a result of the interaction between the characteristics of the individual and the conditions of the environment it fosters. Adolescents' cognitive development, in part, lays the groundwork for moral reasoning which include honesty and prosocial behaviors such as helping, volunteerism, or caring for others (Eisenberg, Carlo, Murphy, & Van Court cited in APA, 2002). On the other hand, successful moral development is characterized by an early capacity for remorse as well as an understanding of right and wrong (Kochanska, Forman, Aksan, & Dunbar. 2005). "Moral development" is the process through which children acquire the concepts of right and wrong as well as the ability to regulate behavior to adhere to standards deemed appropriate by society. The function of morality is to provide guidelines for behaviour (Royal & Baker, 2005). Njoku (2000)

noted that adolescence is a time of moral turbulence characterized by constant assertion of one self. By late adolescence most teenagers are less rebellious as they have begun to establish their own identity, their own belief system, and their own place in the world. Some adolescents who have reached the highest level of development may feel passionate about their moral code; as such, they may choose to participate in activities that demonstrate their moral convictions. For example, some adolescents may organize and participate in demonstrations and protests while others may volunteer their time for academic works that advance the ethical principles they hold important. Unfortunately, some adolescents have life experiences that may interfere with their moral behaviour; perhaps they survived some traumatic experience such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse; the death of a family member or close friend; all of which can affect their sense of moral reasoning.

The complex period of adolescence calls for sensitivity on the part of parents, teachers, and others who work with them to note both the physical and psychological changes rapidly taking place at this period. Some challenging issues in the life of these adolescents include drinking and smoking, cheating, stealing, lying, gambling, drug abuse etc. These students may usually attempt these activities and may decide to participate fully in one or more of these related behaviours depending on the environment they find themselves. Adolescence is also period of emotional transition which is marked by changes in way they view themselves and in the capacity to function independently: they mature intellectually, undergo cognitive changes and perceive themselves in more sophisticated ways. The complexity of this period in the life of adolescents is seen along the spectrum of multiple contexts such as the home, school and neighbourhood that they navigate and their various agents of influence such as family, peers, school, media, (culture) (Hart & Carlo, 2005). During the period of adolescence which falls within the secondary school period, the young person tries to access and analyze the value system and principles picked up in childhood.

Moral behaviour is of great concern to society in general and to parents, teachers and others who care for children. Children with behavioral and emotional problems often behave well when they are provided with external structure and contingencies, but seem to be lacking in internalization, morality and the development of a conscience. Because adolescents are - more independent and mobile than they were as children, they are often out of the direct physical control their parents. In these circumstances, adolescents' behaviour is determined by their own moral and behavioural code. Parents guide rather than directly control the adolescents' actions. Adolescents who feel warmth and support from their parents are less likely to engage in risky behaviours. Teenagers

make moral judgments on a daily basis; when children are younger, their family, culture, and religion greatly influence their moral decision-making. However, during the early adolescent period, peers have a much greater influence especially where the parents had failed in acquainting the child with sufficient moral values.

Parenting is one of the major factors that influences the formation of a child's identity (Moretti and Wang; as posted by Murphy, 2014) and the target of parenting is to develop an atmosphere at home that promotes both personal growth and interpersonal and safety which requires the underpinnings of love, respect and kindness. Parents differ in the way and manner in which they achieve their set of objectives of properly bringing up their children. This concept of the approach or method parents adopt in the process of raising up their children is known as parenting style, which incorporates the behaviours and actions adopted to enhance parent - child relationship. Baumrind, in Murphy (2014), identifies two essential aspects of parenting as parental warmth which constitutes support, acceptance and parental expectations. Parenting styles influence the general atmosphere of the home in which children are reared (Gleitman, Fridlund and Reisberg 2004). These parenting styles fall into two broad groups: Acceptance and Responsiveness and on the other hand, Demand and Control. The disintegration of these two groups gave rise to the four parenting styles.

Parenting style refers to how parents rear their children which is defined by the overall demeanour that a parent has when they are engaged with their children. Parenting style is an indication of the overall emotional climate in the home. Although parents may differ in how they try to control or socialize their children, and the extent to which they do so, it is assumed that the primary role of all parents is to influence, teach and control their children. Parenting style captures two important elements of parenting: parental responsiveness and parental demandingness (Maccoby & Martin, in Mahapatra & Batul, 2016). Parental responsiveness (also referred to as parental warmth or supportiveness) is the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to their children's special needs and demands (Baumrind, 1991). Parental demandingness (also referred to as behavioural control) refers to the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family unit by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys.

Categorizing parents according to whether they are high or low on parental demandingness and responsiveness creates a typology of four parenting styles: permissive, authoritarian, authoritative, and uninvolved (Maccoby & Martin, cited in

Mahapatra & Batul, 2016). Each of these parenting styles reflects different naturally occurring patterns of parental values, practices, and behaviours (Baumrid, 1991), and a distinct balance of responsiveness and demandingness. However, for the purpose of this paper the focus is on two parenting styles: permissive parenting style and authoritative parenting style and how these two parenting styles predict moral behaviour.

Permissive parenting style is practiced by parents who exhibit non punitive, accepting and affirmative behaviour toward their children's needs, desires, and actions. Permissive parents are more and give full autonomy to children and support what children like to do. They are nurturing, accepting and responsive to the child's needs and wishes. Permissive parents encourage children to do whatever they want to do (Timpano, Keough, Mahaffey, Schmidt, & Abramowitz, 2010). They show high responsiveness and support for their children, while at the same time having low or little control of their children (Hoeve, Blokland, Dubas Loeber, Gerris, & Laan, 2009). This group of parents are always friendly and receptive in their children's demands and actions. Children of permissive parents are independent in their approach to life. They are also more mature and responsible (Baumrid, 1991). However, because permissive parents, though responsive, fail to set expectations or boundaries for their children, permissive parenting style is potentially unsafe for children because it is unsuccessful in developing good judgement in children (Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter, & Keehn, 2007).

According to Hoeve et al. (2009), authoritarian parents on the other hand, show low responsiveness and warmth but high control toward their children's behaviour. They attempt to shape, control, and evaluate the behaviour and attitude of their according to a set of principles they provide. Authoritative parents tend to be conservative and strict. The children are given little choice and have to follow their parents' orders. Parents have expectations, and children are not allowed to disobey their parents (Kim & Rohner, 2002). This group of parents try to monitor and evaluate their children's behaviour and attitude on the basis of certain standards of behaviour. They do not believe in dialoguing with their children, and can use different methods of punishment to effect compliance. Parental rules are rigid, harsh with little consideration for the child's views. Children raised with authoritarian background have the potential to lack mental and emotional stability (Ghani-Abadi, 1998). This study sought to investigate the association between these two parenting styles (permissive and authoritarian) and moral behaviour, in terms of their ability to independently predict moral behaviour.

Statement of the Problem

There has been a growing concern not only in Nigeria but across the world about the increasing incidence of antisocial and criminal behaviour among adolescents. This is not completely surprising from our knowledge of the realities of the developmental stage of these youths which has the tendency to predispose them to all sorts of vulnerabilities readily available in today's society. The role of proper development of a sound and constructive sense of moral responsibility and behaviour in the adolescent therefore cannot be overemphasized. This is the age of restiveness among youths. In Nigeria many adolescents can be seen to be involved in all sorts of immoral acts like violence, lawlessness, stealing, sexual abuse, drug abuse, kidnapping, financial fraud, cultism, examination malpractice, banditry, ritual killings, indecent dressing, etc. all of which are against the moral standards of any decent society and a threat to a healthy development of any society.

The issue of immoral behaviour among adolescents is not just common among secondary school students only, but also very common among university students. As a result of that some university and higher institution managements are becoming stricter with sanctions against such antisocial and immoral behaviours. In fact, moral behaviour is becoming more emphasized as prerequisite for graduation with every graduate necessarily fulfilling all conditions in 'learning and character' without which, there is no graduation.

In a bid to critically address the fallout of this menace in society, many have blamed the government, schools and religious institutions as failing in the roles to inculcate the right moral values that will inform responsible behaviour among these adolescents. While the researchers agree that each of these institutions definitely have their place in the blame game, they believe that the home background of the child where primary socialization takes place is also very important. Hence the problem of this study is to determine the extent to which the home front in terms of these two parenting styles can predict moral behaviour among adolescents.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate parenting styles as predictors of moral behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers, State of Southern Nigeria. In specific terms, the objectives of the study include:

1. To determine the extent to which permissive parenting style predicts moral behaviour among adolescents in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State,

Southern Nigeria.

2. To examine the extent to which authoritarian parenting style predicts moral behaviour among adolescents in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria.

Research Questions

For the purpose of this study, two research questions were stated as follows:

1. To what extent does permissive parenting style predict moral behaviour among adolescents in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria?
2. To what extent does authoritarian parenting style predict moral behaviour among adolescents in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance to guide the study:

1. Permissive parental style does not significantly predict moral behaviour among adolescents in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria.
2. Authoritarian parenting style does not significantly predict moral behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State, Southern Nigeria.

METHOD

The research design was correlational. A sample of 800 students from a population of 15, 337 junior secondary school students was drawn and used for the study. Simple random and proportionate stratified sampling techniques were used to draw the sample. Two research questions were answered while two corresponding hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Two instruments were used for the study. They are the Moral Behaviour Questionnaire (MBQ) and The Parenting Style Survey (PSS). The instruments were validated by three experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation. The reliabilities of the instruments were tested, using Cronbach Alpha reliability method of internal consistency. Reliability Coefficient of the items in the permissive parenting style was 0.73 and the authoritarian 0.61 which were high enough to guarantee their use for the study. Research questions one and two were answered using Multiple regression, while their corresponding null hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with regression.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1: To what extent does permissive parenting style predict moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state?

Table 1: Regression analysis of the predictive power of permissive parenting style on moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
I	.750	.624	.470	1.70379
a. Predictors: (Constant), Moral behaviour				

Table 1. shows that permissive parenting style and moral behaviour obtained a correlation coefficient value of 0.75. An R^2 of 0.62 was also obtained but for a more reliable result, adjusted R^2 obtained at 0.470 was used to answer the research question. The obtained adjusted R square showed that permissive parenting style accounts for 47% ($0.470 \times 100 = 47\%$) variation in moral behaviour. Thus permissive parenting style predicts moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Hypotheses Testing

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

Hypothesis 1: Permissive parenting style does not significantly predict moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Table 2: Regression analysis of the significant prediction of Permissive parenting style on moral behaviour.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	4.135	.260		15.904	.000	3.625	4.645
	VAR0000	.289	.036	.274	8.041	.000	.218	.359
	2							

Table 2. above shows that the value of the constant a is 4.135 with standard error of

.260 while the regression coefficient is .289 with standard error of .036. The value of the slope b after conversion to standardized coefficients produced a value of .274. The standardized coefficient of .274 is significant at (Sig.) .000. The value of the slope b converted to standardized coefficient is .274. This implies that for every one standard deviation increase in permissive parenting style, score on moral behaviour increases by .274. The t-value of 8.041 associated with the b values (standardized and unstandardized) indicates that permissive parenting style predicts moral behaviour. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Research Question 2: To what extent does authoritarian parenting style predict moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state?

Table 3: Regression analysis of the predictive power of authoritarian parenting style on moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate_____
1	.758	.601	.532	1.71134
a. Predictors: (Constant), Moral behaviour.				

Table 3. shows that authoritarian parenting style and moral behaviour obtained a correlation coefficient value of 0.758. An R^2 of 0.601 was also obtained; but for a more reliable result, adjusted R obtained at 0.532 was used to answer the research question. The obtained adjusted R square showed that authoritarian parenting style accounts for 53.2% ($0.532 \times 100 = 53.2\%$) variation in moral behaviour. Thus authoritarian parenting style predicts moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Hypothesis 2: Authoritarian parenting style does not significantly predict moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Table 4: Regression analysis of the significant prediction of authoritarian parenting style on moral behaviour.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 (Constant) VAR0000	4.483	.231		19.395	.000	4.030	4.937
2	.263	.035	.258	7.554	.000	.195	.331

Table 4. above shows that the value of the constant a is 4.483 with standard error of .231 while the regression coefficient is .263 with standard error of .035. The value of the slope b after conversion to standardized coefficients produced a value of .258. The standardized coefficient of .258 is significant at (Sig.) .000. The value of the slope b converted to standardized coefficient is .258. This implies that for every one standard deviation increase in authoritarian parenting style, score on moral behaviour increases by .258. The t-value of 7.554 associated with the b-values (standardized and unstandardized) indicates that authoritarian parenting style significantly predicts moral behaviour. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION

Predictive power of permissive parenting style on moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Permissive parenting style accounts for 47% variation of moral behaviour. This indicates that permissive parenting style significantly predicts moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state. This finding is not far from the researchers' expectation. It is okay for children to be relatively independent and have a mind of their own as they grow up. This builds in them a sense of personal responsibility which is also important in a healthy development of moral judgement. However, so much lack of supervision (that may characterize permissive parenting) by parents may lead to a child left on his own which may be unhealthy for a balanced development of moral judgement in the young person. This finding is contrary to that of Kuka (2016) who found among others that there is significant negative relationship between permissive parenting and moral development of secondary school students. It could be seen that this disagreement might be as a result of difference in research area or other factors. Furthermore, this finding agreed with that of Osila, Madundi and Fidelis (2010) whose finding revealed among others

that students with positive behaviour have good moral upbringing and most of such students are from permissive parents.

Predictive power of authoritarian parenting style on moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Authoritarian parenting style accounts for 53.2% variation of moral behaviour. This indicates that authoritarian parenting style significantly predicts moral behaviour among secondary school students in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state. This finding is also not surprising to the researchers. With proper monitoring and expectations well spelt out, children reared in authoritarian homes learn very early that in human society, there are rules of conduct and that there are acceptable behaviours and unacceptable behaviours. Furthermore, that there are consequences for good behaviour as well as for bad behaviour. This has the potential to develop in the young person the sense of right and wrong which enhances the ability to make informed choices. However, just like the other parenting styles, too much supervision and control may tend to take away the humanity in the individual. Such young person may grow up with a mindset of dependency, which almost always leads to greater dependency. This too is not healthy. This finding agreed with that of Ovunda (2011) whose finding revealed among others that adolescents from authoritarian parents are less involved in delinquent behaviour as they have higher scores on moral test. Furthermore, this finding agreed with that of Ufo and Gilbert (2018) who found in their study that among others, students from authoritarian parents have high level of moral development.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded from the study that there is a relationship between parenting styles and moral behaviour among adolescents as both permissive and authoritarian parenting styles were positive predictors of moral behaviour.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the under listed recommendations were made:

1. Parents, especially mothers should be encouraged to be more intentional in spending time with, and involved in the affairs of their adolescents.
2. School administrators should make moral development a vital subject as this will go a long way in emphasizing its importance.
3. Counsellors should consider the role of parenting styles in their bid to have a proper understanding of their adolescent clients.

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