

Original Research Article

“Adolescents’ college students’ perception of their parents’ style of parenting in Enugu and Abakiliki, South-East Nigeria. Is it an ethno-cultural phenomenon?”

Abstract

Background: Adolescents’ perception of their parents’ style of parenting has taken diverse forms in different societies/cultures and this may impact on their psychosocial development.

Methods: This is a cross sectional study which accessed adolescents’ perception of their parents’ styles of parenting. By a simple random selection method, a total of 828 students from each boys,’ girls’ and mixed schools were selected. This study assessed the “Adolescents’ perception of their parents’ style of parenting in Enugu and Abakiliki, South-East Nigeria.

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 19. Chi-square was used to test significant association of categorical variables.

Results

A total of eight hundred and twenty eight adolescents aged 10-19 years with a mean age, 13.8 ± 1.5 years comprising four hundred and ninety (59.2%) males and 338 (40.8%) females completed the questionnaire. Three hundred and sixty one (43.6%) respondents reported having

20 an autocratic parent while 206 (24.9%) and 227(27.4%),reported permissive, authoritarian styles
21 respectively. Twenty four (4.1%) did not report on any parenting styles

22 There were no statistically significant difference in the parenting styles of the adolescents and
23 their socioeconomic class and gender. $\chi^2 = 4.577$; $p = 0.101$. $\chi^2 = 1.041$; $p = 0.904$

24 **Conclusion**

25 This study revealed that the commonest style of parenting among adolescents is the autocratic
26 style which is in-keeping with societies with strong ethnic and cultural background. We noted no
27 association between parenting styles with gender

28 **Key words:** Adolescents' perception; parenting styles; Nigeria

29 **Background**

30 Parenting is the act of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual
31 development of a child. It refers to the aspects of raising a child aside from the biological
32 relationship. ^[1]

33 The purpose of parenting is to protect and prepare our children and teens to survive in the kind of
34 society in which they will live ^[2] Parenting generally is an occupation one finds themselves in,
35 often without any formal education or preparation. Most people, therefore, fall back on past
36 personal experiences which can be negative or positive. Parenting prepares children for
37 responsible life and survival in the society". Adolescents undergo a number of developmental
38 adjustments which includes biological, cognitive, emotional and social changes ^[3] Effective

parenting during adolescence therefore, requires a thorough understanding of associated normative developmental changes^[4] and adjusting to it..

Three main styles of parenting have been described. Autocratic (authoritative), Permissive and Authoritarian or Active parenting styles.^[2] Autocratic parent is one who is domineering and tries to be all powerful in directing the lives of their children; is dominating and has the first and last word on every matter in the family-limits without freedom.^[2] The permissive style (The Doormat) can be seen as the opposite of the autocratic parenting where anything goes, allowing their teens to do their own things –freedom without limits.^[2] The authoritarian style or active parenting is somehow in-between the preceding types. Here, freedom is important and conforms to what is seen in modern democratic society but is no democracy. The authority rests on the parents who should know how to use it –freedom within expanding limits.^[5-7]

Parents around the world want what they believe is the best for their children. However, parents in different cultures have different ideas of parenting styles.^[7] For example, parents in a hunter–gatherer society or surviving through subsistence agriculture are likely to promote practical survival skills from a young age.^[7]

Cross-cultural discrepancies in parenting styles and adolescents’ outcomes have been noted by several authors.^[8, 9] For example, Rudy and colleagues indicated that autocratic practices, which involve a hierarchical parent-child relationship, are linked with positive cognitions in the adolescents.^[9]

Parenting styles could have influence on the health of the adolescents.^[10] It has been shown that, authoritative parenting was found to be associated with higher self esteem and satisfaction.^[10]

60 Isabel ^[10] et al noted that Spanish adolescents from permissive parents show highest scores in
61 self-esteem whereas adolescents from authoritarian parents obtain the worst results. In contrast,
62 there were no differences between the priority given by adolescents of authoritative and
63 indulgent parents to any of the self-transcendence and conservation values.

64 Some authors ^[11,12] have highlighted the burden of several parenting styles on the mental health
65 of the adolescents. Dwairy et al noted that in Arab societies, authoritarian parenting does not
66 harm the adolescents' mental health as it does in Western societies. ^[11,12] Furthermore, other
67 researchers have found no differences between indulgent and authoritative parenting in the
68 offspring's outcomes in certain contexts and cultures. ^[11,12]

69 Parenting styles had been noted to impact on school performance. ^[13] For example, among
70 African and Asian-American adolescents, no complete evidence has been found of the positive
71 influence of authoritative parenting on school performance. ^[13] However, Chao et al has shown
72 that Asian-American adolescents raised in authoritarian households do not do worse at school
73 than adolescents raised in authoritative homes. ^[13]

74 This study is aimed at determining the predominant style of parenting as seen among adolescents
75 attending secondary schools in south east Nigeria, and their associated factors. This is because a
76 number of adolescents' patients have been demonstrating abnormal behaviors consistent with
77 particular parenting style. These abnormal behaviors reverted to normal once the 'stressors'
78 were removed. An association was therefore sought with predominant parenting style(s) in the
79 area in this study.

80 In Nigeria, there are little or very few current works on this topic .This study, therefore, is among
81 the few to be done in this part of the world; the result will complement earlier studies ^[11-13] and

will also serve as information base for future research. It will also provide relevant information for clinical practice on adolescents in this area.

Subjects and methods

Study design

This is a cross-sectional study that assesses the different styles of parenting as seen among adolescents attending secondary schools in south east Nigeria.

Study location and population

The study was carried out among adolescents in seven secondary schools in Enugu metropolis of Enugu State of Nigeria.

Enugu and Abakiliki metropolis, the capital cities of Enugu and Ebonyi states were chosen for this study because they have many secondary schools with large adolescent population besides the fact that they form the main catchment area for the patients we see. It is made up of three local government areas each, namely, Enugu East, Enugu North and Enugu South local government areas from Enugu metropolis and Ebonyi, Abakiliki and Ohaukwu local government areas from Abakiliki metropolis. The students' population of these schools cuts across the various socio-economic strata in Nigeria. These schools were stratified into boys, girls, and mixed schools in order to get a representative sample.

Study instrument

The questionnaire included 9 items on styles of parenting -3 for each style. However this was not disclosed to the subjects to avoid bias. Subjects were asked to tick the most appropriate options

that their parents fitted in. The questions are scored from 1 to 3 for each type of parenting styles and the mean score was taken as a cut off point for each category.

A pretested self administered Questionnaire was culled from a book on Parenting Styles and used for this study. ^[1]

Sampling technique:

Seven secondary schools were selected in Enugu and Ebonyi metropolis through stratified random sampling method. These schools were selected out of the secondary schools in Enugu and Abakiliki metropolis through simple random sampling method. This comprised two boys only school, two girls only school and three mixed schools.

By a simple random selection method, a total of students at each boys' and girls' school were selected by class stream.

The questionnaire was completed by the students during class hours after explanation of the purpose of the study.

Subjects who did not give ascent and who did not completely fill the questionnaire were excluded. The families were assigned socioeconomic classes using the recommended method (modified) by Oyedeji. ^[14]

Ethics and Consent to Participate statement

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical Committee of the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Enugu. Consent was specifically approved by their Principals and parents,

121 and ascent by the students themselves. Confidentiality was assured by informing the respondents
122 not to write their names on the questionnaire.

123 **Data Analysis:** The data were analyzed using SPSS version 19. Chi-square was used to test
124 significant association of categorical variables.

125 **Results:**

126 **Socio-demographics**

127 Eight hundred and twenty eight questionnaires were distributed and all were properly filled and
128 analyzed giving a response rate of 100%. The adolescents were aged 10-19 years with a mean
129 age, 13.8 ± 1.5 years. Four hundred and ninety respondents (59.2%) were males while 338
130 (40.8%) were females. Three hundred and three respondents (36.6%) were from the upper
131 socioeconomic class, while 368 (44.4%) and 157 (19%) were from the middle and lower
132 socioeconomic class respectively. Table I

133 **Parenting styles**

134 Three hundred and sixty one (43.6%) respondents reported having an autocratic parent while 206
135 (24.9%) and 227(27.4%) reported permissive and authoritarian styles respectively. Twenty four
136 24(4.1%) adolescents did not report any parenting styles. Table II

137 **Associations between socio-demographics and type of parenting**

138 Table III shows that there was higher proportion (about 45%) of autocratic parents in both sexes.
139 The difference was not significant statistically ($\chi^2 = 4.577$; $p = 0.101$). Equally all the social class

140 has over 43% of autocratic parents. The difference was not also significant statistically ($\chi^2 =$
141 1.041; $p = 0.904$)

142 **Discussion**

143 The commonest parenting style noted in this study is the autocratic (authoritative) parenting
144 style, followed by authoritarian and permissive styles with relative frequencies of 43.6%, 24.9%
145 and 27.4% respectively. This frequency is similar to the findings in Idukki India where a
146 frequency of 51%, 25% , 24% as autocratic, authoritarian and permissive styles respectively
147 were obtained. ^[16] The reason for these similar findings could be due to similarity in etno-
148 cultural and geographical construct. This study is quite different from that obtained from
149 Christine et al where different parenting styles among different races were obtained. He noted
150 permissive parenting style as the commonest among the white, and very uncommon among the
151 blacks. ^[17]

152 It is not gainsaying the fact that parenting styles are usually influenced by culture. For instance,
153 Francis et al [18] noted that parents from western cultural background tend to highlight
154 permissive style of parenting where self expression and resiliency are paramount while the
155 parents from Asia usually adopt the authoritative style where decisions that will reinforce
156 cultural values are maintained. [18] The fact that Asian Children often outperform their
157 counterparts might lead some to believe that the authoritative style may be the best for academic
158 purposes. ^[18]

159 The greater population (43%) of autocratic parenting style obtained in this study may have an
160 impact on the adolescent. Depending on the mentality of the parents and the point of conflict, the
161 young adolescent may tend to be engaged in the autocratic clench of the parent(s). As an escape

162 mechanism, they tend to present with some dramatic, often medical way, seeking for objective
163 intervention. The sum total of this is that autocratic style of parenting produces stress on their
164 children, some so unbearable that they may beg for external intervention, some may even bolt
165 away from the family, if courageous enough. However a study to correlate styles of parenting
166 and psychosocial impact on adolescents will make this assertion clearer.

167 We noted no association between parenting styles and social class of the adolescent. Though, it
168 is noted, by Hoff, Laurse and Tardiff, writing in the USA that higher socio-economic status has
169 been linked with permissive parental style, while low socio-economic status has been linked with
170 autocratic parenting style.^[19] We also noted no association between parenting styles with
171 gender.

172 **Conclusion**

173 It is noted therefore that in cultures that have positive outcome following autocratic style of
174 parenting are essentially closed societies, those that have little or no external/western influence.
175 Incidentally the Ibos (predominant group in the area of study) have imbibed the western culture
176 such that trying to enforce limits without freedom, autocracy, simply leave the young ones
177 confused and with problems. This study revealed that the commonest style of parenting among
178 adolescents in this area is the autocratic style. This finding tends to explain the clinical
179 observation among these adolescents. We noted no association between parenting styles with
180 gender and non with socioeconomic class.

181 **Recommendation**

It is therefore recommended, at least for this people, should practice the Active or Authoritarian parenting style where both parent and child can reason together even though the parent still has the last word – freedom with expanding limit.

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Tables

Table 1: Socio-demographics of respondents

Variable	n=828	
	Frequency	Percent
Age(years)		
Mean(SD)	12.80(1.52)	
Sex		
Male	338	40.8
Female	490	59.2
Social class		
Upper	303	36.6
Middle	368	44.4

Lower	157	19.0

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239 34

240 **Table 2: Types of parenting**

Variable	n=828	
	Frequency	Percent
Autocratic*	361	43.6
Permissive*	206	24.9
Authoritarian*	227	27.4
None	24	4.1

241 NB:* includes either Father alone, mother alone or both

242 **Table 3: Associations between socio-demographics and type of parenting**

Variable	n=794		
	Autocratic n(%)	Permissive n(%)	Authoritarian n(%)
Sex			
Male	148(45.0)	97(29.5)	84(25.5)
Female	213(45.8)	109(23.4)	143(30.8)
	$\chi^2 = 4.577; \quad p = 0.101.$		
Social Class			
Upper	139(47.3)	71(24.1)	84(28.6)
Middle	156(44.8)	94(27.0)	98(28.2)
Lower	66(43.4)	41(27.0)	45(29.6)
	$\chi^2 = 1.041; \quad p = 0.904.$		

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