

## **PARENTING STYLES, ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOUR AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT IN NORTHERN CROSS RIVER STATE**

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### **Abstract**

After a careful observation of social adjustment of adolescents in northern educational zone of cross river state, Nigeria, social adjustment was formed by a lack of communication and parenting styles that include unclear expectations of behaviour, inconsistent or harsh discipline, conflict between parents and caregivers and low expectation of the child's success. Base on this I was motivated to find out whether parenting styles has any influence on adolescents social adjustment. A null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. Literature review was carried out accordingly. Ex-post factor research was adopted for the study. A sample of 627 respondents were selected for the study. The selection was done through the stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was adopted to test the hypothesis under study, at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that parenting styles significantly influence adolescents social adjustment. Based on the results and finding of the study, it was recommended that parents should learn to accept, guide and be concern over their adolescents needs to avoid academic, health and antisocial problems of adjustment.

**Keyword:** Parenting, styles, adolescent, behaviour, social-adjustment

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## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is the state in human development during which boys and girls move from childhood to adulthood. It normally begins from about 12 years of age. This is usually a period of rapid changes in the individual covering physical, social, intellectual and emotional development of the individuals. The period commences with growth spurts which becomes noticeable at puberty. Physically, rapid changes occur in height and body proportions including sex and associated organs. Socially adolescents develop heterogeneous relationship and become more influenced by peer groups which dominate their social relationship. Their attitudes, interests and values are determined through social relationship with the peer group, most of which conflict with adult values. Emotionally, adolescence is described as a period of storm and stress because of the emotional upheaval, which they encounter. Adolescents generally perceive themselves as adults while society sees them as children. This conflict in perception, between adolescents and adults is the source of conflict between teen, and it affects adolescent's social adjustment.

Adolescents are faced with problems of insecurity, inferiority, frustration and dejection due to the physical, psychological and emotional developments that accompany this state of growth and development. They are therefore faced with the task of developing a personal identity. This is more so because of childhood, parents assume dominant roles in the child's personality, while at adolescence, they require more independence. Their social relationship at this stage is more with the peer group, who influence their interests, attitudes and values (Njama-Abang, 2012).

These characteristics of adolescents demand the guidance and control of parents who are more knowledgeable and experience about societal values and norms to assist adolescents develop their social adjustment. This is necessary because although there are certain personality characteristics that are genetically influenced, they require a pattern of family interaction to either cooperate with genetic tendencies in children or fail to adjust to heredity factors. This assumption presupposes the need for efficient parenting.

Supporting the assumption, Baumrind (1980) confirmed that much social behaviour were prompted by peer group interactions, the parenting styles employed influences their social competence of adjustment. She then suggested four parenting styles, namely: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive (indulgent) and neglectful parenting. Paradoxically, adolescents are

themselves highly suspicious and resentful of adult controls and are extremely sensitive. This is evident in the consistent and continued adolescents' conflict with parents. It is believed that human behaviour is a product of genetic and environmental influence. Parents provide the required socialization that is necessary to bring up the child.

Parenting is the activity which involves bringing up and looking after a child or children. This process may be carried out by biological or blood parents or a parent in the case of single parents. The process may also involve surrogate parents (step-parents or special care-givers) who are not the real parents, but acting in loco parents (Denga and Denga, 2007). They further stated that, parenting children is a badge of honour. This is because children are precious gifts from God. They are highly valued and cherish, inability to produce them bring in threats to couples, worries, anxiety, shame and eventful separation of divorce in marriage. This adequate parenting brings up sound and progressive children while inadequate parenting bred unproductive and undesirable citizens who often turn out to be criminals and problematic in the family setting and society.

Despite these challenges, Baumrind (1967) found what she considered four basic elements that could help in shaping successful parenting: responsiveness, unresponsiveness, demanding and undemanding. From these she identified four parenting styles, which involve a combination of acceptance and responsiveness on one hand and demand and control on the other hand (Santrock, 2005).

Parenting styles therefore are concepts that originate in developmental psychology and describe the ways in which parents influence, teach and control their children. Rather than looking at the specific behaviours of parents, parenting style consider broader pattern of methods. Hence psychologists like Roe (1956) recognize three primary parenting styles namely: emotional concentration (autocratic), avoidance prone (permissive) and accepting (democratic) parenting models.

Similarly, parenting adolescents for social adjustment have become one of the most challenging tasks of raising children. Adolescents are exposed to activities and information from people that challenges their person, family standard and values (Bornstein & Bradley, 2003). These challenges and changes have brought great benefits and problems in the family forms, structure,

parenting rules and children's responses to issues. Experts and psychologist increasingly describe the pressure on contemporary families as frustrating, demanding and confusing (Harvey & Fine, 2004; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Park, 2004). Adolescents in their transitional period are also face with problems of insecurity, inferiority, frustration, rejection and defection. Compounding this are other factors such as peer pressure, school rule, academic pressure, as well as societal pressure and aspirations, well meaning friends and relatives and conflicting theories presented in books and magazines, on television, videos, computers and satellite communication system in many homes. Mckay (2006) affirmed that many parents enjoy their children's infancy and childhood but find their adolescence years a time of crisis and conflict. However, beyond the process of genetic imprint over which the couples or parents or caregivers have no control, the rest of the task of mediation of a course of successful information, development and adjustment of adolescents revolves on the parents. They lay the foundation for successful personality development to the growing person (Arene, 1990). Therefore successful management of adolescents constitutes a challenge which must be accomplished for successful development and transition to adulthood. Parents and adults should act as models for the child. The daily behaviours of parents in the family, their conversations, actions and reactions, their agreement and disagreement, their values and priorities from the basis of adolescents' socialization.

Base on this, the study was carried out to determine the influence of parenting styles on adolescents' social adjustment problems in Northern Educational Zone of Cross River State, with the view of providing empirically validated data that would guide the parents, government of Nigeria and Cross River state, counselors, social workers on the national and rehabilitation strategies for the adolescent child.

## **2. Theoretical background**

Anne Roe need theory of 1956 is adopted for this study. Roe, a clinical psychologist propounded the needs theory in 1956 in relation to parenting styles and occupational choice. She maintained that every individual inherits a tendency to expand his energies and psychic in some particular way. She further opines that the inherited tendency together with childhood experiences determines the manner an individual develops to satisfy his/her needs throughout life. The theorist claimed that needs development to a great extent, was a function of parenting practices.

Roe recognize three primary parenting styles namely: emotional concentration (autocratic), avoidance prone (permissive) and accepting (democratic) parenting models. Emotional concentration parenting ranges from over protection to over demanding. Parents expect much of their children but generally do not explain the reasoning for the rules or boundaries. They are less responsive to their children's needs and are more likely to spank a child rather than discuss the problem. During adolescence, the child may have less social competence as the parent generally tells the child what to do (Eric Digest, 2007). On the other hand, avoidance prone (permissive) parenting ranges from neglect to rejection. Within limit both physical and psychological needs of the child are ignored. Parenting adolescents here tends to be more impulsive and may engage adolescents in behaviour misconduct and maladjustment. In the better cases they are emotionally secure, independent and are willing to learn to accept defeat and also able to live life without the help of someone else. While accepting (democratic) parent sees to it that, the physical and psychological needs are met. Independence and self-reliance are encouraged in an active supportive way (Santrock, 2005). Adolescents with these parents tends to grow up to be independent and having a higher self-esteem because of their give-and-take nature of democratic parenting.

Roe emphasis the need for adequate parental care and understanding of the growing child. In contrast, Roe sees a deeper need for the total acceptance of the child, in order to assist the individual in his/her developmental process as parents and caregiver. Her theory focus on the parent-child interaction, that has to do with mixture of attention, acceptance and avoidance by parents or authority. Roe theory is relevant to this work because it emphasized total acceptance of the individual person, with no personal attachment, which is the basis in guidance and counselling situation, to help the client come out of his/her numerous psychological and emotional problems.

### **3. Statement of problem**

There have been series of complaint from parents, adolescents, teachers, annual reports of social welfare office, administrators and the general public about the behaviour of adolescents and their problem of social adjustment call for immediate attention. The adolescents' behaviour pattern is formed by a transaction of the past, present and future anticipation in accordance with the social setting. Also, the child behaviour may be a product of his environment over which he had no control. Specifically social adjustment is influence by lack of communication and parenting

styles that include unclear expectations of behaviour, inconsistent or harsh discipline, conflict between parents or caregivers and low expectations for the child's success. Hence the adolescent child is forced to fall on his peers who are ready to provide replacement for parents.

Based on this, the study seeks to identify the relevant variables of parenting styles that influence adolescents' social adjustment. Also to find out ways of solving the adolescents' social adjustment problem in its four dimensions of coping with peer pressure, school rules, academic pressure and adult/societal expectations.

#### **4. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of parenting styles on adolescents' social adjustment among senior secondary school students in Northern Educational Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the influence of parenting styles on adolescents' social adjustment

#### **5. Research hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Parenting styles do not significantly influence adolescents' social adjustment.

#### **6. Literature review**

The literature review of the study was reviewed within the context of the main objectives set out for this work, to give direction and focus on what is being investigated. The work is designed to determine the ways in which parenting styles influence adolescents' behaviour and their social adjustment problem.

#### **7. Parenting styles and adolescents' social adjustment**

Adolescents are by nature innovators, idealists and risk takers open to new patterns, goals and lifestyles. They possess enormous potentials which need to be developed through provision of a stimulating environment. Baumrind 1967 parenting styles – authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting – believed that parents should be neither punitive nor aloof. Later they should develop roles for their children and be affectionate with them. These parenting styles are meant to describe normal variation in parenting, not to deviate from parenting, such as may be observed in abusive homes. McKay (2006) asserted that most parents do not fall neatly in one category, but fall somewhere in the middle, showing characteristics of more than one style.

Accordingly, a child's environment includes not only his parents and siblings but also includes geographical location where the child grows, the school, the family social status, values of parents and ethnic or cultural background of parents (Brook, Graber, Pakof, 1994; Laumann, Park & Rosea, 2003). Therefore to make a change to positive behaviour there is need for an individual to adjust to his/her new location, culture and language. A new environment entails new adjustment socially, politically, economically, culturally and religiously. A well adjusted person has positive feelings about himself, perceiving himself as successful and competent, relates well with others, feel satisfied with life and not bogged down with problems.

Similarly, Denga (1988) after looking at maladjustment within the context of need satisfaction posited that, unmet needs create tension and make us restless, aggressive, impudent, delinquent, unsocialized, compulsive, potentially violent, cranky and repulsive. In one way or the other, every human being is maladjusted since he has needs to meet. A non satisfaction of adolescents' need lead them to maladjusted behaviours as stressed above. Hence an adolescents' attempt to meet his/her needs strives towards adjustment. However, no matter how resourceful parents may be in coping with adolescent's needs and problems, parents are bound in most cases to encounter frustration and anxiety.

Regardless of ethnicity, the level of family discord in respect to different parenting styles – seems to hinge primarily on adolescents' personalities and on their parents' treatment of them. Rueter and Conger (1995) in a study of 335 two-percent rural and western families with teenagers' conflict revealed that declined in warm, supportive families during early to middle adolescence, but worsened in a hostile, coercive or critical family atmosphere. Thus must adolescents excel in most areas of their lives when they simply feel that they come from a loving home with responsive parents. Although, adolescents are different from younger children, authoritative parenting seems to work best (Baumrind, 1991). Overtly strict, authoritarian parenting may be especially counterproductive as children enter adolescence and want to be treated more as adults. Hence, when parents do not adjust an adolescent may reject parental influence and seek peer support and approval at all cost.

Wentzel (2002) found that teacher expectation remain important as children approach adolescence. In one study sixth-graders at two suburban middle schools, one predominantly European American and the other predominantly African American, filled out questionnaire

about their classroom experiences. In both schools, high teacher expectations significantly predicted students' motivation, goals and interest. On the other hand, students' perception or negative feedback and lack of encouragement consistently predicted academic and social problem as rated by peers and teachers likewise, parents who are either neutral or negative towards schooling are not likely to encourage either superior intellectual attitudes towards teachers and schools. This affects the growing child, who sees no need for acquiring education, the social setting of the child lack positive direction. As a result, adolescents developed negative motivation for academic attainment (some are caught in examination malpractices and poor performance). These equally influence their social interactions with others in society.

## **8. Methodology**

The design adopted for this study was ex-post factor. The target population of the study comprises all adolescents in Nigeria. The accessible population consisted of all SSII students believed to represent the target population in Northern Education Zone of Cross River State. The choice of SSII students for this study was based on the fact that they have spent not less than five years at secondary school level, and also at their adolescence age and are able to respond to the questionnaire item more effectively. The stratified and simple random sampling techniques were adopted. The stratification was based on adolescents only while the simple random technique was used to select the sample for the study.

The research instrument which was the questionnaire comprises of 12 items on parenting styles and 16 items on the four dimensional level that influences the adolescents' parenting. In terms of validity, four experts in educational measurement, research and evaluation affirmed that the instrument was suitable for measuring what it purported to measure using the split-half, the reliability index of the instrument was found to be 0.93 to 0.95. Data was collected through the use of questionnaire from the sample schools. Through the assistance of research persons, all the 627 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, and were all completed appropriately. The following hypothesis was tested:

Parenting styles do not significantly influence adolescents' social adjustment. The main independent and dependent variables for this study is parenting styles and social adjustment. The major dependent variables are adolescents' social adjustment with four dimensions: coping with peer pressure, coping with school rule, coping with academic pressure and coping with

adult/societal expectations. The mean (x), standard deviation (SD) of the major variables are calculated and presented as in table 1.

The reason for using ex-post facto is that it is a systematic empirical enquiry in which the researcher does not have direct control of the independent variables. This is because the manifestation has already occurred.

**Table 1: Means and standard deviation of variables**

Variable	n	Mean	SD
Autocratic parenting style	627	14.66	1.25
Permissive parenting style	627	14.12	1.28
Democratic parenting style	627	13.80	1.65
Coping with peer pressure	627	8.35	1.34
Coping with school rules	627	7.09	1.60
Coping academic pressure	627	8.72	1.72
Coping with adult/ Societal expectations	627	6.71	3.01

Table 1 shows the mean (X) and standard deviation (SD) of the major variables of the study.

## 9 Results

### 9.1 Hypothesis

Parenting styles do not significantly influence adolescents' social adjustment. The independent variable is parenting styles, while the dependent variable is social adjustment which had four dimensions in this study, namely coping with peer pressure, coping with school rule, coping with academic pressure and coping with adult/societal expectations. Respondents in the sample were categorized into three groups (parenting styles) depending on where they scored the highest among the three sub-scales measuring parenting styles. The statistical analysis technique deployed to test this hypothesis was one way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the results of the analysis are presented in table 2

**Table 2: Analysis of variance of the influence of parenting style on**

Social adjustment sub-variable	Group (parenting style)	N	Mean	SD
Coping with peer	1 (Autocratic)	217	7.90	0.87

pressure	2 (Democratic)	272	8.93	1.51		
	3 (Permissive)	138	7.89	1.16		
	Total	627	8.35	1.34		
Coping with school rule	1 (Autocratic)	217	7.05	0.27		
	2 (Democratic)	272	7.17	0.83		
	3 (Permissive)	138	7.01	0.39		
	Total	627	7.09	0.66		
Coping with academic pressure	1 (Autocratic)	217	8.88	1.78		
	2 (Democratic)	272	8.38	1.58		
	3 (Permissive)	138	9.12	1.79		
	Total	627	8.72	1.72		
Coping with adult/societal expectation	1 (Autocratic)	217	6.16	2.59		
	2 (Democratic)	272	7.49	2.75		
	3 (Permissive)	138	6.04	3.71		
	Total	627	6.71	3.01		
Social adjustment sub-variable	Source of variation	Sum square	Df	Mean square	F-value	Sig level
Coping with parenting pressure	Between group	163.888	2	81.944	52.932	.000*
	within group	966.010	624	1.548		
	Total	1129.898	626			
Coping with school rule	Between group	2.911	2	1.456	4.090*	.017
	within group	222.087	624	0.356		
	Total	224.998	626			
Coping with academic pressure	Between group	60.012	2	30.006	10.408	.000*
	within group	1799.022	624	2.883		
	Total	1859.034	626			
Coping with adult and societal pressure	Between group	201.235	2	145.618	16.863	.000*
	within group	5388.353	624	8.635		
	Total	5679.588	626			
adolescents social adjustment						

The upper part of table show the sizes, mean and standard deviation for the three groups of respondents on each of the four sub-variable of social adjustment. The lower part of the table shows the actual results of ANOVA. The results in table 5 have shown that comparing the three mean values on each of the social adjustment variable yielded calculated F – ratios of 52.932, 4.090, 10.408 and 16.863 for social adjustment sub- variable of coping with peer pressure, with school rules, with academic pressure and with adult/ societal expectations respectively. Each of these ratios is greater than the critical F – ratio of 3.02 at .05 level of significance with 2 and 624 degrees of freedom. With these results, the null hypothesis is rejected in each of the four instances. This implies that parenting styles has a significance influence on adolescents' social adjustment in all its four dimensions of coping with peer pressure, coping with school rules, coping with academic pressure and coping with adult/ societal expectations.

To further explore the pattern of the significance influence parenting style on each of the four dimensions of social adjustment, a post hoc multiples comparison analysis was carried out using Fishers Least significance difference (LSD) test on each of the significance F-values. The results of this analysis are presented in table 3.

**Table 3 Fishers least significance (LSD) analysis of the significance influence of parenting style on adolescent societal adjustment**

Social adjustment sub-variable	Parenting styles		Mean difference		Standard error	Sig. Level
	(i)	-	(j)	(i - j)		
Coping with peer pressure	Auto	demo	-	1.027	.113	.000
		Perm	-	0.012	.135	.930
		Demo	auto	-	.113	.000
	Perm	Perm	-	1.039	.130	.000
		Auto	-	0.012	.135	.930
		Demo	-	1.039	.130	.000
Coping with school rules	Auto	demo	-	0.119	.054	.028
		Perm	-	0.039	.065	.550
	Demo	auto	-	0.119	.054	.028
		Perm	-	0.518	.062	.011

	Perm	Auto	-	0.039	.065	.550
	Demo		-	0.158	.062	.011
Coping with academic pressure	Auto	demo	-	0.506	,155	.001
	Perm		-	0.238	.185	.198
	Demo	auto	-	0.506	.155	.001
	Perm		-	0.745	.177	.000
	Perm	Auto	-	0.238	.185	.198
	Demo		-	0.745	.177	.000
Coping with adolescent expectation	Auto	demo	-	1.329	.267	.000
	Perm		-	0.113	.320	.724
	Demo	auto	-	1.329	.267	.000
	Perm		-	1.442	.307	.000
	Perm	Auto	-	0.113	.320	.724
	Demo		-	1.442	.307	.000

Mean difference is significant at .05 levels

The result of Fishers LSD multiple comparison analysis presented in table 6 indicate that for the social adjustment variables of coping with peer pressure, coping with school rule and coping with adult and societal expectations, adolescents under democratic parenting style are more significantly adjusted than their colleagues who are both under autocratic parenting style and under permissive parenting style. For coping with peer pressure, mean difference of 1.027 between democratic style and autocratic style, and mean different of 1.039 between democratic style and permissive style are each significant at .05 level for coping with school rules, the mean difference between democratic style and autocratic style (0.119) and between democratic style permissive style (0.158) are each significant at .05 level. Similarly for coping with adult/societal expectations the mean difference between democratic style and autocratic style (1.329) and between democratic style and permissive style (1.442) are each significant at .05 level. However, for coping with academic pressure, Table 6 shows that adolescents under autocratic parenting style and adolescents under permissive parenting style are each significantly more adjusted than their colleagues who are under democratic parenting style. The mean differences

between autocratic style and democratic style (0.506) and between permissive style and democratic style (0.745) are each significant at .05 level.

Thus, adolescents brought up under democratic parenting style are significantly more adjusted than adolescents brought up under autocratic and permissive parenting styles in the social adjustment aspects of coping with peer pressure, coping with school rule and coping with adult/societal expectations. However, the reverse is the case with coping with academic pressure where adolescents brought up under autocratic and permissive parenting styles are significantly more adjusted than those brought up under democratic parenting style.

## **9.2 Discussion**

The result of the hypothesis revealed that parenting styles significantly influence adolescents' social adjustment in terms of the four sub-categories. The finding was in line with views of Brook et al (1994); Laumann (2002) they after looking at a child's environment posited that, the family social status, the school, values of parents and ethnic or cultural background of parents can make a change to positive behaviour of an individual to adjust to his/her new location, culture and language. A new environment entails new adjustment socially, politically, economically, culturally and religiously. A well adjusted person has positive feelings about himself, perceiving himself as successful and competent, relates well with others, feel satisfied with life and not bogged down with problems.

Denga (1988) also contended that, unmet needs create tension and make us restless, aggressive, impudent, delinquent, unsocialized, compulsive, potentially violent, cranky and repulsive. In one way or the other, every human being is maladjusted since he has needs to meet. A non satisfaction of adolescents' needs lead them to maladjusted behaviours as stressed above. Hence in an individual attempt to meet his/her needs he strives toward adjustment.

Similarly, regardless of ethnicity, the level of family discord in respect to different parenting styles – seems to hinge primarily on adolescents' personalities and on their parents' treatment of them. Rueter and Conger (1995) in a study of 335 two-percent rural and western families with teenager's conflict revealed that declined in warm, supportive families during early to middle adolescence, but worsened in a hostile, coercive or critical family atmosphere. Thus must adolescents excel in most areas of their lives when they simply feel that they come from a loving

home with responsive parents. Therefore, in parenting adolescents the relationship and interactions should not always be demanding, but a give-and-take process, to help the child move successful in the crisis stage of parent-child relationship.

### **10.1 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusion were reached Parenting styles significantly influence adolescents' social adjustment with respect to the four dimensions of coping with peer pressure, school rules, academic pressure and adult/societal expectations. Also adolescents brought up under democratic parenting style were significantly more adjusted than adolescents brought up under autocratic and permissive parenting styles and in their social adjustment aspect of coping with peer pressure, school rules, and adult/societal expectations. While the reverse was the case with coping with academic pressure, where adolescents brought up under autocratic and permissive parenting styles are significantly more adjusted than those brought up under democratic parenting style.

### **10.2 Recommendations**

The following counselling recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Counsellors, parents, teachers, care-givers and others should understand the generational gap; and recognize that adolescence is a 10-15 years transitional period in the journey to adulthood, rather than an overnight accomplishment. Therefore, knowledge of the characteristics of this stage of development is very important both to the students and practicing counsellors as well as to teachers and parents. Parents and help givers should minimized dictatorial attitudes and treat the child with dignity and respect.
2. Parents and help givers should learn to accept, guide and be concern over their adolescent's needs to avoid academic, health, emotional and social problems. While parents and children should also learn to maintain a cordial relationship and interaction of good communication to avoid family conflict and anti-social crisis.

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