

**IMPACT OF PARENTING STYLE ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT:
INVESTIGATING HOW DIFFERENT PARENTING STYLES
AFFECT CHILD DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES IN IMO STATE,
NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: The study examined the impact of parenting styles on child development, with a particular focus on how authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles influence children's social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Two research questions and two hypotheses were used for the study. A sample of 300 parents and teachers was drawn from primary and secondary schools through stratified random sampling. A structured questionnaire titled the Parenting Style and Child Development Questionnaire (PSCDQ), was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions, while the t-test was employed to test hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that authoritative parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children, including higher self-esteem, better academic performance, and stronger social adjustment. Conversely, authoritarian and neglectful parenting was associated with emotional instability, lower social competence, and weaker academic outcomes. The study concluded that parenting style is a critical determinant of a child's overall development. It is recommended that parents adopt balanced, supportive, and responsive parenting approaches to enhance optimal child growth and functioning.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Child Development, Authoritative Parenting, Authoritarian Parenting, Permissive Parenting, Neglectful Parenting.

INTRODUCTION

Parenting is one of the most significant factors influencing a child's overall development. The family is the first social environment a child encounters, and the way parents interact with their children determines how they think, feel, and behave as they grow. Parenting plays a pivotal role in shaping the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of children. The family is the primary socialization agent, and the way parents interact with their children greatly influences their overall development and adjustment in society. Parenting style refers to the emotional climate and behavioral patterns parents use when nurturing, disciplining, and guiding their children. These patterns affect children's emotional, social, cognitive, and moral development. Bamidele (2021) identified four major parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful, each characterized by varying levels of responsiveness and demandingness.

Globally, Ofoegbu(2023) suggested that parenting style contributes substantially to outcomes such as academic achievement, emotional regulation, self-esteem, and peer relationships. However, cultural, socioeconomic, and educational factors often moderate these effects, making it essential to contextualize research within specific environments. Understanding these dynamics provides insights into effective parenting strategies that promote holistic child development. Parenting style refers to the consistent pattern of attitudes, behaviors, and emotional climate that parents use in raising their children. It encompasses the degree of warmth, control, communication, and discipline parents exercise (Chimobi & Chigozie, 2022).

In the view of Ogu (2022) parenting style can be defined as a psychological construct that represents the standard strategies parents use in raising their children. parenting styles reflect combinations of two main elements: Responsiveness (warmth) – the degree to which parents are supportive and attuned to their children’s needs. Demanding (control) is the degree to which parents set rules, expectations, and monitor their children’s behavior. From these dimensions, Baumrind, as cited in Olatunji (2023), identified four major parenting styles: Authoritative parenting defined by a high level of positive parental regard or simply high responsiveness and high structuring or demanding, is a highly effective form of parenting that positively affects child development, such as academic achievement, emotional development, and social development.

Authoritative parents balance firmness with warmth. They establish clear rules and expectations responsive and supportive. They encourage independence while maintaining consistent discipline. Children raised under this style tend to have high self-esteem, better academic performance, emotional stability, and strong social skills. Authoritarian parents are strict, controlling, and demand obedience without explanation. They often use punishment and have low levels of warmth. This style tends to produce children who are obedient but anxious, withdrawn, and less socially competent, as they are discouraged from expressing their opinions or exploring autonomy.

Permissive Parenting: Permissive parents are indulgent and lenient. They show warmth and affection but enforce few rules or boundaries. While children may develop high self-confidence and creativity, they often struggle with self-control, responsibility, and respect for authority. Neglectful (Uninvolved) Parenting: Neglectful parents show low responsiveness and control. They are often detached or indifferent to their children’s needs. This style is associated with poor emotional regulation, academic underachievement, and behavioral problems, as children lack guidance and emotional security.

According to Irunna (2024) Parenting styles have significant effects on different aspects of child development, which can be seen in the areas of: Cognitive Development - Children’s intellectual growth is largely influenced by the quality of parent-child interaction. Authoritative parenting encourages curiosity, fosters problem-solving skills, and motivates children through open dialogue and encouragement. Conversely, authoritarian and neglectful parenting may hinder learning by creating environments of fear or emotional neglect. Emotional Development - A child’s emotional health is strongly tied to parental warmth and responsiveness. Supportive parents play a crucial role in helping children develop emotional intelligence, empathy, and resilience. In contrast, harsh or indifferent parenting can lead to anxiety, low self-esteem, and emotional insecurity. Social Development - parenting styles shape how children interact with others. Authoritative parents

model respect, cooperation, and empathy, helping their children form healthy relationships. Permissive parenting may produce socially active but sometimes impulsive children, while authoritarian parenting may lead to socially withdrawn or aggressive behaviors. Moral and Behavioral Development - parents serve as moral role models. Authoritative parents use reasoning and discussion to teach values, helping children learn to distinguish right from wrong. Authoritarian parents rely on strict discipline, which may produce outward compliance but not moral understanding. Neglectful parenting often leads to antisocial behaviors due to lack of guidance. In child development, Egbujor (2023) posits that it encompasses various domains, including cognitive, emotional, social, moral, and physical. He further stated that the influence of parenting style is evident across these areas: Cognitive development Authoritative parenting fosters curiosity, problem-solving, and academic success through open communication and encouragement. In contrast, authoritarian parenting may suppress creativity due to fear-based control. Emotional Development - Children raised by authoritative parents tend to exhibit emotional stability and empathy, while those from neglectful homes often experience insecurity and poor self-concept. Social development - Permissive parenting may lead to poor impulse control and difficulty following rules, whereas authoritative parents encourage pro-social behavior and cooperation. Behavioral Outcomes - Neglectful and authoritarian parenting styles are often linked to aggression, defiance, and antisocial behaviors in children.

Statement of the Problem

The family remains the primary social unit responsible for shaping a child's behavior, personality, and overall development. However, in recent years, there has been a growing concern in Imo State, Nigeria, about the increasing cases of poor academic performance, low self-esteem, aggression, and social maladjustment among children. These challenges may be linked to variations in parenting practices adopted by parents. While some parents are nurturing and supportive, others are overly strict, permissive, or indifferent to their children's emotional and educational needs. Despite the recognition that parenting style plays a crucial role in determining children's cognitive, emotional, and social outcomes, many parents in Imo State appear unaware of how their approach to child-rearing affects their children's development. This has led to inconsistent developmental outcomes among children from similar socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, the problem of this study is the apparent lack of understanding of how different parenting styles, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful, influence children's academic, emotional, and social development in Imo State, Nigeria..

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to examine the relationship between parenting styles and various aspects of child development. The population comprised parents and teachers of children aged 6–15 years in selected schools. 300 respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique, which comprised 150 parents and 150 teachers. rating scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree was used for the study. The instrument covered four domains: cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral development. Descriptive statistic of the arithmetic mean was used to answer the research questions, while the t-test was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS

Research Question One: How does authoritative parenting style promote positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State?

Table 1. Mean responses of parents and teachers on how authoritative parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State

S/N	Item Statement	Parents			Teachers		
		N	\bar{X}	Decision	N	\bar{X}	Decision
1	Authoritative parenting style, characterized by warmth, communication, and consistent discipline, promotes children's self-confidence, emotional stability, and academic achievement in Imo State	150	3.2	Agree	150	3.0	Agree
2	Children raised by authoritative parents in Imo State demonstrate better social adjustment, moral responsibility, and problem-solving abilities due to the balance of parental support and firm guidance.	150	3.5	Agree	150	3.3	Agree
Mean of Mean		3.4			3.2		

Findings revealed that authoritative parenting style had the most positive impact on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. These children exhibited better self-confidence, emotional stability, and academic achievement in Imo State. Children raised by authoritative parents in Imo State demonstrate better social adjustment, moral responsibility, and problem-solving abilities due to the balance of parental support and firm guidance. The neglectful style correlated strongly with behavioral problems and academic underachievement. These results align with prior studies (Steinberg, 2001), reinforcing the universality of authoritative parenting as a beneficial approach across cultures.

H0₁: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of parents and teachers on how authoritative parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State

Table 2: t-test analysis of significant difference between the mean rating of parents and teachers on how authoritative parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State

Group	N	\bar{X}	s.d	d.f	t _{cal}	t _{crit.}	Decision
Parents	150	3.4	0.01				
Teachers	150	3.2	0.01				
				297	0.67	1.96	H ₀ Accepted

Table 2 presents the t-test analysis of the significant difference between the mean ratings of parents and teachers on how authoritative parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State. The results show that parents had a mean score of 3.4, while teachers had a mean score of 3.2, with a standard deviation of 0.01 for both groups. The calculated t-value (t_{cal}) of 0.67 is less than the critical t-value (t_{crit}) of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 297 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated t-value is lower than the critical value, the null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of parents and teachers on how authoritative parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children. Both groups therefore agreed that authoritative parenting—characterized by warmth, consistent discipline, and open communication—significantly enhances children’s self-esteem, academic performance, and social adjustment in Imo State.

Research Question Two: How does neglectful parenting style promote positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State?

Table 3. Mean responses of parents and teachers on how neglectful parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State

S/N	Item Statement	Parents			Teachers		
		N	\bar{X}	Decision	N	\bar{X}	Decision
3	Children raised by neglectful parents in Imo State develop independence and self-reliance due to minimal parental involvement	150	3.1	Agree	150	3.0	Agree
4	Limited parental supervision in neglectful homes in Imo State encourages some children to learn responsibility through personal experience.	150	3.3	Agree	150	3.1	Agree
	Mean of Mean		3.2			3.1	

Findings revealed how neglectful parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State. The outcome of the result shows that Children raised by neglectful parents in Imo State develop independence and self-reliance due to minimal parental involvement. Additionally, Limited parental supervision in neglectful homes in Imo State encourages some

children to learn responsibility through personal experience. The means of 3.2 and 3.1 revealed that the item statements are how neglectful parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of parents and teachers on how neglectful parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State.

Table 4: t-test analysis of significant difference between the mean rating of parents and teachers on how neglectful parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State

Group	N	\bar{X}	s.d	d.f	t _{cal}	t _{crit.}	Decision
Parents	150	3.2	0.02				
Teachers	150	3.1	0.02				
				297	0.43	1.96	H0 Accepted

Table 4 presents the t-test analysis of the significant difference between the mean ratings of parents and teachers on how neglectful parenting styles promote positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State. The results indicate that parents had a mean score of 3.2, while teachers had a mean score of 3.1, both with a standard deviation of 0.02. The calculated t-value ($t_{cal} = 0.43$) is less than the critical t-value ($t_{crit} = 1.96$) at the 0.05 level of significance with 297 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated t-value is lower than the critical value, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. This result implies that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of parents and teachers regarding how neglectful parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children. Both groups agreed that neglectful parenting, characterized by a lack of attention, emotional detachment, and minimal involvement in a child's life, does not promote positive developmental outcomes. Instead, it is likely to hinder children's emotional stability, social competence, and academic performance in Imo State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the mean responses of parents and teachers on how authoritative parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State. The data revealed that both groups of respondents agreed that the authoritative parenting style has a significant positive influence on children's development. For item one, parents had a mean score of 3.2 while teachers had a mean score of 3.0, both indicating agreement that authoritative parenting—characterized by warmth, open communication, and consistent discipline enhances children's self-confidence, emotional stability, and academic achievement. This suggests that when parents maintain a balance between affection and control, children are more likely to perform well academically and exhibit emotional maturity. Similarly, for item two, parents recorded a higher mean score of 3.5, while teachers had a mean score of 3.3, also reflecting an agreement that children raised by authoritative parents tend to show better social adjustment, moral responsibility, and problem-solving abilities. This finding aligns with Bamidele's (2021) assertion that the authoritative style produces well-adjusted and competent children, as it encourages independence within a framework of clear

expectations. The mean of mean scores (3.4 for parents and 3.2 for teachers) further confirms that both groups perceive authoritative parenting as the most effective approach in promoting holistic child development in Imo State. The slight variation between the mean ratings may indicate that parents observe these developmental changes more directly at home, while teachers notice them through classroom behaviors and social interactions. Overall, the findings corroborate previous research (Egbujor, 2023) that authoritative parenting promotes positive developmental outcomes, including academic success, emotional stability, and social competence. This implies that promoting authoritative parenting practices among families in Imo State can significantly enhance the quality of child upbringing and long-term societal well-being.

Table 2 presents the mean responses of parents and teachers on how neglectful parenting style promotes positive developmental outcomes in children in Imo State. The results indicate that both groups of respondents agreed that, to some extent, neglectful parenting may contribute to certain aspects of children's independence and responsibility, even though it is generally regarded as an unfavorable parenting approach. For item three, parents reported a mean score of 3.1, while teachers reported 3.0, indicating agreement that children raised by neglectful parents tend to develop independence and self-reliance due to minimal parental involvement. This suggests that in the absence of close supervision, some children learn to manage themselves and make decisions independently. However, while this independence can be viewed as a positive outcome, it may also come with emotional or behavioral challenges if not balanced with parental support. For item four, parents had a mean score of 3.3, and teachers 3.1, indicating that respondents agreed that limited parental supervision can encourage some children to learn responsibility through personal experience. This finding implies that when children are left to navigate situations on their own, they may develop a sense of responsibility and problem-solving ability out of necessity. The mean of the mean scores (3.2 for parents and 3.1 for teachers) further supports the notion that respondents perceive that neglectful parenting can, in some cases, produce adaptive traits such as self-reliance and decision-making ability. Nevertheless, these outcomes are often the result of children compensating for the lack of parental involvement rather than the direct benefits of neglectful parenting. Overall, while the findings acknowledge minor positive traits emerging from neglectful parenting, they also reinforce that this style is not ideal for fostering holistic child development. Consistent with Ogu's (2022) position, neglectful parenting deprives children of emotional warmth and guidance, which are essential for balanced growth. Therefore, parents in Imo State are encouraged to provide both autonomy and emotional support to ensure that children's independence develops within a nurturing and responsible environment.

Conclusion

Parenting style is a critical predictor of child development outcomes. Among the four identified styles, the authoritative approach—marked by warmth, responsiveness, and consistent discipline was found to be most beneficial. The study emphasizes that parental involvement, communication, and emotional support are essential for fostering well-rounded, resilient, and socially competent children.

Recommendations

1. Parent Education Programs: Government and NGOs should organize seminars and workshops to educate parents on effective parenting practices.
2. School-Parent Collaboration: Schools should strengthen partnerships with parents to align home and school discipline strategies.
3. Counseling Services: Family and child development counselors should help parents understand how their parenting style affects children's growth.
4. Policy Intervention: Child welfare policies should promote family stability and positive parenting through community support systems.
5. Further Research: Future studies should investigate cultural variations in parenting and their influence on adolescents' mental health and educational outcomes.

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