

**INFLUENCE OF PARENTING STYLE ON SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of parenting style on social adjustment of undergraduate students in the University of Port Harcourt. The study was an expos-factor design. The sample of this study consisted of 1.533 under graduate student drawing using stratified random sampling technique. Two instruments where used in this study. They are Parenting Style Assessment Scales (SAS), which were developed and validated. Five research questions and five null hypotheses guided the study. The result showed that the parenting style has significant influence on social adjustment of undergraduate students. The result revealed that there is a significant difference on the influence of authoritative style of parenting on social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students. The result also revealed that there is no difference no significant difference on the influence of authoritarian style of parenting on social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students. The result also showed that there is a significant difference on the influence of uninvolved style of parenting on social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students.

Background to the Study

Developmental psychologists have been interested on how parents influence the development of children's social and instrumental competence since at least 1920s. One of the robust approaches to this area is what has been called 'parenting styles'. Parenting is helping a child find the pet mouse before the cat does, or listening to a joke your son had just told you. People learn how to parent not from reading not from reading books or taking a course although both of them can be helpful, but the way they were parented. In this sense, parenting is more of who one is than what one does, passed from generation to generation to the next much like eye colour or body build (Dakat, 2020).

Parenting style is the strategy which parents adopt to bring up their children. Darling and Steinberg (2013) defined parenting styles as a constellation of the attitude toward the child communicated to the child by the parents that taken together creates an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviour are expressed. Different parenting styles portrays the involvement and the non-involvement of parental love with consequent or lack of it.

Parenting is a unit of many styles of child rearing and the styles investigated in this study in relation to the social adjustment include authoritarian/authoritarian parenting, authoritative/democratic parenting, permissive/indulgent parenting, uninvolved/rejectful parenting. A parent who is very responsive but not all demanding is labelled Permissive whereas one who is equally responsive but also very demanding is labelled Authoritative, parents who are very demanding but not responsive are either Authoritarian, parents who are either demanding nor responsive are labelled uninvolved (Steinberg, 2019).

Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviours that work individually and together to influence child outcomes. Although specific parenting behaviours such as spanking or reading aloud, may influence child developments, looking at any specific behaviour in isolation may be misleading (Nancy, 2014). However many writers have noted that specific parenting practices are less important in predicting child well being than in the broad pattern of parenting. Although parents may try to 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 parents is to influence, teach and socialized their children. Parental socialization practices have been found to be related to children's school adjustment (Baumrind, 2024).

The concept of social adjustment defined by Weis (2023) is an interactive ability of an individual with his peers or counterparts in the pursuance of special goals and objectives without conflict in social system. Anderson (2010) defines social adjustment as scientific study of human relationship in the society. The relationship he expanded upon are family, educational institutions, industry etc. The relationships affect and in turn affected by relationships in the wider society.

The concept of social adjustment explains the ability of an individual to actually cope with the challenges they face. Social adjustment theories emphasize that people are most influenced by the assessment of their own past experiences and they are influenced by the experiences of others. People make assumption about their ability to success or by watching others succeed or fail. Social adjustment therefore embraces the core ethical values such as fairness, responsibility, compassion, honesty, and respect for self and others in the context of character education of people. Thus we see that adjustment means reaction to the demands and pressure of social environment imposed upon the individual. The demand may be external or internal to whom the individual has to react to. Observe the live of a child, he is used to do this and not to do other things. He has to follow certain beliefs and set of values which the family follows. His personality develops in the continuous process of interaction with his family environment (Chauhan, 2022).

Observation has shown that there are two categories of undergraduate students with regard to their social adjustment. There are some that are well adjusted and can relate with people around them irrespective of their social-economic status and gender. Personal with such undergraduate students reveals that they have high values and regard to their fellow human beings. There are others who are deviants can hardly relate well with people around them. Chuahan (2022) working on social adjustment identified two categories of social adjustment when he reported that everybody wants to be socially accepted by other persons. If a person obeys social norms, beliefs and set up values, he or she is said to be adjusted, but if he or she satisfies his needs through antisocial means, then he is called a maladjusted person. Nwakwo (2023) opines that this form of unreasonable attachment denies the victim the opportunity to engage in normal rational relationship with persons and things.

However, it is quite obvious that factors like socio economic status and genetic influence are related to some reasonable extent to one's level of social adjustment when they are critically examined, but one question that has still not been answered is the issue of one failing to adjust even when there is adequate socio economic status. Again, on the issue of genetic influence, just as it has been clearly stated by Scarr (2014), gene do not rigidly determine a person's characteristics, instead a developmental possibilities inherited, which can be thwarted or encouraged by experience. It is however that the researchers thought is wise to look into the influence of parenting styles on social adjustment.

The behaviour and attitudes of students have been highly related to parenting style. Often times, parents have been blamed for not doing their job well, and this has posed a kind of confusion to most parents. The reason is that they do not seem to understand why they should be blamed, especially in a situation where such child has chosen to behave differently from his or her other siblings. Many undergraduate students have been found to perform poorly in their ability to fit in well with the pressure emanating from the university environment. This can sometimes lead to withdrawal from school. It is quite obvious that the kind of parenting style received by any child has a far reaching consequence on the child's developmental outcome, but the degree of such influence is not yet known, especially among the undergraduate students of the university of port Harcourt. The problem of study is

therefore: How does parenting style influence undergraduate students' social adjustment considering their gender?

Based on the above introduction, the following research questions and hypotheses guided the study:

- To what extent do parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved style) influence social adjustment of undergraduate students?
- How does authoritarian style of parenting influence social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students?
- To what extent does permissive style of parenting influence social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students?
- How does uninvolved style of parenting influence social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students?
- There is no significant difference in the influence of parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved) on social adjustment of undergraduate students.
- There is no significant difference between male and female students in their social adjustment as a function of their authoritative parenting.
- There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students in their social adjustment as a function of their authoritarian parents.
- There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students- their social adjustment as a function of their permissive parenting.
- There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students in their social adjustment as a function of their uninvolved parenting.

Method

The design of the study is ex-post facto design. This design is considered appropriate; the present study meets all the requirements for the ex-post facto design. A sample of 1,533 undergraduate students were used in this study. Stratified random sample was adopted in the selection of the sample of this study which was drawn from the Kogi State University and Federal University of Lokoja. 219 undergraduate students were drawn from each faculty. The researchers selected 126 females and 93 males from each faculty, irrespective of their departments and levels. Two sets of instruments were used in the study. One is Parenting Style Assessment Scales (PSAS), and the second one is Social Adjustment Scale (SAS). These instruments are based on five points like-scale. They were all designed by the researcher. The Parenting Style Assessment Scale (PSAS) was used to access all parenting styles of the respondents used in the study, namely, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parenting. The instrument has five sections: A,B,C,D and E. Section A was designed to elicit personal information from the respondents, such as gender, while section B,C,D and E contains 13 items each, which were meant to elicit information from the respondents on the following parenting styles, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved. From each section that contains 13 items, it is made up both positive and negative items. The items were responded to on

a five points scale of strongly (SA, agree (A), undecided (U), disagree(D), and strongly disagree(SD). The instrument contains 52 items, on the whole.

The social Adjustment Scale (SAS) was used to ascertain the varying levels of social adjustment among students. The instrument is made up of two sections. Section A was meant to elicit personal information such as gender, faculty and level, just like PSAS. Section B of this instrument contains 18 items which focused on social adjustment. Out of these 18 items, 10 are positively keyed while the remaining 8 are negatively keyed. The items of instrument were also responded to on a five point scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD).

The reliability of the instrument used in this study was ascertained with test-retest method. A reliability coefficient of 0.93 was obtained. The value is high enough to permit the use of the instrument for this study. The researchers administered the instruments to the respondents with the help of some research assistants.

For the scoring of Parenting Style Assessment (PSAS), the total score of each respondent was noted on each section of the instrument. This was possible because, items that were positively keyed were scored as follows, SA=5, S=4, U=3, D=2, and SD=1 while items that are negatively keyed are as follows, SA=1, S=2, U=3, D=4, and SD=5. Based on this, the researchers were able to categorise the respondents into the various parenting styles. The respondents were categorized based on the mid-point of 65 which is the maximum score, and 13 was the minimum score, (that is for each section of the instrument). However, a respondent who scored an average of 32.5 and above in any of this parenting style was considered to belong to that particular style, while any score below 32.5 was not considered.

For the scoring of social adjustment scale (SAS), the same method explained above was used also. Item which were positively framed have scores ranging from 5 to 1 while negatively frame one's have reversed scores from 1 to 5. The researcher also made use of the five point scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree (SD). Considering also that the maximum score in this instrument was 90, therefore, 45 (that was the mid-point of 90) was used to ascertain the level of students social adjustment. Any score from 45 and above was accepted as socially adjusted while below 45 was seen as socially maladjusted.

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while hypothesis one was tested with one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The remaining four hypothesis were tested with t-test. All at 0.05 levels of significance.

Results

Table 1:

Mean (X), and Standard Deviation (SD) of the in influence of Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive and Uninvolved Styles of Parenting on Social Adjustment of Undergraduate Students.

Parenting Styles	N	Mean	Social Adjustment Standard deviation
Authoritative	455	71.84	6.08
Authoritarian	328	64.92	6.81
Permissive	384	60.65	7.20
Uninvolved	366	55.87	9.75
Total	1,533	63, 75	9.66

The data in table 1 shows undergraduate students that are raised by adopting parenting styles such as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved, with a sample size of 455, 382, 384, and 366 respectively. These students have a mean score and standard deviation of 71, 84 (X), 6.08 (SD), 64.92 (X), 6.81 (SD), 60.65(X), 7.20 (SD), and 55.87 (X), 9.75 (SD). The mean score of those from authoritative homes. While those from authoritarian home scored higher than those from permissive with 4.27, the score of those from permissive homes is higher than that of those from uninvolved with 4.78. However, for the sample size of this study, its mean score is 63.75 (X), while the standard deviation is 9.66.

Table: 2

Summary of one-two ANOVA on the influence of Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved Style of Parenting on Social Adjustment of Undergraduate Students.

Sources	sum of	of DF	Mean	F-ratio	F-crit	Alphalevel
Variances	squares	Square				
Between groups	56644.63	3	18881.54	333.93	2.60	0.05
Within groups	86456.12	1,529				
Total	143100.78	1,532				

With Between groups=56644.63, Within groups=86456.12, Sum of squares=143100.78, df=1,532, the calculated F- ratio= 333.93 and the F-critical values= 2.60. Therefore, since the calculated F-ratio is greater than the F-critical, the hypothesis (H_{01}) is thus rejected

and the conclusion is that, there is a significant difference between the influence of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved style of parenting on social adjustment of undergraduate students.

Table 3:

Mean(X) and Standard Deviation (SD) of the Influence of Authoritative Parenting Styles on Social Adjustment of Male and Female Undergraduate Students.

Parenting Style	N	Social Adjustment	
		Mean	Standard deviation
Male	170	72.36	6.30
Female	285	71.53	5.93

The information in table 4.2 shows mean value of 72.36 and standard deviation of 6.30 for male and mean scores of 71.53 and standard deviation of 5.93 for female undergraduate students whose parents adopted authoritative style of parenting. The male scored higher with a mean score difference of 83.

Table 4:

T-test analysis of influence of authoritative Style of Parenting on Social Adjustment of Male and Female Undergraduate Students.

Parenting Style	N	Social Adjustment					
		Mean	SD	DF	T-Cal	T-crit	Alpha level
Males	170	72.36	6.30	453	1.41	1.96	0.05
Females	285	71.53	5.93				

With N=455, DF=453, the calculated t-ratio was 1.41 and the Critical value= 1.96. Since the calculated t-ratio is less than the T-critical value, the hypothesis (Ho₂) is thus accepted. Conclusion therefore is that, there is no significant difference between the influence of authoritative style of parenting on social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students.

Table 5:

Mean(X) and Standard Deviation (SD) of the influence of the Authoritarian Style of Parenting on Social Adjustment of Male and Female undergraduate.

Parenting Style	N	Social Adjustment	
		Mean	Standard deviation
Male	130	65.55	6.67
Female	198	64.51	6.89

The information in table 4.3 shows a mean score of 65.55, and standard deviation of 6.67 for males and mean scores of 64.51, and standard deviation of 6.89 for females whose parents adopted authoritarian style. The males scored higher with a mean score difference of 1.04.

Table 6:

T-test Analysis of the Influence of Authoritative Style of Parenting on Social Adjustment of male and Female Undergraduate Students.

Parenting Style		N		Social Adjustment			
				Mean	SD	DF	T-Cal T-crit. Alpha level
Males	130	65.55	6.67	326	1.36	1.96	0.05
Females	198	64.51	6.89				

With N=328, DF=326, the Calculated t-ratio is 1.36, and the T-critical is 1.96. Since the Calculated ratio is less than the T-critical value, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is thus accepted. Conclusion therefore is that, there is no significant difference between the influence of authoritative style parenting on social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students.

Table 7:

Mean(X) and Standard Deviation (D) of the Influence of Permissive Style of Parenting on Social Adjustment of Male and Female Undergraduate Students.

Parenting Style		N		Social Adjustment	
				Mean	Standard Adjustment
Male	140	63.08	6.34		
Female	244	59.26	7.30		

The above information in table 4.4 shows a mean value of 63.08 and the standard deviation of 6.34 for males and mean scores of 59.26, and standard deviation of 7.30 for females. The males scored higher with a mean score difference of 3.82.

Table 8:

t-test Analysis of Influence of Permissive Style of Parenting on Social Adjustment of Male and Female Undergraduate Students.

Parenting Style		N		Social Adjustment			
				Mean	SD	DF	T-Cal T-crit. Alpha level
Males	140	63.08	6.34	382	5.17	1.96	0.05
Females	244	59.26	7.30				

With N=384, DF= 382, the Calculated t-ratio was 5.17, and T-crit is 1.96. Since the t-calculated value is higher than the t-critical value, the null hypothesis (H_{04}) is thus rejected. Conclusion therefore is that there is no significant difference between the influence of Permissive style of parenting on the social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students.

Table 9:

Mean (X) and Standard Deviation (SD) of the Influence of Uninvolved Style of Parenting on Social Adjustment of Male and Female Undergraduate Students.

Parenting Style		N		Social Adjustment	
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Uninvolved		Mean	Standard deviation
Male	213	57.65	9.34
Female	153	53.40	9.79

The information in table 4.5 show a mean value of 57.65 and standard deviation of 9.34 for males and mean score of 53.40, and standard deviation of 9.79 for females. The males score higher with a mean score difference of 4.25.

Table 10:

Result of t-test Analysis of the Influence of Uninvolved Style of Parenting on Social Adjustment of Male and Female Students.

Parenting style	N	Social Adjustment				
		Mean	SD	DF	T-Cal	T-crit. Alpha level
Uninvolved						
Males	213	57.65	9.34	364	4.21	1.96 0.05
Females	153	53.40	9.79			

With N=366, DF=364, the calculated t-ratio is 4.21, and the 4.21, and the T-critical value=1.96, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, hence the T-Calculated is less than the T-critical value. Conclusion therefore is that there is a significant difference between the influence of uninvolved style parenting on social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students.

Discussions of Findings

The results showed that the mean score for those from authoritative homes is more than those from authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved homes. While those from authoritarian home scored higher than those from uninvolved. This supports Baumrind (2012) who sees authoritative style of parenting as clearly superior to other styles. Analysis of variance indicated that there is a significant difference between the influence of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved style of parenting on social adjustment of undergraduate students. This result also corroborated the study carried out by Lanborn, Mounts, Steinberg, and Dornbusch (2014) who found out that adolescents from authoritative homes reported significantly high level of psychosocial success than adolescents from authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved in terms of positive conceptualizations, greater well-being, and fewer behaviour problems. It is also in agreement with the views of Weiss (2012) who noted that children from uninvolved homes scored lower than children from permissive homes on social adjustment.

On the other hand, the result of study is contrary to that of Weiss (2015) on permissive and Authoritarian style of parenting. Even though the study confirmed that better adjustment are yielded from children from authoritative homes. Weiss reported that children of permissive parents show better adjustment than those from authoritarian homes in Personal/Emotional adjustment. The result also had it that the college students of permissive parents are in fact as well adjusted as those from authoritative parents, socially.

The study revealed that there is no significant difference between the influence of authoritative style of parenting on social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students. This findings is similar to findings of Cooper, Grotevent and Condon (2023) who discovered that adolescents tend to do best when they grow up in a family atmosphere that permits the development of individuality as against a backdrop of close families. Gray and Stenberg (2015) in their study also discovered that the more adolescent perceive their parent to be loving and caring, they more positive they are in evaluating their own general conduct, psychological development, and mental health. The result also supports Ruetter and Conger (2014), who discovered the adolescents who are permitted to assert their own opining within the family context that is secure and loving develop higher self esteem and mature coping abilities.

The result shows that there is no significant difference between the influence of authoritarian style of parenting on social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students. This supports the findings of Ruetter and Conger (2022), Cobb (2019) and Baumrind (2012) because they never discovered any significant difference on the influence of authoritarian style on social adjustment of male and female adolescents, apart from in the area of ethnicity. For instance, in the study of Chinese and American mothers in the use of punishment, this result really go a long way to prove that authoritarian style of parenting is not being interpreted as wickedness on the part of parents by children from this part of the country, hence both the male and female reared in such homes can still compete or strive in the midst of children reared in authoritative homes.

The study also revealed that there is a significant difference between the influence of permissive style of parenting on social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students. The result of this study supports the Steinberg (2015) who sees parental non-demandingness (that is permissive style of parenting) to be slightly worse among girls than boys. This could due to the obvious fact that males do not want be subdued in any way in their environment, and because of that, they work hard these days to see how they can fit in socially in their environment.

The study also revealed a significant difference between the influence of uninvolved style of parenting on social adjustment of male and female undergraduate students. This result is similar to the findings of Steinberg (2015) who sees parenting non-responsiveness to be slightly worse among girls than boys. The present study also has the same result.

Some researchers have come up with some benefits attached to either authoritarian or permissive style of parenting despite their characteristics, but none has ever come up with a good thing concerning children from uninvolved homes. No wonder Shaffer (2011) concluded that the insecurity surrounding a child's interpersonal relationship may make the child less interested in the novel aspect of their environment, thereby hindering the exploitative activities and preventing her from developing the individual initiative that would help her to answer questions and solve problems. This is however, the worst of parenting, because its victims lack a lot, in terms of what it takes to survive in any environment.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the result of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Parents should make communication a priority. Be open to discussion; take time to explain your decisions and motives, and listen to your children point of view. By doing so, they will be encouraged to build up their confidence.
2. An awareness campaign has to be set up for effective parenting style, both in the rural and urban areas. On this note, a lot has to be done in the rural area, because, how much more being aware of their outcomes on children in their later years.
3. University counselling unit should mount programmes that aim at addressing the issue of social adjustment among undergraduate students, especially, on the consequences of maladjustment.
4. A workshop programmes can also be used to assist some students who have essential level of competence, but lack confidence or learning skills.
5. Parents should be given practical support (adequate housing, income, employment, educational, health, social support welfare services), psychological and emotional support inter personal within family and the community and a network of support services.
6. Students should try and understand that their ill interaction can lead to poor academic performance. In that case, they should try and see how they can help themselves considering what is at stake.
7. Universities should set up a monitoring team, in other to identify victims of poor parenting styles at their very first year in the university. With that properly done, a lot will be achieved in an effort to help these victims of poor style of parenting to fit it well in the school environment and society at large.

Thus when we look at the findings concerning parenting practices and adolescent development, we must remember that just as parents affect their adolescents' behaviour, so do adolescent affect their parents, thereby playing a role in shaping their own development. Obviously, parents and children are individuals and not easily categorized. Most will show characteristics of several styles, but over time, one style generally prevails. However, despite the long and robust tradition of the research into parenting style, a number of issues of outstanding. Foremost among these are issues of definition, developmental change in manifestation and correlates of parenting style, and the process underlying the benefits of authoritative parenting. The findings of the study however, provides implication for parental intervention and the need for further replication of the study with the consideration of socio economic status, and child's characteristics, hence the issue of socialization is not a one way but a two way street.

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