

Exploring the Correlation between Parenting Styles and Socio-Emotional Skills of Preschoolers in Shomolu Local Government Area, Lagos State

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Abstract

Lack of parental, caregiver, sibling, and peer interaction delay preschoolers' socio-emotional development. This causes discontent, academic failure, and behavioural issues. This study examined how parenting styles affect preschoolers' socio-emotional skills in Shomolu LGA, Lagos State. Using a Correlational survey research design, this study targeted all Kindergarten preschoolers and their parents from public pre-primary schools in Shomolu LGA of Lagos State. The sample included 120 Kindergartens and their parents from 10 randomly chosen Shomolu LGA public pre-primary schools. Kimble (2014) and Saadu and Agbo (2022) were used to adapt a 20-item Parenting Styles Scale (PSS) and a 14-item Preschooler Socio-emotional Skills Assessment Scale (PSESAS) with 0.77 and 0.89 reliability coefficients, respectively. A 0.05 significance level was employed to test the hypotheses using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings showed a significant negative relationship between authoritarian parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill, a significant negative relationship between permissive parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill, and a significant positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill. This study suggests that workshops and seminars should educate parents about parenting approaches that promote socio-emotional skills development in children inside and outside the school.

Keywords: Authoritarian, Authoritative, Parenting style, Permissive, Preschool, Socio-emotional development

Introduction

Socio-emotion refers to the distinctive pattern of thoughts and behaviours that make up a person's personality. It is also viewed as the distinctive patterns of behaviour, beliefs, and physical characteristics that individuals develop, which differ among individuals, groups, and societies. Given that human beings are inherently social creatures, it is highly probable that their personality, opinions, and conduct have a significant impact on or play a decisive role in determining their overall success and contentment in life. The personality of an individual is determined by factors such as their interpersonal relationships, level of self-control, and drive and perseverance throughout activities (Merita, 2013).

Shaffer and Gordon (2005) define parenting styles as the typical differences in parenting that serve as the means through which children acquire the societal norms from their parents. Husenits (2006) defined parenting styles as the beliefs, attitudes, and values of parents that influence the most effective ways of carrying out parenting. According to Stevens (2008), parenting style pertains to the manner in which parents provide direction, establish boundaries, and engage with their children. According to Woolfolk (2010), parenting styles are defined as the methods of engaging with and enforcing discipline onto children. Parents vary in their approaches to controlling and socialising their children, as well as the extent to which they employ these methods. Nevertheless, the primary function that parents fulfil is that of socialising, instructing, and directing their children (Shaffer & Gordon, 2005), thereby equipping them for independent lives as adults. Optimal socialisation facilitates the child's successful functioning as an adult, even in the absence of parents. Thus, it is plausible to anticipate the outcome of socialisation by studying child-rearing methods employing permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting techniques (Husenits, 2006).

Socio-emotional skills encompass the cognitive and behavioural qualities that allow individuals, especially young children, to comprehend and regulate emotions, establish healthy connections with others, and exhibit

empathy and conscientious decision-making. These skills are fundamental in early life as they have a substantial impact on a child's capacity to engage with peers, negotiate social environments, and attain academic achievements. Denham *et. al.* (2019) state that socio-emotional skills in preschoolers encompass emotional control, awareness of society, and interpersonal interaction, all of which are essential for proper development. Acquiring these abilities at a young age is crucial as they have a significant role in one's overall welfare, encompassing improved mental well-being and academic achievements (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Moreover, children who demonstrate robust socio-emotional abilities are more inclined to display prosocial behaviour and effectively adjust to the requirements of formal schooling (Raver, 2020). Thus, cultivating socio-emotional abilities during the preschool years is a crucial component of ECE.

Parenting styles pertain to the techniques and strategies employed by parents in the upbringing of their children, comprising issues such as communication, discipline, and emotional support. The impact of these techniques on children's development, especially their socio-emotional skills, is substantial. Baumrind's (1967) influential research classified parenting styles into four primary categories: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. Authoritative parenting, which is defined as a combination of being highly responsive and having high expectations, is frequently linked to favourable socio-emotional results in children, such as the ability to regulate their own behaviour and being socially competent (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Authoritarian parenting, characterised by a focus on compliance and discipline with limited responsiveness, can result in problems such as anxiety and social isolation (Pinquart, 2017). Permissive parenting, characterised by a high level of attentiveness but a low level of demands, can lead to inadequate self-discipline and difficulties in social interactions (Smetana, 2017). Neglectful parenting, characterised by a lack of responsiveness and minimal expectations, is associated with the most unfavourable socio-emotional consequences, such as diminished self-esteem and challenges in establishing interpersonal connections (Muris *et. al.*, 2018).

For the purpose of this study, however, authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative parenting styles are considered.

Authoritarian parents exert excessive control over their children by imposing strict boundaries (Dolecki, 2012). They lack displays of affection and are insensitive to their children's appeals. Parents frequently anticipate their children to demonstrate behaviour that is not suitable for their age (Lichtman, 2011). An instance of this is when preschoolers are anticipated to remain silent for an extended duration. Additionally, they fail to take into account their preferences, competencies, and requirements of their children (Baumrind, 2008). Authoritarian parents typically disregard the significance of tenderness in childrearing (Lao, 2008), leading them to be excessively critical and prone to finding faults. These parents hardly appreciate their children for promptly finishing routine tasks or for attaining high marks. Furthermore, they fail to recognise or appreciate the efforts made by their children. Parents exercise authority over their children's activities and enforce strict regulations (Baumrind, 2008). This strict authority persists even after their children reach adulthood (Weiten, Dunn & Hammer, 2009). Consequently, a parenting approach that is authoritarian is characterised by being domineering (Moonie, 2005) and has severe negative effects. This approach hinders the child's self-esteem and hampers their ability to learn to the fullest extent (Dalpiaz, 2004).

Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter, and Keehn (2007) established that children's life happiness may diminish when they are brought up by fathers who exhibit authoritarian parenting styles. Furthermore, according to Leung, McBride-Chang, and Lai (2004), the presence of authority and the disciplinary approach in authoritarian parenting can lead to children experiencing unhappiness and dissatisfaction with their lives. Authoritarian parenting is believed to have a negative impact on the life satisfaction of children. Multiple studies have established a correlation between low self-esteem and authoritarian parenting in children (Martinez & Garcia, 2008; Milevsky *et. al.*, 2007). Patock-Peckham and Morgan-Lopez (2009) discovered that children who experience parental control are more likely to have low self-esteem, in contrast to children who get affection and warmth from their parents. It can be inferred that children who are raised by authoritarian parents may have a decline in their degree of self-esteem.

Joshi *et. al.* (2009) conducted a study examining the relationship between parenting style and depression in teenagers. The findings revealed that adolescents who resided with authoritarian parents experienced higher

levels of depression compared to those who lived with authoritative parents. Additional studies have also discovered a significant correlation between authoritarian parenting and despair (Milevsky *et al.*, 2007; Patock-Peckham & Morgan-Lopez, 2009). According to Thompson (2003), children between the ages of 5 and 10 who live in authoritarian families are currently experiencing depression. Collectively, these findings indicate that authoritarian parenting could be a contributing factor to depression in children.

Permissive parents foster psychological independence, demonstrate acceptance, and display lenient behavioural regulation (Baumrind, 2013; Baumrind *et al.*, 2010). Parents belonging to this category are supportive and impose little behavioural expectations on their child (Baumrind, 1966). Permissive parents strive to minimise the use of forceful or confrontational methods (Baumrind, 1989). Furthermore, permissive parents have been defined as indulgent and granting children the freedom to establish their own norms and make choices of their own (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). This parenting style has been associated with negative child outcomes, including decreased academic success (Baumrind, 1971), impaired impulse control (Maccoby & Martin, 1983), and less autonomy (Baumrind *et al.*, 2010).

Permissive parenting, which is defined by being highly responsive yet having relatively low expectations, has a multifaceted connection with the socio-emotional abilities of preschool-aged children. Permissive parents, although caring and communicative, may have challenges with their children's self-control and socialisation due to the absence of structure and limitations. Research indicates that children who are brought up by permissive parents may display elevated levels of emotional expressiveness but may encounter difficulties in exercising self-control and conforming to societal standards (Baumrind, 2013).

Permissive parenting is associated with higher levels of violence and weaker peer interactions in preschoolers, mostly because of the lack of regular discipline (Kuppens *et al.*, 2019). While these children may form deep emotional connections with their parents, they may encounter difficulties in structured settings such as school, where adherence to rules and self-control are crucial. Therefore, although permissive parenting might promote emotional affection, it may impede the acquisition of crucial socio-emotional skills essential for achieving long-term success.

Authoritative parenting methods grant children greater autonomy and accountability compared to authoritarian parents, while also promoting individuality and self-reliance within certain boundaries (Robbins, 2012). Their goal is to raise children that are confident, socially conscious, disciplined, and collaborative (Baumrind, 2008). The autonomy expected and required by authoritative parents is developmentally appropriate for the children's age (Sclafani, 2004). Despite expecting their children to be autonomous, some parents also impose limitations on their children's activities (Pardeck, 1998). Authoritative parents establish explicit expectations for their children's behaviour and diligently supervise their adherence to these rules (Bornstein & Zlotnick, 2009). Research conducted by Saadu and Agbo in 2022 has shown that authoritative parenting can reduce and impact children's indicators of depression.

Recent researchers, like Liem *et al.*, (2010 as quoted in Saadu & Agbo 2022), conducted a study to examine the potential correlation between authoritative parenting throughout childhood and the occurrence of depression in young adults four years later. The study findings confirmed the predictions that authoritative parenting during childhood is indeed associated with lower levels of depression symptoms in young adults (Liem *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, Milevsky *et al.*, (2007) discovered that children who were raised by authoritative parents exhibited reduced levels of depression in comparison to children raised under different parenting styles, such as authoritarian parenting. Moreover, the practice of authoritative parenting diminishes the likelihood of children experiencing depression. Milevsky *et al.*, (2007) differentiated between the roles of mothers and fathers and examined their impact on the development of children. The researchers examined the patterns of mother and paternal parenting and their impact on children's well-being, including factors such as self-esteem, sadness, and life satisfaction.

The socio-emotional development of preschoolers is greatly impacted by parenting methods, which play a crucial role in developing their capacity to engage with others and regulate their emotions (Baumrind, 2013). The presence of several parenting ways in Shomolu LGA, Lagos State provides a chance to investigate the relationship between different styles and the socio-emotional skills of children. Studies have shown that authoritative parenting, which is a combination of warmth and structure, is linked to positive socio-emotional

development in children (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019). Nevertheless, the effects of permissive or authoritarian styles have not been thoroughly examined in this particular situation. From the aforementioned, this study focused on providing valuable insights into educational and parental practices.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives guided this study:

- To analyse the relationship between authoritarian parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skills.
- To determine the relationship between permissive parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skills.
- To examine the correlation between authoritative parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skills.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between authoritarian parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skills?
- What is the relationship between permissive parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skills?
- What is the correlation between authoritative parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

- H₀1:** There is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill
- H₀2:** There is no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill.
- H₀3:** There is no significant correlation between authoritative parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill.

Methodology

Using a correlational survey research design, this study's population comprised all preschoolers in public pre-primary schools in Shomolu LGA of Lagos State and their parents. The sample for this study comprised 120 preschoolers and 120 parents with children in preschool. Multistage sampling procedure was employed for the study. In the first stage, the Stratified Sampling Technique was employed to separate the preschoolers and parents of preschoolers from the secondary and primary schools in the public schools, in Lagos, State. In the second stage, through the Purposive Sampling technique, the preschoolers and parents of preschoolers in Shomolu LGA were selected. Finally in the last stage, through the Simple Random Sampling Technique, 6 public preschools were randomly selected. 20 preschoolers and 20 parents of preschoolers were also randomly selected from each school. A 20-item Parenting Styles Scale (PSS) was adapted from Kimble (2014) and a 14-item Preschooler Socio-emotional Skills Assessment Scale (PSESAS) was adapted from Saadu and Agbo (2022) with 0.77 and 0.89 reliability coefficients, respectively. It is worth to mention that since the preschoolers may find it difficult to attempt PSESAS, their class teachers who regularly interact with the pupils assisted in responding to the scale for each pupil in the presence of at least one of the researchers. Pearson Correlation was used to test the formulated hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The data analysis was carried out with the use of Statistical Package for the Social Scientists (SPSS 21.0).

Results

Table 1: Preschoolers' Demographics

Characteristics	Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	64	53.3
	Female	56	46.7
	Total	120	100.0
Age	4-5 years	72	60.0
	6-7 years	48	40.0
	Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 indicates that most (53.3%) of the sampled preschoolers were male and the remaining 46.7% of them were female. Also, the majority (60.0%) of them were within the age bracket 4-5 years, while the remaining 40.0% of them were 6-7 years.

Table 2: Parents' Demographics

Characteristics	Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	31	25.8
	Female	89	74.2
	Total	120	100.0
Age	20-30 years	22	18.3
	31-40years	78	65.0
	41-50 years	20	16.7
	Total	120	100.0
Tribe	Hausa	11	9.2
	Igbo	36	30.0
	Yoruba	73	60.8
	Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that most (74.2%) of the sampled parents were female and the remaining 25.8% of them were

male; this indicates that mothers are more involved in their children's education than the fathers. 18.3% of them were within the age bracket 20-30 years, the majority (65.0%) of them were 31-40 years, while the remaining 16.7% of them were 41-50 years. Similarly, only 9.2% of the parents were from the Hausa tribe, 30.0% of them were Igbo, and the majority (60.8%) of them were Yoruba, this is understandable as Shomolu is a Yoruba populated area.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill

Table 3: Correlation Statistics

Authoritarian Parenting Style		
Socio-emotional Skills	Pearson Correlation	-.751
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014
	N	120

Table 3 shows $r = -.751$, indicating that an indirect and strong relationship exists between authoritarian parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill, while $p = .014$ shows that the relationship between the two variables is significant. Hence, null hypothesis that states "there is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill" is rejected, while its alternative that states "there is a significant negative relationship between authoritarian parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill" is accepted.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill.

Table 4: Correlation Statistics

Permissive Parenting Style		
Socio-emotional Skills	Pearson Correlation	-.698
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033
	N	120

Table 4 shows $r = -.698$, indicating an indirect and strong relationship between permissive parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill, while $p = .033$ shows that the relationship between the two variables is significant. Hence, null hypothesis that states "there is no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill" is rejected, while its alternative that states "there is a significant negative relationship between permissive parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill" is accepted.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant correlation between authoritative parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill.

Table 5: Correlation Statistics

		Authoritative Parenting Style
Socio-emotional Skills	Pearson Correlation	-.805
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	120

Table 5 shows $r = -.805$, indicating a direct and very strong correlation between authoritative parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill, while $p = .000$ shows that the relationship between the two variables is significant. Hence, null hypothesis that states "there is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill" is rejected, while its alternative that states "there is a significant positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill" is accepted.

Discussion of findings

This study found that a significant negative relationship exists between authoritarian parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill. This is in agreement with the claim that authoritarian parents typically disregard the significance of tenderness in childrearing (Lao, 2008), leading them to be excessively critical and prone to finding faults. These parents hardly appreciate their children for promptly finishing routine tasks or for attaining high marks. Furthermore, they fail to recognise or appreciate the efforts made by their children. Parents exercise authority over their children's activities and enforce strict regulations (Baumrind, 2008). This strict authority persists even after their children reach adulthood (Weiten, Dunn & Hammer, 2009). Consequently, a parenting approach that is authoritarian is characterised by being domineering (Moonie, 2005) and has severe negative effects. This approach hinders the child's self-esteem and hampers their ability to learn to the fullest extent (Dalpiaz, 2004).

The analysis of this study indicated a significant negative relationship between permissive parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill. This corroborates the argument that permissive parenting is associated with higher levels of violence and weaker peer interactions in preschoolers, mostly because of the lack of regular discipline (Kuppens *et al.*, 2019). While these children may form deep emotional connections with their parents, they may encounter difficulties in structured settings such as school, where adherence to rules and self-control are crucial. Therefore, although permissive parenting might promote emotional affection, it may impede the acquisition of crucial socio-emotional skills essential for achieving long-term success.

Also, the results of this study revealed a significant positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and preschooler socio-emotional skill. This is in tandem with the assertion that authoritative parenting methods grant children greater autonomy and accountability compared to authoritarian parents, while also promoting individuality and self-reliance within certain boundaries (Robbins, 2012). Their goal is to raise children that are confident, socially conscious, disciplined, and collaborative (Baumrind, 2008). The autonomy expected and required by authoritative parents is developmentally appropriate for the children's age (Sclafani, 2004). Despite expecting their children to be autonomous, some parents also impose limitations on their children's activities (Pardeck, 1998). Authoritative parents establish explicit expectations for their children's behaviour and diligently supervise their adherence to these rules (Bornstein & Zlotnick, 2009). Research conducted by Saadu and Agbo in 2022 has shown that authoritative parenting can reduce and impact children's indicators of depression.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that parenting styles have a substantial impact on the socio-emotional abilities of preschool-aged children. Both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles were found to have a strong

negative correlation with the socio-emotional development of preschoolers. This suggests that these approaches may impede emotional and social maturation. On the other hand, an authoritative parenting style showed a strong positive relationship with the growth of socio-emotional abilities. This indicates that a well-rounded strategy that combines structure, warmth, and responsiveness promotes superior socio-emotional outcomes in ECE children. These findings emphasise the significance of implementing an authoritative parenting style to facilitate the comprehensive growth and development of preschool-aged children.

Recommendations

The findings of this study recommended that parents should avoid using authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, since being overly strict or overly indulgent may impede the development of healthy socio-emotional skills in children.

Researchers should arrange seminars and workshops to educate parents on the importance of parenting techniques that can enhance the socio-emotional abilities of children both in and out of school.

Parents should establish a conducive environment that facilitates the development of healthy socio-emotional skills in preschoolers. This would allow children to have the chance to effectively communicate, establish connections, engage, and articulate their perspectives with their parents.

Socio-emotional competence plays a crucial role in the development of children. In order to provide their children with ample care and affection, parents should adopt an authoritative parenting style, which involves setting clear directions, guidance, and objectives. This will facilitate the development of assertiveness, social responsibility, and cooperation among children in their interactions with peers and parents.

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