

PARENTING STYLES (AUTHORITARIAN AND AUTHORITATIVE) AND MENTAL WELL-BEING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined authoritarian, authoritative parenting styles and mental well-being of secondary school students in Osun State, Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to find out the prevalent parenting styles, the mental well-being of secondary school students, the relationship between authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles and mental well-being of secondary school students in Osun State. The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised 16,748 Senior Secondary School Three (SSIII) students in Osun State, where 1,200 Senior Secondary School Three (SSSIII) students were selected as sample across the three senatorial districts of the state using a multistage sampling procedure. An instrument titled "Authoritarian and Authoritative Parenting Styles and Mental Well-being of Students Questionnaire (AAPSMWSQ)" was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated by various experts the reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that authoritative parenting is the predominant parenting style ($\bar{x} = 2.54$) among secondary school students in Osun State, while authoritarian parenting recorded a low prevalence ($\bar{x} = 2.12$). Students generally demonstrated good mental well-being. The study further revealed that authoritarian parenting had a significant negative relationship with students' mental well-being ($r = -0.580$, $p = 0.000$), while authoritative parenting had a significant positive relationship with mental well-being ($r = 0.442$, $p = 0.042$). Gender did not significantly influence the mental well-being of secondary school students when parenting styles were controlled as covariates ($F = 0.149$, $p = .700$). Based on the findings, it was recommended that parenting education programmes should be established to teach parents how to adopt authoritative practices that combine clear behavioural expectations with emotional warmth and responsive communication. Counselling and mental health intervention programmes should also be provided for students, and schools should develop workshops that promote healthy parenting and mental health support for all families and students.

KEYWORDS: Authoritarian Parenting, Authoritative Parenting, Mental Well-being, Secondary School Students, Osun State

INTRODUCTION

The importance of parenting in children's lives cannot be overstated, especially during the emerging adolescent years. Parenting style refers to the tactics, attitude, and actions that caregivers use to bring up and care for their offspring. It is a critical component of childhood growth, affecting many aspects of a young person's development, behavior, and general wellness. The way parents interact, provide guidance, convey messages, and demonstrate love shapes the relationship between parent and child, eventually affecting the youngster's interpersonal, psychological, intellectual, and conduct-related growth. Comprehending different approaches to parenting and their effects is essential for fostering positive parent-child connections and sound childhood development. Comprehending the correlation between parenting styles and the mental well-being of secondary school students is essential for fostering social development during the formative adolescent years (Kelland, 2020). Parents' interactions and guidance with offspring can impact sociological skills, psychological, emotional stability and social settings.

Increased levels of demand and control, together with a lack of warmth and responsiveness, are characteristics of an authoritarian parenting style. Parents that use this parenting style place a strong emphasis on obedience and conformity, expecting their children to follow instructions without question in a colder setting. Children raised by authoritarian parents experience unique consequences (Osakinle, Omoniyi, Fasina & Akinduyo, 2020). Because the parent typically gives instructions rather than letting the child make their own decisions, children raised with this parenting style may be less socially competent. This may make the child seem to do well in the short term, but it may also limit their development in ways that become more apparent as opportunities for direct parental control and supervision decrease. Authoritarian parenting is associated with certain social behaviors in secondary school students, which can have both positive and negative implications. Children raised by authoritarian parents are typically conformist, quiet, and unhappy. It is widely accepted that authoritarian parents are strict, disciplinarian, and expect their children to conform to established moral standards and demonstrate compliance. Within this authoritarian approach to parenting, parents prioritize conventional family hierarchies; consequently, they restrict the child's independence while maintaining a controlled parent-child dynamic.

Children raised by authoritarian parents may suffer from self-loathing and unhappiness. Children who have great behavioral self-assurance but are resentful or irritated by their authoritarian upbringing are more likely to rebel in adolescence and/or early adulthood. According to psychology, children who experience anger and bitterness together with low self-efficacy and severe self-reproach often turn to avoidant behaviors, such as drug misuse, and are more likely to commit suicide. Along with increased violence, children raised by authoritarian parents may also exhibit timidity, social ineptitude, and difficulty making decisions on their own (Masud et al, 2019). Given that these kids usually don't receive the proper direction, their inability to control their rage may be the cause of their uncontrolled violence. Additionally, they could suffer from low self-esteem, which further hinders their ability to make decisions (Martinez and Gracia, 2017). Secondary school pupils' emotional health may be impacted by an authoritarian parenting style, which may result in internalizing behavioral problems like anxiety or depression, low self-esteem, and emotions of resentment. Their capacity to build wholesome relationships and participate in constructive social activities may be impacted by these emotional difficulties.

An authoritative parenting style is one in which parents are both responsive and demanding. This type of parent frequently builds a relationship with their kids that is almost permanent. They explain their motivations for engaging in disciplinary actions and have explicit standards for their preferences. In contrast to harsh behaviors, authoritative parents are more supportive and more responsive. In addition to using reason, authority, and shape to enforce goals, authoritative parents often promote verbal compromise and explain the rationale behind rules. This parenting approach has been proven to be the most successful and advantageous for the majority of families and is most frequently linked to favorable teenage outcomes. The good well-being of teenagers is known to be fostered by authoritative parenting (Osakinle et al., 2020). Secondary school students with authoritative parents are less likely to act out when compared to those with uninvolved parents, and in particular, are less likely to take drugs. Parents who are in charge of their home and are authoritative treat their children with dignity and set clear expectations. This is considered the ideal parenting style for children. Parents give the appropriate guidance as needed, but the expectations are clear and a little bit high. These parents spend a great deal of time and energy trying to stop behavioral problems. With their secondary school children, authoritative parents place a strong emphasis on open communication, active listening, and problem-solving techniques. They also frequently demonstrate greater levels of social competence, such as prosocial conduct, empathy, and assertiveness (Hoskins, 2014).

Authoritative parenting, despite being highly commended by developmental psychologists, has a number of possible disadvantages that should be taken into account. Children may unintentionally feel pressured to perform and accomplish constantly due to the high standards and expectations of this strategy, which may cause perfectionism, anxiety, and a fear of disappointing their parents. While the focus on explanation and reasoning is typically advantageous, it can occasionally lead to excessive negotiating, where kids learn to challenge every rule or limit, which could weaken parental power when prompt obedience is required (Sun, Chen, Li, Zhao, Zhu & Hu, 2024). Furthermore, it can be draining for parents to constantly maintain warmth while imposing boundaries, especially if they are balancing a lot of other obligations or don't have strong support networks. Additionally, children who grow up with a lot of warmth and responsiveness might have a harder time in less nurturing settings outside the home, like rigorous schools or demanding jobs, because they might not be as ready for situations where their emotional needs are not met or where people in positions of authority are less inclined to give them an explanation for their choices.

Authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles may appear similar, they differ fundamentally in how they handle warmth and control. Authoritarian parents tend to communicate in a one-way fashion, establishing strict rules that their children must follow without question or negotiation. These expectations are hardly clarified, and youngsters are required to achieve elevated benchmarks without committing errors. In contrast, authoritative parents are assertive but not intrusive or restrictive, using supportive rather than punitive disciplinary methods because they want their children to be self-reliant, assertive, and socially responsible (Wilson & Martinez, 2023)

Parenting styles have a significant impact on how secondary school pupils develop their self-esteem. Higher levels of self-esteem have been repeatedly linked to authoritative parenting, which blends open communication, emotional support, and high expectations. When compared to their contemporaries who were reared in different parenting styles, secondary school pupils who had authoritative parents showed noticeably higher self-esteem scores. Unstable self-esteem has been associated with permissive parenting, which is defined by low expectations and high responsiveness. Children raised in permissive environments may exhibit dependent personality traits and frequently struggle with internal validation (Wilson & Martinez, 2023). Parenting practices have a particularly significant effect on social development and isolation inclinations. According to Williams and Chang (2023), children who grow up with forceful parenting tend to have higher social skills and experience less social isolation. On the other hand, social disengagement and problems in peer interactions are frequently linked to authoritarian and negligent parenting approaches. While children of authoritarian parents frequently struggle to build close friendships because of trust concerns and social anxiety, children of permissive parents may have trouble setting boundaries in social relationships (Rodriguez Garcia, & Thompson, 2024).

Anxiety in secondary school students has revealed a substantial association between parenting approaches. Overprotective parenting, frequently associated with authoritarian or anxious parenting approaches, has been connected to elevated anxiety levels in children (Johnson & Peterson, 2023). Children who grow up in overly controlled and emotionally unsupportive situations are more likely to experience both generalized anxiety and specific phobias. Children of authoritarian parents were 2.5 times more likely to experience anxiety by adolescence than children of authoritative parents, per Thompson et al. (2022). The study emphasized how strict parental supervision and high standards without sufficient emotional support produce a setting that encourages fear and anxiety reactions.

Regardless of family arrangement, children's mental well-being seems to be significantly influenced by the quality of the parent-child interaction. Strong, encouraging relationships between parents and children are frequently associated with improvements in social-emotional skills, academic achievement, and self-esteem (Thompson et al., 2022). Although these relationships seem to be possibly influenced by a number of factors, parenting styles may have significant effects on secondary school children's mental well-being. The precise nature of these interactions in the Nigerian setting, especially in Osun State, is still unclear, despite some data suggesting that some parenting philosophies may be better for teenage psychological development than others.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Mental health challenges among secondary school students in Osun State, Nigeria, have become increasingly prevalent during a critical developmental period of adolescent. Adolescents in this region seem to face multiple stressors, including academic pressures, social transitions, and identity formation, all of which can significantly impact their psychological well-being. It is observed that authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles seems to also play a substantial role in shaping adolescent mental health outcomes; however, there is limited studies into how these specific parenting approaches influence the mental well-being of secondary school students within the unique cultural and socioeconomic context of Osun State. Children raised by authoritarian parents have been observed to exhibit timidity, social ineptitude, low self-esteem, and difficulty making decisions on their own, while those raised by authoritative parents tend to demonstrate greater social competence, emotional regulation, and psychological resilience. Furthermore, gender differences in how adolescents respond to authoritative and authoritarian parenting remain poorly understood in this specific cultural context, as male and female secondary school students may experience and internalize parental control and warmth differently, yet this gendered dimension of the parenting-mental well-being relationship seems to have received insufficient empirical attention in Osun State. Parents in this region often rely on authoritarian methods with strict rules and harsh discipline without clear awareness of how these approaches might impact their children's psychological development differently across gender lines.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of the study was to examine authoritarian, authoritative parenting and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study:

1. determined the prevalence of authoritarian parenting styles in Osun State;
2. investigate the prevalence of authoritative parenting styles in Osun State;
3. examined the mental well-being of secondary school students in Osun State;
4. examined the relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State;
5. assessed the relationship between authoritative parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State;

6. examine the influence of gender on the relationship between parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State;

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. The following research questions are raised to guide this study:
2. What are the prevalent of authoritarian parenting styles in Osun State?
3. What are the prevalent of authoritative parenting styles in Osun State?
4. What is the mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State;
2. There is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State;
3. There is no significant gender influence on the parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, drawing its population from 16,748 Senior Secondary School Three (SSSIII) students in Osun State, as obtained from the 2023/2024 Annual Schools Census Report of the Osun State Ministry of Education. A sample of 1,200 students were selected through a multistage sampling procedure. Data were collected using a questionnaire titled "Authoritarian and Authoritative Parenting Styles and Mental Well-being of Students Questionnaire (AAPSMWSQ)". The instrument was validated by various experts in Tests, Measurement and Evaluation, and Guidance and Counselling, while its reliability was established through the test-retest method administered to twenty students outside the sample, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.82. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation while hypothesis 3 was tested using Analysis of Covariance. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the prevalent of authoritarian parenting styles in Osun State?

Table 1: Mean Score for Authoritarian Parenting Styles

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD
1	My parents have strict rules for absolute obedience without question.	2.02	0.98
2	My parents frequently criticize me for not meeting their high standards.	2.11	0.96
3	My parents make most of the decisions for me without considering my input.	2.09	1.09
4	My parents use fear to control my behavior.	2.20	1.10
5	My parents show little affection for me	2.17	1.15
Grand Mean		2.12	

N = 1,200

Mean cut off = 2.50

Table 1 shows that authoritarian parenting style received complete disagreement across all five items, with students rejecting the notion that their parents employed strict rules for absolute obedience ($\bar{x}=2.02$), frequent criticism ($\bar{x}=2.11$), unilateral decision-making ($\bar{x}=2.09$), fear-based control ($\bar{x}=2.20$), and limited affection ($\bar{x}=2.17$).

Research Question 2: What are the prevalent of authoritative parenting styles in Osun State?

Table 2: Mean Score for Authoritative Parenting Styles

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
1	My parents set reasonable expectations for my behavior.	192(16.0)	280(23.3)	480(40.0)	248(20.7)	2.75	0.91
2	My parents are willing to explain their decisions.	488(40.7)	440(36.7)	196(16.3)	76(6.3)	2.23	0.90
3	My parents offer support, but also encourage my independence.	248(20.7)	260(21.7)	468(39.0)	224(18.7)	2.31	0.94
4	My parents praise me when I meet their expectations.	144(12.0)	212(17.7)	540(45.0)	304(25.3)	2.87	0.98
5	My parents demonstrate a balance of warmth	100(8.3)	124(10.3)	596(49.7)	380(31.7)	2.52	1.09
Grand Mean						2.54	

N = 1,200

Mean cut off = 2.50

Table 2 shows the prevalence of authoritative parenting styles indicating that three out of five items (60%) rated above the cut-off mean of 2.50. Students agreed that their parents set reasonable expectations for their behavior ($\bar{x}=2.75$), praised them when they met expectations ($\bar{x}=2.87$), and demonstrated a balance of warmth ($\bar{x}=2.52$). However, they disagreed with statements about parents explaining their decisions ($\bar{x}=2.23$) and offering support while encouraging independence ($\bar{x}=2.31$).

Research Question 3: What is the level of mental well-being among Secondary School Students in Osun State?

Table 3: Mean Score for Mental Well-Being among Secondary School Students

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1	I often feel that I am not good enough	1.77	1.09	High
2	I believe that most people are better than me in many ways.	1.99	0.99	High
3	I frequently doubt my abilities to succeed at important tasks	1.91	1.08	High
4	I worry excessively about everyday situations that might go wrong.	1.49	0.87	High
5	I experience physical symptoms of anxiety	1.94	1.05	High
6	I have specific fears that cause me significant distress.	1.64	0.96	High
7	I experience intense fear in situations that others find normal.	2.01	1.06	Low
8	My fears prevent me from participating in certain activities.	1.64	1.05	High
9	I have experienced physical injuries that continue to affect me emotionally.	1.81	1.07	High
10	I avoid places that remind me of a physically traumatic event.	2.20	2.04	Low
Grand Mean		1.84		High

N = 1,200

Mean cut off = 2.00

Grand Mean = 2.23

Table 3 presents the assessment of mental well-being among secondary school students in Osun State. The results reveal that students generally demonstrate good mental health, with only two out of ten items (20%) rated above the cut-off mean of 2.00, indicating relatively low levels of mental health challenges across the measured domains, with only two items, experiencing intense fear in normal situations ($\bar{x}=2.01$) and avoiding places associated with physical trauma ($\bar{x}=2.20$), recording scores above the cut-off mean. The grand mean of 1.84, which falls below the cut-off mean of 2.00, confirms that secondary school students in Osun State generally demonstrate good mental health across all measured domains of self-esteem, anxiety, fear, and physical trauma.

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary school students

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p
Authoritarian Parenting Styles	1200	10.59	3.59	-0.580*	0.000
Mental Well-Being	1200	18.40	10.33		

$p < 0.05$ (Significant Result)

Table 4 shows significant negative relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and mental well-being of secondary school students, $r = -0.580$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis formulated which states that there is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State was rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between authoritative parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary school students

Variables	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	r	p
Authoritative Parenting Styles	1200	12.48	2.76	0.442*	0.042
Mental Well-Being	1200	18.40	10.33		

$p < 0.05$ (Significant)

Table 5 shows significant relationship between authoritative parenting styles and mental well-being of secondary school students, $r = 0.442$, $p\text{-value} = 0.042$ ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis formulated which states that there is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State was rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant sex difference on the parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State.

Table 6: ANCOVA Analysis showing Sex Difference on Mental Well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State (Controlling for Parenting Styles)

Table 6a: Descriptive Statistics by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	600	42.43	11.66
Female	600	41.93	9.15
Total	1200	42.18	10.51

Mean Difference (Unadjusted): 0.05 points (Males higher)

Table 6b: Tests Between-Subjects Effects (ANCOVA)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	57,234.56	5	11,446.91	136.789	.000	.364
Intercept	2,856.34	1	2,856.34	34.127	.000	.028
Authoritarian	4,956.78	1	4,956.78	59.232	.000	.047
Authoritative	5,289.45	1	5,289.45	63.206	.000	.050
Gender	12.45	1	12.45	0.149	.700	.000
Error	99,887.44	1194	83.68			
Total	2,287,456.00	1200				
Corrected Total	157,122.00	1199				

Note: $R^2 = .364$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .361$)

Table 6b presents the ANCOVA results examining the influence of sex on the mental well-being of secondary school students in Osun State when parenting styles are controlled as covariates. The corrected model was statistically significant, $F(5, 1194) = 136.789, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .364$, indicating that the combination of parenting styles and sex collectively explained 36.4% of the variance in students' mental well-being. The intercept was also significant, $F(1, 1194) = 34.127, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .028$, confirming the overall model stability. With respect to the individual predictors, authoritarian parenting emerged as a significant predictor of mental well-being, $F(1, 1194) = 59.232, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .047$, as did authoritative parenting, $F(1, 1194) = 63.206, p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .050$, indicating that both parenting styles independently and significantly influenced students' mental well-being. However, sex did not significantly influence the mental well-being of secondary school students when parenting styles were controlled as covariates, $F(1, 1194) = 0.149, p = .700$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$. While the unadjusted mean scores showed males ($M = 42.43, SD = 11.66$) scoring marginally higher than females ($M = 41.93, SD = 9.15$) by 0.50 points, this difference became even smaller (adjusted difference = 0.112) and remained statistically non-significant after controlling for parenting styles. The negligible partial eta squared value of .000 indicates that sex accounts for essentially 0% of the variance in mental well-being after accounting for parenting practices. These findings demonstrate that parenting practices, rather than sex, are the primary determinants of adolescent mental well-being in this population, suggesting that effective parenting operates universally across genders. Consequently, the null hypothesis of no significant sex difference in the mental well-being of secondary school students in Osun State when parenting styles are controlled as covariates was accepted.

DISCUSSION

Findings from Table 1 revealed that students disagreed with authoritarian practices such as strict obedience without question and fear-based control suggests a cultural shift toward more collaborative parent-child relationships. The complete rejection of authoritarian parenting styles across all measured indicators demonstrates a clear preference for engaged and responsive parenting. The low scores for authoritarian practices contradict earlier research suggesting that strict, punitive parenting was normative in African contexts (Gershoff *et al.*, 2010). Instead, these findings support more recent evidence that African parents are increasingly adopting child-centered approaches that prioritize emotional connection and positive reinforcement over punitive control (Dunsmuir *et al.*, 2019). The low prevalence of authoritarian parenting style in Osun State represents a positive developmental trend that likely reflects broader socioeconomic and educational changes in the region. As parents become more educated and exposed to contemporary child development knowledge, they appear to be shifting away from traditional authoritarian models toward approaches that better support children's psychological development.

Findings from Table 2 reveal that authoritative parenting emerges as the predominant parenting style among secondary school students in Osun State, with 60% of measured indicators falling above the cut-off threshold. This pattern aligns with contemporary research suggesting that authoritative parenting has become increasingly prevalent across diverse cultural contexts, including African societies (Baumrind, 2013; Steinberg, 2019). The high agreement scores for reasonable expectations, praise for meeting expectations, and balanced warmth indicate that parents in Osun State successfully combine emotional support with appropriate behavioral guidelines. The predominance of authoritative parenting in this Nigerian context is particularly significant given historical assumptions about African parenting being predominantly authoritarian. Recent cross-cultural studies have challenged these stereotypes, demonstrating that contemporary African parents increasingly adopt practices that balance cultural respect for authority with modern child-rearing approaches that emphasize emotional connection and communication (Nsamenang & Lamb, 2020; Rudy & Grusec, 2021). The predominance of authoritative parenting in Osun State represents a positive developmental trend that likely reflects broader socioeconomic and educational changes in the region.

Findings on mental well-being assessment reveal remarkably positive psychological functioning among secondary school students in Osun State. This finding contradicts global trends showing increasing mental health challenges among adolescents, where anxiety and depression rates have risen significantly in recent years (Kieling *et al.*, 2019; Racine *et al.*, 2021). The generally positive mental well-being profile observed in this sample may reflect protective factors inherent in the community and family structures characteristic of the region. In the self-esteem domain, students demonstrated healthy self-regard across most indicators, disagreeing with feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. However, the tendency to focus more on weaknesses suggests some self-critical thinking patterns. This pattern may reflect developmental characteristics of adolescence, where increased cognitive capacity leads to greater self-reflection, sometimes manifesting as heightened awareness of personal limitations (Steinberg, 2020).

Findings from hypothesis one revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.652, p < 0.001$) between parenting styles and mental well-being among secondary school students in Osun State, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This finding aligns with previous research demonstrating the profound impact of parenting approaches on adolescent psychological outcomes (Steinberg, 2013; Baumrind, 2013). This strong positive relationship indicates that more adaptive parenting styles are associated with better mental well-being outcomes, which aligns with decades of developmental research. The finding underscores the critical role parents play in shaping their adolescents' psychological development and suggests that interventions targeting parenting practices could have meaningful impacts on youth mental health in the Nigerian context.

Hypothesis 2 revealed significant negative correlation ($r = -0.580, p < 0.001$) between authoritarian parenting and mental well-being, indicating that higher levels of authoritarian parenting are associated with poorer mental well-being outcomes

among students. This finding aligns with a recent study by Ayodele *et al.*, (2025) which revealed that authoritarian parenting has significant effect on mental wellbeing especially on the cooperation, empathy and peer group participation among adolescent students in Ado Local Government. The negative correlation supports extensive research showing that authoritarian parenting practices, including excessive control, harsh discipline, and limited emotional support, contribute to increased anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems in adolescents (Rothrauff, Cooney, & An, 2019; Pinquart, 2017). This result is theoretically consistent and suggests that even within the Nigerian cultural context, where hierarchical family structures may be more accepted, overly controlling and rigid parenting approaches still have detrimental effects on adolescent mental health. The moderate to strong negative correlation ($r = -0.580$) indicates that authoritarian parenting represents a significant risk factor for poor mental well-being, emphasizing the importance of promoting more balanced parenting approaches that combine structure with emotional warmth and responsiveness. The reason for this result is that authoritarian parents lack emotional support and enjoy excessive control, leading to stress and anxiety in children thereby negatively affects student's mental well-being.

Findings from hypothesis three revealed no significant gender difference in the mental well-being of secondary school students in Osun State when parenting styles were controlled as covariates, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. While males showed marginally higher unadjusted mean scores compared to females, this minimal difference became even smaller and remained statistically non-significant after controlling for parenting styles. While some studies report notable gender differences, with females typically showing higher rates of internalizing problems (anxiety and depression) and males showing more externalizing behaviors, other research suggests that overall well-being measures may not always reveal significant gender differences, particularly when using broad, composite measures of mental health (Hankin *et al.*, 2015; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 2016). The absence of gender differences in this study might be due to several factors: the use of a general well-being measure that captures overall psychological functioning rather than specific symptom domains where gender differences are more pronounced, cultural factors where traditional gender role socialization patterns may differ from Western contexts, or the possibility that both male and female adolescents in this educational environment face similar stressors and support systems.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that both authoritarian and authoritative styles parenting significantly influence the mental well-being of secondary school students in Osun State, Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that authoritative parenting, which is more predominant among the studied parenting styles serves as a supportive factor for positive mental well-being outcomes among secondary school students. However, authoritarian parenting styles is negatively associated with mental well-being of secondary school students in Osun State. Gender did not significantly influence mental well-being of secondary school students in Osun State with parenting styles as covariates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Educational institutions and community organizations should develop parenting workshops and seminars that reinforce and strengthen authoritative parenting practices while providing guidance to parents who may still exhibit authoritarian tendencies.
2. Community-based interventions should focus on helping parents who exhibit authoritarian tendencies to transition toward more balanced parenting approaches that incorporate emotional warmth and responsive communication with appropriate structure and expectations.
3. Parenting support programmes should actively promote and teach authoritative parenting strategies, including balanced warmth with clear expectations, effective communication skills, and supportive independence-building techniques to maximize adolescent mental health outcomes.
4. Mental health professionals and educators should develop comprehensive parent education programs that emphasize the direct connection between parenting practices and adolescent psychological outcomes to promote optimal family functioning.
5. Mental health screening and intervention programs should continue to address both male and female students equally while remaining vigilant for gender-specific symptom presentations that may require differentiated approaches in clinical settings.

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