

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

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ABSTRACT

This study examined permissive and uninvolved parenting styles and mental well-being of secondary school students in Osun State, Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to determine the prevalence of permissive and uninvolved parenting styles, assess the mental well-being of secondary school students, and investigate the relationship between permissive and uninvolved 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 (SSSIII) students in Osun State, where 1,200 Senior Secondary School Three (SSSIII) students were selected as sample across the state using a multistage sampling procedure. An instrument titled "Permissive and Uninvolved Parenting Styles and Mental Well-being of Students Questionnaire (PUAPSMWSQ)" 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 both permissive parenting and uninvolved parenting recorded low prevalence among secondary school students in Osun State, with grand means of 2.03 and 2.14 respectively, both falling below the cut-off mean of 2.50. Students generally demonstrated good mental well-being, with a grand mean of 1.96, indicating low levels of mental health challenges across the measured domains. The study further revealed that permissive parenting had a significant negative relationship with students' mental well-being ($r = -0.474$, $p = 0.000$), while uninvolved parenting also had a significant negative relationship with mental well-being ($r = -0.586$, $p = 0.000$), with uninvolved parenting representing the stronger risk factor. Based on the findings, it was recommended that targeted mental health interventions be made available for students and that family-based intervention programmes be established to address parenting practices and adolescent mental health outcomes simultaneously. Parents should also be educated on the importance of maintaining clear boundaries and expectations alongside emotional warmth and supportive communication.

KEYWORDS: *Permissive Parenting, Uninvolved Parenting, Mental Well-being, Secondary School Students, Osun State*

INTRODUCTION

Parenting styles are a collection of parenting philosophies, practices, actions, and emotional expressions that parents use to communicate with their children in everyday situations. Parents hold a significant responsibility in supporting constructive developmental progress. Children appear to receive discipline in homes where the ideal parenting approach is used, but the opposite might be true in homes where this approach is not used. This could mean that a child's growth, development, and behavioural patterns may be influenced by their parenting style (Ma, Chen, Nunez, Yan, & Zhao, 2020). Parenting style used by parents appear having a big impact on the aggressive behavior that secondary school students display. Secondary school students and teenagers who experience negative parenting style, such as rejection, exclusion, or punishment, appears to be delinquent in behavior, intensify hostile feelings and cognitive attributions, stifle and impede the development of emotional and behavior regulation skills, and eventually encourage the emergence of aggressive behavior. Children who endured severe maltreatment during their early years are likely to exhibit greater antisocial aggression (Masud, Shakil, Cho, & Fakhr, 2019).

Permissive parenting includes low levels of demanding behavior and high levels of responsiveness. Adolescents with permissive parents consult with them about family decisions and act in ways that are supportive of their impulses, desires, and behaviors. Permissive parents also don't enforce rules, refrain from using behavioral control, and have low expectations for their teenagers' behavior. Interestingly, compared to people from authoritative or authoritarian homes, adolescents from permissive families report higher rates of substance use, school misbehavior, and lower levels of engagement and positive school orientation. Low self-esteem and an extrinsic motivational orientation are also linked to permissive parenting in teenagers. Since responsiveness fosters more positive self-perceptions, children raised by permissive parents — who are warm but uncontrollable — may have higher self-esteem, stronger parent-child bonds, more creativity, and improved social and socioemotional skills (Sun et al., 2024).

Children of permissive parents are free to do as they choose. These parents do not provide their children much guidance. Their children viewed them as pals rather than relatives. They probably don't have any rules, or if they do have very few. They let their children use their own knowledge and viewpoints to solve their own problems. They engage in two-way dialogue, listening to their children's thoughts and offering their own, but they do not dictate to them. They have the fewest needs and are gentle and caring. Kind parents are those who are tolerant. They treat their children with kindness and simply give them what they want (Seema & Aparna, 2023). Although they are not demanding, these parents are receptive. Warm and encouraging, permissive parents frequently have little or no desires. Adolescents with permissive parents may be more impulsive and more likely to commit crimes like drug use.

Uninvolved parenting is characterized by minimal emotional involvement and limited attention to a child's developmental needs. Parents who display this style provide little guidance, nurturing, or supervision, often appearing emotionally detached from their children's lives. While they may meet basic physical needs like food and shelter, they invest little time or energy in their children's emotional, social, or educational development. This parenting style is not always intentional. In many cases, parents become uninvolved due to circumstances beyond their control, such as mental health struggles (including depression or anxiety), substance abuse issues, overwhelming stress, or lack of resources and support. Out of the three parenting styles, the uninvolved style has been demonstrated to have the most detrimental impact on teenage outcomes. Self-regulation is not supported or encouraged by uninvolved parents, who frequently neglect to watch over or oversee their children's behavior. Even though uninvolved parenting lacks warmth and control, it may unintentionally build some strengths: children of uninvolved parents are more likely to be resilient and self-sufficient than children of other parenting styles, learning how to take care of themselves and their basic needs early on (Yasheshvi, 2023). They may also grow more independent, creative, and problem-solving, and they may be able to freely pursue their interests without any limitations.

Low responsiveness and low demandingness are attributes of the uninvolved parenting style. Generally speaking, these parents are perceived as being disengaged from their children's needs and lack of involvement in the duties of childrearing. According to Yasheshvi (2023), uninvolved parents do not exercise control or structure over their teenagers, and the parent-child bond is frequently distant. Thus, students in secondary school who have parents who are not involved tend to exhibit more externalizing behaviors. Children who have parents who are not involved in their parenting are more likely to have low self-esteem. They have trouble in school and may have behavioral problems. Neither demanding nor responsive are these parents. Since this type of parent frequently stays out of the way, children are allowed a lot of flexibility. They meet the child's basic requirements while, for the most part, staying out of their child's life (Yasheshvi, 2023). Parents that have an uninvolved parenting style are frequently emotionally distant, disinterested, and offer their kids little to no assistance or advice. However, cultural differences and other factors may cause parenting styles to vary among nations.

Global context indicate that the authoritative parenting style is positively correlated with learning outcomes among Chinese students, and global contexts show that it was linked to better overall outcomes, higher emotional regulation, and fewer behavioral issues than any other parenting style (Sun et al., 2024). Parental styles have a significant impact on their children's social adjustment across various educational systems worldwide, and cross-cultural studies show significant differences in parenting effectiveness, with permissive parenting styles sometimes showing a better association with self-efficacy than authoritative parenting styles (Miran & Andrej 2020). The practice of slapping children or schoolchildren is discouraged in several western nations and is frequently referred to as child abuse. Cultural circumstances and extended

family structures have a significant impact on secondary school students' parenting approaches in African nations. Depending on a youth's race, ethnicity, and gender as well as the perceived neighborhood context, permissive and disengaged parenting, maternal involvement, and punitive parenting were all linked to different youth outcomes; neighborhood-modifying influences on parenting were more pronounced for African populations (Carmo et al., 2021). Parenting styles are greatly influenced by African values, which place a strong emphasis on deference to authority and group child-rearing methods. These beliefs frequently combine authoritarian control with social support networks, which have an impact on teenage growth and academic achievement.

In Nigeria, research by Obimakinde, Omigbodun, Adejumo, and Adedokun (2018), showed clear trends in parenting styles among secondary school students. Among adolescents enrolled in school in South-West Nigeria, the authoritative parenting style is most commonly perceived, while the permissive parenting style is least. In addition to having an impact on a child's development and possibly being influenced by culture, parenting styles — authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive — significantly predict anxiety in adolescents enrolled in secondary school. The importance of the family in Nigerian culture underscores the cultural specificity of effective parenting in that country. The mental well-being of secondary school pupils may be significantly impacted by the various parenting philosophies.

Mental well-being is a combination of social, psychological and emotional aspects influence cognitive processes, emotions, and behaviors (World Health Organization (WHO), 2021). Mental wellness extends beyond merely being free from psychological disorders; it represents a positive state where individuals understand their personal capabilities, navigate daily life challenges effectively, perform work efficiently, and actively participate in communal activities. It encompasses a holistic condition wherein people acknowledge their strengths, cope successfully with ordinary life pressures, pursue meaningful work, and make valuable contributions to society. Early childhood mental well-being has a big impact on a child's social abilities, emotional control, and cognitive development (Sharma & Patel, 2023). As kids become adults, they in turn have an impact on their relationships, academic achievement, and general level of life happiness.

The global prevalence of mental well-being issues in children and secondary school students worldwide has been high but inconsistent (Silva, Silva, Ronca, Gonçalves, Dutra & Carvalho, 2020). In particular, a number of mental well-being issues that affect children, such as anxiety and depression, have become increasingly common over time. The frequency of mental well-being problems and the general psychological well-being of Osun State are thought to present intricate problems that need more investigation. Osun State secondary school students' mental well-being seems to be a major concern, which is consistent with larger patterns in Nigeria. However, parental stress and the parenting style could be crucial variables in the mental well-being of secondary school pupils. The relationship between parenting styles and secondary school students' mental well-being has emerged as a crucial field in developmental psychology and mental well-being studies. Anxiety, fear reactions, social isolation, and the processing of psychological trauma are just a few of the aspects of psychological development that are influenced by parenting styles. Understanding these linkages is vital for both parents and mental health professionals in supporting good psychological development among students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Mental health challenges among secondary school students in Osun State, Nigeria, have become increasingly prevalent during a critical developmental period. Adolescents in this region 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 permissive and uninvolved parenting styles seems to play a substantial role in shaping adolescent mental health outcomes; however, there is limited empirical investigation 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. Adolescents from permissive families have been observed to report higher rates of substance use, school misbehavior, impulsivity, and low self-esteem, while children of uninvolved parents are more likely to have low self-esteem, experience trouble in school, and exhibit externalizing behavioral problems. It is on this note that this study intends to examine permissive and uninvolved parenting styles in relations to the mental health of secondary school students in Osun State.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

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

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

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are raised to guide this study:

1. What are the prevalent of permissive parenting styles in Osun State?
2. What are the prevalent of uninvolved parenting styles in Osun State?
3. 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 permissive parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State;
2. There is no significant relationship between uninvolved parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State;

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The target population consisted of 16,748 Senior Secondary School Three (SSSIII) students in Osun State, sourced from the 2023/2024 Annual Schools Census Report of the Osun State Ministry of Education. Through a multistage sampling technique, a total of 1,200 students were drawn as the study sample. A self-report questionnaire designated "Permissive and Uninvolved Parenting Styles and Mental Well-being of Students Questionnaire (PUAPSMWSQ)" served as the primary data collection tool. Content validity of the instrument was ensured through review by various experts in Tests, Measurement and Evaluation, as well as Guidance and Counselling. To ascertain reliability, the instrument was administered twice to twenty students who were not part of the main sample, and the test-retest procedure produced a reliability coefficient of 0.82, confirming the instrument's consistency. The research questions were addressed through descriptive statistical analyses comprising means and standard deviations, while the stated hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

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

Table 1: Mean Score for Permissive Parenting Styles

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD
1	My parents rarely set rules for my behavior.	1.88	1.07
2	My parents allow me to make most of my own decisions without much guidance.	2.19	1.00
3	My parents rarely punish me	2.02	1.08
4	My parents seem indifferent to my academic performance.	1.93	1.95
5	My parents rarely provide routine in our household.	2.13	1.34
Grand Mean		2.03	

N = 1,200

Mean cut off = 2.50

Table 1 indicates that permissive parenting style showed no items above the cut-off (0%), as students disagreed that their parents rarely set rules ($\bar{x}$ =1.88), allowed excessive decision-making freedom ($\bar{x}$ =2.19), rarely punished them ($\bar{x}$ =2.02), showed indifference to academic performance ($\bar{x}$ =1.93), or failed to provide routine ($\bar{x}$ =2.13).

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

Table 2: Mean Score for Uninvolved Parenting Styles

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD
1	My parents are emotionally distant	2.06	1.11
2	My parents seem uninterested in my daily activities	2.31	1.08
3	My parents provide are not in support of personal growth.	2.01	1.17
4	My parents rarely engage in conversations with me.	2.25	1.11
5	I often feel neglected by my parents.	2.07	1.15
Grand Mean		2.14	

N = 1,200

Mean cut off = 2.50

Table 2 shows that uninvolved parenting style also received complete disagreement (0%), with students rejecting characterizations of their parents as emotionally distant ($\bar{x}=2.06$), uninterested in daily activities ($\bar{x}=2.31$), unsupportive of personal growth ($\bar{x}=2.01$), rarely engaging in conversations ($\bar{x}=2.25$), or neglectful ($\bar{x}=2.07$).

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	Remarks
1	I find it difficult to accept compliments because I don't believe I deserve them.	1.92	1.05	High
2	I tend to focus more on my weaknesses	2.01	0.98	Low
3	I find it difficult to control my worrying thoughts.	1.87	0.99	High
4	I avoid certain activities because they make me feel anxious.	1.99	1.03	High
5	Anxiety interferes with my daily activities.	1.90	1.05	High
6	I experience fear that seems out of proportion to the actual danger	2.02	1.04	Low
7	I spend significant time thinking about things I am afraid of.	1.85	1.04	High
8	I have experienced physical injuries that continue to affect me emotionally.	1.81	1.07	High
9	I avoid places that remind me of a physically traumatic event.	2.20	2.04	Low
10	I have recurring memories of physically traumatic experiences.	1.99	1.06	High
Grand Mean		1.96		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 three out of ten items (30%) rated above the cut-off mean of 2.00, indicating relatively low levels of mental health challenges across the measured domains. Specifically, the three items recording scores above the cut-off mean were the tendency to focus more on personal weaknesses ($\bar{x} = 2.01$), experiencing fear that seems disproportionate to actual danger ($\bar{x} = 2.02$), and avoiding places associated with physically traumatic events ($\bar{x} = 2.20$). The remaining seven items all fell below the cut-off mean of 2.00, including difficulty accepting compliments ($\bar{x} = 1.92$), difficulty controlling worrying thoughts ($\bar{x} = 1.87$), avoiding anxiety-inducing activities ($\bar{x} = 1.99$), anxiety interfering with daily activities ($\bar{x} = 1.90$), spending significant time thinking about fears ($\bar{x} = 1.85$), emotionally lingering effects of physical injuries ($\bar{x} = 1.81$), and recurring memories of physically traumatic experiences ($\bar{x} = 1.99$).

HYPOTHESES TESTING

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

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

Variables	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	r	p
Permissive Parenting Styles	1200	10.15	4.01	-0.474*	0.000
Mental Well-Being	1200	44.	10.33		

$p < 0.05$

(Significant Result)

Table 4 shows significant negative relationship between permissive parenting styles and mental well-being of secondary school students, $r = -0.474$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis formulated which states that there is no significant relationship between permissive parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between uninvolved parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State.

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

Variables	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	R	p
Uninvolved Parenting Styles	1200	10.70	4.10	-0.586*	0.000
Mental Well-Being	1200	44.23	10.33		

$p < 0.05$ (Significant Result)

Table 5 shows significant negative relationship between uninvolved parenting styles and mental well-being of secondary school students, $r = -0.586$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis formulated which states that there is no significant relationship between uninvolved parenting styles and mental well-being of Secondary School Students in Osun State was rejected.

DISCUSSION

Findings from Table 1 revealed that permissive parenting style recorded a low prevalence among secondary school students in Osun State, indicating that students disagreed with all characterizations of permissive parenting practices in their homes. This finding suggests that parents in Osun State are not predominantly permissive in their approach to child-rearing, as students rejected descriptions of their parents as rarely setting rules, allowing excessive decision-making freedom, and showing indifference to academic performance. This result contradicts the assertions of Seema and Aparna (2023), who described permissive parents as warm but undemanding, allowing children to make their own decisions with little parental guidance or structure. The low prevalence of permissive parenting observed in this study may reflect the enduring influence of Nigerian cultural values, which traditionally emphasize parental authority, discipline, and structured home environments. Furthermore, this finding aligns with Obimakinde, Omigbodun, Adejumo, and Adedokun (2018), who reported that permissive parenting was the least commonly perceived style among adolescents in South-West Nigeria, suggesting a consistent cultural pattern across the region where parents tend to maintain higher levels of involvement and behavioral expectations in their children's upbringing.

Findings from Table 2 revealed that uninvolved parenting style also recorded a low prevalence among secondary school students in Osun State, as students disagreed with descriptions of their parents as emotionally distant, uninterested in their daily activities, unsupportive of personal growth, rarely engaging in conversation, and neglectful. This finding indicates that the uninvolved parenting style is not a dominant feature of the parenting landscape in Osun State, which represents a positive developmental outcome for adolescents in the region. This result is consistent with Yasheshvi (2023), who noted that uninvolved parents typically exhibit low responsiveness and low demandingness, maintaining a distant parent-child relationship that often leads to externalizing behaviors and low self-esteem in children. The rejection of uninvolved parenting characteristics by students in this study suggests that parents in Osun State maintain meaningful emotional connections and involvement in their children's lives. This finding may be attributed to the strong communal and family-oriented values characteristic of Nigerian society, where parental responsibility and active involvement in children's upbringing are deeply embedded cultural expectations, thereby reducing the likelihood of uninvolved parenting practices taking root in this context.

Findings reveal strong psychological health among secondary school students in Osun State. This stands in contrast to worldwide patterns of deteriorating adolescent mental health, particularly the notable rise in anxiety and depression among young people in recent years (Kieling et al., 2019; Racine et al., 2021). The overall favorable mental health profile seen in this group may be attributed to protective influences rooted in the area's community bonds and family dynamics. Regarding self-esteem, students largely exhibited a healthy sense of self-worth, rejecting feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Nonetheless, a tendency to dwell on personal shortcomings points to some degree of self-critical thought. This may be a typical feature of adolescent development, during which growing cognitive abilities encourage deeper self-reflection, often resulting in a sharper awareness of one's own limitations (Steinberg, 2020).

Hypothesis 1 found a significant negative correlation between permissive parenting and mental well-being, indicating that higher levels of permissive parenting are associated with poorer mental health outcomes among adolescents. This finding shows that permissive parenting, characterized by high warmth but low structure and inconsistent boundaries, often leads to difficulties with self-regulation and emotional adjustment in adolescents (Steinberg, 2013; Rothrauff et al., 2019). The negative correlation supports research demonstrating that while permissive parents may be warm and accepting, their lack of clear expectations and consistent discipline creates an environment where adolescents struggle with behavioral control and may experience increased anxiety and stress (Akinawo, Akpunne & Olajide, 2020). This result suggests that within the Nigerian context, adolescents benefit from clear structure and expectations alongside parental warmth, and that excessive permissiveness, despite its well-intentioned nature, can be detrimental to mental well-being. The moderate negative correlation indicates that the absence of appropriate boundaries and guidance leaves adolescents without the external structure needed to develop internal self-regulation skills, ultimately compromising their psychological adjustment.

Findings from hypothesis 2 also revealed a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.586$, $p < 0.001$) between uninvolved parenting and mental well-being, indicating that higher levels of uninvolved parenting are associated with substantially poorer mental health outcomes. This finding demonstrates that uninvolved parenting, characterized by low warmth and low structure, is associated with the worst outcomes for children and adolescents across multiple developmental domains (Steinberg, 2013; Baumrind, 2013). The strong negative correlation supports decades of research linking uninvolved parenting to higher rates of depression, anxiety, behavioral problems, academic difficulties, and poor self-esteem (Pinquart, 2017). This finding underscores the critical need for interventions targeting uninvolved parents to promote greater engagement and support for their adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Sequel to the findings of the study, it was concluded that permissive parenting styles and uninvolved parenting styles negatively but significantly influence the mental well-being of secondary school students in Osun State, Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that permissive and uninvolved parenting styles were all associated with poorer mental well-being, with uninvolved parenting representing the strongest risk factor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Targeted interventions should be made available for students showing mental health concerns, particularly focusing on anxiety-driven avoidance behaviors
2. There should be family-based intervention programs that simultaneously address parenting practices and adolescent mental health outcomes
3. There should be education for parents about the importance of setting clear boundaries and expectations while maintaining warmth and support.
4. Parents displaying permissive tendencies should receive targeted training on establishing appropriate boundaries, consistent expectations, and structured guidance while maintaining emotional warmth and supportive relationships with their adolescents.
5. High-risk families with uninvolved parenting patterns should be identified early and provided with intensive family support services, parenting skills training, and mental health resources to prevent severe negative outcomes for adolescent development.

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