

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTING STYLES AND STUDENT'S  
MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL  
STUDENTS IN UYO METROPOLIS OF AKWA-IBOM STATE,  
NIGERIA.**

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**Abstract**

This study examined the Relationship between Parenting Styles and Student's Mental Health Outcomes among Secondary School Students in Uyo Metropolis of Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria. The study employed correlational design. The population was two thousand one hundred and fourteen (2114) SS1 students within Uyo metropolis, the sample for the study consisted of 241 students. Two main instruments title Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ) and Student's Mental Health Outcome Questionnaire (SMHOQ) used for data collection. Data were analyzed using inferential statistics. The inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation ( $r$ ) was used to test all the three hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Findings revealed that a significant positive relationship existed between authoritative parenting style and students' mental health outcomes ( $r = 0.505$ ,  $p = 0.037$ ). While inverse significant relationship exists between authoritarian parenting style and students' mental health outcomes. ( $r = -0.736$ ,  $p = 0.044$ ). Also, significant positive relationship exists between democratic parenting style and students' mental health outcomes. ( $r = 0.882$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ). Based on the findings, it was recommended that Educational Psychologist should organize educational programs for parents focus on encouraging authoritative practices that balance structure with support, enhancing students' emotional and psychological well-being.

**Keyword:** Parenting Styles, authoritarian, authoritarian, democratic students' Mental Health Outcomes.

## **Introduction**

In recent years, the interplay between parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes has garnered significant attention from international organization such as World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO has highlighted the importance of student's mental health awareness. WHO has launched special initiative for mental health (201–2023), highlighting the need for universal health coverage to include mental health (World Health Organization, 2019) and recommending new WHO guidelines on how to promote mental health awareness among students (World Health Organization, 2020) particularly within the context of educational environments. Secondary school students especially adolescence, traversing a critical developmental phase, are increasingly subject to the influences of various parenting styles, which can significantly impact their mental well-being. In Uyo Metropolis, Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria, these dynamic remains underexplored despite its potential implications for educational and psychological interventions. (Udo, Adeniyi & Balarabe, 2019)

Parenting styles is the process by which parents relate, interact, rear, react and direct children in the course of upbringing. These include authoritative parenting style, autocratic parenting style, laissez-faire parenting style, democratic parenting style and uninvolved parenting style (Udo, Adeniyi & Balarabe, 2019). Parenting style can be seen as the representation of how parents respond to the demand of their children. Parenting styles are emotional climate in which parents raise their children. It is a psychological construct representing standard strategies that parents use in rearing of their children. The range and depth of emotions which parents display to their children, build up the mental health outcomes of their children (Barnhart, Raval, Jansari & Raval 2013). Parenting styles are one of the most commonly reported contributors to student's mental health outcomes (Patterson, Debaryshe, & Ramsey, 2021; Schaffer *et al*, 2009; Hoeve *et al*, 2008).

Baumrind (2018) examines the influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. The study found that adolescents with authoritative parents exhibited higher levels of competence, better emotional regulation, and lower levels of substance abuse. The supportive nature of authoritative parenting fosters resilience, contributing positively to mental health.

Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, (2017). Investigates overtime changes in adolescents' adjustment and the family environment. The research finding indicated that authoritarian parenting is linked to increased levels of anxiety and depression in adolescents. The lack of emotional support and high demands associated with authoritarian parenting styles negatively impacts mental health. Daddis, & Schachner, (2015) in their longitudinal study on the role of parenting in the development of adolescent mental health found that democratic parenting, characterized by mutual respect and open communication, is associated with positive mental health outcomes in adolescents, including lower levels of anxiety and better self-esteem. Murray & Harrison (2019) carry out study on Parenting practices and the development of children's emotional regulation and discover that children with authoritative parents exhibited higher emotional regulation and fewer behavioural problems, leading to better mental health outcomes. Steinberg (2018) carry out a study on We know some things: Parent-adolescent relationships in retrospect and prospect. The finding of the study reveals that authoritarian parenting styles were associated with increased levels of depression and anxiety in adolescents.

Smetana, (2022) examines Parenting styles and adolescent development. the finding reveals that adolescents from authoritarian households reported lower self-esteem and higher levels of psychological distress. Chao, (2024) examines Beyond parental control: A model of Chinese parental influence on child behaviour. The research finding highlighted that authoritarian parenting negatively impacted children's mental health, particularly in emotional and behavioural adjustment. Gonzalez & Mendez (2016) examines the role of

parenting in adolescent adjustment. Findings reveals that democratic parenting styles correlated with improved mental health outcomes, including lower anxiety and better social competence. Darling, & Steinberg (2023) examines Parenting style as a context: An integrative model. The research finding reveals that democratic parenting practices were linked to higher levels of academic success and positive emotional outcomes in children.

Ryan, & Deci, (2018) Study Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. Findings reveals that Parenting that fosters autonomy (democratic style) leads to enhanced psychological well-being and reduced mental health issues among adolescents. A meta-analysis by Fan & Chen (2017) examined the relationship between parental involvement and children's mental health outcomes. The findings showed that higher levels of parental involvement were correlated with better mental health and fewer behavioural problems in children. Kins *et al.* (2019) conducted a longitudinal study that found children raised in authoritative households reported better emotional well-being and resilience, while those from authoritarian households experienced higher rates of depression and social withdrawal.

There are four conceptual types of parenting styles according to Baumrind (2018): authoritative style, autocratic style, laissez-faire style, and democratic style of parenting (Hoeve, Dubas, Eichelsheim, Van Der Laan, Smeenk, & Gerris, 2016). Autocratic parents apply firm control and require their children to obey rules and regulations without asking question on why they should obey such guidelines. Autocratic parents show high levels of control, supervision, harsh punishment, coercion, and moderate levels of love, withdrawal, and support (Hoeve *et al.*, 2017; Hoeve *et al.*, 2016). Autocratic parents invoke phrases such as, you will do this because I said, and because I am the parent and you are not. Autocratic parents do not engage in discussions with their children and family rules and standards are not debated. Autocratic parents believe children should accept, without question, the rules and practices that they establish. Research

reveals that children's of autocratic parents learn that following parental rules and adherence to strict discipline is valued over independent and critical thinking. As a result, children's may develop mental health issues such as anxiety, fear and depression.

Authoritative parenting style on the other hand is high on responsiveness and demandingness. These parents' value both instrumental and expressive attributes, for example, discipline conformity and freedom of self-will, yet they assume ultimate responsibility for the behaviour of their children (Hertherington & Parke 2022). Authoritative Parents are warm but firm. They encourage their children's to be independent while maintaining limits and controls on their actions. Authoritative parents do not invoke the because I said rule. Instead, they are willing to entertain, listen to, and take into account their children's viewpoint. Authoritative parents engage in discussions and debates with their children, although ultimate responsibility resides with the parent. Research demonstrates that adolescents of authoritative parents learn how to negotiate and engage in discussions. They understand that their opinions are valued. As a result, they are more likely to be socially competent, responsible, and autonomous (Hertherington & Parke 2022).

Laissez-faire parents are defined as parents who give their children too much freedom, without interfering in the child's daily activities (Schaffer *et al.*, 2019). laissez-faire parents are high on responsiveness, but low on demandingness. They interact with their children in a passive manner, avoiding the use of the force when dealing with issues of discipline. (Okoro, 2018). They are indulgent and passive in their parenting, and believe that the way to demonstrate their love is to give in to their children's wishes. Laissez-faire parents invoke such phrases as, sure, you can stay up late if you want to, and you do not need to do any chores if you don't feel like it. laissez-faire parents do not like to say no or disappoint their children. As a result, children's are allowed to make many important decisions without parental input. Parents do not view

themselves as active participants in shaping their children's actions; instead they view themselves as a resource, should the children choose to seek their advice (Hertherington & Parke 2022).

In a democratic parent, the children's have the right and freedom as well as privileges of every child is taken into consideration. Okoro (2018), in his study stated that under democratic style of parenting the children has voice and both the parent and the children's work for the good of the home, the parents are like the director or manager they are more experience so they get to set rules, however, the rules are discussed with the children and explained as to why they are in place and how it benefits the child to have the rules. According to democratic parents' exhibit participatory leadership style that encourages presentation of children matter and decision-making and important discussion under a participatory and threat-free climate, student from democratic parents emulate a lot of behaviour including fairness, justice, and equity. According to Okoro (2018) democratic style of parenting does not mean that parents especially, father does not have any leverage to take decisions without the children's input but decided to carry the children along to promotes peace and calmness. According to Udo, Adeniyi & Balarabe, (2019) democratic parenting stresses choices; children are encouraged to make choices daily on many different areas in their lives. For the purpose of this study, the research will only be limited to three parenting styles including authoritative, authoritarian and democratic parenting styles.

Student mental health outcomes refer to the effects of mental health conditions on students, including emotional, psychological, and overall parenting styles. Understanding these outcomes is important to effectively address the issues among secondary school students. Mental health outcomes encompass a range of indicators that reflect the state of a student's mental health. These can include symptoms of mental illness, functioning in daily life, quality of life, and overall well-being (World Health Organization, 2018). Positive mental health outcomes often manifest as resilience, coping skills, and life satisfaction, while

negative outcomes may lead to impairment in personal and social functioning (Berk, 2017). Understanding student's mental health outcomes is imperative for several reasons. Some of the reason is that it guides educational psychologists in evaluating effective treatment and adjusting interventions. Also, it informs educational psychologists initiatives aimed at improving student's mental health care access and quality. Lastly, it helps educational psychologist in monitoring these outcomes and to identify students at risk of mental health problem and put in preventive measures.

The mental health of students is influenced by many factors. Personal factors e.g., biological and psychological characteristic factors and environmental factors e.g., family, school and peer group are considered to be the main factors which affect student's mental health outcomes (Carr, 2015). Indeed, the family factor i.e., parenting style has been shown to be one of the most important factors affecting student's mental health outcomes which are the focus of this study (Newman *et al.*, 2018). Parenting style not only directly affects the mental health of students, but also has been shown to have a lasting impact on the development of students' behaviour, personality and other psychological characteristics (Rohner and Britner, 2022; Rohner *et al.*, 2015; Huang *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the relationship between parenting style on student's mental health outcomes in Uyo Metropolis of Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The relationship between parenting styles and students' mental health outcomes in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, presents a critical area of concern, particularly as mental health issues among adolescents become increasingly prevalent. Various studies indicate that different parenting styles such as authoritative, authoritarian, and democratic significantly impact student's emotional, social, and academic well-being. However, the specific dynamics within the cultural and socioeconomic context of Uyo remain underexplored. The researchers have identified the rising incidence of mental health issues among



students, such as anxiety, depression, and behavioural problems, potentially linked to varying parenting approaches. Reports from local schools such as West Itam Secondary School Counselling Unit, Foundation for Children with Mental Health Needs (FONCIMH) and mental health organizations such as Federal Psychiatric Hospital, Eket and Ibom Specialist Hospital indicate that many students struggle with emotional regulation and academic performance, raising questions about the role of parenting styles in these challenges. This situation prompted the researchers to seek to understand how different parenting styles practiced in Uyo metropolis influence students' mental health outcomes. The need to explore this relationship is urgent, given the increasing academic pressures and societal expectations faced by students in the region. By investigating this issue, the research aims to provide insights that can inform interventions, enhance parenting practices, and ultimately improve the mental health and overall well-being of students in Uyo Metropolis.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis of Akwa-Ibom state. Specifically, the study aims at:

1. Examine the relationship between authoritative parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis
2. To investigate the relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis
3. To determine the relationship between democratic parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis



### **Null Hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between democratic parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis

### **Methodology**

This study utilized a correlational research design, correlational design is a type of study that seeks to establish what relationship exists between two or more variables. Usually such studies indicate the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables. The reasons for adopting this design were that all the hypotheses are based on relationships. This is justified based on the views of Olayiwola (2007) that when researchers want to find out about the relationship between two variables then correlation design should be used. In the context of this study, the correlational design was appropriate for examining the relationship between authoritative, authoritarian and democratic parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

The population of the study comprised of all the S.S.1 students both males and females in the public senior secondary schools in Uyo metropolis of Akwa state, of which three (3) are boarding schools and thirteen (13) day school. The number stands at two thousand one hundred and fourteen (2114) students as at the time of conducting this research. However, seven hundred and forty-seven (747) S.S.1 students were found to engage in incidence of mental health issues,

such as anxiety, depression, and behavioural problems (Source: Ministry of Education Uyo, Akwa Ibom State May, 2024).

Simple random sampling technique was used to select seven public secondary schools within Uyo metropolis using balloting method. According to Kothari (2016), Simple random sampling is a method of selecting a subset of individuals from a larger population, where each individual has an equal chance of being chosen. Using Research Advisors (2006) table for determining sample size from a given population two hundred and forty-eight (241) respondents were used for this study. Two main instruments were used for this study. The instruments are Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ) and Student's Mental Health Outcome Questionnaire (SMHOQ). PSQ developed by Erinisha, (2012) and adapted for the study, while SMHOQ was developed by Beck (2017) and was adapted for this study. PSQ consisted of a 30-item question and each item measures various aspect of parenting styles. 1-10 measures authoritative, 11-20 measures authoritarian and 21-30 measures democratic parenting, the instrument was structured in 5-point Likert format scale for answers SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, NS= Not Sure, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree. While, SMHOQ is a new instrument developed by Beck to measure changes in cognitive, emotional and behavioural symptoms as it is sensitive to change. In this study, it has been modified by the researchers for easy adaptation. To ascertain the validity of the instruments, scholars with the background knowledge of Educational Psychology, test and measurement validated the instruments to determine content validity, their relevance and appropriateness in the study.

The pilot study was carried out with the purpose of establishing the reliability of instrument using Cronbach alpha reliability method. The reliability was done for each section of the questionnaire. The reliability for authoritative parenting styles was .747, for autocratic parenting styles .711, and for democratic parenting styles it was .756, while the Student's Mental Health Outcome was at .734 respectively. The instruments (PSQ) and (SMHOQ) were administered to

the students in each selected school in Uyo metropolis. Before administration of instruments all participants were instructed and told about purpose of the study. Students were instructed that there is no right or wrong answers and they must just select answer that is most closely describes their typical behaviour. Completion of the inventories was with the guarantee of confidentiality. For analyzing data, the researchers used program IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient PPMC(r) statistics were used for analyzing data for establishing relationship between variables Parenting Styles and Student's Mental Health Outcomes among Secondary School Students in the study area.

## Results

**Table 1:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient PPMC(r) statistics on relationship between authoritative parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	R	P
Authoritative parenting	241	37.6358	6.81658			
				239	0.505	0.037
Mental health outcomes	241	3.1421	.71649			

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)*

Outcome of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) statistics above showed that a significant positive relationship existed between authoritative parenting style and students' mental health outcomes. ( $r = 0.505$ ,  $p = 0.037$ ). The positive relationship ( $r = 0.505$ ) suggests that this parenting style is associated with better mental health outcomes of students in the study area. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes, was rejected.

**Table 2:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient PPMC(r) statistics on the relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	r	P
Authoritarian parenting	241	36.637	5.09286	239	-0.736	0.044
Mental health outcomes	241	3.1309	.71869			

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)*

Outcome of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) statistics above showed that a significant inverse relationship existed between authoritarian parenting style and students' mental health outcomes. ( $r = -0.736$ ,  $p = 0.044$ ). The inverse relationship ( $r = -0.736$ ) indicates that authoritarian parenting, characterized by high demands and low responsiveness, correlates with poorer mental health outcomes of students in Uyo metropolis. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes, was rejected.

**Table 3:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient PPMC(r) statistics on relationship between democratic parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	R	P
Democratic parenting	241	37.44826	7.76734	239	0.882	0.022
Mental health outcomes	241	3.1710	.71325			

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)*

Outcome of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) statistics above showed that a significant positive relationship existed between democratic parenting style and students' mental health outcomes. ( $r = 0.882$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ). The

positive relationship ( $r = 0.882$ ) suggests that this parenting style is associated with better mental health outcomes of students in the study area. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between democratic parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes, was rejected.

### **Discussion**

This study focused on relationship between parenting styles and student's mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Uyo metropolis of Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria.

**Hypothesis one:** relationship existed between authoritative parenting style and students' mental health outcomes. The findings are in line with that of Baumrind (2018) who examined the influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. It is also in line with the study of Murray & Harrison (2019) who carry out study on parenting practices and the development of children's emotional regulation. The reason for this result is that authoritative parents typically provide support while maintaining clear expectations, which may foster resilience and emotional well-being in their children mental health outcome. Also, authoritative parents provide warmth, support, and guidance to their children which can enhance students' self-esteem and emotional well-being thereby improving student's mental health outcomes.

**Hypothesis two:** relationship existed between authoritarian parenting style and students' mental health outcomes. The findings corroborated with that of Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, (2017) who investigated overtime changes in adolescents' adjustment and the family environment. These results agreed with Steinberg (2018) who carry out a study on We know some things: Parent-adolescent relationships in retrospect and prospect. In line with result is study by Smetana, (2022) who examined Parenting styles and adolescent development. Similarly, the finding agrees with Chao, (2024) who examines beyond parental control: A model of Chinese parental influence on child behaviour. 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 health outcomes. Also, authoritarian parents often prioritize obedience and discipline over emotional connection, the rigid nature of this parenting style often create a stressful environment, resulting in lower self-esteem thereby negatively affect student's mental health outcomes in the study area.

**Hypothesis three:** relationship existed between democratic parenting style and students' mental health outcomes. The findings are in line with that of Ryan, & Deci, (2018) who examined Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. Still in support of the result is the study by Daddis, & Schachner, (2015). In their longitudinal study on the role of parenting in the development of adolescent mental health. The result agreed with that of Gonzalez & Mendez (2016) who examined the role of parenting in adolescent adjustment. Equally relevant to the result of this study was a research carried out by Darling & Steinberg (2023) who examined Parenting style as a context. The reason for this result is that democratic parent encourages open communication and mutual respect, which benefits students' mental health. This style likely promotes autonomy and self-esteem of students. Also, this style of parenting promotes mutual respect and understanding between parents and children, enhancing emotional well-being through strong relational bonds. By involving children in decision-making, democratic parenting helps develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which can positively impact students mental health outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that authoritative style of parenting is positively associated with better student's mental health outcomes, indicating that supportive, nurturing, and structured environments foster resilience and well-being in students in the study area. In contrast, authoritarian parenting style shows a negative relationship with mental health

outcomes, suggesting that rigid, controlling parenting may lead to increased stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues among the students in the study area. Democratic style of parenting also demonstrates a positive impact on mental health, reflecting the benefits of collaborative decision-making and open communication between parents and children.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation are hereby made;

1. Educational psychologist should organize educational programs for parents focus on encouraging authoritative practices that balance structure with support, enhancing students' emotional and psychological well-being.
2. Educational psychologist and school counsellors should organize workshops and counseling session for parents exhibiting authoritarian tendencies that could help them understand the negative impacts of such approaches on their children mental health outcomes.
3. Schools should facilitate parent-student workshops that promote democratic parenting principles, emphasizing the importance of communication and shared decision-making.

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