

Influence Of Parenting Styles on Pupils' Socio-Emotional Skills in Early Childhood Educational Centers in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the influence of parenting style on pupils' socio-emotional skills in early childhood education centers in Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 150 parents with children in 15 early childhood education centers (ECEC) across 3 selected local government areas (LGAs) in Nigeria. This study adopted a descriptive technique and regression. Results show parenting styles exhibited by parents of pupils in ECEC as authoritative parenting styles ($\bar{X}=4.36$), authoritarian parenting styles ($\bar{X}=3.39$), and permissive parenting styles ($\bar{X}=3.83$). Results also show a statistically significant influence of parenting styles at ($\beta = 0.250$, $p = 0.002$) on pupils' socio-emotional skills in Nigeria. This study concludes that the authoritative parenting style has the highest influence on pupils' socio-emotional skills than the other two parenting styles. This study recommends that there should be a policy that ensures better parenting styles and excellent children's socio-emotional skills in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Parenting styles, Pupils, Socio-emotional skill, Early Childhood Education Centers, Nigeria*

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Introduction

Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviours that work individually and together to influence the child. Parenting encompasses various aspects of raising a child beyond the biological connection. Additionally, governments and society can play a part in child-rearing. Orphaned or abandoned children may receive care from non-parent relatives, be adopted, enter foster care, or live in orphanages (Gottlieb, 2024). Parenting involves not only bringing up children but also providing care for them. The quality of parenting received during early years significantly impacts cognitive potential, social skills, and behavioural development, which collectively determine a child's overall success in life (Tuerk, *et. al.*, 2021; Zinkeng & Takang, 2024; Rungsattatharm, *et. l.*, 2025).

Parents occupy an essential place in modeling a child's life and exert a significant influence. They possess unique attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, values, and family backgrounds, which can vary greatly from one parent to another. Parenting is of utmost importance as it forms the bedrock of an adolescent's personality development (Bibi *et. al.*, 2013; Sari, 2023). Parenting involves nurturing and aiding the growth of a child emotionally, physically, socially, and intellectually from infancy to adulthood (Mahapatra & Batul, 2016; Brooks, 2023). Disorderliness in some children can be attributed to parents' behaviours, which impede the development of children holistically. The notion of parenting style is applied to account for differences in parents' efforts to guide their children (Baumrind, 1999; Akhta, 2012; Wang *et. al.*, 2019).

Parenting is influenced by a number of elements, such as the maturity of the parent, the closeness and stability of the marriage, the desire to have a child, the timing of the pregnancy, and the physical and temperamental traits of the child. Cultural, ethnic, and economic variables can also have an impact on parenting styles, indicating that parenting behaviours can also shift as a result of these factors (Mahapatra & Batul, 2016; Kealy & Devaney, 2024; Jin *et. al.*, 2024).

Parenting styles can be classified into authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles. Authoritarian parents tend to be highly controlling, directive, and punitive, emphasizing obedience and conformity, often resorting to harsh discipline, and can come across as overbearing (Watabe & Hibbard, 2014). In contrast, permissive parents adopt an under-controlling approach, emphasizing self-regulation and emotional warmth while providing little guidance for mature behaviour. Authoritative parenting style shows a balance between nurturing and reasonable demands, leading to the healthiest developmental outcomes for children (Sahithya, *et. al.*, 2019). Through their influence, parents contribute immensely in shaping their children into responsible individuals. It is crucial to identify that the development of socio-emotional skills is significantly influenced by the parenting styles (Shire, *et.al.*, 2016).

Socio-emotional skills focus on managing emotions, self-perception, and interactions with others rather than raw information

processing ability. They are influenced by situational factors and responsive to learning experiences. Notably, socio-emotional skills impact various personal and societal well-being in someone's life. In today's rapidly transforming world, the role of these skills is becoming increasingly significant (Organization for Economic Co-operation & Development-OECD, 2020; Carpendale, *et. al.*, 2025). Socio-emotional skills influence ability of individuals to adapt to their environment and achieve success in life. These skills not only affect individuals but also have significant implications for entire communities and societies (Kawachi, 1999; Lechner, *et. al.*, 2019; Danner, *et al.*, 2021). The importance of socio-emotional skills in developing and utilizing cognitive domains cannot be underestimated. This growing awareness of the malleability and relevance of socio-emotional skills has reignited the interest of policymakers and researchers (OECD, 2020).

Socio-emotional skills, especially in children, are influenced by different parenting styles (Xiong, *et. al.*, 2020; Akanji, *et. al.*, 2020). The influence of authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles on teenagers' moral reasoning in Ado Ekiti, Nigeria, was examined by Afolabi *et. al.*, (2014) in the Nigerian context. They postulated that parental approaches would be a major determinant of teenagers' moral reasoning. In a study on the genders of children and parenting styles, Vyas, Bano, and Islamia (2016) discovered that fathers tended to adopt an authoritative parenting style for girls more often than for boys, and an authoritarian parenting style for boys more frequently than for girls. Poor socio-emotional skills can impede the valuable utilization of intellectual abilities, with familial factors playing a significant role (OECD, 2020). A study by Vasiou *et al.* (2023) looked at parenting methods and how they affect children's socio-emotional development. They found that about one-third of children and teenagers had behavioural issues, which highlights the necessity of parenting programs to direct parenting techniques.

There exists a substantial body of literature on the connection between parenting style and the skills of adolescents and children, with some studies exploring these relationships, there remains a dearth of research on the specific link between parenting styles and the socio-emotional skills of pupils in early childhood education centres, particularly in communities known for their strong moral and cultural values in Nigeria. This study aimed to assess different parenting styles of pupils' parents in the Early Childhood Education Centre (ECEC) in Nigeria. This would help parents to understand their parenting styles and adjust for better holistic development of their children in early childhood education centres.

Literature Review

Parenting is a multifaceted endeavour comprising various specific behaviours that, both individually and collectively, exert an influence on a child's development (Korolenko *et. al.*, 2024). While specific parenting actions, such as discipline methods or reading to a child, can impact a child's growth. Precise parenting practices have a lesser role in predicting a child's skill compared to the broader patterns of parenting. To describe this overall parental environment, most studies (such as Steinberg *et. al.*, 1991; Shahsavari, 2012; Catalano *et. al.*, 2024; Cayaban *et. al.*, 2025) used

Baumrind's idea of parenting style, which has been applied to confine the typical differences in parents' efforts to mentor and socialize their children.

In her theoretical model of parenting style from 1966, Baumrind incorporated the dimensions of nurturance and control into a framework of parenting style, emphasizing the significance of parents' belief systems. According to Baumrind, a fundamental aspect of the parental function is to guide the child in adapting to the expectations of others while preserving their integrity. Control can manifest as harshness, the use of physical discipline, constancy in punishment, explanations provided, and other related factors. In contrast, Baumrind argued that there is a difference between the willingness of parents to allow socialization of their children and the level of restrictiveness (Baumrind, 1966; Baumrind, 1995).

Baumrind characterizes authoritative parenting as the "balanced" style, incorporating moderate demands on the child and a corresponding level of responsiveness from the parents. Authoritative parents emphasize positive reinforcement and rarely resort to punishment. They demonstrate an acute understanding of their child's feelings and talents, actively fostering the child's independence within appropriate bounds. Parent-child communication within this style is characterized by a reciprocal exchange, with both control and support maintained in equilibrium. In these families, there is a healthy dynamic of communication between parents and children, and decisions are made through collaborative processes. However, parents in this category assert strong control without constraining their children's abilities and competencies (Shahsavari, 2012; Sadeghi, *et. al.*, 2022).

Authoritarian parents are known for their inflexibility and strictness in raising their children. They impose high expectations and rules on their children but are not attuned or responsive to their children's needs. Those who adopt an authoritarian parenting style maintain a stringent set of regulations and expectations, which they enforce with unwavering obedience as the primary goal (Wu, *et. al.*, 2021; Longmir, 2024; Vanest-Hood, 2024). Punishment is the typical recourse when rules are breached, with little to no explanation provided other than asserting the children's wrongdoing with statements like "Because I said so". Research revealed that children nurtured in an authoritarian parenting style tend to exhibit lower levels of cheerfulness, greater moodiness, and heightened vulnerability to stress. In many instances, hostility is one of the attributes of children from this home.

Permissive or indulgent parenting is more commonly observed in middle-class households compared to working-class families. Within these family dynamics, there is a strong emphasis on valuing a child's freedom and independence, with parents primarily relying on communication and explanation to guide their children. Parental expectations and demands are kept to a minimum, resulting in little to no use of punishment or clearly defined rules. Parents adhering to this approach often claim that their children have the freedom to make choices without external constraints and that they are highly responsive to their immediate needs. Children raised by permissive parents generally display contentment, but they may occasionally exhibit low self-control and reliance, which is a result of an unstructured home. An example of

permissive parenting might involve parents refraining from applying discipline to their children (Echedom *et. al.*, 2018; Cui *et. al.*, 2019; Lassonde, 2020; Lee, 2023).

Social skills and interpersonal interactions serve as the fundamental building blocks of human consciousness, significantly shaping human thoughts and behaviours within the realm of social interactions. These abilities are essential to a person's ability to build lasting connections, participate actively in their community, and contribute positively to society. They depict a dynamic interaction between the person and their environment, evolving progressively during childhood and adolescence. Any delays in the acquisition of these social skills can lead to a vital undesirable influence on the general quality of one's life as well as cause psychological anguish, social isolation, and low self-esteem. Ewunonu (2023) found that socio-emotional skills significantly contributed to pupils' school readiness.

Objectives of the Study

- i. Identify the parenting styles exhibited by parents of pupils in early childhood education centers in Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the influence of parenting styles on the socio-emotional skills in Nigeria.

Research Question

What are the parenting styles exhibited by parents of pupils in early childhood education centers in Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant influence of parenting styles on the socio-emotional skills in Nigeria.

Material and Methods

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study's population comprised 150 parents in early childhood education Centers. These are parents who had their children in early childhood education centers in three selected local government areas (LGAs), and who provided reliable information about themselves and their children. The study adopted a descriptive research design.

Sampling Procedure

A multistage sampling procedure was used. Firstly, Osun East Senatorial District was purposively selected among the three senatorial districts in Osun State of Nigeria, being a district with high population and education activities. In the second stage, three LGAs, namely Ife Central, Ife East, and Ife North, were selected in the senatorial district through a simple random sampling technique. Five early childhood education centres were randomly selected from each LGA, making a total of fifteen early childhood education centres for this study. In each early childhood education center, ten pupils in Nursery Two to Primary Three classes, early phases of schooling, were randomly selected, making a total of one hundred and fifty pupils.

One self-designed instrument namely: Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ) was used to collect data for the study.

Data Collection

The Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ) was used to collect data. PSQ was given to each pupil to take home for his/her parent to fill out and return to the school. The researcher went to the ECEC every day for four weeks to follow-up and collect the questionnaires back from the pupils. Any questionnaire that was not completely filled was returned to the pupil for necessary action. This was done to avoid missing values and other issues that might affect the accuracy of the data. The validation of the instrument items involved a two-step process: face validation and content validation. To achieve this, a structured questionnaires were distributed to experts within the Institute of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Their inputs were carefully considered and incorporated into the final draft of the questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was evaluated by subjecting it to a reliability test, specifically using the reliability Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a significant coefficient of 0.79.

Data Analysis

Data collected for this study were analyzed using descriptive and inferential analytical techniques, which were performed in Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). The analytical techniques used were percentage, 5-point Likert scale, and relative importance index (RII) were to address the research question on parenting styles exhibited by parents of children in ECEC.

Relative Important Index was used as

$$RII = \frac{\sum W}{A \times N} (0 \leq RII \leq 1)$$

Where:

W – is the weight given to each factor by the respondents and ranges from 1 to 5 (where “1” is “strongly disagree” and “5” is “strongly agree”);

A – is the highest weight (i.e., 5 in this case) and;

N – is the total number of respondents.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to establish the significant difference in parenting styles exhibited by parents of pupils in ECEC. Regression was applied to test Hypothesis One that state there is no significance influence of parenting styles on the socio-emotional skills of pupils in Nigeria.

Results

Research Question One: What are the parenting styles exhibited by parent of children in early childhood education centers in Nigeria?

In identifying the parenting styles, Table 1 reveals that the parents of the pupils in ECEC in the study area mainly exhibited characteristics of three types of parenting styles (Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive). Considering the authoritative parenting style, 54.7% of the parents were very high in giving their children guidelines for their expectations. Many of these parents (56.7%) were very high in explaining the reasons for disciplining their children (see Table 1). Approximately 79% of parents had at least a high level of welcoming their child's contribution. This is also reflected in the level of parents' communication with their children, as 80.7% of the parents had above-average level of communication with their children (Table 1). The parents with attributes of an authoritative parenting style were very high (72.7%) in being involved in their children's life's journey (Table 1). Another parenting style exhibited by parents of the pupils in ECEC is the authoritarian parenting style, as 40.7% of parents were very high in using discipline as a mode of punishment. These parents impose rules on their children, as 30.7% were very high in imposing rules on their children. Authoritarian parents like to use one way as a mode of communication with their children, as 32% of parents were very high (Table 1). In the case of a permissive parenting style, 34% of parents were very high in allowing their children to figure things out themselves. These parents act like friends to their children, as 49% of parents were very high in acting more like a friend to their children. These parents also allowed their children to have leisure time, as 20% were very high in giving time to watch television (Table 1).

Table 1:

Level of different parenting styles in ECEC of the study area

Parenting Styles	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Give child guideline (Authoritative)	0	1.3	14.7	29.3	54.7
Explain reason for discipline child (Authoritative)	1.3	1.7	12.7	24.7	56.7
Welcome child's contribution (Authoritative)	2.7	1.3	17.3	34	44.7
Frequent level of communication with the child (Authoritative)	1.3	4	14	20	60.
Involve in the child's life journey (Authoritative)	1.3	1.3	7.3	17.3	72.7
Discipline as mode of punishment (Authoritarian)	1.3	7.3	24	26.7	40.7
Impose rules on the child (Authoritarian)	0.7	4.0	30	34.7	30.7

One way of communication with the child (Authoritarian)	0.7	10	24.7	32.7	32
Allow the child to figure things out (Permissive)	7.7	7.3	28	26	34
Act more like friend to the child (Permissive)	0.7	4.0	18.7	27.3	49.3
Give the child time to watch television (Permissive)	2	10	42.7	25.3	20

A parent of a pupil in any of ECECs in the study area may show attributes of two or more parenting styles, but one parenting style is dominant. Figure 1 depicts the different dominated parenting styles in ECEC of the study area, using relative importance index (RII) as follows: involved in the child's life journey (authoritative) with the highest RII of 0.92, followed by giving child guideline (authoritative) and frequent level of communication with child (authoritative) with RII of 0.87 each, explain reason for discipline the child (authoritative) with RII of 0.86, act more like friend to the child (permissive) with RII of 0.84, welcome child's contribution (authoritative) with RII of 0.83, and discipline as a mode of punishment (authoritarian) with 0.80. The other attributes of parenting were below 0.80 relative importance index. Based on this, it is obvious that the most dominant parenting styles of parents of pupils in ECEC of the study area were authoritative parenting styles, followed by permissive parenting style, and authoritarian. Table 2 presents that there is a significant difference in parenting styles exhibited by parents of pupils in ECEC of the study area at a p-value of 0.006, which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$, and the F-observed value of 2.351 which exceeds the F-critical value of 1.64 at F0.05, 14, 135. (Table 2).

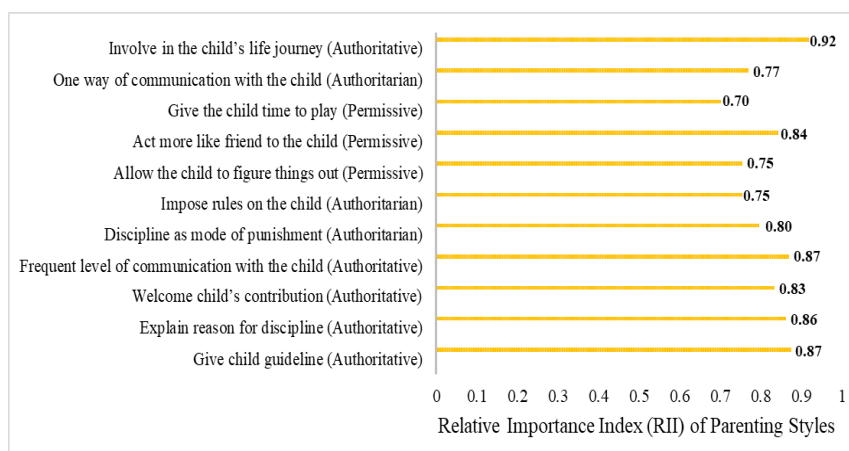


Figure 1: Relative Importance Index (RII) of Different Parenting Styles among Parents of Pupils in ECEC

Table 2

A Significant Difference in Parenting Styles Exhibited by Parents of Pupils in ECEC

ANOVA					
Parenting Styles Exhibited by Parents					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.214	14	.587	2.351	0.006
Within Groups	33.684	135	.250		
Total	41.898	149			

Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of parenting styles on the socio-emotional skills of pupils in Nigeria

For a better understanding of the influence of parenting styles on pupils' socio-emotional skills, parents were allowed to assess the influence of their parenting styles on their pupils' socio-emotional skills. Based on the parents' assessment of the influence of their parenting styles on their pupils' socio-emotional skills. Table 3 presents that 25.3% of parents believed that their parenting styles caused very high pupils' self-esteem, while the majority of parents agreed that their parenting style leads to at least a moderate level of empathy in their pupils in ECEC. Table 3 also reveals that 32% of parents concurred that pupils were very high in open communication, 39% were very high in understanding others' emotions, 29.3% were very low in deliberate destruction, and 22.7% caused very low anxiety in their pupils. On depression as a result of parenting style, 40.7% parents believed that their parenting style caused very low depression in their pupils. Table 3 presents that parenting styles of 20% of parents led to very low aggression in pupils, and 13.3% were very high. In summary, the majority of parents agreed that their parenting styles bring above an average self-esteem, empathy, open communication, understanding others' emotions, while leading to an average of deliberate destruction, anxiety, depression, and aggression in their pupils

Table 3

Level of parents' assessment of the influence of their parenting styles on their pupils' socio-emotional skills in ECEC

Influence of Parenting on Pupils' Socio-emotional Skills	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high
Self-esteem	3.3	7.3	34	30	25.3
Empathy	0.7	8.7	36	34	20.7
Open Communication	0.7	2	34	31.3	32

Understanding others' emotion	5.3	3.3	30.7	34.7	26
Deliberate destruction	29.3	18.7	32	11.3	8.7
Anxiety	22.7	30	27.3	9.3	10.7
Depression	40.7	22.7	18.7	11.3	6.7
Aggression	20	34.7	24.7	7.3	13.3

Based on regression results presented in Table 4, there is a statistically significant influence of parenting styles at ($\beta = 0.250$, $p = 0.002$) on pupils' socio-emotional skills in the study area.

Table 4

Influence of parenting styles on socio-emotional skills in the study

Regression Coefficients					
		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.122	.292	10.682	0.000
	Parenting Styles	.223	.071	0.250	3.144 0.002

a. Dependent Variable: Socio-emotional Skills

Discussion

The study assesses different parenting styles on pupils' socio-emotional skills in Osun State. From the findings of this research work, the parents of pupils in Early Childhood Education Centres (ECEC) in Nigeria exhibited authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles. This is in relation to Diana's theory, which delineates three parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive). Afolabi *et. al.*, (2014) also found authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive as the main parenting styles in Ado Ekiti, Nigeria, while Salavera *et. al.* (2024) categorised parenting style as authoritative, democratic, permissive, and neglectful. Though parents of pupils in ECEC possess different parenting styles, one is dominant in each of the parents in the study area. Parents of pupils of ECEC who are dominant in authoritative parenting display a very high attitude of giving their children guidelines for their expectations, explaining the reason for disciplining their children, and allowing their children to make contributions. These parents are well communicating with their children and are involved more in the life's journey of their children in the ECEC of the study area.

Another parenting style revealed by parents of pupils in ECEC of the study area is the authoritarian parenting style. The parents that are dominant in the authoritarian parenting style are not as many as those in the authoritative parenting style in the study area. Parents of pupils with an authoritarian parenting style are very high in disciplining their children, imposing rules on their children, and in most cases, applying one mode of communication with their children in ECEC. Parents with a permissive parenting style are very high in allowing their children to figure things out, acting more like friends to their children, and permitting their children to have more leisure time in the form of watching television. Based on this study, it is obvious that the most dominant parenting styles of pupils' parents in ECEC in Nigeria are authoritative parenting styles. However, some scholars have found different dominant parenting styles as Salavera *et. al.* (2022) concluded in their study that the most prevalent parenting style was democratic, while Campos *et. al.* (2024) inferred that the neglectful was the most prevalent parenting style among Brazilians. Sahithya *et. al.* (2019) in their study found that authoritative parenting style consistently yielded better outcomes than any other type of parenting style in both Western countries and India. The difference in parenting style exhibited by parents of pupils in the ECEC of Osun State is statistically significant.

Based on further findings, this study reveals a significant influence of parenting style on pupils' socio-emotional skills. Many parents reveal that their dominant parenting styles, especially authoritative and permissive, bring about self-esteem, empathy, open communication, and understanding others' emotions, while some parents' dominant parenting styles, especially authoritarian, cause deliberate destruction, anxiety, depression, and aggression in their pupils. This study is in relation to Stan (2012), who confirmed that the parental style practiced by a parent influences a child's social and emotional responses, particularly assertion, responsibility, and self-control. Salavera *et. al.* (2022) found that parenting styles have a direct influence on social skills. Children raised with a democratic style scored higher in positive influences and lower in aggressive beliefs. Those raised with an authoritative style tended to score above average in both positive influences and aggressive beliefs (Salavera *et. al.*, 2024). Research has been shown that other factors like culture, have been recognized as key factors that influence for the different parenting styles, especially in nation like Nigeria with different ethnics and cultures.

Conclusion

This study infers that the parents of the pupils in early childhood education centers in Nigeria exhibited three parenting styles- authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. This varies among the ECECs in the selected three local government areas. There is a significant influence of parenting styles on pupils' socio-emotional skills, as they bring about self-esteem, empathy, open communication, understanding others' emotions as positive, and deliberate destruction, anxiety, depression, and aggression as negative in pupils of early childhood education centers in Nigeria.

Recommendations

This study recommends that:

1. There should be public enlightenment for parents on harmful cultural practices and consequences of their parenting styles, thereby bring about better children's socio-emotional skills development.
2. The government should make a policy that ensures better parenting styles and excellent children's holistic development.

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