

PARENTING STYLE AS A PREDICTOR OF DELINQUENT BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AWKA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated parenting style as a predictor of delinquent behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population comprised 2,300 Senior Secondary School Two (SS2) students in 19 public secondary schools, from which a sample of 375 students was selected using a multi-stage random sampling technique. Data were collected using two standardized instruments: the Parenting Style Scale (PSS) and the Delinquent Behaviour Scale (DBS). Descriptive statistics were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to determine the relationship between parenting styles and delinquent behaviour at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that the majority of the students (66.13%) were raised with a responsive parenting style, while 33.87% experienced demanding/control parenting style. Results further showed that 74.93% of the students exhibited prosocial behaviour, whereas 25.07% demonstrated delinquent behaviour. The correlation analysis indicated a high positive relationship ($r = 0.76$) between parenting style and delinquent behaviour among secondary school students. The study concluded that parenting style is a significant predictor of delinquent behaviour, with responsive parenting being associated with prosocial behaviour and demanding/control parenting linked to higher tendencies of delinquency. It was recommended that parents adopt more responsive and balanced parenting approaches to reduce delinquent behaviour and promote healthy psychosocial development among adolescents.

Keywords: parenting style, delinquent behaviour, adolescents, secondary school students, Awka South Local Government Area.

INTRODUCTION

Education remains an important aspect of every society. At the beginning of human history, individuals used informal education to integrate members and develop them into responsible and useful people in the society. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD (2018) asserts that education aids in the growth of people's cognitive and practical knowledge. As time passed, education has evolved and people have imbibed the formal education as a means of producing useful individuals in their society. Children are sent to schools in order to become competent and productive adults in future. However, in the course of schooling, some children tend to display certain antisocial behaviour that hinder their ability to thrive. Nigeria's educational system faces challenges due to student delinquent behaviour like truancy, drug or alcohol misuse, cheating, and absence (Monica, 2024). These behaviour tend to contravene the school norms and rules leading to the decreased academic achievement and overall wellbeing of such children. Delinquent behaviour of adolescents is perhaps one of the subjects that have attracted the attention of many people from all works of life, and from all parts of human endeavor. It is crucial to understand that adolescent's delinquent behaviour affects not just the teenager but society. Increased dependency rates, insecurity, overcrowding, and rising unemployment according to Adewuyi (2023), are a few repercussions on the society. This undoubtedly, explains the increasing rate of societal vices among Nigerian young adults such as cybercrime, rape, ritual killing and robbery among others.

Due to the major difficulties faced with school delinquency, it is important to delve into the underlying causes. Delinquent behaviour refers to an action the commitment of which confronts the offender to the laws of the civil society (Darvishi, Atef, Elhami, Trejos-Castillo & Habibi, 2022). For the purpose of the study, delinquent behaviour can be referred to as acts displayed by adolescents which contradicts the norms and rules guiding the school settings often resulting to poor physical, emotional, mental and academic development. A delinquent young person is disobedient and wayward, runs away from home and school, cannot be controlled by the parents and teachers, is not amenable to any kind of discipline, is self-willed and habitually acts in a manner injurious to the welfare and happiness of others and himself (Rathinabalan & Naaraayan, 2017). Most students of Nigerian secondary school students exhibit delinquent behavioural characteristics such as truancy, theft, sex offences or rape, running away from parents, disobedience, drinking alcohol and other hard drugs which are injurious to the health (Vintenaba, 2021). Others include theft, vandalism or damage of school properties, walking out on the teacher, noise making, sleeping in class, pinching, lies, tardiness, irresponsibility, cheating, immorality, alcoholism, use of drugs, cultism, examination malpractice, physical aggression and verbal aggression towards teachers and peers, truancy or school absenteeism, engagement in cult activities, selling drugs, substance and alcohol use, escape from home. All these behaviour could lead to suspension or expulsion from schools, loss of friends, stigmatization, low self-esteem, depression or increased aggression, high chances of unnatural death by suicide or murder.

Delinquent behaviour among other vices could possibly be as a result of family influence and parenting styles (Ngwaka, Chigbu, Oguzie & Vera Nkiru, 2024). Parents play an influential

role in molding and shaping the behaviour of secondary school students to adulthood (Ngwaka et al, 2024). Parenting as a major agent of socialization, is the emotional climate in which parents raise their children (Chigbu, Nwobi, Ngwaka & Mokwelu, 2021). Parenting styles are psychological construct describing standard strategies parents use in bringing up their children (Chigbu, et al 2021).

For the purpose of the study, parenting style can be said to be the approach adopted by individuals in raising their children. The significant nature of parenting style on their children's behaviour cannot be over emphasized; hence, examining the influence of parenting styles on their children's behaviour is on the basis that parents differ in their approach and patterns of parenting; and as such, these different patterns could have substantial influence on how their kids' behave, their wellbeing as well as their personality development (Okeke, Obi-Nwosu & Onuoha, 2024).

Parenting style affects the development of personality and attitudes formation of the child because parenting is the most significant contributing factor in the psychosocial and moral development of children. Parenting plays an important role in determining whether young teens develop into a positive, mature individuals or would develop negative behaviour. Previous researches offer consistent results regarding the existence of a significant association between parenting style and antisocial behaviour in adolescents, offering insights into how parental approaches can influence adolescent behaviour. Silas, Eбенуwa-Okoh and Ugorji (2023), found significant relationships between permissive and uninvolved parenting styles and increased delinquent behaviour, emphasizing the impact of less engaged parenting approaches on adolescent misconduct. Ifedigbo, Anyaorah, Okafor and Uzoma (2023), in their study indicated that both peer influence and parenting styles, particularly dimensions like demandingness, responsiveness, and autonomy granting, were positively correlated with adolescent delinquency. This suggests that both parents and other social structure play crucial in adolescents' development. Xong, Li and Xia (2023), investigated the influence of authoritative parenting style on juvenile delinquency and crime victimization among Chinese adolescents and found that other factors such as adolescent's mental health problem and peer association mediated the relationship between the authoritative parenting style and delinquency.

Although, the present study views delinquency as resulted from parenting, delinquency has several other sorry factors contributing to it. Adesanya and Osinowoin (2019), found that permissive parenting style and certain personality traits, such as psychoticism and extraversion, were significant predictors of delinquent behaviors. Okorodu (2024) investigated the influence of parenting styles on adolescent's delinquency. The study showed that laissez-faire parenting style effectively predicts adolescents' delinquency while authoritarian and authoritative did not. These past studies underscore the significant role that parenting styles play in influencing delinquent behaviour across various cultural contexts. They highlight the importance of balanced and responsive parenting approaches to mitigate delinquent behaviour among adolescents. In view of this, some existing theories also suggests parenting styles as determinants of delinquent behaviour. The social learning theory by Albert Bandura which asserts that individuals learn behaviour through observation and modelling, suggests that negative parental modelling and reinforcement of negative behaviour by parents can contribute to delinquency.

Based on the above citations and studies carried out by different authors, there is still need to fill a gap in the study about parenting style and the recent happening in our society as regards delinquent behaviour. The rate at which adolescents exhibit delinquent behaviour (substance abuse, truancy, vandalism, theft, violence, lying, risky sexual behaviour) in the society raises worries and pressure among parents and stakeholders and could also disrupt the norms of the society. Therefore, for the sake of posterity and our children unborn, there is need to tackle the possible causes of these behaviour. Hence, there is need to investigate the study on parenting style as a predictor of delinquent behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra state.

Statement of the Problem

Delinquency has become a growing trend among secondary school students which is evident through disrespect for elders, sexual offences, academic dishonesty, indiscipline, truancy, poor relationship with others, among others. These acts pose a serious threat to the adolescents themselves, their families, generations to come and the society at large. Different measures have been put in place by the school administrators, researchers, the government, and even non-governmental bodies to curb the contending issue of delinquent behavior among secondary school students in Nigeria. Unfortunately, despite the measures being put in place, signs of delinquent behaviour could still be noticed among secondary school students, which negatively affects their academic achievement and general wellbeing. This could be as a result of failure from relevant stakeholders which involves the parents. With the increasing rate of misconduct among these adolescents, the researcher finds it necessary to explore parenting styles as a variable responsible for delinquent behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra state.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and delinquent behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area.

Specifically, the study determined:

1. The parenting style scores of secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area
2. The delinquent behaviour scores of secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area
3. The relationship between parenting styles and delinquent behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area.

METHOD

The correlational research design was used for this study. Correlational research design is a type of research design that seeks to establish what relationship exist between two or more variables (Nworgu, 2015). The study was conducted in Awka South Local Government Area Anambra State. The population comprises 2300 senior secondary two students in the 19 public secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area (Post Primary School Commission Awka, 2023). The sample size was 375 SS2 students selected through multi stage random sample technique. First, simple random sampling technique was used to select 5 secondary schools in Awka South LGA. From these selected schools, disproportionate sampling technique was used to select 75 students from each of the schools. This made each school to

have 75 students sample and the 5 schools totaled 375 students which constituted the sample of the study. Instrument for data collection were the Parenting Style Scale (PSS) which was adopted by the researcher. It was developed in India by Abdul and Abidha in 2014 but was revalidated in Nigeria by Okoro (2022), Oguzie, Chigbu, Mokwelu, and Okpara (2025). PSS has 32 items on a four-point scale of 'strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4) with corresponding weighted values of 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. The PSS instrument consisted of two sub-scales measuring parental responsiveness (16 items) and parental demandingness/control (16 items). Responsiveness measures the extent to which parents are caring, loving and open to discussion with their children while demandingness assesses the extent to which parents exert control over their children. The respondents were encouraged to read the items of the instrument carefully and indicate the extent it suits the behaviour of their parents towards them by ticking (1-4). Based on the PSS decision rule, students' scores that are from 32 to 90 are regarded as parental responsiveness and scores from 91 and above are regarded as parental demandingness/control. The second instrument was Delinquent Behaviour Scale (DBS) which was adapted by the researcher. It was developed by some university researchers in Minnesora in the early 1990s and was modified by the researcher to fit the present study. It was revalidated by Oguzie and Agha (2025). The DBS has 20 items on a four-point scale of 'never (1), rarely (2), always (3), often (4). The highest score of the instrument is 80 and the lowest score is 20. Based on the DBS decision rule, the norm is 50. Student's scores from 20 to 49 are seen as prosocial behaviour while scores from 50 to 80 are seen as delinquent behaviour. The Parenting Style Scale (PSS), is a standardized instrument and is proven to be suitable for the Nigerian population by Okoro (2022), and Oguzie, Chigbu, Mokwelu, and Okpara (2025) respectively. It was therefore adopted and used for this study. The Delinquent Behaviour Scale (DBS), is a standardized instrument that was revalidated in Nigeria by two experts from the department of guidance and counselling for the purpose of the study. The instruments adopted for this study have reliability coefficients considered enough for the present study as follows: 1. Parenting Style Scale (PSS) was reported to have good psychometric properties (Okoro, 2022). Abdul and Abidha (2014) obtained coefficients reliability of 0.81 and 0.83 respectively, for responsiveness and demandingness variables in the scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of reliability obtained from the Nigerian samples ranged from 0.90 to 0.86 (Okoro, 2022). Therefore, the instrument was deemed reliable enough to be adopted for this study. 2. The reliability of the DBS was established through the method of measure of internal consistency whereby it was administered to 20 secondary school students in Awka North Local Government Area, who were not part of the research population. Data were analyzed using the Cronbach's Alpha method and the reliability index was found to be 0.77. This is high enough for the instrument to be considered reliable as suggested by Nworgu (2015) that a reliability co-efficient of 0.70 and above is an acceptable reliability value. The instruments were administered to the respondents through direct delivery method. The researcher with the help of one research assistant visited the respondents in their various schools to fill the questionnaire face to face. The copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents and after completion, they were collected by the researcher at the spot. The direct delivery method helped the researcher to recover all the questionnaires without recording any lose. The data collected for this study were scored following the scoring instructions. All the data collected for this study were organised in tables and analysed. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to analyse the data. Data collected for the research questions 1 and 2, were analysed using aggregate scores, while research questions 3 was analysed using Pearson Product

Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r). Data relating to the null hypothesis was analysed by comparing the already established relationship index against the critical values at 0.5 level of significance. This analysis was used to determine if the hypothesis was accepted or rejected. The decision rule for judging the resulting scores was as follows:

Parenting style: (a) 32 – 90 = responsiveness (b) 91- 128 = demandingness

Delinquent behaviour: (a) 20 - 49 = prosocial behaviour (b) 50 - 80 = delinquent behaviour

Results

Research Question 1

What are the parenting styles scores of secondary school students in Awka South LGA?

Table 1: Range of scores on students' parenting style

Range of scores	N	%	Remark
32 – 90	248	66.13	Responsive parenting style
91 – 128	127	33.87	Demanding/Control parenting style

Table 1 showed that 248(66.13%) of the students with the scores ranging from 32 to 90 are raised with responsive parenting style, while 127(33.87%) of the students who scored between 91 and 128 were raised with demanding/control parenting style.

Research Question 2

What are the delinquent behaviour scores of secondary school students in Awka South LGA?

Table 2: Range of scores on students' delinquent behaviour

Range of scores	N	%	Remark
20 – 49	281	74.93	Prosocial behave.
50 – 80	94	25.07	Delinquent behave.

Data in table 2 indicated that 281(74.93%) of the students with the scores ranging from 20 to 49 have prosocial behaviour, while 94(25.07%) of the students who scored between 50 and 80 have delinquent behaviour.

Research Question 3

What is the relationship between secondary school students' parenting style and their delinquent behaviour in Awka South LGA?

Table 3: Pearson r on students' parenting style and their delinquent behaviour scores

Source of Variation	N	Parenting style r	Delinquent behav. r	Remark
Parenting style	375	0.00	0.76	High positive relationship
Delinquent behav.	375	0.76	0.00	

Data in table 3 revealed that there is high positive relationship of 0.76 between the secondary school students' parenting style and their delinquent behaviour.

Summary of Findings

Findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Majority of the students 248(66.13%) were raised with responsive parenting style, while few of the students 127(33.87%) were raised with demanding/control parenting style.
2. Majority of the students 281(74.93%) have prosocial behaviour, while 94(25.07%) of the students have delinquent behaviour.
3. There was high positive relationship of 0.76 between the students' parenting style and their delinquent behaviour.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Parenting Styles Scores of Secondary School Students

The findings of the study showed that 248 (66.13%) of the students with the scores ranging from 32 to 90 are raised with responsive parenting style, while 127(33.87%) of the students who scored between 91 and 128 are raised with demanding/control parenting style. This revealed that majority of the secondary students in Awka South Local Government Area are raised with responsive parenting style.

Delinquent Behaviour Scores of Secondary School Students

The findings of the study showed that 281(74.93%) of the students with the scores ranging from 20 to 49 have prosocial behaviour, while 94(25.07%) of the students who scored between 50 and 80 have delinquent behaviour. This revealed that majority of the secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area do not have delinquent behaviour. This does not mean that there are no delinquent students at all.

Relationship Between Parenting Style and Delinquent Behaviour of Secondary School Students

The findings of the study indicated that there is high positive relationship of 0.76 between the secondary school students' parenting style and their delinquent behaviour. This shows that there is high significant relationship between student's parenting style and their delinquent behaviour. This finding agrees with the study by Silas Courage, Eбенуwa-Okoh and Ugoji (2023) which examined the relationship between different parenting styles and delinquent behaviour. The study found that a significant relationship exists between authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, neglectful parenting style and delinquent behaviour among secondary school students. This finding also agrees with the study by Ifedigbo, Anyaorah, Okafor and Uzoma (2023), which examined the influence of parenting styles and peer influence on adolescent's delinquent behavior. The study showed that parenting styles (Demandingness, Responsiveness and Autonomy granting) correlated positively and significantly with adolescents' delinquent behaviour. The present study and the reviewed studies share similar findings because majority of the parents also practiced responsive parenting style which produced less delinquent students. However, there were also a good number of delinquent students.

Conclusion

The study concluded that parenting style is a significant predictor of delinquent behaviour among secondary school students. Similarly, the study concluded that more students are raised with responsive parenting style and they have prosocial behaviour. Also, few students are raised with demanding parenting style and they have delinquent behaviour.

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