Perceived Parenting Styles as Correlates of Self-Esteem among Adolescents in Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between perceived parenting styles (mothers’ and fathers’) and self-esteem among secondary school adolescents in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. The sample size for the study was 276, consisting of 163 females and 113 males. The study made use of two research instruments. A 24-item parental authority questionnaire was validated and used to measure perceived parenting styles and a 25-item self-esteem scale was also used to measure the self-esteem of the adolescents. One research question was raised and three hypotheses formulated to guide the study. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the research question and Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results revealed that the adolescents perceive their parents as moderately authoritarian and authoritative and low in permissiveness. There were significant negative correlations between parental (maternal and paternal) authoritarianism and self-esteem of the adolescents. Results also revealed significant positive correlation between maternal authoritativeness and self-esteem of the adolescents. Perceived permissiveness of both parents did not correlate significantly with self-esteem of the adolescents. Implications for school counselling were discussed and recommendations for future research made.

Key words: Adolescents, Self-Esteem, Parenting Styles, Correlation, School Counselling

Background of the Study

Adolescence is the transition period between childhood and adulthood. It is a period of multiple transition involving education, training, employment, unemployment and other developmental issues. Over the years, researchers have shown that parenting styles have strong impact on children’s and adolescents’ development. This is because the family is the first and most important socialising agency of individuals and parents in particular, play important roles in shaping the personality of individuals. Baumrind (1991) conducted studies using observational and other research methods and identified some important dimensions of
parenting which include disciplinary strategies, warmth and nurture, communication style and expectations of obedience and control. Based on these, three parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian and permissive were suggested by Baumrind (1991). According to the researcher, authoritarian parenting is the style in which children are expected to follow the strict rules established by parents. Failure to do so attracts punishment. In this parenting style, parents are obedient- and status- oriented and obedience to orders without explanation is expected.

Authoritarian parents believe that children are by nature self-willed and self-indulgent and therefore see their primary job to be bending the will of the child to that of authority (Darling, 2014). Compliance, conformity, parental authority and respect are the hallmarks of the parenting style. Authoritative parents are issue-oriented and pragmatic rather than motivated by an external, absolute standing. They tend to adjust their expectations to the needs of the child and listen to the child’s arguments. They balance the responsibility of the children to conform to the needs and demands of elders with the rights of the children to be respected and have their own needs met. Permissive parents are responsive but make few rules and little or no controls are exerted over the children. Children are given complete freedom to make their life’s decisions and behave autonomously and independently (Baumrind, 1991).

Self-esteem has been highly researched into with multiple types to investigate. Self-esteem is generally defined as one’s assessment of own self-worth (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009). This general definition can be called global self-worth, considering internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to emotions, genetic make-up and personality traits while external factors refer to specific events, family, school, career among others. There is also trait self-esteem which refers to the amount of regard we have for ourselves over time. This type is referred to as part of the personality because it is fairly enduring and can be used to describe an individual. The present study is concerned with this type of self-esteem. There are more specific types of self-esteem like academic self-esteem where the feeling of self-worth is contingent upon how well one does academically (Valizadeh, 2012). Another type of self-esteem is state self-esteem which is fluid and is affected by feelings and situations (Driscoll, 2013). Self-esteem is important because of its role in healthy human development.
Abraham Maslow categorised self-esteem as one of the basic human motivations. In the hierarchy of needs, self-esteem comes near the top, followed by only self-actualisation (Maslow, 1987). Factors affecting self-esteem include how we compare ourselves to others and how they respond to us. One important factor influencing self-esteem development is parenting (Gecas and Schwalbe, 1986). Researchers and developmental psychologists have over the years uncovered convincing links between parenting styles and the mental, psychological and emotional development of children. The types of parenting children receive have significant implications on their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development (Milu and Fathima, 2015)

**Parenting Styles and Self-Esteem**

There is no universally best parenting style as culture; environment and individual characters differ from person to person. In the Western cultures, self-esteem has been demonstrated to be consistently negatively correlated with parenting styles characterised by low levels of acceptance and high levels of over protectiveness (Herz and Gullone, 1999). Authoritarianism is characterised by this affectionless control and the parenting style is presumed to be associated with social incompetence and poor communication skills. In traditional collectivist cultures (like Nigeria), there may be preference for this parenting style and it is not thought to have a negative impact on self-esteem. Yamawaki, Nelson and Omoni (2010), studying Japanese college students, found that warm and caring parenting which is characteristic of the authoritative parenting may be a universally crucial factor for the individuals’ psychological well-being later in life. The results of the study also suggest that poor parenting such as low parental care and warmth was significantly associated with low self-esteem and low life satisfaction which may lead to poor psychological well-being. Research results show that authoritarian parenting style puts children at a greater risk of anxiety, low self-esteem and depression (Bacus, 2014). Accordingly, Cardinali and D’Allura (2007) mentioned that adolescents treated authoritatively become more socially adjusted and independent compared to their peers. Maccoby and Martin (1983) also found that young people who experienced authoritative parenting style have higher social development and self-esteem than other parenting styles. In the same vein, Yusuf, Agbonna and Yusuf (2009) asserted that authoritative parenting has been consistently associated with positive cognitive,
emotional and social outcomes. Permissive parenting, on the other hand is associated with social incompetence and lack of self-control (Maccoby and Martins, 1983 and Baumrind, 1991).

Variations exist as to which parenting styles lead to highest levels of self-esteem. Martinez and Garcia (2008) found that children of indulgent parents had the highest level of self-esteem while those of authoritarian parents had the lowest levels of self-esteem. Garcia and Gracia (2009) found that both the children of indulgent and authoritative parents had the highest levels of self-esteem. These variations in results make it unclear as to which parenting style could be labelled as most successful in self-esteem development. Yang and Liang (2008) suggested that nurturing and supportive parenting styles could improve children’ self-esteem. Regarding parental characteristics, nurturing (authoritative and permissive) had positive effect on children’s self-esteem while perceiving parents to be over-protective (authoritarian) had negative effects (De Hart, Pelham and Tennen, 2006). Also, emotional warmth (authoritative, and permissive) correlated positively with higher self-esteem while negative loving, anger and rejecting were negatively correlated with self-esteem (Yang and Zhou, 2008). Akinsola (2010a, 2011) reported that parental practices in Nigeria combines all the parenting styles as parental emphasis was on obedience and compliance with parental instructions. This, the researcher reported was accompanied by responsiveness, love, care, sensitivity and reciprocal dialogue. Most parents aim for the well-being of their children but children may not experience or perceive parenting in the same manner parents believe they do. Children’s perception may therefore be more relevant to their well-being than the actual parenting style. This implies that the individual’s subjective evaluation/ perception of father’s and mother’s parenting pattern/style may influence self-esteem development to the extent, and in the way that the person perceives the behaviour. The present study therefore, is designed to determine the relationship between adolescents’ self-esteem and their perception of parents (fathers and mothers) as authoritative, authoritarian and permissive.
Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study is to Determine the Relationship Between Adolescents’ Self-esteem and Perception of their Parents as Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive.

Specifically the study sought to determine:
1. Patterns of parenting of fathers and mothers as perceived by the adolescents
2. Relationship between perceived parental (fathers’ and mothers’) authoritativeness, authoritarianism and permissiveness and self-esteem of the adolescents.

Research Question

1. To what extent do the adolescents perceive their parents (mothers and fathers) as authoritative, authoritarian and permissive?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant correlation between adolescents’ self-esteem and their perception of parents (father and mother) as authoritative, authoritarian or permissive

Methodology

The study employed the correlational survey design. The population of the study is all the senior secondary school students in the public secondary schools in Egor local Government Area of Edo State. There are eleven public secondary schools in the local Government area consisting of an average of one thousand, two hundred students each. First, five schools were selected by simple random sampling. Then, the instruments were administered to sixty randomly selected senior secondary school II students in each of the selected schools. The sample of the study was two hundred and seventy –six (276) adolescents made up of one hundred and thirteen (113) males and one hundred and sixty-three (163) females whose instruments were properly completed.

Two research instruments were used to collect data for the study

1. A 24-item, Perceived Parental Authority Questionnaire (PPAQ) adapted from Buri (1991) The instrument has two sections, A and B. Section A demands personal data of the respondents while section B consists of twenty- four statements based on the three parenting styles ( authoritative, authoritarian and permissive). The items were responded to on a 4- point rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The
reliability of the instrument was established using the test-retest method with an interval of four weeks and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient calculated was $r = 0.79$. To determine adolescents’ perceived parenting styles in the study, response scores were calculated by dividing the mean scores obtained, by the number of items on each subscale. Response scores of 1.00 - 1.99 were regarded as not representative of the parenting style being considered, 2.00 - 2.49 were regarded as low while 2.50 - 2.99 and response scores of 3.00 and above were regarded as moderate and high respectively. The Parental Authority Questionnaire is most widely used for assessing adolescents’ perception of parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) and has demonstrated good validity and reliability (Shahimi, Heaven and Ciarrochi, 2013).

2. A 25-item self-esteem scale adapted from Hudson (1982) Index of Self-Esteem was used to measure the adolescents’ self-esteem. The instrument has two sections, A and B. Section A sought demographic information about the respondents, section B was made up of 25 statements regarding self to which the respondents responded to on a 5-point likert scale ranging from all of the time to none of the time. A coefficient $\alpha = 0.92$ was obtained using test-retest scores to determine the reliability of the present instrument. The instruments were administered to the sample and completed questionnaires were collected on the spot. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics to answer the research question and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1. Adolescents’ perception of mothers’ and fathers’ parenting styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Parenting Styles</th>
<th>Response Scores</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian Father</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian Mother</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative Father</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative Mother</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive Father</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive Mother</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$N = 276$
The result on Table 1 reveals that the adolescents perceive their parents (fathers and mothers) as moderately authoritarian and authoritative but low in permissiveness.

**Table 2. Correlations between adolescents’ self-esteem and perceived authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles of fathers and mothers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Parenting styles</th>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Pearson corr. r -2.42*</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (2-tailed) p</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Pearson corr. r -1.30*</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig(2-tailed) p</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Pearson corr. r 0.064</td>
<td>N.S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (2-tailed) p</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Pearson corr. r 0.158*</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig(2-tailed) p</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Pearson corr. r -0.062</td>
<td>N.S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (2-tailed) p</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Pearson corr. r 0.100</td>
<td>N.S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig(2-tailed) p</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N =276  *Significant at p <0.05

The results on Table 2 indicate that adolescents’ perceptions of mothers and fathers as authoritarian have significant negative correlations with the self-esteem (fathers, r = -2.42, p = .000; mothers, r = -1.30, p = .031). Perception of fathers as authoritative had a non-significant positive correlation with the adolescents’ self-esteem (r = 0.064, p = 0.287) while perception of mothers as authoritative had a significant positive correlation with their self-esteem (r = 0.158, p = 0.000). Perceived permissiveness of father and mother had no significant correlations with the self-esteem of the adolescents.

**Discussion**

The results of the study reveal that the adolescents perceive their parents (fathers and mothers) as moderately authoritative, moderately authoritarian and low in permissiveness. Parents were not perceived as categorically authoritative, authoritarian or permissive. This could be because Nigerian society though hierarchical, such that within the family unquestioning obedience to authority is paramount, parents also discuss issues with the children and sometimes allow children have their way on certain issues.
This result is consistent with Akinsola (2010a, 2011) who asserted that Nigerian parents tend to be perceived as practicing the three parenting styles due to their insistence on compliance to parental instruction and obedience accompanied with love, care, responsiveness and reciprocal dialogue. The results also reveal significant negative correlation between adolescents’ self-esteem and perceived paternal and maternal authoritarianism. This means that perceiving parents (fathers and mothers) as authoritarian impacts negatively on the adolescents’ self-esteem. This finding is in line with Liang (2004), who reported that perceived over-protection and authoritarianism on the part of parents lead to lower self-esteem in children. It is also in consonance with Yamawaki, Nelson and Omoni (2010), Bacus (2014), among others who found negative correlations between perceived authoritarian parenting and self-esteem. Positive correlations were also found in this study, between perceived authoritative parenting and adolescents’ self-esteem, though only perceived maternal authoritativeness significantly correlated with the self-esteem.

This may be as a result of the fact that mothers on the average spend more time taking care of the children than the fathers (Craig, 2007). This finding corroborates Russel and Russel, cited in Milu and Fathima (2015) who opined that maternal parenting style has greater influence on individuals because up to middle childhood, mothers spend more than twice as much time alone with their children than do fathers. It is therefore expected that perception of mothers’ parenting styles/appraisal of them would make significant impact on the psychological development of children and adolescents.

Similarly, Milu and Fathima (2015) made findings indicating that maternal authoritativeness had positive correlations with self-esteem of adolescents. Nurturance and warmth which are the hallmarks of authoritative parenting tend to promote healthy psychological development and social relationships. Perception of parents as permissive had no significant correlations with the self-esteem of the adolescents in this study. This is not surprising since the adolescents perceive their parents as generally low in permissiveness. It is also in consonance with Milu and Fathima (2015), who found no significant correlations between self-esteem of adolescents and perceived maternal permissiveness.
Conclusion

From the results of the study it can be concluded that Nigerian adolescents perceive their parents as practicing the three parenting styles – authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. Perceived authoritarianism of parents impacts negatively on adolescents’ self-esteem while perceived authoritativeness correlates positively with the self-esteem.

Implications for School Counselling

The results of this study have implications for counselling adolescents and parents. Research has shown that high self-esteem is beneficial to everyone. General principles of education indicate that a student needs good academic self-esteem to be successful academically. Therefore to achieve success in school, school counsellors should assist students to foster positive self-esteem. Self-esteem can be enhanced when children imbibe good study habits and self-management skills. Literature is replete with reports of significant positive correlations between self-esteem and perceived authoritative parenting, particularly maternal parenting. Parents should be made to understand how their parenting styles affect their children and also encouraged to adopt a more authoritative style in rearing their children as this has been reported to be universally beneficial to psychological adjustment of individuals.

Recommendations for Further Research.

The present study has investigated correlations between adolescents’ perceived parenting styles and self-esteem. Future studies using larger samples could investigate if there is a differential influence of gender on adolescents’ perceived parenting styles and self-esteem. Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies investigating how individuals’ perceived parenting styles change over time at different age points should also be carried out.

References


