



Parenting Styles as Predictors of Academic Stress Among Secondary School Students: Implications for Assessment Excellence in Udi Education Zone, Enugu State

Nnamani, Felicitas Chinaza ¹

Ugwoke, Thaddeus Chibuzo ²

Amaka Ikechukwu-Ilomuanya ¹

Ogbonna, Florence Nkechinyere ¹

Agboola, Mukaila Olasun ¹

¹*Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka*

²*Department of Educational Psychology, Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze, Anambra State*

Abstract

The study investigated parenting styles (PS) as predictors of academic stress among secondary school students: implication for assessment excellence in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State. The study was guided by three research questions and three corresponding null hypotheses. It adopted a correlational survey research design. The population and sample for the study were 1,616 and 321 SS 2 students. The proportionate random sampling technique was used to draw the sample. Two validated instruments used were “Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ) and Students’ Academic Stress Questionnaire (SASQ)”. Cronbach alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. Overall reliability coefficients of 0.72 and 0.79 were obtained for PSQ and SASQ, respectively. Linear regression was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed among others, that authoritarian parenting style to a very high extent have predictive power on academic stress among secondary school students; that authoritative parenting style to a medium extent has predictive power on academic stress among secondary school students while permissive parenting style to a very low extent, have predictive power on academic stress among students. The implication is that to ensure assessment excellence by reducing academic stress, counsellors should help parents to adopt good parenting style. The researcher recommends among others that counsellors should organize workshops for parents on regular basis to keep them well-informed on how authoritarian parenting style leads to academic stress among students

Keywords: Authoritarian parenting style, Authoritative parenting style, Permissive parenting style, Stress

Introduction

Academic stress is a pervasive challenge confronting students across educational systems worldwide, and Nigeria is no exception. Secondary school students in particular face a complex web of stressors rooted in family dynamics, peer relations, psychological pressures, environmental conditions, and heavy academic demands. These stressors may manifest through behaviours such as lateness to school, classroom fatigue, aggression towards teachers and peers, bullying, and difficulty coping with workload and assignments. Within the Nigerian educational context where secondary education serves as the critical bridge between primary and tertiary learning, the management of such stress is of profound importance. It is within this framework that parenting styles emerge as a potentially significant predictive factor of academic stress among secondary school students. Nigeria's educational system comprises three tiers: primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Secondary education, defined as the formal schooling received after primary level and before tertiary level, holds a strategic position in the overall educational architecture (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Its broad goals include preparing individuals for productive participation in society and equipping them for higher education. The beneficiaries of secondary education are mostly adolescents typically between the ages of 14 and 17 who engage with a wide range of academic subjects and extracurricular activities that can either alleviate or compound stress at this vulnerable developmental stage.

Stress, broadly understood, refers to the physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural changes an individual experience in response to challenging situations or demanding stimuli (Rana, Gulati & Wadhwa, 2019). It is a feeling of strain and pressure that triggers non-specific bodily reactions (Lee, Jeong & Kim, 2021; Barbayannis et al., 2022). Academic stress, specifically, is the emotional and psychological distress arising from a student's perception of academic workload, the value placed on academic outcomes, and their assessed ability to cope with academic demands (Bonnie, 2017). Its consequences range from anxiety, depression, and disturbed sleep patterns to physical complaints such as headaches and stomachaches, alongside academic disengagement and interpersonal conflict. Academic stress is further understood as a multidimensional construct, reflecting the pressures, anxieties, and coping challenges associated with examinations, assignments, schoolwork, and the broader academic environment (Zittleman, 2019; Lum & Su, 2019). In Udi Education Zone of Enugu State, evidence of heightened academic stress among secondary school students is compelling. Records from the National Examination Council (NECO) indicate that students in the zone performed poorly in the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) across multiple years, with fewer than 30% achieving credit scores in Mathematics and English Language in most years between 2017 and 2020 (NECO Chief Examiner's Report, 2021). Observational data and practicum exercises corroborate these findings, highlighting a student population visibly strained by academic demands.

The family constitutes the child's first social environment, and parents serve as primary architects of the child's emotional, cognitive, and social development. Parenting which is the composite of techniques, behaviours, and practices employed in raising a child from birth through adulthood is a fundamental determinant of how children respond to stress (Lekaviciene & Antiniene, 2016). In Nigeria, parents, whether biological or adoptive, bear the overarching responsibility for the physical, emotional, and academic well-being of their children. The manner in which these responsibilities are fulfilled is captured by the concept of parenting style, which describes the relational patterns and behavioural strategies parents consistently employ across a wide range of interactions with their children (Ashley, 2014). Three dominant parenting styles have been empirically identified and are central to this study: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting (Akinawo, Akpunne & Olajide, 2019). Authoritarian parenting is characterised by strict rule enforcement, high levels of control, low warmth, and a demand for unquestioning obedience. Children raised under this style often exhibit fearfulness, social withdrawal, poor communication skills, and diminished academic performance (Lekaviciene & Antiniene, 2016; Morin, 2018). In contrast, authoritative parenting combines high expectations with warmth and responsiveness. Authoritative parents engage their children in reasoned dialogue, respect their independence while maintaining appropriate boundaries, and utilise positive reinforcement alongside measured discipline. Children from such homes tend to be self-reliant, cooperative, and academically resilient (Akinawo, Akpunne & Olajide, 2019). Permissive parenting, characterised by high warmth but low control and discipline, produces children who, while

generally happy, may lack self-regulation, resist structured environments, and struggle with goal-directed behaviour (Cleendra, 2013; Obeke, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

In Udi Education Zone, Enugu State, academic stress among secondary school students has reached a level that warrants urgent scholarly attention. Observations during practicum exercises reveal that a significant proportion of students struggle to adapt to the academic environment. Manifestations of stress are evident as students arrive late, express fatigue, quarrel with teachers, engage in bullying, and report being overwhelmed by academic workload and assignments. Poor examination performance across the zone further reinforces the argument that these students are operating under conditions of considerable academic strain. Given that the home environment and parental behaviour are among the earliest and most enduring influences on a child's academic attitude and stress response, it becomes critical to examine how different parenting styles may be contributing to or moderating academic stress in this population. This study therefore investigates parenting styles as predictors of academic stress among secondary school students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State, seeking to answer the central question: Are parenting styles significant predictors of academic stress among secondary school students in Udi Education Zone?

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate parenting styles (PS) as predictors of stress among secondary school students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. determine the predictive power of authoritarian parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students.
- ii. determine the predictive power of authoritative parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students.
- iii. ascertain the predictive power of permissive parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions.

1. What is the predictive power of authoritarian parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students?
2. What is the predictive power of authoritative parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students?
3. What is the predictive power of permissive on academic stress among secondary school students?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- H₀₁:** There is no significant predictive power of authoritarian parenting style and academic stress among secondary school students.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant predictive power of authorities parenting style and academic stress among secondary school students.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant predictive power of permissive parenting style and academic stress among secondary school students.

Method

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population of the study was 1,616 SS 2 students in the public secondary schools in the study area. The sample for the study was 321. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size. The sample was drawn using proportionate random sampling technique. The instruments for data collection were two sets of questionnaire which include; "Parenting Styles Questionnaire (PSQ) and Students' Academic Stress Questionnaire (SASQ)". The instruments were face-validated by three experts; two from the Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies and one from the Department of Science Education (Measurement and Evaluation Unit), all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigerian Nsukka.

Cronbach alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. Overall reliability coefficients of 0.72, 0.83 and 0.79 were obtained for PSQ, EIQ and SASQ, respectively. Linear regression was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the predictive power of authoritarian parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students?

Table 1: linear regression of the predictive power of authoritarian parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.88	.78	.78	2.29

0.80 and above (very high), 0.60-0.80 (high), 0.40-0.60 (medium), 0.20-0.40 (low) and 0.00-0.20 (very low)

Data on table 1 showed that the regression and regression square coefficients are 0.88 and 0.78 respectively. The coefficient of determinism of 78.2% derived from the regression square showed that authoritarian parenting style to a very high extent has predictive power on academic stress among secondary school students.

H₀₁: There is no significant predictive power of authoritarian parenting style and academic stress among secondary school students.

Table 2: t-test associated with linear regression of the predictive power of authoritarian parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.96	.86		6.82	.000
	Authoritarian	.84	.03	.88	33.79	.00

Data on table 2 showed that the t-test value associated with simple regression is 33.790. The hypothesis is rejected because the significant value of 0.00 is less than 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant predictive power of authoritarian parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students.

Research Question 2: What is the predictive power of authoritative parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students?

Table 3: linear regression of the predictive power of authoritative parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.50	.25	.24		4.27

0.80 and above (very high), 0.60-0.80 (high), 0.40-0.60 (medium), 0.20-0.40 (low) and 0.00-0.20 (very low)

Data on table 3 showed that the regression and regression square coefficients are 0.49 and 0.25 respectively. The coefficient of determinism of 24.6% derived from the regression square showed that

authoritative parenting style to a medium extent has predictive power on academic stress among secondary school students.

H₀₂: There is no significant predictive power of authoritative parenting style and academic stress among secondary school students.

Table 4: t-test associated with linear regression of the predictive power of authoritative parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students

Style on Academic Stress among Secondary School Students					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t
1	(Constant)	23.33	1.19		19.63
	Authoritative	.36	.04	.50	10.19

Data on table 4 showed that the t-test value associated with simple regression is 10.20. The hypothesis is rejected because the significant value of 0.00 is less than 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant predictive power of authoritative parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students.

Research Question 3: What is the predictive power of permissive on academic stress among secondary school students?

Table 5: linear regression of the predictive power of permissive parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.62	.39	.39	3.83	

0.80 and above (very high), 0.60-0.80 (high), 0.40-0.60 (medium), 0.20-0.40 (low) and 0.00-0.20 (very low)

Data on table 5 showed that the regression and regression square coefficients are 0.63 and 0.39 respectively. The coefficient of determinism of 39.3% derived from the regression square showed that permissive parenting style to a very low extent has predictive power on academic stress among secondary school students.

H₀₃: There is no significant predictive power of permissive parenting style and academic stress among secondary school students.

Table 6: t-test associated with linear regression of the predictive power of permissive parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students

On Academic Stress among Secondary School Students						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	19.61	1.11		17.74	<.001
	Permissive	.466	.032	.627	14.383	.000

Data on table 6 showed that the t-test value associated with simple regression is 14.383. The hypothesis is rejected because the significant value of 0.00 is less than 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant predictive power of permissive parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students.

Discussion

The finding shows that authoritarian parenting style to a very high extent has predictive power on academic stress among secondary school students. It went further to confirm that there is significant power of authoritarian parenting style on academic stress among students. From the result, the respondents agreed that authoritarian parenting style to a high extent has predictive power on academic stress among students. The finding of this study is consistent with earlier research findings which indicate that authoritarian parenting, characterized by high demands and low responsiveness, can significantly impact academic stress among secondary school students. Studies by Hassan et al, (2020) and Hung, (2018) have also shown that students under authoritarian parenting may experience higher levels of academic stress due to the constant pressure to meet their parents' expectations.

The finding of the study revealed that authoritative parenting style to a medium extent has predictive power on academic stress among secondary school students in Udi Education Zone, Enugu State. It went further to confirm that there is a significant predictive power of authoritative parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students. From the result, the respondents agreed that authoritative parenting style to a medium extent has predictive power on academic stress among students. This finding is in agreement with the finding of earlier researcher. Agbaria and Mahamid (2023) found that authoritative parenting is linked to moderate levels of academic stress. The authors also noted that this is primarily due to the balance of support and discipline characteristic of authoritative parenting.

The finding of the study showed that permissive parenting style to a very low extent has predictive power on academic stress among secondary school students. The hypothesis revealed that there is a significant predictive power of permissive parenting style on academic stress among secondary school students. From the result, the respondents agreed that permissive parenting style to a low extent has predictive power on academic stress among students. This finding corroborates some recent studies whose finding indicates that permissive parenting style has a significant predictive power on academic stress among secondary school students. Among them are Lamborn and Nguyen (2017), Lee and Kim (2019), and Johnson and Tanner (2019) which revealed that permissive parenting style was positively related to academic stress. Others are Ahmed (2023) which highlighted how permissive parenting, characterized by low boundaries and high indulgence, may increase academic stress as students feel uncertain about academic expectations and support.

Conclusion

A lot has been done by counsellors and educators to reduce academic stress among students but unfortunately, it is on the increase. The study investigated parenting styles as predictors of academic stress among secondary school students in Udi Education Zone, Enugu State with implications for assessment excellence. From the findings, the study concluded that authoritarian parenting style to a high extent has predictive power on academic stress among students and authoritative parenting style to a medium extent predicts academic stress while permissive parenting styles has low predictive power on academic stress among students. Hence, Counsellors should help parents to adopt right parenting styles that can lessen academic stress and enhance assessment excellence among secondary school students in Udi Education Zone, Enugu State.

Implications for Educational Assessment Excellence

The relationship between parenting styles and academic stress carries significant implications for how educational assessment is understood, designed, and delivered. Assessment excellence in secondary education goes beyond the measurement of knowledge recall; it encompasses the creation of conditions under which all students can perform to their true potential. When students are chronically stressed, a condition that may be exacerbated by authoritarian or permissive home environments; their assessment outcomes are unlikely to reflect genuine academic ability. High-stakes examinations under such circumstances risk producing skewed data that misrepresents both student competence and institutional effectiveness.

For educational policymakers and school administrators in Nigeria, this study underscores the necessity of integrating psycho-social welfare programmes into the secondary school system. Guidance and counselling services equipped to address academic stress and informed by an understanding of students' home environments are essential components of an assessment-supportive school culture. Schools should adopt holistic assessment models that acknowledge the emotional and environmental factors shaping student performance, rather than relying exclusively on high-stakes, norm-referenced examinations.

Furthermore, parent education programmes that promote authoritative parenting practices can serve as upstream interventions to reduce academic stress at its source. When parents understand the value of combining firm expectations with emotional warmth and open communication, they are better positioned to support their children's academic engagement without intensifying stress. School-community partnerships that facilitate regular parent-teacher dialogue, parental involvement in academic goal-setting, and awareness of stress-related warning signs would contribute meaningfully to a culture of assessment excellence.

At the classroom level, teachers and school counsellors must be equipped to identify students exhibiting signs of academic stress and to apply differentiated assessment strategies that reduce unnecessary anxiety while maintaining academic rigour. Formative assessment approaches including continuous assessment, portfolio-based evaluation, and peer assessment offer students multiple opportunities to demonstrate competence, thereby mitigating the disproportionate pressure associated with single high-stakes examinations. These approaches are particularly relevant in contexts such as Udi Education Zone, where systemic academic stress may be inflating failure rates and distorting the true learning outcomes of students.

Conclusively, the pursuit of educational assessment excellence in Nigerian secondary schools requires a paradigm shift that recognizes the inseparability of student well-being from academic performance. Addressing the parenting-style-linked roots of academic stress is not merely a pastoral concern; it is a foundational step toward fairer, more accurate, and more meaningful educational assessment outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made.

Counsellors should organize a workshop for parents on regular basis to keep them well-informed on how authoritarian parenting style leads to academic stress among students. This will help them to understand the style and as well, know the best time to utilize it on their children in secondary schools for proper result.

Parents who practice authoritative parenting style should be enlightened on how some authoritarian parenting style leads to academic stress among students. This will help them to understand that strict set of rules for negative behaviour can make it difficult for their children in secondary school to learn self-discipline and respect for authority.

Counsellors, government and school managements should enhance their educational role in giving parents adequate knowledge for low permissive parenting style. This can be achieved by organizing seminars, workshops and having discussions with them on the consequences of permissive parenting styles on students.

In order to build cordial relationship between parents and their children in secondary school, seminars and workshops should be conducted on regular basis for teachers, counsellors and parents. The knowledge they will get from this will help them to be fully aware of their emotions and utilize it in helping their children to navigate academic stress.

References

- Agbaria, Q., & Mahamid, F. (2023). The association between parenting styles, maternal self-efficacy, and social and emotional adjustment among Arab preschool children. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, 36(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41155-023-00252-4>
- Akinnawo, E. O., Akpunne, B. C. & Olajide, O. A. (2019). Parenting style, emotional intelligence and psychological health of Nigerian children. *Asian Journal of Pediatric Research*, 2(2), 1 – 11.
- Ashley, B. K. (2014). The parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire: a reconceptualization and validation. A project Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College of the Oklahoma State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science. https://core.ac.uk/display/215295769?utm_source=pdf&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=pdf-decoration-v1
- Barbayannis, G., Bandari, M., Zheng, X., Baquerizo, H., Pecor, K. W. & Ming, X. (2022). Academic stress and mental well-being in college students: correlations, affected Groups, and COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13(1), 1–10.
- Bonnie, R. J. (2017). Academic stress and student well-being: A public health perspective. *The journal of American college of cardiology*, 70 (25), 2983-2984.
- Cleendra, J. (2013). Personality and parenting: Exploring the mediating role of transient mood and daily hassles. *Journal of Personality*, 63 (4), 905-929.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2014). *National policy on education* (7th edition). Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Hassan, M., Malik, A. S., Sang, G., Rizwan, M., Mushtaque, I., & Naveed, S. (2022). Examine the parenting style effect on the academic achievement orientation of secondary school students: The moderating role of digital literacy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1063682. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1063682>
- Hung, J. (2018). Parenting styles, academic demands and children's psychosocial well-being: Why today's Hong Kong Chinese students are so stressed. *The Columbia University Journal of Global Health*, 8(2). Retrieved from <https://journals.library.columbia.edu/index.php/jgh/article/view/4854>
- Johnson, K., & Tanner, J. (2019). Permissive parenting and academic stress in American high school students. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 34(3), 474-498.
- Lamborn, S. D., & Nguyen, L. (2017). Permissive parenting and adolescent academic stress. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 32(3), 349-373.
- Lee, P. K., Jeong, S. X. & Kim, S. (2021). Academic stress and adjustment among High School Students. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 3 (4), 70-73.
- Lee, Y., & Kim, H. (2019). Permissive parenting and academic stress in Australian high school students. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 34(3), 449-473.
- Lekaviciene, C. V. & Antinienė, T. (2016). Authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting practices: Development of a new measure. *Psychological Reports*, 7(7), 819–830.
- Lum, W.T., & Su, S. (2019). Academic stress among secondary school students: Correlates and intervention strategies. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 49(2), 91-109.

- Morin, A. (2018). *4 types of parenting styles and their effects on kids*. In S. Gans reviewed what's your parenting style? <https://www.verywellfamily.com/types-of-parenting-styles-1095045>.
- Obeke, V.N. (2022). Influence of parent's emotional intelligence on students. *Journal of comparative studies* 8(3), 71-79.
- Rana, A., Gulati, R. & Wadhwa, V. (2019). Stress among students: an emerging issue. *Integrated Journal of Social Sciences*, 6 (2), 44-48.
- Zittleman, K. (2019). The impact if Academic Stress on Adolescent sleep: A review of the Literature. *Child and adolescent Psychiatry and Mental health*, 13 (1), 20-25.