

## **PARENTING STYLES AND PERSONALITY TRAITS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE NIGERIA, WEST AFRICAN**

**Dr. Odiase Jerry Edobor, Dr. (Mrs) Rosemary Ekechukwu**

Department of Educational Psychology Guidance and Counseling. University of Port Harcourt

---

**ABSTRACT:** *This study investigated the influences of parenting styles on the personality traits of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. 560 students were selected for the study. This number was drawn using simple random sampling technique for all the selected 28 government owned schools with seven local governments in Rivers State. Researchers designed questionnaire named Parenting Styles and Personality Traits Assessment (PSPTA) was used in the study. Three research questions and three hypotheses were drawn, Anova (analysis of variance) was used to analyze the hypotheses. From the study, the following results were obtained: That extroversion personality trait does depend on parenting styles among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. That the personality trait of agreeableness is dependent on parenting styles among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The neuroticism personality trait does depend on parenting styles among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. It was therefore recommended as follows - Every child is distinct and unique therefore parents should be encouraged to adopt appropriate parenting styles for each child (adolescent). Information on the influence of the various parenting styles on the personality traits of students should be made to parents.*

**KEYWORDS:** Parenting Styles, Authoritarian, Democratic, Neglectful, Adolescents and Personality traits.

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

Difference in the live patterns of people has been an issue of great concern. This has been more interesting especially in our modern society whereby different society sets standards of behaviour to citizens. It has been the expectation of the various societies that people should exhibit lives patterns that will lead to the attainment of personal goals and the goals of the society at large.

Personality is seen as the stable complex characteristics in which the life pattern of an individual could be identified. George and Jones (1996) explain personality to mean the patterns of relatively enduring ways in which a person feels, thinks and behaves. By this, the behaviour of people and most especially students in senior secondary school is attributed to their personality.

A trait is a specific component of personality that describes particular tendencies a person has to feel, think, and act in certain ways. In referring to a person's personality, it is pointing at a collection of traits that describes how a person generally, tends to feel, think and behave.

Researchers have identified many personality traits and most psychologists agree that the traits that make up a person's personality can be organized in hierarchy.

According to George and Jones (1997), the “big five” model of personality places five general personality traits at the top of the trait hierarchy, extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness and openness to experience.

The personality trait of extroversion is a trait that predisposes an individual to experience positive emotional states and feel good about themselves and the world around them. Agreeableness personality trait captures the distinction between individuals who get along well with others and those who do not. Neuroticism personality trait reflects people’s tendency to experience negative emotional states, feel distressed and generally view themselves and the world around them negative. Conscientiousness trait captures the extent to which an individual is careful, scrupulous and persevering, while last of the big five personality traits openness according to George and Jones (1997) captures the extent to which an individual is original, open to a wide range or variety of stimuli, has broad interest and willing to take risks.

Personality is a product of two major factors. They are hereditary and environment.

The hereditary has to do with family inherited genes that determine personality and physiological development of the person. The individual does not have control over them.

On the other hand, environmental influences are influences from the environment where the individual is raised. The impact of the environment aspect of personality development, being a factor that can be controlled to a large extent is a source of great concern.

This has become an issue especially in our society where people do not take this seriously, rather allowed children to develop without due consideration to their life patterns. There are a lot of factors that can be attributed to this, such as the traditional set up of our families, the influence of western culture to our traditional and cultural set up; our rapidly changing value systems etc.

The family has been known to be the bedrock of society. Once a child is born, the first place of contact is the family. Therefore the family can either make or mar a child. Though other environmental factors influence personality development, the family has a more long lasting impact on personality development. Mullins (2005) indicates that early family experiences go a long way to determining personality of an individual.

Children and adolescents generally are raised in families comprising mothers and fathers usually referred to as parents. When a child grows up to adulthood they still remain a child in the eyes of his parents. Parenting is a continuous process. The result of successful or unsuccessful parenting can be seen in grownup child’s personality. The various decisions that these young adults take, regarding their work life and personal life reflects the type of parenting the child has received.

In some cases, it is the child’s mother or sometimes father who undertakes the work of parenting. In some cases, this care is also provided by some relatives. For orphans, thrown away or abandoned children, the orphanage and motherless babies’ homes provide this care. There is therefore the existing of parenting either by the real parents or surrogate parents.

Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviour that work individually and together to influence child outcome. Developmental psychologists have been interested in how parents influence the development of children’s social and instrumental competences. One major area in this direction is parenting styles.

Parenting styles refers to the different methods adopted by parents in the upbringing of their children and wards.

According to Baumrind (1991) there are four major parenting styles namely authoritative or democratic, authoritarian or autocratic, permissive and neglectful parenting styles.

The researcher and other well meaning individuals have observed that senior secondary school students in Rivers State are exhibiting different personality traits, and that students at this level of education are raised from different parenting styles. The researcher therefore will investigate how authoritarian, democratic and neglectful parenting styles have influenced on the personality traits of extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism among senior secondary school SSS3 students in Rivers State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There are expectations the society has on individuals especially adolescents. This is based on the acceptable values and norms each society holds. In all organized societies, people are made to go through experiences and processes that will make them conform to societal standards. This calls for the need for acceptable behaviour. This is not intended for the collective interest of the society alone but also that of the individual and his/her immediate environment. This can be attained when people exhibit the right behaviour as demanded by the larger society.

The researcher observed that despite the various steps being taken, there has been a wide spread of different patterns of behaviours both the acceptable and the unacceptable ones among adolescents. This has affected societal goals and more especially the goals of the individual, senior secondary schools students in Rivers State are not left out. This is a situation of great concern to all well meaning individuals.

Going through this development, one is compelled to ask some rhetorical questions; why is the society going this way? Why is it that some adolescents have acceptable behaviors and some unacceptable behaviors? Why do adolescents behave the way they behave? Why are some adolescents friendly and some are not? The truth has been that people make up the society. Iwundu (1995) stated that adolescents behave differently because of the different personality they have apart from other factors. Considering this, the formative periods of an adolescent's personality which also include the senior secondary school period needs a careful thought. The importance of how students at this stage or level are raised cannot be overemphasized, especially the parenting styles. Though they look upon the friends and other adults as role models, parents still have a great impact on their children. So parenting is a very important piece of the child's life.

The home (parenting) therefore plays a very crucial role on personality especially at the senior secondary level where students are susceptible to all kinds of live style both positive and negative.

This investigation has therefore become necessary to x-ray the various parenting styles and how they influence the personalities of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is aimed at ascertaining whether parenting styles have any influence on the personality traits of senior secondary school students in Rivers state.

## Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the research;

1. To what extent do democratic, authoritarian, and neglectful parenting styles influence the personality trait of extroversion among senior secondary school students in Rivers State?
2. To what extent do democratic, authoritarian, and neglectful parenting styles influence the personality trait of agreeableness among senior secondary school students in Rivers State?
3. To what extent do democratic, authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles influence the personality trait of neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

## Hypotheses

In this study the following hypotheses are formulated to guide the investigation at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant influence of democratic, authoritarian, and neglectful parenting styles on the personality trait of extroversion among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant influence of democratic, authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles on the personality trait of agreeableness among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.
4. There is no significant influence of democratic, authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles on the personality trait of neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

## METHODOLOGY

The design of the study is ex-post facto. Here, the researcher has no control over certain factors or variables, and cannot manipulate them because they already exist and cannot be changed.

The major instrument for data collection in this study was the designed questionnaire named Parenting Styles and Personality Traits Assessment (PSPTA) developed by the researcher.

The questionnaire comprised of five sections; Section A provides information on personal data of the respondents. Section B consists of parenting styles used by parents, while section C D E, consist of items to assess the different personality traits under study.

Four copies of the questionnaire on parenting styles and personality traits of students developed by the researcher were given to experts in measurement and evaluation specialist in Educational psychology for face and content validation. It was vetted for clarity of words, relevance and appropriateness of questions.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using test retest techniques, and co-efficient value of 0.82 was obtained and highly reliable for the study.

Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis.

## RESULTS

### Research Question 1

To what extent do authoritarian, democratic and neglectful parenting styles influence students' personality trait of extroversion.

**Table 1**

Variables	n	X	std
Authoritarian parenting style	113	19.000	10.44
Democratic parenting style	148	17.333	3.062
Neglectful parenting style	112	33.333	5.17

Table 1 shows that authoritarian parenting style has a mean 19.000 and standard deviation of 10.44, democratic parenting style has a mean of 17.333 and a standard deviation of 3.062 while neglectful parenting style has a mean of 33.333 and a standard deviation of 5.17. This shows that democratic parenting style really has influence on the students' personality trait of extroversion.

### Research Question 2

To what extent do authoritarian, democratic and neglectful parenting styles influence students' personality trait of agreeableness

**Table 2**

Variables	n	X	std
Authoritarian parenting style	133	18.000	11.531
Democratic parenting style	112	36.000	2.006
Neglectful parenting style	142	10.667	5.058

Table 2 shows that authoritarian parenting style has a mean 18.000 and standard deviation of 11.531, democratic parenting style has a mean of 36.000 and a standard deviation of 2.006 while neglectful parenting style has a mean of 10.667 and a standard deviation of 5.058. This shows that authoritarian parenting style really has influence on the students' personality trait of agreeableness.

### Research Question 3

To what extent do authoritarian, democratic and neglectful parenting styles influence students' personality trait of neuroticism

**Table 3**

Variables	n	X	std
Authoritarian parenting style	134	16.667	9.873
Democratic parenting style	99	38.000	5.000
Neglectful parenting style	148	14.000	4.361

Table 3 shows that authoritarian parenting style has a mean 16.667 and standard deviation of 9.873, democratic parenting style has a mean of 38.000 and a standard deviation of 5.000 while neglectful parenting style has a mean of 14.000 and a standard deviation of 4.361. This shows that neglectful parenting style really has influence on the students' personality trait of neuroticism.

### Hypothesis 1

**H01:** There is no significant influence of authoritarian, democratic and neglectful parenting styles on the personality trait of extroversion among senior secondary school SSS3 students in Rivers State.

**Table 4: A Summary of ANOVA personality trait and parenting styles on Extroversion**

Source	Sum of Square	df	Means Scores	fcal	fcrit	P- value
<b>Between group</b>	1,336.00	4	33.000	9.77	3.48	.0018
<b>Within group</b>	342.00	10	34.200			
<b>Total</b>	1,678.00	14				

Groups = The three parenting styles

fcal = calculated value

fcrit = table value

**Responses from table 4 was used in testing this hypothesis.**

From the analysis, the critical value of F (3.48) is less than the computed value (9.77). We therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that authoritarian, democratic and neglectful parenting styles do have significant influence on the personality trait of extroversion among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

### Hypothesis 2

**H02:** There is no significant influence of authoritarian, democratic and neglectful parenting styles on the personality trait of agreeableness among senior secondary school SSS3 students in Rivers State.

**Table 5: Summary of ANOVA on personality trait of agreeableness and parenting styles**

Source	Sum of Square	df	Means Scores	fcal	fcrit	P- value
<b>Between group</b>	1.814.67	4	453.667	13.69	3.48	.0005
<b>Within group</b>	331.33	10	33.133			
<b>Total</b>	2146.00	14				

Responses from table 5 was used in testing this hypothesis, from the analysis, the critical value of F (3.48) is less the computed value (13.69), we therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the authoritarian, democratic and neglectful parenting styles do have a significant influence on the personality trait of agreeableness among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

### Hypothesis 3

**H03:** There is no significant influence of authoritarian, democratic and neglectful parenting styles on the personality trait of neuroticism among senior .secondary school SSS3 students in Rivers State.

**Table 6: Summary of ANOVA on Neuroticism personality trait and parenting styles.**

Source	Sum of Square	df	Means Scores	fcal	fcrit	P- value
<b>Between group</b>	1,838.67	4	459.667	13.69	3.48	.0005
<b>Within group</b>	333.33	10	33.333			
<b>Total</b>	2,172.00	14				

Responses from Table 6 was used in testing this hypothesis, from the analysis, the critical value of F (3.48) is less than the computed value (13.79). We therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the different parenting styles under study do have a significant influence on the personality trait of neuroticism among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the data analysis in table 4 indicated that there is a significant influence of authoritarian, democratic and neglectful parenting styles on the personality trait of extroversion among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. Based on this, the null hypothesis is rejected.

This result is in agreement with Steinberg (1996) findings which he stated that adolescents from authoritative homes gain independence gradually as they grow older which helps them develop self reliant, more self assured, more adaptive, more creative, more curious, more successful in school.

Mc Adams (1994) in his recent research also found that extroversion is positively associated with reports of feeling good about life. This means that extroverts have greater level of positive effect in everyday life. Such environment is created by a democratic or authoritative parenting styles



From the data derived from the hypothesis which is shown in table 5, the critical value of  $f(3.48)$  is less than the computed value of (13.69), we therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that authoritarian, democratic and neglectful parenting style do have significant influence on the personality trait of agreeableness among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. This result is in agreement with Fitzsimmons (1998). According to her, agreeableness trait is learnt and maintained in a manner similar to other behavior, thus two major factors in behavior development and modification are involved. Modeling, positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement. Butressing this point, Baumrid (1991), also asserts that, the authoritarian parents who expects orders to be obeyed without explanation, power assertive and statue oriented tends to become a model for the adolescent to imitate in future. Hence, parents' show of aggressiveness both in words and actions affects the students' level of agreeableness.

Wade and Tarvis (1993) in a similar study also concluded that parental power assertion which is otherwise known as authoritarian parenting styles is linked with adolescent hostile, uncooperative and aggressiveness. Observational studies of parents and adolescents relationship in the home according to him, is that parents with hostile adolescents use a great deal of punishment and less instructions and remainders by shouting, spanking and scolding yet failed to make the punishment commensurate the child's behaviour.

From the result of the data derived from the hypothesis in table 6, the critical value of  $f(3.48)$  is less than the computed value (13.79). We therefore reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant influence of authoritarian, democratic and neuroticism parenting styles on the personality trait of neuroticism among senior secondary school SSS3 students in Rivers State.

This result is in agreement with the research carried out by NIHM which shows that teenagers have the feeling of sadness, and exhibits hopelessness, fatigue, low self esteem, feeling of worthlessness, loss of interest in activities, excessive guilt inability to concentrate, negatives views about life etc.

McAdams (1994) also share similar view in his study of adolescent from neglectful homes. Due to the noninvolvement of parents in their affairs, they tend to have negative views or feelings of themselves the outside world and the future. They see themselves as losers. This leads to feelings of sadness and despair adolescents here recall more negative and unpleasant adjectives such as bleak, dismal, helpless in memory tasks.

Hazell (2002) also noted that trait of neuroticism develops from a combination of genetic vulnerability, suboptimal early developmental experiences and exposure to stresses.

According to Wang & Crane (2001) certain types of family organizations are closely related to development and maintenance of symptoms in adolescents. According to family system theory, when the married couple has conflict and cannot solve it in a constructive way, they are likely to involve their children in the conflict to release some anxiety and tension between them. A child is physiologically vulnerable to everything going on between parents. Tension and conflict in the family induces emotional arousal in the child, triggering physiological and psychological responses.



Asarnow, Jaycox and Tompson (2001) in their research stressed the importance and effectiveness of family involvement, intervention and participation in the developmental process of the child in the home.

## CONCLUSION

The general result of the study shows that evidence that democratic, authoritarian, and neglectful parental styles, influence significantly. Personality traits of extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism of senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

## RECOMMENDATION

The adolescents are very important in that they made up the family. Families on the other hand, make up the society. The adolescents are often said to be the future leaders of our 'society'. It is against this backdrop that the researcher makes the following recommendations,

- 1) Information on influence of the different parenting styles on personality traits of adolescent should be made available to parents. This will equip them properly in the role of parent. It will also help parents to understand that no particular parenting style is all embracing. Therefore apply variations when the need arises.
- 2) Every child is born unique. Therefore parents should adopt and treat their children, wards and adolescents with appropriate parenting styles.
- 3) Teachers also need to be abreast with the various parenting styles and how they influence personality traits of adolescent. This will help them to properly handle problems as they arise in the teaching and learning situation among students.
- 4) Adolescents should also be made to understand that it is not every behavior exhibited by parents or adults that should be set as models for them to admire and follow.

## REFERENCES

- Asarnow, D. Jaycox, L.C. and Tompson P. (2001) *Introduction to Research in Education*. USA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.
- Baumrind, D. (1991) *The Influence of Parenting Styles on Adolescent Competence and Substance Use*. Journal of Early Adolescence 11(1), 56-95.
- Fitzsimmons, I.E. (1998) *Understanding Developmental Psychology*. Part Harcourt. Abe publishers (Nig.)
- George, J. M. and Jones, C. R. (1997) *Organizational Behaviour*. Addison USA: Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.
- Hazel, P. (2003) *Depression in children and adolescents*. American Family Physician, 67,577-580.
- Iwundu, C. O. (1995) *Psychology for the Education and Health Professions*. Port Harcourt: Capllc Publishers Nig. Ltd.

- Mc-Adams, S. D. P. (1994) *The Person, an introduction to personality psychology*. Harcourt: Bruce and coy.
- Mullins, L.J. (2005) *Management and organizational behaviour*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Steinberg, (1996) *Adolescence*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Wade, C. & Tarvis, C. (1993) *Psychology*. New York: Harper Collins College publishers.
- Wang, & Crane, D. R (2001). *The relationship between “marital satisfaction, marital stability, nuclear family triangulation and childhood depression*. The American journal of family therapy, 29 333-347.