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Parenting Styles as Predictors of Social Maladjustment among Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

The study investigated parenting styles as predictors of social maladjustment among undergraduate students, with one hundred and twenty (120) undergraduate students with mean age of 21.63 and SD of 2.40140 were selected using multi-stage (cluster, simple random: by balloting and purposive) sampling techniques as participants from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. Two sets of instruments were used for the study namely; Baumrid (1971) Parental care scale and Wiggins (1966), social maladjustment scale were used for data collections, a cross sectional design was adopted, the statistical test used for data analysis is linear regression using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 software. Thus, Means and standard deviation distributions will be investigated. These will help to determine the direction and strength of the relationships among the study variables (George, 2008). Findings shows that parental style (authoritative at sig.= .080 and permissiveness at sig.= .118) which exceeded the benchmark of at $p < .05$ didn't independently predict social. While authoritarian predicted sig.= .018 which falls below the benchmark of at $p < .05$ positively predict social maladjustment, Hence parents are advice to adopt both permissive and authoritative style of parenting and authoritarian style so as to enable the student adjust to the society perfectly.

Keywords: parenting styles, parental care, social maladjustment, undergraduate students,

Introduction

It's interesting to note that maladjustment can encompass various factors, including social, biological, and psychological conditions. According to Khanfer et al. (2013), intrinsic maladjustment can occur when there are disparities between an individual's needs, motivations, and evaluations, and the actual rewards they receive from their experiences. Addressing these issues is important to promote greater well-being and a more fulfilling life. Extrinsic maladjustment refers to situations in which an individual's behaviour does not align with their society's cultural or social expectations (Bergman, 2018). The causes of maladjustment can be quite complex and multifaceted. For example, research suggests that factors such as family environment, personal factors, and school-related factors can all contribute to maladjustment (Manichander, 2016). By understanding these underlying causes, methods can be worked out to address maladjustment and promote greater well-being for all individuals. Failing to intervene and provide support for individuals who are maladjusted can have negative effects later in life (Manichander, 2016; Restrepo et al., 2016). That's why it's so crucial to investigate different factors that may contribute to maladjustment, such as parenting styles. By understanding these predictors, effective interventions can be developed and promote greater well-being for individuals who may be struggling with maladjustment. This is particularly important for undergraduate students who may be experiencing a range of challenges as they navigate this period of transition and growth.

Sam (2022) defined social maladjustment as an inability to develop satisfying relationships, a lack of social finesse and tact, and breakdowns in maintaining constructive social relationships. It's interesting to note that this construct encompasses aspects that are often associated with antisocial personality and cognition (Bonta & Wormith, 2013). By understanding the different components of social maladjustment, we can develop more effective interventions and support individuals who may be struggling with these challenges. It's important to note that there are a range of behaviours that are commonly considered maladjusted, such as stealing, fighting, drug abuse, and truancy. These behaviours can have significant negative impacts on individuals and their communities, and it's important to address them in a constructive and supportive way. According to Gibbon (2011), the socially maladjusted behaviour of a learner can be characterized by a strong motivation for self-gain and survival skills. This behaviour can have negative consequences for the individual, as well as for their interactions with others in social settings. It's important to address maladaptive behaviours early on to prevent them from becoming ingrained patterns of behaviour.

It's been suggested that there are five main causes of socially maladjusted behaviour in individuals. These include the family's socioeconomic status, psychological needs, personal needs, school-related causes, and teacher and peer-related causes. Addressing these underlying factors can help prevent maladaptive behaviours from developing or worsening. It's important to provide individuals with the necessary support and resources to help them address these underlying issues and develop healthier patterns of behaviour.

Jolliffe and Farrington (2019) suggest that certain personal variables related to an individual's personality may increase the likelihood of criminal behaviour, particularly during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. This is a period of identity formation and social behaviour stabilization and may be influenced by factors such as impulsivity, low self-control, and a lack of empathy. By identifying and addressing these personal variables, individuals may be able to reduce their risk of engaging in criminal behaviour and develop more positive social behaviours. It's important to provide individuals with the necessary resources and support to help them address these factors and develop healthy coping mechanisms.

At a second level, there are the individual's beliefs, values and attitudes (adaptive patterns), developed from the interaction between their basic dispositions and the environment. Favourable patterns to the violation of rules/laws increase the chances of engaging in criminal behaviour (Intravia et al., 2017; McNeeley et al., 2018; O'Riordan & O'Connell, 2014). It has been found that beliefs, values, and attitudes that emphasize following rules and controlling impulses to meet societal expectations are negatively correlated with divergent and criminal behaviour, according to studies conducted by Bilsky and Hermann in 2016, and Borg et al., in 2017. These factors are considered as forming antisocial cognition, as per Bonta and Wormith's research in 2013.

Research suggests that individuals who score high on the antisocial cognition scale exhibit a limited ability to consider societal demands in a socially acceptable manner, resulting in a pronounced antisocial attitude, negativity towards others, negative emotions, and impulsive behaviour, according to Jesness's study in 2003.

Moreover, various findings indicate that the Social Maladjustment construct helps identify individuals with varying degrees of criminal involvement, as per Semel's research in 2016 and Olver & Stockdale's study in 2017.

Studies have shown that parenting style has a significant impact on the conduct and traits of children, as per research conducted by Blondin and Cochran in 2011 and Adegboyega et al. in 2017. The three parenting styles - authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive, can predict the outcome of a child's social competence and other traits, as per the research studies conducted by Terry in 2004 and Adegboyega et al. in 2017. It has been observed that parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping cognitive development and social competence and adjustment, according to Adegboyega et al.'s research in 2017.

Parenting can be defined as the deliberate actions taken to guarantee the survival and growth of individuals. It is a mutual process of communication between the child and the parent, according to Maccoby and Martin (1983) and Rajan & Rema (2022). It is a process by which a person displays a particular, caring, and affectionate attitude towards their infants. Parenting has a significant impact on the overall development of children and adolescents, and it greatly influences the parent-child relationship (Rajan & Rema 2022). The perception of parenting style refers to the viewpoint of adults regarding their parents' approach to child-rearing, which shapes their understanding of their parents and their upbringing. Parenting styles have been categorized based on two fundamental dimensions - demandingness and responsiveness (Hughes, et al., 2005; Rajan, & Rema, 2022). While there have been various attempts to conceptualize parenting styles in the past, Baumrind's classification of styles based on the level of control exerted is the most commonly used (Baumrind, 1971, 1991; Crittenden et al., 2014).

Parenting styles are considered to be a balance between a certain level of control exerted by the parents and the level of responsiveness they have towards their child (Baumrind, 1971, 1991; Crittenden et al., 2014; Soňa, 2017). The degree of control and responsiveness that parents exhibit determines which parenting style they follow, and this, in turn, shapes the development of the child. While a child's attitude can also impact the relationship between the child and parent, Baumrind was able to measure the behaviour of both the parent and the child separately, thus addressing the bi-directionality issue and being able to operationalize parenting styles individually (Soňa, 2017). Based on this conceptualization, parenting styles are categorized as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful (Baumrind, 1971, 1991; Soňa, 2017).

An authoritarian parent tends to exert strict control over their child, with a focus on discipline and limitations on their actions. This parenting style has been identified by Baumrind (1971, 1991) and also mentioned by Soňa (2017). Authoritarian parenting style can come across as very decisive and in control, as noted by Howe (2011) and Soňa (2017). However, this mindset can also be quite rigid and inflexible, with little room for the child to explore and learn on their own. It's possible that the authoritarian parenting style stems from the parent viewing their child as a duty rather than a relationship, leading to a sense of control over the child's actions (Howe, 2011; Soňa, 2017). Additionally, an authoritarian mother may struggle with emotional availability, which can result in the child being forced to become self-reliant (Howe, 2011; Soňa, 2017).

Permissive parents tend to be more hands-off when it comes to controlling their child's behaviour, with less emphasis on punishment and more freedom for the child to make their own decisions, this parenting style has been identified by Baumrind (1971, 1991, 1966, 2005), Gonzalez et al., (2001), Turner et al., (2009), and also mentioned by Soňa (2017). While permissive parenting can have its drawbacks, it's important to note that it's not necessarily all negative. Permissive parents can be quite tolerant of their child's behaviour, and they are still responsive to their needs and wants in many cases, despite the lack of control, permissive parents can still provide their children with emotional care and support, as noted by Baumrind (1971, 1966, 2005) and also mentioned by Soňa (2017). Permissive parents may be seen more as friends than strict authorities by their children, as identified by Baumrind (1971, 1991, 1966, 2005) and also mentioned by Soňa (2017). This can lead to a more relaxed and informal relationship between the parent and child, but it can also lead to a lack of structure and guidance in some cases.

Authoritative parenting seems to strike a balance between control and emotional responsiveness towards the child, as noted by Baumrind (1971, 1991) and also mentioned by Soňa (2017). These parents can be seen as role models for their children, with a secure and healthy emotional foundation themselves. They can provide

structure and discipline when needed, while also being playful and friendly in their interactions with their child (Crittenden et al., 2014; Howe, 2011; Soňa, 2017). Authoritative parents tend to promote independence in their children by negotiating with them and finding a balance between safety and exploration (Crittenden et al., 2014 & Howe, 2011). These parents are involved in their child's activities, providing support and care without being overbearing. They are open with their children and explain the reasons behind their actions and rules, which can help the child understand and internalize these values.

Authoritative parents can serve as a secure base and haven for their children, providing emotional regulation and helping to build a stable self-image, as noted by Crittenden et al., (2014) and Howe (2011). This is possible because these parents are interested in their children, attuned to their needs, and promote self-assurance and a positive internal working model, as mentioned by Howe (2011) and Soňa (2017). Children raised by authoritative parents grow up in an environment that balances rules and freedom (Baumrind, 1966; Soňa, 2017). Communication is also a key component of this parenting style, with open and honest interactions between the parent and child that promote understanding and mutual respect. An authoritative mother does not necessarily need to firmly state her position all the time. Instead, she encourages the child to ask questions and discuss what is being instated. This concept was proposed by Baumrind in 1966 and was further developed by Soňa in 2017.

In this study, Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behaviour was chosen as the theoretical framework. This approach links an individual's beliefs and behaviour, stating that attitudes towards behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control all shape an individual's behavioural intentions and behaviours. This suggests that an individual's tendency to perceive a certain parenting style as undesirable can lead to the social maladjustment they experience, and their ability to adjust to their social environment solely depends on them. Students have the autonomy to choose their own behaviour based on situations they encounter and what grants them gratification. Even if they have had a good upbringing, students can still choose to adopt behaviours that they plan for themselves. The impact of parenting styles on the social maladjustment of university students is a topic of great interest. To shed light on this issue, a recent study was conducted to investigate how parenting styles contribute to social maladjustment among students. The study aimed to explore parenting styles as predictors of social maladjustment among university students. Hence the following research question:

Will parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissiveness) jointly predict social maladjustment?

METHOD

Participants

One hundred and twenty (120) undergraduate students with mean age of 21.63 and SD of 2.40140 were selected using multi-stage (cluster, simple random: by balloting and purposive) sampling techniques as participants from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. The students were cluster according to their faculties, simple random: by balloting was used to pick the faculties, while purposive: a criterion selection based sampling techniques was used to select the participants from thirty-one (31) from Applied natural sciences, twenty-eight (28) from Management sciences, twenty-five (25) from Environmental sciences, fifteen (15) from Engineering and twenty-one (21) from Law.

Instrument

Two sets of instruments were used for the study; namely

1. Baumrind (1971) Parental care scale
2. Wiggins (1966), social maladjustment scale

Wiggins (1966) social maladjustment scale

The instrument which is the Wiggins (1966) social maladjustment scale is a 25-item inventory. These are scales specifically developed by analyzing the contents of MMPI items (Hathaway & McKinley, 1940) and regrouping them to measure specific personality/ behavioural characteristics that are distinct from the Clinical Scales of the MMPI specifically, SMS is designed to measure those behaviour characteristics which make an individual unable to adjust adequately to social situations because he/she is too self-conscious, introverted and lacks necessary social skills. Wiggins (1966-1969) provided the original psychometric

properties for American samples while the properties for Nigerian samples were provided by Adekunle (2002) and Bolaji (2002). The cronbach alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients reported by Wiggins (1969) are; .856 and .835 for males and females respectively. The reliability coefficients obtained by Bolaji (2002) are 21- days test-retest = .55. KR -20 = .45; split – half = .81. Wiggins (1969) obtained a concurrent validity coefficient of .899 by correlating SMS with MMPI scale (social introversion). The concurrent validity coefficient obtained with political Participation Scale (PPS) by Gough et al. (1951) is .36 (Bolaji 2002) while that with self-Efficacy Scale (SES) by Sherer et al (1982) is .24 (Adekunle, 2002).

A pilot study carried out by the researcher with thirty (30) selected participants from University of Nigeria Enugu campus students using availability sampling technique yielded a unit score cronbach alpha of .983

Baumrind (1971) Parental care scale

Parental care scale (PCS) the 20-item instrument designed to measure styles of parenting .YES or NO response is expected from each statement in the questionnaire. The statements were categorized into 3 groups of parenting styles (Authoritarian style, permissive style and authoritative style), and each participant gets scores in all the styles of parenting, and the style with the highest score becomes dominant. The scale was administered individually after establishing adequate rapport with the participant. Baumrind (1970) provided the original psychometric properties for American samples while Tumasi & Ankrah (2002) provided the properties for African samples. The norms are as follows; males authoritarian style = 7.87, permissive style = 13.57, and Authoritative style = 7.40, female authoritarian style = 7.72, permissive style = 12.82 and authoritative style = 7.48, and male and female are authoritative style = 7.80, permissive style = 7.44. Baumrind (1971) reported an internal consistency alpha coefficient of .86 on the reliability while Omoluabi (2002) obtained a concurrent validity coefficient of .73 by correlating PCS and IFR (Hufson, 1982). The norms scores were the basis for interpretation of the score of the participants, the scores higher than the norms indicate the dominance of the particular parenting style.

A pilot study carried out by the researcher with thirty (30) selected participants from University of Nigeria Enugu campus students using availability sampling technique yielded a unit score cronbach alpha of authoritarian .960, Permissive .981, and Authoritative .984

Procedure

Undergraduate students were drawn as participants from four faculties in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) using multi-stage sampling (cluster, simple random: by balloting, and purposive) techniques for this study. The students were clustered according to their faculties, simple random: by balloting was used to pick the faculties while purposive sampling techniques were used to select students from thirty-one (31) from Applied natural sciences, twenty-eight (28) from Management sciences, twenty-five (25) from Environmental sciences, fifteen (15) from Engineering and twenty-one (21) from Law. The researcher employed the research assistants whom are faculties' executives from the selected faculties to help distribute and retrieve the questionnaire. One hundred and twenty questionnaires were sent out, one hundred and fourteen were returned. Among the returning ones, five bears multiple initials and the other two were not properly responded to, which makes the numbers properly responded to be one hundred and seven, which was used for data analysis.

Design/statistic

A cross sectional design was adopted based on the researcher is looking for if parental styles can predict social maladjustment among undergraduate student. Thus, the statistical test used for data analysis is linear regression using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 software. Thus, Means and standard deviation distributions will be investigated. These will help to determine the direction and strength of the relationships among the study variables (George, 2008)

Results

Table 1: descriptive statistics

S/N	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Social maladjustment	13.5349	2.59220	1	.290	-.231	-.254	-.216	-.004
2	authoritarian	3.6512	1.71688		1	-.242	-.288	-.361	.063
3	Permissive style	3.5814	1.42356			1	.266	-.039	.059
4	Authoritative style	4.5581	1.73614				1	.000	.034
5	age	21.6279	2.40140					1	-.470
6	gender	1.4884	.50181						1

Table 1 above shows that authoritarian dimension of parenting style $r = .290$ is positive related with social maladjustment, this means that the increase in authoritarian parenting style will lead to increase in social maladjustment among undergraduate students. While permissiveness $r = -.231$ and authoritative $r = -.254$ dimensions of parenting styles negatively related to social maladjustment, this indicates that increase in the mention parenting styles will cause the decrease in social maladjustment among undergraduate students.

Table 2: regression statistics

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	UnSt	St	T	Sig.
1	.365	.133	.112				.000
authoritarian				.319	.211	2.388	.018
Permissive style				-.252	-.138	-1.573	.118
Authoritative style				-.234	-.157	-1.762	.080
2	.408 ^b	.166	.132				.092
age				-.243	-.225	-2.210	.029
gender				-.531	-.103	-1.093	.277

Dependent variable: social maladjustment, at $p < .05$, $p < .001$. $r =$ relationship, $r^2 =$ relationship square, UnSt= unstandardised, St= standardised

Table 2 above shows that parental style (authoritative at $\text{sig.} = .080$ and permissiveness at $\text{sig.} = .118$) which exceeded the benchmark of at $p < .05$ didn't independently predict social. While authoritarian predicted $\text{sig.} = .018$ which falls below the benchmark of at $p < .05$ positively predict social maladjustment, this means that the increase in this dimension of parental style will lead to an increase in social maladjustment. The result shows that both permissiveness and authoritative parental styles had a negative interaction with social maladjustment, meaning that the increase in the two mentioned dimension of parental style will lead to the decrease in social maladjustment. Parental style jointly predicted social maladjustment at $\text{sig.} = .000$ which is lower than the threshold of at $p < .001$, the dimensions are closely related to social maladjustment at $r = .4$ ($r = .365$), and they contribute 13% variance to social maladjustment at $r^2 = .133$

Summary of Result

Parental styles (authoritative and permissiveness) didn't independently predict social maladjustment, it is only authoritarian predicted.

Both permissiveness and authoritative parental styles had a negative interaction with social maladjustment. Parental styles jointly predicted social maladjustment

Discussion

The hypothesis tested which stated that parental styles (authoritarian, permissive style and authoritative style) will significantly predict social maladjustment was not confirmed, hence the hypothesis was rejected. The result obtained shows that only authoritarian parental style positively predicted social maladjustment, the findings are not in congruity with the work of Lola (2022) and Gimenez-Serrano and Garcia (2021) which postulated that parental styles has direct influence on social maladjustment, which agreed with the result from this findings. The findings show that the type of parental style one adopt or went through can

sometimes help determine if the student will experience social maladjustment or not. Being unable to cope with social activities or not responding properly to social activities depends so much on the parental style one receive along with the individual choice.

The result obtained shows that permissive and authoritative style indicated a negative interaction with social maladjustment among undergraduate, though there was no prediction, while authoritarian style positively predicted social maladjustment. This implies that the increase in permissive and authoritative parental style will cause the decrease in social maladjustment among university student. This means those children that were given free hand and the one that were directed on what to do tend to adjust properly to the social than the other parental style. Children that are properly guided and were still given free room to make their decision when they were young tend to blend were with others and experiences less social maladjustment, according to the result obtained. Because most maladjustive behaviour would been noticed and corrected by the parents during their puberty and adolescent stage, this was possible because the parent gave the undergraduate student free room to make his or her decision, and the faulty once they make were corrected or shaped by parents.

Also the presence of authoritarian style will cause the presence of social maladjustment. Authoritarian parenting is extremely strict. In this style, parents expect kids to follow the rules with no discussion or compromising. Parents use this approach for many reasons. Many choose this style because of their nationality; culture or ethical backgrounds dictate it. Also, it may be the way they were raised and don't know any other way. Finally, they believe ruling with an iron fist is the best way to keep kids in line and under control (Trautner, 2017).

Implication of the findings

The result obtained is in congruity with the theory of planned behaviour was adopted as theoretical framework because it is an approach that links one's beliefs and behaviour. The theory states that attitude toward behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, together shape an individual's behavioural intentions and behaviours. Which means that the individual tendency to adopt and rely on the parenting style he or she experience, and the ability to adjust to school and social environment solemnly depend on the individual. The student chooses to form his or her own behaviour by themselves from situation that happens around them. Behaviours that are not favourable or does not give the student a desirable effect are been dropped for the once that a positively perceived once. The individual tend to exhibit what he or she has learnt from the parents. The findings have added to literature that can be cited by future researchers.

The finding indicated that parental styles are strong predictors of social maladjustment among undergraduate students, authoritarian style positively predicted social maladjustment, and permissive and authoritative style did not predict but indicated a negative interaction with social maladjustment. This shows that the two parental styles can cause the decrease in social maladjustment, while the increase in authoritarian style will cause the increase in social maladjustment. Hence parents are advice to adopt both permissive and authoritative style of parenting and authoritarian style so as to enable the student adjust to the society perfectly.

Limitation of the study

Some factors militated against this study, one of such is the sampled population. Sampling only one institution during exam reduces the numbers of participants, more students would have participated assuming more than one university was sampled. The sampling techniques also affected the numbers of participants, the more students would have been sampled assuming a suitable sampling techniques was adopted. Some demographic variable were left on answered by the participants which lead to the researcher not including the outcome in the study, demographic such as religious affiliation, parental working status et al. These control variables would have help to give this study direction.

Suggestion for further study

Future researcher should consider sampling population from different institution and also to consider carrying this study outside examination period, this will give student opportunity to participate in the research.

A suitable sampling technique should be considered by future researcher, because this will give room for the selection of larger population. The future researcher should consider to arrange the demographic variables in such a way that the participants will not leave them unattended to.

Summary and Conclusion

The study investigated parental style as predictors of social maladjustment among undergraduate students, and finding revealed that parental styles are strong determinant of social maladjustment by undergraduate student, authoritarian style positively predicted social maladjustment, and permissive and authoritative style did not predict but indicated a negative interaction with social maladjustment.

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