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PARENTING STYLES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the relationship between parenting styles and students' academic achievement in Nigerian public secondary schools. It considers four commonly discussed parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved—and examines how parental guidance, supervision, communication and support may shape students' motivation, study habits and educational performance. A narrative review of relevant literature published between 2015 and 2026 was conducted, with particular attention to evidence from Nigeria and comparable educational settings. The reviewed studies indicate that parenting characterised by warmth, clear expectations, constructive supervision and open communication is generally associated with more favourable educational experiences and outcomes. Findings relating to authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parenting are less consistent and appear to depend on the social, economic and educational context in which parenting occurs. The review further shows that parenting style does not independently determine students' academic achievement. School conditions, socioeconomic circumstances, parental education, student characteristics and the quality of parent–school relationships also contribute to academic outcomes. The study recommends stronger family–school partnerships, practical parenting education and greater parental participation in students' education. It also recommends further research on changing family structures, digital parenting and emerging patterns of parental support in Nigerian secondary education.

Keywords: Parenting styles, academic achievement, parental involvement, secondary education, family environment, Nigeria.

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Introduction

Education remains an important means of promoting individual development, social mobility and national progress. Through education, individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values and competencies that support productive participation in society. For Nigeria, improving educational quality and ensuring that students attain meaningful learning outcomes remain important concerns. Academic achievement is therefore more than a record of examination scores; it provides an indication of the extent to which students have acquired the knowledge and competencies expected at a particular level of schooling.

Students' achievement is influenced by a combination of factors operating within and outside the school. These include the home environment, family relationships, socioeconomic circumstances, peer influence, school climate, teacher characteristics and individual learner differences. Among these factors, parenting practices are particularly important because parents are central figures in children's social and educational development. The ways parents guide, supervise, communicate with and respond to their children can shape attitudes towards learning, educational expectations and everyday study behaviour. Nigerian studies have consequently examined the relationship between parenting practices, parental involvement and students' academic outcomes (Baji & Mohammed, 2018; Ogunsola, 2018; Onongha et al., 2022). Parenting style refers to the relatively consistent pattern through which parents interact with, guide, discipline and respond to their children. It is commonly discussed in terms of parental responsiveness and behavioural demandingness. These dimensions have been used to distinguish four broad patterns: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parenting. Although the categories differ in their assumptions about discipline and control, actual parenting practices may overlap across categories and may change according to family circumstances.

Authoritative parenting is generally associated with warmth, clear expectations, reasonable supervision and open communication. Parents who adopt this approach establish rules while allowing children opportunities to develop independence and express their views. Authoritarian parenting places greater emphasis on obedience, strict control and compliance, often with less room for negotiation. Permissive parenting is usually characterised by warmth and responsiveness but relatively limited behavioural control, whereas uninvolved parenting reflects low levels of both responsiveness and supervision.

These differences have possible educational implications. Students whose parents discuss school activities with them, monitor academic progress, establish realistic expectations and provide assistance during academic difficulties may experience stronger support for learning. At the same time, excessive control, limited communication or inadequate supervision can create difficulties for students' motivation and independent learning. Evidence from Niger State, for example, suggests that relationships between parenting dimensions and academic performance may exist, although the nature and strength of those relationships differ across parenting practices (Baji & Mohammed, 2018).

The Nigerian context is important because families differ in socioeconomic circumstances, educational attainment, family structure, cultural expectations and employment patterns. Such differences may affect the time parents can devote to their children's education as well as the resources available for learning. Parents who face financial or occupational pressures may have limited opportunities for direct academic supervision even when they strongly value education. Families with greater educational and material resources may, on the other hand, be better positioned to provide textbooks, digital resources, study spaces and additional educational support. Public secondary schools are particularly relevant because they serve students from

varied social and economic backgrounds. Although school-related conditions influence students' learning experiences, the home remains an important setting in which attitudes, routines and expectations are developed. The relationship between the family and the school is therefore useful in understanding differences in academic achievement.

However, Nigerian findings are not completely consistent. Some studies have reported favourable relationships between supportive parenting practices and academic `Ogunsola (2018), for example, reported that parenting styles and parental supervision of schoolwork did not significantly influence academic performance among secondary school students in Niger State. Ojewola and Faremi (2018) similarly found no significant relationship between achievement motivation and parenting styles among secondary school students in Ondo State. These results caution against treating parenting style as an isolated explanation for academic performance. Other Nigerian studies have reported relationships between parenting practices and educational outcomes. Baji and Mohammed (2018) found relationships involving particular parenting dimensions and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Niger State. Onongha et al. (2022) examined parenting style and parental involvement among secondary school students in Osun State, drawing attention to the distinction between general parenting style and direct parental participation in educational activities. Obadike and Unachukwu (2023) likewise examined parenting styles as correlates of academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Anambra State.

Recent evidence has also extended the discussion to other parts of the country. Idris-Iyekolo (2024) investigated parental child-rearing practices and academic achievement among secondary school students in Ilorin East Local Government Area of Kwara State. Adeyeye (2024) examined the role of parenting techniques in the academic performance of Nigerian students. Gidado and Abubakar (2025) investigated parenting styles and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory. These studies provide further evidence that parental practices remain relevant to educational outcomes, although relationships vary across contexts and parenting dimensions. The literature therefore presents parenting as an important but complex influence on academic achievement. Its effects may operate through motivation, self-regulation, academic expectations, emotional support, communication and parental involvement. These processes are also shaped by socioeconomic conditions, parental education, school characteristics and students' personal circumstances.

Changes in family life have added another dimension to the issue. Greater access to smartphones, social media and online learning platforms has changed the ways in which parents supervise and communicate with their children. Parental support now extends beyond physical supervision to include helping adolescents manage digital activities, balancing online learning with entertainment and developing responsible technology-use habits. These developments make contemporary parenting an increasingly relevant issue in educational research.

Despite the increasing number of Nigerian studies, available evidence remains dispersed across states, educational levels and subject areas. There is therefore a need for a balanced review that synthesises findings from different locations, identifies points of agreement and disagreement, and highlights areas requiring further investigation.

Method of Literature Review

This paper adopted a narrative literature review approach. The review focused primarily on studies published between 2015 and 2026 in order to provide contemporary evidence on parenting styles and students' academic achievement. Relevant literature was identified using scholarly sources and academic databases with combinations of keywords such as *parenting*

styles, *parenting practices*, *parental involvement*, *academic achievement*, *academic performance*, *secondary school students*, *public secondary schools* and *Nigeria*. Priority was given to scholarly publications that directly examined parenting practices and educational outcomes. Studies were considered relevant when they addressed at least one of the following areas: parenting styles and academic achievement; parental involvement and academic performance; parenting practices and school engagement; or family communication and educational outcomes. Publications that did not contribute directly to the relationship under review were excluded from the main empirical discussion.

The review also considered differences in geographical location, educational level, study design and major findings. This approach was intended to avoid presenting the relationship between parenting and academic achievement as identical across all settings. Where studies reported contrasting findings, both positions were considered in order to provide a balanced interpretation of the available evidence.

Literature Review

Concept of Parenting Styles

Parenting style describes the characteristic manner in which parents interact with and guide their children. It includes parental warmth, communication, discipline, supervision, responsiveness and expectations. Although the four broad categories of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parenting have their origins in earlier developmental scholarship, they remain useful in contemporary educational research. In the educational setting, parenting style matters because the home is one of the environments in which students develop attitudes, routines and expectations that may influence school engagement. Parents may affect educational behaviour through direct activities such as monitoring homework, discussing schoolwork and communicating with teachers. They may also influence learning indirectly by modelling attitudes towards education and establishing expectations for achievement.

Parenting style, however, should not be equated completely with parental involvement. A parent may demonstrate a generally supportive parenting style while having limited direct involvement in schoolwork because of employment demands or other family responsibilities. Conversely, a parent may monitor schoolwork closely without providing the emotional support associated with an authoritative approach. Onongha et al. (2022) illustrate the importance of examining these concepts as related but distinct dimensions of family influence.

Authoritative Parenting

Authoritative parenting combines emotional responsiveness with clear and reasonable behavioural expectations. Parents who use this approach generally establish rules while permitting children to express their views and develop independence. Communication tends to be open, and discipline is more likely to involve explanation and guidance than severe punishment. In education, such parenting may support self-regulation because students understand what is expected of them while also receiving encouragement and emotional support. Parents can monitor academic progress without controlling every aspect of the student's educational experience.

Evidence from Nigeria provides some support for this relationship. Baji and Mohammed (2018) reported relationships between parenting styles and academic performance among junior secondary school students in Niger State. Gidado and Abubakar (2025) also reported significant relationships between some parenting dimensions and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory. Nevertheless, authoritative parenting should not be regarded as a universal solution. The educational value of particular parenting

practices may depend on cultural expectations, family resources, parental education and school conditions. The evidence is therefore better interpreted in terms of specific practices rather than a simple ranking of parenting styles.

Authoritarian Parenting

Authoritarian parenting is characterised by strong behavioural control, strict rules and high expectations, often with limited opportunity for negotiation. Parents may place considerable emphasis on obedience and compliance. Structure and clear expectations can provide useful boundaries for adolescents, but excessive control may limit students' opportunities to develop independence and discuss academic challenges. Nigerian findings concerning authoritarian parenting are mixed. Baji and Mohammed (2018) reported a significant relationship involving authoritarian parenting, indicating that its educational effects cannot automatically be considered negative in every context. Gidado and Abubakar (2025) similarly found that the association between parenting dimensions and academic achievement was more complex than a simple positive or negative classification.

Permissive Parenting

Permissive parenting generally involves considerable warmth and responsiveness combined with relatively limited behavioural control. Children may be allowed substantial freedom to make decisions, with comparatively few rules or restrictions. In educational settings, excessive permissiveness may make it difficult for students to maintain regular study schedules, meet academic expectations or develop consistent routines. At the same time, emotional closeness and autonomy may support healthy development when freedom is combined with appropriate guidance.

Empirical evidence does not provide a uniform picture. Some studies have reported weak or insignificant relationships between permissive parenting and academic outcomes. Ogunsola (2018), for example, found that parenting styles and parental supervision did not significantly influence academic performance among the secondary school students examined in Niger State. This suggests that permissiveness should be examined alongside other aspects of the family environment rather than treated as an independent explanation for poor achievement.

Uninvolved Parenting

Uninvolved parenting is characterised by limited responsiveness and limited supervision. Parents may provide inadequate attention to their children's educational activities, school experiences and developmental needs. Students who receive little parental guidance may have fewer opportunities to discuss academic difficulties, obtain help with schoolwork or develop consistent educational routines. Parental engagement can be important because much of students' learning-related behaviour occurs outside the classroom. Where parents show little interest in attendance, homework, academic progress or educational aspirations, the home may provide limited reinforcement for school-based learning.

Concept of Academic Achievement

Academic achievement refers to the extent to which students attain the learning outcomes expected at a particular educational level. It is commonly reflected in scores obtained from examinations, tests, assignments and other forms of assessment. In secondary education, academic achievement is important because it provides an indication of students' mastery of subject matter and their preparedness for future educational and occupational opportunities. Achievement is influenced by several interacting factors. Students' intellectual abilities and motivation matter, but so do the conditions under which learning occurs.

The family environment is relevant because parents may shape students' study habits, educational aspirations, attendance, discipline and attitudes towards school. However, the relationship should be understood within the wider educational context. Ogunsola (2018) found no significant influence of parenting styles and parental supervision on academic performance among secondary school students in Niger State. Ojewola and Faremi (2018) similarly reported no significant relationship between achievement motivation and parenting styles among secondary school students in Ondo State. Such findings demonstrate that academic achievement is multidimensional and cannot be attributed to parenting style alone. Idris-Iyekolo (2024) further examined parental child-rearing practices in relation to academic achievement in Ilorin East, showing the importance of considering the particular behaviours through which parents guide and support students.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Perspective

The social learning perspective provides a useful explanation of how parenting may influence students' academic behaviour. Children and adolescents learn partly through observing significant people within their environment. Parents are among the most important models available to young people, particularly during the formative years.

Students may observe how their parents respond to difficulties, approach responsibilities, solve problems and value education. Parents who demonstrate persistence, responsibility and positive attitudes towards learning may encourage similar patterns in their children. In contrast, inconsistent or excessively punitive responses may influence students' attitudes towards learning in less favourable ways.

The perspective also highlights the role of reinforcement. Parents can encourage desirable academic behaviour by acknowledging effort, providing constructive feedback and supporting responsible behaviour. Through these processes, parenting may influence not only what students do but also the attitudes and expectations that guide their educational behaviour.

Ecological Perspective

The ecological perspective offers another explanation for the relationship between parenting and academic achievement. Students develop within interconnected environments that include the family, school, peer group and wider community. These settings do not operate independently.

The relationship between parents and teachers may therefore influence students' educational experiences. Parents who communicate regularly with teachers may receive information that enables them to provide appropriate support at home. Teachers, in turn, may better understand students' circumstances when communication with families is constructive and consistent.

The ecological perspective is particularly useful in the Nigerian context because educational outcomes may be shaped by socioeconomic conditions, community characteristics, school resources and broader social circumstances. As a result, the influence of a particular parenting practice may vary across communities and family situations.

Empirical Review

The empirical studies reviewed between 2018 and 2026 indicate that parenting practices are relevant to students' academic experiences in Nigerian secondary schools, although the strength and direction of the relationship vary across locations, age groups and educational settings. Evidence from Niger, Ondo, Osun, Anambra, Kwara, the Federal Capital Territory, Bayelsa, Delta and Edo States shows that parenting is not a uniform predictor of academic

performance. Instead, particular practices, the extent of parental involvement and the wider family and school context appear to shape the relationship.

Evidence from Niger State illustrates these contrasting findings. Baji and Mohammed (2018) reported significant relationships between some parenting dimensions and students' academic performance. Their findings suggest that parental interaction, guidance and supervision can be associated with educational outcomes. Ogunsola (2018), however, found that parenting styles and parental supervision of schoolwork did not significantly influence students' academic performance. In Ondo State, Ojewola and Faremi (2018) similarly found no significant relationship between parenting styles and achievement motivation. These differences suggest that parenting style alone may not directly determine academic achievement. Students' motivation, socioeconomic circumstances, self-confidence, school conditions and other individual and environmental variables may also shape educational outcomes.

Other studies have drawn attention to parental involvement and supportive practices. Onongha, Oladiji and Raji (2022) examined parenting style and parental involvement in relation to students' academic performance in Osun State. Their work supports the importance of distinguishing general parenting style from direct parental participation in school-related activities. In Anambra State, Obadike and Unachukwu (2023) examined parenting styles as correlates of academic achievement among senior secondary school students. Ebonam and Ekoyo (2025) also considered the relationship between parenting styles and academic performance in Basic Science. These studies further indicate that the educational significance of parenting can vary according to the age of students, subject area and specific parental practices examined. Evidence from Kwara State is particularly relevant to the present discussion. Idris-Iyekolo (2024) examined parental child-rearing practices in relation to academic achievement among secondary school students in Ilorin East. The study highlights the importance of combining parental guidance with an appropriate degree of student independence.

Adeyeye (2024) provided additional contemporary evidence through an examination of parenting techniques and academic performance among Nigerian students. Similarly, Gidado and Abubakar (2025) examined parenting styles and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory and found significant relationships for some parenting dimensions but not for all.

Research from other parts of Nigeria also reinforces the importance of parenting practices. Daodu and Frank-Oputu (2025) examined authoritative and permissive parenting in relation to Social Studies performance in Bayelsa State. Ndakara and Urien (2025) examined parenting styles and the educational development of secondary school students in Delta State. Ibhafidon (2026) provided recent evidence from Edo State on parenting styles and academic achievement in Social Studies.

Taken together, the empirical evidence points to three broad conclusions. First, parenting practices characterised by support, reasonable supervision, clear expectations and communication are often associated with more favourable educational experiences. Second, the findings are not completely consistent, indicating that parenting does not operate independently of other family, school and individual factors. Third, recent research increasingly distinguishes between broad parenting categories and more specific behaviours such as parental involvement, supervision, communication and child-rearing practices. The available evidence therefore provides justification for continued investigation of parenting styles and academic achievement in Nigerian public secondary schools. However, differences among studies indicate that future

research should pay greater attention to context, measurement, family conditions and students' individual characteristics.

Discussion

The evidence reviewed indicates that parenting is an important but complex factor in students' academic achievement. The literature does not support the assumption that one parenting style will produce the same academic outcome for all students. A recurring theme is the value of parental support and appropriate supervision. Students may benefit when parents show genuine interest in their education, establish realistic expectations and provide help when academic challenges arise. Such support is likely to be most useful when students are also given opportunities to develop independence and responsibility.

Evidence from Kwara State illustrates this balance. Idris-Iyekolo (2024) examined different child-rearing practices and their relationship with academic achievement, highlighting the importance of combining guidance with an appropriate degree of autonomy. The contrasting findings from Niger State are also instructive. Baji and Mohammed (2018) reported relationships between parenting styles and academic performance, whereas Ogunsola (2018) found no significant influence of parenting styles and parental supervision. Differences in samples, measures, school environments and research procedures may partly account for these contrasting results.

Another important issue is the distinction between parenting style and parental involvement. Parents may have a generally supportive style but limited direct involvement in schoolwork because of employment demands, limited educational experience or financial challenges. Conversely, some parents may monitor schoolwork closely while providing relatively little emotional support. Onongha et al. (2022) demonstrate why these dimensions should be examined separately.

The literature also indicates that parenting may affect achievement indirectly through students' psychological and behavioural characteristics. Encouragement and constructive support may strengthen motivation, self-regulation and educational aspirations. Excessive control, however, may encourage dependence on external pressure rather than internal responsibility. This does not imply that discipline is unnecessary. Rather, discipline may be more useful when accompanied by explanation, support and opportunities for responsible decision-making.

Socioeconomic conditions deserve particular attention. Parenting practices do not occur in isolation from family resources. Parents with limited financial means may value education but face difficulties providing textbooks, digital devices, private study areas or additional academic support. Differences in students' achievement should therefore not automatically be interpreted as evidence of inadequate parenting. The school environment also plays an important role. Teachers, school administrators and counsellors may reinforce effective family practices or provide additional assistance when weaknesses exist at home. Strong parent–school communication can help identify students who need support and promote greater consistency between expectations at home and at school.

Overall, the evidence suggests that educational stakeholders should avoid labelling parents as simply "good" or "bad" based on broad parenting categories. Greater attention should be directed towards specific behaviours that support learning, including communication, encouragement, reasonable supervision, academic monitoring and opportunities for student independence.

Research Gap

Although a growing body of Nigerian literature has examined parenting styles and academic achievement, several gaps remain.

First, much of the available evidence is geographically limited. Studies have been conducted in Niger, Ondo, Osun, Anambra, Kwara, the Federal Capital Territory, Bayelsa, Delta and Edo States, but these findings cannot automatically be generalised to all Nigerian public secondary schools.

Second, many studies use cross-sectional survey or correlational designs. Such designs are useful for identifying relationships but provide limited evidence about causality. Longitudinal research could provide stronger evidence regarding how parenting practices and family relationships affect academic development over time.

Third, some studies treat parenting style and parental involvement as closely related concepts without examining their differences sufficiently. Future research should consider them as distinct but interacting variables.

Fourth, comparatively limited attention has been given to digital-era parenting. Parents increasingly have to guide adolescents' use of smartphones, social media, online learning platforms and digital entertainment. These activities may influence study time, concentration, communication and academic engagement. More contemporary research is therefore needed to understand how digital parenting interacts with traditional parenting practices.

Conclusion

This review examined evidence concerning parenting styles and students' academic achievement in Nigerian public secondary schools. The literature published from 2015 to 2026 indicates that parenting is relevant to students' educational experiences, but its influence is neither simple nor uniform. Supportive communication, appropriate supervision, realistic academic expectations and encouragement generally provide conditions that can support learning. At the same time, findings from Nigerian studies are mixed, showing that parenting style alone cannot explain differences in students' academic achievement.

Academic outcomes emerge from the interaction of family, school and individual factors. For this reason, efforts to improve students' performance should extend beyond the family and involve teachers, counsellors, school administrators and educational policymakers. Stronger cooperation between schools and families can help create conditions in which students receive both educational support and appropriate independence.

Recommendations

Based on the reviewed literature, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents should monitor students' educational activities while giving them sufficient independence to develop responsibility and self-regulation.
2. Regular discussions about school experiences, academic challenges and educational goals can help identify difficulties at an early stage.
3. Teachers and school administrators should maintain regular communication with parents concerning students' academic progress, attendance and behavioural development.
4. Parent–Teacher Association activities can provide practical guidance on communication, constructive discipline, academic support and adolescent development.
5. High expectations should be accompanied by encouragement, realistic support and constructive guidance rather than fear-based punishment.

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6. School counsellors should assist students whose academic difficulties may be associated with family-related challenges and help establish effective communication between students, parents and teachers.

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