

Psychosocial Factors Associated with Dependent Personality Disorder among Adolescents in Bayelsa State in Nigeria

J. N. Onukwufor and N. N. Anyanwu

Department of Educational Psychology Guidance and Counseling,
University of Port- Harcourt Rivers State, Nigeria

Abstract

An investigation was conducted to explore the factors associated with Dependent Personality Disorder (DPD) among adolescents in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study focused on senior secondary school students in public schools located in Yenagoa and Ogbia Local Government Areas. Through stratified random sampling, 1,000 students were selected to participate. The research was guided by one research question. Data were gathered using a researcher-developed instrument titled Parenting Style Influence on Dependent Personality Disorder Questionnaire (PSIDPDQ). The reliability coefficients for the subscales were 0.80 for authoritarian, 0.55 for authoritative, 0.65 for overprotective, and 0.73 for permissive parenting styles, while the overall reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.75. Results indicated that adolescents exposed to overprotective parenting recorded the highest mean DPD score (27.10), followed by authoritarian (24.53), authoritative (14.83), and permissive (13.24) parenting styles. These findings suggest that overprotective and authoritarian parenting styles are more strongly linked to higher tendencies of dependent personality traits among adolescents. The study therefore recommends that parents adopt a more balanced and supportive parenting style, particularly the authoritative approach, which has proven more effective in fostering healthy psychological development.

Keywords: dependent personality disorder, adolescence, authoritative, authoritarian, overprotective, and permissive parenting styles

1. Introduction

In human development different stages abound of which adolescence is one of them. It is a period of rapid growth and development as Nwankwo (2010: 206) rightly affirms, "Adolescence is a period of special growth and development in all human developmental areas such as physical, cognitive, social, emotional and moral." Menkiti (2008) posits that an adolescent is a person who has outgrown the social status of a child, but has not been accorded the social and mature privilege of an adult. Menkiti further argues that "even when the physical and psychological characteristics are evident in the adolescent, adults sometimes are in a dilemma of actually where to place the individual; that is why sometimes he is branded an adult and sometimes a child." These complex situations may affect the adolescent's mood and behaviours and lead to frustration and conflicts (Uba, 2002) and can make the adolescent develop unhealthy personality at the end of the day.

Some factors can influence the development of unhealthy personalities in the adolescent; in severe cases it can degenerate to personality disorders such as dependent personality disorder. A brief highlight will be made on dependent personality disorder as this paper is emphasizing it.

Bressert (2016) posits that dependent personality disorder is characterized by a long-standing need for the person to be taken care of and a fear of being abandoned or separated from important individuals in his or her life. Furthermore, "dependent personality disorder formally known as asthenic personality disorder is a personality disorder that is characterized by pervasive psychological dependence on other people" (Wikipedia, 2017:1). It is a long term chronic condition in which people depend on others for their emotional and physical needs with "only a minority achieving normal levels of independence" (Wikipedia, 2017:1). Kelly (2011) reported that the Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders fourth edition describes dependent personality disorder as a pervasive and excessive need to be taken care of that leads to submissive and clinging behaviour and fears of separations by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts. Studies have revealed (Braiker as quoted in Onukwufor & Iheanetu, 2013) that people with dependent personality disorder have an excessive need to be taken care of, which leads to their being overly, submissive and clinging.

The cause of dependent personality disorder is said to be unknown (Sederer, 2009) but significant evidence has shown that the disorder runs in families (Coolidge, Thede & Hang as

cited in Nolen-Hoeksema, 2014). Nolen-Hoeksema (2014) also reported that children and adolescents with a history of anxiety disorders and physical illnesses are more susceptible to acquiring the disorder. Bornstein (as cited in Onukwufor & Iheanetu, 2013) emphasized that overprotective, authoritarian and sex role socialization are closely associated with dependent personality disorder. Furthermore, Kabbur (2006) reported that the development of undesirable tendencies of personality disorder decrease by accepting parenting and vice-versa. Suffice it to say that one may not be able to pin point the cause(s) of dependent personality disorder, the preceding discussions have shown that some number of factors have been identified to trigger off the disorder in the individuals susceptible to it. One of the factors mentioned is parenting styles.

Parenting style "is a psychological construct representing standard strategies that parents use in their child rearing. The quality of parenting can be more essential than the quantity of time spent with the child" (Wikipedia, 2017:1). It behooves that a parent can spend an entire afternoon with his or her child while engaging in a different activity and not demonstrating enough interest towards the child. Developmental psychologists have long been interested in how parents impact on child development. However, Cherry (as cited in Iheanetu, 2012) maintains that finding the real cause-effect-links between specific parental actions and later child's behaviour is very difficult. Cherry holds the view that some children raised in dramatically different environment can later grow up to have remarkably similar personalities while those who share a home and are raised in the same environment can later grow up to have astonishingly different personalities. That notwithstanding, researchers have discovered convincing links between parenting style and the effects these have on children.

Many theories abound on the best child rearing styles or practices. But one of the best known theories was developed by Diana Baumrind in the early 1960's. Baumrind (Wikipedia, 2017) proposed that parents fall into one of the three categories: authoritarian, authoritative or indulgent. The theory was later extended to include negligent parents. Baumrind's research (as cited in Santrock, 2007) found what is considered to be the four basic elements that could shape successful parenting: responsiveness versus unresponsiveness and demanding versus undemanding. From these Baumrind identified three general parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive (MacKay, 2006). Maccoby and Martin (as cited in Chan & Koo, 2008) expanded the styles to four: authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful. Santrock

(2007) reported that these four styles of parenting involve the combination of acceptance and responsiveness on the one hand and demand and control on the other. Baumrind (as highlighted in Santrock, 2007) is of the opinion that parents should neither be punitive nor aloof, instead they should develop rules for their children and be affectionate towards them.

Parenting styles discussed here are meant to describe normal variations in parenting and not "deviant parenting", such as might be observed in abusive homes. In the subsequent paragraphs the different parenting styles will be briefly reviewed.

Authoritarian parenting is a restrictive punitive style in which parents make their children follow their directions with little or no explanation or feedback and focus on the perception and status of the child's family (Santrock, 2007). In this style the parents are demanding but not responsive. "Children raised using this type of parenting may have less social competence because the parent generally tells the child what to do instead of allowing the child to choose by him or herself, making the child appear to excel in the short term but limiting development in ways that are increasingly revealed as supervision and opportunities for direct parental control decline" (ERIC Digests as quoted in Wikipedia, 2017:3). Authoritarian parenting also called "strict parenting" (National youth anti-drug media campaign, 2009) is characterized by high expectations of conformity and compliance to parental rules and directions, while allowing little open dialogue between parent and child.

Wikipedia (2017: 1) posited that "authoritative parenting is characterized by a child-centered approach that holds high expectations of maturity". According to Shaffer and Kipp (2007) this style of parenting is a flexible and democratic style in which warm and accepting parents provide guidance and control while allowing the child some say in deciding how best to meet challenges and obligations. Here, the parent is demanding and at the same time responsive (Wikipedia, 2017). Cherry concurs that authoritative parenting is much more democratic, and parents are responsive to their children and willing to listen to questions. Researchers have discovered that authoritative parenting is associated with many positive outcomes, giving rise to children who are happy, independent and successful as well as emotionally, socially and intellectually balanced (Baumrind, 1967)

Overprotecting which is closely linked with terms like "overparenting" and "helicopter parenting", refers to parents who try to involve themselves in every aspect of their child's life,

often attempting to solve all their problems (Wikipedia, 2017). This style stifles the child's ability to act independently. A helicopter parent is a colloquial early 21st-century term for a parent who pays extremely close attention to his or her children's experiences and problems, and attempts to sweep all obstacles out of their paths, particularly at educational institutions. "Helicopter parents are so named because, like helicopters, they hover closely overhead, especially during the late adolescence to early adulthood years during which gradual development of independence and self-sufficiency are essential for future success" (Jackson, 2010). The rise of the cell phone has been blamed for the explosion of helicopter parenting; it has been called "the world's longest umbilical cord" (Briggs, 2006).

The negative effects of this child rearing style are better imagined than stated as the products of this style lack self-confidence, have poor self-image and are frightened to take risks or confront new situations (Wikipedia, 2010).

Permissive parenting, also called indulgent, non-directive, lenient or libertarian (National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, 2009) is characterized as having few behavioural expectations for the child. "Indulgent parenting is a style of parenting in which parents are very involved with their children but place few demands or controls on them (Santrock, 2007). This is an accepting but lax parenting with few punishment and rules in which adults make relatively few demands, permits their children to freely express their feelings and impulses, do not monitor their children's activities, and rarely exert firm control over them (Rosenthal, 2014; Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). Baumrind posits that permissive parents are more responsive than they are demanding. Permissive parenting may result in negative developmental outcomes as it may result in creating spoiled brats or "spoiled sweet" children depending on the behaviour of the children (Wikipedia, 2010). Baumrind (as cited in Shaffer & Kipp, 2007) reported among other things that products of this style tend to be impulsive, self-centered, low in independence and achievement.

Statement of the Problem

Behaviour problems related to adolescence can become large and serious issues. If not adequately diagnosed and remedied at the right time they might degenerate to more complex issues like personality disorders. Personality disorders like the DPD has been identified to be influenced by many factors like the type of parenting a child received. Those that have DPD feel helpless, submissive and are unable to make decisions on their own. Therefore, the problem of

this study is: What are the factors influencing dependent personality disorder (DPD) among adolescents in Bayelsa state.

Aim & Objective of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the factors influencing dependent personality disorder (DPD) among adolescents in Bayelsa state. The objective of the study is to determine the influence of authoritarian, authoritative, overprotecting and permissive parenting styles in the development of DPD among adolescents.

Research Question

What is the influence of authoritarian, authoritative, overprotecting and permissive parenting styles on DPD among adolescents?

Hypothesis

Authoritarian, authoritative, overprotecting and permissive parenting styles do not significantly influence DPD among adolescents in Bayelsa state.

2. Research Methodology

The design of the study was descriptive survey. The population of the study was made up of all senior secondary school students in all public schools in Yenagoa and Ogbia LGAs of Bayelsa state. They are 14,488 (9100 in Yenagoa and 5388 in Ogbia) as at the time of the study. Stratified random sampling was used to select 6.9% of the population which is 1000 (630 for Yenagoa and 370 for Ogbia) students for the study. The sample also Comprised 523 male and 477 female adolescents. The study was conducted to find out the factors influencing dependent personality disorder (DPD) among adolescents in Bayelsa state.

Parenting Style Influence on DPD Questionnaire (PSIDPDQ) was developed and used by the researchers for the study. It was developed to assess the parenting style influence on DPD among adolescents. The instrument consists of four sections; A, B, C and D. The sections contain 10 items each making a total of 40 items. Specifically, section A measures authoritarian parenting influence on DPD, section B measures authoritative, section C measures overprotecting and D measures permissive parenting influence on Dependent Personality Disorder. The items of the instrument were responded to on a 4-point Likert scale of strongly agree (A), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). The 4-point Likert scale weighed 1,2,3,4 respectively. The

minimum score of each section of the instrument was 10 while the maximum score was 40. For the entire instrument the minimum score was 40 while the maximum was 160.

The reliability of the PSIDPDQ was determined through test-retest method. Stratified random sampling was used to draw a sample of 35 students. Copies of the instrument were administered to the sample. After an interval of two weeks, the same instrument was administered to the same sample. The initial and retest scores were correlated separately for each section of the instrument as well as for the entire instrument using Pearson product moment correlation. The following stability coefficient were obtained for the sections namely, authoritarian parenting influence on Dependent Personality Disorder 0.80; authoritative 0.55; overprotecting 0.65; permissive 0.73; and the entire instrument 0.75. Mean, standard deviation and ANOVA were used for data analysis.

3. Results

Research Question:

What is the influence of authoritarian, authoritative, overprotecting and permissive parenting styles on DPD among adolescents?

Hypothesis

Authoritarian, authoritative, overprotecting and permissive parenting styles do not significantly influence DPD in adolescents

Table1: Summary of the various sums of squares and group means of the four parenting styles

Variables	N	X	Sd	X	(X) ²	(X ²)/N	X ²	X ² /N
Authoritarian	1000	24.53	5.93	24534	601917156	601917.16	637091	637.09
Authoritative	1000	14.83	3.07	14829	219899241	219899.24	229332	229.33
Overprotecting	1000	27.10	3.08	27104	734626816	734626.82	744101	744.10
Permissive	1000	13.24	1.07	13240	175297600	175297.6	176310	176.31

Table 2: One way ANOVA summary table of adolescents' responses on the different parenting styles

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean squares	F-value	Result
Between	143439.351	3	47813.117	2344.70	Significant
Within	81488.187	3996	20.392		
Total	224927.538	3999	47833.509		

Table 1 showed that overprotecting parenting ranked highest with a mean of 27.10, closely followed by authoritarian parenting with a mean of 24.53, then authoritative 14.83 and permissive 13.24.

Table 2 indicated that the degrees of freedom for mean square between and mean square within were 3 and 3996 respectively. The calculated F-value of 2344.70 is statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance since the calculated F-value is greater than the critical F-value (2.60). The null hypothesis is thus rejected. The scheffe test showed that the means of group 1 and 3 (authoritarian and overprotecting parenting styles were significantly different from those of group 2 and 4 (authoritative and permissive). The conclusion therefore, is that children from overprotecting and authoritarian parents develop higher DPD tendencies.

4. Discussion

The result of the study is significant and revealed that adolescents of overprotecting and authoritarian parents have higher DPD tendencies than those of authoritative and permissive parents. This research finding is similar to Kabbur (2002) who discovered that "accepting parents" reduce the chances of their wards tendencies to develop personality disorders. Another study that is related to the present one is Bornstein (as cited in Onukwufor & Iheanetu, 2013) who reported that overprotective, authoritarian and sex role socialization are closely associated with dependent personality disorder. The relatedness of these studies is not surprising as research has shown that the two parenting styles may have the tendency of creating a dependent personality in the individuals involved.

Implication

The principal finding of this study is that overprotecting and authoritarian parenting styles influence dependent personality disorder in adolescents. The implication is that these parenting styles help to spark off dependent personality disorder in the affected persons. The finding also implied that if parents should employ more positive oriented parenting style in rearing their children, they will develop into mature individuals who will be capable of taking their own destinies in their hands without depending on anybody to solve all their problems.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The researchers explored the factors influencing dependent personality disorder among adolescents in Bayelsa state. The factors reported here is with regard to parenting styles. The researchers discovered that out of the four parenting styles analyzed (authoritarian, authoritative, overprotecting and permissive), overprotecting and authoritarian parenting styles significantly influence DPD in adolescents. Based on the findings, implications as well as recommendations were given to help manage those affected and to forestall future occurrences.

Parents should neither be too hard nor soft on their children. They should desist from giving their children severe punishment for offences committed. They should not also mollicoddle or hover above them like a helicopter trying to remove every obstacle on their way, as these may send the wrong signal and make them adversely dependent on others to provide their physical and emotional needs. Parents are encouraged to adopt a more objective and accepting kind of parenting like the authoritative style which has been seen to be more effective in child rearing. Should anyone indicate signs and symptoms of DPD, the individual should seek help from experts in psychology and or psychotherapy. Nondirective and humanistic therapies as well as cognitive- behavioural therapy may be helpful in encouraging autonomy and self confidence in persons with DPD.

References

- Baumrind, D. (1967). Childcare practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behaviour. *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 75(1), 43-88.
- Bressert, S. (2016). Dependent personality disorder symptoms. *Psych Central*.
<http://PsychCentral.com/disorders/dependent-personality-disorder-/symptoms/>, Retrieved February, 2017
- Briggs, S. (2006). Confession of a “helicopter parent”, Retrieved May, 2006.
- Chan, T.W. & Koo, A. (2008). Parenting styles and youth outcome in the UK, p.5. University of Oxford. Retrieved June, 2009.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/parentingstyles>, Retrieved January, 2017
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/dependent-personality_disorder, Retrieved January, 2017
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/dependent-personality_disorder, Retrieved, 2010
- Iheanetu, A.N. (2012). Prevalence and factors influencing dependent personality disorder among adolescents in Bayelsa state. A Master Thesis of the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers state.
- Jackson, L. J. (November 2010). "Smothering Mothering: 'Helicopter parents' are landing big in child care cases". *ABA Journal. American Bar Association*. 96 (11): 18–19. JSTOR 20789779 .
- Kabbur, R.U. (2006). The analysis of parenting style and personality disorder of college students. A Thesis submitted to the University of Agric, Dharward.
- Kelly, D. (2011). Personality types. <http://www.ptypes.com/overviews.html>
- McKay, M. (2006). Parenting practices in emerging adulthood: Development of a new measure. Thesis of Brigham Young University. Retrieved, June, 2009.
- Menkiti, B.U. (2008). *Child development and education*. Enugu: Jodek Press.
- National youth anti-drug media campaign. (2009). What’s your parenting style? Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>
- Nolen-Hoeksema, Susan (2014). *Abnormal Psychology* (6th. ed.). McGraw Hill Education. ISBN 978-0-07-803538-8.
- Nwankwo, O.C. (2010). *Psychological basis of counselling and adolescence perspective*. UNIPORT: Pam Unique Publishers.

- Onukwufor, J.N. & Iheanetu, A.N (2013). Prevalence of dependent personality disorder among adolescents in Bayelsa state. *Delsu Journal of Educational Research and development*, 12, (1), 59-72.
- Rosenthal, M. (2014). "Knowing Yourself and Your Children". www.drma.com . Retrieved 7 December 2014.
- Santrock, J.W. (2007). *A tropical approach to life-span development* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Sederer, L. I. (2009). *Blueprints Psychiatry* (5th ed.). Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. p. 30. ISBN 9780781782531.
- Shaffer, D.R. & Kipp, K. (2007). *Developmental psychology: Childhood & adolescence* (7th ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage Learning Inc.
- Uba, A. (2002). *Human developmental psychology of childhood and adolescence*. Enugu: Magnet Business Enterprises.