

Perceived Parenting Styles and Age as Predictors of Distress Disclosure among In-School Secondary Students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Patrick Ochege Aleje¹, Adejumo Adebayo², Temitope Oluwagbejani Olabode-Ashaolu³, Nana Hauwa Muhammad⁴ and Kehinde Oladimeji Ajijola⁵

^{1,3,4,5} Department of Educational Psychology, Federal University of Education, Zaria, Nigeria

² Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

One of the major mental health challenges experienced by secondary school students today is psychological distress, which is as a result of bullying. This study examined the influence of parenting styles and age on distress disclosure among secondary school students in Ibadan, Nigeria. A cross sectional survey design was used in this study and questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample size of 1,200 In-school Adolescents, but the properly filled questionnaires for analysis was 1,122 (583 male and 539 female). One thousand, two hundred students were selected through purposive sampling techniques from eight secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis Oyo State, Nigeria. Two scales were adopted in the study. The scales are Perceived Parenting Styles Scale (PPSS) and Distress Disclosure Index (DDI). Two hypotheses were developed and tested in the study. The results revealed that permissive parenting ($\beta=0.68$; $t=30.94$), authoritarian parenting ($\beta=0.33$; $t=8.3$) were significant independent predictors of distress disclosure. Authoritative parenting was not a significant predictor of distress disclosure. It was also revealed that there was no significant difference between young and old secondary school students on distress disclosure ($t(1120) = -1.77$; Mean=43.68; SD=10.18; Mean=44.77; SD= 8.83). It was concluded that parenting styles has significant influence on distress disclosure among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, particularly, permissive parenting style. It was recommended that parents should give the in-school adolescents some freedom to decide how to behave in school but with guides, rules and regulations. Parents practicing authoritative parenting style should try to be flexible in their approach else, it will continue to hinder distress disclosure as seen in this study. Also, for the obvious fact that both the young and the old in-school adolescents are in secondary school, parents should give them equal attention so as to encouraged distress disclosure among them.

Keywords: Distress disclosure, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, age

Introduction

Adolescence, the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, is characterised by significant biological and emotional changes. This period, often referred to as "Storm and Stress," is marked by conflicts and challenges that can impede normal psychosocial development and exacerbate psychosocial dysfunction. One of the challenges that secondary school adolescents encounters in our contemporary society today is psychological distress, this is a result of bullying they experienced in schools. Distress disclosure

from time immemorial is a key indicator in improving the psychological resilience among bullied secondary school adolescents, especially among secondary school students in Ibadan North, Oyo State.

Globally, several scholars have researched factors explaining non-disclosure of distress among adolescents who were victims of bullying; they were of the view that non-disclosure of distress has significant behavioural implications that can manifest in various ways. For instance, internalizing behaviours have been observed when

children who do not disclose their distress exhibit behaviours such as withdrawal, social isolation, and emotional dysregulation (Wade *et al.*, 2019). They may internalize their emotions, leading to increased feelings of sadness, anxiety, and depression, which can impact their overall behavioral functioning.

Non-disclosure of distress may limit their access to support systems and healthy coping mechanisms, increasing the likelihood of engaging in maladaptive behaviours. Currently, there is limited understanding of the specific challenges faced by Nigerian adolescents who are victims of bullying and the need for distress disclosure among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of perceived parenting styles and age on distress disclosure among in-school adolescents in Ibadan Nigeria.

One of the significant variables of interest leading to distress disclosure among bullied in-school adolescents is perceived parenting style. Perceived parenting styles refers to the several views adolescents or children could hold about the different behavioural parenting styles adopted by parents on the children (Yadav *et al.*, 2021). Raji *et al.* (2019) defines parenting styles as the absence or presence of significant deprivation of parental warmth, couple with the affection or love provided by the parents to their children, which seen manifesting in the parents attitude is taken three forms which are hostility and aggressiveness; indifference and negligence; and undifferentiated rejection. Parenting styles plays a great role in distress disclosure among in-school adolescents.

It should be noted that parenting styles varies across families with cultural backgrounds having significant roles in shaping family dynamics and child rearing practices. Parenting style plays a critical role in molding the overall development of the child (Charles-Ebere, 2025). Parenting style plays a key role in the academic advancement, mental health, attachment patterns and adjustment of the child in the society (Ofoegbu, 2023). This implies that the well-being of the child is influenced by the social environment of the family.

A study in Nigeria by Raji *et al.* (2019) revealed that the parents do have germane roles to play among bullying school adolescents.

Furthermore, Raji *et al.* (2019) noted that family factors, which denotes the type of family environment that are provided for the development of children is very germane in recent years, particularly with regards to distress disclosure. Hence, children or adolescents psychological and social adjustment are function of the relationships between the parents and the children (Putnick *et al.*, 2015). One of such parental factor is the parenting styles.

Four styles of parenting identified in research are the authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful or uninvolved (Yadav *et al.*, 2021). The authoritative parenting style exercises control of the children when necessary, couple with the fact that they are receptive, loving, and converse. Authoritarian parenting style poses excessive demand and overbearing hence, they may show little or no love and may fail to often communicate with the children. Permissive parenting style poses few demands, exercise little control, and show responsiveness and affection. Neglectful parenting style is associated with lack of responsiveness and control over the affairs of their children. A major assumption of this study is that different parenting styles could be deployed by different parents and this could influence distress disclosure among bullied in school adolescents.

Authoritative parenting is typically linked to a strong, nurturing bond between parents and teenagers. Parents establish explicit rules and regulations and elucidate the rationale for their stringent measures. They employed stringent tactics as a kind of encouragement rather than as a punitive measure. Adolescents are urged to participate in establishing objectives and expectations, so promoting open, regular, and suitable communication between parent and kid, which facilitates the disclosure of suffering. This parenting approach typically yields the most favorable outcomes for children, although demands much patience and work from both parents. Authoritative parenting fosters confidence, responsibility, and self-regulation in children, hence promoting the disclosure of distress (Masud *et al.*, 2019; Morris *et al.*, 2007). These children regulate negative emotions more adeptly, resulting in distress disclosure and emotional equilibrium. By fostering independence, authoritative parents assist their secondary school

adolescents in recognizing their ability to overcome obstacles independently, thereby revealing their distress. Moreover, these youngsters typically demonstrate academic excellence and achieve high performance in educational settings (Pong *et al.*, 2010).

Authoritarian parenting is a rigid and stringent approach characterised by unilateral communication, wherein rules are imposed on the child must be adhered to without inquiry or dissent. No explanations are provided regarding the rules, and secondary school adolescents are anticipated to adhere to the established criteria without error. Errors lead to consequences that result in punishment. Authoritarian parents are typically less caring, imposing stringent standards with minimal flexibility. Adolescents reared by authoritarian parents typically exhibit good behavior to evade the repercussions of misconduct. Moreover, they typically adhere to directives more efficiently to achieve their objectives. This parenting approach may result in increased violence, and teenagers may display shyness, social ineptitude, and challenges in decision-making (Masud *et al.*, 2019). This unchecked aggression may stem from difficulties in anger management, as these teenagers typically lack enough guidance. Additionally, they may contend with diminished self-esteem, which adversely influences their decision-making capabilities (Martinez & Garcia, 2007). Rigid parental regulations and punitive measures may obstruct the revelation of distress. Permissive parents are generally affable and flexible, frequently maintaining low expectations for their children. They enforce minimal regulations and foster open communication, enabling their children to manage circumstances autonomously, thus revealing their anguish. The lack of expectation typically leads to occasional penalties, as permissive parents often adopt a more amicable role rather than that of conventional authority figures, facilitating an open exchange of information regarding their discomfort. Inadequate regulations may cause adolescents to cultivate unhealthy eating habits, especially with snacks, (Lopez *et al.*, 2018), hence increasing the risk of obesity and other health issues in the future. These teenagers possess autonomy in determining their bedtime, homework, and screen time on computers and televisions (Langer *et al.*, 2014). This freedom

often results in detrimental habits, as parents frequently exert minimal or no control. Children of permissive parents often exhibit a commendable level of self-esteem and adequate social skills; yet, they may also display impulsivity, entitlement, selfishness, and lethargy, along with difficulties in self-regulation (Leeman *et al.* 2014; Piotrowski, 2013). Ferrer *et al.* (2019) investigated the influence of parenting styles on distress disclosure among secondary school students in the Philippines. The findings indicated a weak yet significant positive correlation among the three parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive.

Zheng (2025) explored the effects of parenting style on the emotional stability and skill development among in school adolescents. The outcome of the study indicated that the warmth and encouraging attributes authoritative parenting enhances distress disclosure while authoritarian and permissive parenting styles hinders disclosure resulting in distress concealment among in-school adolescents. Agoha *et al.* (2021) investigated the influence of parenting style on the psychological well-being of secondary school students in Lagos, Nigeria. The result shows that students with permissive parenting style experienced poor well-being while students with authoritative parenting style experienced better well-being. In a study on the impact of parenting styles on Indonesians adolescents' self-confidence, Fitrianto *et al.* (2025) found that democratic parenting style significantly predicted self-confidence among the respondents. It was further revealed that permissive and authoritarian parenting styles have inverse effects on self-confidence among the respondents.

With regards to the different types of parenting styles, parenting style that focuses on providing open communication, warmth, couple with the provision of support, and acceptance to children could promote better environment for children or adolescents to disclose certain distress to parents (Raji *et al.*, 2019). However, if parents operate a closed type of parenting styles, this could hinder the tendency for adolescents or children to disclose such distress from bullying to parents, and this could aggravated to lead to certain mental and psychological health issues and hence, could lead to death (Oppenheimer *et al.*, 2016; Plexousakis *et al.*, 2019). Hence, parenting

style could serve as protective effect on the negative significant effect of bullying on children through disclose distress (Olejniczak *et al.*, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2018; Cruz-Manrique *et al.*, 2021).

Age is another variable (demographic) that play a great role in distress disclosure among bullied in-school adolescents in our school today. Age can best be understood from a psychosocial perspective: age is a numerical measurement that indicates the number of years a person has lived since birth. It serves as a fundamental marker for categorizing individuals into different stages of life and understanding their developmental needs and experiences. In the context of in-school adolescents, age plays a crucial role in shaping their educational experiences, social interactions, and overall development. During adolescence, which typically spans from ages 12 to 19, young individuals undergo significant physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes as they transition from childhood to adulthood (Eccles & Roeser, 2018). The age range of adolescence is not a fixed or universally defined concept. It is influenced by cultural, biological, psychological, and legal factors, leading to variations in the age boundaries of this developmental stage. While ages 12 to 19 are commonly used to describe adolescence (Lee, Park, Song, Kim, & Yoo, 2019).

Research has shown that age-related factors significantly impact the experiences and outcomes of in-school adolescents (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Meaning that, age is a critical variable that is closely linked to the experiences, challenges, and developmental processes of in-school adolescents. In a systematic review of literature on distress disclose, Pathmalingam *et al.* (2023) observed that young and old adolescents prefer to conceal their distress rather than disclosing as a results of shame and humiliation. In a study on distress disclosure among in-school adolescents, Joseph and Abraham (2018) found that age has a negative relationship with distress disclosure among in-school adolescents. Understanding the implications of age in the lives of in-school adolescents helps educators, policymakers, and parents provide appropriate support and interventions to promote their well-being and academic success.

Society, parents, guardians, clinicians, psychologists, teachers, school counselors and mental health professionals face difficulties and

challenges the moment students do not disclose their distress. These have detrimental effects on their mental health, leading to the development or exacerbation of mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. These conditions may persist or worsen over time if left untreated, impacting the students' emotional well-being and daily functioning. Also, psychological distress in adolescents has a deleterious impact on various aspects of their lives, including their academic performance, family, peer relationships, and community engagement.

Research Hypotheses

1. Parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) will jointly and independently significantly predict distress disclosure among in-school secondary students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.
2. There will be a significant difference between young and old adolescents on distress disclosure among in-school secondary students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Method

Research Design

Cross sectional research design was adopted in this study which was used to measure the relationship between the independent variable, perceived parenting styles and the dependent variable, distress disclosure while age is the demographic variable in the study.

Setting and Participants

Ibadan North Local Government; Ibadan was selected using purposive sampling technique based on the reported cases of bullying among in-school adolescents, while eight (8) secondary schools and participants were selected through simple random sampling technique so as to ensure equal chance of being selected from among the schools and students in the study setting. Taroyamane (Yamane, 1973) sample size calculator was used to select 1,122 (539 female and 583 male) as the participants in the study out of the sample size of 1,200 In-school Adolescents.

Instruments

Perceived Parenting Style Scale

Perceived parenting styles were assessed using the perceived parenting style scale developed and validated by Divya and Manikandan (2013). The scale measured the opinion of the adolescents on the parent's attitude towards them. It is a five point Likert with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). It is a 30 item scale measuring three dimensions of authoritative parenting style with 10 items of 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28. Authoritarian parenting style with 10 items of 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29 while permissive parenting style has 10 items of 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27, 30 respectively. All the 30 items are positively worded. All the three perceived parenting styles scales are scored separately. Authoritative parenting style has a high reliability of 0.79, authoritarian 0.81 and permissive 0.86.

Distress Disclosure Index

This is a 12 item scale developed by Khan *et al.* (2012). It is designed to examine individual desires to disclose distressing experiences. The authors revealed that the DDI reported a high level of content validity of .67 and a reliability of .81. It entails reverse scoring of items 2, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 respectively. The DDI is scored on a five point Likert format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). High score indicate distress disclosure while low indicate distress concealment.

The researchers sought the permission of the school principals and the approval granted. The cooperation of the class teachers was also sought and obtained. The researchers formally introduced themselves to the students; their consent was sought and obtained. Questionnaires were distributed to consenting students and completed questionnaires were retrieved from the students for analysis and interpretation.

Statistical Analysis

Data collected for this study was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software 25.0 versions. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the analysis of the data collected for this study. Stepwise Regression Analysis and independent sample t-test was used in testing the hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee at the Faculty of the Social Sciences University of Ibadan.

Results and Findings

Hypothesis one which states that parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) will jointly and independently significantly predict distress disclosure among in-school secondary students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria was analyzed using the Stepwise regression analysis and the result is presented on Table 1.

Procedure

Table 1: Summary of Stepwise Regression Showing Parenting Styles predicting Distress Disclosure among bullied in-school Adolescents

Model	Beta	T	Sig	R	R ²	F	P
(Constant)		45.502	.000				
Permissive	.679	30.936	.000	.679 ^a	.461	957.063	.000 ^b
(Constant)		27.874	.000				
Permissive	.405	10.364	.000	.702 ^b	.493	543.283	.000 ^c
Authoritarian	.327	8.384	.000				
(Constant)		21.124	.000				
Permissive	.414	10.241	.000	.702 ^a	.493	362.362	.000 ^d
Authoritarian	.310	7.033	.000				
Authoritative	.022	.870	.385				

As shown in Table 1, the present study investigated the predictive capacity of parenting styles (permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative)

on distress disclosure among bullied in-school adolescents in Ibadan. Hypothesis one posited that these parenting styles would jointly and

independently significantly influence distress disclosure among in-school adolescents. To test this, stepwise multiple regression analysis was employed, offering a sequential understanding of the relative contribution of each variable to the prediction of distress disclosure.

Model 1 of the stepwise regression revealed **permissive parenting** as the strongest individual predictor of distress disclosure ($\beta = 0.679$, $t = 30.936$, $p < .001$). This initial model accounted for **46.1% of the variance** in distress disclosure ($R^2 = 0.461$), with the F-ratio ($F = 957.063$, $p < .001$) confirming the model's overall statistical significance. This result underscores the powerful role of permissive parenting in shaping adolescents' emotional openness.

Model 2 introduced **authoritarian parenting** into the analysis, significantly enhancing the model. This variable had a positive effect ($\beta = 0.327$, $t = 8.384$, $p < .001$), while permissive parenting retained its predictive power ($\beta = 0.405$). The explanatory strength of the model increased to **49.3% ($R^2 = 0.493$)**, indicating that authoritarian

parenting acts in tandem with permissive parenting to facilitate distress disclosure.

Finally, **Model 3**, the full model, introduced **authoritative parenting**, which had no significant predictive relationship with distress disclosure ($\beta = 0.022$, $t = .870$, $p = .005$). The full model explained **49.3% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.493$)**, and all predictors remained statistically significant, confirming the hypothesis. The unexpected inverse relationship between authoritative parenting and distress disclosure may reflect the dual emphasis on warmth and control within this parenting style. Adolescents in such environments might internalize high expectations or fear judgment, thus becoming reluctant to share emotional struggles, especially in the context of bullying. Thus, the outcomes confirm the hypothesis and it is accepted.

Hypothesis two which states that there will be a significant difference between young and old adolescents on distress disclosure among in-school secondary students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria was analyzed using independent sample t-test and the result is presented on table 2.

Table 2: Summary table of Independent T-test showing the Influence of Age on Distress Disclosure among in-school Secondary Students in Ibadan

	Age	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P
Distress Disclosure	Young	744	43.68	10.18	1120	-1.772	>.01
	Old	378	44.77	8.83			

As shown in table 2, the result indicates that there is no significant difference between young and old in-school secondary adolescents in their mean scores on distress disclosure; $df (1120)$; $t = -1.772$; $p > .01$; (young= 43.68 and old= 44.77). The result revealed that age did not have significant influence on distress disclosure among in-school secondary students in Ibadan. Hence, the hypothesis is hereby rejected.

Discussion

This study investigated the influence of parenting styles and age as predictors of distress disclosure among in-school secondary students in Ibadan. In this study, two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The outcomes are discussed here.

Hypothesis one which states that parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive will jointly and independently significantly predict

distress disclosure among in-school secondary students in Ibadan was tested using stepwise regression analysis and the results indicated that permissive parenting style has the strongest individual predictor of distress disclosure, the freedom given to the adolescents by their parents without any restrictions spur them up to disclose their distress. There are no clearly laydown expectations of the parents from their children, the adolescents decided to use their own initiatives, prompting disclosure of distress experienced from being bullied in school. With the introduction of authoritarian parenting style added to strengthening of distress disclosure among bullied in-school adolescents. The result further indicated that authoritative parenting style has no influence on distress disclosure. The high expectation the parents have for adolescents with clear guidelines on how to live a meaningful life, hinders the

adolescents from disclosing their distress, they feel that they are disappointment to their parents for not standing up to their fellow students by fighting them instead of allowing themselves to be bullied thereby concealing their distress. The findings of this study disagrees with the findings of Zheng (2025) who noted that the warmth and encouraging attributes authoritative parenting enhances distress disclosure while authoritarian and permissive parenting styles hinders disclosure resulting in distress concealment among in-school adolescents. This implies that the freedom associated with permissive parenting style better encouraged distress disclosure among the respondents as seen with the findings.

Hypothesis two states that there will be a significant difference between young and old adolescents on distress disclosure among in-school secondary students in Ibadan was analysed using independent t-test. The result revealed that there is no significant difference between young and old adolescents on distress disclosure among bullied in-school secondary students in Ibadan. The outcome of this finding is based on the fact they are in the same learning environment, whatever happened to one, happened to all, thereby exposing them to the same experience, prompting the same response. The findings of this study agreed with that of Pathmalingam *et al.* (2023) who stated that young and old adolescents prefer to conceal their distress rather than disclosing as a result of shame and humiliation. The outcome of this study also concurred with that of Joseph and Abraham (2018) found that there is no significant age difference on distress disclosure among in-school adolescents.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of parenting styles and age on distress disclosure among in-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis. This study concludes that parenting styles has significant influence on distress disclosure among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, particularly, permissive parenting style. This indicated that parents should give their children (adolescents) the benefit of doubt that they are capable of handling their problems and can report when it is necessary as seen in this study. The study further concludes that there is no age difference on distress

disclosure among bullied in-school students in Ibadan.

Implications of the Findings

Based on the outcome of this study, implications were made;

Findings that permissive parenting style significantly influenced distress disclosure among bullied in-school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis underscores the importance of parents giving their adolescents children the free hands , but it should be done with close monitoring so that they will not derailed. It will provide adolescents the opportunity to share they challenges in the schools. Findings that permissive and authoritarian parenting styles jointly predicted distress disclosure stressed the connection between these factors in influencing distress disclosure. This calls for multidimensional approaches that address multiple influences simultaneously rather than focusing on isolated factors. Findings that there is no age difference on distress disclosure among bullied in-school adolescents, implies that all the in-school adolescents experienced distress from being bullied at school. This suggests that interventions aimed at ending bullying in our schools and encouraging distress disclosure may need to be tailored to address the specific needs of bullied adolescents.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study, it was recommended that parents should give the in-school adolescents some freedom to decide how to behave in school but with guides, rules and regulations. The freedom associated with permissive parenting style, surprisingly leads to distress disclosure, therefore, parents practicing authoritative parenting style should try to be flexible in their approach else, it will continue to hinder distress disclosure as seen in this study. Also, for the obvious fact that both the young and the old in-school adolescents are in secondary school, parents should as a matter of fact treat them the same based on the no significant difference among them.

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