

Parenting Style, Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Health of Nigerian Children

ABSTRACT

Aim: Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been defined as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and connect emotions to oneself and in relation to others. Research findings show that parenting style could potentially contribute to or hinder the lifetime success of a child well into adulthood including leadership roles. The influence of parenting style on the emotional intelligence and psychological health of the Nigerian child has not been given adequate research attention.

Study design: Exploratory /Descriptive survey design.

Methodology: Purposive sampling technique was used to select 332 (*mean age = 14*) in-school adolescents who responded to Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), Parenting Style Dimension Questionnaire (PSDQ) and General Health Questionnaire -12 (GHQ-12). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis.

Results: Observed patterns for low, high and very high levels respectively are: authoritative parenting style (45.5%, 41.6%, and 12.9%), authoritarian parenting style (53%, 30.7% and 16.3%); permissive parenting style (64.2%, 20.7% and 15.1%). Authoritative as well as authoritarian parenting styles were observed to significantly predict Emotional Intelligence. Permissive parenting style failed to significantly predict Emotional Intelligence. Authoritative parenting style failed to significantly predict psychological distress, while authoritarian as well as permissive parenting styles were significant predictors of psychological distress.

Conclusion: Authors conclude that a child's emotional intelligence and psychological health status are products of parenting style.

Keywords: Parenting style, emotional intelligence, psychological health, children.

1. INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and the emotions of others. It is generally said to include three skills: emotional awareness; the ability to harness emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problem solving; and the ability to manage emotions, which includes regulating your own emotions. Parents' emotional expressiveness and the emotional climate that they create through their parenting styles provide guidelines to children regarding the use of emotion in the regular everyday social interactions. The family play pivotal and specific role of parenting in the development of a child's emotional intelligent. Noticeably, parents want to help their children to move through different developmental stages successfully. Research has shown that the influence of parents on children does not decline as they grow into adolescents [1, 2].

Parenting style is a psychological construct that is defined as standard strategies used by parents to bring up their children. Baumrind's parenting styles focus on two main elements of parenting: it reflects that parents are responsive and demanding. The responsiveness of parents is also referred to as parental supportiveness and warmth. This is, "the extent in which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulatory behaviour and self-assertiveness by being attentive, supportive, and compliant to children's needs and demands" [2]. When parents are demanding, this refers to behavioural control, "the claims, parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys" [2]. Baumrind [3, 4, 2] in a series of studies identified three parenting styles namely authoritative, authoritarian and permissive.

48 These three styles vary according to the degree of warmth and control exercised and is useful in
49 understanding its contribution to emotional wellbeing of children. Each parenting style creates a different
50 emotional climate thereby contributing to the development of emotional intelligence.

51
52 During the socialization process parents provide the first context for recognition and communication of
53 affective messages. These affective messages are communicated to children with the expectation that
54 they will be able to interpret and respond to them. The four major parenting styles are authoritarian,
55 authoritative, indulgent or permissive and uninvolved. Authoritarian parents are highly controlling in the
56 use of authority and rely on punishment but are not responsive. They value obedience and do not tolerate
57 give and take relationships with their children. Authoritarian parents do not expect their children to
58 express disagreement with their decisions and rules and do expect them to obey without explanation [5].

59 Authoritative parents are warm and communicate well with their children; they are both demanding and
60 responsive. Parents of this style are able to stay in authority and expect maturity from their children. They
61 respect their children's opinions and independence while also maintaining their own positions. This
62 parenting style permits children enough freedom of expression so that they can develop a sense of
63 independence but know the boundaries of rules and obey them [4, 6]. Both authoritative and authoritarian
64 parents have high expectations of their children but use control in different ways [5]. Indulgent parents
65 are warm and accepting but their main concern is not to interfere with their children's creativity and
66 independence; these parents are more responsive than demanding. They demand little in terms of
67 obedience and respect for authority. They are nontraditional and lenient, they do not require mature
68 behaviour, they allow considerable self-regulation, and avoid confrontations [5].

69
70 Uninvolved parents are low in demand and responsive behaviour. In extreme cases, this parenting style
71 might include both rejecting-neglecting and neglecting parents. This parenting style is viewed as the worst
72 of the four. Parents in this style do not establish rules nor do they even care in which direction the child's
73 behaviour is headed [5]. In order to fully understand the difference in parenting styles, an example from
74 Maccoby and Martin [5] indicates how each parent demonstrates how they would react to a situation.
75 Baumrind's parenting styles have been found to predict child wellbeing in terms of social competence,
76 academic performance, psychosocial development, and problem behaviour. Research using parent
77 interviews, teacher interviews, and child report consistently finds these characteristics associated with
78 each parenting style [2].

79
80 Emotional intelligence refers to the capacity for recognizing one's own feelings and those of others, for
81 motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships [7, 8]. Unlike
82 intelligence quotient (IQ) which changes little after adolescent years, emotional intelligence (EI) is largely
83 learnt, is not fixed genetically or develops in early childhood but continues to develop and is
84 predominantly environmentally determined [9]. Emotionally intelligent person is skilled in four areas such
85 as identifying, using, understanding and regulating emotions [10]. Those with higher emotional
86 intelligence (EI) perform better academically as they have developed empathy and social skills [9, 10].
87 Though there is no direct link between a student's retention capacity and Emotional Intelligence (EI),
88 students equipped with a proper level of Emotional intelligence (EI) are more likely to succeed
89 academically than those who have relatively high Intelligence quotient (IQ) and yet lack emotional
90 intelligence. Be it an ability or personality trait, emotional intelligence follows a predictable pattern of
91 development from infancy to adolescence.

92
93 During adolescence there is an increased awareness of complex emotional cycles. Adolescents use
94 complex strategies to independently regulate emotions and slowly become aware of the need for mutual
95 and reciprocal emotional self-disclosure in making and maintaining relationships. In the present study,
96 identifying, using, understanding and regulating emotions [10] or abilities to motivate oneself and persist
97 in the face of frustration; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep
98 distress from hindering the ability to think to empathize and to hope [9] is conceptualized as interpersonal
99 awareness, intrapersonal awareness, interpersonal management, and intrapersonal. Several studies
100 have shown the positive outcome of parenting style on emotional intelligence but the focus has been on
101 only one parent that is the mother [11, 12, 13]. As children grow into adolescence they are more
102 vulnerable to emotional problems and how they deal with their emotions and the emotions of others could
103 be dependent on the parenting style engaged in by their parents. Many researchers have noted that it is

104 not the specific discipline practices that are important in predicting child welfare but rather the overall
105 pattern of parenting [14].
106

107 The purpose of this study is to determine the patterns of parenting style and emotional intelligence and
108 prevalence of psychological distress, find out the extent to which parenting style predicts emotional
109 intelligences, ascertain the degrees to which each of the domains of parenting style (authoritative,
110 authoritarian and permissive) predict emotional intelligence and severity of psychological distress among
111 in school children in Osun state southwestern Nigeria.
112

113 **Hypotheses**

114 The following hypotheses were tested in this study

- 115 1. Authoritative parenting style will independently and significantly predict Emotional Intelligence
116 among the in-school children in Osun state Nigeria.
- 117 2. Authoritarian parenting style will independently and significantly predict Emotional Intelligence
118 among the participants.
- 119 3. Permissive parenting style will independently and significantly predict Emotional Intelligence
120 among the respondents.
- 121 4. Authoritative parenting style will independently and significantly predict Psychological Distress
122 among the participants.
- 123 5. Authoritarian parenting style will independently and significantly predict Psychological distress
124 among the respondents.
- 125 6. Permissive parenting style will independently and significantly predict Psychological distress
126 among the participants.
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129 **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

130 **2.1 Participants:** A cross sectional survey design was employed in the study. The population
131 comprised of secondary school children selected from five schools in Ede Osun state, **southwestern**
132 **Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was adopted in this study. Random sampling technique was used**
133 **to select Ede south Local Government Area (LGA) from Osun West senatorial district. Furthermore a**
134 **random sampling technique was employed to select five secondary schools in the LGA. Lastly a**
135 **purposive sampling technique was adopted to select seventy participants from each of the school. Of the**
136 **returned questionnaires only three hundred and thirty two were properly answered. These were used for**
137 **the study.**
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139 **2.2 Measures**

140 Three research instruments were used in data collection. The instruments were written in English
141 language hence there was no need for translation to a Nigerian language since the respondents could
142 read and understand the English language.

143 Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale [WLEIS] [15] designed to rate the emotional intelligence of
144 self and others. It is a 16 item scale with 4 dimensions. The first is the Self-Emotion Appraisal **(cronbach's**
145 **alpha of .79)** which assesses individuals' ability to understand and express their own emotions. The
146 second is the Others' Emotion Appraisal **(cronbach's alpha of .77)** which measures peoples' ability to
147 perceive and understand the emotions of others. The third dimension is Use of Emotion **(cronbach's**
148 **alpha of .76).** This denotes individuals' ability to use their emotions effectively by directing them toward
149 constructive activities and personal performance, the fourth **dimension** is Regulation of Emotion
150 **(cronbach's alpha of .82)** which refers to individuals' ability to manage their own emotions. The WLEIS
151 was measured with a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).
152 Previous research has found support for the underlying four-factor structure, reliability, and convergent
153 and discriminant validity of the WLEIS scores [15, 16].

154 Parenting Style **Dimension** Questionnaire (PSDQ) by Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, and Hart, [17] is a 32
 155 item instrument, with 3 sub scales, measured on a 5 points likert scale ranging from never – always. **The**
 156 **questionnaire is focused on parenting behaviors relating to interactions with their child. Higher scores**
 157 **indicated a more frequent use of the described behavior. Internal consistency reliability for the scales [17]**
 158 **are:** authoritarian **.82**, authoritative **.86** and permissive **.64**. The psychometric properties were found
 159 acceptable for Nigerian samples. **In this study parenting style refers to parental figure which was defined**
 160 **by whom the child live with which includes both parents, single parents and guidance.**
 161 General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) is a 12 item instrument by Goldberg and Williams [18] used to
 162 identify psychological distress. It has five response categories of 1 “Better than usual”, to Worse than
 163 usual”. Overall high scores consistently indicate high level of psychological distress. GHQ-12 has a
 164 Guttman Split-Half reliability coefficient of 0.75 reliability coefficient, and a Cronbach’s α value of 0.73.
 165 The scale also has a Spearman-Brown coefficient of 0.88. The GHQ scales have been validated with
 166 clinical [19] and non-clinical samples [20]. The GHQ-12 was shown to be measurement invariant (i.e., to
 167 measure the same construct) across gender [21] and between adults and adolescents [22]. GHQ-12 has
 168 been used by many Nigerian investigators [23, **24, 25**].

169
 170 **2.3 Data Analysis**

171 Collected data was analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS 23). Descriptive
 172 statistic (frequency count and percentages) were used to organize, summarize and describe the
 173 demographic characteristics of respondents, while inferential statistic (linear regression analysis) was
 174 employed to test the hypotheses.
 175

176 **3. RESULTS**

177 **3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

178 A total of 332 children were selected for this study. They were made up of 140 males and 192 females.
 179 The age distributions were between ages 9 to 19 years with mean age of 14 years. The distribution by
 180 father’s occupation showed that 38% (126) were civil servant, 50.3% (167) were self-employed while
 181 11.7% (39), artisan. Distributions by mothers’ occupation returned the 31% (103) were civil servant;
 182 64.8% (215) were self-employed while 4.2% (14) were artisan. 94.6% (314) of the respondents have
 183 mother in a marriage relationship, while, 5.4% (16) had mother as single parent. 74.4% (247) of the
 184 participants were from Monogamous family while 25.6% (84) were from polygamous homes. Participants
 185 caregivers **showed that** 81.% (268) stayed with both parents, 1.8% (6) lived with their fathers alone, 9.9%
 186 (33) have mother as only caregiver, 3.9% (13) were in custody of some close relations who were not their
 187 parents and finally 3% (10) had guardians as caregivers.
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189 Patterns of observed parenting style as summarized in table 1 are authoritative parenting style (45.5%,
 190 41.6%, and 12.9%), authoritarian parenting style (53%, 30.7% and 16.3%); permissive parenting style
 191 (64.2%, 20.7% and 15.1%) for low, high and very high levels respectively.
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193 **Table 1: Patterns of perceived parenting style among the sample**

N= 332			
Patterns %			
Parenting style	Low	High	Very high
Authoritative	45.5	41.6	12.9
Authoritarian	53.0	30.7	16.3

Permissive	64.2	20.7	15.5
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Patterns of perceived EI as summarized in table 2 revealed that 27.7% of the participants manifest very low EI, 56% had average EI while 16.3% had very high EI.

Table 2: Patterns of perceived emotional intelligence among the Nigerian in-school adolescents
N = 332

Patterns (%)			
Emotional Intelligence	Very low	Average	Very high
	27.7	56.0	16.3

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3.2 Test of hypotheses

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether authoritative parenting style independently and significantly predicted EI among the participants. The result summarized in table 3 revealed that authoritative parenting style independently and significantly predicted EI among the participants [$F(1, 332) = 33.69, p = 0.000$]. The analysis further reveals an R^2 of .093 indicating that 9.3% variance of EI among the in-school children in Osun state Nigeria is influenced by authoritative parenting style.

Table 3: Linear Regression Analysis of Authoritative Parenting Style on EI

N=332							
	B	β	T	sig	R^2	F	P
(constant)	53.69		8.90	.000			
Authoritative Parenting Style	.61	.31	5.80	.000	.093	33.69	.000

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A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether authoritarian parenting style independently and significantly predicted EI among the participants. The result reveals that Authoritarian parenting style independently and significantly predicted EI among the participants [$F(1, 332) = 13.05, p = 0.000$]. The analysis summarized in table 4 further returned an R^2 of .038 indicating that 3.8% variance of EI among the in-school children in Osun state Nigeria is influenced by authoritarian parenting style.

Table 4: Linear Regression Analysis of Authoritarian Parenting Style on EI

N=332							
	B	β	T	sig	R^2	F	p
(constant)	74.92		19.59	.000			

Authoritarian	.20	3.61	.000	.038	13.05	.000
Parenting Style	.31					

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219 A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether permissive parenting independently
 220 and significantly predicted Emotional Intelligence (EI) among the in-school children in Osun state Nigeria.
 221 The result summarized in table 5 revealed that permissive parenting style did not independently and
 222 significantly predicted EI among the participants [$F(1, 332) = 1.66, p = .198$]. The analysis further reveals
 223 an R^2 of .005 indicating that 0.5% variance of EI among the participants is influenced by permissive
 224 parenting style.

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226 **Table 5: Linear Regression Analysis of Permissive Parenting Style on EI**

N = 332							
	B	β	T	sig	R^2	F	p
(constant)	90.79		41.55	.000			
Permissive Parenting Style	-.29	-.07	-1.29	.198	.005	1.66	.198

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228 A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the degree to which authoritative parenting
 229 independently and significantly predicted PD among the in-school children in Osun state Nigeria. The
 230 result summarized in table 6 returned that authoritative parenting style failed to significantly predict PD
 231 among the participants ($R^2 = .00, p = .874$). The analysis in further reveals that 0% variance in severity of
 232 PD is explained by the authoritative parenting style.

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234 **Table 6: Linear Regression Analysis of authoritative parenting style on PD**

N = 332							
	B	β	T	sig	R^2	F	p
(constant)	33.06		9.12	.000			
Authoritative Parenting Style	-.01	-.01	-.16	.874	.000	.025	.874

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236 A linear regression analysis was carried out to ascertain the extent to which authoritarian parenting
 237 independently and significantly predicted PD the participants. The result summarized in table 7 reported
 238 that that authoritarian parenting style significantly predict severity of PD among the participants ($R^2 = .01,$
 239 $p = .075$). The analysis further shows that 1% variance in severity of PD is explained by the authoritative
 240 parenting style.

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243 **Table 7: Linear Regression Analysis of authoritarian parenting style on PD**

N = 332

	B	β	T	sig	R ²	F	P
(constant)	28.66		12.91	.000			
Authoritarian Parenting Style	.09	.10	1.78	.075	.010	3.18	.075

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245 A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether permissive parenting independently
 246 and significantly predicted severity of psychological distress among the in-school children in Osun state
 247 Nigeria. The result summarized in table 8 showed that permissive parenting style independently and
 248 significantly predicted psychological distress among the participants ($R^2 = .015, p = .025$). The analysis
 249 further reveals 1.5% variance of psychological distress among the participants is influenced by permissive
 250 parenting style.

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252 **Table 8: Linear Regression Analysis of Permissive Parenting Style on PD**

N= 332							
	B	β	T	sig	R ²	F	p
(constant)	29.99		24.12	.000			
Permissive Parenting Style	.29	.12	2.25	.025	.015	5.05	.025

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255 4. DISCUSSIONS

256 Majority of the participants fall within low and average emotional intelligence. This is similar to finding on
 257 adolescent in rural Indian community [26] who reported that students in rural communities had low EI in
 258 the domain of self-awareness, motivation, and social skills. The result of this study revealed that
 259 composite parenting style is a strong independent predictor of Emotional Intelligence among the
 260 participants. Previous studies consistently returned strong relationships between parenting style and
 261 children and adolescents behavior [27, 28, 29]. Wang, and Sheikh-Khalil [30] found that parental
 262 involvement helped to boost emotional functioning among children and mental health both directly and
 263 indirectly through behavioral and emotional engagement. Stack, Serbin, Enns, Ruttler, and Barrieau's [31]
 264 in a longitudinal study established parenting style significantly influenced either the development of
 265 competent emotional functioning or problematic emotional functioning in children as they grow older and
 266 across generations.

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268 We also found in this study that authoritative domain of parenting style is a strong independent predictor
 269 of EI among the participants. This research finding is in agreement with most previous studies which
 270 found authoritative parenting as being associated with positive behavioural outcomes such as increased
 271 competence, autonomy, and self-esteem as well as better problem solving skills, better academic
 272 performance, more self-reliance, less deviance, and better peer relations [32, 33, 34, 35, 2]. A hallmark of
 273 emotional intelligence is the capacity to recognize one's own feelings and those of others, for motivating
 274 ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships. Emotional intelligence (EI)
 275 is largely learnt, and continues to develop and is predominantly environmentally determined [6]. Children
 276 nurtured in environments that values and instills responsiveness and accountability as is found in the
 277 authoritative parenting will, all things being equal, manifest high emotional intelligence.

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279 Contrary to some previous studies which linked the authoritarian parenting style with negative behavioural
280 outcomes including aggressive behaviour, decreased emotional functioning, depression and lower levels
281 of self-confidence [36, 37, 38, 39] our research finding showed that authoritarian domain of parenting
282 style is a strong independent predictor of EI of Nigerian children, indicating that as authoritarian parenting
283 style increases, Emotional Intelligence also increases. The plausible explanation to this difference in our
284 research finding is the social cultural difference in the child rearing practices prevalent in the population of
285 study.

286 Our research finding which revealed that permissive parenting style is a weak predictor of EI is in
287 agreement with previous studies [40, 41]. The permissive parent indulges the child placing little or no
288 demand on obedience to authorities, respect for self and others and shy away from confrontation with
289 child on negative and maladaptive behaviours [5]. The permissive parent has been positively correlates
290 with delinquent and aggressive behaviour. Poor supervision, neglect, and indifference are all indulgent
291 parental practices that play a crucial role in engaging in future delinquency. Children from indulgent
292 homes report a higher frequency of involvement in deviant behaviours, such as drug use and alcohol use,
293 school misconduct and emotional, impulsive, nonconforming behaviours [40, 41], difficulty in various
294 areas of emotional development and have feelings of insecurity [37].

295
296 Authoritative parenting style failed to significantly predict PD among the participants while authoritarian
297 parenting style was found to significantly predict PD among the participants. This implies that authoritative
298 parenting style enhances psychological health while authoritarian style of parenting promotes
299 psychological distress. This is in agreement with previous research findings [42, 43, 44, 45, 46].

300 Finally, our research finding reveals that permissive parenting style independently and significantly
301 predicted psychological distress among the participants. This supports previous researches which
302 suggest that a lack of involvement, as well as poor monitoring and supervision of children's activities,
303 strongly predicts antisocial behavior [47]. Parents of children with antisocial behaviour are likely to be less
304 positive, more permissive and inconsistent, and use more violent and critical discipline [48]. Among the
305 various parenting styles, permissive parenting style is reported as the most positively associated with
306 antisocial behavior and psychological distress including drug use [49, 33], inconsiderate and
307 disrespectful treatment of parents, struggle with the interpersonal aspects of their emotional development,
308 are emotionally dependent on others [37], poor self-esteem and depressive symptoms, [50], criminal
309 behavior [49, 51], behavioral problems in school [49] and bullying [34, 35] in adolescents.

310 311 **4.1. Limitations**

312 The purposive sampling technique used in this study was a limitation. There is a possibility that a different
313 result might be arrived at if a more probability method had been used. Also a larger sample size which
314 includes participants from other socio-cultural background and geopolitical regions of the country would
315 be more representative of a Nigerian study.

316 Also participants were restricted to in-school children which limit the generalization of the finding. Finally
317 the study results were based on questionnaires and self-reported perceptions of participants on self and
318 parenting style which may not have been measured accurately.

319 320 **5. CONCLUSIONS**

321 The finding of this present study shows that majority of the participants fall within low and average
322 emotional intelligence level. Also this study revealed that parenting style is a strong independent predictor
323 of Emotional Intelligence among in-school children in Ede Province of Osun state southwestern Nigeria.
324 Furthermore, authoritative parenting style as well as authoritarian parenting style is independent strong
325 predictors of EI among the children. Permissive parenting style is returned as a weak predictor of EI,
326 on the other hand, as a strong predictor of psychological distress among the participants. Hence, the
327 emotional intelligence of the Nigerian child is a product of parenting style.

328 329 **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

330 Public enlightenment programmes aimed at educating parents on the effects of the various parenting
331 styles on the emotional intelligence and psychological health status of their children will be beneficial in
332 promoting the authoritative style of parenting. Further studies that using the same methodology on a lager

333 sample focused on preschool and in school children from other social cultural setting within Nigeria is
334 recommended.

335 **ETHICAL APPROVAL & Consent:**

336 This study carried out investigations that involved human elements, thus ethics of research for human
337 subjects were observed. The researcher reviewed online regulatory and informational documents on
338 human-subject protection and passed the examination on responsible conduct of human studies and was
339 issued a Certificate for Bioethics and Research by the Nigerian National Code of Health Research Ethics.
340 Judging that the respondents were below the age of eighteen and therefore cannot make decisions of this
341 magnitude for themselves, a consent letter was requested from the office of the permanent secretary,
342 Ministry of Education, Oshogbo Osun state. Approval /introductory letters were issued which was
343 presented to head teachers in the selected schools before the commencement of data collection. The
344 purpose of the exercise was explained to the selected children and they were assured of confidentiality.
345 Selected samples had the option of declining in participation if they chose to. Participants were handled
346 with absolute care with cognizance of their human value, dignity and in line with the child rights act.

347 **COMPETING INTERESTS**

348 Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.
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