



# **The relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Socioeconomic Status, and Parenting Styles among Teenage Mothers**

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## **Abstract**

This research explored the relationship between emotional intelligence, and parenting styles adopted by teenage mothers in a Lagos suburb in relation to their socioeconomic status. The research design employed was the cross-sectional survey design. Two Instruments were used for data collection which are the Schutte Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) and Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). SES was assessed by income or earnings, educational level, occupational level, and family property as listed in a sociodemographic section of the instrument. A total of 110 participants were purposively sampled for the study out of which only 84 copies of the questionnaires were duly completed and returned for analysis. The data collected were analyzed based on the proposed hypotheses using the SPSS: descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient, independent t-test and one-way MANOVA. It was found that emotional intelligence has a significant positive relationship with different parenting styles. However, the authoritative parenting style ( $r = .741$ ,  $P < 0.05$ , 2-tailed) had the most significant correlation with emotional intelligence. Also, younger teenage mothers ( $M = 107.94$ ,  $S.D = 3.89$ ) compared to older mothers ( $M = 89.38$ ,  $S.D = 1.76$ ) had higher emotional intelligence scores  $t(82) = 4.7$ ,  $p = .001$ . Also, differences in parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, neglectful, permissive), were not significant among the different socioeconomic status (low, middle, high). It is therefore recommended that social skills, self-awareness, self-regulation, self-management, and relationship management be incorporated into the antenatal training 'curriculum' for improved motherhood practices, especially for teenage mothers.

**Keywords:** Parenting styles; Teenage mothers; Socioeconomic status; Emotional intelligence, Authoritarian; Authoritative; Neglectful parenting.

## **Introduction**

The way and manner parents interact, teach, and get involved with a child is popularly termed as parenting style. According to Buamrind (1966, 1991) parenting style is a psychological construct that stands as a standard strategy parents use to bring up their children. Each parenting style has a strong effect on a child's development and so many other characteristics of the child. It

determines the child's social competence, coping strategies, and many other psychological outcomes (Meesters & Muris, 2004). At home, parents consciously or unconsciously prepare the child for school. According to Alarcon (1997), children are affected by the parenting style of their parents all through their life. Parenting style and parent-child relationship have both been found to be an impactful factor in a child's academic success or failure. Abbette (2007),

agreed that underachievement by students was one of the most serious problems faced by schools, affecting nearly one out of four students. Parents play a highly influential role in their children's development. Baumrind (2012) identified that preschool children raised by parents with differing parenting styles varied in their degree of social competence. Darling and Steinberg (1993), defined a parenting style as the emotional climate in which parents raise their children and it is characterized by dimensions of parental responsiveness and demandingness. The role that parents play in their children's life influences their development all through their life as the parenting style used by parents has an impact on the cognitive development of their children. Parenting styles can be categorized according to the levels of parental demandingness i.e., control, supervision, maturity demands, and responsiveness i.e., warmth, acceptance, and involvement (Maccoby & Martin, 2003). Parenting styles have often been presented as a four-category structure that is; authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles.

While the authoritarian parenting style depicts parenting that is sternly demanding with consistent orders issued with an expectation of strict adherence to instructions, the permissive parenting style is the exact opposite with parenting mannerisms similar to the *laissez-faire* style of leadership. As the name implies, children are permitted to interact in any way convenient to them. There are fewer restrictions and almost no demands for strict adherence to parental instructions. The neglectful parenting style is a negative form of parenting where parents do not accord their children the needed attention and support all through the way. Expectedly, a host of adverse outcomes are the aftermath of the neglectful parenting style. Lastly is the authoritative parenting style which literature has approved as the most appropriate and highly desired style on the parenting style spectrum. An authoritative parent is often seen to strike a balance between issuing orders and allowing children to air their views, feel respected, and accorded attention. Çalik-Var, Kiliç & Kumandas (2015) have also identified parenting style as an important variable especially in childhood that

contributes to physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development in children. Controlling parents are categorized as middle and high-class families, based on SES, while parents who foster autonomy are categorized as lower-class. They noted that historically, low-income families are characterized as having more discord and dysfunction while in comparison, wealthy families have structure and compliance.

According to WHO (2018), teenage mothers have the highest rates of maternal mortality and a host of other physical and psychological problems partly because the majority of them are not ready for that stage of life. No wonder teenage mothers are more likely to neglect their children at birth as the majority of them face stigma and other social problems (Watts, Liamputtong & McMichael, 2015). This could lead to emotional detachment from not only the child but also the communities they live in. Emotional intelligence, emotional bonding, and adequate communication between children and parents can lead to adequate emotional and social competence for the child in the future since emotional intelligence is closely associated with good parenting (Goleman, 1995, Aremu, Tella, & Tella, 2015). Appropriate emotional intelligence in parenting helps to establish in a very easy way, positive social relationships in children. Emotional intelligence needs to go side by side with other factors such as available finance for good parenting.

Socioeconomic status (SES) incorporates not just income or pay but also educational attainment, occupational prestige, and subjective perceptions of social status and social class. Socioeconomic status can include quality of life properties as well as the opportunities and privileges afforded to people within the society. Poverty, specifically, is not a single factor but rather is characterized by multiple physical and psychosocial stressors. Further, SES is a consistent and reliable predictor of a vast array of outcomes across the lifespan, including physical and psychological health. Thus, SES is relevant to all realms of behavioural and social science, including research, practice, education, and advocacy. The socioeconomic status of a mother goes a long way to determine how the mother brings up her child, due to the amount of time they have to themselves and

consequently their child (September, Smith, Springer & Barrett, 2015). It also determines the kind of resources and opportunities a parent is able to put at the disposal of her child; the kind of school they are likely to attend, the kind of environment they would live in, and amenities that would be readily available for their upbringing (September et al., 2015). Liu & Lachman (2019) concluded that long-term consequences of SES and psychosocial factors in early life can lead to optimal cognitive function in middle and old age. SES affects overall human functioning, including our physical and mental health. Low SES and its correlates, such as lower educational achievement, poverty, and poor health, ultimately affect every aspect of our society, and quality of life especially in Nigeria and globally, a study of this nature is called for. For teenage mothers who are most likely to be out of school as a result of their early pregnancy, they may find it very difficult to secure a job either as pregnant women or nursing mothers thereby falling into the low socioeconomic status range of citizens. According to Sasu (2022), as of 2020, there is a great possibility that there would be limited resources to cater for their children except for cases where the teenage mother in question comes from a high socioeconomic status family with parents willing to support their daughter and grandchild.

This study builds upon the work of previous researchers who have identified parenting styles and socioeconomic status (SES) as separate contributing factors related to child development. SES is comprised of both economic and social standards by which individuals and families are recognized (APA, 2018) as defined by an individual, group, position, or class within a hierarchical social structure. Hierarchy in the social structure depends on a combination of variables including occupation, education, income, wealth, and place of residence. Neighborhood and community connections are assets that add to or take away from the overall functioning of families. SES can have a remarkable impact as persons with low SES will have limited resources as well as exacerbating economic and social circumstances. Comparatively, higher SES families will likely have an abundance of resources as well as fewer

financial and environmental stressors (Çalik-Var et al., 2015).

The Investment Model (IM) theory is primarily concerned with the advantages that accrue to the developing child because of family wealth and financial prosperity. It proposes that families with greater economic resources are able to make significant investments in the development of their children whereas more disadvantaged families must invest in more immediate family needs (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Mayer & Salovey 1997). These investments in children involve several dimensions of family support including (a) parent stimulation of learning both directly and through the support of advanced or specialized tutoring or training, (b) the provision of adequate food, housing, clothing, and medical care, and (c) living in a more economically advantaged neighborhood that fosters a child's competent development. Lower SES has been linked to domestic crowding, a condition that has negative consequences for adults and children, including higher psychological stress and poor health outcomes (Melki et al., 2004). According to Shriberg, (2013) seven in 10 children living with a single mother are low-income, compared to less than a third (32%) of children living in other types of family structures. When considering the effect of socioeconomic influences, it can be concluded that economic and sociological hardships have detrimental effects on family systems and McLoyd (1990) noted that "poverty and economic loss diminish the capacity for supportive, consistent, and involved parenting." By implication, we can extend this to the Nigerian situation where families are worse off not only as a developing economy but also occasioned by political instability and the recklessness of the political class.

In a study of two hundred and twenty-five undergraduate students (113 boys & 112 girls; aged 17–18 years), completed by Batool and Bond (2015), results indicated that the emotional intelligence of parents was indirectly linked to aggression among offspring, through parenting styles. It was concluded that emotional intelligence training will help parents to improve their parenting styles, and will lower the risk of aggression. They also recommended that parents

should receive emotional intelligence training in order to decrease the incidence of adolescent aggression and improve parenting styles. September, Rich, and Roman (2016) reported that parental knowledge is an important factor in adopting positive parenting styles. Low and high socioeconomic groups were utilized, and findings indicated that parents from low SES groups were more knowledgeable about child development while parents from high SES groups were less knowledgeable. However, all parents identified themselves as using an authoritative parenting style.

From the foregoing, there is an abundance of research that addresses each variable (parenting styles, SES, Emotional intelligence) individually, but limited research that draws a connection between the variables. There is a dearth of research that identified the moderating effect of SES on the relationship between parenting styles and the level of Emotional intelligence among teenage mothers. The lack of current literature supports the need for additional research to address the proposed problem and fill the gap in the literature. This study hopes to do this by providing empirical information that addresses the relationships between parenting styles, SES and the level of EI in teenage mothers. The study provides the content to inform future interventions related to parenting styles and Emotional Intelligence

The following hypotheses were proposed for the study:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and positive parenting styles.

Hypothesis 2: Older teenage mothers will have higher emotional intelligence compared to younger teenage mothers.

Hypothesis 3: Socioeconomic status would significantly influence parenting styles.

### **Methods**

A cross-sectional survey design was employed for this study. A purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting participants based on the

purpose of the study. Research participants were sampled from a group of teenage mothers attending antenatal hospitals within Ikorodu, a suburb of Lagos, Nigeria. Out of a total of one hundred and ten copies of the questionnaires given out and retrieved, only 84 were found to have been properly filled out and were used for analysis. After administering and retrieving the instrument from the participants, the questionnaires were scored based on the scoring manual and coded after which the data was statistically analysed.

### *Instruments*

The instruments employed were divided into four sections.

*Section A: Biodemographic information:* In this section demographic questionnaire was used to collect personal information from the participants. These personal details were those which were directly relevant to the purpose of the study which included the Age, gender, marital status, annual family income, occupation, family status, religion, and ethnicity of the respondents.

*Section B:* The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) developed by Schutte, Malouff & Bhullar (1998) made up of 33 items with response options on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The scale is used to quantify emotional intelligence levels by evaluating an individual's ability to recognize and understand the emotions of others and to measure the capacity to manage those emotions. Scores range from 33 to 165, with higher scores indicating more emotional characteristics (Schutte et al, 2009). The SSEIT instrument has been used frequently to measure emotional intelligence and is shown to have a high reliability and validity with a test-retest reliability of .87 and a predictive validity of  $r(63) + .32$   $p < 0.01$ . Research also reports an internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of .87 (Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden & Dornheim, 1997). Aniemeka, Akinnawo and Akpunne (2020) reported that all items in the scale had acceptable goodness-of-fit measures revealing corrected item-total correlations range of .60 to .83; a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .90, a Spearman-Brown

coefficient of .91 and Guttman Split-Half coefficient of .91.

**Section C:** The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) developed by Buri (1991), to measure the authoritative, authoritarian, neglectful, and permissive styles of parenting as perceived by respondents. It is a twenty-four (24) item questionnaire, with six (6) items each for each parenting style subscale, that is authoritative, authoritarian, neglectful, and permissive parenting styles. The responses to each of the items are in a 5-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). This research instrument has a co-efficient alpha of 0.82 and basically asks questions about how parents behave towards their children and the

nature of the relationship between them. Nwanzu (2016) using a Nigerian sample tested Cronbach's alpha on the three dimensions (authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative) of the scale and reported a coefficient alpha of .80, .73, and .64 respectively. This instrument is used to measure the various parenting styles based on Baumrind's four dimensions of parenting, such as disciplinary strategies, warmth and nurturance, communication styles, and expectations of maturity and control. Ifeonu, Okafor, Onyeneje, & Emesibe (2021) reported among a group of adolescents a two-week interval test-retest reliability correlation coefficient of .66 on the PAQ. Also, face validity was also determined by some experts from different fields of psychology.

## Results

**Table 1: Data Presentation on Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

<b>Socio-Demographic Variables</b>	<b>F (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>	
13 – 16 years	36 (42.9)
17 – 19 years	48 (57.1)
<b>Religion</b>	
Christian	27 (32.1)
Islam	54 (64.3)
Traditional	3 (53.6)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Yoruba	69 (82.1)
Igbo	13 (15.5)
Hausa	2 (2.4)
<b>Socio Economic Status</b>	
Low	5 (6.0)
Middle	69 (82.1)
Upper-Middle	10 (11.9)

The above table shows the socio-demographic characteristics of participants that were used for the study. Age of participants were divided into two groups- Group1: 13-16 years 36 (42.9%) and group 2: 17-19 years 48 (57.1%). The religion of participants – 27 participants were Christians (32.1%); 54 moslems (64.3%), and 3 Traditional religionists (3.6%). Ethnicity of participants: Yoruba 69 (82.1%), Igbo 13 (15.5%), and Hausa

2 (2.4%). Socioeconomic Status (SES) of Participants – Low 5 (6.0%), Middle 69 (82.1%), and Upper Middle 10 (11.9%).

### Hypotheses Testing

This section presents the hypotheses that were tested and the results analyzed. Hypothesis one was tested with a correlation analysis; hypothesis two with an independent t-test, and hypothesis three with a one-way analysis of variance.

Hypothesis 1: states that there will be a significant relationship between Emotional intelligence and positive Parenting styles. This was tested using correlation analysis.

**Table 2: Zero-order correlation showing the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Parenting styles**

	Mean	S. D	1	2	3	4	5
1. Authoritative Parenting	17.15	5.66	-				
2. Authoritarian Parenting	16.79	5.09	.759**	-			
3. Neglectful Parenting	15.26	3.91	.364**	.494**	-		
4. Permissive Parenting	18.23	4.31	.414**	.387**	.141	-	
5. Emotional Intelligence	97.33	19.99	.726**	.741**	.351**	.474**	-

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between parenting styles and Emotional Intelligence as follows: Authoritative Parenting ( $r = .741$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Authoritarian Parenting ( $r = .726$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Neglectful Parenting ( $r = .351$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Permissive Parenting ( $r = .474$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and Emotional Intelligence. The hypothesis is thus accepted.

The result indicates that, despite all the parenting styles having significant correlations with

emotional Intelligence, the Authoritative parenting style which is a positive parenting style is seen as having the highest level of correlation with Emotional Intelligence. The result implies that parents who adopt the Authoritative model of parenting tend to have the highest level of Emotional Intelligence.

Hypothesis 2: Older teenage mothers will have higher levels of Emotional Intelligence when compared to their younger counterparts. This hypothesis was tested using an independent t-test.

**Table 3: independent T-test showing age differences in Emotional Intelligence**

	AGE	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
Emotional Intelligence	Older teenage mothers	36	89.38	3.89	4.72	82	.001
	Younger teenage mothers	48	107.94	1.76			

Result is significant at  $< .05$

The above table shows significant mean differences in emotional intelligence between older teenage mothers and younger teenage mothers  $t(84) = .001$   $p < .05$ . In comparing older and younger teenage mothers, the result showed that younger teenage mothers have the higher mean scores on emotional intelligence which is

107.94 than older teenage mothers who have lower mean scores of 89.38 and this was significant. However, this result was the exact opposite of the hypothesized. Therefore, the hypothesis that states that "Older teenage mothers will have higher scores on emotional intelligence

compared to younger teenage mothers” is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 3: Level of socioeconomic status will have a significant influence on Parenting Style. This was tested using a one-way multi variate analysis of variance (MANOVA).

**Table 4: One-way MANOVA results on the level of Socioeconomic Status and Parenting Style.**

<i>Parenting Style</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F ratio</i>	<i>P</i>
Low	5	90.20	10.43	2	1.749	.180
Middle	69	96.36	20.46	81		
Upper-Middle	10	107.60	17.93	83		

**Dependent Variable** (Parenting Styles)  $P > .05$

Note: The result above shows the levels of Socio-economic Status and Parenting Style. However, the difference is not significant  $F(2,81) = 1.749$ ,  $P > 0.05$ . Thus hypothesis 3 is rejected.

### Discussion

The present study was conducted to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and parenting styles in relation to socioeconomic status among teenage mothers. Thus, investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence, socioeconomic status, and the parenting styles of teenage mothers. The findings of this study showed that while there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and the different parenting styles, the authoritative parenting style had the most significant relationship with emotional intelligence. This means that teenage mothers who were more emotionally intelligent employed the authoritative parenting style more than those mothers who practiced the authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles. Aminabadi et al. (2012) in a similar study also reported a significant positive correlation between maternal emotional intelligence and authoritative parenting style. This connotes that authoritative an mother is also more emotionally intelligent since it affects how she nurtures and interacts with her child. In other words, high emotional intelligence can help a mother to maintain a level of clarity that allows parents to respond to their children’s behavior in ways that encourage, rather than discourage, and thereby raise cooperative children. Indeed, emotional intelligence informs their style of parenting.

Other researchers eg. Cindea (2015); Cohen and Rice (1997), Paulson (1994) etc. whose studies agree with the current one have concluded that the existence of a positive significant relationship between parenting styles and emotional intelligence researchers concluded that higher levels of parental control accompanied by both maternal and paternal responsiveness (characteristics of authoritative parenting) were related to higher emotional intelligence. Adekeye et al., (2015) and Pittman and Chase-Lansdale (2001) in consonance with associations between parenting style, social adjustment and socioeconomic status among teenage mothers asserted that adolescent girls with authoritative parenting styles showed the best adjustment of all parenting style groups, while adolescent mothers who were disengaged (neglectful) mothers showed the worst adjustment of all parenting style groups.

Another finding of this study as to whether older teenage mothers will show higher levels of emotional intelligence compared to younger teenage mothers showed a significant result which was in contradistinction to what was hypothesized. This result is in agreement with the findings of Neethu et al. (2017), who found that middle and younger individuals among siblings had higher emotional intelligence on the dimensions of self-awareness, motivation, and empathy. This result could be explained from the angle of socio-ecological resilience resources unique to African teenage mothers which equip them to cope with early parenthood (Malindi, 2018). This provides a reasonable explanation as

to factors that may distinguish African teenage mothers from those of the Western world.

The third finding of this study was on the influence of socioeconomic status on parenting style which revealed that there is no statistically significant relationship in the parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, neglectful, permissive), among the different socioeconomic statuses (low, middle, upper-middle). Contrary to the findings of this study, it was expected that the socioeconomic status of the parents would influence their parenting style due to the fact that the socio-economic status measures three types of resources that are important to the children: (1) financial capital or the ability to buy the things needed, (2) human capital, or the ability to communicate high academic aspirations and concrete help in achieving those aspirations, and (3) social capital, or the ability of parents to provide connections to the larger community. This finding is however negated by Pittman and Chase-Lansdale (2001) whose findings indicated that adolescents from low socioeconomic status are more disengaged with their children than adolescent mothers from the middle and high socioeconomic status who displayed other parenting styles. It is assumed that parents who are more financially well off can provide resources needed to contribute to more positive development while parents who are considered low-income lack the finances to procure resources that contribute to healthy child development (Boe et al., 2014). The present findings could be due to the fact that the study population is from a rural community, Ikorodu, a suburb of Lagos, in which case the environmental uniformity may have dissipated any class disparities that may exist. Subsequent research efforts considering a more decentralized sample would be of major contribution to literature.

### *Conclusions and Limitations*

The study concludes that a positive significant relationship exists between emotional intelligence and parenting styles. This finding has supported previous findings, which indicate a significant relationship between parenting styles and emotional intelligence. Findings have also established a relationship between emotional

intelligence and the authoritative parenting style. Emotional intelligence is one of the determinants of cognitive and behavioural development. According to the findings of this study, a mother or teenage mother who is emotionally intelligent will exhibit an authoritative parenting style that will ensure proper child growth and development. Socioeconomic status and parenting style have been linked to addressing academic performance, aggression, socially appropriate behaviors, and overall mental health. The results of current study have highlighted the importance of early parenting, and parental emotional intelligence as a source of actions, feelings and beginning reflective emotional development of children. However, such conclusions may not be that all-encompassing, considering the fact that the relationship between maternal emotional intelligence and children's behavior may be mediated by other intervening factors like social and cultural status of the mothers.

Another limitation is the possibility that some of the respondents may not be honest with their responses may affect the result. However, the numbers of responses were good enough for meaningful generalization of the result. More so, the area covered may not have been large enough but due to constraints of finance and time, other areas were not covered.

### *Recommendations*

It is therefore recommended that subsequent research puts gender into consideration when examining the relationship between socioeconomic status, emotional intelligence, and parenting styles. Therefore, future research can be carried out embedding maternal emotional intelligence and parenting styles within a given socioeconomic and cultural context such as belonging to nuclear or extended family, marital status, number of siblings, father authority, the parents own developmental history with her or his own parents and child personal characteristics etc. Furthermore, it is recommended that social skills, self-awareness, self-regulation, self-management, and relationship management be incorporated into the antenatal training 'curriculum' for improved motherhood practices, especially for teenage mothers.



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