

Research Article

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Influence of indulgent parenting on adolescents' lack of moral values in Nigeria: A biblical approach

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Abstract: The erosion of moral values among adolescents has become a growing concern in contemporary Nigerian society, reflected in rising cases of violence, substance abuse, sexual immorality, and declining respect for cultural and religious norms. While multiple factors influence adolescent behaviour, parental influence remains a critical determinant of moral development. This study examines the impact of indulgent (permissive) parenting on adolescents' moral values within the Nigerian socio-cultural and religious context. It adopts a qualitative, conceptual-analytical design based on a systematic review and thematic analysis of relevant scholarly literature on parenting styles, adolescent development, moral formation, and value orientation. The analysis indicates that indulgent parenting, characterised by low discipline and weak behavioural control, is associated with poor self-regulation, distorted value orientation, diminished respect for moral norms, weakened spiritual commitment, and reduced personal responsibility. The study argues that excessive parental permissiveness undermines the development of discipline, accountability, and moral responsibility during the critical stage of identity formation. It concludes that effective parenting requires a balanced integration of love, guidance, discipline, and moral instruction. The study contributes to ongoing discourse on adolescent moral development by highlighting the importance of parenting practices in fostering value-based upbringing and recommends collaborative efforts among parents, schools, faith-based institutions, and other stakeholders to promote positive moral formation.

Keywords – Adolescent moral development, Indulgent parenting, Moral values, Nigeria, Parenting styles

1. INTRODUCTION

The apparent decline in moral standards among adolescents has increasingly attracted concern, particularly within contemporary Nigerian society. Recent scholarship has identified significant changes in the attitudes, behavioural patterns, and value priorities of contemporary adolescents and emerging adults compared with previous generations (Smith et al., 2011; Twenge, 2023). Similar concerns have been expressed in African societies, where rapid social change, exposure to digital media, and shifting cultural norms have influenced the value orientations of young people (Lansford, 2021). In the Nigerian context, this concern is reflected in increasing involvement in violence, substance abuse, sexual immorality, poor work ethics, and diminishing respect for cultural and religious values. Recent studies on Nigerian adolescents have linked behavioural and moral challenges among young people to changing parenting patterns, peer influences, and increasing incidences of examination malpractice, substance abuse,

bullying, extortion, internet fraud, and other forms of anti-social behaviour (Chigbu et al., 2021; Okechukwu, 2026). These developments have generated growing concern among educators, religious leaders, parents, and policymakers regarding the moral direction of the younger generation and the adequacy of existing socialisation structures. What was once regarded as normative moral conduct is now often considered outdated, while alternative lifestyles that contradict established cultural and spiritual standards are gaining wider acceptance (Ebute et al., 2020).

Values may be understood as deeply held beliefs and guiding principles that influence how individuals think, make decisions, and conduct their lives within a given social context. They influence attitudes, decisions, and patterns of conduct, collectively forming a value system. The apparent shift in adolescents' value systems suggests a movement away from traditionally upheld moral standards. This trend is evident across both urban and rural communities, indicating a widespread transformation in moral orientation. Manifestations include declining respect for authority, changing attitudes toward work and wealth, increasing moral permissiveness, and a redefinition of cultural and religious commitments (Saadu, 2023).

Scholars have identified multiple factors influencing adolescent behaviour and value formation, including peer pressure, media exposure, socio-economic conditions, and environmental influences. Among the various influences on moral formation, the role of parents remains particularly decisive in shaping the ethical orientation of young people. Within the African context, it is widely recognised that a child's character and value orientation are largely shaped by parental upbringing. Consequently, when adolescents exhibit behavioural deviance, responsibility is often linked to inadequate parental guidance and discipline (Chigbu et al., 2021).

From a biblical perspective, the responsibility for moral formation rests primarily with parents. Scripture consistently portrays parents as the first educators of their children, charged with the duty of transmitting godly values, moral instruction, and spiritual discipline to succeeding generations (Deuteronomy 6:6–9; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). The biblical model of parenting combines love with guidance, nurture with correction, and freedom with accountability. Consequently, parenting approaches that fail to provide appropriate boundaries and moral direction may hinder the development of character and responsible behaviour among adolescents. This biblical understanding provides an important framework for evaluating contemporary parenting practices, including indulgent parenting.

Adolescence is a delicate and formative stage of development, characterised by identity exploration, emotional fluctuations, and increasing independence. During this period, young people are particularly susceptible to external influences while simultaneously negotiating their personal values and beliefs. The foundations laid during childhood, especially through parental guidance, play a decisive role in shaping outcomes at this stage. Where structure, discipline, and moral instruction are lacking, adolescents may struggle to develop a stable and responsible value orientation (Igwenyi, 2024).

In many cases, parents, in an effort to maintain close relationships or provide comfort, adopt overly permissive approaches to parenting. This indulgent style, characterised by warmth without corresponding behavioural control, often grants children excessive freedom without adequate guidance. While such an approach may be well-intentioned, it carries significant implications for adolescents' moral formation, particularly when boundaries are unclear or inconsistently enforced. Studies have shown that permissive and indulgent parenting patterns may contribute to problematic social behaviour, weak self-regulation, and poor moral development among adolescents (Saadu, 2023; Ebute et al., 2020).

Despite considerable scholarly attention to parenting styles and adolescent development, limited focus has been given to the specific influence of indulgent parenting on moral value formation within the Nigerian socio-cultural and religious context. This study, therefore, examines the effect of parental indulgence on adolescents' moral values, arguing that excessive permissiveness undermines the development of discipline, responsibility, and moral accountability during the critical stage of identity formation. It contributes to ongoing discourse by highlighting the need for a balanced parenting approach that integrates love, guidance, discipline, and moral instruction.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

The literature on parenting and adolescent development consistently highlights the family as a primary context for moral formation, value transmission, and behavioural development. Existing scholarship demonstrates that parenting styles significantly influence adolescents' moral values, self-regulation, identity formation, and overall psychosocial adjustment. This review examines relevant literature on parenting, moral values, indulgent parenting, adolescence, value orientation, parental roles, and parenting styles in order to establish the conceptual and theoretical foundations for understanding the relationship between indulgent parenting and adolescents' moral development within the Nigerian context.

2.1. Concept of parenting

Scholarly discourse consistently identifies parenting as a foundational influence in shaping the developmental trajectories of children and adolescents across multiple domains. The term *parenting* is derived from *parent*, which traditionally refers to a biological father or mother. However, contemporary scholarship adopts a broader understanding that includes individuals who assume primary caregiving responsibilities for children over a sustained period, such as foster parents, grandparents, and other guardians (Moyo, 2011). Despite this broader conceptualisation, parenting in this study is considered primarily within the context of biological parenthood.

Parenting is generally understood as the complex process through which parents and caregivers nurture, guide, protect, and socialise children to facilitate their physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and moral development (Bornstein, 2022). It encompasses both tangible provisions and intangible investments, including emotional support, behavioural guidance, value transmission, and character formation. Contemporary research emphasises that parenting extends beyond meeting children's immediate needs to shaping developmental outcomes through patterns of interaction, discipline, communication, and supervision (Pinquart, 2021). Consequently, parenting serves as a critical mechanism through which societies transmit norms, values, and acceptable patterns of behaviour across generations. Furthermore, scholars note that parenting is a multidimensional process that significantly influences children's self-regulation, moral reasoning, social competence, and overall adjustment (Jeong et al., 2021; Lansford, 2021). Through daily interactions and modelling, parents function as primary agents of socialisation, helping children internalise societal expectations and develop moral frameworks that guide future behaviour.

From a Christian perspective, parenting is further understood as a divine responsibility entrusted by God to parents for the nurture and formation of children (Deut. 6:6–9; Eph. 6:4). It requires intentional commitment, loving discipline, moral instruction, and spiritual guidance. Christian parenting, therefore, extends beyond social responsibility to stewardship, wherein parents are called to cultivate godly character and moral integrity in their children. This perspective highlights parenting not merely as a family function but as a sacred vocation aimed at shaping both the moral and spiritual lives of the next generation.

2.2. Concept of moral values

Moral values refer to ethical principles and standards that guide human judgment concerning what is right, wrong, acceptable, or unacceptable within a given social and cultural context (Schwartz, 2012; Malti et al., 2021). They shape personal conduct, regulate social relationships, and provide the basis for responsible decision-making. In adolescence, moral values are particularly significant because this stage involves the development of moral reasoning, personal identity, emotional regulation, and social responsibility. Malti et al. (2021) observe that adolescence is a critical period for moral development because young people increasingly negotiate issues of justice, responsibility, care, identity, and social belonging.

Within the context of this study, moral values include honesty, respect, self-control, responsibility, compassion, diligence, accountability, sexual purity, reverence for God, and respect for cultural and religious norms. These values are not formed in isolation but are transmitted and internalised through family upbringing, religious instruction, peer relationships, school experiences, and wider social influences. Parents remain central in this process because they provide the earliest moral environment through instruction, modelling, discipline, correction, and reinforcement. Bornstein et al. (2022) show that parenting styles are associated with adolescents' moral values, indicating that the moral direction of young people is significantly shaped by the quality of parental involvement. Therefore, the decline of moral values among adolescents may be partly understood in relation to weaknesses in parental guidance, discipline, and value transmission.

2.3. Concept of indulgent parenting

Indulgent parenting, often referred to as permissive parenting, is a parenting style characterised by high warmth and responsiveness but low demandingness, discipline, supervision, and behavioural control. Within Baumrind's parenting framework, indulgent parents are usually affectionate, accepting, and emotionally available, yet they place few demands on children and enforce limited rules. Such parents often avoid confrontation, grant excessive freedom, and allow children to regulate their own behaviour without adequate guidance or correction. Sanvictores and Mendez (2022) describe permissive parents as warm and nurturing but marked by minimal expectations, few rules, and infrequent discipline.

In the context of this study, indulgent parenting refers to a pattern of child-rearing in which parents provide care, comfort, and affection without corresponding moral instruction, boundaries, accountability, and discipline. Although this parenting style may promote emotional closeness between parents and adolescents, it may also weaken the development of self-control and moral responsibility when freedom is not balanced with structure. Recent studies suggest that permissive parenting may be associated with poor self-regulation, emotion dysregulation, risk-taking behaviour, and externalising behaviour among adolescents (Goagoses et al., 2023; Pinquart, 2017). Emotion regulation is particularly important for moral development because it influences impulse control, decision-making, empathy, and responsible behaviour. This makes indulgent parenting particularly relevant to the present study because adolescents who grow up with love but without firm moral boundaries may struggle to internalise discipline, respect for authority, responsibility, and spiritual commitment.

From a biblical perspective, indulgent parenting falls short of the balanced model of parenting that combines love with discipline, nurture with correction, and freedom with accountability. Scripture presents parenting as a divine responsibility that requires teaching, training, nurturing, discipline, and blessing (Deut. 6:6–9; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4). Therefore, indulgent parenting may be considered inadequate for moral formation because it emphasises affection without sufficient correction and freedom without adequate accountability.

2.4. Concept of adolescence

Adolescence is a transitional stage of human development between childhood and adulthood. It is marked by physical maturation, emotional sensitivity, cognitive growth, identity exploration, increasing independence, and heightened social awareness. Branje et al. (2021) explain that adolescence is a critical period of identity development during which young people form, test, revise, and consolidate their sense of self. This makes adolescence a decisive stage for moral formation because young people are not only developing biologically and socially but also constructing personal values, beliefs, and life orientations.

In this study, adolescence is understood as a formative stage during which young people require intentional parental guidance, moral instruction, emotional support, and behavioural boundaries to navigate developmental challenges successfully. During this period, adolescents become increasingly exposed to peer influence, media content, social comparison, and competing value systems that shape their attitudes and behaviour (Steinberg, 2020; Lansford, 2021). Consequently, the family remains a critical source of stability and moral direction. Research indicates that adolescents who experience consistent parental involvement, supervision, and support are more likely to develop self-discipline, moral judgment, responsibility, and positive psychosocial adjustment (Pinquart, 2021; Bornstein et al., 2022). Conversely, weak parental supervision and excessively permissive parenting may increase vulnerability to impulsive behaviour, poor self-regulation, emotion dysregulation, and distorted value orientation (Goagoses et al., 2023; Pinquart, 2021). Therefore, adolescence represents a critical period during which the quality of parenting significantly influences moral development and value formation.

2.5. Concept of value system and value orientation

A value system refers to an organised set of beliefs, principles, and standards that individuals use to evaluate situations, make decisions, and regulate behaviour. Values function as enduring guides that influence attitudes, priorities, and patterns of conduct across different life contexts (Schwartz, 2012). Value orientation, on the other hand, refers to the manner in which these values are expressed in everyday choices, relationships, and behavioural preferences. Together, value systems and value orientations provide the framework through which individuals interpret reality and determine what is desirable, acceptable, and morally appropriate.

The development of a value system is a gradual process that begins in childhood and continues throughout adolescence. During this period, young people internalise values through socialisation processes involving family, peers, schools, religious institutions, and the broader cultural environment (Bardi & Goodwin, 2011). Among these influences, the family remains particularly significant because parents serve as the earliest and most consistent agents of value transmission. Through instruction, modelling, reinforcement, and discipline, parents communicate beliefs and expectations that shape children's moral outlook and behavioural patterns (Grusec & Davidov, 2021). Adolescence represents a particularly critical stage in value formation because young people increasingly evaluate, modify, and personalise previously acquired beliefs and norms. Research indicates that parental influence remains important during adolescence despite increasing exposure to peers and media influences (Knafo-Noam et al., 2020). Consequently, the quality of parenting significantly affects the development of value orientation, moral judgment, and behavioural choices.

Within the Nigerian socio-cultural and religious context, desirable value orientations are often associated with honesty, respect for authority, diligence, self-discipline, responsibility, communal concern, sexual morality, and reverence for God. These values contribute to social cohesion and moral stability. However, where parental guidance is weak, inconsistent, or excessively permissive, adolescents may experience difficulty internalising such values. In such situations, value orientation may become unstable, leading to diminished respect for moral norms and increased susceptibility to negative social influences. This study, therefore, views value orientation as a product of continuous socialisation in which parenting plays a central role. While multiple factors contribute to adolescent value formation, parental practices remain foundational in shaping the moral convictions and behavioural patterns that ultimately constitute an individual's value system.

2.6. Parental roles

The literature consistently underscores the importance of parental roles in shaping the developmental outcomes of children, particularly during adolescence. These roles are expressed through daily interactions and are often interrelated. Contemporary research identifies parental responsibilities as encompassing emotional support,

behavioural guidance, protection, supervision, and the promotion of healthy developmental outcomes among children and adolescents (Jeong et al., 2021; Lansford, 2021).

Parental love, expressed through warmth and care, creates a secure environment that promotes emotional stability, healthy adjustment, and positive developmental outcomes among children and adolescents (Bornstein, 2022). Behavioural control, which involves setting boundaries, supervision, and consistent guidance, helps children develop responsibility, self-regulation, and an understanding of consequences (Jeong et al., 2021; Moyo, 2011). In addition, recognising the individuality of children and responding appropriately to their developmental needs fosters self-worth, healthy independence, and positive psychosocial adjustment (Lansford, 2021). Parents also serve as role models, with their behaviours significantly influencing children's emotional regulation, attitudes, behavioural patterns, and value formation (Goagoses et al., 2023). Furthermore, provision and protection remain fundamental responsibilities, ensuring that children grow in safe and supportive environments.

2.7. Parenting styles

Patterns of parental interaction, commonly described as parenting styles, play a significant role in influencing behavioural outcomes and developmental patterns among adolescents. Darling and Steinberg (1993) define parenting style as the overall climate within which parent-child interactions occur. These styles reflect patterns of parental attitudes and behaviours that influence children's socialisation and development (Talib, 2011).

The literature commonly identifies four parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive (indulgent), and uninvolved. Authoritarian parenting is characterised by strict control and low responsiveness and has been associated with less favourable psychosocial outcomes in many cultural settings (Pinquart, 2021; Larzelere & Baumrind, 2016). Authoritative parenting, by contrast, combines warmth with structure and is widely associated with positive developmental outcomes, including responsibility and social competence (Kopko, 2007; Huver, 2010).

Of particular relevance to this study is permissive or indulgent parenting, which is characterised by high responsiveness and low behavioural control. Parents who operate within this framework often demonstrate high levels of emotional responsiveness while placing minimal demands or limits on their children's behaviour (Huver, 2010; Pinquart, 2021). While this approach may foster emotional closeness, it has been associated with poor self-discipline, impulsiveness, and reduced responsibility among children (Mgbemere & Telles, 2016). Uninvolved parenting, marked by low responsiveness and low control, is linked to negative developmental outcomes, including weak emotional bonds and poor behavioural regulation (Kopko, 2007).

2.8. Adolescent development

Adolescence represents a transitional phase in human development during which individuals undergo profound physical maturation, cognitive restructuring, and evolving social and emotional experiences that collectively shape identity formation (Steinberg, 2020). It is a transitional period characterised by exploration, uncertainty, increasing autonomy, and identity formation (Branje et al., 2021; Steinberg, 2020). During this developmental phase, young individuals become highly receptive to external social forces while simultaneously constructing personal belief systems and identity frameworks (McNeely & Blanchard, 2009).

Existing scholarship consistently identifies adolescence as a decisive phase for the internalisation of moral reasoning and ethical judgment. Without appropriate parental guidance and moral support, this developmental process may be negatively influenced by peer pressure, media exposure, and competing social values, resulting in unstable or distorted value orientations (Steinberg, 2020; Malti et al., 2021). Given this vulnerability, parental influence becomes especially significant during adolescence, as it provides the structure and guidance necessary for healthy development.

The developmental characteristics of adolescence highlight the importance of intentional and balanced parenting during this critical stage. As these young people navigate identity formation and increasing exposure to external influences, the presence or absence of parental guidance becomes a decisive factor in shaping their value orientation. Indulgent parenting, characterised by warmth without adequate behavioural control, may limit the development of self-discipline, responsibility, and moral accountability in adolescents. While the reviewed literature has established the significant influence of parenting styles on adolescents' behaviour and moral development, a clearer understanding of the underlying mechanisms through which indulgent parenting shapes value orientation requires a sound theoretical grounding.

2.9. Theoretical framework

The foregoing review of literature highlights the significant role of parenting in shaping adolescents' behaviour and moral orientation, while also revealing the implications of indulgent parenting for value formation. To provide a clearer explanatory basis for these relationships, this study is anchored in Baumrind's Parenting Style Theory, supported by Social Learning Theory, and further enriched by biblical perspectives on parenting.

Baumrind's Parenting Style Theory (Baumrind, 1967; 1971) provides a foundational framework for understanding how variations in parental behaviour influence child development outcomes. Parenting styles are categorised along the dimensions of responsiveness (warmth) and demandingness (control), resulting in authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive (indulgent) patterns, with later inclusion of the uninvolved style (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Of particular relevance to this study is indulgent parenting, characterised by high responsiveness and low behavioural control, which creates a relationally warm but structurally weak environment for child development. Within the context of adolescence, a stage marked by identity formation, increasing autonomy, and heightened susceptibility to external influences, the absence of consistent guidance and behavioural expectations typical of this parenting style may hinder the development of self-regulation, responsibility, and moral clarity. Baumrind's theory, therefore, provides a structured lens for understanding the behavioural outcomes identified in the literature.

Complementing this perspective is Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977). Social Learning Theory posits that individuals develop behavioural patterns and value systems through processes of observation, imitation, and reinforcement within their social environment. Young people develop their value systems through continuous interaction with significant others, particularly parents, who serve as primary models of behaviour. Where parental conduct reflects discipline, responsibility, and consistency, adolescents are more likely to internalise such values; conversely, where permissiveness and lack of accountability prevail, they may adopt similar patterns. Within this framework, indulgent parenting is conceptualised as the independent variable influencing adolescents' moral values as the dependent outcome, while social learning processes explain how these behaviours and attitudes are internalised during this formative stage.

The integration of these perspectives provides both structural and process-based explanations for the findings discussed in the literature: Baumrind's theory defines the structure of parenting styles, while Social Learning Theory explains how these styles are translated into behaviour and internalised values. In addition, the study is informed by biblical teachings on parenting, which emphasise intentional instruction, discipline, and moral guidance. Scripture presents parenting as a divine responsibility involving teaching, training, nurturing, and correction (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4), thereby aligning with the balanced approach advocated in the literature and situating parenting within a framework of stewardship and moral responsibility.

Taken together, these frameworks provide a coherent explanatory model in which parenting style defines the structure of influence, social learning explains the process through which behaviours and values are acquired, and

biblical principles offer the moral direction that shapes expected outcomes. Within this integrated perspective, indulgent parenting emerges as a pattern that, despite its emotional warmth, lacks the structure necessary to support healthy moral development in adolescents. This strengthens the study's central argument that a balanced parenting approach, integrating love, discipline, guidance, and moral instruction, is essential for fostering morally grounded, responsible, and spiritually conscious young people.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The increasing erosion of moral values among adolescents has become a significant social, educational, and religious concern in contemporary Nigerian society. Manifestations such as substance abuse, examination malpractice, internet fraud, violence, sexual immorality, bullying, and declining respect for authority suggest a weakening of the moral foundations traditionally transmitted through family, religious, and community structures. While scholars have identified multiple factors contributing to these challenges, including peer influence, media exposure, and socio-economic pressures, parental influence remains one of the most significant determinants of adolescent value formation.

Of particular concern is the growing tendency among some parents to adopt indulgent or permissive parenting practices characterised by warmth, affection, and responsiveness without corresponding discipline, supervision, and behavioural control. Although such parenting may foster emotional closeness, it may also undermine the development of self-discipline, responsibility, accountability, and moral judgment among adolescents. Consequently, young people may become increasingly vulnerable to negative social influences and behaviours that contradict accepted moral and spiritual standards.

Despite substantial scholarly attention to parenting styles and adolescent development, limited studies have specifically examined the influence of indulgent parenting on adolescents' moral values within the Nigerian socio-cultural and religious context. Furthermore, insufficient attention has been given to evaluating this phenomenon from a biblical perspective. This gap creates the need for a focused examination of how indulgent parenting contributes to moral value erosion among adolescents and how biblical principles of parenting may provide a framework for fostering responsible, morally grounded, and spiritually conscious young people.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, conceptual-analytical research design to examine the influence of indulgent parenting on adolescents' moral values within the Nigerian socio-cultural and religious context. The study relies exclusively on secondary data, drawing from scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and relevant theoretical and theological literature on parenting styles, adolescent development, moral formation, and value orientation. Relevant literature was identified through searches of major academic databases. The selection process prioritised peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and authoritative publications that addressed parenting styles, adolescent moral development, value formation, and related behavioural outcomes. Preference was given to recent publications (2020–2025) to ensure currency, while seminal works such as those of Baumrind (1967, 1971), Bandura (1977), and Darling and Steinberg (1993) were retained because of their foundational contributions to the field.

The collected literature was subjected to thematic and comparative analysis to identify recurring concepts, patterns, and relationships regarding indulgent parenting and adolescent moral development. Particular attention was given to studies conducted within Nigeria and other relevant cultural contexts in order to situate the discussion within contemporary realities. The analysis was guided by Baumrind's Parenting Style Theory and Social Learning

Theory, while biblical perspectives on parenting provided a theological framework for interpretation. Although the study does not employ primary empirical data, the systematic selection, critical evaluation, and synthesis of relevant literature provide a credible basis for understanding the relationship between indulgent parenting and adolescent moral value formation within the Nigerian context.

5. BIBLICAL DEMANDS FOR PARENTING

Akerele (2025) argues that parenting, from a biblical perspective, is a divine responsibility entrusted to parents by God. Scripture presents parenting as an intentional and active process that requires commitment, discipline, and spiritual sensitivity. The Bible employs action-oriented expressions such as *teach*, *train*, *nurture*, *discipline*, and *bless* to describe what God expects from parents in raising their children. These demands reflect a balanced approach that combines warmth with structure, aligning with the dimensions of responsiveness and behavioural control emphasised in parenting theory.

i. Teach

Parents are commanded to teach their children diligently. Deuteronomy 6:7 emphasises this responsibility: *"You shall teach them diligently to your children..."* Teaching extends beyond formal instruction to include the consistent communication of godly values in everyday life. It is a continuous process through which children are guided to understand and live out truth (Turnbull, 2010). Within the framework of Social Learning Theory, such intentional teaching provides the cognitive and moral content that children internalise through repeated exposure and reinforcement.

ii. Train

Closely related to teaching is training. Proverbs 22:6 underscores this responsibility: *"Train up a child in the way he should go..."* Training is practical and intentional, involving step-by-step guidance, modelling of behaviour, and the development of life skills and godly habits. It requires discipline, structure, and consistency (Peace & Scott, 2010). While teaching informs, training forms, and shaping behaviour through practice and example. This reflects the dimension of behavioural control highlighted in Baumrind's framework and reinforces the importance of structure in moral development.

iii. Nurture

Ephesians 6:4 instructs parents to nurture their children in the training and admonition of the Lord. Nurturing involves care, encouragement, emotional support, and protection. It requires parents to be present and intentional in building their children's lives (Adewale, 2009). A nurturing environment promotes growth, confidence, and stability, while guarding against discouragement and neglect. This dimension aligns with parental responsiveness in Baumrind's model and underscores the role of emotional warmth in fostering secure and healthy development.

iv. Discipline

Discipline remains an essential aspect of biblical parenting. Hebrews 12:11 acknowledges that, though discipline may be painful in the moment, it produces righteousness and peace in the long run. It is not merely punitive but corrective and instructive, guiding children toward right living. Proverbs 13:24 further presents discipline as an expression of love. Within the theoretical framework of this study, discipline represents the structured guidance necessary for

developing self-regulation and responsibility. When absent, as seen in indulgent parenting, adolescents are more likely to struggle with moral boundaries and accountability (Ayanrinola, 2013).

v. Bless

Blessing is another important, though often neglected, responsibility of parents. Within a biblical framework, blessing involves affirming children's identity, communicating acceptance, offering encouragement, and fostering a positive sense of purpose and belonging. Biblical examples, such as Isaac blessing Jacob (Genesis 27:28–29) and Jacob blessing his sons (Genesis 48), highlight its significance. Research suggests that positive parental affirmation contributes significantly to children's emotional well-being, self-worth, and psychosocial adjustment (Bornstein, 2022; Lansford, 2021). In practical terms, blessing may be expressed through encouragement, affirmation, prayer, emotional support, and positive parent-child interactions that strengthen confidence, resilience, and purpose. Such parental affirmation complements guidance and discipline by reinforcing positive identity formation and value internalisation.

These biblical demands for parenting reinforce the theoretical position of this study by demonstrating that effective parenting requires a deliberate balance of love and discipline. While nurturing and blessing reflect responsiveness, teaching, training, and discipline provide the structure necessary for behavioural control. In addition, consistent parental instruction and example support the process of value internalisation as explained by Social Learning Theory. The absence of this balance, particularly in indulgent parenting contexts, undermines the development of self-discipline, responsibility, and moral clarity in adolescents. This integration strengthens the argument that parenting must combine warmth with guidance in order to produce morally grounded and socially responsible young people.

6. VALUE SYSTEM AND PARENTAL INDULGENCE

Values are the underlying beliefs and convictions that shape an individual's attitudes, decisions, and behaviour, collectively forming what may be described as value orientation. Adolescents, like all individuals, develop and operate within a value system that influences their thoughts, emotions, judgments, and behavioural choices (Schwartz, 2012; Knafo-Noam et al., 2020). This system is not formed in isolation but develops through continuous interaction with family, peers, school, society, and religious institutions. Among these influences, the family, particularly parents, remains foundational.

Parental influence in value formation begins in early childhood and becomes more critical during adolescence, a stage marked by identity formation and increasing independence. At this point, the quality of parental guidance significantly affects how adolescents internalise values and respond to life situations. Where parenting is intentional and balanced, young people are more likely to develop self-discipline, responsibility, and sound moral judgment. Conversely, weak or inconsistent parental guidance may result in unstable value orientation.

Indulgent parenting, also referred to as permissive parenting, is characterised by high responsiveness and low behavioural control (Huver, 2010; Pinquart, 2021). Parents who adopt this style are often warm, accepting, and emotionally supportive, but they set few boundaries and make limited demands on their children. In many cases, they prioritise maintaining closeness over enforcing discipline, thereby granting considerable freedom with minimal supervision.

While this approach may create an emotionally supportive environment, its implications for value formation are significant. Young people nurtured within highly permissive environments frequently exhibit difficulties in developing self-control, as they are rarely required to operate within clearly defined behavioural limits (Mgbemere & Telles, 2016). This observation is supported by Goagoses et al. (2023), whose meta-analysis found significant

associations between parenting styles and emotion dysregulation in children and adolescents. Since emotional regulation contributes to moral judgment, self-control, and responsible decision-making, adolescents raised in highly permissive environments may experience greater difficulty internalising moral values and behavioural expectations.

As a result, they may exhibit impulsiveness, poor decision-making, and a weak sense of responsibility.

Furthermore, the absence of clearly communicated and consistently enforced moral expectations may contribute to distorted value orientation. Research suggests that adolescents raised within highly permissive parenting environments are more likely to exhibit difficulties with self-regulation, behavioural control, and adherence to social norms, factors that may weaken respect for authority and moral standards (Pinquart, 2017; Goagoses et al., 2023).

Such adolescents may increasingly prioritise personal gratification over responsibility, accountability, and long-term goals (Bornstein et al., 2022). Within the Nigerian context, such tendencies may manifest in behaviours such as examination malpractice, internet fraud, substance abuse, academic indiscipline, and disregard for constituted authority. While these behaviours result from multiple social influences, scholars increasingly recognise that weak parental supervision and inadequate moral guidance create conditions that heighten adolescents' vulnerability to such practices (Chigbu et al., 2021; Saadu, 2023). Consequently, indulgent parenting may indirectly contribute to the erosion of moral values by reducing opportunities for the development of accountability, self-control, and ethical decision-making.

In addition, young people raised under indulgent parenting may find it difficult to cope with real-life demands. Accustomed to excessive freedom and minimal restraint, they may lack the resilience and discipline required to function effectively in structured environments such as education, work, and social responsibility. This often results in dependency, frustration, and difficulty in making responsible life choices.

It is therefore evident that, although indulgent parenting is often motivated by love and a desire to provide comfort, it may inadvertently weaken the development of strong moral values and personal responsibility in adolescents. This supports the theoretical position of this study that parenting characterised by warmth without adequate control undermines moral formation. In contrast, effective parenting requires a balanced integration of love and discipline, freedom and guidance, in order to nurture adolescents who are morally grounded, socially responsible, and capable of making sound life decisions.

7. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM THE NIGERIA CONTEXT

Evidence from Nigeria suggests that parenting practices significantly influence adolescent behaviour and value formation. Chigbu et al. (2021), in a study of adolescents in South-East Nigeria, found that parenting styles play an important role in shaping behavioural outcomes, social adjustment, and moral development. Similarly, Ebute et al. (2020) reported that parenting approaches significantly influence the moral development of secondary school students in Abuja, with structured parental guidance positively associated with desirable moral behaviour. Studies conducted within Nigerian educational settings have also linked inadequate parental supervision to behavioural problems such as examination malpractice, substance abuse, truancy, aggression, and other forms of juvenile delinquency (Saadu, 2023). These findings suggest that adolescents who experience limited behavioural monitoring and weak parental control may be more susceptible to external influences and negative peer pressure.

Further evidence is provided by Okechukwu (2026), who found significant relationships between youth deviance and future criminal tendencies among Nigerian adolescents. The study identified behaviours such as truancy, bullying, extortion, examination malpractice, and substance abuse as important predictors of future criminality. These findings underscore the importance of early moral formation and behavioural regulation during adolescence and suggest that weaknesses in parental supervision and value transmission may contribute to the development of

deviant behavioural patterns among young people. Collectively, these Nigerian studies suggest that adolescent moral decline is not merely an individual problem but is closely connected to family socialisation processes, particularly the quality of parental guidance, supervision, discipline, and value transmission.

Within contemporary Nigerian society, manifestations of weak moral value orientation among adolescents may include involvement in internet fraud, cult-related activities, cyberbullying, sexual promiscuity, disrespect for authority, and a growing preference for material success without corresponding ethical responsibility Akerele, 2026). Although these outcomes cannot be attributed solely to parenting style, existing evidence indicates that indulgent parenting may contribute to such behaviours by weakening the development of self-discipline, accountability, and respect for social norms. These findings support the central argument of this study that parenting characterised by warmth without adequate behavioural control may undermine the moral formation of adolescents and contribute to value erosion within the Nigerian context.

8. CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of parental indulgence on adolescents' moral values and its implications for value formation and behaviour. The findings affirm that parenting plays a decisive role in shaping adolescents' moral orientation, particularly during the critical stage of identity formation, and that the persistence of indulgent practices, characterised by excessive permissiveness and weak discipline, remains a significant concern. Although often motivated by love, such parenting contributes to weakened moral development, as adolescents raised in these environments tend to exhibit poor self-discipline, diminished respect for social and cultural norms, low spiritual commitment, and reduced personal responsibility. The absence of consistent guidance further undermines their capacity for resilience, accountability, and sound judgment. These outcomes reinforce the theoretical position that parenting marked by high warmth without adequate control limits the development of self-regulation and weakens the internalisation of sound values. The Nigerian evidence reviewed in this study demonstrates that parental indulgence may contribute to behavioural challenges such as weak self-discipline, susceptibility to negative peer influence, diminished respect for authority, and other forms of moral decline among adolescents. The study, therefore, concludes that sustainable moral development in adolescents is best achieved when parental care is expressed through a deliberate integration of affection, structure, guidance, and consistent correction.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Parents should adopt a balanced parenting approach that combines warmth, affection, and emotional support with clear expectations, appropriate boundaries, and consistent discipline.
2. Parents should prioritise the moral and spiritual formation of their children through intentional teaching, positive role modelling, family devotions, and active participation in faith-based activities.
3. Parents should deliberately cultivate discipline, responsibility, and accountability in adolescents by providing age-appropriate guidance, monitoring behaviour, and helping young people understand the consequences of their actions.
4. Parents should maintain open and supportive communication with their children in ways that foster trust, mutual respect, and emotional security without compromising parental authority and structure.

5. Faith-based institutions should develop and strengthen programmes that promote moral, spiritual, and social development among adolescents through mentoring, discipleship, counselling, and character-building initiatives.
6. Schools should complement parental efforts by implementing value-based education programmes that reinforce ethical behaviour, responsibility, respect for authority, and positive citizenship.
7. Religious bodies, educational institutions, parents, and community leaders should collaborate to address moral decline among adolescents through coordinated interventions that promote value-based upbringing and responsible youth development.
8. Government agencies and relevant stakeholders should support family-strengthening initiatives through parenting education programmes, public awareness campaigns, and youth development policies that encourage positive moral and social values.

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