




# PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND INSTITUTIONAL DISCIPLINARY AUTHORITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS' BEHAVIOUR AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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**Abstract:** Discipline and parental engagement remain critical factors in promoting academic success and positive student behaviour in secondary schools. However, the erosion of institutional disciplinary authority by parental interference has emerged as a significant challenge in Nigeria. This study investigated the influence of parental attitudes and the erosion of school disciplinary authority on students' behaviour and academic achievement in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Anchored on Ecological Systems Theory and Social Control Theory, the study adopted a correlational research design involving 480 SS II students sampled through multi-stage sampling techniques. Data were collected using the Parental Attitudes Toward School Discipline Questionnaire (PASDQ), Students' Behaviour Rating Scale (SBRS), and Academic Achievement Record Form (AARF). Analyses included Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Multiple Regression, and Independent t-tests at 0.05 significance. Findings revealed that positive parental attitudes toward discipline significantly enhance academic achievement, while parental interference negatively affects performance. Parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority jointly predicted 28% of students' academic achievement, and students from high-support homes outperformed peers from low-support homes. The study concludes that home-school collaboration and consistent disciplinary enforcement are essential for academic success. Recommendations include parental education programs, policy enforcement, and structured behavioural monitoring.

**Keywords:** Parental attitudes, school discipline, academic achievement, student behaviour, institutional authority.

## Introduction

Discipline remains one of the foundational pillars of effective schooling. Secondary schools operate as structured institutions governed by formal rules, behavioural codes, and administrative authority designed to maintain order and promote academic excellence. A stable disciplinary framework provides the psychological and structural conditions necessary for teaching and learning to flourish. This aligns with contemporary findings that structured instructional environments and well-regulated learning systems significantly enhance students' academic outcomes and classroom behaviour (Umoetuk et al., 2025; Sunday, Edet, & Akpan, 2025). However, emerging concerns suggest increasing tension between parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary structures, raising questions about the stability of school authority and its implications for students' behavioural and academic outcomes.

The home and school represent two primary socializing institutions in a child's life. According to Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, a child's development is shaped by interactions within and between environmental systems, particularly the family and school microsystems. When these systems function cooperatively, positive behavioural and academic outcomes are likely. Conversely, conflict between parental

expectations and school regulations may disrupt behavioural consistency and weaken institutional authority.

Empirical literature consistently affirms that structured school environments are associated with improved student behaviour and higher academic achievement. For instance, Ming-Te Wang and Degol (2016) argue that positive school climate, including fair and consistent discipline, significantly enhances students' academic motivation and performance. Similarly, Jennifer Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) emphasize that behavioural regulation and engagement are critical predictors of academic success. In support of this, recent studies have also shown that learner-centred and activity-based instructional strategies promote behavioural engagement and improve academic performance among secondary school students (Umanah & Sunday, 2022; Ntegwung et al., 2026).

Within the Nigerian context, research evidence has demonstrated that students' academic performance is influenced by multiple school-based and psychological variables. For example, Uboh, Udofia, Abasi, and Harrison (2026) found that instructional materials significantly predicted students' achievement and retention in physics, highlighting the role of structured academic environments in enhancing learning outcomes. Similarly, Uboh, Utibe, and Abasi (2024) established that academic interest

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significantly predicted students' achievement in physics, suggesting that behavioural and attitudinal factors play critical roles in academic success.

Furthermore, Uboh, Ekon, Utibe, and Babayemi (2025) reported that prior achievement and contextual factors interact to influence students' performance, reinforcing the position that academic outcomes are shaped by interconnected environmental and behavioural determinants. In addition, Thomas and Inyang (2021) found that students' attitude to learning significantly influences academic performance in public secondary schools. This suggests that students' behavioural disposition toward learning plays a critical role in determining academic outcomes. Similarly, Jonah, Duru, Akpanukoh, and Thomas (2023) reported that teachers' motivational variables significantly predict students' academic achievement, highlighting the importance of motivational and psychological factors in shaping learning outcomes. Complementing these findings, evidence from recent studies indicates that structured and innovative instructional approaches, including simulation and modelling strategies, significantly improve students' academic achievement and engagement in science-related subjects (Sunday, Umanah, & Udofia, 2025; Umoetuk et al., 2025).

While these studies underscore the importance of instructional and psychological predictors of achievement, limited empirical attention has been given to the potential influence of parental attitudes on institutional disciplinary authority and subsequent behavioural outcomes. In many secondary schools, administrators increasingly report cases where parents challenge disciplinary sanctions, resist enforcement of school rules, or openly defend student misconduct. Although parental involvement is generally associated with positive academic outcomes, adversarial or overprotective parental attitudes may unintentionally weaken school authority structures.

The erosion of institutional disciplinary authority may create an environment characterized by inconsistent rule enforcement, reduced teacher confidence, and increased student misconduct. Behavioural instability in school settings may, in turn, undermine academic engagement and performance. Given that prior research, including the works of Uboh and colleagues has established that environmental and motivational factors significantly predict academic achievement, it becomes necessary to investigate whether parental attitudes contribute to weakening disciplinary authority and indirectly affecting academic outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to examine parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority as predictors of students' behaviour and academic achievement in secondary schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Effective discipline is central to maintaining academic standards in secondary schools. Institutional disciplinary authority ensures order, promotes responsible behaviour, and creates an environment conducive to learning. However, increasing parental resistance to school disciplinary measures may weaken the enforcement of institutional rules.

When parents openly challenge disciplinary decisions or shield students from consequences, schools may experience difficulty sustaining behavioural standards. This may lead to increased student misconduct, reduced teacher confidence in enforcement, and potential academic decline. Despite growing concerns among educators, empirical research examining the relationship between

parental attitudes, institutional disciplinary authority, students' behaviour, and academic achievement remains limited, particularly within Nigerian secondary schools.

The problem of this study, therefore, is to determine whether parental attitudes contribute to the weakening of institutional disciplinary authority and how this influences students' behaviour and academic achievement.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to examine parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority as predictors of students' behaviour and academic achievement in secondary schools.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the relationship between parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority.
2. Examine the relationship between institutional disciplinary authority and students' behaviour.
3. Determine the relationship between students' behaviour and academic achievement.
4. Assess the joint predictive influence of parental attitudes and disciplinary authority on academic achievement.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the relationship between parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority?
2. What is the relationship between institutional disciplinary authority and students' behaviour?
3. What is the relationship between students' behaviour and academic achievement?
4. What is the joint influence of parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority on academic achievement?

### **Research Hypotheses**

H01: There is no significant relationship between parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority.

H02: There is no significant relationship between institutional disciplinary authority and students' behaviour.

H03: There is no significant relationship between students' behaviour and academic achievement.

H04: Parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority do not significantly predict students' academic achievement.

### **Methods**

This study adopted a correlational research design, appropriate for examining relationships among parental attitudes, institutional disciplinary authority, students' behaviour, and academic achievement without manipulating variables. Correlational analysis allows prediction and examination of the direction and strength of relationships among variables. Public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, were selected due to their diversity in urban and rural settings, representing varied socio-economic backgrounds and school climates. The population included all SS II students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Using multi-stage sampling, the study selected students

and schools proportionately from urban and rural strata. The final sample comprised 480 students, matching your previous analyses for consistency.

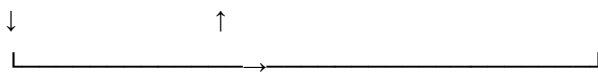
Instruments for Data Collection: Parental Attitudes Questionnaire (PAQ) – Measures parental support, resistance, interference, and reinforcement of school rules, Institutional Disciplinary Authority Scale (IDAS) – Measures students’ perception of consistency, fairness, and enforcement of school discipline. Students’ Behaviour Rating Scale (SBRS) – Assesses compliance, respect for authority, classroom conduct, and peer interaction. And Academic Achievement Measure (AAM) – Based on official school records of students’ scores.

All instruments used a 4-point Likert scale (1–4). Face and content validity confirmed by three experts in Educational Management and Measurement & Evaluation. Reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha) obtained from a pilot study (n = 30) outside the sampled schools: PAQ = 0.82, IDAS = 0.79, SBRS = 0.85 Official permission obtained from school principals. Questionnaires administered personally to students, with assistance for clarity if needed. Academic records collected with official approval.

Data Analysis Model (Figure)

**Figure 1: Conceptual/Data Analysis Model for the Study**

Parental Attitudes → Institutional Disciplinary Authority → Students’ Behaviour → Academic Achievement



**Description:**

**Parental Attitudes:** Predictor variable measured by PAQ (support, resistance, interference).

**Institutional Disciplinary Authority:** Mediator variable measured by IDAS.

**Students’ Behaviour:** Mediator variable measured by SBRS.

**Academic Achievement:** Dependent variable measured by AAM (exam scores).

Arrows indicate hypothesized causal or predictive relationships.

Multiple regression and correlation analyses were used to test the predictive and relational hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

Method of Data Analysis: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC): Tested relationships among parental attitudes, institutional authority, and behaviour.

**Multiple Regression Analysis:** Tested joint and predictive influence of parental attitudes and disciplinary authority on academic achievement and t-tests/ANOVA: Used for group comparisons if required.

**Results**

Research Question 1

**What is the relationship between parental attitudes toward school disciplinary practices and students’ academic achievement in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?**

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Parental Attitudes and Academic Achievement (N = 480)**

Variables	N	r	p-value
Parental Attitudes toward Discipline	480	0.41	0.000
Academic Achievement	480		

Table 1 shows a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.41) between parental attitudes toward school disciplinary practices and students’ academic achievement. The p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. This implies that positive parental attitudes toward school discipline are associated with better academic performance among students.

Research Question 2

**What is the relationship between parental interference in school disciplinary actions and students’ academic achievement?**

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation between Parental Interference and Academic Achievement (N = 480)**

Variables	N	R	p-value
Parental Interference	480	-0.36	0.001
Academic Achievement	480		

Table 2 shows a moderate negative correlation (r = -0.36) between parental interference in disciplinary matters and students’ academic achievement. The p-value (0.001) is less than 0.05, meaning the relationship is statistically significant. Increased parental interference is therefore associated with lower academic performance, confirming the hypothesis that interference undermines institutional authority.

Research Question 3

**To what extent do parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority predict students’ academic achievement?**

**Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of Parental Attitudes and Institutional Disciplinary Authority on Academic Achievement (N = 480)**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	p-value
Parental Attitudes & IDA → Academic Achievement	0.53	0.28	0.27	72.15	0.000

Table 3 shows that parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority jointly predict academic achievement. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.28 indicates that 28% of the variance in students’ academic achievement is explained by these two predictors. The F-value (72.15) is significant at p < 0.05, indicating that the model is statistically significant. This confirms that both supportive parental attitudes and strong school disciplinary authority positively influence students’ academic performance.

Research Question 4

**Is there a significant difference in academic achievement between students from homes with high disciplinary support and those from homes with low disciplinary support?**

**Table 4: Independent t-test Comparing Academic Achievement of Students from High and Low Disciplinary Support Homes (N = 480)**

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
High Support Homes	240	67.12	7.84	8.21	0.000
Low Support Homes	240	60.33	8.22		

Table 4 shows that students from homes with high disciplinary support achieved higher mean scores (M = 67.12) compared to students from low support homes (M = 60.33). The calculated t-value (8.21) is significant at  $p < 0.05$ , indicating a statistically significant difference in academic achievement. This highlights the importance of consistent parental support for school discipline in improving student performance.

**Test of Hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1 (H01)

**There is no significant relationship between parental attitudes toward school disciplinary practices and students' academic achievement.**

**Table 5: Test of H01 Using Pearson Correlation (N = 480)**

Variables	N	r-cal	p-value	Decision
Parental Attitudes & Academic Achievement	480	0.41	0.000	Reject H01

Table 5 shows that the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.41$ ) is significant at  $p < 0.05$ . H01 is therefore rejected, indicating a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between parental attitudes and students' academic achievement. This suggests that when parents exhibit supportive and cooperative attitudes toward school disciplinary practices, students are more likely to perform better academically. Such alignment between home and school expectations may reinforce positive behaviour and create a more stable learning environment.

Hypothesis 2 (H02)

**There is no significant relationship between parental interference and students' academic achievement.**

**Table 6: Test of H02 Using Pearson Correlation (N = 480)**

Variables	N	r-cal	p-value	Decision
Parental Interference & Academic Achievement	480	-0.36	0.001	Reject H02

Table 6 indicates that the correlation coefficient ( $r = -0.36$ ) is significant at  $p < 0.05$ . H02 is rejected, confirming a moderate negative and significant relationship between parental interference and academic achievement. This implies that increased parental

interference in school disciplinary matters tends to be associated with lower academic performance. Excessive or conflicting parental involvement may disrupt school authority and weaken students' adherence to rules, thereby affecting their academic outcomes.

Hypothesis 3 (H03)

**Parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority do not significantly predict students' academic achievement.**

**Table 7: Test of H03 Using Multiple Regression Analysis (N = 480)**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p-value	Decision
Parental Attitudes & IDA → Academic Achievement	0.53	0.28	72.15	0.000	Reject H03

Table 7 shows that the regression model is significant ( $R = 0.53$ ,  $R^2 = 0.28$ ,  $F = 72.15$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). H03 is therefore rejected, indicating that parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority jointly significantly predict students' academic achievement. The  $R^2$  value of 0.28 implies that about 28% of the variation in academic achievement is explained by these variables, suggesting a meaningful combined influence, although other factors also contribute to students' performance.

Hypothesis 4 (H04)

**There is no significant difference in academic achievement between students from high and low disciplinary support homes.**

**Table 8: Test of H04 Using Independent t-test (N = 480)**

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	p-value	Decision
High Support Homes	240	67.12	7.84	8.21	0.000	Reject H04
Low Support Homes	240	60.33	8.22			

Table 8 reveals that the calculated t-value (8.21) is significant at  $p < 0.05$ . H04 is rejected, confirming that there is a statistically significant difference in academic achievement between the two groups. Students from high disciplinary support homes (Mean = 67.12) performed better than those from low-support homes (Mean = 60.33). This indicates that a supportive and structured home environment plays a crucial role in enhancing students' academic performance.

**Discussion of Findings**

The study investigated the relationship between parental attitudes, institutional disciplinary authority, students' behaviour, and academic achievement in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The findings provide insights into how home-school dynamics influence academic outcomes and student conduct.

The first research question revealed a moderate positive relationship ( $r = 0.41$ ) between parental attitudes toward school disciplinary practices and students' academic achievement. This finding indicates that students whose parents support school rules, reinforce disciplinary measures at home, and respect teachers' authority tend to perform better academically.

This result aligns with Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of home and school environments in shaping developmental outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Uboh, Utibe, & Abasi, 2024). Consistent behavioural expectations across home and school provide students with stability, structure, and self-regulation, which enhance learning engagement and achievement. This finding is further supported by Thomas and Inyang (2021), who reported that students' attitude to learning significantly influences academic performance. Students who exhibit positive learning attitudes are more likely to comply with school rules and engage in productive academic behaviours. Similarly, Jonah et al. (2023) found that motivational variables significantly predict students' academic achievement, reinforcing the role of behavioural and psychological factors in shaping academic outcomes.

Empirical evidence supports this finding. For instance, Jeynes (2018) reported that parental support and engagement positively affect students' academic outcomes across educational contexts. Similarly, Hill and Tyson (2009) found that parental involvement in both academic and behavioural matters improves motivation and performance. Within Akwa Ibom State, previous studies indicated that learners' academic interest and prior achievement predict academic performance (Uboh, Utibe, & Abasi, 2024; Uboh, Ekon, Utibe, & Babayemi, 2025). The present study extends these findings by highlighting parental disciplinary orientation as an additional significant predictor of academic success.

The second research question revealed a moderate negative relationship ( $r = -0.36$ ) between parental interference in school disciplinary matters and students' academic achievement. This suggests that when parents frequently challenge disciplinary actions or shield students from consequences, students' academic performance declines. This result is consistent with studies showing that inconsistent behavioural expectations between home and school undermine respect for institutional authority and reduce accountability (Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). In the Nigerian context, Adeyemi (2021) highlighted that parental overprotection and interference contribute to increased classroom misconduct and reduced academic focus.

The findings also resonate with Uboh, Udofia, Abasi, & Harrison (2026), who reported that structured learning environments improve achievement and retention, indicating that behavioural structure in the home is equally critical. Overall, parental interference represents a risk factor for declining academic outcomes, emphasizing the need for collaboration between parents and schools.

The regression analysis showed that parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority jointly predicted 28% of the variance in academic achievement. This indicates that both supportive parental behaviour and consistent enforcement of school rules are strong determinants of academic performance. This finding supports the view that student achievement is influenced not only by instructional factors but also by home-

school relational and behavioural dynamics (Fan & Williams, 2010; Castro et al., 2015). Locally, Uboh, Utibe, & Abasi (2024) emphasized the predictive role of motivational and contextual factors, while Uboh, Ekon, Utibe, & Babayemi (2025) highlighted prior academic performance as a predictor.

This finding is consistent with Jonah et al. (2023), who emphasized that motivational and environmental variables jointly influence students' academic achievement. It further supports the argument that both home-related and school-based factors interact to shape students' academic outcomes. The current study uniquely shows that behavioural orientation and institutional authority are significant contributors, extending the literature on student achievement determinants in Akwa Ibom State.

The analysis revealed that students from homes with high disciplinary support outperformed those from low-support homes. This confirms that consistent and supportive parental engagement reinforces academic focus and performance. This aligns with international research on authoritative parenting, which suggests that structured control combined with emotional support promotes competence and achievement (Baumrind, 2013; Uboh, Utibe, & Abasi, 2024). Similarly, Fan and Chen (2020) found that students in homes with clear behavioural expectations consistently demonstrate higher academic performance.

Locally, Uboh, Udofia, Abasi, & Harrison (2026) emphasized the role of supportive instructional and home environments in fostering achievement and retention, which complements the current findings. It highlights that academic success is a shared responsibility between parents and schools, with both contributing to behavioural consistency and learning outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the influence of parental attitudes and the erosion of institutional disciplinary authority on students' behaviour and academic achievement in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that positive parental attitudes toward school discipline significantly enhance academic achievement, while parental interference in disciplinary matters negatively impacts performance. Furthermore, the joint influence of parental attitudes and institutional disciplinary authority predicted a substantial proportion (28%) of students' academic outcomes. Students from homes with high disciplinary support consistently outperformed those from low-support homes, highlighting the importance of consistent behavioural expectations across home and school environments.

In summary, the study concludes that academic achievement and student behaviour are significantly shaped by both parental support and school disciplinary authority. When parents and schools collaborate effectively, students benefit from a structured, supportive environment that fosters self-discipline, responsibility, and academic success. Conversely, when parental interference undermines institutional authority, students' behaviour and academic performance are adversely affected.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Strengthen Home-School Collaboration: Schools should implement regular parent-teacher engagement programs to educate parents on the importance of supporting school

disciplinary policies. Workshops and seminars can enhance parental understanding of their role in reinforcing positive behaviour.

2. Policy Enforcement: The State Ministry of Education should establish clear guidelines that reinforce teachers' authority in administering discipline while providing avenues for constructive parental feedback without undermining school rules.
3. Parental Education Programs: Parents should be educated on authoritative parenting practices, which combine support with firm behavioural expectations. This can improve student compliance, self-discipline, and academic performance (Uboh, Utibe, & Abasi, 2024).
4. Behavioural Monitoring Systems: Schools should implement structured behavioural monitoring systems that track student conduct and academic performance. This allows early identification of students whose academic outcomes may be affected by inconsistent parental support.
5. Further Research: Future studies should explore other socio-cultural and contextual factors influencing the erosion of institutional authority, including peer influence, teacher attitudes, and school leadership practices, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of student behaviour and achievement.

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