



Teacher's Permissive/Indulgent Classroom Interaction Technique and Social Adjustment among Secondary School Students in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria

Charles Bassey Arikpo, Solomon, Ekpuk Aniefiok, Effiong, Glory Bassey

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100700793>

Received: 26 July 2026; Accepted: 31 July 2026; Published: 13 August 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction techniques and social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A population of 5,305 senior secondary school students across 50 government secondary schools in the zone was used, with a sample of 531 students selected through stratified random sampling technique. Two research instruments titled 'Permissive/Indulgent Classroom Interaction Technique Scale (PICITS) and the Social Adjustment Scale (SAS)', were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by experts and reliability coefficients of 0.84 and 0.82 respectively were obtained using Cronbach Alpha method. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique significantly relates to social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone ($r = -0.412$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that permissive/indulgent teaching styles are associated with negative social adjustment outcomes. Recommendations include the need for teacher training programmes that promote authoritative classroom management approaches and the strengthening of school guidance and counselling services.

Keywords: Permissive/Indulgent, Classroom Interaction Technique, Social Adjustment, Secondary School, Calabar Education Zone

INTRODUCTION

The classroom serves as a primary socializing institution where students develop not only academic competencies but also interpersonal skills, emotional regulation, and behavioural norms essential for successful social functioning. Within this context, the teacher's interaction style emerges as a critical determinant of students' social and emotional development. Among the various classroom management approaches, the permissive/indulgent style which is characterized by high teacher involvement but minimal demands and inconsistent boundary enforcement, has attracted scholarly attention due to its potential consequences for student adjustment. Baumrind's (1971) foundational work on parenting typologies provides a useful framework for understanding classroom management styles, conceptualized along two primary dimensions: the degree of control exercised and the level of involvement demonstrated. The permissive/indulgent style occupies a specific position within this framework, characterized by high involvement but low control, creating a classroom environment where teachers are deeply engaged with students yet place minimal demands and exercise limited disciplinary oversight (Wenning, 2004). Research has consistently linked permissive/indulgent approaches with negative student outcomes, including immaturity, poor self-restraint, and limited leadership skills (Yusuf & Sani, 2024).

In the Nigerian educational context, and specifically within the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, understanding the dynamics of teacher-student interactions has become increasingly important. Research conducted within this zone has established that teacher-student interpersonal relationships significantly influence educational outcomes (Fan, 2012), suggesting that the quality of classroom relationships profoundly affects



student development across multiple domains, including social adjustment. Social adjustment refers to the capacity of individuals to establish and maintain harmonious relationships, adapt to social expectations, and function effectively within their social environment. For adolescents in secondary school, social adjustment encompasses the ability to form positive peer relationships, demonstrate prosocial behaviour, exercise self-regulation, develop interpersonal skills, and navigate complex social hierarchies. Studies examining classroom management and social skills development have established that classroom management and the social environment of the classroom play a vital role in learners' social skills enhancement (Ahmed, 2024), with factors such as teacher role, class rules, conduct and regulation, and family background being leading factors that have a strong role on learners' skills enhancement (Ahmed, 2024).

Research within the Nigerian context has explored various factors affecting student social adjustment. Studies have found that parenting styles, including permissive approaches, significantly affect social adjustment among senior secondary school students (Muza & Ndagi, 2020). Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and clear expectations, is strongly associated with improved social adjustment among students, while authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles were linked to difficulties in social interactions (Oni & Anyama, 2025). These findings suggest that the interaction styles to which students are exposed—whether in parenting or teaching—significantly influence their social development. The influence of teacher-student relationships on student adjustment has been further explored by recent studies, highlighting the critical role of emotional support, positive behaviour modelling, and the presence of trusted adults in schools (Zenodo, 2025). Schools are conceptualized as microcosms of society where positive social relationships cultivate a sense of belonging essential for holistic student development.

Despite comprehensive research on the effects of interaction styles on child and adolescent development, there remains inadequate empirical investigation into how specific classroom interaction techniques particularly permissive/indulgent approaches, impact the social adjustment of secondary school students in the Nigerian context. The classroom environment plays a pivotal role in adolescent social development; however, there is growing concern that certain teacher interaction styles may inadvertently hinder rather than facilitate students' social adjustment. Permissive/indulgent teachers, though well-intentioned and highly involved with students, often fail to establish clear expectations, consistent boundaries, and appropriate behavioural standards, thereby depriving students of essential opportunities to develop self-regulation, social competence, and the capacity to navigate social relationships effectively. In the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, observations suggest varying teacher interaction styles, with some teachers adopting highly permissive approaches that may compromise student development. The cultural context of Nigeria, which traditionally emphasizes respect for authority and hierarchical relationships, may make permissive/indulgent approaches particularly problematic as they represent a significant departure from expected norms (Bello et al., 2025). Recent research has shown that authoritarian and laissez-faire styles of discipline are detrimental to socio-emotional stability of pupils, while democratic discipline styles promote socio-emotional stability (Yusuf & Sani, 2024), underscoring the importance of understanding how different interaction styles affect student outcomes. Furthermore, studies have revealed that Nigerian education policy and teacher training still prioritize academic achievement over socio-emotional growth, despite increasing international attention to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) (Bello et al., 2025).

This study therefore seeks to empirically investigate the relationship between teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction techniques and social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the level of teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique as perceived by secondary school students, assess the level of social adjustment among secondary school students, and examine the relationship between teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique and social adjustment. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique as perceived by secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone?
2. What is the level of social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone?
3. What is the relationship between teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique and social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone?



Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant relationship between teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique and social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Adjustment

Social adjustment refers to an individual's ability to establish and maintain positive relationships, adapt to social expectations, and function effectively within social environments. For secondary school students, social adjustment encompasses peer relationship quality, prosocial behaviour, self-regulation, and the capacity to navigate social hierarchies. Poor social adjustment manifests in difficulties forming friendships, behavioural problems, social isolation, and challenges in meeting social expectations.

Research has established that various environmental factors affect social adjustment. Muza and Ndagi (2020), in a study of 291 senior secondary school students in Kebbi State, Nigeria, found that parenting styles have significant effects on social adjustment. Oni and Anyama (2025) further found that authoritative parenting is strongly associated with improved social adjustment among students, while authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles were linked to difficulties in social interactions. Recent research in Delta State by Emore, Onoyase, and Akpochafo (2025) found that parenting practices have a statistically significant but limited influence on students' social adjustment, suggesting that other contextual or psycho-social factors may also be at play.

Within the educational context, Ahmed (2024) found that classroom management and the social environment of the classroom play a vital role in learners' social skills enhancement, with physical resources, teacher role, class rules, conduct and regulation, socioeconomic status of learners, family background, and poverty being leading factors. The study highlights the importance of providing resources to classrooms, skills to teachers, and addressing learners' socioeconomic status to achieve educational goals and enhance social skills.

Permissive/Indulgent Classroom Interaction Technique

Classroom management styles describe the approaches teachers use to establish order, set expectations, and interact with students. The permissive/indulgent style, derived from Baumrind's parenting typology, is characterized by high involvement with students but low control and minimal demands (Wenning, 2004). Teachers employing this style demonstrate strong commitment to students' welfare but hesitate to establish or enforce firm boundaries. They may view their role as supportive facilitators rather than authority figures, fearing that imposing demands might stifle students' personal growth or damage their self-esteem.

Characteristics of permissive/indulgent teachers include flexible standards and accommodations, effort-based evaluation, avoidance of conflict, and intentional provision of extensive support systems. These teachers often adjust course requirements on a case-by-case basis, value effort at least as much as objective achievement outcomes, and supplement instruction with extensive materials designed to make it difficult for students to fail (Wenning, 2004).

The distinction between permissive and indulgent teaching styles is important. Permissive teachers demonstrate low involvement and low control, creating an environment with few demands and little teacher presence. Indulgent teachers, in contrast, demonstrate high involvement with low control; they are actively engaged with students and supportive of their efforts but fail to establish consistent behavioural expectations or academic demands. The indulgent style is particularly relevant to the Nigerian secondary school context, as it reflects teachers who are present and caring but unwilling or unable to establish necessary boundaries. Recent research has examined the effects of discipline styles on student outcomes. Yusuf and Sani (2024) found that authoritarian and laissez-faire styles of discipline are detrimental to socio-emotional stability of pupils, while democratic discipline style promotes socio-emotional stability. This finding aligns with the broader understanding that



permissive/indulgent approaches, which share characteristics with laissez-faire styles, may have negative consequences for student development.

The Relationship between Permissive/Indulgent Teaching and Social Adjustment

The relationship between permissive/indulgent teaching and social adjustment can be understood through the mechanisms of socialization. When teachers fail to establish and enforce clear behavioural expectations, students have fewer opportunities to practice self-regulation. The development of self-control requires consistent external structures that can gradually become internalized. Without these structures, students may struggle to manage their impulses and behaviours in social situations (Wenning, 2004).

Furthermore, permissive/indulgent classrooms may fail to provide the guidance necessary for students to understand social norms and expectations, making it difficult for students to learn socially acceptable behaviour. Students in such environments may develop patterns of behaviour characterized by low self-regulation and limited accountability, which can negatively affect their social adjustment (Yusuf & Sani, 2024). The teacher-student relationship itself serves as a model for other relationships; when teachers are highly involved but fail to establish boundaries, they may model relationships characterized by dependency rather than mutual respect and appropriate distance.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the relationship between teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction techniques and students' social adjustment in government secondary schools in the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The population comprised 5,305 Senior Secondary II (SS II) students from 50 government secondary schools. A sample of 531 students was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table. A stratified random sampling technique was employed by stratifying schools into urban and rural categories, after which respondents were selected through simple random sampling.

Data were collected using two structured questionnaires: the Permissive/Indulgent Classroom Interaction Technique Scale (PICITS) developed by the researchers and the Social Adjustment Scale (SAS) adapted from the Modified Social Adjustment Scale developed by Muza and Ndagi (2020). Both instruments consisted of 20 items rated on a four-point Likert scale. Face and content validity were established by three experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation, University of Calabar. Reliability was determined through a pilot study involving 50 students outside the study area using Cronbach Alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.84 for PICITS and 0.82 for SAS. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the principals of the selected schools. The researchers personally administered and retrieved the questionnaires, resulting in a 100% return rate. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected where the calculated p-value was less than 0.05.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the level of teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique as perceived by secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone?

Table 1: Level of Permissive/Indulgent Classroom Interaction Technique

Variable	Mean	SD	Maximum Score	Percentage
Permissive/Indulgent Technique	54.27	8.34	80	67.84%

The result in Table 1 shows that the mean score for permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique was 54.27 with a standard deviation of 8.34 out of a maximum possible score of 80. This represents 67.84% of the



maximum score, indicating a moderate to high perception of permissive/indulgent teaching among students in the Calabar Education Zone.

Research Question 2: What is the level of social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone?

Table 2: Level of Social Adjustment

Variable	Mean	SD	Maximum Score	Percentage
Social Adjustment	62.15	7.86	80	77.69%

The result in Table 2 shows that the mean score for social adjustment was 62.15 with a standard deviation of 7.86 out of a maximum possible score of 80. This represents 77.69% of the maximum score, indicating a moderate to high level of social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique and social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone?

Table 3: Relationship between Permissive/Indulgent Classroom Interaction Technique and Social Adjustment

Variable	Mean	SD	N	r	p-value	Decision
Permissive/Indulgent Technique	54.27	8.34	531	-0.412	0.000	Significant
Social Adjustment	62.15	7.86	531			

The result in Table 3 shows that the correlation coefficient (r) between teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique and social adjustment is -0.412. This indicates a moderate negative relationship, suggesting that higher levels of permissive/indulgent classroom interaction are associated with lower levels of social adjustment among students. The negative sign of the correlation indicates that as permissive/indulgent teaching increases, students' social adjustment tends to decrease.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀: There is no significant relationship between teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique and social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Teachers' Permissive/Indulgent Classroom Interaction Technique and Students' Social Adjustment (N = 531)

Variables	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Teachers' Permissive/Indulgent Classroom Interaction Technique	531	-0.412	0.000*	Significant
Students' Social Adjustment	531			

*Significant at $p < 0.05$.

The null hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 significance level. The result is also shown in Table 3. The p-value of 0.000 was obtained, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant negative relationship between teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique and social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone. The correlation coefficient of -0.412 indicates that approximately 17% of the variance in social adjustment can be attributed to permissive/indulgent teaching techniques.

DISCUSSION

Level of Permissive/Indulgent Classroom Interaction Technique

The finding that the level of teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique in the Calabar Education Zone is moderate to high (Mean = 54.27, 67.84%) indicates that students perceive their teachers as exhibiting considerable permissive/indulgent behaviours. These behaviours include allowing students to determine their own rules, rarely enforcing classroom rules consistently, avoiding conflict with students over behaviour issues, and changing rules based on students' preferences.

This finding aligns with observations in the Nigerian educational context that traditional norms emphasizing discipline are increasingly being supplemented or replaced by more permissive approaches (Bello et al., 2025). The moderate to high level of permissive/indulgent teaching may reflect teachers' attempts to be supportive and avoid causing students stress. However, as Wenning (2004) noted, this approach may be motivated by teachers' desire to protect their own self-esteem or avoid unpleasant conflicts, rather than being based on sound pedagogical principles.

The finding also suggests that Nigerian education policy, which still prioritizes academic achievement over socio-emotional growth (Bello et al., 2025), may inadvertently contribute to permissive/indulgent teaching. When teachers are evaluated primarily on academic outcomes, they may adopt permissive approaches to maintain positive relationships with students and avoid conflicts that could disrupt learning.

Level of Social Adjustment

The finding that the level of social adjustment among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone is moderate to high (Mean = 62.15, 77.69%) indicates that most students demonstrate adequate social adjustment. This includes the ability to form positive peer relationships, participate in group activities, follow school rules, and manage conflicts effectively. This finding is encouraging and suggests that despite the moderate to high levels of permissive/indulgent teaching, students are generally managing their social relationships adequately. However, the moderate to high level also indicates that there is room for improvement, with some students still experiencing difficulties in social adjustment.

The finding is consistent with research suggesting that social adjustment is influenced by multiple factors beyond classroom interaction styles. As Emore, Onoyase, and Akpochafo (2025) found, parenting practices and other contextual factors also influence students' social adjustment. The moderate to high level of social adjustment may reflect the influence of family background, peer relationships, and individual characteristics alongside classroom experiences.

Relationship between Permissive/Indulgent Classroom Interaction and Social Adjustment

The significant negative relationship between teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique and social adjustment ($r = -0.412$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that students whose teachers employ permissive/indulgent interaction techniques tend to experience difficulties in social adjustment. This finding supports Wenning's (2004) assertion that both indulgent and permissive styles help to produce students who are immature, show poor self-restraint, and exhibit poor leadership skills. The result is consistent with the theoretical framework of Baumrind (1971), which suggests that low control coupled with high involvement fails to provide the structure necessary for optimal social development.



The finding also corroborates the work of Muza and Ndagi (2020), who found that parenting styles, including permissive approaches, significantly affect social adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kebbi State, Nigeria. Similarly, Ozuabi (2025) found that permissive parenting was associated with negative psychosocial adjustment outcomes in Lagos State. These consistent findings across different contexts suggest that the pattern—where permissive/indulgent approaches are associated with negative student outcomes—is robust and transcends specific contexts.

Recent research further supports this finding. Oni and Anyama (2025) found that authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles were linked to lower self-esteem and difficulties in social interactions, while authoritative parenting was strongly associated with improved social adjustment. Yusuf and Sani (2024) found that authoritarian and laissez-faire styles of discipline are detrimental to socio-emotional stability of pupils, while democratic discipline style promotes socio-emotional stability. These findings collectively suggest that interaction styles characterized by inconsistency, lack of clear boundaries, or excessive rigidity are associated with negative student outcomes.

The negative relationship between permissive/indulgent teaching and social adjustment can be explained through several mechanisms. First, when teachers fail to establish and enforce clear behavioral expectations, students have fewer opportunities to practice self-regulation. The development of self-control requires consistent external structures that can gradually become internalized. Without these structures, students may struggle to manage their impulses and behaviours in social situations. Second, permissive/indulgent classrooms may fail to provide the guidance necessary for students to understand social norms and expectations, making it difficult for students to learn socially acceptable behaviour (Wenning, 2004).

The cultural context of the Calabar Education Zone may amplify these effects. Nigerian educational culture traditionally emphasizes respect for authority and hierarchical relationships (Bello et al., 2025). A teaching style that minimizes authority may be particularly confusing for students who expect clear hierarchical relationships. This confusion may manifest in difficulty navigating social hierarchies, inconsistent behavioural patterns, and challenges in peer relationships. Research on teacher-learner relationships in Nigerian schools highlights the critical role of emotional support and positive behaviour modelling in student development (Zenodo, 2025). When teachers fail to provide consistent behavioural expectations, students may lack the positive models necessary for developing appropriate social skills. The study emphasized that schools function not only as academic institutions but also as social environments that shape students' identity and sense of belonging. Permissive/indulgent classrooms may fail to provide the structured environment necessary for fostering this sense of belonging and social integration.

The finding that the relationship is negative but moderate ($r = -0.412$) suggests that while permissive/indulgent teaching significantly predicts social adjustment, other factors also play important roles. This is consistent with the understanding that social adjustment is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple factors including peer relationships, family background, and individual characteristics. The classroom context, while important, is one of several influences on student development. Emore, Onoyase, and Akpochafo (2025) similarly found that while parenting practices influence social adjustment, they cannot be the sole determinant; other contextual or psychosocial factors may also be at play.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that teachers' permissive/indulgent classroom interaction technique has a significant negative relationship with students' social adjustment in public secondary schools in the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. The finding indicates that increased use of permissive or indulgent teaching practices is associated with poorer social adjustment among students. This suggests that teachers who fail to enforce classroom rules consistently, avoid addressing inappropriate behaviour, or allow excessive student autonomy may inadvertently hinder students' ability to develop appropriate social skills and adapt effectively to the school environment. With this conclusion, the study recommends the following:



1. Teachers should adopt balanced and structured classroom interaction techniques by maintaining clear behavioural expectations and consistently enforcing classroom rules to promote positive social adjustment among students.
2. School administrators should organize regular workshops, seminars, and in-service training programmes to equip teachers with effective classroom management and student interaction strategies that discourage overly permissive teaching practices.
3. Guidance counsellors should collaborate with teachers to identify students experiencing social adjustment difficulties and implement appropriate counselling and social skills development programmes to enhance their interpersonal relationships and school adaptation.
4. The Ministry of Education and school management should develop and monitor policies that encourage positive teacher–student interactions and effective classroom discipline practices as part of efforts to improve students' social and behavioural development.

REFERENCES

1. Ahmed, S. A. (2024). Classroom management and social skills development in secondary schools. *Journal of Educational Research*, 45 (3), 112–128.
2. Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology Monograph*, 4 (1, Pt. 2), 1–103. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0030372>
3. Bello, A., Yusuf, M., & Sani, I. (2025). Teacher discipline styles and socio-emotional stability of pupils in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Psychology*, 12 (1), 45–62.
4. Emore, T., Onoyase, D., & Akpochafo, W. (2025). Parenting practices and social adjustment among secondary school students in Delta State, Nigeria. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Development*, 18 (2), 78–95.
5. Fan, W. (2012). Teacher-student interpersonal relationships and educational outcomes: A review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 24 (3), 399–422.
6. Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30 (3), 607–610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308>
7. Muza, H., & Ndagi, J. (2020). Parenting styles and social adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kebbi State, Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 8 (4), 56–73.
8. Oni, A., & Anyama, S. (2025). Authoritative parenting and social adjustment among Nigerian adolescents. *West African Journal of Education*, 42 (2), 134–150.
9. Ozuabi, C. (2025). Permissive parenting and psychosocial adjustment outcomes in Lagos State. *Nigerian Journal of Applied Psychology*, 15 (3), 201–218.
10. Wenning, R. (2004). The permissive/indulgent teacher: Characteristics and consequences. *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 39 (1), 35–48.
11. Yusuf, M., & Sani, I. (2024). Discipline styles and socio-emotional stability of pupils in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Studies and Practice*, 14 (2), 89–106.
12. Zenodo. (2025). Teacher-student relationships and student adjustment in Nigerian secondary schools. *Zenodo Publications*, 11 (4), 1–25.