

# Parenting Styles and Student Academic Performance in The Bahamas

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## Abstract

International evidence suggests that parenting styles have a significant impact on academic success. However, there is paucity of Caribbean literature on this phenomenon. The current Bahamian study utilises a quantitative method to examine the relationship between parenting styles and students' academic performance, using Diana Baumrind's authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles model. The sample consists of 582 randomly selected parents and 582 students. The survey instrument comprises a demographic questionnaire and the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) enabling parents to self-report parenting styles on a five-point Likert scale. Grade point averages from school records were used to measure academic performance. Reliability analyses revealed overall good internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .80$ ) for the PSDQ on the Bahamian parent sample. Pearson product-moment correlation analyses indicate no statistically significant relationship between the authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles and students' academic performance in The Bahamas. Low to moderate correlations resulted between the authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles, respectively and academic performance. A moderate negative correlation was yielded between the permissive parenting style and academic performance. Results from this study are intended to broaden the literature on parenting styles and the impact thereof on academic performance in The Bahamas and the Caribbean.

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## Introduction

A myriad of factors impacting the academic performance of primary and secondary school students have emerged in the international and regional literature (Aturupane et al. 2013; Buehler & Gerard, 2013; Hartwig & Dunlosky, 2012; Kapur, 2018; Kudari, 2016; McNair & Johnson, 2009; Rivers et al. 2012; Rodríguez-Rodríguez & Guzmán, 2019; Stubbs & Maynard, 2017; Whitesell et al., 2009). Among these factors, a significant relationship has been found between

parenting styles and academic performance (Davis, 2000; Elham et al., 2012; Hayek et al., 2023; Masud et al., 2015; Moradian et al., 2021; Reitman et al., 2002; Turner et al., 2009; Yang & Zhao, 2020). Most of these studies, reflecting both Western and Eastern cultures, have substantiated Diana Baumrind's (1966) assertion regarding the positive impact of authoritative parenting on academic performance. Baumrind (1966) is a pioneer in parenting style theory whose work has been applied globally.

Baumrind's (1966) Theory of Parenting

Styles has linked authoritarian and permissive parenting styles to negative psycho-social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes in children and adolescents. While some may consider Baumrind's (1966) Theory of Parenting Styles as antiquated, classist, and Caucasian-American-centric, the theory has found utility in the Caribbean. For example, in a study involving Caribbean and Bahamian participants, the authoritative parenting style was associated with lower rates of depression among adolescents (Lipps et al., 2012). Furthermore, Smith and Moore (2013) found that authoritarian parenting among Jamaican adolescents was associated with diminished psychological and behavioural adjustment including greater risk of anger, depression, suicide ideation, and conduct problems. Little, however, has been studied on the relationship between parenting styles and academic success in The Bahamas and the Caribbean.

Historically in the Caribbean, authoritarian parenting styles characterised by control, harsh demands, and punishment have dominated households throughout the region (Crawford-Brown, 1999; Roopnarine & Brown, 1997). Since the dawn of the 21st century, there has been some evidence reflecting a deviation from authoritarian parenting practices to authoritative practices in the Caribbean (Lipps et al., 2012). The current study explores the relationship between parenting styles and students' academic performance in The Bahamas utilising the framework of Baumrind's (1966) Parenting Styles Theory.

### **The Bahamian Public School System**

Successive governments of The Bahamas continue to allocate a significant portion (approximately 12%) of the national budget to the education sector, testifying to the critical role education plays in national development (Bahamas Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, 2019).

Data suggest that over 15 years (between 2000 and 2015), 50% of students within the public education system each year met grade-level expectations at the conclusion of high school ("Bahamas Education Minister", 2015). A major goal of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has been to increase the graduation rate from 50% to 80% by 2030 (Bahamas Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, 2016).

### **Factors Affecting Academic Performance**

Globally, educators, psychologists, and researchers have explored many avenues to improve academic performance. Several factors have been examined in the literature and can be categorised as internal or external school factors. Internal school factors include but are not limited to curriculum reform, instructional strategies, school quality, teaching experience, classroom management, classroom resources, school environment, student motivation, student study habits, and the like (Aturupane et al. 2013; Hartwig & Dunlosky, 2012; Kapur, 2018; Kudari, 2016; McNair & Johnson, 2009; Whitesell et al., 2009). Further, external factors such as parental involvement in school, parental interest, neighbourhood or community factors, family income, parent educational level, home environment, family functioning, parental expectations, and parenting styles can also have a direct and/or indirect impact on academic performance (Buehler & Gerard, 2013; Eirini, 2010; McNair & Johnson, 2009; Rivers et al., 2012, Rodríguez-Rodríguez & Guzmán, 2019; Stubbs & Maynard, 2017).

Upon review of the Caribbean literature examining academic performance, a few prominent factors come to the fore, including both school and student socioeconomic status, gender differences, the school context, parental involvement, and family functioning (Alexander & Maeda, 2015; DeLisle, 2016;

Graham, 2007; Roopnarine et al. 2006; Stubbs, 2015; Stubbs & Maynard, 2017). Teacher morale and commitment, teaching strategies and the classroom environment as constructed by the teacher were found to significantly impact students' attitudes toward school, academic performance and school behaviour in schools across the Caribbean (Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Education Reform Unit, 2000). However, apart from a few studies (see, for example, Fielding & Gibson, 2015), academic success factors are understudied in the Bahamas.

### **Baumrind's Theory of Parenting Styles**

Parenting styles can be described as patterns of behaviour displayed by primary caregivers as they interact with their children. These styles reflect a set of strategies parents use to raise their children. As operationalised for this study, parenting styles are grounded in Diana Baumrind's (1966) Parenting Styles Theory. Baumrind (1966) categorises parenting styles according to the degree of demandingness and responsiveness demonstrated in parenting. Demandingness refers to the extent to which parents exhibit control, power assertion, maturity demands, and supervision in their parenting. Conversely, responsiveness refers to the degree to which parents show their children affection, warmth, emotional expression, acceptance, and support. The parenting styles initially espoused by Baumrind (1966) are authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles; the neglectful parenting style was added later (Baumrind, 1989).

The authoritative parenting style, characterised by high levels of both demandingness and responsiveness, is assumed by many practitioners to be ideal for child and adolescent development in all domains. This style reflects parents who practice firm discipline and foster self-

regulatory behaviour, along with a degree of autonomy, and high levels of warmth and nurturance. The authoritative parent-child relationship is hinged upon mutual trust and respect. Communication flows both ways and parents are supportive.

As it relates to the authoritarian parenting style, parents also display high levels of demandingness but rather low levels of responsiveness. They exercise firm control over their children, expecting conformity and obedience and allowing little room for personal autonomy and independence. A control-based environment is cultivated with the use of the authoritarian style. Children's perspectives are not considered and communication is one-way. This style reflects a parent-centred home.

The permissive or indulgent parenting style is demonstrated when parents exert very low levels of demandingness and high levels of responsiveness toward their children. These parents exercise minimal control and authority over their children and fail to define appropriate limits and standards of acceptable behaviour. This style fosters a parent-child relationship that is highly child-centred and child-indulgent. There is a prevailing sense of entitlement from children and little control exercised by parents. Parents practising this style do not make demands of the child.

Finally, the neglectful, also known as the uninvolved parenting style, is characterised by a non-existent parent-child relationship with no communication. There is neither demandingness nor responsiveness and actual parenting is not practiced.

While older studies examining Caribbean family life point to the prevalence of authoritarian parenting practices characterised by power-assertive, punitive parenting and harsh discipline measures (Crawford-Brown, 1999; Roopnarine & Brown, 1997), more recent studies are

revealing contrasting results (Lipps et al., 2012). For example, a Caribbean study involving 716 tenth graders from The Bahamas (New Providence), Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent, revealed that the majority of parents within the Bahamian sample practised the authoritative style of parenting. Parenting styles reported for the remaining Caribbean countries were mixed, predominantly the authoritative and permissive parenting styles. The parenting styles were reported by the adolescents using the Lempers, Clark-Lempers, and Simons' Parenting Practices Scale (Lipps et al., 2012).

The authoritative parenting style has also been shown to be a protective factor against psychological and behavioural disorders. The Caribbean study conducted by Lipps et al. (2012) further examined the relationship between parenting styles and depression. Findings demonstrated that the authoritative parenting style was associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms in adolescents.

### **Parenting Styles and Academic Performance**

The interplay of parenting styles and the academic performance of children and adolescents has garnered attention in the literature, particularly since the start of the new millennium. To this end, Davis (2000) asserted that the strongest support for learning occurs at home through positive parenting styles, reading at home, homework policies, and high expectations. More recently, Masud et al. (2015) conducted a review of 39 studies which consistently found parenting styles to significantly affect academic achievement.

Baumrind (1966) theorises the authoritative parenting style to be most effective, contending that children raised in homes where parents practice the authoritative style tend to score high on measures of competence, achievement, social

development, and self-perception, and low on measures of psychological and behavioural dysfunction. Many studies provide credence to Baumrind's (1966) assertion of the positive impact of the authoritative parenting style on academic performance (Elham et al., 2012; Hayek et al., 2023; Masud et al., 2015; Moradian et al. 2021; Reitman et al., 2002; Turner et al., 2009; & Yang & Zhao, 2020). Authoritative parenting also positively affects other indicators of academic success including school motivation, academic self-efficacy, and school engagement; moreover, this parenting style reduces problematic behaviour (Rivers et al. 2012; Simons-Morton & Chen, 2009).

A study conducted by Yang and Zhao (2020) examined Baumrind's (1991) parenting styles. Although the authoritarian and neglectful styles yielded as predominant among Chinese parents, the authoritative parenting style was found to promote higher academic performance among middle-school students. Furthermore, the study revealed that parenting style had a greater effect on children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In a North American study, conducted by Rivers et al. (2012), involving 148 high school students who self-reported the parenting styles used by their parents, students whose parents were authoritative were found to be more intrinsically motivated in pursuing academic goals. While the study carried out by Rivers et al. (2012) utilises a rather small sample of students, it remains useful as it gathered parenting styles from the perspective of children and further demonstrates a positive relationship between the authoritative parenting style and academic outcomes.

Elham et al., (2012) sampled 382 Iranian high school students utilising Baumrind's (1991) Parenting Style Scale and also found a positive significant correlation between the authoritative parenting style and students'

academic grade points (ranging from zero to 20). The study further yielded a negative correlation between the permissive parenting style and academic grade points. The Iranian adolescents also rated their parents' style of parenting. The studies conducted by Elham et al. (2012) and Rivers et al. (2012) are slightly different from the current study in that they solicited the parenting styles from students rather than their parents, but remain useful in analysing relationships between parenting styles and academic performance.

However, there remains a dearth of literature in The Bahamas and the Caribbean with respect to the relationship between parenting styles and academic performance. A Caribbean study carried out among English-speaking Caribbean immigrants in North America examined the impact of mother and father parenting styles on academic skills and social adjustment. Roopnarine et al. (2006) found that fathers' authoritarian parenting style was negatively associated with children's receptive skills, vocabulary and composite scores while mothers' authoritarian parenting practice was negatively associated with children's social behaviours. Furthermore, fathers' authoritative parenting and father-child academic interaction at home were positively related to children's social behaviours.

Published studies with empirical data on the relationship between parenting styles and academic achievement among students in The Bahamas are limited. Nevertheless, findings from a Bahamian study conducted by Jones et al. (2012) revealed that greater parental monitoring was significantly associated with reduced involvement in physical fights, risky sexual behaviour, and alcohol consumption among 6th to 10th graders in schools across New Providence, Bahamas. Parental monitoring is a key characteristic within both the authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles and thus an examination of these findings is helpful.

Other studies analysing parental involvement in the Bahamas include Collie-Patterson (2008) and Bowe (2023).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The current study examines the relationship between parenting styles and academic performance in public school students within New Providence, The Bahamas. Studies of this kind are needed to assess parenting styles within The Bahamas. Results from this study will offer a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between parenting styles and academic achievement in The Bahamas and the Caribbean.

### **Method**

#### *Research Design*

The present study is cross-sectional and employs a quantitative method. The nature of the research is descriptive and a survey study design was utilised to explain the relationship between parenting styles and academic performance among public school students in The Bahamas.

#### *Pilot Study*

A 10-week pilot study was undertaken involving 11 schools and 120 parents and 120 students within the Southwestern School District of New Providence. This initial phase of the research sought to: pre-test the questionnaire instrument to provide further validation of the instrument, checking reliability levels and performing preliminary statistical analyses; and to pre-test the logistics and conditions surrounding the data collection procedures. After the pilot study and preliminary analyses, data collection for the main study commenced.

#### *Sampling & Participants*

Multi-stage sampling was used to select and assess parents for the current study. The initial stage involved the stratified sampling technique. The sample was stratified first by school type, followed by grade level. All

New Providence public schools participated excluding only the schools in the pilot study. Seven school types within The Bahamas were represented: pre-school/pre-primary, primary, junior high, senior high, secondary, special and behavioural/ alternative schools. Within each school, parents were randomly selected from each grade level, targeting at the very least two parents: one male parent and one female parent. The cluster sampling technique was then utilised as survey questionnaires were administered during Parent Teacher Association meetings.

### *Instrumentation*

A 42-item instrument, consisting of a demographic questionnaire and the Parental Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ), was used for this study. Demographic information gathered from parents included gender, type of parent, age range, nationality, marital status, level of education, and employment status. Students' grade levels and family structure were also ascertained. The PSDQ is a 32-item measure that examines parenting styles. This instrument, developed by Robinson et al. (2001), is the short version of a 64-item instrument. The PSDQ is a self-report measure designed for parents to complete and is constructed according to Baumrind's (1966) Theory of Parenting Styles. Consisting of 3 subscales, the PSDQ examines the Authoritative subscale (15 items), the Authoritarian subscale (12 items), and the Permissive subscale (five items). Each item is rated along a 5-point Likert scale as follows: 1 (*never*), 2 (*once in a while*), 3 (*sometimes*), 4 (*very often*), and 5 (*always*). The instrument has adequate internal consistency and high reliability on the overall scale and subscales.

### *Reliability Estimates*

According to instrument development reliability data, Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale was established at .80 and for

the subscales: .86 for the authoritative subscale; .82 for the authoritarian subscale; and .64 for the permissive subscale (Robinson et al., 2001). In the current study, reliability estimates on the overall scale and subscale are given in Table 1. There is some concern regarding the .53 result on the permissive subscale. Although a Cronbach's alpha of .70 or above is considered acceptable, values below .70 can be realistically expected for psychological constructs due to the diversity of the construct (see, Kline, 1999). As Cronbach's alpha assumes unidimensionality, reliability estimates can be lower if the construct is not unidimensional.

**Table 1**

### *Reliability Estimates*

Scale / Subscale	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Overall PSDQ	.81
Authoritative subscale	.82
Authoritarian subscale	.80
Permissive subscale	.53

### *Validation of Instrumentation*

Upon crafting the initial draft of the instrument for this study, feedback was ascertained from an expert panel of professionals to ensure that the instrumentation was valid to assess parenting styles and practical for the Bahamian sample of parents. The expert panel consisted of the Assistant Director of Education (with responsibility for Special Services including Psychological Services) at the Ministry of Education, an educational psychologist, a clinical psychologist, a Ministry of Education Curriculum Officer, a school principal, and a Caribbean measurement and assessment specialist. Face validity was established in that the questionnaire at face value measures the constructs it purports to measure, parenting styles. Feedback was given regarding the questionnaire's layout and spacing, the font of the items, vocabulary,

and wording to suit the Bahamian vernacular, particularly for the PSDQ. Amendments were made to the instrument to ensure that it was suitable for the parent sample and there were no ambiguities. As it pertains to content validity, the panel expressed that the items on all scales were sufficiently representative of the domains under study.

### *Construct Validity*

Once the revisions were made, the instrument was pre-tested on two lay parents of public school students. Further revisions to the instrument were conducted. Construct validity was confirmed during and after the questionnaire completion process within the pilot study involving 120 parents of public school students in 11 schools within one New Providence district. Evidence of the response processes of the parents was also gathered. Participants generally responded that the questionnaire was straightforward, interesting and good.

### *Academic Performance*

Academic performance in this study is measured by the Grade Point Average (GPA) attained by students at the end of the Christmas Term of the academic year. GPAs for students in Grades 1 through 12, enrolled in all school types were used (with the exception of those in pre-schools and in special schools).

### *Ethical Considerations*

Approval to conduct the present study was granted by the Director of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in The Bahamas, who is the Chief Technical Officer. Subsequently, directives were given to District Superintendents to permit data collection within New Providence School Districts. Parents were issued Informed Consent Forms which detailed the purpose and nature of the study as well as the possible risks which were minimal and psychological in nature. Parents were assured anonymity,

voluntary participation, and notified that if they agreed to participate, their child's grades would be ascertained from school records. They were allowed to withdraw from the study. Moreover, no personal identifiers were used during the data collection and entry processes. The data is protected by a password-protected encrypted computer and questionnaires are stored in a locked filing cabinet, accessed only by the principal researcher.

### *Demographics*

The current study assessed 1,164 students ( $n = 582$ ) and parents ( $n = 582$ ) of students enrolled in New Providence Public Schools. Forty-five schools participated in this study. Among the parents, 76% ( $n = 440$ ) were females while 24% ( $n = 142$ ) were males. Between the 45 schools, 582 parents and 582 students represented seven school types within New Providence: seven stand-alone pre-schools; 18 primary schools; six junior high schools; six senior high schools; one secondary school; four special schools; and three behavioural / alternative schools.

### *Analysis*

The data analysis used the Statistical Software for Social Sciences. Data is analysed at the .05 level, in that statistically significant differences are seen at or below .05 ( $p \leq .05$ ). Variables include parenting styles and academic performance. Frequencies are reported on demographics (e.g. sex, age, family structure, etc.). Descriptive statistics are documented for study variables, including means and standard deviations.

Inferential statistics are presented about the population based on the Pearson product-moment correlation. Three parenting styles were assessed: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. On the PSDQ, mean scores are calculated for parents on each parenting style questionnaire; the highest mean score

represents the parenting style practised by each parent according to the original construction of this instrument (Robinson et al., 2001). As for academic performance, students' GPAs are divided into six categories as follows: Unsatisfactory (0–1.49); Below Average (1.50–1.99); Average (2.0–2.49); Credit (2.5–2.99); Honours (3.0–3.49); and Special Honours (3.5–4.0).

## Results

Results pertaining to family structure reflect the family structure that the student experienced at the time of the study. Among the eight family structures listed on the questionnaire, the nuclear family ( $n = 224$ ; 39%) was predominant. A considerable number of students were from extended families ( $n = 137$ ; 24%) followed by single-parent/female-headed families ( $n = 114$ ; 20%), common-law families ( $n = 29$ ; 5%), blended families ( $n = 28$ ; 5%), 'other' family structures ( $n = 20$ ; 3%), single-parent family/male-headed families ( $n = 16$ ; 3%), and finally institutional families ( $n = 9$ ; 2%).

**Table 2**

Parenting Styles

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative &
Authoritative	549	94.3	94.7	94.7
Authoritarian	19	3.3	3.3	97.9
Permissive	12	2.1	2.1	100
Total	580	99.7	100	
Missing	2	.3		
N	582	100		

## Academic Performance

Students' GPAs for the Christmas Term were used as an indicator of academic performance. GPAs were available for 466 students. Of the students whose GPAs were obtained ( $N = 466$ ), 80% ( $n = 373$ ) of them achieved a minimum of 2.0, which is the passing grade for public schools. Twenty percent ( $n = 93$ ) of the students fell below the

Almost half of the parents ( $n = 279$ ; 48%) reported their highest education level as high school, followed by the attainment of a post-secondary certificate ( $n = 164$ ; 29%), a bachelor's degree ( $n = 60$ ; 10%), an associate's degree ( $n = 51$ ; 9%), a primary school education ( $n = 11$ ; 2%), a master's degree ( $n = 8$ ; 1%), and lastly, a doctoral degree ( $n = 3$ ; 1%).

## Parenting Styles

An examination of means on the PSDQ (Robinson et al., 2001) revealed that all three Parenting Styles were practised by parents within the sample ( $n = 580$ ); there was missing parenting styles data for two parents. The predominant parenting style, practised by 94% of the parents ( $n = 549$ ) was the Authoritative Parenting Style. This was followed by the Authoritarian (3%;  $n = 19$ ), and Permissive (2%;  $n = 12$ ) parenting styles, respectively. Very few parents used the permission style of parenting (Table 2).

passing GPA while 45% ( $n = 210$ ) attained GPAs above 3.0, reflecting Honours or Special Honours. The mean GPA for the student sample was 2.67 ( $SD = .87$ ). GPA distributions are outlined in Table 3, while a cross-tabulation of students' GPAs according to the parenting style practised at home, is given in Table 4.

**Table 3***Academic Performance - Qualitative Description & Distribution*

Description	GPA Range	<i>n</i>	%
Special Honours	3.5–4.0	76	16%
Honours	3.0–3.49	134	29%
Credit	2.5–2.99	93	20%
Average	2.0–2.49	70	15%
Below Average	1.5–1.99	44	9%
Unsatisfactory	0–1.49	49	11%
N		466	100%

**Table 4***Cross-Tabulation Parenting Style and Academic Performance*

GPA		0-1.49	1.50-1.99	2.0-2.49	2.50-2.99	3.0-3.49	3.50-4.0	<i>n</i>
Parenting Styles	Authoritative	42	40	68	86	131	74	441
	Authoritarian	3	3	2	5	1	2	16
	Permissive	3	1	0	2	2	0	8
	Total	48	44	70	93	134	76	465

*Parenting Styles and Academic Performance*

The Pearson product-moment correlation was performed to determine whether a relationship existed between each parenting style and academic performance for the Bahamian sample. Correlation tests were run where there was data for both parenting styles and GPAs for each participant in the data set. Pearson *r* provides the measure of effect size for the relationships under examination.

No significant correlations were found between the parenting styles and GPA. In part this may have been due to the same sample size for authoritative parenting (*n* =

16) and permissive parenting (*n* = 8).

*Authoritative Parenting and Academic Performance*

The students whose parents practised the authoritative style of parenting attained a Mean GPA of 2.70 (*SD* = .856). Authoritative parents scored a mean of 4.10 (*SD* = .589) on the PSDQ (See Table 5). There was no statistically significant relationship between the authoritative parenting style and academic performance for the sample, (*r* = .04, *p* = .401; Table 6). Results however, revealed a low positive relationship between the authoritative parenting style and academic performance (*r* = .040).

**Table 5***Authoritative Parenting Style & Academic Performance Means*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Authoritative Mean	4.102	.589	441
GPA	2.696	.856	441

**Table 6***Pearson Product-Moment Correlation  
Authoritative Parenting Style & Academic Performance*

		Authoritative Mean	GPA
Authoritative Mean	<i>r</i> Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.040 .401
GPA	<i>r</i> Sig. (2-tailed)	.040 .401	1

*Authoritarian Parenting and Academic Performance*

Students whose parents subscribed to the Authoritarian style obtained a Mean GPA of 2.23 ( $SD = 1.004$ ). Authoritarian parents received a mean of 3.33 ( $SD = .517$ ) on the PSDQ (See Table 7). No statistically

significant relationship was yielded between the authoritarian parenting style and academic performance ( $p = .207$ ). A moderate positive relationship was found between the authoritarian parenting style and academic performance ( $p = .333$ ) as demonstrated in Table 8.

**Table 7***Authoritarian Parenting Style & Academic Performance Means*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Authoritarian Mean	3.328	.517	16
GPA	2.230	1.004	16

**Table 8***Pearson Product-Moment Correlation: Authoritarian Parenting Style & Academic Performance*

		Authoritarian Mean	GPA
Authoritarian Mean	<i>r</i> Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.333 .207
Grade Point Average	<i>r</i> Sig. (2-tailed)	.333 .207	1

*Permissive Parenting and Academic Performance*

As shown in Table 9, students whose parents subscribed to the permissive style attained a Mean GPA of 2.05 ( $SD = 1.088$ ). Permissive parents scored a mean of 3.63 ( $SD = .663$ ). No statistically significant relationship was found between the permissive parenting style and academic performance ( $p = .504$ ; See

Table 9). However, there was a moderate negative relationship ( $r = -.278$ ) between the permissive parenting style and academic performance in Table 10.

**Table 9**

*Permissive Parenting Style & GPA Means*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n =</i>
Permissive Mean	3.625	.663	8
GPA	2.054	1.088	8

**Table 10**

*Pearson Product-Moment Correlation: Permissive Parenting Style & Academic Performance*

		Authoritarian Mean	GPA
Permissive Mean	<i>r</i>	1	-.278
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.504
GPA	<i>r</i>	-.278	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.504	

**Discussion**

The present study assessed the relationship between parenting styles and student academic performance. Findings revealed that the majority of Bahamian parents (94%) self-reported practicing the authoritative parenting style. According to Baumrind’s (1966) Theory of Parenting Styles, this is a balanced approach to parenting and is ideal for producing well-adjusted children and adolescents. Parents in this study self-reported their parental practices which suggests that parents of public school students in The Bahamas are, for the most part, setting demands for children but also responsive, allowing for autonomy and giving children the opportunity to participate in the family decision-making process. This predominant authoritative parenting style result is consistent with a 2012 study involving Bahamian and Caribbean parents (Lipps et al., 2012). It supports the notion that a shift in parenting styles has occurred in the Caribbean over the past 20 or more years. Findings reveal a deviation from the traditional authoritarian parenting approach revealed and described by earlier Caribbean studies carried out by Crawford-Brown (1997) as well as Roopnarine and Brown

(1999).

There are parents, however, who have maintained the traditional authoritarian parenting practices, as indicated by 3% of the parent sample. These homes are parent-centred where children do not participate in the decision making and parents justify instructions and rules by the statement “Because I said so” (Robinson et al., 2001). Very few parents within this study (2%) practised the permissive parenting style which was found to be predominant in other Caribbean countries (Lipps et al., 2012).

The focus of this study is not solely on student academic performance but rather on the relationship between parenting styles and academic performance. Nevertheless, a review of the academic performance mean (2.67) and ranges illustrates that participating students were typically attaining the passing GPA. The majority (*n = 134*) of students attained GPAs between 3.0 and 3.49. Following this, 93 students achieved a GPA between 2.5 and 2.99. These results are in contrast to the number of students leaving high school having met the grade-level expectations (50%) as reported by the Ministry of Education over 15 years

(Bahamas Ministry of Education, 2016). It should be noted however that students in senior high school (Grades 10-12) represented only 10% of the participants in the current study as parental participation decreased after Grade 6. Therefore, the academic achievement for students could possibly be more indicative of parents' interest in student academic well-being and parental involvement.

While parental interest and involvement can be implied, this study did not focus on these variables. Nevertheless, the parents' participation in this study alone, testify to their interest in their child's education. A British study followed males and females up to the age of 26 years and found that parents' interest in their child's education was a significant predictor of educational attainment. Mothers' interest significantly affected both males and females, while fathers' interest significantly affected females' educational attainment (Eirini, 2010).

Caribbean studies are needed to examine the impact of parental interest and involvement on academic performance and further examine the point at which students' performance declines nationally.

### **Parenting Styles & Academic Performance**

The empirical evidence from the current study did not reveal a significant relationship between the parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) and the academic performance of public school students in The Bahamas. Baumrind (1966) asserted that the authoritative parenting style has positive cognitive, emotional and social outcomes. However, no significant difference was found between the authoritative parenting style and academic performance in this study.

These results are also contrary to the findings

of previous international studies (Elham et al., 2012; Hayek et al., 2023; Masud et al., 2015; Moradian et al. 2021; Reitman et al., 2002; Rivers et al., 2012; Turner et al., 2009; Yang & Zhao, 2020). This puts into question the relevance and applicability of Baumrind's Theory of Parenting Styles for the Caribbean and Bahamian context. Notwithstanding, Lipps et al.'s findings which revealed that authoritative parenting practices lowered depressive symptoms in Caribbean and Bahamian adolescents. And, while statistical significance was not yielded in the current study, a weak positive correlation was found between authoritative parenting and academic performance. Interestingly though, a moderate correlation was found between the authoritarian parenting style and the academic performance of public school students.

It is apparent that to some extent, for Bahamian students, demands, expectations, discipline, and rules which are common characteristics of both the authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles, set the tone for children to succeed academically. These results do not support an older Caribbean study conducted by Roopnarine et al. (2006) where fathers' and mothers' authoritarian practices were negatively associated with children's academic and social outcomes.

As outlined earlier in the international and Caribbean literature, both internal and external school factors including instructional strategies, curriculum, teaching experience, school environment, classroom resources, teacher quality, student motivation, study habits, gender differences, parental involvement, family income, parent educational levels, family functioning, and socioeconomic status can also impact academic outcomes (Alexander & Maeda, 2015; Aturupane et al. 2013; DeLisle, 2016; Graham, 2007; Hartwig & Dunlosky, 2012; Kapur, 2018; Kudari, 2016; McNair & Johnson, 2009; Whitesell et al., 2009 Buehler

& Gerard, 2013; McNair & Johnson, 2009; Rivers et al. 2012, Rodríguez-Rodríguez & Guzmán, 2019; Roopnarine et al., 2016; Stubbs, 2015; & Stubbs & Maynard, 2017). Future studies can examine these variables to determine to what extent they account for the variance in academic performance.

### Study Limitations

This study's results provide insight into parenting styles and student academic performance in The Bahamas. However, several limitations must be considered that may have affected the findings. The PSDQ ascertained parents' perspectives of their parenting styles and while in some cases this is more reliable than children's perspectives, parents can tend to respond in a socially desirable manner. Nevertheless, parents in this study were encouraged to respond honestly so that educators, psychologists, and researchers can accurately assess the status of parenting styles, and their impact on

academic performance in The Bahamas.

The use of unstandardised scores to measure academic performance limits the study's ability to make reliable comparisons between participating schools. Even so, the participating institutions are comparable in that the syllabi followed are similar, catering to preparation for standard national examinations at the third, sixth, ninth, and 12th-grade levels. Researchers must also be cognisant that the focus of this research is on the relationship between parenting styles and academic performance. This study, therefore, does not address other factors that may be related to the academic outcomes for students such as parental involvement. Despite these limitations, the current study provides data relating to parenting styles in The Bahamas and how they impact the academic performance of primary and secondary public school students in The Bahamas.

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