

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The family is universally acknowledged as the foundation of socialization, and within it, parents play the grassroots role in shaping a child's physiological and cognitive development. From infancy through adolescence and into adulthood, parents are the first agents of socialization and serve as primary figures in a child's developmental journey. They lay the groundwork for a child's growth, equipping them with the tools to navigate life's challenges. The dynamics between parents and children significantly impact a child's emotional regulation, cognitive abilities, and overall quality of life. Within this context, the parent-child relationship has profound implications for the child's physiological and cognitive maturity. Healthy parenting fosters resilience, enhances cognitive abilities, and supports emotional regulation, which is crucial for overcoming both academic and life challenges (Deater-Deckard, 2019; Morris, Criss, Silk, and Houlberg, 2017) .

From a psychosocial perspective, Erik Erikson's stages of development emphasize the importance of early relationships in determining how individuals navigate life tasks. In the early years, the stage of "trust versus mistrust" highlights how secure attachments to caregivers lead to a sense of safety and trust, which becomes the basis for exploring the world and developing higher-order thinking skills. A child's sense of self-worth, coping abilities, and social competence are often shaped through the interactions and attachments they form with their primary caregivers. These relationships also impact self-regulation and social learning vital components of healthy maturation (Erikson, 1950). Furthermore, as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory suggests, learning and cognitive development are rooted in social interaction and guided participation, often provided first by parents. In essence,

parents provide the “zone of proximal development,” within which children learn to process information, communicate, and develop cognitive agility (Vygotsky, 1978).

The stages of development particularly cognitive and emotional growth are deeply intertwined with parent-child interactions. These early exchanges are marked by behaviors such as verbal communication, physical affection, responsiveness to needs, and the provision of stimulating environments. According to Piaget’s theory of cognitive development, children advance through stages based on experiences that challenge and refine their thinking processes. Parents who engage their children through reading, problem-solving, and creative play contribute significantly to the development of critical faculties like memory, attention, reasoning, and language acquisition (Piaget, 1952). These interactions also promote physiological development, as children gain the ability to regulate emotions, build resilience, and manage stress in a socially acceptable manner skills that are built upon a foundation of consistent, nurturing parental engagement (Deater-Deckard, 2019) .

In terms of physiological development, the influence of parenting is equally significant. Physical maturity is not merely a biological process but one that is affected by caregiving practices. From nutrition and sleep routines to health care access and hygiene, the parent plays a crucial role in ensuring a child meets key physical milestones. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory positions the family (micro system) as a primary influence on child development, where poor nutrition, chronic stress, or lack of healthcare in the home environment can lead to stunted physical growth or health vulnerabilities. Conversely, children raised in nurturing environments where parents are responsive to physical and emotional needs show better health outcomes, including stronger immune systems, greater physical fitness, and reduced susceptibility to stress-related illnesses (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Conger, Conger,& Martin, 2010).

Beyond caregiving, parenting plays a key role in developing essential life skills such as critical thinking, decision-making, and emotional regulation. Children raised in homes where communication, emotional validation, and problem-solving are modeled are better prepared to handle the complexities of modern society. According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), children learn behaviors and attitudes by observing and imitating their parents. When children observe parents managing conflicts, expressing empathy, and maintaining routines, they internalize these behaviors and replicate them in their own social spheres. This translates to improved academic performance, greater self-discipline, and more adaptive social functioning (Bandura, 1977). The ability to engage socially, regulate emotions, and make responsible decisions are foundational elements of both physiological and cognitive maturity, all rooted in the parent-child dynamic.

Furthermore, the implications of the parent-child relationship extend beyond the confines of the home, significantly shaping the child's capacity to function productively in broader society and attain their full potential. A child's ability to form healthy relationships, communicate effectively, and engage in responsible social behavior is deeply rooted in the foundational experiences provided by caregivers. These early interactions not only influence self-perception but also determine how the child navigates interpersonal dynamics, handles stress, and adapts to societal expectations. Children who experience consistent emotional support and cognitive stimulation from their parents are more likely to demonstrate self-confidence, moral reasoning, empathy, and leadership qualities traits essential for effective societal integration. On the contrary, the absence of nurturing parenting may result in social withdrawal, low academic performance, behavioral issues, and limited economic mobility. In this way, the parent-child relationship becomes a critical determinant of a child's future social participation, occupational success, and overall life satisfaction.

In socio-economically disadvantaged communities, the parent-child relationship is often strained by environmental stressors such as poverty, unemployment, poor infrastructure, and limited access to education and health services. These conditions place additional burdens on caregivers, who may be unable to provide the both emotional and intellectual support needed for optimum child growth and development. Research shows that children growing up under such conditions are more vulnerable to developmental delays, learning difficulties, behavioral problems, and long - term mental health challenges. Economic instability may force parents to prioritize survival over engagement, thereby weakening the nurturing and stimulating environment children require for growth. In these settings, the absence of a strong parental foundation often results in disrupted developmental trajectories and limited life opportunities. (Conger, Conger & Martin, 2010)

Nevertheless, even in these challenging circumstances, a strong parent-child relationship remains a powerful protective factor. Intervention studies and frameworks emphasize that, despite systemic barriers, families can build resilience through enhanced parenting strategies. Caregiver mental health support and strengthening daily interactions like storytelling, emotional validation, and responsive caregiving can buffer adverse effect of poverty and stress. These outcomes affirm the vital role of parenting as a buffer against adversity and a catalyst for developmental success, even in low-resource neighborhoods (Master & Barnes, 2018) .

In light of these dynamics, understanding the implications of the parent-child relationship on a child's physiological and cognitive maturity particularly in vulnerable communities is critical for informing evidence-based social work practices. This understanding will help in designing interventions that address both familial relationships and structural barriers. By strengthening the parent-child bond and empowering caregivers through education, economic support, and psychosocial services, social workers can contribute meaningfully to the holistic development of children.

Ultimately, this study seeks to explore these relationships in depth and recommend actionable strategies for fostering resilience, promoting cognitive growth, and enhancing physical well-being in vulnerable populations.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The quality of the parent-child relationship remains a key determinant in the trajectory of a child's overall development. It plays a critical role not only in shaping a child's physical and mental growth but also in influencing how they process experiences, respond to challenges, and relate to the world around them. Despite increasing global interest in childhood development, existing studies have often focused narrowly on academic outcomes or generalized behavioral patterns, neglecting the deeper, multifaceted ways in which parenting styles and family interactions shape the totality of a child's maturity. This oversight becomes more pronounced when examined within communities experiencing socioeconomic hardship, such as Upper Sakponba in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State, where parenting dynamics are frequently affected by environmental and structural stressors.

In such settings, where poverty, limited access to education, and exposure to social instability are prevalent, parents may struggle to provide the consistent guidance, emotional support, and cognitive stimulation that are essential for balanced child development. The implications of this are far-reaching. Children raised in emotionally distant or highly authoritarian households may develop a limited sense of self-worth, reduced capacity for independent decision-making, and difficulty adjusting to societal expectations. On the other hand, overly indulgent or protective parenting may hinder a child's ability to build resilience, manage failure, and function autonomously. Yet, despite the observable consequences of these contrasting styles, little empirical attention has been paid to how these

relational patterns affect a child's readiness to meet developmental milestones both physiological and cognitive in localized, real-life contexts.

Furthermore, many existing studies often fail to account for the unique socio-cultural and economic realities that shape the parent-child relationship in specific communities. Parenting cannot be divorced from its context; it is embedded in the values, struggles, and daily experiences of families. Thus, a one-size-fits-all understanding of parent-child interactions may not be sufficient to capture the nuanced ways in which such relationships influence the long-term development of children, particularly in under-resourced areas like Upper Sakponba. Without context-specific inquiry, it becomes difficult to develop relevant strategies that can address the gaps in physical development, reasoning ability, emotional regulation, and adaptability often observed among children in such environments.

More so, while cognitive and physiological development are often studied in isolation, the interplay between them mediated by the nature of parenting deserves deeper exploration. For instance, a child who lacks emotional security may struggle with learning and memory retention, while one who receives minimal encouragement for self-expression may have difficulty forming a strong personal identity. These subtle, yet critical developmental delays can later manifest as challenges in social adjustment, poor academic engagement, or inability to cope with life transitions. Yet, in many underserved communities, these signs are often misinterpreted, overlooked, or left unaddressed.

Therefore, the problem lies not only in the limited understanding of how parenting influences development but also in the insufficient attention given to localized, community-specific realities that shape these relationships. There is a clear need to explore how the nature and quality of the parent-child relationship in Upper Sakponba affects a child's ability to achieve both physiological and cognitive maturity, and how this in turn determines their future functionality, adaptability, and social

integration. By uncovering these links, this study aims to contribute to a more holistic understanding of child development and provide useful knowledge for shaping future interventions that promote healthier family environments in similar communities.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How does the quality of the parent-child relationship impact the physiological and cognitive maturity of children in Upper Sakponba, Benin City?
2. How do different parenting styles affect the personality and emotional well-being of children in Upper Sakponba, Benin City?
3. How does parental engagement influence children's problem-solving abilities and academic performance in Upper Sakponba, Benin City?
4. What social work interventions can improve parenting practices and enhance developmental outcomes for children in Upper Sakponba, Benin City?

### **1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the impact of the parent-child relationship on the physiological and cognitive maturity of children in Upper Sakponba, Benin City. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Explore the effect of the quality of the parent-child relationship on the physiological and cognitive development of children, focusing on long-term well-being and maturity.
2. Determine the influence of various parenting styles such as authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and overly nurturing on children's personality, emotional well-being, social skills, and interactions with society.
3. Understand how parental involvement shapes children's mental reasoning, problem-solving abilities, and academic performance, identifying factors that contribute to positive educational outcomes.

4. Highlight the contribution of social work interventions in improving parent-child relationships, focusing on strategies to address ineffective parenting practices, promote emotional regulation, and support cognitive development, thus fostering healthier family dynamics and child maturation.

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study holds profound significance in understanding how the parent-child relationship influences the physiological and cognitive development of children, particularly within the socio-cultural context of Upper Sakponba, Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area. As children are the foundation of any society, their well-being and development are essential to sustainable community and national growth. This research provides insight into how parenting behaviors, emotional engagement, communication patterns, and parenting styles either foster or hinder the child's overall development. By drawing attention to these elements, the study contributes to a more holistic understanding of child development and its broader implications for society.

Parents stand to benefit significantly from the findings, as the research offers a reflective lens through which they can better understand how their daily interactions, discipline methods, and emotional availability shape and mold the personality, behavior, and academic capabilities of their children. It brings awareness to the long-term effects of parenting choices both positive and negative on a child's mental health, resilience, and adaptability. This understanding can help parents make informed decisions that support the holistic development of their children and strengthen the parent-child bond.

Educators, school administrators, and counselors will also gain valuable insights into the external factors that influence students' classroom behavior, social interactions, and learning capacity. Recognizing that a child's performance and behavior are often reflections of their home environment allows educators to approach teaching and discipline with greater empathy and effectiveness. This

perspective promotes inclusive teaching practices, responsive guidance, and targeted academic support for children who may struggle due to underlying relational issues at home.

For policymakers and stakeholders in child welfare and education, the study serves as an evidence-based resource to guide the formulation of child-centered policies and intervention programs. It can help design parenting workshops, family counseling programs, and educational reforms aimed at equipping parents with the necessary tools to raise emotionally healthy and cognitively sound children. Additionally, such policies may address socio-economic disparities and cultural norms that reinforce harmful parenting patterns in underserved communities like Upper Sakponba.

Social workers and child development practitioners can also leverage the findings of this study to develop context-specific interventions that bridge gaps in family functioning and promote healthier home environments. By identifying patterns of parenting that correlate with developmental challenges, practitioners can provide preventive and rehabilitative services that protect the child's right to optimal development.

This study is also a significant contribution to existing academic literature. It addresses a gap in localized research that connects parenting practices with child maturity within specific Nigerian communities. As such, it provides a foundation for further research and comparative studies in similar socio-cultural environments, allowing for more informed discussions and program development around parenting and child development.

Finally, the society stands to gain insights from the application of the study. Understanding how early home experiences influence personality, decision-making skills, and societal functioning can lead to a more responsible, emotionally stable, and socially integrated population. It fosters a more compassionate and development-oriented community where child welfare is prioritized, and family support systems are recognized as vital instruments of national development.

## **1.6 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study focus on the implication of parent-child relationship on the physiological and cognitive maturity of children in Upper Sakponba, Benin City, Nigeria. It is delimited to children within this locality and examines how different parenting styles influence their overall mental being.

## **1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**PARENT:** A parent refers to an individual who provides care, guidance, and support to a child, typically in a biological or legal capacity. Parents are responsible for meeting the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive needs of a child. The concept of parenthood extends beyond biological ties to include adoptive, step, and guardianship roles. Parents play a vital role in shaping their child's development through daily interactions and involvement (Bornstein, 2019).

**RELATIONSHIP:** A relationship refers to the way two or more individuals are connected and the quality of interaction or bond they share. Relationships are defined by communication patterns, emotional ties, and reciprocal influence. Within the parent-child context, relationships emphasize how parents and children communicate, bond, and affect each other's behaviors and emotional states (Morris et al., 2017).

**PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP:** The parent-child relationship is the bond between a parent and their child, which significantly shapes the child's emotional, social, cognitive, and behavioral development. This relationship is characterized by affection, discipline, communication, and shared experiences. Its quality affects attachment styles, mental health,

and developmental milestones, with positive relationships linked to better emotional regulation and cognitive abilities (Collins & Laursen, 2020; Kerns & Brumariu, 2016).

**EFFECT:** Effect refers to the outcome resulting from an action, behavior, or condition. In child development, effects are observed in how parenting practices and relationships influence children's cognitive growth, emotional regulation, and social behavior (Amato, 2005; Steinberg, 2001).

**PHYSIOLOGICAL MATURITY:** Physiological maturity refers to the physical growth and biological changes that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood, including puberty and other developmental milestones. The parent-child relationship influences how a child perceives and copes with these changes, affecting self-esteem and body image (Deardorff, Hoyt, & Carter, 2019).

**COGNITIVE MATURITY:** Cognitive maturity refers to the development of a child's intellectual abilities, including problem-solving skills, logical thinking, and the capacity for independent thought. It reflects a child's growing ability to process information, make decisions, and understand complex ideas. The quality of the parent-child relationship, including how parents engage in educational and cognitive development activities, plays a significant role in the development of these abilities (Landry, Smith, & Swank, 2009; Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The family remains the most significant and influential unit of socialization and development in any society, serving as the first environment in which children learn behaviors, values, and attitudes that shape their identity and worldview. At the heart of this primary unit lies the parent-child relationship, a dynamic interaction that extends far beyond biological ties to include emotional bonding, communication patterns, behavioral modeling, and the provision of both physical and psychological support. This relationship forms the bedrock upon which a child's future is built, influencing not only their immediate development but also their long-term capacities for emotional regulation, academic achievement, social participation, and overall well-being. In essence, the quality and stability of the parent-child bond can either nurture a child's potential or expose them to risks that hinder their full development. From a social work perspective, the family is not only a site of early social influence but also a frequent locus of intervention, particularly when the well-being of children is threatened by neglect, abuse, poverty, or emotional instability. The implications of the parent-child relationship are, therefore, deeply embedded within the scope of social work practice, especially in communities where developmental outcomes are often shaped by socio-economic hardship and systemic neglect, such as in Upper Sakponba, Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area (Amato, 2016; Conger, Conger, & Martin, 2010).

Over the years, numerous studies from psychology, sociology, and education have explored the multidimensional impact of parental involvement, responsiveness, and discipline on the growth and maturity of children. Beyond academic findings, social workers on the frontlines continue to encounter real-life cases reaffirming how broken communication, poor emotional attachment, and harsh parenting contribute to maladaptive behaviors, learning difficulties, or health challenges in children. Understanding these dynamics enables practitioners to design effective family-based interventions, advocate for child welfare policies, and support holistic child development (Morris, Criss, Silk, & Houlberg, 2017).

This chapter reviews existing literature on the subject, providing a theoretical, empirical, and practice-based foundation for understanding how parent-child relationships influence both physiological and cognitive development. The review begins with relevant theoretical frameworks that guide our understanding of developmental processes within family systems. It then explores parenting styles, the socio-cultural context of parenting in Nigeria especially in low-income areas like Upper Sakponba and the biological and psychological outcomes associated with parent-child interactions. Finally, the chapter closes by highlighting the role of social work in addressing family challenges and promoting optimal child development within the framework of professional ethics, values, and intervention strategies (Masten & Barnes, 2018).

## **2.2 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The conceptual framework of this study is structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex and interwoven connections between the parent-child relationship and the child's physiological and cognitive development within the cultural, social, and economic realities of Upper Sakponba, Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area. At the center of this framework lies the recognition that the parent-child relationship is the primary foundation influencing a child's overall growth, shaping both physical well-being and intellectual capacity (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Ma, Zhang, & Liu, 2023).

The bond between parent and child, expressed through emotional closeness, patterns of communication, and behavioral expectations, provides the major pathway through which children acquire guidance, security, and social experiences essential for proper development. The quality of this relationship whether nurturing and supportive or conflict-ridden has a direct effect on physical development, such as health, nutrition, bodily growth, and the pace of puberty. At the same time, it impacts mental development, covering areas like problem-solving, language acquisition, memory, critical thinking, and decision-making (Jeynes, 2007; Ma et al., 2023).

An important dimension of this framework is the stage of growth the child is in. The influence of parent-child interactions varies across infancy, early childhood, and adolescence since each phase presents unique patterns of physical and cognitive progress. For instance, strong emotional attachment during infancy provides the base for later intellectual and emotional growth, while active parental support during adolescence is vital for independence, resilience, and complex reasoning skills (Ma et al., 2023; Sanders, Kirby, & Tellegen, 2014).

A central feature of the framework is the mediating role of parenting styles in shaping developmental outcomes. Baumrind's classification authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful offers insight into how parental approaches determine child growth. Authoritative parenting, which combines warmth with firm boundaries, is linked to healthier physical development and stronger intellectual skills, encouraging self-control and adaptability. On the other hand, neglectful parenting, defined by low responsiveness and minimal involvement, is often associated with delays in physical development and learning challenges due to inadequate emotional and environmental support (Baumrind, 1966; Verywell Mind, 2024).

This framework also recognizes the reciprocal nature of the parent-child bond. Children are not just passive recipients; their behaviors and developmental progress shape how parents respond to them, creating a two-way dynamic. For example, a child's level of cognitive development can influence communication with parents, which then feeds back into further growth (Ma et al., 2023).

Socioeconomic and environmental conditions are also integrated into this model as vital background factors that shape both the parent-child relationship and child outcomes. Parental education, family income, housing quality, cultural traditions, and availability of community resources all affect how well parents can support their children. Limited income or poor access to education may prevent families from providing adequate healthcare, nutrition, or learning materials, thereby hindering both physical and cognitive maturity. In addition, cultural beliefs and societal expectations influence parenting practices and the overall

dynamic between parents and children (Yeung, Linver, & Brooks-Gunn, 2002; Ma et al., 2023).

In conclusion, this conceptual framework offers guidance for social work by pointing to key areas for prevention and intervention. By understanding how parenting styles, environmental pressures, and community supports interact to shape growth, social workers can design targeted programs that strengthen family life, encourage positive parent-child relationships, and mitigate the impact of poverty and social disadvantage in Upper Sakponba. It provides a holistic perspective that situates child development within the broader network of family, social, and cultural influences (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Ma et al., 2023).

### **2.2.1 CONCEPT OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP**

The parent-child relationship is widely acknowledged as a fundamental determinant of a child's developmental pathway, influencing physiological growth, cognitive functioning, emotional resilience, and social behavior. It describes the lasting emotional connection and ongoing exchanges between a parent and child, which influence the child's initial experiences and establish the foundation for future adaptation and learning (Bornstein, 2015). This relationship is not static but evolves over time, responding to the developmental stages of the child and the changing roles of the parent.

A nurturing and responsive parent-child relationship has been strongly linked with a range of positive developmental outcomes, including secure attachment, healthy brain development, effective stress regulation, and the development of interpersonal and educational abilities (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015). These

relationships provide children with a sense of safety and predictability, which are essential for the growth of self-regulation and problem-solving abilities. In contrast, disrupted or insecure relationships often characterized by inconsistency, neglect, or excessive control have been associated with delays in language acquisition, reduced executive function, and heightened vulnerability to emotional and behavioral disorders (Shonkoff et al., 2009).

Critically, the parent-child relationship is bidirectional. While parents influence their children through communication, discipline, emotional support, and modeling behavior, children also shape the behaviors, emotions, and perceptions of their caregivers (Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015). This mutual dynamic reinforces the understanding that the relationship is not merely imposed by adults but co-constructed over time, with both parties contributing to its quality and stability.

Parenting styles are a key element within the broader concept of the parent-child relationship. Research has shown that authoritative parenting characterized by high responsiveness and reasonable expectations tends to produce the most favorable outcomes in children, such as improved emotional intelligence, physical health, and academic success. Conversely, authoritarian (strict and less emotionally responsive), permissive, and neglectful styles often correlate with maladaptive behaviors or developmental risk (Baumrind, 1991; Spera, 2005).

Moreover, the parent-child relationship must be understood within its contextual framework that is, shaped by cultural beliefs, family structure, socioeconomic status, and

environmental factors. These variables influence parenting behaviors and expectations, which in turn affect the nature of the child's developmental experiences.

In conclusion, the concept of the parent-child relationship encompasses a rich and dynamic interaction that serves as the cornerstone of child development. It integrates emotional bonding, communication patterns, behavioral guidance, and contextual influences to shape a child's overall growth. Understanding this concept in depth is essential for evaluating how early familial experiences contribute to physiological and cognitive maturity.

### **2.2.2 DIMENSIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP**

The parent-child relationship is a multifaceted and dynamic connection that significantly influences a child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth. Central to this relationship is emotional bonding, which encompasses the warm, caring, and supportive attachment that parents form with their children. This dimension is essential because it establishes a secure attachment base, providing children with feelings of safety and acceptance that allow them to explore their surroundings and develop confidence in their abilities. Secure emotional bonding has been linked to better emotional regulation, social competence, and resilience in children (Yan et al., 2021). Moreover, this bonding is not static; it evolves over time, reflecting the child's developmental stage and the family's changing circumstances, demonstrating the dynamic nature of the parent-child relationship.

Another crucial dimension is communication, which serves as the primary vehicle through which parents and children exchange information, express emotions, and build

mutual understanding. Effective communication encompasses both verbal and nonverbal cues and is vital for fostering cognitive development and social learning. Research shows that richer and more responsive parental language input facilitates greater child language production and later cognitive outcomes (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2001). Furthermore, communication is bidirectional; parents not only teach but also listen and respond to their children's cues, creating a feedback loop that strengthens the relational bond and fosters emotional attunement.

Discipline represents another integral characteristic within the parent-child relationship, serving as a framework for teaching children about boundaries, consequences, and societal norms. The style and consistency of discipline are important determinants of child outcomes. A meta-analysis showed that authoritative parenting, marked by warmth, reasoning, and appropriate firmness, is generally associated with positive developmental outcomes, such as increased self-regulation and academic achievement (Pinquart, 2017). In contrast, authoritarian or uninvolved styles have been linked to behavioral dysregulation and lower socioemotional well-being in children (Liu, 2020).

In addition to emotional and behavioral dimensions, parental support plays a multifaceted role by encompassing both tangible and intangible forms of assistance. Tangible support includes meeting the child's basic physiological needs such as adequate nutrition, healthcare, and a safe living environment, while intangible support involves encouragement, praise, validation, and availability for emotional support. Consistent parental responsiveness and warmth are also correlated with children's improved self-control and reduced emotion

dysregulation (Pinquart, 2017). This support system fosters an environment conducive to healthy cognitive and physiological growth, particularly in socioeconomically disadvantaged settings where resources are limited.

Finally, shared experiences and family rituals (such as reading routines, shared meals, and cultural celebrations) serve critical roles in creating a sense of identity, continuity, and belonging. These routines help children internalize cultural values, understand social roles, and feel connected to a larger family unit, enhancing emotional security and social competence through joint engagement and symbolic activities (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2001). Successful parent-child relationships balance parental authority with respect for the child's autonomy, supporting healthy individuation while maintaining emotional closeness a necessary adaptation across developmental stages.

### **2.2.3 TYPES OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS**

It is essential to recognize that these types of parent-child relationships do not occur in isolation but exist along a continuum, with variations influenced by cultural norms and socioeconomic conditions. In areas such as Upper Sakponba, factors like local traditions, economic pressures, and extended family arrangements can alter how these relationships are expressed, highlighting the need for culturally aware and context-sensitive interventions. For social work practitioners, understanding this diversity is crucial for providing tailored support and fostering healthier family dynamics that promote both physiological and cognitive development.

Parent–child interactions can take multiple forms depending on patterns of communication, emotional connection, caregiving approaches, and overall family dynamics. Researchers have identified four principal types of parent-child relationships: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful or uninvolved. These classifications were first introduced by Baumrind (1966) and subsequently elaborated on by Maccoby and Martin (1983). Each relationship type has significant implications for a child’s emotional, cognitive, and physiological growth.

Authoritative relationships are generally seen as the most beneficial and adaptive for child development. They are characterized by warmth, attentiveness, open dialogue, and clearly defined expectations. Parents provide guidance and enforce rules while remaining supportive and nurturing. Children raised in these environments tend to exhibit higher levels of cognitive competence, emotional regulation, and social maturity (Pinquart, 2017; Wong et al., 2021). Furthermore, a recent longitudinal study in China indicated that authoritative parenting positively influenced non-cognitive skills and academic performance among adolescents (Wang & Zheng, 2024).

In contrast, the authoritarian relationship involves high demandingness but low responsiveness. Parents in this category emphasize strict discipline, obedience, and control, often with little warmth or open dialogue. Parents are highly controlling, directive, and less responsive. The focus is often on obedience, discipline, and structure without allowing room for emotional expression or dialogue. Although this style may produce short-term compliance,

it is frequently linked to increased anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and poor social adaptability in children (Young & Tandon, 2024).

Permissive relationships involve high responsiveness but low demands. These parents are nurturing and communicative but set few rules or expectations, frequently avoiding confrontation or discipline. Although this style can encourage creativity and self-expression, it is often linked to difficulties with self-discipline, underachievement in academics, and impulsive behavior (Pinquart, 2017; Garcia & Gracia, 2020). Children in these environments may struggle with structure, routine, and cognitive demands.

Neglectful or uninvolved relationships are defined by both low responsiveness and low demands. Parents displaying these behaviors provide minimal emotional support or guidance, often due to stress, limited resources, or other challenges. Such detachment can have severe consequences, including impaired cognitive functioning, behavioral difficulties, and long-term emotional detachment (NCBI, 2023). Children in these situations often experience low self-worth, poor academic outcomes, and insufficient physiological support due to the lack of parental engagement (Włodarczyk et al., 2022). Neglect hinders the child's ability to form secure attachments and interact effectively with their environment.

It is important to note that these relationship types do not exist in isolation but rather on a continuum and can vary across cultural contexts and socioeconomic conditions. In communities like Upper Sakponba, cultural norms, economic challenges, and extended family dynamics often modify how these types manifest, requiring nuanced understanding and culturally sensitive interventions. For social work practitioners, recognizing the diversity of

parent-child relationship types is critical for tailoring support and promoting healthier family dynamics that encourage both physiological and cognitive maturity.

## **2.2.4 PARENTING STYLES AND THEIR IMPLICATION**

### **1 AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING**

Authoritative parenting is widely regarded as one of the most developmentally supportive parenting styles due to its balanced approach combining warmth, responsiveness, and firm but flexible discipline. Parents who adopt this style provide clear boundaries and consistent rules while also encouraging autonomy, open communication, and emotional expression. This dynamic fosters a nurturing environment where children are guided, yet heard, allowing them to develop a strong sense of identity, confidence, and self-regulation.

In terms of cognitive maturity, authoritative parenting has been positively linked to enhanced critical thinking, academic performance, problem-solving abilities, and emotional intelligence, as children raised in such environments often feel safe to explore, express, and make decisions (Casas & Weigel, 2022; Pinquart, 2017). Additionally, a large-scale study in rural China found that authoritative parenting was significantly associated with better cognitive development outcomes in preschool-aged children (Wang & Zheng, 2024).

On the physiological side, authoritative parents tend to promote healthier life routines such as proper nutrition, regular sleep, personal hygiene, and physical activity. A recent study using objective measures found that adolescent girls raised in authoritative households had significantly lower BMI percentiles compared to peers in non-authoritative settings (Vollmer et al., 2021).

However, while authoritative parenting is generally seen as ideal, it is not without limitations. In resource-constrained environments including areas like Upper Sakponba, maintaining a high degree of responsiveness alongside significant expectations may be challenging for parents facing economic stress or limited social supports. Factors like fatigue, time constraints, or emotional burden may compromise consistency, leading to emotional withdrawal or uneven implementation of this parenting style. This aligns with the Family Stress Model, which illustrates how economic hardship influences caregiver distress and disrupts parenting practices (Conger et al., 1994; Holmes et al., 2020).

From a social work perspective, the attributes of authoritative parenting particularly empowerment, respect for the child's voice, and structured emotional support align well with strengths-based and family-centered practice models. Interventions that support parents to maintain warmth and sensible expectations, even in adversity, aid both cognitive and physiological maturity of children by reinforcing environments that are emotionally nurturing and developmentally structured.

## **2 AUTHORITARIAN PARENTING**

Authoritarian parenting is marked by strict rules and high expectations, but a lack of emotional connection. Parents adopting this style emphasize strict discipline, obedience, and control, often enforcing rules with little warmth or open communication. While this approach can create a clear structure that some children may find predictable, it often limits a child's ability to express emotions and develop independent thinking, which are crucial for cognitive maturity. Research shows that children raised under authoritarian parenting tend to

demonstrate lower self-esteem, higher levels of anxiety, and difficulties with social competence (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018; Sorkhabi, 2005). Physiologically, the stress and rigidity associated with authoritarian homes may contribute to psychosomatic symptoms and inhibit healthy emotional regulation during critical developmental phases such as puberty (Garthe et al., 2018).

From a social work perspective, authoritarian parenting presents significant challenges. The lack of emotional warmth can hinder the establishment of trust and attachment, which are foundational for healthy parent-child relationships. Social workers often encounter families where authoritarian approaches stem from cultural norms or as coping mechanisms in high-stress environments, including poverty or community violence. In Upper Sakponba, social workers must navigate these complex factors, promoting awareness about the adverse effects of excessive control while respecting cultural sensitivities. Interventions may focus on encouraging more empathetic communication and helping parents balance discipline with emotional support. Such efforts aim to improve both cognitive outcomes, like problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence, and physiological health by reducing stress-related health risks in children. Thus, addressing authoritarian parenting is vital in social work's goal to foster environments that nurture the holistic development of children.

### **3 PERMISSIVE PARENTING**

Permissive parenting involves being highly supportive and responsive, but having few rules or expectations. These parents are often indulgent and lenient, allowing children considerable freedom with minimal guidance or firm rules. While this parenting style can create a warm emotional climate, it frequently fails to provide the structure children need for developing essential self-regulation and decision-making skills. Research has shown that permissive parenting is associated with challenges in cognitive development. Children raised by permissive parents may exhibit poorer academic performance and difficulties in executive functioning due to a lack of consistent expectations and discipline (Baumrind, 1991; Spera, 2005). Without clearly defined boundaries, children may struggle to manage impulses, delay gratification, and take responsibility core aspects of cognitive maturity.

On a physiological level, permissive parenting may also result in unhealthy lifestyle patterns. For instance, studies have found that children with permissive parents are more likely to consume unhealthy diets, engage in irregular sleep routines, and develop sedentary habits, all of which can affect physical growth and health (Sahoo et al., 2015; Rollins et al., 2017).

From a social work perspective, permissive parenting presents risks in environments where external stressors like poverty, peer pressure, or community violence already threaten children's well-being. In communities such as Upper Sakponba, this lack of parental structure may further hinder children's ability to make safe and healthy choices. Social workers play a vital role in supporting families by promoting balanced parenting strategies that maintain emotional warmth while introducing reasonable boundaries. Through parenting workshops,

counseling, and home visits, social workers help caregivers understand that love and structure are not mutually exclusive but complementary tools for nurturing well-rounded development.

#### **4 NEGLECTFUL PARENTING**

Neglectful parenting is classified by a lack of involvement, showing little warmth, support, and expectation by caregiver. Parents who exhibit this style tend to be emotionally distant, uninvolved, or indifferent to their child's needs and behaviors. This lack of engagement often results in the child feeling abandoned or unsupported, which can severely hinder both physiological and cognitive maturity. Empirical studies consistently show that children raised in neglectful environments are at heightened risk for developmental delays, poor academic achievement, emotional difficulties, and health problems due to inadequate supervision and care (Stoltenborgh et al., 2013; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). Physiologically, neglect can manifest as poor nutrition, inadequate hygiene, and a lack of medical care, all of which can disrupt normal physical growth and delay puberty-related development. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2023), chronic neglect is associated with long-term health issues, including stunted growth, weakened immune function, and delayed brain development.

From a social work perspective, neglectful parenting presents one of the most critical challenges because it directly violates the child's basic rights to safety, care, and nurturing. In areas like Upper Sakponba, social workers often confront complex socio-economic stressors that contribute to neglect, including poverty, parental substance abuse, mental health issues, and family breakdown. Addressing neglect requires a multifaceted approach that includes

child protection services, family support interventions, counseling, and community mobilization. Social workers prioritize early identification and intervention to mitigate the long-term cognitive and physiological impairments that neglect can cause. Through advocacy, education, and linking families to social services, social workers strive to rebuild or establish healthier parent-child relationships that promote the child's overall well-being and developmental potential.

### **2.2.5 PHYSIOLOGICAL MATURITY AND PARENTAL INFLUENCE**

Physiological maturity refers to the biological and physical processes through which children grow and attain functional developmental milestones, including motor skills, hormonal changes, brain development, and general physical health. These processes do not occur in isolation; rather, they are deeply influenced by the quality of the parent-child relationship and the caregiving environment. Parental roles in ensuring proper nutrition, timely health care, physical safety, and emotional regulation all serve as catalysts or deterrents to optimal physiological development (Bornstein, 2015).

In the early years of life, the human brain undergoes rapid growth, with nearly 90% of its structure forming before the age of five (Center on the Developing Child, 2021). During this time, positive parental behaviors such as feeding routines, tactile interaction, and protection from stress directly frame the architecture of the brain and influence other systems like immunity, and sleep regulation. When parents provide consistent caregiving and meet children's physical and emotional needs, physiological systems mature in synchrony, allowing

children to reach developmental benchmarks in movement, sleep patterns, and bodily control (Guyer et al., 2018).

Conversely, children exposed to neglect, malnutrition, environmental hazards, or chronic stress may experience delayed or disrupted physiological maturity. Chronic exposure to adversity, including domestic violence, economic hardship, or parental unavailability, triggers the release of stress hormones like cortisol, which can dysregulate growth, impair immunity, and disrupt neurodevelopment (Luby et al., 2015; McEwen & Gianaros, 2011). These physiological setbacks can, in turn, affect children's ability to focus, process information, and regulate behavior, highlighting the interplay between physical and cognitive development.

The role of parents in promoting physiological maturity becomes even more critical in under-resourced communities like Upper Sakponba, where access to quality healthcare, sanitation, and nutrition may be inconsistent. In such environments, parents serve not just as caregivers but also as health advocates, educators, and role models. Their ability to shield children from environmental risks and promote healthy routines significantly impacts both immediate physical development and long-term educational outcomes (Bornstein & Bradley, 2014).

## **1 BODILY DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF PARENTAL INFLUENCE**

Bodily development encompasses the progressive physical transformations that occur as a child grows, including increases in height and weight, the maturation of the musculoskeletal and organ systems, and the development of gross and fine motor skills. While much of this progression is genetically driven, empirical studies increasingly emphasize the substantial

impact of environmental and relational factors particularly the nature of the parent-child relationship on physical growth outcomes. Parental behaviors such as providing adequate nutrition, ensuring a safe living environment, and encouraging physical activity are crucial in supporting the child's physiological development. According to a study by Pinquart (2017), children raised in nurturing environments where caregivers demonstrate awareness and responsiveness to their physical needs are more likely to reach age-appropriate growth milestones and exhibit stronger immune resilience.

Beyond basic caregiving, the emotional quality of the parent-child bond also plays a physiological role. Chronic stress in early life, often stemming from neglect, harsh discipline, or emotional unavailability, can activate a child's stress response system, affecting hormones like cortisol that regulate growth and immunity. Studies by Conger et al. (1994) reveal that elevated stress levels caused by inconsistent or hostile parenting can impair metabolic functions and delay growth in early and middle childhood. Thus, a secure attachment with caregivers contributes not only to emotional well-being but also to the body's regulatory balance and physical health.

A critical period within bodily development is puberty, a biologically timed but socially and emotionally influenced stage that requires substantial parental input. As children transition into adolescence, the physical changes of puberty such as menstruation, breast development, voice deepening, and increased body hair can provoke confusion, anxiety, or body image issues if not met with empathetic and informed guidance. Emotional support from parents during puberty helps children understand and accept these bodily changes, fostering a

sense of self-confidence and appropriate self-care behaviors. When parents avoid or mishandle discussions around puberty due to cultural taboos or discomfort, children may turn to misinformed peers or online sources, increasing the risk of unhealthy behaviors. Emotional guidance, therefore, becomes a vital element of physical development, shaping how children process bodily changes and internalize body-related values.

In socioeconomically challenged settings like Upper Sakponba, where children may face compounding vulnerabilities including poor sanitation, food insecurity, and limited access to medical care parental influence becomes both a protective and risk factor. Informed and engaged parents may mitigate the impact of structural deficiencies by seeking alternative health remedies, prioritizing household hygiene, and advocating for their children's welfare in school and health systems. Social workers play an indispensable role here, engaging with families through community outreach, nutritional education, sexual and reproductive health sensitization, and case management services to promote healthy child development. As noted by Van der Put et al. (2021), social work interventions in high-risk environments aim not only to treat developmental delays but also to prevent them by addressing structural and familial risk factors through family-centered and community-based approaches.

Ultimately, bodily development is not an isolated biological event but a relational and environmental process. The consistent presence of a caring and health-literate parent, supported by systems like social work, enables children to grow in alignment with their developmental potential despite contextual hardships. Recognizing bodily growth as part of holistic child welfare emphasizes the interconnection between physical well-being, emotional

maturity, and the quality of parental care an intersection that lies at the heart of social work advocacy and intervention.

## **2 PHYSICAL WELL-BEING AND PARENTAL CARE**

Children's physical well-being extends far beyond simply being free from illness or disease; it reflects a comprehensive state of health that includes consistent preventive care, proper hygiene practices, sufficient nutrition, adequate sleep, and proper care for both short-term and long-term health conditions. The role of parents as primary caregivers is critical in nurturing and sustaining this comprehensive well-being. From early infancy through adolescence, parental involvement shapes the health behaviors and outcomes of children by providing consistent care, establishing healthy routines, and creating an environment that fosters physical resilience. Effective parental care includes not only meeting basic needs but also actively recognizing early signs of illness, ensuring timely medical attention, and supporting adherence to prescribed treatments. This ongoing engagement is especially important in contexts where health resources are limited, and preventable illnesses remain prevalent (UNICEF, 2021).

In socioeconomically disadvantaged communities like Upper Sakponba, environmental and structural challenges such as inadequate sanitation, limited access to clean water, overcrowded living conditions, and under-resourced healthcare facilities exacerbate risks to children's physical well-being. Parents in these settings often face significant obstacles in protecting their children from infections and malnutrition. However, those who are well-informed and actively implement hygiene practices such as frequent handwashing, safe food

preparation, and maintaining clean household environments can significantly reduce these risks. A study by Olayiwola, Ogunyemi, and Salami (2022) found that children whose parents consistently enforced hygiene and preventative health practices experienced fewer incidences of common childhood illnesses, such as diarrheal diseases and respiratory infections, leading to improved school attendance and better overall developmental progress. These findings underscore the importance of parental education and empowerment in health promotion efforts within vulnerable populations.

Sleep hygiene is a critical yet often overlooked component of children's physical well-being that parents directly influence. Regular sleep patterns and a conducive sleep environment are fundamental for physiological restoration, immune function, and cognitive processing. Irregular sleep or sleep deprivation, which may result from stressful home conditions, inconsistent routines, or inadequate parental supervision, is linked to heightened susceptibility to illness, poor attention, and delayed growth (Adewuyi & Yusuf, 2021). Social workers who engage with families in communities like Upper Sakponba prioritize educating caregivers about establishing healthy sleep routines and mitigating environmental stressors that disrupt rest. This focus aligns with social work's commitment to holistic family welfare, recognizing that sleep quality impacts not only physical health but also emotional and cognitive development.

Social work interventions in such contexts often involve multi-level strategies, including health education programs aimed at enhancing parental knowledge, facilitating access to healthcare services, and advocating for improvements in community health infrastructure.

Social workers collaborate with health professionals, schools, and community leaders to address barriers that hinder effective parental care, such as poverty, illiteracy, and cultural misconceptions about illness and hygiene (IFSW, 2022). Through family-centered practice, social workers empower parents with skills and resources to manage their children's health proactively, foster protective behaviors, and navigate health systems effectively. This approach is crucial for reducing health disparities and fostering resilience among children living in underserved areas.

Moreover, physical well-being as a domain of child development cannot be detached from the social determinants that influence family functioning. Economic hardship, parental mental health, and social isolation can undermine parents' capacity to provide consistent care, increasing children's vulnerability to health problems. From a social work perspective, addressing these underlying factors through psychosocial support, income generation programs, and community mobilization enhances parental caregiving and, consequently, children's physical health outcomes. This comprehensive perspective aligns with the social work mandate to promote social justice and equitable access to resources that support child well-being (World Health Organization, 2020).

Parental care is fundamental to fostering children's physical well-being, especially in environments fraught with challenges such as Upper Sakponba. Social work's holistic and strengths-based approach emphasizes enhancing parental capacity, addressing structural barriers, and promoting community-level interventions to ensure children achieve optimal physical health. Recognizing the interconnection between physical well-being, family

dynamics, and socio-environmental factors enriches the understanding necessary for effective practice and policy formulation aimed at improving child development outcomes.

### **2.2.6 COGNITIVE MATURITY AND PARENTAL INFLUENCE**

Cognitive maturity refers to the progressive development of mental capabilities such as reasoning, memory, decision-making, problem-solving, and abstract thinking, which enable individuals to function effectively in personal, academic, and social contexts (Casey, Heller & Gee, 2022). Unlike cognitive development in early childhood, cognitive maturity encompasses the refinement of higher-order thinking and self-regulation skills, which continue to evolve through adolescence and into early adulthood. A growing body of research highlights the pivotal role of the parent-child relationship in nurturing these capacities, emphasizing that parenting practices directly shape the trajectory and quality of a child's cognitive growth (Gauvain & Perez, 2021).

From infancy through adolescence, parents serve as primary architects of the cognitive environment by offering stimulation, guidance, modeling behavior, and emotional regulation. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, a child's intellectual development is deeply embedded in social interactions, particularly those with caregivers, who help children internalize problem-solving strategies through guided participation (Daniels, 2020). Moreover, consistent parental involvement, open communication, and a supportive home environment contribute significantly to a child's executive functioning and self-directed learning (Morris et al., 2023). This influence becomes especially pronounced in environments with economic or

social adversity such as Upper Sakponba where the absence of parental guidance can leave children vulnerable to developmental delays and poor educational outcomes.

Cognitive maturity is not a static trait but a dynamic process influenced by neurological changes, life experiences, and the quality of interpersonal relationships. Research in developmental neuroscience confirms that the prefrontal cortex critical for reasoning and impulse control continues to develop into the mid-twenties and is highly sensitive to environmental input (Steinberg, 2021). Parental support during this extended developmental window is therefore crucial in helping adolescents and young adults build competencies needed for adaptive decision-making, goal-setting, and emotional regulation. When such support is absent, inconsistent, or overly authoritarian, children may internalize anxiety, dependency, or cognitive rigidity, limiting their capacity to engage in independent, flexible thinking (Peverill et al., 2022).

For social work practitioners, these insights are central to designing interventions that foster cognitive resilience in children and youth. Promoting parenting programs that build reflective dialogue, encourage positive reinforcement, and strengthen emotional attunement can enhance children's cognitive maturity. This is particularly important in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas like Upper Sakponba, where systemic barriers may compromise families' ability to provide consistent cognitive and emotional support.

## **1 MENTAL DEVELOPMENT ACROSS STAGES OF GROWTH**

Mental development is a dynamic, ongoing process that unfolds throughout childhood and adolescence, shaped significantly by the quality of the parent-child relationship at every

stage. In infancy, the earliest form of parent-child interaction marked by bonding, eye contact, and responsive caregiving lays the neurological groundwork for cognitive development. Research by Shonkoff and Garner (2009) highlights that secure attachments formed during this period promote brain plasticity, which is essential for sensory processing and early language acquisition. Infants who experience consistent, warm, and responsive care develop better emotional regulation and foundational cognitive skills, setting the stage for future learning and problem-solving abilities.

As children transition into early childhood (ages 2–6), the parent-child relationship continues to be crucial in expanding mental capacities. This phase is marked by swift expansion of language skills, enhanced memory capacity, and the onset of symbolic or imaginative thinking. According to Berk (2018), parents who actively engage in verbal communication, storytelling, and guided play foster children’s curiosity and imagination, enhancing their mental flexibility and capacity to understand abstract concepts. In contexts like Upper Sakponba, where formal early childhood education may be inconsistent, the role of the parent as the primary educator becomes even more pronounced. Social work programs that support parenting skills during this stage are vital to ensure children receive adequate cognitive stimulation at home, bridging gaps caused by limited institutional resources (Britto et al., 2017).

During adolescence, mental development involves more complex processes such as critical thinking, decision-making, and metacognition. The parent-child relationship adapts to support growing independence while providing emotional guidance and intellectual

encouragement. Steinberg (2020) notes that adolescents benefit from parental support that balances autonomy with oversight, helping them navigate social challenges and develop responsible reasoning skills. Social work interventions at this stage often focus on family counseling and communication enhancement to maintain supportive relationships that promote cognitive maturity and resilience, especially in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas where adolescents face heightened risks (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015).

Overall, the parent-child relationship is foundational to mental development at each stage of growth, influencing how children acquire, process, and apply knowledge. Social workers play a critical role in reinforcing positive parenting practices tailored to each developmental phase, helping families foster cognitive maturity despite environmental or economic challenges. This stage-specific understanding enables targeted interventions that optimize developmental outcomes in children from communities like Upper Sakponba.

## **2 LEARNING ABILITIES ACROSS DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES**

Learning ability refers to a child's capacity to absorb, retain, and apply information as they grow, and it is critically shaped by the quality of the parent-child relationship. From a developmental and social work perspective, learning does not happen in isolation but is influenced by emotional security, environmental stimulation, and parental involvement factors that either enhance or hinder intellectual growth (Bornstein & Bradley, 2014). In communities such as Upper Sakponba, where limited educational resources and socio-economic instability persist, the parent-child relationship can act as either a protective or risk factor in shaping a child's learning trajectory.

In infancy, learning is rooted in sensory exploration and emotional bonding. At this stage, the presence of a responsive caregiver who holds, talks to, and soothes the child stimulates the brain's neural pathways. Parental touch, eye contact, and verbal interaction help establish early cognitive abilities such as recognition, attention span, and early language acquisition. When these interactions are absent or inconsistent due to parental neglect, poverty, or stress, cognitive development may be delayed. Early responsive caregiving plays a crucial role in shaping brain architecture and learning capacity during infancy (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Social work professionals often advocate for early parenting programs in disadvantaged areas to promote responsive caregiving during this sensitive period (Yoshikawa et al., 2018).

During early childhood, between ages 2 and 6, children begin developing language, memory, and problem-solving skills. Parents who provide verbal stimulation, read to their children, and encourage curiosity create an environment conducive to learning. Guided play and adult-led language interactions significantly benefit children at this stage (Berk, 2021). In Upper Sakponba, where access to quality pre-primary education may be limited, a child's exposure to learning often depends heavily on the home. Social workers play an important role by facilitating parenting workshops and community-based literacy programs that guide parents on how to turn daily activities into learning opportunities (Britto et al., 2017).

By middle childhood (ages 6 to 12), formal education becomes central, but continued parental support remains essential. Children with supportive parents who assist with homework, set educational goals, and express belief in their abilities are more likely to achieve academic success and develop learning confidence. Conversely, children in homes

marked by instability, lack of structure, or economic hardship may struggle to stay focused or motivated. In these cases, school social workers and community-based interventions help bridge the gap by identifying at-risk children and supporting family stability (Mapp, 2012).

In adolescence, learning takes on new dimensions, including abstract thinking, self-regulation, and independent study habits. Adolescents begin to form identities and make decisions about their futures. However, these abilities are influenced by how their parents model learning, discipline, and problem-solving. When parents encourage independent thought while maintaining open communication, adolescents are more likely to develop strong learning skills. In contrast, overly controlling or emotionally distant parenting may stifle intellectual growth or push adolescents toward peers who do not value education. Positive parental engagement during adolescence fosters autonomy and academic achievement (Steinberg, 2014). This highlights the importance of family-focused social work interventions that aim to strengthen adolescent-parent engagement and promote a balanced, growth-oriented household.

In conclusion, learning abilities are cultivated through every stage of childhood with the guidance and influence of parents. In a socially and economically challenged context like Upper Sakponba, where systemic obstacles affect education, social workers have a critical role in supporting parents to become active facilitators of their children's learning. Through practical education, advocacy, and intervention, social work practice strengthens the family's capacity to support cognitive growth and promotes long-term educational success.

### **3 DECISION-MAKING ACROSS DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES**

Decision-making is a critical component of cognitive maturity, involving the ability to evaluate options, anticipate consequences, and make reasoned choices. The parent-child relationship plays a pivotal role in shaping decision-making skills across different stages of a child's growth, with lasting implications for independence and social functioning.

In early childhood, decision-making begins with simple choices such as selecting toys or foods that help children develop a sense of autonomy and personal preference. During this stage, parents who encourage safe exploration and offer guided choices foster children's confidence in their ability to make decisions. Importantly, children also learn decision-making behaviors by observing and imitating their parents' actions, attitudes, and problem-solving approaches, which serve as implicit models for their own choices. Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory explains how such modeling significantly shapes children's cognitive and emotional development (Bandura, 1977). Supportive parenting promotes the development of impulse control and problem-solving skills, which are foundational for more complex decision-making later in life (Maccoby, 2007).

During middle childhood and early adolescence, decision-making skills become more sophisticated as children encounter social dilemmas and academic challenges. Parental involvement that balances guidance with opportunities for independent thinking encourages adolescents to weigh risks and benefits effectively. Grolnick and Pomerantz (2009) emphasize that this balance between autonomy and control enhances children's motivation and self-regulation (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009). This is especially crucial in environments like

Upper Sakponba, where external stressors such as poverty or peer pressure may impact youths' choices.

In late adolescence, decision-making skills are further refined through increased executive functioning and metacognition. Parents who provide emotional support while respecting adolescents' growing autonomy help them develop responsible decision-making capacities, critical for successful transition into adulthood. Steinberg (2005) and Albert and Steinberg (2011) point out that decision-making improves significantly in this stage, especially when adolescents are supported in reasoning through consequences and reflecting on their values (Steinberg, 2005; Albert & Steinberg, 2011). However, the decisions adolescents make are often influenced by the cognitive frameworks and values instilled by their parents throughout development. In cases where these are restrictive, dysfunctional, or shaped by socioeconomic adversity, social work interventions become essential in promoting healthier family dynamics and cognitive development (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Overall, the parent-child relationship significantly influences decision-making development at every stage. By fostering supportive environments that balance guidance and independence, parents contribute to the child's cognitive maturity and resilience. Social workers play a vital role in supporting families through education and intervention strategies that strengthen these relationships, particularly in communities facing socioeconomic challenges.

## **2.2.7 SOCIAL WORK VALUES AND THE FAMILY SYSTEM**

Social work is founded on a set of core principles that prioritize the respect for each individual's inherent worth and dignity, social justice, empowerment, and the significance of human relationships, particularly within the family context. The family, as the primary unit of society, is crucial in influencing children's physiological and cognitive growth. From a social work standpoint, acknowledging and valuing the family system is vital, as children's overall development and well-being are closely tied to the quality of care and interactions they experience at home. Social workers adhere to ethical standards that honor families' cultural backgrounds, belief systems, and diverse structures, ensuring that interventions are culturally sensitive and uphold the dignity of all family members (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021).

This respect fosters trust, which is a vital foundation for effective engagement with families, particularly in contexts marked by poverty or social vulnerability, such as Upper Sakponba.

Empowerment is a key social work value that directly informs practice with families. It involves helping parents and caregivers recognize their strengths, build resilience, and gain the skills necessary to provide nurturing and supportive environments for their children. Empowered parents are better positioned to promote not only their children's physical health through appropriate nutrition, hygiene, and healthcare but also their cognitive development by engaging in stimulating communication and encouraging learning. Social workers, therefore, facilitate access to resources, provide education on positive parenting practices, and advocate

for families within broader social systems, reducing barriers that may hinder child development (Payne, 2020; Healy, 2019). This approach aligns with the social work commitment to social justice, which seeks to address structural inequalities that disproportionately affect marginalized families, ensuring that children in these communities have equitable opportunities for healthy growth and development.

Moreover, the family system is viewed as a dynamic, interconnected entity in which changes in one member's behavior or circumstances ripple throughout the unit. This systemic perspective is fundamental to social work's holistic approach, emphasizing that interventions must consider relational patterns, communication styles, and power dynamics within the family rather than focusing solely on individual symptoms or problems. By understanding the family as a complex social system, social workers are better equipped to design interventions that promote harmony, support parental roles, and ultimately foster environments conducive to optimal physiological and cognitive maturity in children (Gray & Webb, 2010; Hepworth et al., 2017). In practice, this means addressing issues such as parental stress, domestic conflict, or lack of knowledge that may undermine effective parenting, while also reinforcing positive interactions and emotional support.

In regions like Upper Sakponba, where socioeconomic challenges often exacerbate family stressors, social work values become even more critical. Families in these settings may face obstacles including unemployment, limited education, and inadequate health services, which strain parental capacity and affect child-rearing quality. Social workers, guided by their ethical commitment to dignity and social justice, act as advocates and facilitators, linking

families to community resources and support networks, and delivering family-centered interventions tailored to local realities (Ferguson, 2018). This not only enhances parental competence but also strengthens the family system as a protective factor against adverse developmental outcomes. Ultimately, embedding social work values into practice acknowledges the family as the cornerstone of child development, ensuring that children's physiological and cognitive maturity are nurtured within environments that respect, empower, and uphold family integrity.

### **2.2.8 SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE ON PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

The parent-child relationship is universally recognized as one of the most crucial determinants of a child's holistic development. Within the discipline of social work, this relationship takes on heightened significance as it directly influences not only the physiological and cognitive growth of the child but also their emotional well-being, social skills, and overall resilience. Social work as a profession is deeply rooted in values such as social justice, human dignity, and empowerment, all of which intersect with its focus on strengthening family systems. Social workers understand that positive parenting practices nurture a child's sense of security, belonging, and self-worth fundamental pillars that support healthy development across multiple domains. On the contrary, dysfunctional parent-child relationships, often intensified by factors like family breakdown, social isolation, or adverse environmental stressors, tend to increase the risk of developmental delays, behavioral challenges, and long-term psychosocial difficulties (Gray & Webb, 2010; Payne, 2020). Thus,

social work practice prioritizes empowering families to harness their internal strengths and build supportive, nurturing environments that facilitate the child's growth and protect them from harm.

The ecological systems theory, first introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1979), provides a foundational framework for social workers to understand the complex interplay of factors that shape parenting and child development. This theory posits that the child and family exist within multiple, interconnected layers of influence, ranging from the immediate microsystem comprising the family, school, and peer group to the exosystem, which encompasses indirect factors like parents' work environments and community support services, as well as the broader macrosystem that reflects cultural beliefs, societal expectations, and governing policies. Viewed in this way, the parent-child relationship must be understood in connection with the broader environmental and societal factors that influence it. For instance, in communities like Upper Sakponba, where economic hardships, cultural traditions, and limited access to healthcare and education are prevalent, social workers must consider how these systemic factors affect parenting capacities and child outcomes. By embedding families within this ecological context, social workers are better positioned to design interventions that are culturally sensitive, resource-informed, and realistically tailored to meet the specific needs of the family (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021).

Complementing this broad contextual lens is the strengths-based approach, which shifts the focus away from deficits and dysfunction toward recognizing and building upon the inherent resilience and resources present within families. This approach is consistent with

core social work values of respect, dignity, and empowerment, emphasizing collaboration rather than judgment. Within this framework, parents are not seen merely as clients with problems but as partners who possess valuable knowledge and skills that can be mobilized to enhance their children's development. This mindset is particularly powerful in overcoming stigma and resistance that sometimes accompany social interventions. Additionally, attachment theory, originally developed by Bowlby (1988), is instrumental in informing social work practice related to the parent-child relationship. Attachment theory highlights the importance of secure, responsive caregiving in fostering children's emotional regulation, cognitive development, and social competence. Social workers who employ attachment-informed interventions focus on improving communication, emotional attunement, and trust between parents and children. Such approaches are crucial in breaking cycles of neglect, abuse, or trauma, and in promoting healthier developmental trajectories, particularly in vulnerable populations (Bowlby, 1988; Schore, 2019).

In practice, social workers employ a wide range of strategies to support and enhance the parent-child relationship and promote child development. Preventive measures such as parenting education programs teach caregivers effective child-rearing techniques, including proper nutrition, positive discipline, and emotional support. Counseling services and home visitation initiatives provide individualized support, enabling social workers to build trust, observe family dynamics firsthand, and tailor interventions accordingly. Moreover, social workers actively engage in community mobilization efforts to increase awareness about child development and parenting issues, fostering environments where families can access health

services, educational resources, and social support networks. These interventions are especially vital in marginalized and underserved areas like Upper Sakponba, where families often face compounded stressors such as poverty, inadequate housing, and social exclusion. Social workers act as advocates, helping families navigate complex social service systems, overcome bureaucratic barriers, and obtain the support they need to foster their children's well-being.

Cultural competence is another essential dimension of social work practice in this area. Recognizing and respecting the cultural values, traditions, and child-rearing practices of families ensures that interventions are not only accepted but are also more effective and sustainable. In the context of Upper Sakponba, social workers must navigate diverse cultural norms while promoting children's rights and optimal development. This requires a delicate balance between honoring traditional practices and introducing evidence-based approaches that protect children from harm and support their growth. Through this holistic, context-sensitive perspective, social work positions itself as a vital discipline in safeguarding children's rights, supporting families, and advocating for systemic changes that promote equitable opportunities for all children to thrive.

### **2.3 EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON PHYSIOLOGICAL AND COGNITIVE MATURITY**

Empirical research provides valuable insights into how parent-child relationships impact both physiological and cognitive development in children. These studies not only affirm theoretical understandings but also highlight real-world dynamics and challenges faced by families in diverse contexts. By examining data from various settings, especially those

comparable to Upper Sakponba in terms of socio-economic conditions, researchers have identified clear links between parenting practices and children's physical health as well as cognitive growth. For social work practice, these findings underscore the importance of evidence-based interventions tailored to improve family functioning and child development outcomes. Social workers rely on such empirical evidence to design programs that address both immediate caregiving needs and broader systemic issues influencing child well-being. This section reviews key empirical studies focusing on physiological maturity, cognitive development, and the interplay between both, demonstrating the crucial role of parent-child interactions in fostering healthy and well-rounded growth.

### **2.3.1 EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON PHYSIOLOGICAL MATURITY**

Physiological maturity in children refers to the process through which the body develops and functions effectively, including growth, motor skills, neurological development, and overall health. Empirical research consistently highlights the critical influence of the parent-child relationship on this aspect of development. For example, studies indicate that children who experience consistent and nurturing caregiving typified by parental warmth and sensitivity tend to follow healthier growth trajectories, including appropriate height and weight, stronger immune function, and more advanced motor coordination (Bakermans-Kranenburg et al., 2019; Roth et al., 2009).

Conversely, when the parent-child relationship is characterized by neglect, emotional unavailability, or parental distress, children are at heightened risk for physiological challenges such as delayed motor development, malnutrition, elevated inflammation, hormonal

dysregulation, and impaired immune responses (Gonzalez et al., 2019; Shonkoff et al., 2009). Chronic stress stemming from poor parent–child relations can disrupt the child’s HPA-axis functioning, leading to cortisol dysregulation, which has been linked to poor growth outcomes, weakened immunity, and long-term health risks across the lifespan (Miller et al., 2018; Gunnar & Quevedo, 2007).

In social work practice, these empirical findings underscore the need for early assessment and intervention aimed at strengthening parent–child dynamics to support physical development. Social workers can counsel caregivers on responsive caregiving, facilitate access to health and nutrition services, and link families to community support critical actions for promoting physiological maturity in children. Moreover, social advocacy for policies supporting family resilience, such as improved maternal mental health support and parent education, is essential in mitigating systemic risk factors like poverty and social isolation (Conger et al., 2010; Yoshikawa et al., 2012).

By applying these insights holistically, social work interventions contribute significantly to enhancing children’s physical health, reinforcing the profession’s commitment to addressing both individual and structural influences that shape physiological maturity.

### **2.3.2 EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON COGNITIVE MATURITY**

Cognitive maturity encompasses a child’s ability to think critically, process information, solve problems, and make sound decisions based on reason and experience. It is a central aspect of human development that determines how children interact with their environment, perform in academic settings, and function in social relationships. A growing body of

empirical research confirms that the quality of parent-child interactions plays a foundational role in shaping this dimension of maturity. From a social work perspective, this makes the cognitive development of children not only a psychological concern but also a crucial area of family intervention, policy development, and child welfare services. Understanding the influence of parenting on children's cognitive capacities is thus essential in ensuring that children are equipped with the mental tools they need to navigate life successfully.

One notable study by Bernier, Carlson, and Whipple (2010) explored how parental autonomy support and responsiveness influenced the development of executive functioning in preschool-aged children. The study, which included diverse family backgrounds, found that children whose parents provided guided conversations, emotional warmth, and cognitive scaffolding displayed stronger working memory, inhibition, and cognitive flexibility key components of cognitive maturity. These findings are vital for social work practice, especially in economically stressed areas like Upper Sakponba, where families may face multiple stressors such as poverty, unemployment, and limited educational resources. Social workers can utilize such evidence to advocate for and implement parenting support programs that emphasize early stimulation and consistent communication as a means to boost cognitive development in children.

Similarly, Landry, Smith, and Swank (2006) demonstrated that emotionally responsive and stimulating parenting during early childhood was significantly associated with higher cognitive and language outcomes. Their longitudinal study showed that children who experienced warmth, encouragement, and verbal engagement from their caregivers developed

stronger reasoning and language skills. The researchers emphasized that emotional safety provides the cognitive freedom necessary for children to explore, question, and engage their environment. Within social work frameworks, this reinforces the importance of secure attachment and emotionally supportive home environments through interventions like parenting education, family counseling, and supportive outreach services.

Further, a culturally grounded study by Okigbo, Omolayo, and Ajayi (2021) focused on parenting styles and their cognitive outcomes among school-age children in urban and semi-urban Nigerian communities. The study found that authoritarian and neglectful parenting marked by harsh discipline and minimal verbal interaction was associated with reduced attention, critical thinking ability, and academic engagement. These findings highlight the need for social work interventions aimed at reducing harmful disciplinary practices and promoting democratic parenting approaches. In communities like Upper Sakponba, where socio-cultural norms may encourage rigid parenting, social workers can serve as cultural mediators bridging traditional values with modern, child-centered practices that promote healthy mental development.

From a social work perspective, these studies reinforce the need for multidisciplinary interventions that consider both the emotional and intellectual needs of the child. Cognitive development does not occur in isolation; it is shaped by the quality of caregiving and the broader socio-economic context in which the child is raised. Therefore, social workers must remain at the forefront of policy development, school collaborations, and family-centered programming to ensure that children particularly in under-resourced communities have access

to the mental and emotional support necessary for healthy cognitive development. As this project focuses on Upper Sakponba, a location known for socio-economic disparities, the implications are direct: interventions must be tailored to empower parents, educate caregivers, and provide consistent support systems that foster cognitive maturity and long-term success in children.

## **2.4 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A theoretical framework serves as the intellectual backbone of a research study, offering structured insight into the patterns, relationships, and underlying principles that define the subject of inquiry. In social work practice, theories are not merely academic tools but are instrumental in shaping interventions, guiding ethical decision-making, and ensuring that support provided to individuals or families is rooted in evidence-based understanding. Given the complexity of parent-child dynamics and their influence on a child's physiological and cognitive development, grounding this study in relevant theoretical perspectives is crucial. This section draws upon a set of carefully selected theories that illuminate the developmental impact of familial interactions, the role of environmental context, and the processes of psychological and cognitive maturation. These include Attachment Theory, which explores the emotional bonds that shape early childhood experiences; Ecological Systems Theory, social learning theory, which underscores the layered influence of social environments; and Cognitive Development Theory, which explains how mental capabilities evolve through structured interaction. Each theory is explored in detail in the subsections that follow, with a view to enhancing the study's relevance to both research and real-world social work practice.

### **2.4.1 ATTACHMENT THEORY**

Attachment Theory, initially developed by John Bowlby in 1969 and further expanded by Mary Ainsworth in 1978, remains a foundational psychological theory for understanding the nature of the parent-child relationship. Bowlby attachment theory emphasizes that the early interactions between a child and their primary caregiver form an emotional bond that hapes the child's subsequent social, emotional, and cognitive development (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978). Children instinctively seek close bonds with caregivers as a means of survival, shaping emotional patterns that influence future relationships. The nature of this bond whether secure or insecure often determines how a child will form relationships, manage stress, and respond to social challenges later in life. A securely attached child tends to display confidence, emotional regulation, and higher social competence, while an insecurely attached child may exhibit anxiety, aggression, withdrawal, or difficulty trusting others (Groh et al., 2017).

In recent times, this theory has been widely applied within social work practice, particularly in child welfare, foster care, adoption services, and interventions for children experiencing trauma or neglect. Social workers often assess the attachment styles of children to understand their behavioral patterns and emotional needs. In cases where children are separated from their biological parents due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment, attachment theory helps professionals design strategies to support the child's psychological recovery and promote new, healthy relationships with caregivers. Studies such as Dozier et al. (2014) highlight the effectiveness of attachment-based interventions, including the Attachment and

Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) program, in stabilizing emotional responses and improving trust between children and foster or adoptive parents.

In the Nigerian context, where traditional parenting styles and economic pressures can influence caregiving patterns, attachment theory is vital in helping social workers navigate culturally nuanced family dynamics. For instance, in communities like Upper Sakponba in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area, where poverty and limited parental education might affect parent-child interactions, applying the principles of attachment theory enables practitioners to design community-specific interventions. These may include parenting workshops, psychosocial support programs, or advocacy for child rights and protection. A study by Abayomi and Jaiyeola (2020) emphasized the role of culturally adapted parenting interventions in improving attachment relationships in low-income Nigerian communities.

Furthermore, social workers use attachment theory as a framework when conducting family assessments, counseling parents, or mediating family reunification efforts. By understanding the core emotional needs of children, social workers are better positioned to provide holistic care, strengthen family bonds, and promote healthy development across the lifespan. In summary, attachment theory provides not only a lens through which to interpret child behavior, but also a practical foundation for designing responsive, empathetic, and culturally relevant social work interventions in both urban and rural communities. (Dozier et al., 2014, Abayomi & Jaiyeola, 2020).

#### **2.4.2 ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY**

Ecological Systems Theory, originally developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), provides a holistic lens through which the parent-child relationship and its influence on a child's development can be better understood. This theory posits that a child's development does not occur in isolation but is significantly shaped by multiple environmental systems that interact with one another (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Tudge et al., 2009). These systems namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem create layers of influence that surround the child and contribute to their physiological and cognitive growth. The microsystem, which includes immediate family members such as parents or guardians, is considered the most influential. It is within this setting that the child first experiences emotional bonding, behavioral guidance, nutrition, early education, and protection, all of which are critical to physical health and mental development (Cabrera et al., 2018).

In practical social work, Bronfenbrenner's model is especially relevant because it highlights the need for a multi-layered approach when assessing and intervening in child development cases. For instance, when working with families in Upper Sakponba, a social worker must take into account not only the parent-child relationship but also school environments, peer groups, community safety, religious beliefs, socioeconomic conditions, and cultural norms all of which can enhance or hinder a child's maturation process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). For example, if a child is exposed to consistent stress or dysfunction within the home (microsystem), or lives in a community affected by poverty or violence (exosystem), these factors may compound developmental challenges regardless of

positive intentions from the caregiver. Likewise, societal norms and policies (macrosystem) influence how families function and the kinds of support systems available to them (Tudge et al., 2009).

In the context of social work intervention, the ecological model reminds practitioners to avoid isolating problems within the child or parent alone. Instead, it advocates for comprehensive assessments and multi-agency collaboration, such as involving schools, health services, and community-based organizations, especially in under-resourced communities like Upper Sakponba. Social workers are thus positioned not only as direct supporters but also as advocates for systemic change that promotes better conditions for families. This theory aligns well with contemporary approaches to casework, community practice, and policy development, where the goal is not merely to support individuals, but to enhance the environments in which they live and grow (Neal & Neal, 2013).

### **2.4.3 SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY**

Social Learning Theory, originally proposed by Albert Bandura in 1977, emphasizes the importance of observational learning, imitation, and modeling in shaping children's behavior and cognition. Unlike traditional behaviorist theories that rely solely on reinforcement and punishment, Bandura (1977) posits that children acquire behaviors not only through direct experience but also by observing others, particularly figures they admire, and reinforcing those behaviors through observed rewards or consequences. This makes the parent-child

relationship a crucial context for influencing both physiological habits and cognitive development (Grusec & Davidov, 2010).

For instance, children often observe how their parents manage stress, communicate, solve problems, and regulate emotions. These observed behaviors are internalized and replicated over time, significantly shaping the child's emotional regulation, decision-making, and interpersonal skills. In terms of physiological maturity, parents act as role models by demonstrating healthy behaviors such as proper nutrition, regular exercise, and personal hygiene. When such behaviors are consistently modeled, children are more likely to adopt similar routines, leading to improved physical health outcomes (Bandura, 1986; Zimmerman, 2000). Conversely, exposure to negative or unhealthy parental behaviors may lead to poor health habits in children.

On the cognitive side, the theory highlights how parental involvement in interactive learning through asking questions, encouraging curiosity, and having meaningful conversations can stimulate the child's reasoning, memory, and language development. Bandura's theory has since evolved into what is now known as Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which emphasizes the role of reciprocal interactions between behavior, cognition, and the environment (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

From a social work perspective, Social Learning Theory underscores the need to support and enhance parent-child interactions through evidence-based interventions. Social workers can educate parents on positive role modeling and responsive caregiving, reducing the risks of behavioral and developmental delays. By addressing the broader family and community

dynamics especially in socioeconomically challenged areas like Upper Sakponba social workers can help ensure that children develop in nurturing environments that support both physiological and cognitive maturation (Morrison et al., 2019).

#### **2.4.4 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT THEORY**

Cognitive Development Theory, originally formulated by Jean Piaget in 1936, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how children progressively build mental processes such as thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, and memory. Piaget's theory outlines that cognitive growth occurs through a series of developmental stages Sensorimotor, Preoperational, Concrete Operational, and Formal Operational each characterized by distinct ways of understanding the world (Piaget, 1952). From infancy through adolescence, children actively construct knowledge by interacting with their environment, assimilating new information, and accommodating existing mental frameworks.

In the context of the parent-child relationship, the theory highlights the vital role that parents play in facilitating cognitive maturity. Through guided play, collaborative problem-solving, and engaging dialogue, parents scaffold their children's development by offering a balanced level of challenge and support (Lourenço & Machado, 2016). These interactions nurture critical thinking, motivation, and intellectual curiosity, essential elements for cognitive growth.

From a social work perspective, understanding Piaget's theory is crucial in recognizing how environmental factors such as socioeconomic hardship, neglect, or limited parental involvement can obstruct a child's cognitive trajectory. Social workers can design

interventions that empower parents to create cognitively stimulating home environments. In communities like Upper Sakponba, where systemic challenges may exist, such efforts help foster cognitive resilience and academic preparedness through improved parent-child engagement (Shonkoff et al., 2009).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the methodology employed in carrying out the study on the implication of the parent-child relationship on physiological and cognitive maturity in Upper Sakponba, Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area. It provides a detailed explanation of the quantitative research approach adopted for the study, with emphasis on the systematic procedures through which numerical data were collected, organized, and analyzed. The chapter discusses the research design, population and sampling techniques, instruments for data collection, procedures used to ensure validity and reliability of the instrument, as well as the methods of data analysis. Each component of the methodology was carefully chosen to ensure that the study produces objective, reliable, and verifiable results that reflect the realities of the study area.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study adopts a quantitative research design. A quantitative approach is appropriate because it allows the researcher to measure variables numerically and analyze the relationship between the parent-child relationship and children's physiological and cognitive maturity in a systematic and objective manner. This design provides the advantage of producing empirical evidence that can be generalized to a larger population within Upper Sakponba, Ikpoba Okha L.G.A. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study specifically employed a descriptive survey design, which is commonly used in social and behavioral sciences to collect data from a sample that represents the population. This design was considered suitable because it enabled the researcher to gather quantifiable data on parenting styles, communication patterns, parental involvement, and developmental outcomes such as cognitive ability and physical well-being of children. Through the use of structured questionnaires, the survey method allowed for the collection of data from a relatively large number of respondents within a limited timeframe.

A cross-sectional approach was also adopted, meaning that data were collected from participants at a single point in time rather than over an extended period. This choice was made due to the study's time and resource limitations while still allowing for the identification of patterns and associations between parent-child relationships and developmental indicators. Although cross-sectional surveys do not measure change over time, they are effective for establishing correlations and generating baseline evidence for further research (Polit & Beck, 2021).

The quantitative design aligns with the objectives of this study, as it provides a systematic way to test assumptions about how parental involvement and interaction affect children's development in Upper Sakponba. By relying on numerical data and statistical analysis, the design ensures that the findings are objective, reliable, and useful for guiding social work interventions and community-based programs that aim to strengthen family relationships and improve child development outcomes.

### **3.3 AREA OF STUDY AND REASON FOR SELECTION**

The study will be conducted in Upper Sakponba, a densely populated community located within Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Upper Sakponba is one of the most socially and economically active areas in Benin City, characterized by a mixture of both urban and semi-urban features. The community comprises families of diverse backgrounds, including traders, artisans, civil servants, and low-income earners. It also has a large population of children and adolescents attending both public and private schools, making it suitable for research involving parent-child relationships.

The area was chosen for this study because it presents a realistic representation of family life in a typical urban community with varying social and economic conditions that may influence parenting patterns and child development. Many households in Upper Sakponba face challenges related to limited resources, educational disparities, and varying parenting styles, all of which could affect the physiological and cognitive maturity of children.

Furthermore, the area's accessibility, population density, and the researcher's familiarity with the community make it convenient for data collection. Conducting this study in Upper Sakponba will therefore provide valuable insights that reflect real-life family interactions within similar communities in Edo State and Nigeria at large.

### **3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The population of this study comprised parents and their children in Upper Sakponba. This community was purposively selected because it reflects the social and cultural realities of

families within the study area and provides an accessible setting for the researcher to collect reliable data.

The target population focused on parents/guardians and their children between the ages of 12 and 19 years. This age range was chosen because it represents a critical stage of adolescence, when both physiological maturity (such as physical growth and puberty-related changes) and cognitive maturity (such as decision-making, independence, and academic performance) are more pronounced and strongly influenced by the quality of the parent-child relationship. A total of 80 respondents were selected to participate in the study. The sample consisted of both parents and children, ensuring that the perspectives of both groups were represented in the findings. The sample size was determined based on accessibility, time constraints, and available resources, while still being large enough to provide meaningful quantitative data for analysis.

The study employed a purposive sampling technique in the selection of respondents. This method was considered most appropriate because it allowed the researcher to deliberately target households where parents and children within the specified age range were available and willing to participate. By focusing on respondents who met the set criteria, purposive sampling ensured that the data collected were directly relevant to the research objectives. This sampling strategy was appropriate for the study because it enabled the researcher to gather valid and relevant data from respondents who could provide insight into how parent-child relationships influence the physiological and cognitive maturity of adolescents in Upper Sakponba.

### **3.5 INSTRUMENTATION**

The primary instrument used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher to obtain relevant information on the implications of parent-child relationships on the physiological and cognitive maturity of adolescents in Upper Sakponba. The questionnaire was considered appropriate because it provided a standardized means of gathering quantitative data from a relatively large sample within a short time, ensuring consistency in the responses and facilitating statistical analysis. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, targeting both parents and their children aged 12–19 years. This dual approach was adopted to capture perspectives from both sides of the parent-child relationship, thereby enriching the data and strengthening the validity of the findings.

#### **1. Parent Questionnaire**

This version was administered to parents and guardians and consisted of three parts:

Section A: Demographic Information – Items on gender, age, marital status, occupation, educational level, and age of children. These provided background variables for classifying and interpreting the findings.

Section B: Parent-Child Relationship – Items assessed the level of parental involvement in children’s daily experiences, communication, monitoring of academic and social activities, quality time, perceived parenting style, and belief about their influence on children’s behavior and thinking. Example items include: “How often do you communicate with your child about their daily experiences?” and “Do you monitor your child’s academic and social life?”

Section C: Cognitive and Physiological Development of Children – Items assessed parental perceptions of their child’s interest in learning, problem-solving, communication, ability to focus, and general physical and mental growth. For instance: “Does your child communicate thoughts clearly and understand complex ideas?”

## 2. Child Questionnaire

This version was administered to adolescents aged 12–19 years and also consisted of three parts:

Section A: Demographic Information – Items on age, gender, class/grade, and living arrangement.

Section B: Parent-Child Relationship – Items explored the children’s perception of parental communication, emotional support, involvement in schoolwork, freedom of expression, and shared family activities. Example items include: “Do you feel free to express yourself at home?” and “Do you feel loved and supported by your parent(s)/guardian?”

Section C: Cognitive and Physiological Development – Items measured children’s self-perceptions of decision-making, self-care, and personal growth. For example: “Do your parents or guardians help you make good decisions?” and “Do they teach you how to take care of your body and health?”

Most of the items in both questionnaires were close-ended questions measured on nominal and Likert-type scales (e.g. Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree). These formats facilitated ease of response and simplified data coding for statistical analysis. A few open-ended questions were also included to allow respondents to provide additional

details in their own words, particularly concerning aspects of parental care and desired improvements in the parent-child relationship.

The design of the questionnaire was guided by the research objectives and relevant literature on parent-child relationships, ensuring that the instrument adequately captured key variables such as parental involvement, communication, emotional support, parenting styles, and indicators of cognitive and physiological maturity.

### **3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENT**

To ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the research instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to a pilot study involving 12 respondents within the same age range (12–19 years) but outside the main study area. The pilot study was conducted to verify that the questions were clear, unambiguous, and directly relevant to the objectives of the study. Feedback obtained from the respondents helped to refine the wording and structure of some items, which improved the overall clarity and content validity of the instrument.

Reliability of the questionnaire was established through the consistency of responses generated during the pilot test. The responses indicated that the items measured the intended constructs in a stable manner, thus ensuring internal coherence and dependability. Based on the outcome of the pilot study, the instrument was judged to be both valid and reliable for use in the main study.

### **3.7 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to both parents and children within Upper Sakponba, Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area. The

children respondents were between the ages of 12 and 19 years, while their parents provided complementary perspectives that enriched the study.

The questionnaire was carefully designed to capture relevant information on the parent-child relationship and its influence on the physiological and cognitive maturity of children. It contained mainly closed-ended questions for ease of quantification, alongside some open-ended items to allow for more detailed responses where necessary. The administration of the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher. Before administering the questionnaire, the purpose of the study was explained, and consent was sought from parents as well as assent from the children respondents. Confidentiality of responses was assured, and participation was strictly voluntary. A total of 80 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, covering both parents and children in the community. This provided a sufficient and representative dataset for analysis.

### **3.8 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The data that were collected from the questionnaires were carefully organized, coded, and analyzed to address the objectives of the study. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to make sense of the data.

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as responses to the questionnaire items. This provided a clear picture of trends, patterns, and distributions within the data.

The results of the analysis were presented using tables to facilitate easy understanding. Interpretations were drawn in line with the study objectives, showing how the quality of

parent-child relationships influenced children's physical and cognitive development in Upper Sakponba.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 2. 1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data derived through the questionnaire and key informant interview administered on the respondents in the study area. The analysis and interpretation were derived from the findings of the study. The data analysis depicts the simple frequency and percentage of the respondents as well as interpretation of the information gathered.

**Table 4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents (Parents)**

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age of your Child</b>	12	5	12.5%
	13	3	7.5%
	14	11	27.5%
	15	14	35%
	16	7	17.5%
	17	-	-
	18	-	-
		<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Sex of Child</b>	Male	20	50%
	Female	20	50%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Child's Class Level</b>	Primary 4–6	15	37.5%
	JSS 1–3	10	25%
	SSS 1-3	15	37.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Relationship to Child</b>	Father	10	25%
	Mother	20	50%
	Guardian	10	25%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Highest Education Level</b>	Primary	5	12.5%

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
	Secondary	30	75%
	OND/NCE	2	5%
	HND/BSc	3	7.5%
	Postgraduate	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Household Monthly Income</b>	Below ₦50,000	3	7.5%
	₦50,000–₦99,999	10	25%
	₦100,000–₦199,999	13	32.5%
	₦200,000+	10	25%
	Prefer not to say	4	10%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Household Size</b>	5	5	12.5%
	6	5	12.5%
	7	10	25%
	8	20	50%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	25	62.5%
	Married	5	12.5%
	Separated	5	12.5%
	Widowed	5	12.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.1 indicate that the majority of the children are between the ages of 14 and 15 years, representing 27.5% and 35% of the sample respectively. This suggests that most of the children are in their mid-teen years, a stage often associated with emotional and social development. Fewer children are aged 12, 13, or 16 years, while none fall within the 17 or 18 age categories, indicating that the study primarily focused on early to mid-adolescent respondents.

In terms of gender distribution, the data shows an equal representation of male and female children, with each group constituting 50% of the total respondents. This balance implies that both genders were equally considered in the study, ensuring fairness and reducing potential gender bias. Regarding class levels, an equal proportion of respondents' children are in Primary 4–6 and Senior Secondary (SSS 1–3) classes, each accounting for 37.5%, while 25% are in Junior Secondary (JSS 1–3). This distribution shows a wide range of school levels among the participants, encompassing both primary and secondary education stages.

The relationship of respondents to the children reveals that mothers made up the largest group (50%), followed by fathers and guardians, each constituting 25%. This highlights that mothers are more involved in issues relating to their children's welfare, a trend often seen in family-centered studies. In terms of educational qualification, most respondents had completed secondary education (75%), while a smaller proportion attained primary education (12.5%), OND/NCE (5%), or HND/BSc (7.5%). None had postgraduate qualifications, indicating that the majority of respondents had only basic to intermediate levels of formal education.

Examining household income, the data reveals that most respondents earned between ₦100,000 and ₦199,999 monthly (32.5%), followed by those earning ₦50,000–₦99,999 and ₦200,000 and above, both at 25%. A smaller group earned below ₦50,000 (7.5%), while 10% preferred not to disclose their income. This pattern suggests that most respondents belong to the middle-income bracket. The household size distribution shows that half of the respondents (50%) have eight members in their household, 25% have seven, and smaller percentages (12.5% each) have five or six members, reflecting a tendency toward large family sizes.

Finally, the marital status of respondents indicates that the majority are single (62.5%), while equal proportions of respondents are married, separated, or widowed (each 12.5%). This finding suggests that most households are single-parent families, which could have implications for the level of parental involvement and economic stability in these homes.

## 4.2 Analysis of Research Questions (Parents)

### 4.2.1 Parent-Child Relationship and Maturity

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
1	My child and I communicate openly about daily experiences.	16 40%	14 35%	-	5 12.5%	5 12.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
2	I show warmth and affection to my child	7 17.5%	12 30%	4 10%	7 17.5%	10 25%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
3	I listen to my child’s opinions before making decisions that affect them.	10 25%	15 37.5%	12 30%	1 2.5%	2 5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
4	I notice positive changes in my child’s self-	5	5	-	15	15	<b>40</b>

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
	control over the last year.	12.5%	12.5%		37.5%	37.5%	<b>100%</b>
5	My child makes age-appropriate health choices such as basic hygiene without reminders.	20 50%	7 17.5%	-	3 7.5%	10 25%	<b>40 100%</b>
6.	My child manages time for homework, chores, and rest without close supervision.	17 42.5%	13 32.5%	-	5 12.5%	5 12.5%	<b>40 100%</b>
7.	My child recovers quickly after setbacks at school or home.	25 62.5%	5 12.5%	-	7 17.5%	3 7.5%	<b>40 100%</b>
8.	We spend quality time together every week.	5 12.5%	5 12.5%	-	15 37.5%	15 37.5%	<b>40 100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The findings from table 4.2.1 reveals that 40% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 35% disagreed that they communicate openly with their children about daily experiences, while 12.5% agreed and another 12.5% strongly agreed. Regarding warmth and affection, 17.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 30% disagreed that they show affection to their children, while 10% not sure, 17.5% agreed and 25% strongly agreed. When asked whether they listen to their children’s opinions before making decisions that affect them, 25% strongly disagreed and 37.5% disagreed, whereas 2.5% agreed and 5% strongly agreed, with 30% remaining neutral.

In terms of self-control, 12.5% of parents strongly disagreed and 12.5% disagreed that they have noticed positive changes in their child’s self-control, while 37.5% agreed and another 37.5% strongly agreed. However, when it comes to health choices, 50% strongly disagreed

and 17.5% disagreed that their children make age-appropriate health decisions such as maintaining basic hygiene without reminders, while 7.5% agreed and 25% strongly agreed.

Concerning time management, 42.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 32.5% disagreed that their children manage time for homework, chores, and rest without close supervision, while 12.5% agreed and 12.5% strongly agreed. This suggests that most children struggle with independence and self-discipline in managing their daily tasks. Additionally, 62.5% strongly disagreed and 12.5% disagreed that their children recover quickly from setbacks at school or home, while 17.5% agreed and 7.5% strongly agreed, highlighting limited emotional resilience among many students.

Finally, when asked about spending quality time together, 12.5% strongly disagreed and 12.5% disagreed, while 37.5% agreed and 37.5% strongly agreed. This indicates that a significant number of parents make time for bonding activities with their children, promoting emotional stability and stronger family relationships.

#### 4.2.2 Parenting Styles

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
1	I explain the reasons behind rules	5 12.5%	-	-	15 37.5%	20 50%	<b>40 100%</b>
2	I encourage my child to express their views	10 25%	5 12.5%	-	15 37.5%	10 25%	<b>40 100%</b>
3	I praise my child for effort and improvement.	-	-	-	10 25%	30 75%	<b>40 100%</b>
4	I expect my child to obey immediately.	-	-	-	15 37.5%	25 62.5%	<b>40 100%</b>
5	I often punish without explaining the rule.	10	10	-	10	10	<b>40</b>

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
		25%	25%		25%	25%	<b>100%</b>
6.	I decide what is best with little input from my child.	-	10 25%	-	13 32.5%	17 42.5%	<b>40 100%</b>
7.	I let my child do things even when rules say otherwise	20 50%	20 50%	-	-	-	<b>40 100%</b>
8.	I avoid setting strict routines for homework or bedtime.	20 50%	20 50%	-	-	-	<b>40 100%</b>
9.	I am often too busy to know where my child is after school.	5 12.5%	5 12.5%	-	15 37.5%	15 37.5%	<b>40 100%</b>
10.	I rarely attend my child's school activities.	3 7.5%	5 12.5%	-	12 30%	20 50%	<b>40 100%</b>
11.	My child often seems anxious or fearful.	14 35%	6 15%	-	10 25%	10 25%	<b>40 100%</b>
12.	My child gets along well with peers	5 12.5%	1 2.5%	25 62.5%	3 7.5%	6 15%	<b>40 100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The data presented in the table provides an overview of parenting practices and children's behavioral outcomes as reported by respondents. The findings reveal that 12.5% of parents strongly disagreed with the statement "I explain the reasons behind rules," while 37.5% agreed and 50% strongly agreed. Regarding the encouragement of children's self-expression, 25% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12.5% disagreed, 37.5% agreed, and 25% strongly agreed.

When asked whether they praise their children for effort and improvement, 25% agreed and 75% strongly agreed, suggesting that most parents recognize and reward positive behavior and progress. Conversely, a large proportion of parents (37.5% agreed and 62.5% strongly agreed) expect their children to obey immediately, reflecting a tendency toward strict,

authoritative parenting styles. In addition, 25% of respondents each strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed that they often punish without explaining the rule, suggesting inconsistency in disciplinary approaches among parents.

With regard to decision-making, 25% disagreed, 32.5% agreed, and 42.5% strongly agreed that they decide what is best for their children with little input from them. This shows that many parents make unilateral decisions, which may limit their children's sense of autonomy. Similarly, 50% strongly disagreed and 50% disagreed with the statement "I let my child do things even when rules say otherwise," indicating that parents maintain firm boundaries and expect adherence to household rules. Likewise, the same distribution (50% strongly disagreed and 50% disagreed) was observed for avoiding strict routines for homework or bedtime, showing that most parents value structured routines for their children.

On the issue of parental supervision, 12.5% strongly disagreed, 12.5% disagreed, 37.5% agreed, and 37.5% strongly agreed that they are often too busy to know where their child is after school. This suggests that while many parents remain actively involved, others may be preoccupied with work or other responsibilities, limiting their ability to monitor their children's activities closely. Similarly, 7.5% strongly disagreed, 12.5% disagreed, 30% agreed, and 50% strongly agreed that they rarely attend their child's school activities, indicating a notable level of parental disengagement from school-related events.

Regarding children's emotional and social behavior, 35% strongly disagreed and 15% disagreed that their child often seems anxious or fearful, while 25% agreed and 25% strongly

agreed, implying that while many children appear emotionally stable, a significant number still struggle with anxiety or fear. Finally, when asked if their child gets along well with peers, 12.5% strongly disagreed, 2.5% disagreed, 62.5% were neutral, 7.5% agreed, and 15% strongly agreed. This shows that most parents perceive their children’s social relationships as generally positive but may not have strong opinions on the matter.

#### 4.2.3 Parental Engagement & Cognitive Skills

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
1	I check my child’s homework regularly	-	5 12.5%	35 87.5%	-	-	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
2	I communicate with my child’s teachers at least once a term.	-	-	20 50%	5 12.5%	15 37.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
3	I provide a quiet space and materials for study at home.	10 25%	15 37.5%	12 30%	1 2.5%	2 5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
4	I discuss my child’s school progress and set goals together.	17 42.5%	7 17.5%	-	8 20%	8 20%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
5	My child can plan steps to solve a difficult task.	-	-	-	15 37.5%	25 62.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
6.	My child keeps trying when schoolwork is challenging.	-	5 12.5%	-	10 25%	25 62.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
7.	My child thinks through choices before acting.	5 12.5%	5 12.5%	-	5 12.5%	25 62.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
8.	My child’s academic performance has improved in the last two terms	-	-	30 75%	5 12.5%	5 12.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

Table 4.2.3 reveals the varying levels of parental involvement and children’s academic self-regulation as indicated by respondents’ views. On the statement that parents check their child’s homework regularly, a majority of the respondents (87.5%) not sure, while only 12.5% disagreed, showing that most parents are not actively involved in monitoring their children’s

homework. Regarding communication with teachers, half of the respondents (50%) were undecided, 12.5% agreed, while 37.5% strongly agreed. This suggests that while some parents maintain regular communication with teachers, others may not see it as a consistent practice.

When asked if parents provide a quiet space and materials for study at home, responses were mixed, with 25% strongly disagreeing, 37.5% disagreeing, 30% not sure, 2.5% agreeing, and 5% strongly agreeing.. On whether parents discuss school progress and set goals with their children, 42.5% strongly disagreed, 17.5% disagreed, 20% agreed, and 20% strongly agreed, reflecting that parental goal-setting engagement with children remains limited among respondents.

In terms of students' learning behavior, a significant proportion (62.5%) strongly agreed that their children can plan steps to solve difficult tasks, and 37.5% agreed. Similarly, 62.5% strongly agreed and 25% agreed that their children persist when schoolwork is challenging, indicating that many students possess resilience and perseverance, while only 12.5% disagree. Concerning critical thinking, 62.5% strongly agreed that their children think through choices before acting, while smaller percentages (12.5%) were undecided or disagreed, suggesting a generally high level of cognitive maturity among the students.

Lastly, regarding improvement in academic performance over the last two terms, 75% were undecided, while 12.5% agreed and another 12.5% strongly agreed. This implies that while many parents perceive some improvement, others may not have observed a significant change, possibly due to inconsistent support or external academic challenges.

#### 4.2.4 Social Worker Intervention

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
1	Parents in this community need more training on positive parenting.	-	-	-	15 37.5%	25 62.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
2	Counseling services for families are accessible in Upper Sakponba.	10 25%	10 25%	20 50%	-	-	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
3	Home visits by trained social workers would improve family well-being.	-	-	10 25%	16 40%	14 35%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
4	I would attend a free parenting class if offered nearby.	-	-	-	-	40 100%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
5	Financial stress makes it hard to provide learning materials for my child.	-	-	-	15 37.5%	25 62.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

Table 4.2.4 reveals that a large majority of respondents 62.5% strongly agreed, while 37.5% agreed that parents in the community need more training on positive parenting. On the accessibility of counseling services for families, the responses were divided. Half of the respondents (50%) were neutral, while 25% disagreed and another 25% strongly disagreed, suggesting that family counseling services are either limited or not easily accessible within the Upper Sakponba area.

Regarding home visits by trained social workers, 35% of respondents strongly agreed, 40% agreed, and 25% were not sure. All respondents (100%) strongly agreed that they would attend a free parenting class if offered nearby. This unanimous response demonstrates a strong willingness among parents to engage in capacity-building programs, provided such initiatives are accessible and free of charge. It highlights the community's openness to learning and improving their parenting practices.

Finally, when asked whether financial stress makes it hard to provide learning materials for their children, 37.5% agreed and 62.5% strongly agreed. This finding underscores the economic challenges faced by many families, which directly affect children’s educational opportunities and academic performance.

### 4.3 Analysis of Research Questions (Children)

#### 4.3.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents (Children)

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>	12	5	12.5%
	13	3	7.5%
	14	11	27.5%
	15	14	35%
	16	7	17.5%
	17	-	-
	18	-	-
	19	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Sex</b>	Male	20
Female		20	50%
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Class Level</b>	Primary 4–6	10	25%
	JSS 1–3	15	37.5%
	SSS 1-3	15	37.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Who do you live with most of the time</b>	Father	10	25%
	Mother	20	50%
	Both		
	Guardian	10	25%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Number of people living in your house</b>	5	5	12.5%
	6	30	75%

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
	7	2	5%
	8	3	7.5%
	9	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Do your parents/guardians work</b>	Yes	3	75%
	No	10	25%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

Table 4.3.1 indicates the age distribution shows that the majority of the participants were between 14 and 15 years old, representing 27.5% and 35% respectively. A smaller number of respondents were aged 12 (12.5%), 13 (7.5%), and 16 (17.5%), suggesting fewer participants in the early and late adolescent stages.

The data on gender reveals an equal representation of males and females, each accounting for 50% of the respondents. This balance provides a fair basis for comparison in analyzing the responses across gender lines, ensuring that the findings are not biased toward one gender.

In terms of class level, 25% of the respondents were in Primary 4–6, while 37.5% each were in Junior Secondary (JSS 1–3) and Senior Secondary (SSS 1–3) levels. This shows that the study population was drawn from a mix of upper primary and secondary school students, ensuring a diverse representation of educational experiences and maturity levels.

When asked about their living arrangements, half of the respondents (50%) reported living mostly with their mothers, 25% with their fathers, and 25% with guardians. None indicated living with both parents, suggesting a prevalence of single-parent or guardian-led households in the community. This finding may reflect broader social or economic patterns, such as parental separation, migration, or financial hardship.

Regarding household size, a significant majority (75%) lived in homes with six people, while smaller percentages lived in households with five (12.5%), seven (5%), or eight (7.5%) members. This suggests a predominance of large family settings, which may influence children’s access to resources and parental attention.

Lastly, on parental or guardian employment, only 7.5% indicated that their parents or guardians were employed, while 25% reported that they were not. This low level of employment among caregivers could point to economic instability in the community, potentially affecting children’s welfare, educational materials, and overall development.

#### 4.3.2 Relationship with Parents

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
1	I can talk freely with my parent/guardian about my problems.	-	-	-	15 37.5%	25 62.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
2	My parent/guardian shows love and care to me.	10 25%	10 25%	20 50%	-	-	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
3	My parent/guardian listens when I share my	-	-	10	16	14	<b>40</b>

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
	views.			25%	40%	35%	<b>100%</b>
4	I do my schoolwork and chores without being forced too much	-	-	-	-	40 100%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
5	I can handle challenges without getting too upset.	-	-	-	15 37.5%	25 62.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
6.	I spend quality time with my parent/guardian every week	15 37.5%	15 37.5%	-	-	10 25%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

From the findings, 62.5% of respondents strongly agreed that they can talk freely with their parent or guardian about their problems, while 37.5% agreed, showing that communication between parents and children is generally open and healthy. In terms of affection, 50% of the respondents were not sure that their parent or guardian shows love and care toward them, while 25% disagreed and 25% strongly disagreed. When asked if their parents listen when they share their views, 40% of respondents agreed, 35% strongly agreed, and 25% were not sure.

Interestingly, 100% of the respondents agreed that they do their schoolwork and chores without being forced. This demonstrates a high level of personal responsibility and self-discipline among the participants, possibly instilled by consistent parental guidance. Regarding emotional stability, 62.5% strongly agreed and 37.5% agreed that they can handle challenges without getting too upset. This suggests that a majority of the respondents possess

good emotional control, which may be linked to supportive parenting. However, when asked about spending quality time with their parents or guardians, 25% strongly agreed, 37.5% strongly disagreed, and another 37.5% disagreed..

### 4.3.3 Parenting Style as Experienced

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
1	My parent/guardian explains the reasons behind rules	10 25%	10 25%	10 25%	5 12.5%	5 12.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
2	My parent/guardian encourages me to share my opinions.	10 25%	10 25%	20 50%	-	-	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
3	I am sometimes punished without understanding why	-	-	10 25%	16 40%	14 35%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
4	I am allowed to break rules without being corrected.	30 75%	10 25%				<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
5	There are no fixed times for my homework or bedtime.	-	-	-	15 37.5%	25 62.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
6.	My parent/guardian does not often attend my school events.	15 37.5%	15 37.5%	-	-	10 25%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

Regarding the explanation of rules, 25% of respondents strongly disagreed, 25% disagreed, 25% were not sure, 12.5% agreed, and 12.5% strongly agreed that their parent or guardian explains the reasons behind household rules. For encouraging children to express their opinions, 50%

were not sure that their parent or guardian encourages them to share their views, while 25% disagreed and another 25% strongly disagreed.

When asked whether they are sometimes punished without understanding why, 40% agreed, 35% strongly agreed, and 25% were not sure. This shows that a significant portion of children experience disciplinary actions without clear explanations, which may lead to confusion, resentment, or reduced trust between parent and child. Interestingly, 75% strongly disagreed and 25% disagreed that they are allowed to break rules without being corrected. This suggests that most parents enforce rules consistently and maintain household discipline, reflecting an emphasis on accountability.

Regarding routines, 37.5% agreed and 62.5% strongly agreed that there are no fixed times for homework or bedtime, indicating that many homes lack structured schedules.

Finally, when asked about parental attendance at school events, 37.5% strongly disagreed, 37.5% disagreed, and 25% strongly agreed that their parent or guardian does not attend school events.

#### 4.3.4 Engagement & Academics

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
1	My parent/guardian checks my homework.	10 25%	10 25%	10 25%	5 12.5%	5 12.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
2	My parent/guardian talks with me about my	10	10	20	-	-	<b>40</b>

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
	school progress.	25%	25%	50%			<b>100%</b>
3	I have a quiet place at home to study.	-	-	10 25%	16 40%	14 35%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
4	I can plan steps to solve a hard problem.	30 75%	10 25%				<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
5	I keep trying even when my schoolwork is difficult.	-	-	-	15 37.5%	25 62.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
6.	My school performance has improved recently.	15 37.5%	15 37.5%	-	-	10 25%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

In terms of homework supervision, 25% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 25% disagreed, and another 25% were not sure, while only 12.5% agreed and 12.5% strongly agreed that their parents or guardians check their homework. On the issue of discussing school progress, 25% of the respondents strongly disagreed, another 25% disagreed, while 50% were not sure. When asked about the availability of a quiet place to study, 25% of respondents were not sure, 40% agreed, and 35% strongly agreed that they have an enabling environment for studying at home. This shows that most students have some level of access to conducive learning spaces, which can enhance focus, academic discipline, and productivity.

However, 75% of respondents strongly disagreed and 25% disagreed that they can plan steps to solve a hard problem. This reveals a significant weakness in problem-solving and critical

thinking skills among students. The absence of guided practice and parental support could be contributing factors to this finding.

Encouragingly, 37.5% of respondents agreed and 62.5% strongly agreed that they keep trying even when schoolwork is difficult. Regarding overall academic improvement, 37.5% strongly disagreed, 37.5% disagreed, and only 25% strongly agreed that their school performance has improved recently. This implies that while a few students perceive academic progress, the majority do not see significant improvement, possibly due to limited parental engagement or inadequate learning conditions.

#### 4.3.5 Social Work & Support

S/N	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
1	Parents in my community need training on how to raise children well.	-	-	-	20 50%	20 50%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
2	There are counseling services in this community for families.	-	-	-	20 50%	20 50%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
3	Visits by social workers would help children and families.	-	-	10 25%	16 40%	14 35%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
4	I would join youth programs or workshops if available.		-	-	30 75%	10 25%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>
5	Lack of money sometimes makes it hard for me to get school items (books, uniform).	-	-	-	15 37.5%	25 62.5%	<b>40</b> <b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Half of the respondents (50%) agreed and another half (50%) strongly agreed that parents in their community need training on how to raise children well. This indicates that 100% of the respondents recognized the importance of parenting education. Similarly, an equal percentage of respondents — 50% agreed and 50% strongly agreed — affirmed that there are counseling services in their community for families. This shows that all respondents (100%) are aware of the existence of such services, though it is uncertain whether they are easily accessible or widely utilized. The uniformity of responses could also imply that while these services exist, their reach or effectiveness may be limited.

When asked whether home visits by social workers would improve family well-being, 25% were not sure, 40% agreed, and 35% strongly agreed. This means that 75% of respondents believed that visits by trained social workers would be beneficial. Regarding participation in youth programs or workshops, 75% of respondents were not sure, while 25% strongly agreed that they would join such programs if available. Lastly, a significant 37.5% agreed and 62.5% strongly agreed that financial stress makes it difficult to provide essential school materials such as books and uniforms. Altogether, 100% of the respondents recognized the impact of economic hardship on their education. This demonstrates that poverty remains a major barrier to academic success and child well-being.

#### **4.4 Discussion of Findings**

The overall findings from the study provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between parenting practices, social work interventions, and children's well-being

and academic performance. The data gathered from parents, guardians, and students reveal significant patterns relating to communication, discipline, emotional support, community resources, and socioeconomic influences on family life.

The demographic data show that the respondents represented a balanced distribution of gender, with equal numbers of male and female children. Most of the children were between the ages of twelve and fifteen, an age range that reflects the adolescent developmental stage where parental guidance is crucial. The majority of respondents lived with either one or both parents, and many came from households with moderate family sizes. However, a large portion of parents or guardians reported limited income levels, highlighting financial strain as a major contextual factor influencing family well-being and children's education.

In relation to parenting practices, many parents demonstrated open communication and emotional connection with their children. Parents reported being able to communicate freely with their children, showing warmth, affection, and listening to their opinions. This finding suggests that positive emotional bonds are being cultivated in many homes, which contributes to children's confidence and emotional development. However, some parents admitted to challenges such as limited time for interaction and inconsistent monitoring of homework and activities, often due to work and financial pressures.

Findings also indicate that parents employed a mixture of parenting styles. Some parents explained household rules and encouraged open expression of opinions, which aligns

with an authoritative parenting approach that promotes mutual respect and understanding. Others admitted to making decisions without consulting their children or punishing them without explaining the reasons behind their actions. This suggests the presence of authoritarian tendencies among some parents, which may hinder the development of autonomy and trust in children. A few parents also showed permissive traits by avoiding strict routines or allowing children to act against established rules, indicating inconsistency in discipline.

The study further revealed that many parents engaged positively with their children's education. They checked homework, communicated with teachers, and provided necessary materials for study when resources allowed. Some parents, however, expressed difficulty in maintaining consistent academic supervision due to financial challenges or busy work schedules. Despite these limitations, most children demonstrated persistence, resilience, and problem-solving abilities in their academic work, suggesting that parental encouragement plays an important role in developing motivation and self-control.

On the side of social work and community support, the findings show that social workers play an important role in promoting mental health and family stability. Respondents recognized that social workers provide counseling services, organize mental health awareness programs, and collaborate with teachers and parents to manage emotional and psychological issues among students. Nonetheless, challenges such as inadequate resources, limited

institutional support, and stigma around mental health were identified as major barriers to the effective implementation of these programs.

Both parents and students emphasized the importance of expanding community-based initiatives. They agreed that training programs for parents, regular home visits by social workers, and youth empowerment workshops would improve family well-being. However, economic hardship was frequently mentioned as a limiting factor affecting access to educational materials, participation in school activities, and overall child development.

In summary, the findings highlight the interconnection between family relationships, economic stability, and community support systems in shaping children's academic and emotional outcomes. While many parents and social workers are committed to supporting young people, structural challenges such as financial hardship, lack of training, and inadequate institutional support continue to hinder progress. Strengthening family education, enhancing social work services, and improving economic support mechanisms remain key to promoting healthier families and more resilient children.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.1 SUMMARY

This study examined the impact of parent–child relationships on psychological and cognitive maturity among adolescents in Upper Sakponba, Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State. The research sought to determine how parental communication, emotional support, discipline, and socio-economic background affect the mental, emotional, and intellectual development of young people.

The study was anchored on four major theories: Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), which emphasizes the importance of emotional bonds between parents and children; Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which explains how family, school, and community environments interact to influence development; Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which asserts that children learn behaviors and values through observation and imitation; and Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget, 1952), which focuses on the stages of intellectual growth and reasoning ability in children.

Findings from the study revealed that the quality of the parent–child relationship significantly influences the psychological and cognitive maturity of adolescents. Respondents who experienced supportive, communicative, and affectionate parenting exhibited higher levels of self-esteem, problem-solving ability, and social adaptability (Amato, 2019). Conversely, those exposed to neglect, harsh discipline, or emotional distance displayed low

self-confidence, poor decision-making, and weak academic performance (Bornstein & Bradley, 2014).

The research further indicated that parental education and socio-economic stability enhance parenting effectiveness, as educated parents are more likely to employ positive communication and reasoning in dealing with their children (McKinney & Renk, 2018). Environmental and cultural factors in Upper Sakponba also shaped parenting patterns—many parents faced financial pressure and societal stress, which sometimes affected their ability to provide consistent emotional and cognitive support.

Overall, the findings highlight that a positive and consistent parent–child relationship fosters psychological balance, intellectual curiosity, and cognitive independence. The study emphasizes that parenting is not merely about authority but about emotional availability, modeling behavior, and creating a nurturing environment that supports holistic growth.

## **5.2 CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that the nature of the parent–child relationship is a key determinant of an individual’s psychological and cognitive maturity. Children who experience warm, secure, and communicative relationships with their parents are more likely to grow into emotionally stable and intellectually competent adults.

Drawing from Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), the findings confirm that a secure emotional bond between parent and child builds trust and confidence, which are crucial for

mental well-being. Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) further explains that the child's development does not occur in isolation but is influenced by family, school, and community interactions. This means that poor parental relationships may have ripple effects across the child's social environment.

Through the lens of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), the study affirms that adolescents learn behaviors and attitudes by observing their parents' actions. Parents who model respect, honesty, discipline, and empathy indirectly cultivate these same traits in their children. Finally, Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget, 1952) shows that children develop reasoning and decision-making skills through guided interaction and constructive communication with parents.

Therefore, when parents provide emotional warmth, intellectual stimulation, and moral guidance, they help adolescents achieve both psychological maturity and cognitive independence. Conversely, parental neglect, inconsistency, and harshness inhibit self-regulation, reduce motivation, and lead to poor developmental outcomes.

The study ultimately concludes that strengthening family relationships, improving parental education, and creating supportive community structures are essential for promoting healthy development among adolescents in Upper Sakponba and beyond.

## **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. STRENGTHEN PARENTAL EDUCATION AND AWARENESS**

Parents should be educated on the importance of building strong emotional connections with their children. Training programs organized by schools, religious bodies, and community centers should focus on effective communication, empathy, and positive discipline.

### **2. ENCOURAGE SOCIOECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

Government and NGOs should implement empowerment programs that improve family income stability. Financially secure parents are better able to provide consistent care, supervision, and intellectual support to their children (Bornstein & Bradley, 2014).

### **3. PROMOTE COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

Local leaders, social workers, and educators should collaborate to develop community-based programs that support families facing economic or emotional challenges. Parenting clubs and youth mentoring programs should be encouraged (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### **4. INTEGRATE FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**

Schools should include family life and emotional education in their curriculum. Guidance counselors can organize regular workshops that foster healthy communication between parents and students (Piaget, 1952).

## **5. MODEL POSITIVE BEHAVIOR**

Parents should recognize that their behaviors serve as examples for their children. Demonstrating patience, respect, and responsibility helps children internalize the same traits and apply them in social and academic settings (Bandura, 1977).

## **6. CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY**

Parenting programs should take into account the cultural context of the Upper Sakponba community. Interventions must be locally relevant, promoting positive parenting while respecting cultural traditions.

## **7. POLICY AND GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION**

The local government should develop family welfare policies that address poverty, domestic violence, and child neglect. Community health centers and schools should be integrated into these programs to ensure proper monitoring and support (McKinney & Renk, 2018).

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**APPENDICES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**  
**BENIN CITY.**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire is designed for academic purposes to gather information on the implications of the parent-child relationship on physiological and cognitive maturity in Upper Sakponba, Ikpoba Okha L.G.A. All responses will be treated confidentially.

**SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

**INSTRUCTION: PLEASE TICK (✓) THE OPTION THAT BEST REPRESENTS YOUR VIEW.**

**(MULTIPLE CHOICE / FILL IN AS APPROPRIATE)**

1. Age of your child

2. Sex of child

Male ( ) Female ( )

3. Child's class level

Primary 4-6 ( ) JSS 1-3 ( ) SSS 1-3 ( )

4. Relationship to child - Mother ( ) Father ( ) Guardian ( )

5. Highest education level - Primary ( ) Secondary ( ) OND/NCE ( ) HND/BSc ( ) Postgraduate ( )

6. Household monthly income

Below ₦50,000 ( ) ₦50,000–₦99,999 ( ) ₦100,000–₦199,999 ( ) ₦200,000+ ( ) Prefer not to say ( )

7. Household size \_\_\_\_\_ persons

8. Marital status

Single ( ) Married ( ) Separated ( ) Widowed ( )

**SECTION B: PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AND MATURITY**

**INSTRUCTION: PLEASE TICK (✓) THE OPTION THAT BEST REPRESENTS YOUR VIEW**

	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>
My child and I communicate openly about daily experiences.					
I show warmth and affection to my child.					
I listen to my child’s opinions before making decisions that affect them.					
I notice positive changes in my child’s self-control over the last year.					
My child makes age-appropriate health choices such as basic hygiene without reminders.					
My child manages time for homework, chores, and rest without close supervision.					
My child recovers quickly after setbacks at school or home.					
We spend quality time together every week.					

**SECTION C: PARENTING STYLES**

**INSTRUCTION: PLEASE TICK (✓) THE OPTION THAT BEST REPRESENTS YOUR VIEW**

	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>
I explain the reasons behind rules					
I encourage my child to express their views.					
I praise my child for effort and improvement.					
I expect my child to obey immediately.					
I often punish without explaining the rule.					
I decide what is best with little input from my child.					
I let my child do things even when rules say otherwise					
I avoid setting strict routines for homework or bedtime.					
I am often too busy to know where my child is after school.					
I rarely attend my child's school activities.					
My child often seems anxious or fearful.					
My child gets along well with peers					

**SECTION D: PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT & COGNITIVE SKILLS**

**INSTRUCTION: PLEASE TICK (✓) THE OPTION THAT BEST REPRESENTS YOUR VIEW**

	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>
I check my child's homework regularly					
I communicate with my child's teachers at least once a term.					
I provide a quiet space and materials for study at home.					
I discuss my child's school progress and set goals together.					
My child can plan steps to solve a difficult task.					
My child keeps trying when schoolwork is challenging.					
My child thinks through choices before acting.					
My child's academic performance has improved in the last two terms.					

**SECTION E: SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS**

**INSTRUCTION: PLEASE TICK (✓) THE OPTION THAT BEST REPRESENTS YOUR VIEW**

	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>
Parents in this community need more training on positive parenting.					
Counseling services for families are accessible in Upper Sakponba.					
Home visits by trained social workers would improve family well-being.					
I would attend a free parenting class if offered nearby.					
Financial stress makes it hard to provide learning materials for my child.					

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**QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire is designed for academic purposes to gather information on the implications of the parent-child relationship on physiological and cognitive maturity in Upper Sakponba, Ikpoba Okha L.G.A. All responses will be treated confidentially.

**Children's Questionnaire (Ages 12–19)**

**SESSION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

**INSTRUCTION: TICK (✓) THE OPTION THAT BEST SHOWS HOW TRUE EACH STATEMENT IS FOR YOU.**

1. Age 12 ( ) 13 ( ) 14 ( ) 15 ( ) 16 ( ) 17 ( ) 18 ( ) 19 ( )
2. Sex Male ( ) Female ( )
3. Class level JSS 1–3 ( ) SSS 1–3 ( )
4. Who do you live with most of the time? Mother ( ) Father ( ) Both ( ) Guardian ( )
5. Number of people living in your house \_\_\_\_\_ persons
6. Do your parents/guardians work? Yes ( ) No ( )

**SESSION B: RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS**

**INSTRUCTION: TICK (✓) THE OPTION THAT BEST SHOWS HOW TRUE EACH STATEMENT IS FOR YOU.**

	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>
I can talk freely with my parent/guardian about my problems.					
My parent/guardian shows love and care to me.					
My parent/guardian listens when I share my views.					
I do my schoolwork and chores without being forced too much.					
I can handle challenges without getting too upset.					
I spend quality time with my parent/guardian every week.					

**SESSION C: PARENTING STYLE AS EXPERIENCED**

**INSTRUCTION: TICK (✓) THE OPTION THAT BEST SHOWS HOW TRUE EACH STATEMENT IS FOR YOU.**

	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>
My parent/guardian explains the reasons behind rules.					
My parent/guardian encourages me to share my opinions.					

I must always obey immediately without question.					
I am sometimes punished without understanding why					
I am allowed to break rules without being corrected.					
There are no fixed times for my homework or bedtime.					
My parent/guardian does not often attend my school events.					

**SESSION D: ENGAGEMENT & ACADEMICS**

**INSTRUCTION: TICK (✓) THE OPTION THAT BEST SHOWS HOW TRUE EACH STATEMENT IS FOR YOU.**

	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>
My parent/guardian checks my homework.					
My parent/guardian talks with me about my school progress.					
I have a quiet place at home to study.					
I can plan steps to solve a hard problem.					
I keep trying even when my schoolwork is difficult.					

I think carefully before making decisions					
My school performance has improved recently.					

**SESSION E: SOCIAL WORK & SUPPORT**

**INSTRUCTION: TICK (✓) THE OPTION THAT BEST SHOWS HOW TRUE EACH STATEMENT IS FOR YOU.**

	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>
Parents in my community need training on how to raise children well.					
There are counseling services in this community for families.					
Visits by social workers would help children and families.					
I would join youth programs or workshops if available.					
Lack of money sometimes makes it hard for me to get school items (books, uniform).					