



# Parents' Emotional and Physical Availability as Factors in Morality and Physical Stress of Adolescents with Working Parents

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## ABSTRACT

The economic realities in most families have made it challenging for parents to be sufficiently available to provide growing children with needed guidance and care for proper development. One negative impact of such unavailability may be the recent surge in moral decay and the level of stress among adolescents. This study investigated the roles of emotional and physical availability on morality and physical stress of adolescents with working parents. A cross-sectional design was adopted in the study and a convenient sampling technique was used to select 300 adolescent secondary school students aged 13-19 years, who completed the Lum Emotional Availability of Parents Scale, Moral Identity Questionnaire, Perceived Stress Scale and Parent Physical Availability Scale and provided relevant demographic information. Hierarchical multiple regression results showed that emotional availability was positively associated with morality, indicating that parents' emotional availability was associated with increased morality; but physical availability was not significantly associated with morality. Emotional availability was not significantly associated with physical stress; however, physical availability was positively associated with physical stress, such that adolescents whose parents were always available reported higher physical stress. The findings could guide stakeholders in planning relevant interventions to assist parents to balance both work and the home front to create an enabling environment for their adolescents to thrive.

## Introduction

Every period of human life has its own problems, including the teenage period. For teenagers in general, the search for identity is a major problem because of social, physiological, and psychological changes in themselves and in the communities in which they live (Moshman, 2005; Zhang, & Qin 2023). According to Erickson (1950), adolescence is a period of identity crisis or the search for self-identity. Adolescence is a time of rapid changes, including fundamental changes in cognitive, emotional, social, and achievement aspects (Fagan, 2006). Some adolescents can cope with this transition well, but some teenagers may experience a decline in psychological, physiological, and social conditions. Schulenberg et al. (2001) and Simpson (2001) described adolescence as a time of rapid and pervasive changes, comprising fundamental changes in cognitive, emotional, social, and achievement development.

The social changes in adolescents also make them defiant, seeking more autonomy from significant others, and when they fail to have their way, they may resort to rebellion, or other forms of disruptive behaviours. How an adolescent handles the inevitable

changes they experience in their journey to self-identity could be influenced by a variety of factors including social and interpersonal influences such as lack of warmth from parents, supervision, control, and encouragement, negative assessment from parents, tension at home, divorce, and separation from parents (Noller & Calan, 2015; Peterson, 2005; Steinberge & Silk 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). Other factors are personal traits, including temperamental, aggressive personalities, external locus of control, low self-esteem, poor coping skills, etc (Adeyi, 2023; Klimstra, 2013). Moral issues, values, and religion; and conflicting demands from home, school, church and peers also matter in navigating the challenges of adolescence (McLanahan, et al., 2013).

One major area of concern for the well-being of adolescents today is the decline in morality. The principles of humanity and morality are taught in the family. This education is crucial for children in understanding morals which are developed from infancy to adulthood. Adebisi (2018) submitted that moral decadence among adolescents is blamed on the parents (for lack of proper up-bringing of their children) and the media (for exposing

some critical scenes capable of polluting the innocent minds of the youths). These days, Nigerian adolescents have been influenced with the “get rich quick” syndrome, they want to make money as quick as possible through illegitimate avenues. Mere seeing their peers in schools or society driving cars and hanging out with beautiful girls have crushed their emotional, spiritual, and physical health making them wayward, disobedient and disrespectful to constituted authority (Nwosu et al., 2022). Nwosu et al. maintained that majority of Nigerian adolescents find it difficult to resist the use of marijuana, cigarette and “Shisha” because of peer pressure and that most of them are having difficulty wearing clothes that cover their bodies, it is either, too tight, too short or too revealing because of media influence. They further held that even under the roof of their parents, the use of the internet, especially social media has exposed adolescents to pornographic films, nudity and morally insane standards that have damaged the morality of adolescents. In schools, cultism, smoking and excessive drinking are normalized and, in some cases, some adolescents normally sneak out of campus to hang out with their gangs (Nwosu et al., 2022).

Another source of worry for adolescents is the increasing level of household stress they experience (Chiang et al., 2016; Mishra & Putil, 2021). Physical stress among adolescents in this context can be best understood as overwhelming burden placed on adolescents who are compelled to assume parental roles and responsibilities (Chiang et al., 2016; Mishra & Putil, 2021). This stress stems from an excessive workload, including academic demands, household chores, caregiving for younger siblings, and the emotional strain of fulfilling the roles of both a mother and a father simultaneously. Adolescents experiencing this type of stress may feel overwhelmed, fatigued, and emotionally drained as they struggle to balance their responsibilities and cope with the demands placed upon them. Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's behaviour and values. However, busy working parents may find it challenging to devote time to teaching and instill important life skills. According to Biu (2011), many parents today believe the best way to bring up children is to avail superfluous material provisions to their children. This has turned many children to view their parents just like material providers and nothing more and has greatly eroded the mutual cohesiveness that is supposed to exist between parents and their children (Mutie, 2015). A parent can be available for the child physically and emotionally (Weaver & Schofield, 2015).

Emotional availability refers to the capacity of a parent or caregiver to provide consistent emotional support, responsiveness, and nurturing interactions with their children (Lum & Phares, 2005). Lum and Phares (2004) defines emotional availability as the potentials of parents to be understanding, reactive, and helpful of their children's emotional needs. It encompasses aspects such as warmth, sensitivity, empathy, and being attuned to the child's needs. Research has shown that emotional availability in parent-child relationships predicts a wide range of child outcomes,

including attachment security and emotion regulation (Saunders et al., 2015). It is essential for fostering secure attachment bonds and promoting healthy socio-emotional development in children. Furthermore, the importance of parental emotional availability in shaping adolescents' moral reasoning, empathy, and prosocial behavior (Martins et al., 2021), as well as in mitigating stressors and promoting positive coping strategies among adolescents have been observed (Ozaydin et al., 2024). These findings underscore the importance of considering the impact of parental work dynamics on adolescent well-being and the need to support parents in balancing work and family responsibilities (Saunders et al., 2015).

With today's economy, it's not unusual for both parents to have jobs to support their family. While the idea of both parents working is usually challenging there are many advantages of having working parents: improved child's well-being, better opportunities, extracurricular activities, vacations, school clubs, transport and study programs, improved quality of life, better housing, healthcare among other benefits. Despite its many advantages, there are also many downsides to being a working parent and having working parents as a kid. In some cases, working parents may be so busy with their jobs that they begin to neglect their children altogether. Work culture might make it difficult for some parents to maintain a healthy balance between personal and professional life. Being engrossed with work seriously affects the parents' physical availability. Physical availability means being available for physical interaction and contact. Parents are expected to come home early enough, spend time with their adolescents talking, doing chores, running errands, eating and even praying together among other activities. When parents are present, accessible and responsive to their children's needs for comfort, affection, and security, they help their adolescents adjust better and thrive. Research has shown that father involvement can foster strong father-child relationships by engaging in sensitive tenderness and participating in physical play, which entails challenges and activations (Zhong, 2024).

Parents' physical availability helps adolescents feel loved, secure and supported. Most children of working parents may grow up without adequate care and attention, and may turn out to become depressed or wayward, because their parents were busy earning money at the time when they needed them most. Furthermore, the physical absence of parents due to work obligations can exacerbate stress and emotional strain among adolescents (Lakhani & Nadeem, 2023). Parents hurry to work in the morning with less attention to the children's welfare. Such parents come back later in the afternoon or evening very tired and exhausted, sometimes when the children are about to sleep or may have gone to bed, and some of these parents may leave for work before their children wake up the next day. This same routine repeats itself, leaving little or no time for the child's moral upbringing, or to check regularly and consistently their educational progress in their schools. Awoyokun (2002) expresses similar sentiments when he argues that because

parents as educators are unavailable to minister to the needs of attuning the values of their children in consonance with the splendor of virtues, the children resort to the media for 'modern' standards of behavior; the children are left to the vortex of their own whims, friends, and the media.

Most adolescents who have parents who are barely around mostly go through the stress of looking after the home and younger siblings while their parents are away. This is another negative effect of work on parenting and it causes excessive demand on adolescent children for services in the home. Onyazonwu (2022) discovered that out of 26 respondents who answered the structured interview question on who does the cooking, cleaning, and other household chores in their home, five (representing 19.2%) revealed that the children were involved in the said domestic works. This means that wage-earning by the parents may exert additional burden on the children. Most adolescent children are forced to assume a greater responsibility for their own well-being and that of their younger siblings. While other children are enjoying recreational activities, these children are busy helping at home, and taking up the domestic responsibilities of their parents. They prepare meals, go for school runs, wash their cloths and school uniforms, do their assignments and that of their younger siblings, and make sure the house is always tidy before their parents return home.

Most times these children who assumed adult roles are not appreciated, and their efforts go unnoticed by their parents and may face verbal, physical and emotional abuse from their parents when they do fail to meet up with their daily activities expected of them every day. They are being reminded that the least job they should do is to take care of the home and their siblings while they the parents provide the daily bread. Consequently, adolescents who go through these may suffer physical and even emotional stress, they barely have time for themselves and may face challenges in school due to the physical stress they go through every day. Most adolescents tend to grow up very fast and think and work more than their age and mental capacity, they rarely find fun in what their mates do (Onyazonwu 2022). Brooks (1988) further maintains that when parents permit their children to come home and care for themselves, the children may feel bad and rejected; accidents or mistreatment may befall these children when alone; children may not develop appropriate skills when unsupervised, such as not becoming responsible for schoolwork and other tasks; and children may engage in delinquent behaviour like premature sexual activity.

The researchers seek to ascertain if parents' emotional and physical availability can influence an adolescents' moral development and physical stress. Based on the existing premise, this study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) Will emotional availability of parents predict morality among adolescents? (2) Will physical availability of parents predict morality among adolescents? (3) Will emotional availability of parents predict physical stress among adolescents? (4) Will physical availability of parents predict

physical stress among adolescents? The following hypotheses were set forth to guide the study: (1) Parental emotional availability will be significantly associated with adolescents' morality. (2) Parental physical availability will be significantly associated with adolescents' morality. (3) Parental emotional availability will be significantly associated with adolescents' physical stress. (4) Parental physical availability will be significantly associated with adolescents' physical stress.

## Method

### Participants

Three hundred adolescents participated in this study. They included both male ( $n = 128$ ) and female ( $n = 172$ ) adolescents conveniently sampled from different extramural lesson centres in Nsukka. Their ages ranged from 13 to 19 years (Mean age = 16.00,  $SD = 2.13$ ). Inclusion criteria were children of working parents who live together. For ethnic groups, majority ( $n = 256$ ) were Igbos, but there were Hausas ( $n = 40$ ) and Yorubas ( $n = 4$ ). In terms of religion, 262 participants were Christians, 36 were Muslims while 2 were adherents of other religious groups.

### Instruments

Data for this study was gathered by means of a questionnaire which had two sections. The first section included statements on demographic and personal information such as age, gender, class, religion, ethnic group and other personal information like whether both parents work, parents work status (employed, self-employed), time they leave for work, time they return, if they both work on weekends, and which parent spends more time with them. The second section included four choice instruments for the variables: the Lum Emotional Availability of Parents (LEAP), the Moral Identity Questionnaire (MIQ) and Perceived Stress Questionnaire (PSQ), while Parents Physical Availability (PPA) was measured using a vignette designed by the researcher.

#### *Lum Emotional Availability (LEAP)*

The LEAP scale was developed by Lum and Phares (2005) to assess the emotional availability of parents. It is a measures three aspects of availability, namely, sensitivity (referring to the ability of the parent to accurately perceive their child's emotional need), responsiveness (the ability of the parent to respond appropriately to their child's emotional state) and supportiveness (the ability of the parent to provide emotional support to their child). The measure shows good psychometric properties regarding both reliability and validity. Babore et al. (2014) reported Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the emotional availability of mother (LEAPm) as .93 and emotional availability of father (LEAPp) as .95. Willingham (2007) reported Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the LEAP as .97. Convergent validity of LEAPm and LEAPp with Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (&) were positively significant ( $r = .85, p < .001$  for IPPAm;  $r = .82, p < .001$ , for IPPAp) (Babore et al., 2014). The LEAP is a promising new measure that



can be used to identify children who might be at risk for development of emotional/behavioural problems because of their perceptions of parental emotional unavailability. The scale contains fifteen items in which participants are asked to rate their parents' behaviour by ticking the one that best describes it. Responses are scored on a 6-point Likert scale: never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), very often (5), always (6). Sample items are "supports me", "shows they care about me". For the present study, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .94.

#### *Moral Identity Questionnaire (MIQ)*

MIQ was developed by Black and Reynolds (2016). The scale assesses a measure of moral identity that would encompass both integrity and the importance of morality to self-identity. In other words, moral identity involves two facets conceptualized as moral self and moral integrity. Sample items are "I try hard to act honestly in most things I do"; "Having moral values is worthless in today's society"; "If no one could find out, it is okay to steal a small amount of money or other things that no one will miss". The MIQ contains twenty (20) items that are scored on a 6-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Items 1-8 describe moral self while 9-20 describe moral integrity. Higher scores indicate greater importance placed on moral values and integrity. Evidence of convergent validity according to the developers showed moderate correlations with empathy ( $r = .47 - .54$ ) and perspective taking ( $r = .36 - .41$ ). The developers equally reported internal consistency, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .91, .89 and .86 for MIQ total, moral integrity and moral self, respectively. The MIQ items yielded a Cronbach  $\alpha$  of .80 in the present study

#### *Perceived Stress Questionnaire (PSQ)*

PSQ, developed by Levenstein et al. (1993) and validated by Osteras et al. (2018) was designed to assess stressful life events and circumstances that tend to trigger or exacerbate disease symptoms. It permits assessments of subjective experiences of perceived stressful situations and stress reactions, emphasizing cognitive perceptions more than emotional states or specific life events, and it is considered valid in the context of a transactional view of stress. The scale is a 30-item self-report, pencil-and-paper measure requiring between 10 and 15 min for completion. The scale has two forms of instructions: the general form that asks questions related to "the last two years" and the recent form that asks about situations taking place "during the last four weeks or during the last month", addressing chronic and acute experience with stressful events and activities. Respondents indicate on a scale from 1 ("almost never") to 4 ("usually") how frequently they experience certain stress-related feelings. Higher scores indicate greater levels of stress. A total score is found by tallying each item. positively worded items are scored according to the directions accompanying the scale. A PSQ index can be found by subtracting 30 from the raw score and dividing the result by 90, yielding a score

between 0 and 1.

Levenstein et al. (1993) found an internal consistency Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .85 and a test-retest reliability of .82 for the PSQ. Its concurrent validity has been demonstrated in terms of positive associations with compatible stress measures, including the Trier Inventory for the Assessment of Chronic Stress (TICS) (Schulz & Schlotz, 1999) and Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen et al., 1983). In other studies (e.g., Levenstein et al., 1993; Fliege et al., 2005; Sanz-Carrillo et al., 2002), PSQ appears positively associated with anxiety and depression, neuroticism, burnout (in terms of exhaustion, cynicism and lack of efficacy), and somatic symptoms. Furthermore, PSQ appears to be negatively associated with reliance, self-efficacy, optimism and health-related quality of life (e.g., Fliege et al., 2005; Kocalevent et al., 2007; Montero-Marin et al., 2014a; Montero-Marin et al., 2014b). In the present study a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .58 was obtained.

#### *Parents Physical Availability Scale*

The parents' physical availability scale was developed by the current researchers for the study to measure the extent to which parents are physically available for their children at home. The scale contains three different family scenarios or family type. The respondent is required to tick which family best describes their own type of family and also the family they consider to be an ideal family. Sample item includes "Family A- Both parents are working full-time. Yet, the couple or at least one of them creates time each day to eat, do homework, pray and spend quality time with their child(ren)" (See Appendix A). The present researchers conducted a pilot study to validate the Parents' Physical Availability Scale for the present study on a sample of 3 experts in counselling and developmental psychology in the university of Nigeria, Nsukka. Inter-rater reliability estimation yielded 0.67 indicating a moderate agreement among the 3 raters. Face validity estimate of the 3 experts indicated that PPA scale appears to measure the construct, and it is relevant to the target population.

#### **Procedure**

The researchers obtained ethical approval from the Department of Psychology, University of Nigeria, to embark on the study. Permission was obtained from management of the extramural lesson venues to sample the students that attend lessons in their different centres. The centres were used to conduct the study because schools were on holiday. The inclusion criterion was any adolescent with both parents formally employed. The researchers went to the above-mentioned locations, asked for students who had both working parents and gave them the questionnaire to fill. The rationale behind asking them the question was to ensure that only those who had experience with both working parents were sampled. The researcher gave the participants instructions as how to fill the questionnaires and they were also informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that the responses

would be kept strictly confidential, hence they are required to give honest responses. The instruments were collected whenever they were done so as to give them ample time in filling the items in the questionnaire. Three hundred (300) copies of the questionnaires that were duly completed were consequently used for analysis.

### Design/Statistics

Cross-sectional design was adopted in the study. Pearson's correlation ( $r$ ) analysis was conducted among the study's demographic variables, predictors and dependent variables. Hierarchical multiple regression was used for hypothesis testing.

Table 1 showed that age was positively related to gender ( $r = .14, p < .05$ ) and parents' availability. Emotional availability was positively related morality ( $r = .17, p < .01$ ). Physical availability was positively related physical stress ( $r = .35, p < .01$ ).

### Results

The results of the findings of this study are presented in this section. The descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables are shown in Table 1. The Hierarchical multiple regression for the predictors of morality and physical stress among adolescents are shown in

**Table 1: Pearson's Correlations of Demographics, Emotional and Physical Availability, Morality and Physical Stress.**

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Age	-	-	-					
2 Gender	-	-	.14*	-				
3 Emotional Availability	69.24	15.47	.07	.04	-			
4 Physical Availability	-	-	-.07	.02	-.02	-		
5 Morality	91.16	14.18	.05	.08	.17**	.08	-	
6 Physical Stress	73.08	10.94	.06	.04	-.09	.35**	.05	-

Note:  $N = 300$ , \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ , Gender (Coded 0 = Male, 1 = Female), Physical availability (Coded 0 = None, 1 = Weekends, 2 = Each Day).

**Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression for predicting of morality by emotional and physical availability with gender as a covariate.**

Predictors	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>
Age	.63	.03	.58	.43	.023	.40	.43	.02	.40
Gender	2.27	.08	1.36	2.13	.074	1.29	2.13	.07	1.28
Emotional Availability				.15	.17	2.93**	.154	.168	2.89
Physical Availability							.02	.00	.01
$R^2$		.01			.04			.04	
$\Delta R^2$		.01			.03			.00	
<i>F</i>	1.23(2, 297)			3.70(3, 296)*			2.76(4, 295)*		
<i>FΔ</i>	1.23(2, 297)			8.57(1, 296)**			.00(1, 295)		

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ ; Gender (Coded 0 = Male, 1 = Female), Physical availability (Coded 0 = None, 1 = Weekends, 2 = Each Day).

Results of the hierarchical multiple regression analyses are shown in Table 2. In step 1, age and gender were added as control variables. Age ( $\beta = .03, p < .05$ ) and gender ( $\beta = .08, p < .05$ ) were not significantly associated with morality. The model was not significant.

Emotional availability was added in step 2 and was significantly associated with morality ( $\beta = .17, p < .01$ ). The  $B$  showed that each unit rise in emotional availability was associated with .15 unit increase morality. The model was significant,  $F(1, 296) = 8.57, R^2\Delta = .03$ . The  $R^2\Delta$  of .03 shows that 3% of the variance

in morality was explained by emotional availability.

In step 3, physical availability was added and was not significantly associated with morality ( $\beta = .00, p > .05$ ). The model was not significant. Four percent of the variance in morality was explained by all the variables under study.

**Table 3: Hierarchical multiple regression predicting physical stress by emotional and physical availability with gender as a covariate.**

Predictors	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	<i>B</i>		<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>
Age	.83	.06	.98	.92	.06	1.09	1.10	.08	1.31
Gender	.58	.03	.45	.65	.03	.51	.98	.05	.771
Emotional Availability				-.07	-.10	-1.72	-.05	-.07	-1.28
Physical Availability							4.46	.18	3.13**
$R^2$		.00			.01			.04	
$R^2\Delta$		.00			.01			.03	
<i>F</i>	.66(2, 297)			1.43(3, 296)			3.55(4, 295)*		
<i>F</i> $\Delta$	.66(2, 297)			2.97(1, 296)			9.80(1, 295)**		

**Note:** \*.05, \*\*.01, Gender (Coded 0 = Male, 1 = Female), Physical Availability (Coded 0 = None, 1 = Weekends, 2 = Each Day).

Results of the hierarchical multiple regression analyses are shown in Table 3. In step 1, age and gender were added as control variables. Age ( $\beta = .06, p < .05$ ) and gender ( $\beta = .03, p < .05$ ) were not significantly associated with physical stress. The model was not significant. In step 2, emotional availability was added and was not significantly associated with physical stress ( $\beta = -.10, p > .05$ ). The model was not significant. Physical availability was added in step 3 and was significantly associated with physical stress ( $\beta = .18, p < .01$ ). The *B* showed that adolescents whose parents were not available were associated with higher physical stress. The model was significant,  $F(1, 296) = 9.80, R^2\Delta = .03$ . The  $R^2\Delta$  of .03 shows that 3% of the variance in physical stress was explained by physical availability. 4% of the variance in physical stress was explained by all the variables under study.

### Discussion

Findings of the study revealed that emotional availability was positively associated with morality, indicating that increase in emotional availability was associated with increase in morality. Thus, the first hypothesis which stated that there would be a significant relationship between parental emotional availability and morality among adolescent was supported. This finding is consistent with Njoku (2016) who proposed that parents and teachers are capable of remoulding and shaping of youths' moral behaviour; hence their active participation in character formation is required. This result can be explained by Bowlby and Ainsworth's (1969) attachment theory. Students experience with caregivers who likely accept and encourage their displays of emotion, may also be more open in their expression and communication of emotion, which is a crucial factor in the expression of empathy.

This result can also be explained by Piaget's (1932) theory of moral development. Emotional availability can control the tide of moral decadence. If parents are available to inculcate moral values and norms, adolescents would grow up to be orderly, shun normlessness. Haralambos et al. (2008) posited that anomie can result from changes in society which disrupt existing relationships and bring existing values into question, the family being the smallest unit of the society can face anomie when changes that affect their members are perceived to be negative. When the supposed relationships which exist between parents and adolescents are severed due to certain factors which may affect them negatively, it leads to anomie.

Furthermore it was discovered that physical availability was not significantly associated with morality. Hence, the second hypothesis, which stated that parental physical availability would be significantly associated with morality among adolescents was not supported. This result does not support previous research (e.g., Ufearo et al., 2021) which found that parental availability (communication and supervision) reduced aggression among adolescents.

Emotional availability was not significantly associated with physical stress. This contradicts the third hypothesis that parental emotional availability would be significantly associated with physical stress among adolescents. The present finding suggests that the presence of emotional support may not directly influence the physiological stress responses, indicating that other factors such as coping mechanisms, individual differences in stress perception, and quality of support, might play a more critical role in managing physical stress levels. These factors could as well interact with emotional support in complex ways, potentially

moderating its impact on physical stress.

Findings of this study showed that physical availability was positively associated with physical stress, such that adolescents whose parents were always available had higher physical stress. This supports the fourth hypothesis that predicted that physical availability of working parents would be significantly associated with physical stress among adolescent children. This result also supports the finding of Kamau and Karimi (2022) which showed a significant relationship between parental availability and adolescent's psychosocial wellbeing. When parents are physically present in the home, it may increase the level of stress their children face. It could be that when the parents are around, they may place restrictions on entertainments, get the children to do their chores, monitor their use of time and send them on different errands. Because most adolescents seek independence, they may find their parents' presence stressful unlike when the parents go to work and the adolescent has time to operate social media, entertain friends or do other personal things at their own leisure. This finding, calls for a moderation study with constructs such as self-control, emotional intelligence, democratic parenting style etc. that could buffer the deleterious effect of parents' physical availability on adolescent physical stress.

#### Limitations of the Study and recommendations for further studies

This study has several limitations which affected the conduct of and possibly the results of this study. Firstly, the majority of the population sample was from the Nsukka Local Government Area which is located in the Eastern part of Nigeria and therefore predominantly contained people from the Igbo ethnic group. This, therefore, calls to question whether the results can be generalized to other ethnic groups. The field of physical stress in adolescents has not received much research especially in Nigeria. Hence, there was not much empirical data on the variable of study. Moreover, the poor reliability index of perceived stress questionnaire (PSQ) obtained calls for caution in the interpretation of the findings, as this may affect the accuracy and generalizability of the results. Further studies should consider other parts of Nigeria to aid generalizability. Moreover, factors such as coping mechanisms, individual differences in stress perception and quality of support can be considered as predictors of physical stress or better still as interacting with emotional support in complex ways to impact on physical stress in further studies.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, in an attempt to make ends meet for the family, parents should not neglect the needs of their family. The family is the first point of socialization. Therefore, parents should make out time to instill moral values, be emotionally and physically present in the lives of their children and try to balance work and family needs. Moreover, parents should try to make their physical

availability more interesting (e.g., having fun time with them, getting them do the house chores in a friendlier manner, sharing with them important tips on how to navigate life trajectories, and lowering restrictions on entertainment sometimes) such that their presence will not constitute burden to their adolescent children.

#### Declarations

**Data availability statement:** The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

**Conflict of Interest/Disclosure statement:** J. I. Ugwu, F. C. Odimba and N. G. Onyedire declare that they have no conflict of interest.

**Informed Consent:** All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional and national) and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2000 (5). Informed consent was obtained from all patients for being included in the study.

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## APPENDIX A

### Parent Physical Availability Measure

The following vignette describes 3 different family scenarios.

Family A- Both parents are working full-time. Yet, the couple or at least one of them creates time **each day** to eat, do homework, pray and spend quality time with their child(ren).

Family B- Both parents are employed full-time. However, the couple or at least one of them creates time **on weekends** to eat, do homework, pray and spend quality time with their child(ren).

Family C- Both parents are working full-time. However, **none of them** creates time to eat, do homework, pray and spend quality time with their child(ren).

**Use the vignette to answer the following questions: (circle your response)**

1. Which family best resembles what happens in your own family?

Family A F a m i l y B  
Family C

2. Which family do you consider to be the ideal family?

Family A F a m i l y B  
Family C