

# Home Structure as Predictor of Adolescents' Autonomy Development in the Assin South District, Ghana

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## Abstract

**Background:** Too many rules or too forceful implementation of these rules, as well as too many consequences for not following the rules, can make adolescents feel that they are being oppressed rather than supported. This study investigates the home structure and adolescents' autonomy development in the Assin South District, Ghana.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional descriptive design was used with 400 participants which comprised parents age 30-59 and older adolescents age 15-19 years. Data were analysed using frequency distribution, Pearson's chi-squared test of independence and binary logistic regression.

**Results:** Association was found between parents knowing their child's whereabouts at  $p=0.034$ , ( $\chi^2=4.493$ ). Parents' consistency in rules enforcement was significant at 0.001, ( $\chi^2=10.753$ ) and adolescents' autonomy development. Measures of control was significant at  $p=0.019$ , ( $\chi^2=5.493$ ).

**Conclusion:** Parents in Assin South District could be a bit liberal not overprotective over adolescents to enable them aspire for autonomy.

## Introduction

The adolescent years can be difficult for both parents and children, while adolescents fight to develop more independence, parents struggle to set appropriate boundaries for adolescents (Fosco, Lippold & Feinberg, 2014; Mastrotheodoros et al., 2019). Despite parents need rules and regulations to guide decision-making and behaviour of adolescents, they (adolescents) also need to feel independent (Ciranka & van den Bos, 2019; Shah Szwedo & Allen, 2022). Allowing adolescents to feel that they are in control of their lives and making their own decisions while still offering them structure and guidance until their brains are fully developed is one of the most difficult balancing acts of parenting (Shah Szwedo & Allen, 2022). Too many rules or too forceful implementation of these rules, as well as too many consequences for not following the rules, can make adolescents feel that they are being oppressed rather than supported (Gupta, Madabushi & Gupta, 2023). Not enough rules or structure, or inconsistent enforcement of the rules, can create resentment and confusion for both parent and child (Hayes & Higgins, 2014). Finding a better compromise between healthy boundaries versus independent choices will allow adolescents to feel in control while also providing them with a solid foundation as their brains continue to develop (Hartley & Somerville, 2015).

For adolescents to become a responsible adult, they need autonomy and connectedness, both of which grow out of close, supportive relationships with others (Beyers, Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2024; Ruiz & Yabut, 2024). As adolescents mature, they increasingly view personal matters—such as decisions about their appearance and friendships—as areas that should be under their own control (Melendro, Campos, Rodríguez-Bravo & Arroyo Resino, 2020). This desire for self-determination can make parents and other guardians feel pushed away and even increase conflict in some families, particularly during early-

to mid-adolescence (Beyers, Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2024; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023; Shah, Szvedo & Allen, 2022). Though, they still need responsive and supportive relationships with their families to navigate this time successfully. Therefore, parenting style that supports autonomy, relaxes control while maintaining values and limits and enables open communication leads to better outcomes for adolescents (Young & Tully, 2022). However, there may be long-term consequences for an individual who fails to gain autonomy at the appropriate time or gains too much autonomy too early (Davis & McQuillin, 2021).

Increasing autonomy without guidance from adults is harmful to adolescents' development while controlling or coercive measures to protect an adolescent from making risky decisions may lead an adolescent into further pursuit of autonomy and often in the opposite direction intended by well-meaning adults (Davis & McQuillin, 2021). Essentially, there are risks associated with both complete autonomy as well as excessive control. A balance between independence and support is needed and often stems from having a close, emotional relationship between the adult and teen. Autonomy-supportive parenting that respects adolescents' feelings and preferences is related to increased well-being and less depression (Mageau et al., 2015). Conversely, controlling parenting that seeks to manage adolescent behaviour through punishment, guilt, and shaming is associated with negative outcomes (Young & Tully, 2022).

Previous studies on the phenomena dwelt much on how adolescents' sociodemographic characteristics relate to autonomy development. For instance, Sher-Censor (2015) and Graça et al. (2010) concentrated on how gender differences relate to adolescents' autonomy and revealed contradictory findings. Whereas Sher-Censor (2015) found higher autonomy levels in girls, Graça et al. (2010) reported better results among male respondents. However, other studies found more coherent results when it comes to age. Several studies (example, Graça et al., 2010; Dutra-Thomé et al., 2019) submitted that older adolescents exhibit better levels of autonomy, as expected. The adolescents' social context also has a strong influence on their autonomy levels (Wood et al., 2018). The families' socioeconomic conditions (Barbosa et al., 2017) as well as the kind of work carried out in residential care to promote autonomy, have a strong impact on adolescents (Cabral, 2017). When focusing on gender differences to estimate adolescents' autonomy, male and female show autonomous behaviours at different stages of their adolescence, however, this gender equality is not evident in all cultural contexts. Further, even, those variances are nowadays less important than they were in the past (Dutra-Thomé et al., 2019).

It should also be noted that the studies conducted so far, none has its aim towards the influences of home structure

on adolescents' autonomy development. Therefore, to contribute to this conversation, this parent-child dyad study investigates whether home structure predicts adolescents' autonomy development in the Assin South District, Ghana by specifically analysing: if parental attitude towards adolescents influences autonomy development among adolescents in the Assin South District, Ghana; whether parental child discipline predicts adolescents' autonomy development in the Assin South District, Ghana; and lastly, if parental home monitoring influences adolescents' autonomy development. The study further hypothesised that there is no statistically significant relationship between home structure and adolescents' autonomy development.

## Theoretical Framework

The study relied much on Deci and Ryan's 1980 Self Determination Theory [SDT] which links personality, human motivation, and optimal functioning together. This SDT has been applied in various disciplines, including education, sport, health, and the workplace, and has been used to explain the effects of different types of motivation on behaviour and well-being. The SDT of motivation is a psychological theory that expounds how human behaviour is influenced by the degree to which the behaviour is autonomous or self-determined. The theory posits that behaviour that is autonomous or self-determined is more likely to be sustained over time and to lead to greater well-being and personal growth than behaviour that is controlled by external factors or the individual's perceived lack of choice (Ryan, 2009).

As posited by the theory, people have three innate psychological needs (which are: autonomy, competence, and relatedness) and these must be met in order to maintain optimal motivation. Per the SDT, the level of autonomy in behaviour is influenced by the degree to which the behaviour is in line with an individual's values, goals, and needs (Gagné & E.D.-J. of O. behaviour, undefined, 2005). However, the theory distinguishes between different types of motivation namely autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, and amotivation. As noted by the theory, autonomous motivation implies a behaviour that is in line with an individual's values, goals, and needs and is perceived as self-determined. Controlled motivation signifies a behaviour that is performed because of external rewards or to avoid punishment. Amotivation connotes the absence of motivation. It happens when an individual does not have a reason or belief that behaviour or activity will lead to the desired outcome or goal (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Vallerand et al., 2008).

The theory also suggests that when people feel autonomous and competent in their behaviour, they are more likely to experience positive outcomes such as

personal growth, well-being, and optimal performance. Research suggests that promoting autonomy-supportive environments and behaviours can lead to better outcomes, such as improved performance and satisfaction (Sheldon et al., 2014; Teixeira et al., 2012).

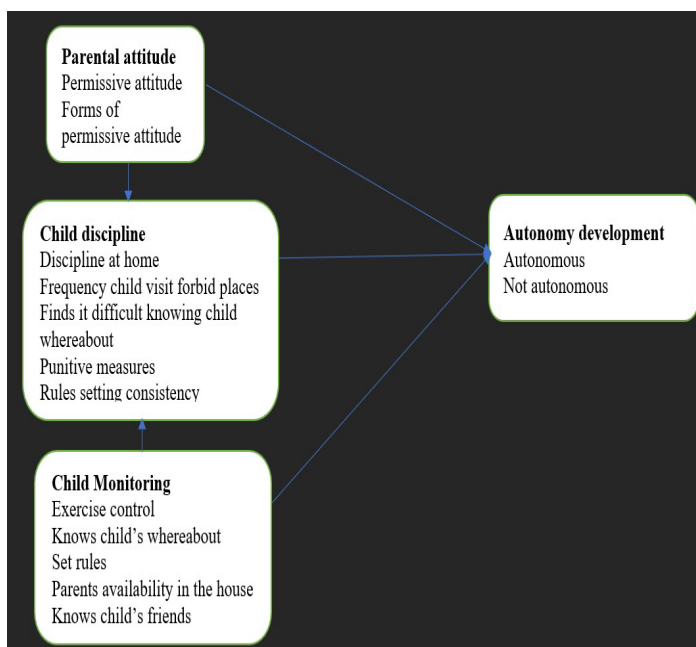
### Conceptual Framework of the Study

To be able to unearth the pathway through which home structure influences adolescents' autonomy development, the various constructs of home structure (HS) have been summarised in Figure 1 to indicate how parental attitude, child monitoring and child discipline could give rise to adolescents' autonomy development [AAD]. The AAD in the framework has been stratified into autonomous and not-autonomous and these in return shape the well-being of the adolescents. The framework has demonstrated the main pathways and mechanisms through which HS affect AAD.

## Methods

### Study Setting and Participants

Assin South District in the Central Region of Ghana was chosen for the study because it contributed high percentages (19.6%, 17.5%, & 18.5%) to the prevalence of adolescents' pregnancy in the region and the country as a whole. This was attributed to teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19 years in 2015, 2016 and 2020 respectively (Ghana Health Service, 2015, 2016; Ghana News Agency, 2020; Owusu, 2021) while Awutu Senya East recorded the lowest rate of 7% pregnancies in the same region (GHS, 2016). Moreover,



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework Illustrating the Influences of Home Structure on Adolescents' Autonomy Development.

Source: Author's Construction (2024).

the Assin South district has not been spared from the global HIV and AIDS pandemic (Citi News Room, 2022; GSS, 2012). The prevalence of HIV in the district is 0.84% (Citi News Room, 2022). Hence, the statistics in the district qualify it for the study.

In the district, parents age 30-59 years and adolescents age 15-19 years were enrolled in the study. In all, 400 respondents were recruited for the study. However, after checking and cleaning the data, 354 respondents' responses with a return rate of 88.5% were used for the analysis.

### Study Design and Data Source

The study made use of cross-sectional design where descriptive survey plan was adopted. The study used separate questionnaires to collect similar data from both parents and adolescents from the field. The data collection instruments used was developed with reference to literature and the conceptual framework of the study. However, already used survey questionnaires were also reviewed and those that were found appropriate to the study were adopted into the formulation of the data collection instruments.

### Sampling Procedures

The study made use of a multistage sampling procedure. The random selection of Assin South District out of the 22 metropolitan, municipals and districts assemblies within the Central Region was done at stage. Selection of settlements out of the twelve (12) settlements in the district to form a study site for the study was done in stage two with a simple random technique. Signing of number of respondents to be selected at each study site (settlement) selected took place at stage three. The final stage was where systematic random sampling method was used to select the respondents from each of the selected study location for the study.

### Sample Size Estimation

The sample size was estimated at 400 with the help of Cochran's (1977) formula as follows:

$$n = z^2 p (1-p) / d^2$$

n = sample size

Confidence level set at 95% (1.96)

The p-value was set at 0.05.

z = standard normal deviation set at 1.96

d = degree of accuracy desired at 0.05

p = proportion of parents aged 30-59 years and adolescents aged 15-19 years was 36%.



$n = 1.962 * 0.36 (1-0.36)/0.052 = 354.041$ , approximately 400

Sample size was, therefore, estimated at 400 respondents for the study. The extra 46 respondents were added to cater for refusal, and non-responses. The selection of the respondents for the study commenced on Wednesday, 15th of July, 2020 and ended on Friday, 31st of July, 2020.

### Data Quality Concerns

To ensure data acceptability for analysis, Cronbach's alpha reliability test was conducted on the HS and AAD data collected from the field, it was revealed that Cronbach's alpha rated the data as acceptable with a reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.63$ . As noted by Griethuisen et al. (2014), a general accepted rule is that alpha of 0.6-0.7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability and that data is useful. As part of ensuring validity of data collected from the field, steps were made to pretest the questionnaires before the actual data collection. Also, standardised data collection instruments which were used in previous HS and AAD survey (Lezin, Roller, Bean & Taylor, 2004) were adopted.

### Variables and Measurements

In the study, the independent variable was HS and the dependent variable was AAD. Measurement of HS and AA dwells on: rules governing; bedtime, homework, TV, alcohol/drugs, dating, clarity of rules and agreement with parent rules; child calls if late, parents know if not home, child can reach parents, parents know where child is after school and with whom, parents know child's friends, child's perception of parents' knowledge of where he/she goes and whom he/she is with, parent's presence before and after; school, dinner, bedtime, weekends, child's perception of parent's strictness, how often child goes where told not to, how difficult it is to know where child goes, adult supervision of children's parties, over-protectiveness; — babying, controlling behaviour-blame, guilt, rejection/withdrawal, erratic emotional behaviour, punishment, type of punishment restrict activities, slapping/hitting, arguing, name-calling; parents knowledge of child's friends, activities and whereabouts, parents' awareness of child's risk behaviour, consistency in rules and discipline (Lezin et al., 2004).

Lastly, autonomy construct measurement dwelt mainly on: child makes own decisions, child's perception of parent's non-coercive, democratic discipline, encouragement of child's own ideas, intrusiveness, locus of control, voice in family decisions, trust, respect for child's individuality (Lezin et al., 2004).

### Data Collection Procedure

Data collection commenced on 23rd of June, 2020 and ended on 5th of July, 2020 at the Assin South District in the Central Region of Ghana with the help of four research assistants. Two sets of interviews were conducted in each house in the field for the parent-child dyad to avoid spying and to ensure openness and truthful responses. Generally, parents were first interviewed before the child.

### Data Analysis

The data for the study was processed with SPSS version 27 after a detailed cross-examination for errors and re-coding of questions that asked respondents to choose more than one option as well as the open-ended questions to ease data entry had been done. The study made use of frequency distribution (percentages) to summarise information on: demographic data, child monitoring, child discipline, and parental attitudes as well as adolescents' autonomy. The Pearson's chi-squared test of independence was applied to test the statistical hypothesis postulated in the study to either approve it or disapprove it. However, the binary logistic regression analysis was also conducted to identify factors that predict adolescents' autonomy.

### Ethical Consideration

In order to ensure ethical consideration, participation was made voluntary and participants were given the choice to withdraw at any time. Oral consent was taken from both parents and adolescents age 18-19years in the field while adolescents below 18years old also assented after their parents have consented on their behalf. Since, verbal consent was what was sought, it was not documented but was witnessed by the participant's parents or any elderly person who directly related to the participant. The reason why adolescents less than 18years assented was that in Ghana the 1992 constitution stipulates that one becomes an adult and takes decisions for him/herself after he/she has celebrated the 18th birthday. So, without that, all decisions concerning minors are done by their parents. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured. During the fieldwork, all forms of identification including respondents' names, addresses and telephone numbers were avoided. In addition, ethical approval (with ID number UCCIRB/CHLS/2020/09) to conduct this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

## Results

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of participants. The study participants composed of 54.8% females and 45.2% males. Close to half (48.6%) of the parents in the sample were between the ages of 40 and 49 years while roughly a quarter (24.9%) were in the 30-39

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Parents and Adolescents**

Variable	Parents (n=177) (%)	Adolescents (n=177) (%)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	45.2	45.2
Female	54.8	54.8
<b>Age group in years</b>		
30-39	24.9	
40-49	48.6	
50-59	26.6	
<b>Age in years</b>		
15		16.4
16		26.0
17		9.6
18		16.4
19		31.6
<b>Educational level</b>		
None	15.8	
Primary	44.1	1.1
JHS	15.3	29.4
Secondary	22.6	12.4
Tertiary	2.3	0.6
Still in school		56.5
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed	11.3	
Unemployed	38.4	
Self-employed	50.4	
<b>Religious affiliation</b>		
No religion	1.7	1.7
Christianity	81.9	81.9
Muslim	7.9	7.9
Traditionalist	8.5	8.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Fieldwork (2020).

**Table 2: Parental Attitudes**

Variable	Parents (n=177) %	Adolescents (n=177) %
<b>Parents' have permissive attitude in the home</b>		
Yes	1.7	11.9
No	98.3	88.1
<b>Parents disapprove child's bad behaviour</b>		
Yes	100.0	49.7
No		50.3
<b>How parents disapprove child's bad behaviour</b>		
Frown face, restrict child's activities and name calling	88.7	
Deny child's privileges	11.3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Fieldwork (2020).

age group. In terms of education, only 2.3% of the parents had tertiary education compared to 44% who completed primary school. Whereas self-employment was a dominant category of employment status constituting over half (50.3%) of the total participants, the employed category was the least (11.3%). Concerning religious affiliation, Christianity dominated (81.9%) and those without any religion affiliation were 1.7%.

Nearly, a third (31.6%) of the adolescents were 19 years old while about 10% were 17 years old (see Table 1). More

than half (56.5%) of the adolescents indicated that they were still in school. Out of the 20 parents who were identified as employed, about 5% earned more than GH¢1500.00.

### Home Structure

Instituting vibrant rules and punitive measures will enable adolescents make informed decisions and take responsibility for their choices. This is a significant step towards autonomy. Parents must avoid being overprotective (Shah, Szvedo & Allen, 2022). It is normal to have household rules and regulations to check for your children's safety. Therefore, to unravel the influences of home structure on adolescents' autonomy development, several questions were formulated on the various constructs of home structure (parental attitudes, parental child discipline and parental home monitoring) to solicit data from participants in the field to analyse the extent to which home structure exert influences on adolescents' autonomy development.

### Parental Attitudes

To answer the first research objective, participants were asked several questions which span through parents' permissive attitude, forms of parents' permissive attitude and parental disapproval of adolescents' bad behaviour. The results are presented in Table 2.

Assessment of parental permissive attitude in the home towards adolescents' autonomy development revealed that a majority of the participants (parents [98.3%] and adolescents [88.1%]) indicated that parents do not have permissive attitude towards adolescents' autonomy development in the home (see Table 2). On whether parents disapprove of child's autonomy development or not revealed that all parents and 49.7% of adolescents said that parents disapprove child's autonomy development. When parents were asked to indicate how they disapprove child's autonomy development in the home revealed that 88.7% of the parents frown their face, restrict child's activity and resort to name calling while 11.3% of the parents said that they deny child's privileges (see Table 2). Among the adolescents that said parents do not have permissive attitude towards their autonomy development but rather disapprove it, 72.9% of them reported same as their parents thus parents frown their face, restrict child's activity and resort to name calling while 27.1% of the adolescents said parents deny child's privileges. To unmask the influences

**Table 3: Adolescents Autonomy Development**

Variable	Adolescents (n=177)	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Being autonomous</b>		
Yes	142	80.2
No	35	19.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Fieldwork (2020).

**Table 4: Parental Child Discipline**

Variable	Parents (n=177) %	Adolescents (n=177) %
<b>Parents discipline child</b>		
Yes	100	100
<b>Type of child's discipline</b>		
Democratic	95.5	47.5
Undemocratic		52.5
Do not know	4.5	
<b>Why child discipline</b>		
For behavioural boundaries and self-control	60.5	63.3
For self-sufficiency and positive social conduct	39.5	36.7
Parents strictness can reduce child's bad behaviour		
Yes	100	50.3
No		49.7
<b>How often do child go to where forbidden</b>		
Often	9	32.2
Occasionally		67.8
Never	91	
<b>How easy do parents find child's whereabouts</b>		
Very easy	7.9	31.6
Easy	86.4	68.4
Difficult	5.6	
<b>Punishment type</b>		
Restrict child's activities and resort to name calling	63.8	63.8
Slapping/hitting and arguing	36.2	36.2
<b>Parents knowing their child's whereabouts</b>		
Yes	100	55.9
No		44.1
<b>Parents consistency in rules enforcement reduce child's bad behaviour</b>		
Yes	39	80.2
No	61	19.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork (2020).

HS has on adolescents' autonomy development, they were asked some specific questions regarding autonomy development. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 has revealed that majority (80.2%) of the adolescents are autonomous while 19.8% of the adolescents are not autonomous. Among the 142 adolescents that reported they are autonomous, all of them said parents respect their autonomy. Regarding how parents grant autonomy to adolescents revealed that 94.4% of the adolescents indicated that parents allow them to make

their own decisions and add their voices in the family decisions while 5.6% adolescents reported that parents offer encouragement on their own ideas and respect their individuality. Concerning whether adolescents trust the autonomy revealed that all the adolescents indicated they trust the autonomy. Regarding how adolescents perceive the autonomy revealed that all the adolescents stated that it is non-coercive.

### Parental Child Discipline

To answer the objective two, I analysed responses concerning parental child discipline which covered discipline at home, frequency of child visiting forbidden places, how easy it is for parents to find child's whereabouts, punish a child, type of punishment, parents' strictness about rules and parents' consistency in rules enforcement. The results are shown in Table 4.

When parents were asked to indicate whether they discipline a child or not, revealed that all the parents and all adolescents reported that parents discipline a child (see Table 4). Concerning the type of discipline parents' level on children revealed that 95.5% of parents and 47.5% of adolescents said it is democratic while 52.5% of adolescents reported that it is undemocratic. Results on why parents discipline a child revealed that 60.5% of parents and 63.3% of adolescents intimated that it is for behavioural boundaries and self-control (see Table 4). Responses on punishment type parents' level on adolescents revealed that 63.8% of both parents and adolescents said that parents restrict child's activities and resort to name calling (see table 4).

Responses on whether parents' strictness on rules enforcement can reduce child's autonomy development revealed that all parents and 50.3% of adolescents answered in affirmative (see Table 4). When parents were asked to indicate how often do children go to where they are forbidden to go revealed that 91.0% of parents said that children never go to where they are forbidden while 67.8% of adolescents reported that it is occasionally (see Table 4). When parents were asked to indicate whether they find it difficult to locate child whereabouts revealed that 86.4% of parents and 68.4% of adolescents indicated that it is easy while 7.9% of parents and 31.6% of adolescents reported that it is very easy (see Table 4).

Concerning whether parents always know their child's whereabouts revealed that all parents and 55.9% of adolescents answered in affirmative. When parents were asked if their consistency in rule enforcement can reduce child' autonomy development revealed that 39.0% of parents and 80.2% of adolescents answered in affirmative (see Table 4).

In Table 5 are Pearson's Chi-square test of

**Table 5: Relationship between Parental Child Discipline and Adolescents' Autonomy Development**

Variable	Autonomous	Not Autonomous	Total	Chi-square	P-value
			n(%)		
<b>Disciplinary type</b>				0.053	0.818
Democratic	81	19	84(100.0)		
Undemocratic	79.6	20.4	93(100.0)		
<b>Why child discipline</b>				0.202	0.653
For behavioural boundaries and self-control	81.3	18.8	112(100.0)		
For self-sufficiency and positive social conduct	78.5	21.5	65(100.0)		
<b>Parents' strictness in rules</b>				1.648	0.199
Yes	76.4	23.6	89(100.0)		
No	84.1	15.9	88(100.0)		
<b>How often do child go where forbidden</b>				1.215	0.27
Often	75.4	24.6	57(100.0)		
Occasionally	82.5	17.5	120(100.0)		
<b>How difficult it is for a parent to find child's whereabouts</b>				0.19	0.663
Very easy	82.1	17.9	56(100.0)		
Easy	79.3	20.7	121(100.0)		
<b>Punishment type</b>				0.279	0.597
Restrict child's activities and resort to name calling	81.4	18.6	113(100.0)		
Slapping/hitting and arguing	78.1	21.9	64(100.0)		
<b>Parents knowing their child's whereabouts</b>				4.493**	0.034
Yes	85.9	14.1	99(100.0)		
No	73.1	26.9	78(100.0)		
<b>Parents' consistency in rules enforcement</b>				10.753***	0.001
Yes	75.4	24.6	142(100.0)		
No	100	0	35(100.0)		

Note: Row percentages in parenthesis, Chi-square significant at (0.01)\*\*\*, (0.10)\*\*, (0.05)\*

Source: Fieldwork (2020).

independence results on parental child discipline and adolescents' autonomy development. This analysis was run to test the hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between parental child discipline and adolescents' autonomy development. Statistically significant relationships were not found between disciplinary type [p=0.818], why child discipline [p=0.653], parents' strictness in rules [p=0.199], how often do child visit where forbidden [0.270], how difficult it is for parents to find child's whereabouts [0.663], punishment type [0.597], and adolescents' autonomy development. However, statistically significant relationship was found between parents knowing their child's whereabouts [p=0.034] as well as parents' consistency in rules enforcement [0.001] and adolescents' autonomy development.

### Parental Home Monitoring

To analyse parental home monitoring, participants were asked some questions which covered parents' exercise

control in the home, measures of control, parents' habit to know child's whereabouts, parents set rules, parents' availability in the home and parents knowing people that matter to child. The results obtained are presented in Table 6.

Parents and children were asked to indicate whether parents exercise control in the home or not and the results revealed that all the participants both [parents and adolescents] answered in affirmative. On assessing measures of control, all the parents and 54.8% adolescents confirm that parents set number of rules for children and perceived strictness (see Table 6). Regarding parents' awareness of what child does revealed that all parents and 63.3% of adolescents responded in affirmative. Parents and children were asked to indicate if parents are strict in the home and the results indicated that all parents and 59.9% of adolescents answered in affirmative. In reference to whether parents are always available in the home revealed that all parents and 61.6% of adolescents answered in



affirmative (see Table 6). On whether parents endeavour to know their child's whereabouts revealed that all parents and 55.9% of adolescents indicated that parents are always presence in the home.

Presented in Table 7 are the Pearson's Chi-square test of independence results on parental child monitoring and adolescents' autonomy development. This analysis was run to test the hypothesis that there is no statistically

**Table 6:** Parental Home Monitoring

	Parents (n=177)	Adolescents (n=177)
Variable	%	%
<b>Exercise control</b>		
Yes	100	100
<b>Measure of control</b>		
Set number of rules for children and perceived strictness	100	54.8
Mount punishment for wrong doing		45.2
<b>Parents awareness on what child does</b>		
Yes	100	63.3
No		36.7
<b>Strictness</b>		
Yes	100	59.9
No		40.1
<b>Parents are always presence in the house</b>		
Yes	100	61.6
No		38.4
<b>Parents endeavour to know child's whereabouts</b>		
Yes	100	55.9
No		44.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork (2020).

**Table 7:** Relationship between Parental Child Monitoring and Adolescents' Autonomy Development.

Variable	Autonomous	Not autonomous	Total n(%)	Chi-square	P-value
<b>Measures of control</b>				5.493**	0.019
Set number rules for children and perceived strictness	86.6	13.4	97(100.0)		
Mount punishment for wrong doing	72.5	27.5	80(100.0)		
<b>Parents' awareness of what child does</b>				0.003	0.954
Yes	80.4	19.6	112(100.0)		
No	80.0	20.0	65(100.0)		
<b>Parents strictness</b>				2.419	0.120
Yes	76.4	23.6	106(100.0)		
No	85.9	14.1	71(100.0)		
<b>Parents availability in the home</b>				0.046	0.830
Yes	80.7	19.3	109(100.0)		
No	79.4	20.6	68(100.0)		
<b>Parents endeavour to know child's whereabouts</b>			0.048		0.827
Yes	80.8	19.2	99(100.0)		
No	79.5	20.5	78(100.0)		

Note: Row percentages in parenthesis, Chi-square significant at (0.01)\*\*\*, (0.05)\*\*, (0.10)\* Source: Fieldwork (2020).

Source: Fieldwork (2020).

significant relationship between parental child monitoring and adolescents' autonomy development. Statistically significant relationship was found between measures of control [p=0.019] and adolescents' autonomy development. However, there was no statistically significant relationships found between the other components namely; parents' awareness of what a child does [p=0.954], parents strictness [p=0.129], parents' availability in the home [p=0.830] as well as parents endeavour to know child's whereabouts [0.827] and adolescents' autonomy development.

## Discussion

The study attempted unravelling the extent to which structure of home makes adolescents' autonomous or not autonomous. Therefore, the discussion is based on the key selected variables studied under each dimension of structure of home (parental attitude, parental child discipline and parental home monitoring), the literature reviewed as well as the conceptual framework of the study.

### Parental Attitude

The assessment of influences of parental attitude on adolescents' autonomy development revealed that almost all the participants demonstrated utmost fairness by confirming that parents do not have permissive attitude towards adolescents' autonomy development in the home. It was revealed that parents endeavour to disapprove child's autonomy development in the home. These findings have revealed that in the home parents do not condone any unnecessary decisions adolescents often make all in the name of wanting to be autonomous so that, they can take charge of their life and things they perceive to be personal to them. Parents refuting adolescents' autonomy development could mean that they have realised that adolescents need guidance as they transition through adolescence stage. Hence, if they are not being managed and controlled, it might lead them to encounter a detrimental consequence



in the long run. It could also mean that parents perceive that if adolescents get enough freedom during childhood, they can abuse it and might also become vagabond or stubborn and if they do, it might not enable them realise their dreams. With this in mind, parents might endeavour to keep eye on whatever adolescents do in the home just to ensure that they do not deviate from the norms of the society to become irresponsible adulthood in the future. This finding is in line with a study by Nyabuto (2018) that permissive parenting style does not yield autonomous adolescents, while uninvolved parenting has an influence on adolescent autonomy.

Both parents and adolescents graciously cited that parents disapprove adolescents' autonomy development by frowning their face, restricting their activities and resort to name calling. What this implies is that maybe parents might have witnessed a child who was autonomous during his or her adolescence days and could not live to realise his or her dreams due to the lack of parental control over his or her life which eventually made him or her to be irresponsible. It could also be that parents perceive that adolescent stage is where children need guidance and a bit of freedom but mostly need to be monitored or controlled. Therefore, knowing what the child does and people that matter in his or her life could help the child to be able to realise his or her dreams. Parents could be sure that the mode through which they disapprove their children's autonomy development could work best for them which is why they resort to it. This finding confirms a study by Shah, Szewedo and Allen (2023) that different types of behaviour can be used by parents to restrict their child's autonomy development in the home. Statistically significant relationship was not found between parental attitude and adolescents' autonomy development. Therefore, the null hypothesis was confirmed.

### Parental Child Discipline

In trying to ascertain the influences parental child discipline has on adolescents' autonomy development brought to the fore that all the participants are of the view that parents discipline adolescents in the home. From parents view point the type of discipline parents institute on adolescents is democratic. These findings have demonstrated that parents might want the best for their children and that do not want them to go wayward. Therefore, they endeavour to offer guidance, counseling and appropriate help these adolescents might need to advance smoothly in the adolescence period without diverting from the recommended norms embraced by the members of the society. It could also mean that parents know that though inasmuch as adolescents require some sort of autonomy, they still need responsive and supportive relationships with their families to navigate the adolescence time successfully. This finding corroborates to a study by Ward, Grogan-Kaylor,

Ma, Pace and Lee (2023) that verbal reasoning and shouting were the most common parental discipline behaviours towards young children. Hence, children experience physical punishment in the home. However, the employment of democratic lines of discipline by parents could probably suggest that they want to demonstrate that they are fair and transparent in their disciplinary actions.

The study revealed that all parents are strict in their homes from parents view point where most of them discipline children for behavioural boundaries and self-control purposes. Parents strictness in the home could reflect that maybe they are controlling parents and that they seek to manage adolescent behaviour closely and when they backslide, they can shame and punish them accordingly. Almost all the parents intimated that children never go where they are warned not to go and cited that they always find it easy to locate the whereabouts of these children from parents view point. This might be possible because of parents' strictness in the home. Parents' strictness could deter children from living home without making their parents know where they are going to. It could also mean that if children go contrarily to parents' orders in the home, they are shamed and denied of their privileges. However, it might also mean that parents do not condone nonsense in their lives. This finding is in line with a study by Lanjekar, Joshi, Lanjekar and Wagh (2022) that parenting is necessary for the regulation of emotions and behaviours of adolescents in the home.

The study revealed restrict child's activities and resort to name calling as the type of punishment parents' level on children whenever, they violate the rules and regulations governing the home. It could be that this punishment type work well for parents that might be the reason they do adopt it. From child view point, parents' consistency in rules enforcement in the home could reduce their autonomy development. This probably reflects that children might be aspiring for autonomous therefore, they view parents' consistency in rules enforcement as a threat to their autonomy development. This could instigate adolescents to probably do the unthinkable in the home. Again, it could be that parents' consistency in rules enforcement coerce adolescents and that they persist to pursue autonomy which normally lead them to the opposite direction intended by adults. This finding is in line with a study by Effective Discipline for Children (2004) that harsh discipline such as humiliation (verbal abuse, shouting, name-calling) will also make it hard for the child to respect and trust the parent. It also confirms a study by Wang and Kenny (2014) that harsh verbal discipline can vary in severity, ranging from yelling and shouting at a child to using words to humiliate him or her.

Statistically significant relationship was found between

parental child discipline and adolescents' autonomy development. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not confirmed. This meant that when parents make the conscious effort to discipline adolescents, it goes a long way to make adolescents to be self-determined. For instance, the Chi-square coefficient of parents knowing their child's whereabouts is 4.5 which explains more of adolescents being autonomous in the home. That is, the more and more parents discipline adolescents, it is the more that they develop autonomy. Moreover, Chi-square coefficient of parents' consistency in rules enforcement which is 10.8 also explains more of adolescents' autonomy development. This finding has revealed that when parents make conscious effort in ensuring rules and regulations in the home help adolescents to develop autonomy.

### Parental Home Monitoring

In analysing parental home monitoring influences on adolescents' autonomy development unearthed that all the participants graciously cited that parents exercise control in the home. Parents set number of rules for children and perceived strictness was endorsed by parents as the measure of control in the home. Parents might exercise control in the home probably because they might believe that a lawlessness home is likely to breed irresponsible adolescents and that parents do not want to have such irresponsible adolescents in the home. The number of rules parents set could probably mean that they want to instill fear in adolescents so that, they can shield them from aspiring for autonomy or self-determined where they will in return flout over parents' orders in the home. This finding is in line with a study by González-Cámara, Osorio and Reparaz (2019) that measure behavioral control evaluate the extent to which parents set limits and rules for their children in the home.

The study revealed that parents' presence in the home, their strictness, knowing child's whereabouts in the home and being aware of what child does could reduce adolescents' autonomy development from parents view point. The reason for these findings could be that parents have weighed adolescents to know that their presence, strictness, knowing child's whereabouts and their awareness of what child's does instill fear in them and that deter them from thinking of being claiming to be autonomous. It could also mean that parents do not want their children to even think of becoming autonomous. This finding is in line with a study by Kapetanovic and Boson (2022) that parental knowledge of adolescents' whereabouts is central for healthy adolescent development.

Statistically significant relationship was found between parental home monitoring and adolescents' autonomy development. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not

accepted. Per the Chi-square result, it could be concluded that, the more parents monitor adolescents in the home, it is the more and more adolescents develop autonomy in the home. Moreover, the Chi-square coefficient (5.5) of measure of control stipulates that as parents set number of rules for children and being strict as well as mounting punishment on adolescents for wrong doing in the home in return make adolescents to develop autonomy.

### Conclusions

Participants have demonstrated an in-depth knowledge about home structure. This study represents a cross-section of parent-child dyad in the Assin South District, Ghana. It sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of how home structure influences adolescents' autonomy development in the Assin South District, Ghana. The study drew much on self-determined theory to serve as a justification and foundation to the purposes of the study.

Two out of the three null hypotheses suggesting statistically significant relationships between parental child discipline as well as parental home structure and adolescents' autonomy development were not confirmed. Association was not found between parental attitude and adolescents' autonomy development therefore the null hypothesis was accepted. Unfortunately, none of the binary logistic regression analysis conducted could produce significant result. Parents in Assin South District could be a bit liberal not overprotective over adolescents to enable them aspire for autonomy.

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### Declaration

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval (with ID number UCCIRB/CHLS/2020/09) to carry out the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

**Consent to participate in the Study:** In the field, verbal consent was sought before a participant could take part in the study.

**Consent to Publish:** Participants were informed that the study was strictly academic and that the results would be published for the purposes of contributing to building academic literature.

**Competing Interests:** No competing interest existed.

**Funding:** The study was self-funded

**Availability of Data and Materials:** The data is only available to the author hence it was a primary data.

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