

The Role of Parenting Styles in Shaping Family Health Behaviors: Young Adult's Perspectives

Vincy Joseph^{1*}, Dr. Suphala S. Kotian²

ABSTRACT

The influence of parenting styles on the development of family health behaviors is a topic of increasing interest in contemporary research. Parenting styles, characterized as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful, play a significant role in shaping the health habits and attitudes of children and, consequently, the overall well-being of the family unit. This study explored the role of parenting styles in shaping family health behaviors among young adults. A qualitative approach was used, with data collected from 40 young adults from Mangalore through in-depth interview. Participants' reflections on their upbringing, family dynamics, young adults' current health behaviors and their perceptions of how their parents' parenting styles influenced their health behaviors are analyzed in-depth. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that young adults' perceptions of their parents' parenting styles were associated with their own health behaviors. The findings of this study suggest that parenting styles can have a significant impact on young adults' health behaviors. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions and educational programs that empower parents to adopt effective, health-promoting parenting styles. Ultimately, this research contributes to a holistic understanding of the complex dynamics within families and their impact on the promotion of healthy behaviors among adolescents.

Keywords: *Family, Parenting Styles, Young Adults, Health Behaviours, Thematic Analysis*

As a social unit, the family has a significant impact on how people develop over their lifetimes, influencing their values, beliefs, and behaviors. Academics, medical professionals, and policymakers have all recently begun to pay more attention to the effects of family dynamics on health behaviors. Parenting practices stand out as a key component in determining how someone views their own health and well-being within the complex web of family influences [1]. With a focus on the perspectives of young adults who have reached a critical point in their life progress, this study aims to understand the complex interaction between parenting practices and family health habits. Given their significant effects on both individual and society well-being, the importance of family health habits cannot be denied. Health behaviors, which include food choices, family meals, physical activity patterns, substance use, and adherence to medical advice, have a substantial role in

¹Research Scholar, Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities, Srinivas University, Mangalore, Karnataka.
Orcid Id: 0000-0001-8196-2743

²Research Professor, Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities, Srinivas University, Mangalore, India.
Orcid Id: 0000-0002-5747-4982

*Corresponding Author

Received: January 10, 2024; Revision Received: February 08, 2024; Accepted: February 12, 2024

The Role of Parenting Styles in Shaping Family Health Behaviors: Young Adult's Perspectives

the development of a number of health disorders [2]. The early years of life are critical for the creation of healthy behavior since these patterns, when instilled during childhood and adolescence, can last into adulthood [3]. In this setting, parents are seen as the main promoters and have a significant impact on the decisions that their young children make about their health.

The four primary parenting styles, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful are commonly recognized. Each parenting style is distinguished by a special blend of warmth, responsiveness, expectations, and disciplinary methods. Parents' use of these methods can have a big impact on how children develop, particularly how they view and act with regards to their health. The authoritative parenting approach, which is marked by warmth, support, transparent communication, and realistic expectations, has a tendency to promote a good environment where kids feel cherished and guided [4]. On the other hand, authoritarian parenting places a focus on rigid regulations, high expectations, and little emotional support [5]. Greater autonomy is permitted under permissive parenting, which is characterized by indulgence and forbearance, but may lack structure and rules [6]. Finally, the lack of interest in a child's life, neglect, and indifference are characteristics of a negligent parenting style [7].

Research evidences reveal that the relationship between parenting style and behavior regarding food shows that an authoritarian parenting style is linked to forcing children to eat and having restrictive eating habits. Monitoring a child's food intake by parents was linked to authoritative parenting. Monitoring of a child's nutritional intake was inversely connected to a permissive parenting style [8]. According to Fisher and Birch (2002) [9], excessive parental food restriction, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, family income, and mother's education were all strongly linked to children's health-related behaviors [10]. According to Faith et al. (2004) [11], parenting style is also linked to greater overall child weight. A child's food intake will decrease and their weight percentile status will decrease as a result of parental pressure to eat, according to research by Galloway et al. (2006) [12]. A child's nutritional intake and eating habits can be influenced by parental guidance during the formative years [13, 14]. Negligent disciplinary methods were linked to a variety of health problems [15].

In comparison to permissive parents, authoritative parents were more likely to keep an eye on their children's snacking habits and less likely to reward excellent behavior with treats. Compared to authoritarian parents, permissive parents were less likely to insist their children clean their teeth before bed or to do so completely when they were busy or fatigued. A higher frequency of skipping cleaning teeth before night substantially predicted a permissive parenting style [16].

Stronger parenting styles and regular family dinners were also linked to better mental health, less depressive symptoms, decreased risk of overeating, and specific sexual behaviors in children [17]. According to studies conducted by Davids, E. L., and Roman, N. V. (2014) [18], authoritative parenting practices and physical exercise are positively correlated. Parental feeding patterns are correlated with general parenting approaches. While authoritative parenting is associated with modelling, supervision, and beliefs of responsibility, low modelling is permissive in nature. Authoritarian parenting is associated with restriction and pressure to eat [19].

The Role of Parenting Styles in Shaping Family Health Behaviors: Young Adult's Perspectives

There is a growing understanding of how important these styles are in influencing health behaviors in the context of the family. The opinions of young adults who have experienced these parenting methods and are currently navigating their own health journeys, however, have received less attention. By studying the effect of parenting styles in influencing family health behaviors from the perspective of young people, this research aims to close the gap in the body of existing literature.

It's important to comprehend how various parenting philosophies affect family members' health behaviors for a number of reasons. It first provides insights into the ways in which parenting styles affect decisions about one's health, assisting in the creation of focused interventions and support systems. Second, it offers a comprehensive understanding of the potential long-term effects of different parenting philosophies on outcomes for family health. Finally, by shining light on the ways that family surroundings can either encourage or hinder the adoption of healthier lifestyles, our research adds to the larger conversation on family dynamics and health habits. A qualitative approach is used in this to explore the complex connection between parenting practices and family health habits.

METHOD

The primary objective is to investigate how parenting styles influence the health behaviors of young adults within a family context. This research incorporates a qualitative research design, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Participants

A sample of 40 young adults aged between 18-25 years is selected through random sampling from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and family structures from Mangalore. Participants are informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, and they provide written consent to participate.

Research instruments and data collection:

Parenting styles is identified using a screening tool of parenting style questionnaire to categorize participants' perceived parenting styles. Socio- demographic Information is gathered using a survey questionnaire to gather demographic data including age, gender, education, and family structure.

Data Collection:

In-depth Interviews are conducted using Semi-structured interview schedule consisting of open-ended questions. Open-ended questionnaire is to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding how their parents' parenting styles influenced their health behaviors. It includes questions that explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to parenting styles and health behaviors. Thematic Analysis is used to analyse the qualitative data using thematic coding to identify common themes and patterns in participants' responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic Information of Young Adults

No	Demographic Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Age (years)		
	18-19	13	32.5
	19-20	7	17.5
	20-21	5	12.5
	21-23	12	30
	23-25	3	7.5
2	Gender		
	Male	16	40
	female	24	60
3	Education Level		
	Degree	25	62.5
	P. G	15	37.5
4	Type of family		
	Nuclear	34	85
	Joint	6	15
5	Parenting styles		
	Authoritative	17	42.5
	Authoritarian	11	27.5
	Permissive	8	20
	Neglectful	4	10

Table 2: Excerpts from Interviews

Participant ID	Quotes
Respondent 1	"We had family dinners every night, and my parents encouraged healthy eating." Now I do self-cooking.
R2	"My mom was super strict about what we ate. No junk food was allowed in the house, and she monitored every meal. It was frustrating at times, and when I went to college, I definitely indulged in all the foods I wasn't allowed to have. As for exercise, she didn't push us, but I did feel like I had to compensate for the strict diet by working out excessively."
R3	"My parents were pretty laid back about food. We had access to snacks, and they rarely cooked. I think I developed a taste for convenience foods early on. Exercise wasn't a priority either; it was more about watching TV or playing video games. Now that I'm older, I realize it might have been better if they'd been more involved in teaching us about healthy choices."
R4	"My parents were really supportive but also set clear rules. They taught us the importance of balanced meals and would always encourage us to try new vegetables. Family dinners were a big thing, and it was during those times that we discussed our day and healthy eating. As a result, I appreciate a nutritious diet and make an effort to maintain it. They also enrolled me in various sports activities, and I still enjoy staying active today."
R5	My parents were always busy with work, so they didn't pay much attention to what we ate or if we exercised. We often had takeout or microwave meals because no one had time to cook. Exercise was never encouraged, and I didn't have any role models for physical activity. Looking back, it's clear that our family's health wasn't a priority."

Table 3: Parenting Styles and Health Behavior Influences

Parenting Style	Influence on Diet	Influence on Exercise
Authoritative	Open communication, Encourages balanced diet	Promotes active lifestyle
Authoritarian	Lack of communication and choices, Imposes strict dietary rules	May lead to unhealthy choices exercise, May discourage exercise
Permissive	Confusion about dietary choices Allows unhealthy choices	May not prioritize exercise
Neglectful	Lack of communication, Lack of dietary guidance	Lack of exercise guidance

DISCUSSION

The findings from this qualitative study, based on in-depth interviews with 40 young adults, shed light on the significant influence of parenting styles on family health behaviors. The research explored how different parenting styles impact diet and exercise habits, as well as the role of communication within the family dynamic. The insights gleaned from participant narratives provide valuable perspectives on the nuanced relationships between parenting styles and health behaviors.

Impact of Parenting Styles on Health Behaviors

The study revealed that parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping family health behaviors. Participants' experiences varied significantly depending on the parenting style they grew up with. For instance, those raised in authoritative households emphasized the positive impact of balanced meals and active lifestyles, good communication on healthy meals and food habits, underscoring the importance of supportive yet structured parenting. Even now parents are concerned about healthy food and habits of these young adults.

Conversely, participants from authoritarian households often described a sense of rebellion and indulgence in unhealthy eating habits, which they attributed to the strict dietary rules imposed by their parents. When they were at home with parents, they obeyed parents. But ones they are out of the house for study, they do not follow much to the healthy food habits and life styles. Similarly, permissive parenting was associated with a preference for convenience foods and limited emphasis on exercise. Neglectful parenting was linked to a lack of guidance in both diet and exercise, with participants recalling minimal parental involvement in these aspects of their lives.

- **Authoritative:** This parenting style is characterized by setting clear rules and boundaries while being supportive and responsive to the child's needs. Subthemes might include the impact of authoritative parenting on healthy eating habits and exercise routines.
- **Authoritarian:** Authoritarian parenting is marked by strict rules and control. Subthemes could explore how authoritarian parenting may lead to specific dietary rules and restrictions and whether it discourages or encourages exercise.
- **Permissive:** Permissive parenting allows for greater autonomy and fewer restrictions. Subthemes might delve into how permissive parenting influences food choices and whether it emphasizes or neglects exercise.
- **Neglectful:** Neglectful parenting involves a lack of involvement or guidance. Subthemes could examine how neglectful parenting affects diet, exercise, or the lack thereof in the family.

The Role of Parenting Styles in Shaping Family Health Behaviors: Young Adult's Perspectives

Communication and its Role in the family

Communication emerged as a pivotal factor in shaping health behaviors within the family. The impact of health and lifestyle choices depends on how parents communicate about healthy food habits and child's health behaviors. Families characterized by open and honest communication tended to encourage healthy eating habits and exercise. These families provided an environment where young adults felt comfortable discussing nutrition and physical activity, fostering a positive outlook on these aspects of their lives.

Conversely, a lack of communication often led to unhealthy dietary choices and a lack of motivation for exercise. Young adults in these families described making dietary decisions without guidance or discussion, often resulting in unhealthy habits. Additionally, conflicting messages about health behaviors within the family contributed to confusion and ambivalence among participants, particularly regarding diet and exercise, [21].

This subtheme could focus on the role of communication within the family, Family meals: Examine how family meal patterns and dynamics, such as the frequency of shared meals and the types of meals served, influence diet and exercise behaviors within the family.

Influence on Diet

Healthy eating habits: This subtheme could explore how different parenting styles contribute to the development of healthy eating habits, including the types of foods consumed, portion sizes, and attitudes towards nutrition.

Unhealthy eating habits: Here, you might investigate how specific parenting styles may lead to unhealthy dietary choices, such as excessive consumption of processed foods, sugary snacks, or irregular meal patterns.

Influence on Exercise

Active lifestyle: Explore how parenting styles can encourage or discourage an active lifestyle, including participation in sports, physical activities, and exercise routines.

Sedentary lifestyle: Investigate whether certain parenting styles contribute to a sedentary lifestyle, characterized by minimal physical activity, prolonged screen time, and lack of interest in exercise.

Family meals provide an opportunity for strengthening the bonding and communication between family members, and facilitates parental monitoring and modelling on a regular basis. Across the lifespan, eating with others, particularly family, is associated with healthier dietary outcomes. Among children and adolescents, these findings appear to be consistent for both boys and girls according the study by Fulkerson, J. A., et al (2014), [22].

Adolescents/young adults reporting high family functioning and more positive relationships with their parents reported better weight-related behaviors in the study by Haines, J., et al (2016), [23].

CONCLUSION

This research study, based on interviews with 40 young adults, underscores the profound impact of parenting styles on family health behaviors. It highlights the varying experiences of young adults raised under different parenting styles, ranging from authoritative to

The Role of Parenting Styles in Shaping Family Health Behaviors: Young Adult's Perspectives

authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. The findings demonstrate that parenting styles not only influence diet and exercise habits but also shape attitudes and perceptions related to health.

Moreover, communication within the family emerged as a critical factor influencing health behaviors. Families characterized by open and honest communication tended to foster healthier habits, while a lack of communication or conflicting messages often led to less favorable outcomes.

The implications of this study are significant for both parents and healthcare professionals. Understanding the role of parenting styles and effective communication in promoting healthy behaviors can guide parents in shaping a positive and supportive environment for their children's well-being. Furthermore, healthcare practitioners can use these insights to tailor interventions and guidance to families with different parenting dynamics.

REFERENCES

- Bruck, Z., Ignatjeva, S., Sianko, N., & Volosnikova, L. (2021). Does age Matter? Life Satisfaction and Subjective Well-Being among Children Aged 10 and 12 in Russia. *Population Review*, 60(1). [Google Scholar](#)
- Middleton, K. R., Anton, S. D., & Perri, M. G. (2013). Long-term adherence to health behavior change. *American journal of lifestyle medicine*, 7(6), 395-404. [Google Scholar](#)
- Tickell, C. (2011). The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning. *An independent report on the early years foundation stage to Her Majesty's Government media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/F/The%20Early%20Years%20Foundations%20for%20life%20health%20and%20learning.pdf (17.12. 2011)*. [Google Scholar](#)
- Guyer, A. E., Jarcho, J. M., Pérez-Edgar, K., Degnan, K. A., Pine, D. S., Fox, N. A., & Nelson, E. E. (2015). Temperament and parenting styles in early childhood differentially influence neural response to peer evaluation in adolescence. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, 43(1), 863-874. [Google Scholar](#)
- Davids, E. L., Roman, N. V., & Leach, L. (2017). The link between parenting approaches and health behavior: A systematic review. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 27(6), 589-608. [Google Scholar](#)
- Newman, K., Harrison, L., Dashiff, C., & Davies, S. (2008). Relationships between parenting styles and risk behaviors in adolescent health: an integrative literature review. *Revista latino-americana de enfermagem*, 16, 142-150. [Google Scholar](#)
- Davids, E. L., Roman, N. V., & Leach, L. (2015). The effect of family structure on decision making, parenting styles and healthy lifestyle behaviour of adolescents in rural South Africa. *African Journal for Physical Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 21(3.2), 953-967. [Google Scholar](#)
- Collins, C., Duncanson, K., & Burrows, T. (2014). A systematic review investigating associations between parenting style and child feeding behaviours. *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, 27(6), 557-568. [Google Scholar](#)
- Fisher, J.O. & Birch, L.L. (2002) Eating in the absence of hunger and overweight in girls from 5 to 7 year of age. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 76(2), 226–231. [Google Scholar](#)
- Park, Hyunjeong PhD; Walton-Moss, Benita DNS. (2012). Parenting Style, Parenting Stress, and Children's Health-Related Behaviors. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics* 33(6). 495-503, [Google Scholar](#)

The Role of Parenting Styles in Shaping Family Health Behaviors: Young Adult's Perspectives

- Faith, M.S., Berkowitz, R.I., Stallings, V.A., Kerns, J., Storey, M. & Stunkard, A.J. (2004) Parental feeding attitudes and styles and child body mass index: prospective analysis of a gene–environment interaction. *Pediatrics* 114(1), 429–436. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Galloway, A.T., Fiorito, L.M., Francisc, L.A. & Birch, L.L. (2006) ‘Finish your soup’: counterproductive effects of pressuring children to eat on intake and affect. *Appetite* 46 (1), 318–323. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Campbell, K.J., Crawford, D.A. & Ball, K. (2006) Family food environment and dietary behaviors likely to promote fatness in 5–6 year-old children. *Int. J. Obesity*. 30(1), 1272–1280. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Campbell, K.J., Crawford, D.A., Salmon, J., Carver, A., Garnett, S.P. & Baur, L.A. (2007) Associations between the home food environment and obesity- promoting eating behaviors in adolescence. *Obesity* 15(1), 719–730. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Ko, M. Y., Rosenberg, S. M., Meza, B. P., Dudovitz, R. N., Dosanjh, K. K., & Wong, M. D. (2023). Perceptions of School Climate Shape Adolescent Health Behavior: A Longitudinal Multi school Study. *Journal of School Health*, 93(6), 475-484. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Quek, S. J., Sim, Y. F., Lai, B., Lim, W., & Hong, C. H. (2021). The effect of parenting styles on enforcement of oral health behaviours in children. *European Archives of Paediatric Dentistry*, 22(4), 83-92. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Chen, Y., Haines, J., Charlton, B. M., & VanderWeele, T. J. (2019). Positive parenting improves multiple aspects of health and well-being in young adulthood. *Nature human behaviour*, 3(7), 684-691. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Davids, E. L., & Roman, N. V. (2014). A systematic review of the relationship between parenting styles and children's physical activity. *African Journal for Physical Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 20(2), 228-246. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Hubbs-Tait, L., Kennedy, T. S., Page, M. C., Topham, G. L., & Harrist, A. W. (2008). Parental feeding practices predict authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles. *Journal of the American dietetic association*, 108(7), 1154-1161. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Peng, B., Hu, N., Yu, H., Xiao, H., & Luo, J. (2021). Parenting Style and Adolescent Mental Health: The Chain Mediating Effects of Self-Esteem and Psychological Inflexibility. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12(1), 1-11. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Johnson, S. L., Clark, L., Goree, K., O'Connor, M., & Zimmer, L. M. (2008). Healthcare providers' perceptions of the factors contributing to infant obesity in a low-income Mexican American community. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, 13(3), 180-190. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Fulkerson, J. A., Larson, N., Horning, M., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2014). A review of associations between family or shared meal frequency and dietary and weight status outcomes across the lifespan. *Journal of Nutrition Education and behavior*, 46(1), 2-19. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]
- Haines, J., Rifas-Shiman, S. L., Horton, N. J., Kleinman, K., Bauer, K. W., Davison, K. K., ... & Gillman, M. W. (2016). Family functioning and quality of parent-adolescent relationship: cross-sectional associations with adolescent weight related behaviors and weight status. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 13(1), 1-12. [Google Scholar](#)[↗]

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Joseph, V. & Kotian, S.S. (2024). The Role of Parenting Styles in Shaping Family Health Behaviors: Young Adult's Perspectives. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(1), 743-751. DIP:18.01.070.20241201, DOI:10.25215/1201.070