

## The Impact of Parenting Styles on Young Adults' Self-Esteem: An Exploratory Study

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### ABSTRACT

This exploratory study investigated the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem among 150 young adults (18–25 years) using the PAQ and RSES. Surprisingly, authoritative parenting negatively correlated with self-esteem ( $r = -0.188$ ,  $p = 0.021$ ), while authoritarian and permissive styles showed weak, non-significant associations. Notably, high scorers in all parenting styles reported significantly higher self-esteem ( $p < 0.001$ ). These unexpected results suggest cultural or contextual influences. Limitations include self-reporting and cross-sectional design; future studies should explore causal links using diverse, longitudinal samples.

**Keywords:** *self-esteem, parenting styles, authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, young adults, cultural influences*

Parenting plays a pivotal role in shaping a child's emotional, social, and psychological development. One crucial aspect of this is self-esteem, which impacts overall well-being, academic success, relationships, and resilience (Baumrind, 1991). Defined as an individual's assessment of self-worth, self-esteem is heavily influenced by early family interactions, emotional support, and autonomy (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Diana Baumrind (1967) introduced three parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—based on responsiveness and control. Maccoby and Martin (1983) later added a fourth: neglectful parenting. These styles differ in warmth, discipline, and expectations, each of which affects children's psychological outcomes, especially self-esteem.

This study investigates how parenting styles shape self-esteem, with attention to cultural and contextual variations (Pinquart, 2017). It draws from Baumrind's Parenting Styles Theory, Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Theory, and Bowlby's Attachment Theory to explore the behavioral and emotional mechanisms underlying self-worth development.

A. Baumrind's Parenting Styles Theory:

- Authoritative: High warmth & control; promotes high self-esteem.

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## The Impact of Parenting Styles on Young Adults' Self-Esteem: An Exploratory Study

- Authoritarian: High control, low warmth; linked to low self-worth.
  - Permissive: High warmth, low control; may cause unstable self-esteem.
  - Neglectful: Low warmth & control; leads to poor self-concept (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).
- B. Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Theory (1965):  
Self-esteem includes global and domain-specific evaluations. Positive reinforcement, autonomy, and emotional support enhance self-worth. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is a key measurement tool.
- C. Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969):  
Early emotional bonds with caregivers shape self-concept. Secure attachment fosters resilience and high self-esteem, while insecure attachment often results from authoritarian or neglectful parenting and is linked to emotional instability.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Chandam & Yadava (2024)** examine the impact of different parenting styles—authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful—on young adults' self-esteem and emotion regulation. Data from 200 participants aged 18-25 revealed that authoritative parenting boosts self-esteem and emotional regulation, while neglectful parenting has the opposite effect. Permissive parenting, though warm, leads to difficulties in self-control. The study highlights the importance of culturally tailored parenting programs that support authoritative practices.

**Deshmukh (2024)** examined the link between perceived parenting styles (autonomy support, participation, warmth) and self-esteem in young adults (18-25). Results from 180 participants indicated that females perceived higher levels of support and warmth from both parents, especially from mothers. However, parenting styles were not significantly associated with self-esteem, suggesting other factors may play a greater role. The study highlights gender differences in parenting perceptions and calls for further research using longitudinal methods.

**Gul et al. (2024)** examined the link between parenting styles and self-esteem in medical students, considering age and gender. A survey of 230 students was conducted using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Parental Authority Questionnaire-Short Version. Results showed that 60% of participants had an authoritative parenting style, which was positively linked to higher self-esteem. Females with authoritative parenting and males with authoritarian or permissive parenting had higher self-esteem. The study highlights the importance of open communication and parental involvement.

**Ismail et al. (2024)** found that authoritative parenting promotes prosocial behavior, while authoritarian and permissive styles have a negative impact. Self-esteem was the most significant predictor, with psychological flexibility also enhancing prosocial behavior. These findings highlight the role of positive parenting and psychological well-being in fostering supportive social environments.

**Lazaro et al. (2024)** examined how permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting styles influenced self-esteem stability among Lyceum Northwestern University tourism students. Data from 36 respondents were gathered using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991) and Self-Esteem Stability Scale (Altmann & Roth, 2018). A Chi-Square Test showed no significant link between parenting styles and self-esteem stability, resulting in the null hypothesis not being rejected. The study suggests that future research with larger, more diverse populations could further explore this relationship.

## The Impact of Parenting Styles on Young Adults' Self-Esteem: An Exploratory Study

**Talwar (2024)** explores how parenting approaches affect the self-esteem of young adults aged 18-25, with a sample of 30 individuals (15 males, 15 females). Using the Parenting Style Scale, results show that authoritative parenting, which balances support and expectations, positively impacts self-esteem. In contrast, authoritarian parenting leads to restricted decision-making, while permissive parenting lacks involvement. Authoritative parenting emerged as the most beneficial for fostering strong self-esteem.

**Aastha (2023)** found that parenting techniques significantly impact young adults' self-esteem and optimism, both of which are linked to psychological well-being. The study, involving 100 young adults aged 18-25, showed that authoritative parenting promotes higher optimism and self-esteem, while authoritarian parenting negatively affects both. These findings suggest that understanding parenting styles can help create a supportive environment for healthy psychological development during the transition to adulthood.

**Guðjónsdóttir (2023)** found that among 344 Icelandic university students, authoritative parenting correlated with higher self-esteem, while permissive parenting was linked to lower self-esteem; gender differences were not significant.

**Usman and Tufail (2023)**, studying 100 young adults, reported that authoritarian parenting was associated with higher self-esteem and lower social anxiety, especially in men, while permissive styles showed opposing, less significant trends.

**Jannah et al. (2022)** studied the impact of parenting styles on adolescent depression, with self-esteem as a mediator. The research, conducted in Bekasi, Indonesia with 555 high school students, found that authoritative parenting lowers depression, while authoritarian and permissive styles increase it. Self-esteem moderated the effects of parenting styles on depression, highlighting the importance of positive parenting and self-esteem development in reducing adolescent depression.

**Vasudeva (2022)** examined the effect of parenting methods on adolescent self-esteem, focusing on gender differences. The study of 160 participants found that permissive parenting improved self-esteem, while authoritative parenting led to lower self-esteem, with notable gender differences.

**Martinez et al. (2021)** explored how parental socialization—acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition—affects adolescent adjustment, mediated by family self-esteem. Involving 848 Spanish teenagers, the study revealed that family self-esteem influences adolescent outcomes, with acceptance/involvement improving adjustment and strictness/imposition having a negative effect.

**Altay et al. (2020)** studied the link between self-esteem and perceived parenting styles in 55 teenagers (ages 12-18) receiving cancer treatment. Despite 85.5% showing strong self-esteem, no significant connection was found between parenting styles (democratic vs. permissive) and self-esteem ( $p > 0.05$ ). The study emphasizes the need for better understanding of factors affecting adolescents' well-being.

**Batool (2020)** explored the impact of positive parenting on academic performance in 502 undergraduate students. Using structural equation modeling, the study found that positive parenting directly ( $\beta = .27$ ) and indirectly ( $\beta = .08$ ) influenced academic achievement by boosting self-esteem and reducing procrastination.

## The Impact of Parenting Styles on Young Adults' Self-Esteem: An Exploratory Study

**Gramaje et al. (2020)** showed that adolescents with aggressive behavior fared worst overall, while those raised under indulgent or authoritative parenting—characterized by warmth rather than strictness—had better self-esteem and adjustment than those with authoritarian or neglectful parents.

**Szkody et al. (2020)** found that authoritative mothering in particular boosted girls' self-esteem and lowered their risk of psychiatric problems, highlighting parenting's role in long-term female well-being.

In Ibadan, **Aremu et al. (2018)** reported that only about 36–39% of parents used an authoritative (flexible) style and that greater parental flexibility was linked to higher teen self-esteem, though the sample's average Rosenberg score (24.0) suggested generally lower self-esteem.

**Bee (2017)** explored the link between parenting styles and self-esteem across three generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Results showed that Baby Boomers exhibited more authoritarian styles, while Generation Y showed more permissiveness and lower self-esteem. Generation X displayed no significant shifts in parenting style or self-esteem.

**Hirata & Kamakura (2017)**: This study on 329 Japanese students found that authoritative parenting positively affected personal growth initiative (PGI) and self-esteem, while authoritarian and permissive parenting had minimal impact.

**Luk, et al. (2016)**: Research with 419 college students showed that authoritative parenting protected against bullying and depression by boosting self-esteem, while authoritarian and permissive styles led to increased bullying and alcohol use.

**Warimu, et al. (2016)**: In Kenya, a study of 200 students showed that parental involvement improved self-esteem, suggesting that engaging with teens' psychological needs could enhance self-esteem.

**Jin & Mofrad (2015)**: In Malaysia, research with 400 emerging adults indicated that overprotective parenting linked to depression, with self-esteem partially mediating this effect. **Newman, et al. (2015)**: A cross-cultural study on 634 students showed that parenting styles' effects on academic performance and self-esteem varied across China, Turkey, and the U.S., highlighting the need for culturally specific models.

**Sharma & Pandey (2015)**: In India, a study with 120 teenagers found that permissive and authoritative parenting linked to higher self-esteem, while authoritarian parenting led to lower self-esteem.

**Yousaf & Saira (2015)**: A study on 100 female students showed a link between authoritative parenting and higher social anxiety, while permissive parenting reduced it. Poor self-esteem also contributed to social anxiety.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter highlights the research design, sample and sampling methods, the various tools used, and the statistical methods applied in this research to understand the relationship between the selected variables.

## The Impact of Parenting Styles on Young Adults' Self-Esteem: An Exploratory Study

### ***Aim***

This study examines how parenting styles influence young adults' self-esteem, with consideration for cultural, socioeconomic, and gender differences, to inform interventions fostering healthy psychological development.

### ***Objectives***

The research aims to explore the connection between young adults' self-esteem and parenting styles (permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative). Key objectives include:

1. Analyzing the relationship between self-esteem and the three parenting styles.
2. Comparing self-esteem levels of individuals with different parenting style scores.
3. Investigating how gender, financial status, and culture influence this relationship.
4. Identifying mediating and moderating factors, like academic achievement, peer relationships, and emotional control.
5. Offering evidence-based recommendations for parenting strategies that promote positive self-esteem in young adults.

### ***Hypotheses***

1. Authoritarian parenting negatively correlates with self-esteem.
2. Authoritative parenting positively correlates with self-esteem.
3. Permissive parenting negatively correlates with self-esteem.
4. High authoritarian scorers exhibit lower self-esteem than low scorers.
5. High permissive scorers show different self-esteem levels than low scorers.
6. High authoritative scorers report higher self-esteem than low scorers.

### ***Research Design***

A self-report questionnaire-based quantitative exploratory study. A quantitative exploratory study uses self-report questionnaires—with structured or semi-structured items (e.g., multiple-choice questions and Likert scales)—to collect numerical data on a scarcely researched topic, allowing researchers to detect patterns, correlations, and trends, generate preliminary findings, and formulate hypotheses.

### ***Sample and Sample Selection***

The study used convenience sampling to recruit 150 young adults (18–25 years) from diverse backgrounds. Participants were selected based on specific criteria (raised by biological parents, no severe mental health conditions). Data was collected via online and offline surveys, using self-report measures (PAQ and RSES) to assess parenting styles and self-esteem. While convenience sampling limits generalizability, efforts were made to include a broad demographic for better external validity. Future research should explore randomized or stratified sampling for wider applicability.

### ***Inclusion Criteria***

1. Participants aged 18 to 25 years, aligning with the definition of emerging adulthood.
2. Participants who are raised by biological parents (to ensure consistency in parenting influence)
3. Participants fluent in the language used in the questionnaires (English) to ensure accurate comprehension and responses)

### ***Exclusion Criteria***

1. Participants younger than 18 or older than 25 years, as they fall outside the targeted emerging adulthood range.

## The Impact of Parenting Styles on Young Adults' Self-Esteem: An Exploratory Study

- Participants diagnosed with mental health disorders like major depression, bipolar disorder, etc, that significantly impact self-esteem.
- Participants raised by non-parental guardians (for example foster care, relatives).

### Tools Used

- Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991):** This 30-item self-report questionnaire evaluates three parenting styles: permissive (lenient), authoritative (balanced), and authoritarian (strict). Each style is assessed based on warmth and control, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Higher scores indicate a dominant parenting style. Low scores across all subscales suggest negligent parenting.
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES, Rosenberg, 1965):** This 10-item scale measures self-esteem, assessing both positive and negative self-views. It uses a 4-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree), with higher scores reflecting higher self-esteem. Scores range from 0 to 30.

### Procedure

A synopsis presentation outlining the study was submitted and approved by the university guide. Using convenience sampling, 150 participants aged 18–25 were selected. Informed consent and confidentiality assurances were provided. Participants gave demographic details and completed the PAQ and RSES.

### Statistical Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarized self-esteem scores across parenting styles, while independent t-tests assessed gender differences. Pearson's correlations examined links between parenting styles and self-esteem. Significance was set at  $p < .05$ .

## RESULT

### 4.1 Correlation of Variables

*Table 1- Correlation Between Self Esteem and Parenting Styles*

Correlations		rse	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive
Rse	Pearson Correlation	1	-.188*	.103	-.092
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.021	.210	.262
	N	150	150	150	150
Authoritative	Pearson Correlation	-.188*	1	-.090	.612**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021		.273	<.001
	N	150	150	150	150
Authoritarian	Pearson Correlation	.103	-.090	1	.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.210	.273		.244
	N	150	150	150	150
Permissive	Pearson Correlation	-.092	.612**	.096	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.262	<.001	.244	
	N	150	150	150	150

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## The Impact of Parenting Styles on Young Adults' Self-Esteem: An Exploratory Study

Hypothesis 1 is not supported. The correlation between authoritarian parenting and self-esteem ( $r = 0.103$ ,  $p = 0.210$ ) is weak, slightly positive, and not statistically significant. Therefore, there is no evidence of a negative relationship between the two variables.

Hypothesis 2 proposed a positive correlation between authoritative parenting and young adults' self-esteem. However, results showed a small but significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.188$ ,  $p = 0.021$ ), indicating that higher levels of authoritative parenting were associated with slightly lower self-esteem. This unexpected result challenges prior assumptions and suggests the need to explore potential mediating factors or context-specific influences. Consequently, Hypothesis 2 is not supported as initially predicted, though the relationship is statistically significant.

Hypothesis 3 tested the correlation between permissive parenting and self-esteem in young adults. The results showed a weak negative correlation ( $r = -0.092$ ) that was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.262$ ), indicating no meaningful association. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

### **Summary of Findings:**

None of the three hypotheses were supported. Authoritarian parenting showed a weak, non-significant positive correlation with self-esteem ( $r = 0.103$ ,  $p = 0.210$ ). Contrary to expectations, authoritative parenting was moderately and significantly negatively correlated with self-esteem ( $r = -0.188$ ,  $p = 0.021$ ), while permissive parenting showed a weak, non-significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.092$ ,  $p = 0.262$ ).

### **Implications:**

The unexpected negative link between authoritative parenting and self-esteem warrants further study, possibly exploring mediating or contextual factors. The weak association between permissive parenting and self-esteem suggests its impact may be minimal or indirect. Future research should consider larger, more diverse samples and explore cultural or developmental factors.

### **Difference between Variables**

*Table 2- Difference Between the Self Esteem of Individuals with High Vs Low Authoritarian Parenting*

#### **Group Statistics**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Low Authoritarian (0)	83	25.2048	4.88592	0.53630
High Authoritarian (1)	67	38.3582	4.56834	0.55811

Hypothesis 4 proposed that individuals with high authoritarian parenting scores would have lower self-esteem than those with low scores. An independent samples t-test was conducted with 83 participants in the low authoritarian group and 67 in the high authoritarian group. Contrary to the hypothesis, results showed that the high authoritarian group had significantly higher self-esteem scores ( $M = 38.36$ ) than the low group ( $M = 25.20$ ),  $t(148) = -16.87$ ,  $p < .001$ . Levene's test confirmed equal variances ( $p = .402$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference (-14.69 to -11.61) and large effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = 4.75$ ) suggest a strong, meaningful difference.

## The Impact of Parenting Styles on Young Adults' Self-Esteem: An Exploratory Study

Conclusion: The hypothesis was not supported. Instead, individuals with higher authoritarian parenting scores reported significantly greater self-esteem, possibly due to internalized discipline or structure. Further research is needed to explore these underlying dynamics.

**Table 3 Difference in Self Esteem of Individuals with High Vs Low Permissive Parenting**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Low Permissive (0)	86	25.9419	3.80821	0.41065
High Permissive (1)	64	35.3594	4.44496	0.55562

Hypothesis 5 tested whether individuals with high permissive parenting scores have significantly different self-esteem levels than those with low scores. An independent samples t-test compared the two groups: the high permissive group (N = 64, M = 35.36, SD = 4.44) and the low permissive group (N = 86, M = 25.94, SD = 3.81). Levene's test showed no violation of variance equality (p = 0.366). The t-test revealed a significant difference (t(148) = -13.943, p < 0.001), with higher self-esteem in the high permissive group. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference was [-10.75, -8.08].

Effect sizes were large: Cohen's d = 4.09, Hedges' g = 4.11, and Glass's delta = 4.44, indicating a strong practical difference. Overall, the findings suggest that individuals with higher permissive parenting experiences tend to have substantially higher self-esteem, possibly due to the autonomy and reduced restriction typical of permissive parenting.

**Table 4 Difference Between Self Esteem of Individuals with High Vs Low Authoritative Parenting Style**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Low Permissive (0)	85	29.0588	4.49696	0.48776
High Permissive (1)	65	39.6462	3.66329	0.45438

Hypothesis 6 examined whether individuals with high authoritative parenting scores have significantly higher self-esteem than those with low scores. An independent samples t-test was conducted with 85 participants in the low group and 65 in the high group. The high authoritative group had a mean self-esteem score of 39.65 (SD = 3.66), while the low group had a mean of 29.06 (SD = 4.50). Levene's test (p = 0.279) confirmed equal variances.

The t-test showed a significant difference between the groups (t = -15.457, df = 148, p < 0.001), with a 95% confidence interval of the difference ranging from -11.94 to -9.23. Large effect sizes (Cohen's d = 4.16, Hedges' g = 4.18, Glass's delta = 3.66) suggest the difference is not only statistically but also practically significant.

Conclusion: Individuals with high authoritative parenting scores have significantly higher self-esteem. These findings support the theory that authoritative parenting fosters self-worth, likely due to its balance of warmth and structure. Further research could explore the roles of autonomy, guidance, and support in this relationship.

## DISCUSSION

This study explored the relationship between self-esteem and three parenting styles—authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative—among young adults, revealing unexpected results.

## The Impact of Parenting Styles on Young Adults' Self-Esteem: An Exploratory Study

- 1. Authoritarian Parenting:** Contrary to past research, authoritarian parenting showed a small, non-significant positive correlation with self-esteem ( $r = 0.103$ ,  $p = 0.210$ ). However, those with high authoritarian parenting reported significantly higher self-esteem ( $M = 38.36$ ) than those with low scores ( $M = 25.20$ ), with a large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 4.75$ ). Cultural interpretations and unmeasured factors may explain these findings.
- 2. Permissive Parenting:** A slightly negative correlation ( $r = -0.092$ ,  $p = 0.262$ ) was found, but high permissive parenting was associated with higher self-esteem ( $M = 35.36$  vs.  $M = 25.94$ , Cohen's  $d = 4.09$ ). This may reflect short-term boosts in self-esteem, though long-term effects may be negative due to lack of self-discipline.
- 3. Authoritative Parenting:** Despite a strong theoretical link, authoritative parenting had a weak negative correlation with self-esteem ( $r = -0.188$ ,  $p = 0.021$ ), though those with high authoritative parenting reported higher self-esteem ( $M = 39.65$  vs.  $M = 29.06$ , Cohen's  $d = 4.16$ ). Complex dynamics like mismatched expectations may explain this contradiction.

### CONCLUSION

The study suggests that the connection between young adults' self-esteem and parental practices is complex and influenced by various factors like culture and individual beliefs. Contrary to traditional research emphasizing authoritative parenting, both authoritarian and permissive styles may lead to high self-esteem in certain cultural contexts. This highlights the need for a more nuanced approach in assessing the effects of parenting styles on self-esteem. Limitations include the cross-sectional design, self-report bias, and cultural homogeneity of the sample. A longitudinal design, more diverse samples, and objective measures would help strengthen future research.

Future studies should explore the cultural context of parenting, mixed parenting styles, and the role of warmth and control in parenting. Additionally, examining emotional outcomes beyond self-esteem, such as anxiety and resilience, could deepen our understanding of parenting's long-term effects on psychological well-being.

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## The Impact of Parenting Styles on Young Adults' Self-Esteem: An Exploratory Study

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