

Parenting Style, Purpose in Life, and College Adjustment Among First-Year Navi Mumbai Students

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ABSTRACT

The research explores how different parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—relate to students' sense of purpose and their ability to adapt to college life across academic, social, emotional, and attachment domains. A sample of 224 students was assessed using standardized scales for perceived parenting style, purpose in life, and college adjustment. The findings from Spearman's rank correlation analysis highlight the interrelated roles of parental influence and individual motivation in shaping students' adaptation to higher education.

Keywords: *Parenting Style, Purpose in life, College Adjustment, First-Year Navi-Mumbai College Students*

The parents are the first and the ultimate teachers a child will ever have. They are the most significant influences that affect the lives of children (Zedan, 2011). Parenting style is a characteristic, which has a huge influence on an individual's overall development. With the style of parenting, the social and behavioural outcomes of the child is determined. (Naushin & Hazara, 2022).

It has been found to predict child wellbeing in the domains of social competence, academic performance, psychosocial development and problem behaviour (Winsler et al., 2005).

The transition to college marks a critical developmental period for young adults, during which they are required to adapt to new academic, social and emotional challenges (Baker & Siryk, 1984). Successful (college) adjustment during this phase is crucial for students' academic success and psychological well-being.

One of the most influential factors shaping an individual's capacity for such adjustment is their early upbringing—particularly, the parenting style (Authoritarian, Authoritative, and

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Permissive) experienced during childhood and adolescence (Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

In parallel, the development of a sense of purpose in life—defined as a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is meaningful to the self and has consequence to the world beyond the self (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003)—plays a crucial role in how individuals approach challenges, set goals, and regulate behaviour.

It has been researched that a well-developed purpose has been associated with better psychological adjustment and resilience (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parenting style & College Adjustment

Ataei Zanjanejad, Z., Hejazi, M., Sobhi, A., & Ahmadi, M. S. (2022) describes the relationship between perception of parenting style, academic vitality and mediating role of meaning of life. This correlation was conducted on 400 students at the secondary schools of Zanjan city. Data were collected using three standardized questionnaires. The results showed that parenting styles show a significant positive relationship with the perception of meaning in life. Also, supportive parenting fosters a stronger sense of purpose in students, which in turn affects other life domains.

Sierra, M. T., Reyes, L. G., Carmona, S. E., & Aranda, G. P. (2024) explored the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent sense of life in San Francisco. It was a quantitative study, involving 76 adolescents aged 12-18, selected through non-probabilistic sampling. The data was collected using three standardized questionnaires. The analysis indicated a significant relationship between parenting styles and adolescents' sense of meaning in life with adolescents raised with a democratic or authoritative parenting style having a stronger and more defined sense of meaning in life compared to those raised with permissive or authoritarian styles.

Parenting Style & College Adjustment

Moon-Seo, S. K., Sung, J., Moore, M., & Koo, G. Y. (2021) examined the role of parenting styles in college students' adjustment with a mediating effect of personal self-esteem. It was a quantitative and cross-sectional research design, with a sample size of 300 undergraduate students. Data were obtained using three questionnaires. The results revealed that authoritative parenting enhances students' self-esteem, which mediates their adjustment to college life, particularly in social, emotional, and academic domains.

Turner, Chandler, and Hefferet (2009) investigated the relationships among parenting styles, achievement motivation, self-efficacy, and academic performance in college students. The sample were 264 undergraduate psychology students. The results disclosed that authoritative parenting style significantly predicted academic performance, and no relation was found for permissive and authoritarian parenting styles.

Sartaj, B., & Aslam, N. (2010) investigated the impact of authoritarian and authoritative parenting in home, health and emotional adjustment. The sample size of the study was 200 college students with an age range of 16-19 years. Data obtained using 2 scales. The result suggested that authoritarian parenting style was negatively related to health, and emotional adjustments of college students while adolescents raised by authoritative parenting showed better home, health and emotional adjustment.

Purpose in Life & Adjustment

Sharma, G., & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, M. A. (2020b and 2024) investigated the extent to which life purpose explained the variance in college students' levels of resilience and persistence amidst COVID-19. Data were obtained from 295 college students using three scales. The result discovered that a strong sense of life purpose significantly predicts resilience and persistence in college students, particularly in challenging situations like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Steven B. Robbins, Karen P. Lese, and Stephen M. Herrick (1993) examined the moderating effect of goal instability and social support on college freshman adjustment. Sample included 198 freshmen and data were collected using three instruments. Analysis discovered that high goal-directedness was associated with better academic and personal adjustment among college freshmen while low goal-directedness predicted lower academic and personal adjustment.

Hackman, J. R., & Dysinger, W. S. (1970) investigated the commitment of a student to pursuing higher education as well as that if their parents can predict whether or not the student withdraws from college during freshman year. Data were collected from 1407 students, along with responses from the parents of 1331 of these students. The participants were categorized into four groups - persisters, transfers, voluntary withdrawals, and academic dismissals. Results exhibit that meaningful distinction could be made among these groups in terms of the level of commitment to college expressed prior to enrolment. Furthermore, the results highlight the importance of influence of parental attitudes implying that parental involvement may predict student persistence just as well as, if not better than, the students' own goals and aspirations.

Shagufta Bibi, Zhenhong Wang, Abdul Sattar Ghaffari, Zafar Iqbal (2018) investigated the correlation between social achievement goals and academic adjustment among college students. The sample consisted of 750 students including 429 males and 321 females, ages ranging from 15 to 20 years. Data collected using two questionnaires. Students' responses revealed notable variations according to gender. Male students indicated higher levels of college adaptation and higher focus on achieving socially oriented goals as compared to female students.

METHODOLOGY

Hypotheses

- **H1:** There will be a significant positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and college adjustment among students.
- **H2:** There will be a significant negative correlation between the authoritarian and permissive parenting style and college adjustment among students.
- **H3:** There will be a significant positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and purpose in life.
- **H4:** There will be a significant negative correlation between the authoritarian and permissive parenting style and purpose in life.
- **H5:** There will be a significant positive correlation between purpose in life and college adjustment.

Objectives

1. To investigate the relationship between different types of parenting styles and college adjustment.

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2. To assess the relationship between purpose in life and parenting styles and college adjustment.

Sample

The sample for this study was 224 young adults, aged 18-21 years, who are currently pursuing first-year undergraduate degrees for the first time. The mean age of the sample is 19.2 years.

Research design

The research design employed in this study is a correlational research design as this study aims to establish the relationship between parenting styles, college adjustment and purpose in life.

Statistical analysis

The present study employs the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ , rho) as the statistical analysis. This non-parametric test is used to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. It was chosen for this study because the assumption of normality was not met.

Variables

- Parenting style,
- Purpose in life,
- College adjustment.

The control variables include the age of the individuals, educational qualification, and parents' marital status.

The confounding variables in this study primarily were Individual personality traits, social desirability relating to their college adjustment, purpose in life and their parents parenting style, which were unavoidable.

Instruments

Three measures were used in this study,

1. **Perceived Parenting Styles Scale (PPSS) by Divya, T. V & Manikandan K, (2013):** The Perceived Parenting Styles Scale (PPSS) (Divya et al., 2013) is a 30-item Likert-type scale that aims to assess perceived parenting styles. PPSS has a 5-point Likert scale.
2. **Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) by Amrita Mohanty (2019):** Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) is a multidimensional measure where 31 items are clubbed under 4 dimensions. The four dimensions are academic adjustment (AA), social adjustment (SA), personal-emotional adjustment (PEA), and attachment (AT).
3. **Youth Purpose in Life scale by Upasana Chaddha (2018):** Youth Purpose in Life scale is a 28-items Likert-type scale that aims to assess Purpose in Life of youth. YPIL has a 5-point Likert scale. There are 5 dimensions in the scale- Goal-directedness, Family-oriented goals, Society-oriented goals, Goal clarity, and commitment.

Procedure

Data were collected via Google Forms with informed consent and demographic questions, followed by the three scales, which was circulated among the population. The data collection phase extended over a period of two months. The obtained quantitative data was then analysed

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using the Jamovi to study the three variables. A Spearman's rank correlation method was calculated to measure the relationship between the three variables that were being studied.

A correlation relationship between parenting styles, purpose in life and college adjustment of two genders (i.e. Males and Females) was also studied using spearman correlation.

RESULTS

Sample breakdown:

Table. 1 Socio-Demographic Details of the Sample

The socio-demographic details of the pattern may be inferred in reference to Table 1.

Table. 1.1 Frequency and percentage distribution of Gender of sample

| Gender | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Male | 114 | 50.9% | 50.9% |
| Female | 110 | 49.1% | 49.1% |
| Total | 224 | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table. 1.1: The sample included 114 males (50.9%) and 110 females (49.1%). The nearly equal proportion of males and females is clearly evident from the table which will be useful when we analyze and interpret the data further.

Table. 1.2 Frequency and percentage distribution of age of sample

| Age (years) | Frequency (N) | Percent (%) | Valid Percent (%) |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 18 | 79 | 35.27% | 35.27% |
| 19 | 60 | 26.79% | 26.79% |
| 20 | 46 | 20.54% | 20.54% |
| 21 | 39 | 17.41% | 17.41% |
| Total Mean | 224 19.2 | 100.00% | 100.00% |

Table No. 1.2: The table reveals that the population is largely made of participants aged 18 and 19 years old. The Sample consists of 224 young adults first-year college students with a mean of 19.2, which denotes the average age of the participants.

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics of 224 participants for the variables are given in Table 2.

Table. 2 Descriptive statistics

| | Authoritative Parenting | Authoritarian Parenting | Permissive Parenting | Purpose in Life | College Adjustment |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mean | 34.1 | 26.1 | 26.4 | 75.0 | 97.6 |
| Median | 35.5 | 24.0 | 26.0 | 76.5 | 96.0 |
| Standard deviation | 9.26 | 8.05 | 9.14 | 14.4 | 20.2 |

As per the table, the mean score for Authoritative Parenting is 34.1, with a median of 35.5. This suggests a relatively strong inclination toward authoritative parenting styles among the participants. The standard deviation of 9.26 reflects a moderate level of variability in responses.

For Authoritarian Parenting, the mean score was 26.1 with a median of 24.0, and a standard deviation of 8.05. This indicates a moderate endorsement of authoritarian traits, with variability in perceptions across the sample. The mean score for Permissive Parenting was 26.4, with a median of 26.0, and a standard deviation of 9.14.

Regarding the Purpose in Life, the mean score is 75.0, with a median of 76.5. This shows that the participants generally reported a strong sense of life direction and goal clarity. The standard deviation of 14.4 indicates a broad range of variability, meaning that while many students had high purpose scores, others showed significantly lower clarity or goal direction. Finally, for College Adjustment, the mean score was 97.6, the median was 96.0, and the standard deviation was 20.2, reflecting moderate to high levels of adjustment with some individual differences.

Normality Test

Normality test conducted by Shapiro-Wilk test, the results are in the table below.

Table. 3 Normality Assessment Using Shapiro-Wilk Test

| | Authoritative Parenting | Authoritarian Parenting | Permissive Parenting | Purpose in Life | College Adjustment |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Skewness | -0.348 | 0.621 | 0.339 | -0.753 | 0.0883 |
| Std. error skewness | 0.163 | 0.163 | 0.163 | 0.163 | 0.163 |
| Shapiro-Wilk W | 0.965 | 0.963 | 0.979 | 0.963 | 0.986 |
| Shapiro-Wilk p | <.001 | <.001 | 0.002 | <.001 | 0.025 |

Table 3 displays the normality test results for the primary variables of the study. Overall, the Shapiro-Wilk test outcomes for all variables were statistically significant ($p < .05$), suggesting that none of the measured variables conformed to a normal distribution. The persistent statistical significance across tests determine that the dataset breaches the normality assumption, and hence non-parametric methods must be considered for data analysis.

Correlation Matrix

The study employed a correlational research design using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient.

Table. 4 Correlation Matrix

| | Authoritative Parenting | Authoritarian Parenting | Permissive Parenting | Purpose in Life | College Adjustment |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Authoritative Parenting | - | | | | |
| Authoritarian Parenting | -0.482*** | - | | | |
| Permissive Parenting | -0.560*** | 0.514*** | - | | |
| Purpose in Life | 0.547*** | -0.182** | -0.316*** | - | |
| College Adjustment | 0.437*** | -0.390*** | -0.438*** | 0.518** * | - |

Note: * $p < .05$: The result is statistically significant at the 5% level.

** $p < .01$: The result is significant at the 1% level

*** $p < .001$: The result is significant at the 0.1% level

Table 4 presents the Spearman’s rho correlations among the main study variables. All correlations were statistically significant and in expected directions, supporting the hypothesized relationships between parenting styles, purpose in life, and college adjustment.

Independent T-test

Further, T-test was administered to see if there was a difference between the male and female dataset. Mann-Whitney U test was employed as the data violated the assumptions of normality. The result of the t -test is in the table below.

Table. 5 Independent Samples T-Test

| Variable | Test | Statistic (U) | p | Mean difference | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|-------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Authoritative Parenting | Mann-Whitney U | 6168 | 0.833 | ~0 | -3.000 | 2.00 |
| Authoritarian Parenting | Mann-Whitney U | 5687 | 0.229 | 1.00 | -1.000 | 4.00 |
| Permissive Parenting | Mann-Whitney U | 6112 | 0.744 | ~0 | -3.000 | 2.00 |
| College Adjustment | Mann-Whitney U | 5579 | 0.154 | 4.00 | -1.000 | 9.00 |
| Purpose in Life | Mann-Whitney U | 6070 | 0.680 | ~0 | -2.000 | 3.00 |

Table for Man-Whitney U

The findings of the test displayed that across all five variables—authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting, permissive parenting, college adjustment and purpose in life, none showed a statistically significant difference between males and females as the p-values of all variables were above the conventional threshold of 0.05.

Thereafter, Spearman correlation analysis was run grouping male and female separately.

Comparison of Correlations Between Males and Females

Table. 6.1 Correlation Matrix Male

| | Authoritative Parenting | Authoritarian Parenting | Permissive Parenting | Purpose in Life | College Adjustment |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Authoritative Parenting | - | | | | |
| Authoritarian Parenting | -0.229* | - | | | |
| Permissive Parenting | -0.447*** | 0.440*** | - | | |
| Purpose in Life | 0.692*** | -0.058 | -0.336*** | - | |
| College Adjustment | 0.559*** | -0.430*** | -0.567*** | 0.530*** | - |

Table. 6.2 Correlation Matrix Female

| | Authoritative Parenting | Authoritarian Parenting | Permissive Parenting | Purpose in Life | College Adjustment |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Authoritative Parenting | - | | | | |
| Authoritarian Parenting | -0.740*** | - | | | |
| Permissive Parenting | -0.683*** | 0.577*** | - | | |
| Purpose in Life | 0.353** | -0.307** | -0.2732** | - | |
| College Adjustment | 0.299*** | -0.366*** | -0.293** | 0.507*** | - |

The table above displays that the correlational patterns between the three parenting styles, college adjustment and purpose in life differs remarkably between male and female participants. These results highlight the discrepancy of strengths in the relationship of males and females with the variables of the study.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the correlation between different parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive), purpose in life and college adjustment among first-year Navi Mumbai college students. The correlational analysis showed that the relation between authoritative parenting style and college adjustment was seen to be positive, and that authoritarian parenting style and permissive parenting style were negatively correlated to college adjustment. Furthermore, the authoritative parenting style was found to be positively correlated with purpose in life, while authoritative and permissive parenting styles were negatively correlated to purpose in life.

Hypothesis Testing

H1: There will be a significant positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and college adjustment among students.

With respect to the first hypothesis, it was found that authoritative parenting was significantly and positively correlated with College Adjustment ($\rho = 0.437, p < .001$). When divided by sex, authoritative parenting resumed to show a significant positive correlation among both males ($\rho = 0.559, p < .001$) and females ($\rho = 0.299, p = 0.001$), but the relationship for college adjustment was stronger for males than females, with rho value of 0.260.

This finding is consistent with the research by Moon-Seo et al. (2021) that found that authoritative parenting significantly amplifies students' social, emotional, and academic adjustment, with self-esteem partly strengthening it. The gender difference observed, with stronger positive correlations among males, echoes findings by Endendijk et al. (2016), who suggested that males may respond more robustly to structure combined with emotional support, crucial components of authoritative parenting. Thus, H1 is supported

H2: There will be a significant negative correlation between the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles and college adjustment among students.

The current investigation found that authoritarian parenting showed a significant negative correlation with college adjustment in the overall sample ($\rho = -0.390, p < .001$), as well as separately among males ($\rho = -0.430, p < .001$) and females ($\rho = -0.366, p < .001$). Similarly, permissive parenting was negatively correlated with college adjustment for the full sample ($\rho = -0.438, p < .001$), males ($\rho = -0.567, p < .001$), and females ($\rho = -0.293, p = 0.002$).

These findings were also reported by Sartaj and Aslam's (2010) study, which highlighted that authoritarian parenting impairs emotional adjustment and health. In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that permissive parenting which provides little guidance, has been associated with poor academic and emotional regulation (Turner et al., 2009). The most interesting finding is the difference in sex-wise correlation of authoritarian and permissive parenting where males showed stronger negative impacts under permissive parenting than females. This can be explained by the cultural gender role expectations: males are often faced with societal pressures to exhibit independence and achievement; thus, a lack of structured parenting may leave them particularly vulnerable to maladjustment (Leaper, 2011). Hence, H2 is supported.

H3: There will be a significant positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and purpose in life.

The analysis revealed a strong, positive correlation between Authoritative Parenting and Purpose in Life in the overall sample ($\rho = 0.547, p < .001$), and among both males ($\rho = 0.692, p < .001$) and females ($\rho = 0.353, p < .001$).

These findings strongly support the research from Zanjanejad et al. (2022) that supportive parenting fosters a stronger sense of purpose in students which significantly shapes their existential outlook. This finding also accords with the work of Sierra et al. (2024), who demonstrated that democratic or authoritative parenting styles correlates to stronger and more defined sense of meaning in the life of adolescents. Notably, the stronger correlation among

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males suggests that male students might internalize parental expectations into their life purpose more directly when nurtured by an authoritative parenting approach, as also indicated by Sharma and Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2022), who observed that authoritative parenting fosters internal motivation and identity formation, particularly in male adolescents. Thus, H3 is also supported.

H4: There will be a significant negative correlation between the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles and Purpose in life.

Another finding is that authoritarian parenting showed a weak but significant negative correlation with purpose in life in the overall sample ($\rho = -0.182$, $p = 0.006$) and in females ($\rho = -0.307$, $p = 0.001$), but no significant correlation among males ($\rho = -0.058$, $p = 0.538$). Further, permissive parenting correlated negatively with purpose in life across the overall sample ($\rho = -0.316$, $p < .001$), males ($\rho = -0.336$, $p < .001$), and females ($\rho = -0.272$, $p = 0.004$).

These results are consistent with that of Zanjanejad et al., 2022, who found that individuals who are raised by authoritarian parents, who are highly controlled and have gotten less emotional response, tend to have low purpose in life. Similar findings were suggested in research by Sierra et al., 2024, which found out that adolescents raised in authoritarian households, characterized by limited emotional warmth, high control and rigid rules, were reporting a lack of purpose or low sense of life meaning. A possible explanation for this might be that authoritarian parenting may inhibit the development of autonomy and self-exploration, which are important for forming meaningful goals and a clear sense of direction, which are key components of purpose in life.

Further, the result also reflects the findings on permissive parenting in the research by Zanjanejad et al., 2022 and Sierra et al., 2024, that found out that permissive parenting has little to no significant relationship with permissive parenting, suggesting low control and lack of guidance with high warmth, do not show strong pattern for developing a purpose. This relationship could be explained because of insufficient challenge or motivation of the individual to develop a strong sense of purpose, resulting from high emotional support and lack of structure and guidance. Thus, H4 is also supported.

H5: There will be a significant positive correlation between purpose in life and college adjustment.

The findings of this study showed that purpose in life correlated strongly and positively with college adjustment in the overall sample ($\rho = 0.518$, $p < .001$), among males ($\rho = 0.530$, $p < .001$), and females ($\rho = 0.507$, $p < .001$).

This data analysis supports evidence from previous observations (Robbins et al., 1993; Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2022) which revealed that purpose in life enhances resilience and persistence in college students, academic commitment, emotional well-being, personal adjustment and social integration among college students. A number of other studies have also highlighted the positive impact of having a sense of purpose on various aspects of college students' lives. Purpose in life is linked to improved mental health and better overall wellbeing (Bronk et al., 2009), increased commitment to degree completion (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018), academic identity (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2020a), better career

success (Kosine et al., 2008). (Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2022). Thus, H5 is strongly supported: a higher sense of purpose leads to better adjustment in college.

Summary

In summary, the findings supported all five hypotheses. The study highlights the crucial role of parenting and a strong sense of purpose in facilitating college adjustment among first-year students. Notably, gender differences were seen, suggesting the moderating effect of gender of the variables.

CONCLUSION

The study analysed the correlation between perceived parenting style, purpose in life and college adjustment among first-year college students in Navi Mumbai. The findings highlight the significant influence of authoritative parenting and a strong sense of purpose in college adjustment of first-year college students, whereas authoritarian and permissive perceived parenting styles are identified as risk factors.

Gender differences indicate that interventions should be tailored, where emotional resilience should be enhanced in females and offering structured support for males.

Implications of the Study

This study highlights positive correlations between authoritative parenting, college adjustment, and purpose in life, while authoritarian and permissive styles show negative associations. The findings underscore the need for parenting workshops in schools and communities that promote authoritative approaches, emphasizing warmth, reasoning, and high expectations. Educational institutions should identify adjustment difficulties linked to rigid or permissive parenting and provide early interventions such as emotional regulation and problem-solving training. Purpose-centered programs, including career planning and values clarification, can foster resilience. Mental health professionals should assess parenting influences in student evaluations and tailor interventions that enhance purpose and support healthy adjustment.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research: While the study offers valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. The correlational design restricts causal interpretations between parenting styles, purpose in life, and college adjustment. The sample of 224 first-year Navi Mumbai students limits generalizability, while reliance on self-reports may have introduced social desirability bias or distorted perceptions, especially regarding parenting and adjustment. The focus on intact families excludes challenges faced by students from disrupted families. Additionally, although Mann-Whitney U tests showed no sex differences in average levels, correlation analyses revealed distinct patterns, suggesting sex may moderate these relationships. Future studies should explore subgroup dynamics and potential moderators.

Future research should address these limitations through longitudinal designs tracking changes over time, diverse geographical and cultural samples, inclusion of students from varied family structures, and moderation analyses or interaction terms in regression models to better understand how sex influences the interplay between parenting approaches, adjustment, and life purpose.

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Conflict of Interest

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