

The Role of Parenting Styles in Shaping Perfectionism among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the role of parenting style - Authoritarian, Permissive, and Authoritative, in the development and shaping of perfectionism among young adults through quantitative research. A structured Google Forms Survey called 'Parenting Styles and Perfectionism in Young adults' was conducted and administered on 150 participants, between the age group of 18-25 years from Delhi NCR, on a 5-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree), using a correlational research design. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted using SPSS. Results indicated that Authoritarian, Permissive, and Authoritative parenting styles showed positive correlations with perfectionism among young adults, as measured using the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) and the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). Permissive parenting exhibited the strongest association with perfectionism ($r = .913, p < .001$), followed by Authoritative ($r = .907, p < .001$) and Authoritarian ($r = .693, p < .001$) styles. The findings suggest that higher levels of parenting styles are associated with an increase in perfectionistic traits, with varied degrees of influence. Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were fully supported. Limitations include a restricted sample size and self-reported data. Future studies should examine gender differences and cultural factors to better understand how early parenting styles shape perfectionistic traits across stages of development.

Keywords: Parenting styles, Authoritarian, Permissive, Authoritative, Perfectionism

Perfectionism is a multifaceted personality trait characterized by the pursuit of impeccability, the establishment of exceptionally demanding performance criteria, and a propensity for harsh self-assessment (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Historical perspectives have distinguished between adaptive perfectionism, which facilitates adjustment and resilience in parallelly with conscientiousness, and maladaptive perfectionism, which impairs functioning and aligns with neuroticism (Hamachek, 1978; Hollender, 1965). Adaptive forms involve setting ambitious yet attainable goals, deriving fulfilment from achievements, and maintaining flexibility. In contrast, maladaptive perfectionism features inflexible ideals, dissatisfaction with efforts, and persistent anxiety about capabilities.

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While perfectionistic tendencies often intensify in young adulthood amid educational and professional demands, their origins trace back to childhood environments, particularly family dynamics (Piotrowski, 2019). Parenting styles, as outlined by Baumrind (1966, 1991), play a pivotal role in shaping these traits through varying levels of warmth and control. Authoritative parenting balances affection with structure, authoritarian emphasizes strict compliance with minimal emotional support, permissive offers leniency without boundaries, and neglectful involves detachment and lax oversight. These approaches influence how children internalize concepts of accomplishment, validation, and self-esteem, potentially fostering either constructive ambition or debilitating self-criticism.

Empirical research underscores the link between parenting and the development. For instance, authoritarian and permissive styles correlate positively with elevated perfectionism in early adulthood, while authoritative parenting shows an inverse relationship, mitigating maladaptive aspects such as fear of errors and external pressures (Naumovska et al., 2024). Cross-cultural studies further reveal that parental expectations and criticism have escalated over decades, contributing to rising perfectionism among youth in competitive societies (Curran & Hill, 2022). In high-achieving adolescents, performance-driven assessments and parental control amplify achievement pressure, indirectly heightening perfectionism and related distress (Haspolat & Yalçın, 2023).

Protective factors like self-compassion mediate perfectionism's impact on well-being. Among emerging adults, self-compassion buffers the adverse effects of maladaptive perfectionism on mental health, with dimensions like orderliness promoting resilience, while discrepancies in standards exacerbate vulnerability (Benedetto et al., 2024; Koutra et al., 2023; Grad et al., 2023). Longitudinal data indicate that perceived parental expectations predict increases in socially prescribed perfectionism during adolescence (Damian et al., 2013). Additionally, childhood adversities, including abuse and dysfunction, heighten tendencies toward concealing flaws and external-oriented perfectionism (Chen et al., 2019).

Personality and environmental interplay further complicate this dynamic. Neuroticism and low emotional intelligence amplify maladaptive perfectionism, reducing happiness and increasing procrastination, often rooted in authoritarian upbringing (Kong et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2022; Doyle & Catling, 2022). Overparenting, moderated by neuroticism, fosters academic entitlement through socially prescribed perfectionism (Finch et al., 2019). Gender-neutral patterns show authoritarian parenting linked to doubts and concerns over mistakes, while authoritative styles offer protection (Hibbard & Walton, 2014; Miller & Neumeister, 2017; Walton et al., 2018).

Cultural contexts also shape these associations, with psychological factors like parental mental health and attachment influencing styles (Elyasi et al., 2019). Joint parental profiles, incorporating psychological control, reveal intrusive patterns that hinder child outcomes (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018). Broader stressors, including social media and economic pressures, exacerbate perfectionism in young adults, underscoring the need for resilience-building interventions (Kurz, 2021; Lehmann & Konstam, 2011; Tangri, 2017).

Overall, parenting lays the groundwork for perfectionism's trajectory, with authoritative approaches potentially channelling it adaptively (Smetana, 2017; Darling & Steinberg, 2017). This synthesis highlights the necessity for nuanced, culturally sensitive research to address perfectionism's psychological implications (Kassinove, 2013; Fatemeh, 2019; Turner & Turner, 2011; Ali et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

Aim: To explore the relationship between Authoritative, Permissive, and Authoritarian parenting styles and perfectionism among young adults.

Objective

1. To measure the relationship between the level of Authoritarian parenting and Perfectionism among young adults.
2. To find the relationship between Permissive parenting and Perfectionism among young adults.
3. To study the relationship between the level of Authoritative parenting and Perfectionism among young adults.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** There will be a significant relationship between the level of Authoritarian parenting and Perfectionism among young adults.
- **H2:** There will be a significant relationship between Permissive parenting and Perfectionism among young adults.
- **H3:** There will be a significant relationship between the level of Authoritative parenting and Perfectionism among young adults

Design

A correlational research design was employed. The design focused on determining the association and the strength between Authoritarian, Permissive, and Authoritative parenting styles and perfectionism. Data was collected through self-report standardized questionnaires without manipulating the variables.

Sample

The sample size consisted of 150 young adults (18-25 years) from Delhi NCR, and participants were engaged from universities and community networks.

Measures

1. **Parenting styles: Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991):** The PAQ is a self-report questionnaire that assesses three parenting styles: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative (flexible). Each style subscale consists of 10 items rated on a Likert-type scale. The subscale scores were analysed by summing up item responses- higher scores indicating the stronger influence of parenting style.
2. **Perfectionism: Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS; Frost et al., 1990):** The FMPS measures perfectionism across 4 dimensions. In the study, the subscales used were: Parental Expectations and Criticism (PEC), Personal Standards (PS), Concern over Mistakes and Doubts (CMD), and Organisation (O). Mean scores were analysed for each subscale, with higher scores reflecting stronger support of perfectionistic traits.

Ethical considerations

Before the participation, all respondents were assured of the confidentiality that their responses would remain anonymous at the beginning of the Google Form. The form outlined the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the participation, and the eligibility criteria (18 to 25 years of age). The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants.

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Procedure

The data was collected through a structured online Google Form and offline surveys distributed to students. Informed consent was obtained while assuring confidentiality, and ethical clearance was granted by the university research committee, after which, the participants completed the PAQ and FMPS questionnaires.

Data analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Software)**. The raw scores for each subscale were summed up to obtain the total and the subscale scores for parenting styles and perfectionism. To study the relationship between the variables, **Pearson's Correlation** was conducted, since it is suitable for investigating linear associations between continuous data. The validity was ensured by using standardized questionnaires.

RESULTS

Table 1 Relationship between Authoritarian parenting style & Perfectionism

Variables	N	r value	p-value
Perfectionism	150	.693**	.001
Authoritarian	150		

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 level.

As per Table 1, to assess the association between Authoritarian Parenting Style and Perfectionism, a correlation was performed. The analysis revealed a moderately strong positive correlation ($r = .693$, $p < .001$, $N = 150$). This shows that higher levels of authoritarian parenting are associated with higher perfectionistic tendencies among children.

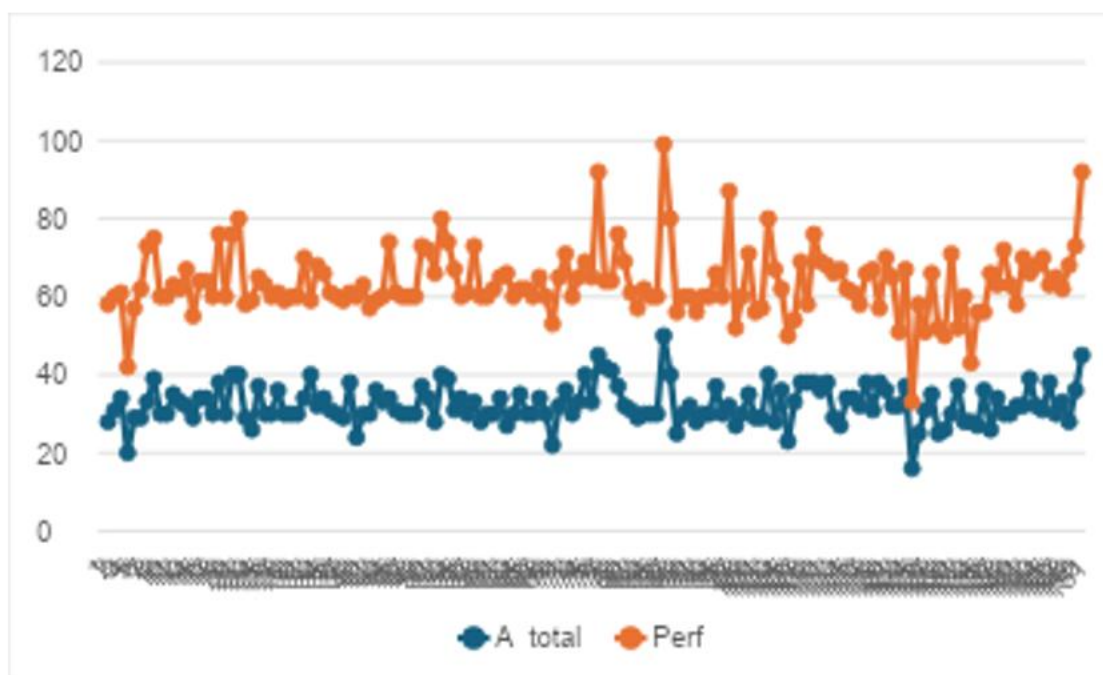


Figure 1. Correlational graph analyzing the relationship between Authoritarian parenting styles and Perfectionism

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The line chart shown in Figure 1 compares Authoritarian Parenting Style and Perfectionism across observations. Authoritarian parenting remains relatively stable with moderate scores ranging between 20 and 40, whereas perfectionism consistently appears at a higher level, mostly between 50 and 80, with occasional sharp peaks reaching close to 100. This indicates that perfectionism is more variable and intense compared to authoritarian parenting, which stays steady over time. The overall pattern suggests that while authoritarian parenting maintains a consistent presence, it may contribute to heightened and fluctuating perfectionistic tendencies in individuals.

Table 2 Relationship between Permissive parenting style & Perfectionism

Variables	N	r value	p-value
Perfectionism	150	.913**	.001
Permissive parenting style (P)	150		

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level and 0.05 level.

In the above table, a correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between Permissive Parenting Style (P) and Perfectionism (FMPS). The results indicated a very strong positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .913$, $p < .001$, $N = 150$). This means that as permissive parenting increases, levels of perfectionism also increase.

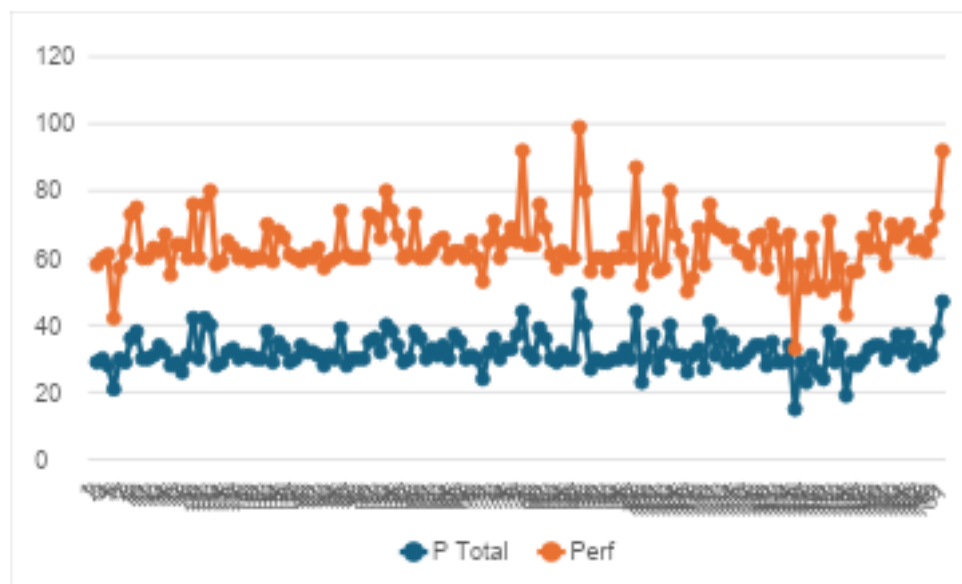


Figure 2. Correlational graph analysing the relationship between Permissive parenting styles and Perfectionism

The line chart compares permissive parenting style (P Total) with perfectionism (Perf) across multiple data points. It shows that scores for perfectionism are consistently higher than those for permissive parenting, with perfectionism generally fluctuating between 55 and 80, while permissive parenting remains lower, mostly ranging between 25 and 40. Although both variables display some variability, perfectionism demonstrates more pronounced peaks and dips compared to the steadier trend of permissive parenting, suggesting a stronger intensity and wider spread in perfectionism levels relative to permissive parenting tendencies.

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Table 3: Relationship between Authoritative parenting style & Perfectionism

Variables	N	r value	p-value
Perfectionism	150	.907**	.001
Authoritative parenting	150		

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 level.

In Table 3, a correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between Flexible/Authoritative Parenting Style and Perfectionism. The results demonstrated a very strong positive correlation ($r = .907$, $p < .001$, $N = 150$). This suggests that when authoritative parenting increases, perfectionism levels also tend to increase.

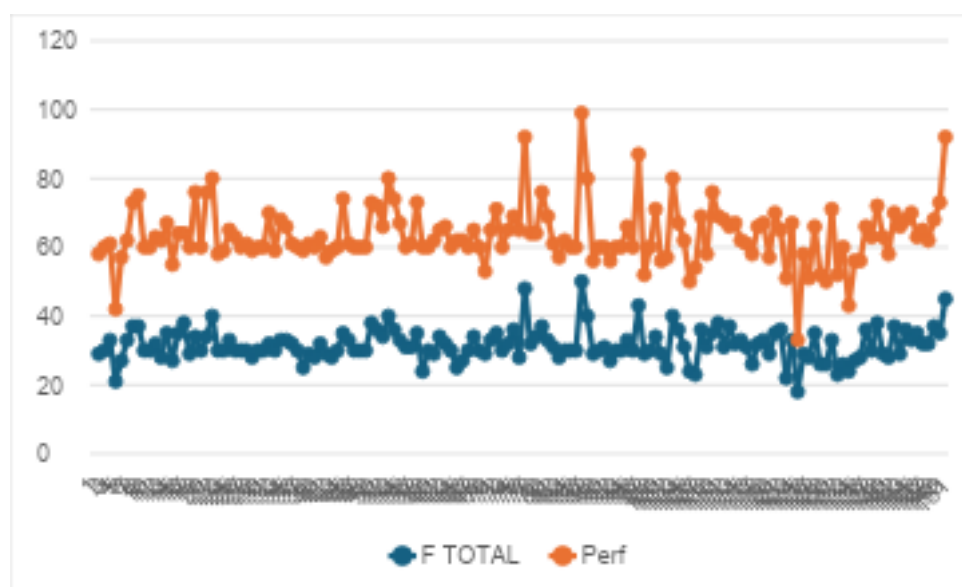


Figure 2. Correlational graph analysing the relationship between Authoritative Parenting Style and Perfectionism

This graph illustrates the correlation between the Authoritative Parenting Style (represented by F Total) and Perfectionism (represented by Perf). The orange line (Perfectionism) consistently shows higher values than the blue line (Authoritative Parenting Style), suggesting that individuals scoring higher on perfectionism tend to have moderately varying but generally elevated scores. In contrast, the blue line remains relatively stable with lower overall values, indicating less fluctuation in authoritative parenting scores. Overall, the data suggest a mild positive association, where higher perfectionism levels appear alongside somewhat consistent authoritative parenting scores, though the variation in perfectionism scores is more pronounced.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the relationship between different parenting styles: Authoritarian, Permissive, and Authoritative; and Perfectionism among young adults. The findings indicate that all three parenting styles are significantly correlated with perfectionism, highlighting how varying parental approaches can influence the development of perfectionistic traits. With respect to the first hypothesis (H_1), Table 1 and Figure 1 reveal a moderately strong positive correlation ($r = .693$, $p < .001$), suggesting that higher levels of authoritarian parenting are associated with an increase in perfectionistic tendencies. The

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patterns indicate that authoritarian parenting remains steady between 20 and 40, while perfectionism fluctuates between 50 and 80, occasionally peaking near 100. The finding is consistent with research indicating that increased levels of authoritarian parenting styles are associated with higher maladaptive perfectionism (Chen, W. W., et. al. 2022). Regarding the second hypothesis (H₂), Table 2 and Figure 2 demonstrate a very strong positive correlation ($r = .913, p < .001$) between permissive parenting and perfectionism, indicating that as permissive behaviours increase, perfectionistic tendencies also increase. The results show that perfectionism consistently scores higher than permissive parenting, with greater fluctuations and sharper peaks, emphasizing a broader spread in perfectionism levels. This outcome supports findings from a meta-analysis indicating that permissive parenting style is linked to increased levels of perfectionism, as children in these environments may acquire unrealistic standards due to limitation of parental boundaries (Yıldız, M. et. al. 2020) Lastly, in relation to the third hypothesis (H₃), Table 3 and Figure 3 report a very strong positive correlation ($r = .907, p < .001$) between authoritative parenting and perfectionism, suggesting that balanced parental warmth and expectations may promote adaptive perfectionism characterized by motivation and persistence. These results align with research showing that authoritative parenting, which is characterized by warmth and expectations, is associated with adaptive forms of perfectionism that promote personal and effective emotional growth and regulation. Overall, the findings validate all three hypotheses and data that while authoritarian and permissive styles are linked to heightened and fluctuating perfectionism, authoritative parenting tends to encourage more adaptive and goal-oriented perfectionistic traits in young adults.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights a significant association between parenting styles and perfectionism among young adults, emphasizing how parental approaches shape emotional and behavioural outcomes. The results reveal that authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative parenting each have a positive relationship with perfectionism, though the intensity and nature of these associations differ. Authoritarian parenting was linked to increased perfectionistic tendencies, reflecting how rigid control and criticism may contribute to heightened pressure for flawlessness. Permissive parenting showed the strongest association, suggesting that excessive leniency and lack of structure can lead to unregulated perfectionistic behaviours. Conversely, authoritative parenting demonstrated a strong positive link with adaptive forms of perfectionism, where warmth and balanced expectations encourage motivation and self-discipline rather than distress. Collectively, these findings underscore the influential role of parenting in shaping young adults' perfectionistic traits and emotional development. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of family dynamics, indicating that fostering balanced and supportive parenting practices may help promote healthier perfectionism and psychological well-being in emerging adults.

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Conflict of Interest

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