

Research Paper

A Correlational Study on Parenting Styles and Adjustment in Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a period of significant transition and development, during which individuals may encounter various challenges. The influence of parenting styles and the quality of parent-child interactions have long been of interest in developmental and family psychology. Parenting styles are essential aspects of the family environment and are closely linked to the dynamics between parents and adolescents. The present study examined this relationship within an Indian sample, using a combination of convenience and random sampling methods. A total of 60 participants—adolescents aged 14 to 18 years and their mothers—were included. Data were collected via a Google Form using two standardized instruments: the *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire* (PSDQ; Robinson, Mandlco, Olsen, & Hart, 1995) and the *Adjustment Inventory for School Students* (Sinha & Singh, 1971). The data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Results indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between permissive parenting style and adolescent adjustment. However, authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles showed no statistically significant relationship with adolescent adjustment and were negatively correlated.

Keywords: *Adolescence, parenting styles, adjustment, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, neglectful, emotional, social, educational*

Adolescence is a theoretical and evolving concept informed by physiological, psychological, temporal, and cultural perspectives. The term derives from the Latin word *adolescere*, meaning "to grow up" or "to mature." Although the concept of adolescence dates back to the 15th century, it wasn't until 1904 that G. Stanley Hall, the first president of the American Psychological Association, popularized the term. Hall introduced the phrase *storm and stress* to describe adolescence as a turbulent developmental stage (Henig, 2010, p. 4; Hall, 1904). While modern psychologists recognize that "storm and stress" is not a universal experience, they do agree that adolescence is a time of significant emotional, psychological, and physical changes.

Traditionally, adolescence is defined as the period between the onset of puberty and the acquisition of social independence (Steinberg, 2014). Chronologically, it often spans the

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ages of 10 to 18 but can range from 9 to 26 depending on cultural and developmental factors (APA, 2002).

Stages of Adolescence

- **Early Adolescence (Ages 10–13):** This stage is marked by the beginning of puberty and rapid physical development. Changes include underarm hair growth, breast development in females, and testicular enlargement in males. For girls, puberty may begin as early as age 8; for boys, around age 9. Menstruation typically starts around age 12, two to three years after breast development.
- **Middle Adolescence (Ages 14–17):** During this stage, puberty continues and physical changes become more apparent. Boys often experience voice changes and may develop acne, while girls typically complete physical development and begin regular menstruation. Adolescents may show increased interest in romantic and sexual relationships and begin to explore their sexual identity. Masturbation is a common means of self-exploration during this time.
- **Late Adolescence (Ages 18–21 and beyond):** Most individuals reach full physical maturity by this stage. They also show improved self-regulation and decision-making abilities. Late adolescents begin to form stable romantic and platonic relationships, develop a stronger sense of personal identity, and make future-oriented decisions based on their values and aspirations. Their emotional and physical dependence on family decreases, often giving way to an adult-like relationship with their parents (Allen & Waterman, 2019).
- **Adjustment in Adolescence:** The term "adjustment" originates from the biological concept of adaptation. In psychology, it refers to how individuals cope with social and interpersonal challenges. Adjustment can be viewed as both an achievement and a process (Ubale, 2018).

Types of Adolescent Adjustment

- **Emotional Adjustment:** This refers to maintaining emotional stability amid internal and external pressures. Through acceptance and cognitive adaptation, adolescents learn to balance their needs with available coping mechanisms. Emotional development is a key part of human growth (Richard & Sumathi, 2015).
- **Social Adjustment:** Social adjustment includes maintaining harmony within family, school, and broader society. Adolescents often experience emotional turbulence due to heightened sensitivity and peer influence. Developing interpersonal skills and adapting to social norms are crucial during this phase (Mathil, 2016).
- **Educational Adjustment:** This involves an adolescent's engagement with their educational environment. Success and comfort in school are linked to positive experiences with peers, teachers, instructional methods, and extracurricular activities. Poor academic performance can hinder educational adjustment, while a supportive school environment enhances it (Bhagat, 2017).
- **The Role of Parental Support:** Parental support plays a critical role in adolescent development. It fosters a sense of self-worth, psychological well-being, and emotional security (Coplan et al., 2002; Steinberg, 2001). In its absence, adolescents may suffer from anxiety, fear, aggression, and low self-esteem (Baumrind, 1996).

Parental supervision instills societal norms and helps children develop responsible behavior. Through consistent guidance and consequences, adolescents learn to regulate themselves and make independent decisions.

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Parenting Styles and Adolescent Adjustment: Parenting style is defined by parental attitudes and the emotional climate in which they interact with their children. Baumrind (1971) categorized parenting into three styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Maccoby and Martin (1983) later added a fourth: neglectful. These styles vary along dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness.

- 1. Authoritative Parenting:** Characterized by high responsiveness and reasonable demands, this style is considered the most beneficial for adolescent development. Authoritative parents set clear rules, encourage independence, and engage in open communication. This style is linked to higher self-esteem, better emotional regulation, and reduced depressive symptoms in adolescents (Baumrind, 1978; Ohannessian et al., 1998; Morin, 2022; Hearne, 2015).
- 2. Authoritarian Parenting:** Marked by high demands and low responsiveness, authoritarian parents are strict, emotionally distant, and expect unquestioning obedience. This style may result in low self-esteem, social withdrawal, aggression, and emotional issues in adolescents (Baumrind, 1989, 1991; Ozer et al., 2011; Morin, 2022; Hearne, 2015).
- 3. Permissive Parenting:** Highly responsive but undemanding, permissive parents offer emotional support but lack clear rules. This may lead to poor self-discipline, academic underperformance, and behavioral problems in adolescents (Baumrind, 1991; Lamborn et al., 1991; Radziszewska et al., 1996; Dornbusch et al., 1987).
- 4. Neglectful Parenting:** Low in both responsiveness and demands, neglectful parenting involves emotional detachment and lack of supervision. Children from such households may experience emotional distress, poor academic performance, and antisocial behavior (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Ge et al., 1996).

A study by Isabel M., Sergio M., et al. (2021) revealed that **acceptance and involvement** from parents, through enhanced family self-esteem, positively influence adolescent adjustment. On the other hand, **strictness and imposition** had a negative impact on adolescent outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

To examine the impact of different parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—on the emotional, social, and educational adjustment of adolescents.

Sample:

The study sample consisted of 30 adolescents (aged 14–18 years) and their mothers, making a total of 60 participants. Both male and female adolescents were included. Participants were selected using a random sampling technique.

Instruments:

- The **Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ)** was developed by Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, and Hart (1995) to measure parenting behaviors across three distinct styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. The questionnaire demonstrates high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients reported as .91 for authoritative, .86 for authoritarian, and .75 for permissive parenting styles. These reliability scores indicate strong psychometric properties, making the PSDQ a reliable tool for assessing parenting practices in research and applied settings.
- The **Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS)**, developed by A. K. P. Sinha and R. P. Singh, is a standardized tool used to assess emotional, social, and

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educational adjustment among school-aged students. The inventory demonstrates excellent reliability, with a split-half reliability of 0.94 and test-retest reliability of 0.93. Its validity is established through the selection of items based on biserial correlation with total and area-specific scores, all significant at the .001 level. These properties make the AISS a robust instrument for evaluating students' overall adjustment in academic and social environments.

Procedure:

Data collection for the study was conducted online using Google Forms and involved two separate forms tailored to different respondent groups. Form 1 was designed for mothers and included demographic questions along with the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ). Form 2 was intended for adolescents and collected demographic details along with responses to the Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS), which measured emotional, social, and educational adjustment. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Of the 67 responses initially collected, only 60 met the inclusion criteria and were considered for final analysis. A debriefing note was provided to all participants upon the completion of the survey forms.

RESULTS

Table No. 1: Correlation among all the parenting styles and adjustments

Adjustment	Authoritative Parenting Style	Authoritarian Parenting Style	Permissive Parenting Style
Emotional	.08	-.26	.77
Social	.30	-.14	.61
Educational	-.39	-.22	.44

Table No. 2: Correlation between total parenting and total adjustment scores

Parenting Style and Adjustments	Correlation of total scores
Authoritative and all Adjustments	-.05
Authoritarian and all Adjustments	-.23
Permissive and all Adjustments	.62

Table No. 3: Authoritative Parenting style with Adjustments

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Confidence Level	Total
Authoritative	5.19	0.839	0.600	10
Emotional	-1.543	1.056	0.755	10
Social	-0.802	0.644	0.460	10
Educational	-0.505	0.867	0.620	10

Table No. 4: Authoritarian Parenting Style with Adjustment

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Confidence Level	Total
Authoritarian	4.24	0.195	0.139	10
Emotional	-1.752	0.747	0.534	10
Social	-1.352	0.474	0.339	10
Educational	-0.533	0.853	0.610	10

Table No. 5: Permissive Parenting Style with Adjustments

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Confidence Level	Total
Permissive	4.04	0.157	0.112	10
Emotional	-1.976	0.944	0.675	10
Social	-1.134	0.793	0.567	10
Educational	-0.828	0.497	0.356	10

DISCUSSION

The present study explored the impact of different parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—on adolescents’ emotional, social, and educational adjustment. The correlation analysis revealed that the permissive parenting style had a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with all three dimensions of adolescent adjustment. The correlation coefficients were notably high: $r = 0.777$ for emotional adjustment, $r = 0.614$ for social adjustment, and $r = 0.443$ for educational adjustment. These results suggest that adolescents who experience permissive parenting, characterized by high warmth, acceptance, and active involvement from their parents, tend to exhibit better emotional well-being, stronger social skills, and more positive academic outcomes. The affectionate and supportive nature of permissive parents appears to foster motivation, self-esteem, and social self-efficacy, which collectively contribute to improved adjustment during adolescence.

In contrast, the authoritative parenting style showed mixed results. While the correlations with emotional ($r = 0.082$) and social adjustment ($r = 0.297$) were weakly positive but not statistically significant, the relationship with educational adjustment was moderately negative ($r = -0.385$). This suggests that although authoritative parents, who are typically characterized by a balance of responsiveness and demandingness, may provide some emotional and social support, this style did not translate into better academic adjustment in this sample. This unexpected finding might reflect cultural differences or other contextual factors influencing the effectiveness of authoritative parenting in the studied population.

The authoritarian parenting style was consistently negatively correlated with all forms of adolescent adjustment: emotional adjustment ($r = -0.258$), social adjustment ($r = -0.136$), and educational adjustment ($r = -0.219$). These negative correlations indicate that parenting characterized by strict control, low warmth, and high demands may contribute to difficulties in emotional regulation, social interactions, and academic performance in adolescents. Adolescents raised in authoritarian environments might struggle with low self-esteem, poor decision-making skills, and increased stress levels, which in turn hamper their overall adjustment.

The descriptive statistics support these findings. The mean scores for authoritative parenting and adjustment variables indicated moderate levels of parenting style expression but lower adjustment scores across domains. Similarly, authoritarian parenting means were lower, with correspondingly poorer adjustment scores, while permissive parenting had moderate mean scores but was linked to comparatively better adjustment outcomes.

Taken together, the results underscore the significant role of parenting warmth, involvement, and acceptance in promoting healthy adolescent development. While traditional literature often highlights authoritative parenting as the most effective style, this study's findings suggest that in the specific cultural and social context examined, permissive parenting may

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be more conducive to positive emotional, social, and educational adjustment. These findings highlight the importance of considering cultural diversity and contextual nuances when evaluating parenting practices and their impact on adolescent outcomes. Future research should further explore these dynamics across different populations to better understand how parenting styles function in varied settings.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant influence of parenting styles on adolescent adjustment across emotional, social, and educational domains. The findings reveal that permissive parenting, characterized by warmth, acceptance, and involvement, is positively associated with better adjustment outcomes in adolescents. Conversely, authoritarian parenting, marked by strictness and low emotional support, is linked to poorer adjustment. The role of authoritative parenting showed mixed results, suggesting that its impact may vary depending on cultural or contextual factors. Overall, the results emphasize the critical role of parental warmth and engagement in fostering healthy adolescent development. These insights can inform parents, educators, and counselors about the importance of nurturing supportive family environments to promote positive growth and adjustment in adolescents.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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