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Research Paper

Impact of Parenting Styles on Emotional Maturity and Social Adjustment among Adolescents: A Cross-Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Parenting style is a central family-context determinant of adolescent development, shaping the emotional and interpersonal capacities required for navigating school, peer and community environments. Adolescence involves simultaneous changes in identity, autonomy, emotional regulation and social expectations; consequently, the quality of parental responsiveness and control may be particularly consequential during this stage. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 500 adolescents (250 boys and 250 girls) drawn from ten higher-secondary schools in the urban area of Rajnandgaon district during the academic session 2025–2026. Random sampling was used to select participants from private CBSE and government schools. The Parenting Style Scale (PSS-GMMD) by Madhu Gupta and Dimple Mehtani, the Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) by Tara Sabhapathy and the Social Adjustment Scale (SAS-KA) by Ashutosh Kumar were administered in bilingual Hindi–English forms. Dominant parenting style was classified from the highest parenting-style subscale score. Descriptive statistics and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to compare emotional maturity and social adjustment across parenting-style groups. Democratic parenting was dominant among 363 adolescents (72.60%), followed by autocratic (97; 19.40%), permissive (19; 3.80%), tie (13; 2.60%) and uninvolved parenting (6; 1.20%). Emotional maturity differed significantly across parenting-style groups, $F(3,474)=19.679$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.111$. The democratic group obtained the highest mean score (126.47±13.61), whereas the permissive group obtained the lowest mean score (109.16±12.80). Social adjustment also differed significantly, $F(3,469)=8.798$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.053$. Democratic parenting was associated with the highest mean social adjustment score (58.46±7.34), while permissive parenting was associated with the lowest (52.95±7.21). Category-wise analysis showed that 38.40% of adolescents in the democratic group had high emotional maturity, compared with 19.10% in the autocratic group and 0% in the permissive group. Adolescents reporting democratic parenting demonstrated significantly higher emotional maturity and social adjustment than those reporting less structured or less responsive parenting patterns. The findings are associational rather than causal, but they support family-focused psychoeducation, adolescent counselling and school-based parent engagement initiatives. Future longitudinal and multi-informant studies should examine mediating mechanisms such as autonomy support, self-esteem, psychological flexibility and parent–adolescent communication.

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Keywords: *Adolescents, Parenting Styles, Democratic Parenting, Emotional Maturity, Social Adjustment, Cross-Sectional Study, India*

Developmental significance of adolescence

Adolescence is a transitional developmental period marked by accelerated biological maturation, expanding cognitive capacity, identity exploration, heightened sensitivity to social evaluation and increasing demands for autonomy. These changes do not occur in isolation: adolescents continue to depend on family systems for emotional security, behavioural boundaries, values, material support and models of interpersonal problem solving. The family therefore remains a primary developmental ecology even as peers, teachers and digital environments acquire greater salience. Emotional maturity and social adjustment are two indicators of whether adolescents can manage internal affective experiences and external interpersonal demands in adaptive ways.

Emotional maturity refers to the capacity to recognize, understand, regulate and express emotions without allowing emotional impulses to dominate behaviour. In adolescence, emotional maturity supports impulse control, frustration tolerance, realistic self-appraisal, empathy and recovery from stress. Social adjustment concerns the degree to which an individual adapts to social roles, relationships, institutional expectations and collective norms. Both constructs are developmentally linked: adolescents who regulate emotions effectively are generally better positioned to form stable peer relationships, resolve conflict, cooperate with teachers and respond constructively to criticism. The broader adolescent literature also identifies emotional competence as a relevant correlate of subjective well-being (Llamas-Díaz *et al.* 2022).

Conceptual foundation of parenting styles

Parenting-style theory conceptualizes childrearing practices in terms of the intersection of parental responsiveness and demandingness. In the traditional typology associated with Baumrind, authoritative parenting combines warmth, reasoning, appropriate autonomy and consistent control; authoritarian parenting emphasizes obedience, hierarchy and punitive discipline with limited responsiveness; permissive parenting is responsive but insufficiently demanding; and neglectful or uninvolved parenting is low on both dimensions. Contemporary studies continue to show that parenting style is best understood as a multidimensional and relational pattern rather than a single disciplinary behaviour (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019).

The terminology used in the present study follows the instruments supplied by the author: democratic, autocratic, permissive, tie and uninvolved. In interpretation, democratic parenting is considered alongside the broader authoritative parenting literature because both emphasize warmth, participation and structured autonomy. This interpretive bridge is made cautiously because the present paper does not alter the scale-derived categories or relabel the empirical data. The distinction matters conceptually: democratic/authoritative patterns are expected to promote emotional maturity because they combine affective security with negotiated limits, whereas autocratic/authoritarian patterns may provide structure at the cost of autonomy and psychological safety. Permissive patterns may preserve warmth but fail to provide consistent behavioural scaffolding, while uninvolved patterns lack both responsiveness and active guidance.

Parenting styles and emotional maturity

Emotional development is partly socialized within parent–child relationships. Parents who acknowledge adolescents' feelings, model regulated responses, explain consequences and encourage autonomous problem solving provide repeated opportunities for emotion recognition and self-regulation. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that positive parenting dimensions such as warmth and autonomy support are generally associated with lower emotion dysregulation, whereas psychological control, hostility, rejection and authoritarian practices are associated with greater dysregulation (Goagoses *et al.* 2023). Similar conclusions are reported in research on adolescent internalizing symptoms, where warmth, behavioural control and autonomy granting tend to be protective, while harsh and psychologically controlling practices are risk factors (Gorostiaga *et al.* 2019; Pinquart, 2017a).

A useful mechanistic account is provided by self-determination theory. Supportive parenting can satisfy adolescents' needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, thereby facilitating integrated self-regulation and emotional well-being. Conversely, controlling, chaotic, or rejecting environments may frustrate these needs and increase emotional vulnerability. Abidin *et al.* (2022) found that supportive parenting was associated with emotional well-being through basic psychological need satisfaction, while thwarting parenting was associated with emotional ill-being through need frustration. Peng *et al.* (2021) similarly showed that parental emotional warmth, rejection and overprotection were connected to adolescent mental health through self-esteem and psychological inflexibility. These findings suggest that emotional maturity is not simply a direct product of parental discipline; it emerges through the adolescent's internalization of security, self-worth, flexibility and autonomy.

Parenting styles and social adjustment

Social adjustment requires skills that are repeatedly rehearsed in the family: turn-taking, conflict resolution, perspective taking, negotiation, respect for boundaries and adaptation to authority. Democratic family environments may promote these competencies by allowing adolescents to express opinions while experiencing consistent consequences. Autocratic environments may create compliance without necessarily developing adaptive social judgement, particularly where obedience is enforced through fear or punishment. Permissive environments may provide warmth but insufficient practice in negotiating rules, delaying gratification and managing interpersonal limits. Uninvolved environments may leave adolescents without reliable supervision, emotional feedback, or behavioural guidance. Prior research links parenting practices with adolescent social anxiety and self-esteem-related adjustment, underscoring the family's role in social-emotional development (Gómez-Ortiz *et al.* 2019; Milevsky *et al.* 2007).

Cross-national and regional studies consistently associate supportive and structured parenting with better psychosocial adjustment. For example, Lamborn *et al.* (1991) and Steinberg *et al.* (1994) reported that authoritative parenting was linked to more favourable adolescent competence and adjustment profiles than authoritarian, indulgent, or neglectful patterns. More recent work links authoritative parenting with proactive behaviour and social-emotional competence, while negative or neglectful parenting is linked to maladjustment and internalizing difficulties (Lorence *et al.* 2019; Nie *et al.* 2022). In the Indian context, Jain *et al.* (2021) reported an important relationship between parenting style and social adjustment among school-going adolescents, while Francis *et al.* (2021) found perceived

parenting style to be associated with adolescent psychological well-being. These studies provide regional relevance for examining parenting styles among Indian school adolescents.

Indian contextual relevance

Indian families often function within collectivistic values, hierarchical respect, strong family interdependence, academic aspiration and rapidly changing adolescent lifestyles. These characteristics can complicate simple transplantation of Western parenting typologies. Behaviour that appears controlling in one cultural setting may be interpreted in another as involvement, protection, or moral socialization. Nevertheless, research increasingly suggests that the core developmental significance of warmth, support, autonomy and consistent structure remains relevant across cultures, even when the expression of these dimensions varies (Dou *et al.* 2020; Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019).

The study setting in Rajnandgaon district adds an important regional dimension. Adolescents in central Indian urban school settings navigate family expectations, school achievement pressures, friendship networks, digital media and social transitions simultaneously. Investigating parenting styles in this context can inform school counselling services and parent education programmes that are culturally grounded rather than imported uncritically from other settings. Qualitative evidence also indicates that parenting practices are dynamic and may shift with social stressors, child age and changing parent–adolescent relationships (Babu *et al.* 2024).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design

A quantitative cross-sectional research design was employed to examine associations between dominant parenting style, emotional maturity and social adjustment. The cross-sectional design was appropriate for estimating group differences and prevalence-like distributions at a single point in the academic session, but it does not permit causal inference or temporal ordering. The study followed the general IMRAD reporting structure and used only the variables and aggregate results supplied in the source document and the author-provided methodology.

Study setting

The study was conducted in the urban zone of Rajnandgaon district, Chhattisgarh, India, during the academic session 2025–2026. Participants were recruited from ten higher-secondary schools representing both private CBSE and government school categories. The selected schools were: Delhi Public School, Rajnandgaon; Yugantar Public School, Rajnandgaon; Wesleyan School, Rajnandgaon; Royal Kids School, Rajnandgaon; Aziz Public School, Rajnandgaon; Guru Nanak School, Rajnandgaon; Neeraj Public School, Rajnandgaon; Neeraj Bajpai International School, Rajnandgaon; Gayatri School, Rajnandgaon; and Sanskar Public School, Rajnandgaon.

Study population and sample

The target population consisted of adolescent students enrolled in Classes IX through XII. A total of 500 adolescents were selected, with an equal distribution of 250 boys and 250 girls. The institutional distribution supplied by the author comprised ten higher-secondary schools, with 500 adolescents selected in total.

Supplementary Table S1. Distribution of the Sample across Institutions

Institutional category	No. of schools	Male adolescents	Female adolescents	Total selected
Higher-secondary schools	10	250	250	500

Sampling technique

Random sampling was used to select the final sample of 500 adolescents. The supplied methodology specifies balanced gender selection, with 250 male and 250 female participants.

Because additional details regarding sampling frame construction, school-level stratification and student-level randomization were not provided, no further procedural claim is made.

Research instruments

Data were collected using three bilingual Hindi–English psychometric tools: the Parenting Style Scale (PSS-GMMD) developed by Madhu Gupta and Dimple Mehtani; the Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) developed by Tara Sabhapathy; and the Social Adjustment Scale (SAS-KA) developed by Ashutosh Kumar. The PSS-GMMD was used to identify the adolescent's perceived dominant parenting style, while the EMS and SAS-KA measured emotional maturity and social adjustment, respectively.

The dominant parenting style was classified from the highest Parenting Style Scale subscale score. Categories retained in the supplied results were democratic, autocratic, permissive, tie and uninvolved. In the categorical emotional-maturity table, "tie" represented respondents whose parenting-style scores did not yield a single dominant category according to the supplied classification. No scoring algorithm, item count, cut-off derivation, or reliability coefficient was available in the supplied material; therefore, none is invented here. This is a reporting limitation that should be addressed in the final journal submission if scale manuals or psychometric documentation become available.

Study variables

The principal grouping variable was dominant parenting style. The primary outcome variables were emotional maturity and social adjustment. Demographic variables included gender, class, family type and area of residence. Emotional maturity was additionally categorized as low, moderate, or high in the supplied categorical table. For ANOVA-based continuous outcomes, the supplied tables present democratic, autocratic, permissive and uninvolved groups, while the categorical table also includes tie respondents.

Data collection

The author-provided methodology specifies that the three bilingual scales were administered to adolescent respondents. The exact field procedure, questionnaire completion mode, data-collection dates, investigator training and non-response handling were not documented in the supplied material. Consequently, the present manuscript reports the study as a cross-sectional school-based survey without adding unsupported procedural details.

Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize frequencies, percentages, means, medians and standard deviations. One-way analysis of variance was used to compare emotional maturity

and social adjustment across parenting-style groups. Statistical significance was evaluated at $p<0.001$ for the reported omnibus tests. Eta-squared (η^2) was reported as the measure of between-group effect size. The supplied analysis plan also mentioned t-tests and Pearson correlations as part of the broader statistical framework, but the uploaded results did not include corresponding t-test or correlation tables; therefore, those analyses are not reported as findings in this paper.

Small differences in the number of respondents across outcome tables reflect the sample sizes actually reported in the supplied tables. The original descriptive and inferential values have been retained without imputation or alteration. The uninvolved group contained only six respondents for emotional maturity and five for social adjustment, so estimates for this group are unstable and should be interpreted descriptively rather than as population estimates.

Ethical considerations

The supplied methodology did not provide the institutional ethics committee name, approval number, parental consent process, participant assent process, confidentiality procedure, or referral protocol. Accordingly, this manuscript makes no unsupported claim that these procedures occurred. Before journal submission, the authors should document the actual ethical approvals and consent/assent procedures in accordance with institutional and national requirements. This transparency is important because the participants are minors.

Reporting approach

All tables and figures in the Results section are derived strictly from the supplied aggregate data. No individual-level records were generated, no missing values were imputed and no additional analyses were fabricated. Where the source tables showed different denominators, those denominators were retained. Interpretive statements distinguish statistical significance, descriptive rank ordering and causal plausibility.

RESULTS

1. Socio-demographic characteristics

The study sample comprised 500 adolescents, with equal representation of boys and girls (250 each; 50.00%). Class IX constituted the largest class group (236; 47.20%), followed by Class XI (124; 24.80%), Class XII (101; 20.20%) and Class X (37; 7.40%). A majority lived in joint families (266; 53.20%) and urban areas (336; 67.20%). The demographic profile therefore combined gender balance with considerable variation in class level, family structure and residence.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Adolescent Respondents (N = 500)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	250	50.00
	Female	250	50.00
Class	IX	236	47.20
	X	37	7.40
	XI	124	24.80
	XII	101	20.20
Family type	Joint	266	53.20
	Single	234	46.80

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Area of residence	Urban	336	67.20
	Rural	164	32.80

The equal gender distribution strengthens the study's descriptive comparability across boys and girls, although gender-wise outcome results were not supplied. The predominance of Class IX respondents indicates that early-to-middle adolescence is heavily represented. Joint-family residence was slightly more common than single-family residence, while urban residence was twice as prevalent as rural residence.

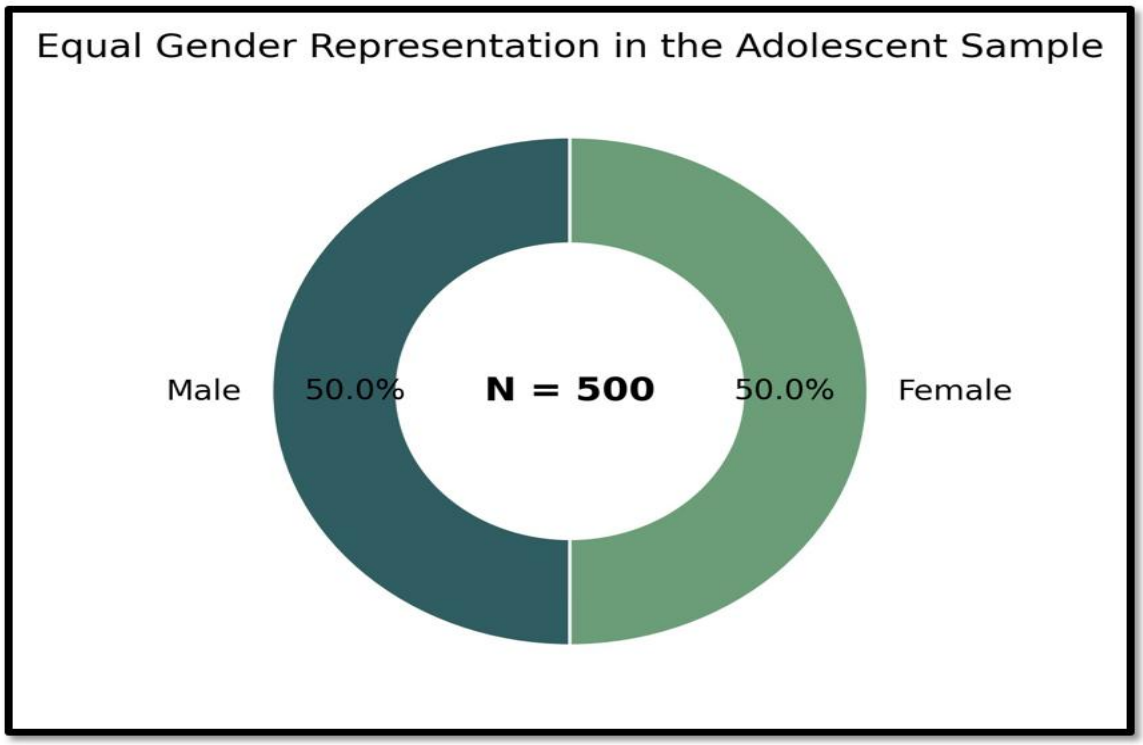


Figure 1. Gender distribution of the adolescent sample (N = 500).

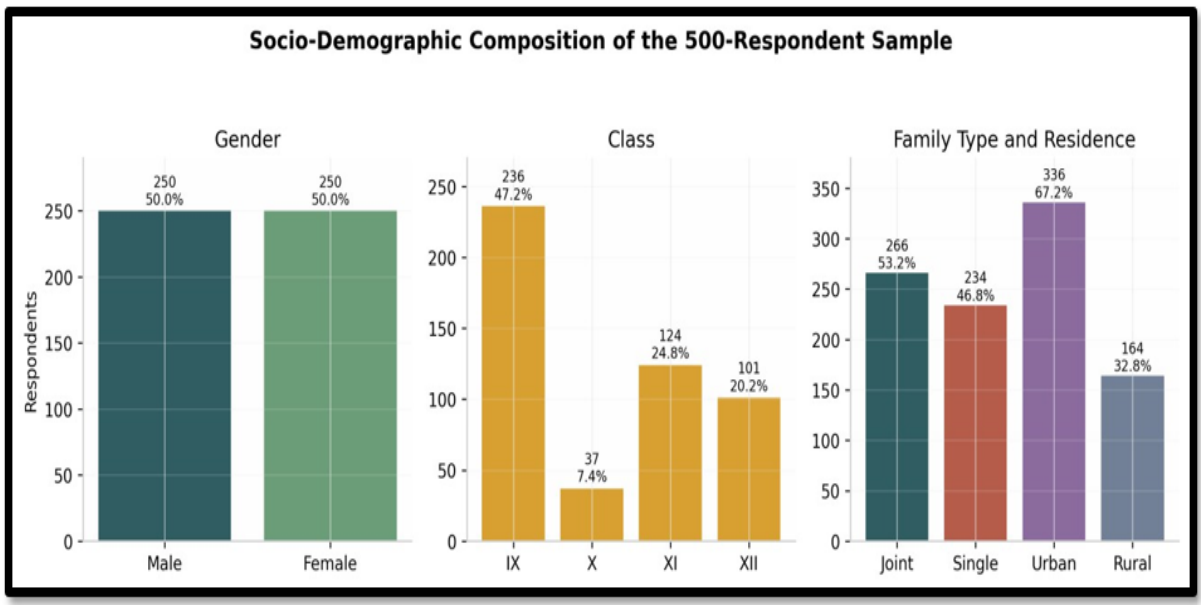


Figure 2. Socio-demographic composition by gender, class, family type and residence.

2. Distribution of dominant parenting styles

Democratic parenting was the most prevalent dominant style, reported by 363 adolescents (72.60%). Autocratic parenting was the second most common category (97; 19.40%), followed by permissive parenting (19; 3.80%), tie (13; 2.60%) and uninvolved parenting (6; 1.20%). The marked concentration in the democratic category suggests that most adolescents perceived their family environment as combining responsiveness with participation and structured guidance.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents According to Dominant Parenting Style (N = 500)

Dominant Parenting Style	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Democratic	363	72.60
Autocratic	97	19.40
Permissive	19	3.80
Tie	13	2.60
Uninvolved	6	1.20
Total	500	100.00

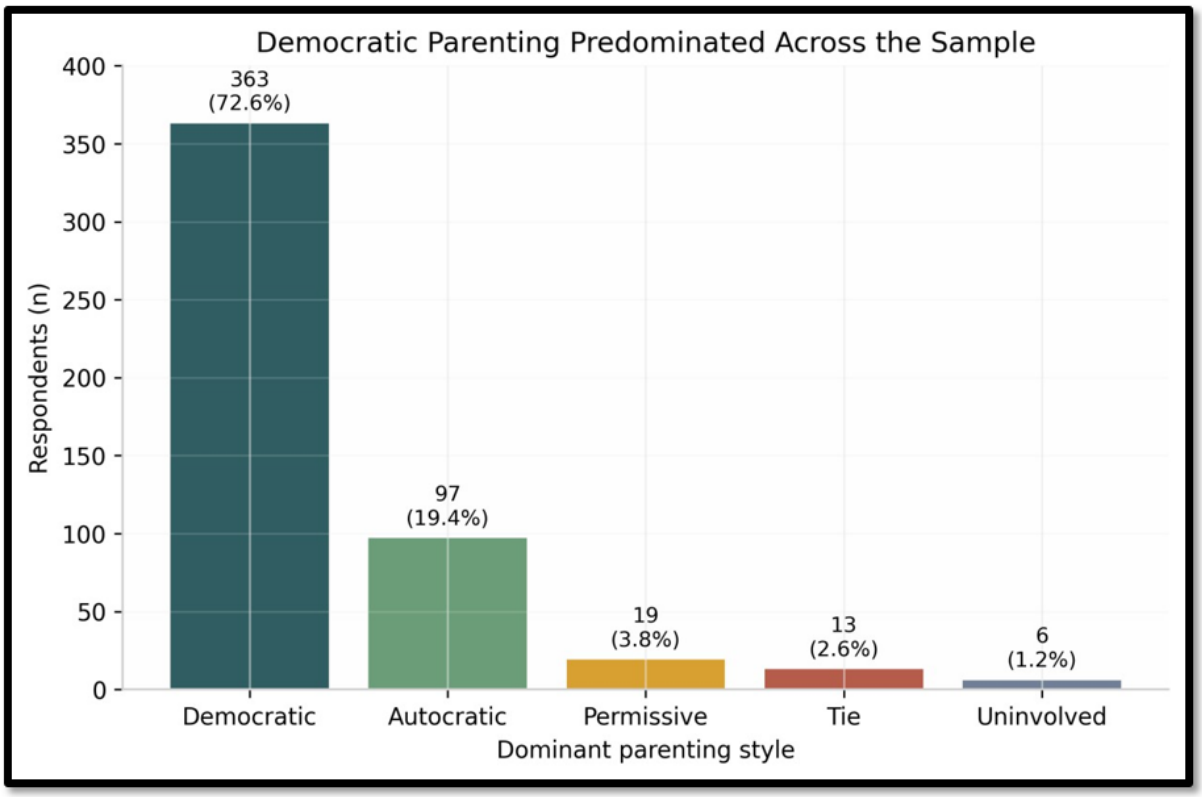


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents according to dominant parenting style (N = 500).

The small counts for permissive, tie and uninvolved groups limit the precision of group-specific estimates. In particular, the uninvolved category contains only six respondents, so its observed mean values should not be overinterpreted despite their descriptive value.

3. Emotional maturity by dominant parenting style

The democratic group recorded the highest mean emotional maturity score (126.47±13.61; n=359), followed by the autocratic group (117.77±12.51; n=94), the uninvolved group (115.17±10.28; n=6) and the permissive group (109.16±12.80; n=19). The overall mean

reported for the emotional-maturity sample was 123.56±14.29 (n=492). The median scores followed a similar pattern, with democratic parenting associated with the highest median and permissive parenting with the lowest.

Table 3. Emotional Maturity Scores According to Dominant Parenting Style

Parenting Style	n	Mean	Median	SD
Democratic	359	126.47	127.00	13.61
Autocratic	94	117.77	117.50	12.51
Permissive	19	109.16	114.00	12.80
Uninvolved	6	115.17	118.50	10.28
Overall	492	123.56	124.00	14.29

The mean difference between the democratic and permissive groups was 17.31 score points. Although the absolute interpretation of this difference depends on the EMS scoring manual—which was not supplied—the rank ordering is consistent across means and medians. The uninvolved group's mean was higher than that of the permissive group, but the very small n renders this comparison unstable.

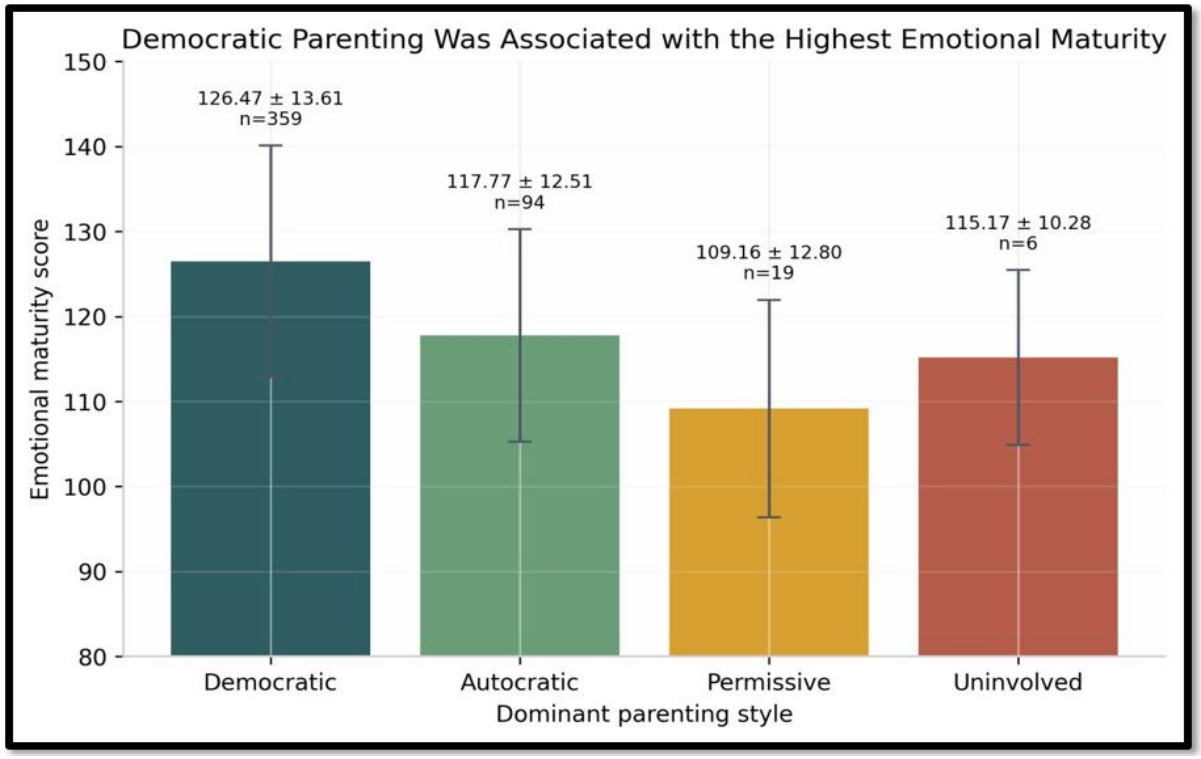


Figure 4. Mean emotional maturity scores with standard deviations by dominant parenting style.

4. ANOVA for emotional maturity

One-way ANOVA showed a statistically significant difference in emotional maturity across parenting-style groups, $F(3,474)=19.679$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.111$. The η^2 value indicates that approximately 11.1% of the variability in emotional maturity was associated with parenting-style group membership in the supplied analysis. Because the design is cross-sectional, this association should not be interpreted as proof that parenting style caused the observed differences.

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA of Emotional Maturity According to Parenting Style

Source of Variation	df	F-value	p-value	η^2
Between groups	3	19.679	<0.001	0.111
Within groups	474			
Total	477			

The omnibus test establishes that at least one group mean differs, but the supplied results do not include post-hoc pairwise tests. Therefore, the manuscript does not claim that every specific pairwise contrast is statistically significant. Descriptively, the democratic group ranked highest and the permissive group ranked lowest.

5. Social adjustment by dominant parenting style

For social adjustment, the democratic group again recorded the highest mean score (58.46±7.34; n=357), followed by the uninvolved group (56.80±5.36; n=5), the autocratic group (54.79±7.08; n=92) and the permissive group (52.95±7.21; n=19). The overall mean was 57.40±7.47 (n=488).

Table 5. Social Adjustment Scores According to Dominant Parenting Style

Parenting Style	n	Mean	SD
Democratic	357	58.46	7.34
Autocratic	92	54.79	7.08
Permissive	19	52.95	7.21
Uninvolved	5	56.80	5.36
Overall	488	57.40	7.47

The democratic group's mean exceeded the permissive group's mean by 5.51 points and the autocratic group's mean by 3.67 points. The uninvolved group's second-place rank is based on only five respondents and should therefore be treated as descriptive rather than reliable.

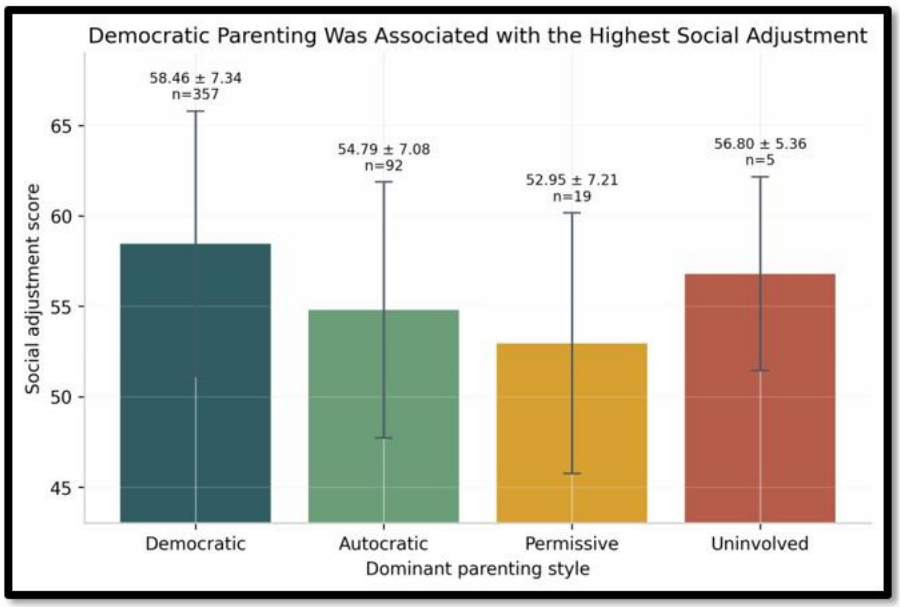


Figure 5. Mean social adjustment scores with standard deviations by dominant parenting style.

6. ANOVA for social adjustment

Social adjustment differed significantly across parenting-style groups, $F(3,469)=8.798$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.053$. The effect size was smaller than that observed for emotional maturity, indicating that dominant parenting-style group membership accounted for approximately 5.3% of the observed variability in social adjustment.

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA of Social Adjustment According to Parenting Style

Source of Variation	df	F-value	p-value	η^2
Between groups	3	8.798	<0.001	0.053
Within groups	469			
Total	472			

7. Emotional maturity categories by parenting style

The categorical distribution revealed substantial between-group contrasts. High emotional maturity was most common in the democratic group (138/359; 38.40%), followed by the autocratic group (18/94; 19.10%). No respondents in the permissive, tie, or uninvolved groups were classified as high in the supplied table. Low emotional maturity was especially frequent among permissive-parenting respondents (16/19; 84.20%), followed by tie (7/13; 53.80%), autocratic (47/94; 50.00%) and uninvolved respondents (3/6; 50.00%). Democratic parenting had the lowest proportion in the low category (96/359; 26.70%).

Table 7. Emotional Maturity Categories According to Parenting Style

Parenting Style	Low n (%)	Moderate n (%)	High n (%)
Autocratic	47 (50.00)	29 (30.90)	18 (19.10)
Democratic	96 (26.70)	125 (34.80)	138 (38.40)
Permissive	16 (84.20)	3 (15.80)	0 (0.00)
Tie	7 (53.80)	6 (46.20)	0 (0.00)
Uninvolved	3 (50.00)	3 (50.00)	0 (0.00)
Overall	170 (34.60)	166 (33.70)	156 (31.70)

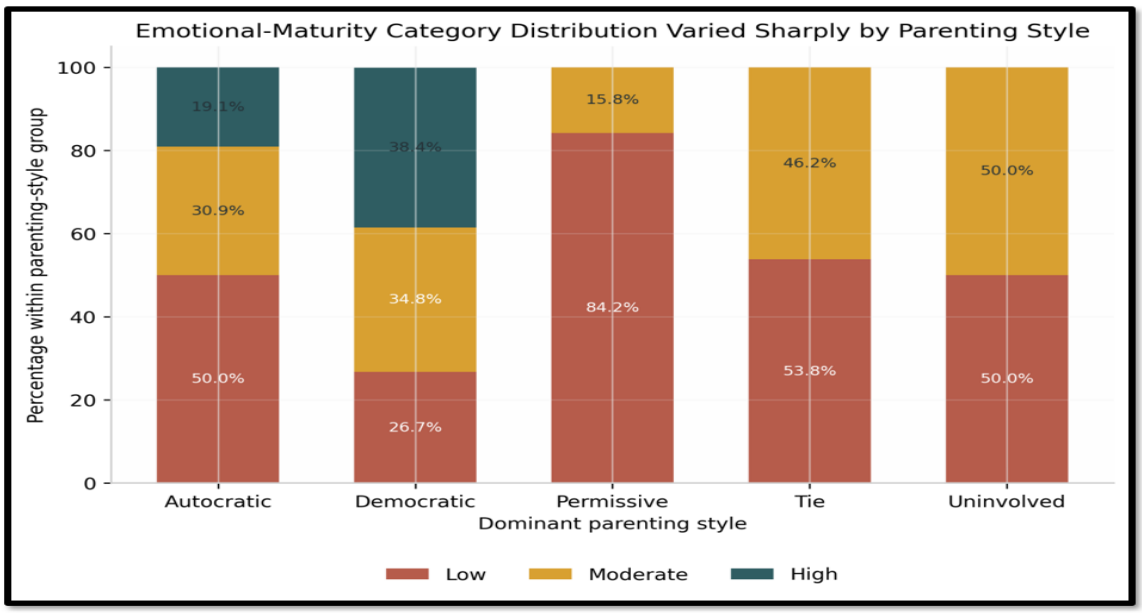


Figure 7. Percentage distribution of low, moderate and high emotional maturity by dominant parenting style.

Overall, 34.60% of adolescents were classified as low, 33.70% as moderate and 31.70% as high in emotional maturity. The democratic group shifted the distribution toward the high category, whereas the permissive group was concentrated overwhelmingly in the low category. These categorical findings reinforce the continuous-score ANOVA result while also showing that group differences were not limited to mean scores.

Summary of statistical findings

Both primary hypotheses were supported. Emotional maturity and social adjustment differed significantly across dominant parenting-style groups. The third directional hypothesis was descriptively supported: democratic parenting was associated with the highest mean emotional maturity and social adjustment, while permissive parenting was associated with the lowest mean scores on both outcomes. The association was stronger for emotional maturity (η^2=0.111) than for social adjustment (η^2=0.053), suggesting that parenting-style patterns may be more closely linked in this sample to internal emotional regulation than to broader social adaptation.

DISCUSSION

Principal interpretation

The present cross-sectional study found that dominant parenting style was significantly associated with both emotional maturity and social adjustment among 500 school-going adolescents. Democratic parenting was reported most frequently and was associated with the highest mean scores on both outcomes. Permissive parenting, although reported by a much smaller subgroup, was associated with the lowest mean emotional maturity and social adjustment. Autocratic parenting occupied an intermediate position on both outcomes, while the uninvolved group's estimates were unstable because of very small group size.

These findings align with a broad developmental literature indicating that parenting environments combining warmth, structure and autonomy support are associated with more favourable adolescent outcomes than environments characterized by coercion, inconsistency, or emotional disengagement. The consistency of the results across continuous means, omnibus ANOVA tests and categorical distributions strengthens the conclusion that parenting-style group membership was meaningfully associated with the two developmental indicators examined.

Democratic parenting and adolescent competence

The strong representation of democratic parenting (72.60%) and its association with the highest emotional maturity and social adjustment scores are consistent with the classic authoritative-parenting literature. Baumrind (1991) argued that authoritative parents support adolescent competence by combining clear behavioural expectations with reasoning, responsiveness and appropriate independence. Later longitudinal work reported that adolescents from authoritative families tended to show better adjustment and competence than those from authoritarian, indulgent, or neglectful families (Lamborn *et al.* 1991; Steinberg *et al.* 1994). The present results are compatible with this pattern while using the democratic terminology of the PSS-GMMD.

Mechanistically, democratic parenting may facilitate emotional maturity by validating adolescents' emotional experiences without surrendering appropriate limits. Such an environment can promote internal regulation rather than external compliance: adolescents learn to identify emotions, consider consequences, negotiate disagreement and recover from

frustration. In self-determination terms, democratic parenting may satisfy needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, enabling more integrated self-regulation (Abidin *et al.* 2022). It may also support social adjustment by modelling respectful communication and reason-based conflict resolution. These mechanisms are plausible and empirically supported in the broader literature, but the current cross-sectional dataset does not directly test mediation.

Why emotional maturity showed a larger effect than social adjustment

Parenting style showed a larger between-group effect for emotional maturity (η^2=0.111) than for social adjustment (η^2=0.053). This difference may indicate that family emotional climate is more proximal to emotional maturity than to social adjustment. Emotional regulation is learned in everyday family exchanges involving comfort, discipline, frustration, praise and conflict. Social adjustment, by contrast, is influenced by a broader ecosystem that includes peer relationships, school climate, community safety, digital media, socioeconomic conditions and prior social experiences. Accordingly, parenting style may be a particularly salient predictor of emotional development while representing only one of several influences on social adaptation.

This interpretation is consistent with studies showing that parenting dimensions are robustly associated with emotion regulation and internalizing outcomes, while adolescent social behaviour also reflects peer and school contexts (Goagoses *et al.* 2023; Gorostiaga *et al.* 2019; Lorence *et al.* 2019). It also suggests that interventions designed to improve social adjustment may need to address both parenting practices and extra-familial environments rather than assuming that family change alone will produce large social effects.

Autocratic parenting: structure without psychological autonomy

The autocratic group had lower mean emotional maturity and social adjustment than the democratic group but higher mean emotional maturity than the permissive group. This intermediate pattern is theoretically meaningful. Autocratic parenting may provide rules, supervision and behavioural structure, which can prevent some forms of impulsivity or disorganization. However, when structure is delivered with low warmth, limited explanation, punitive control, or restricted autonomy, adolescents may develop compliance without mature self-regulation. They may become skilled at avoiding punishment without acquiring adaptive emotional processing, negotiation and independent problem-solving capacities.

The broader evidence supports this nuanced interpretation. Meta-analytic findings indicate that harsh control and psychological control are associated with greater externalizing and internalizing problems, while warmth and autonomy support are generally protective (Pinquart, 2017a, 2017b). Shaw and Starr (2019) found that authoritarian parenting contributed to intergenerational patterns of emotion dysregulation, particularly in the context of chronic family stress. Rakhshani *et al.* (2022) also found associations between parenting style and anxiety and depression among adolescent girls. Recent evidence further links perceived authoritarian and permissive parenting with greater adolescent anxiety (Haghshenas *et al.* 2024). The present study does not measure psychological control directly, but the lower emotional maturity observed in the autocratic group is compatible with this literature.

Permissive parenting and the lowest outcome scores

Permissive parenting was uncommon in the sample but was associated with the lowest mean emotional maturity and social adjustment. This finding cautions against interpreting warmth alone as sufficient for adolescent development. A family environment may be affectionate yet fail to provide consistent limits, monitoring, routines and expectations. Under such conditions, adolescents may have fewer opportunities to practise delaying gratification, managing frustration, accepting boundaries and resolving conflicts within a structured relationship. The high proportion of permissive-parenting respondents in the low emotional-maturity category (84.20%) is especially notable, although the group contained only 19 respondents.

The finding is consistent with prior work linking permissive or indulgent environments with weaker behavioural regulation and poorer psychosocial outcomes in some contexts. Kuppens and Ceulemans (2019) emphasize that parenting typologies are multidimensional and context-dependent, but their findings still favour authoritative patterns over uninvolved or authoritarian configurations. Pinquart (2017b) reported that permissive parenting was associated with higher externalizing problems. Fuentes *et al.* (2022) similarly show that parental warmth without sufficient strictness may not automatically produce optimal adolescent empathy and self-concept outcomes. In the present study, the particularly low social adjustment score in the permissive group may reflect insufficient socialization into rules, role expectations and reciprocal responsibility. Nevertheless, the small subgroup requires replication before strong population-level conclusions are drawn.

Uninvolved parenting and interpretive caution

The uninvolved group displayed unexpectedly high social adjustment and intermediate emotional maturity relative to autocratic and permissive groups. This result should be interpreted with exceptional caution because the group contained only five or six respondents across outcome tables. Small groups can yield unstable means and a few atypical observations can shift the group average substantially. The theoretically expected pattern would generally place uninvolved parenting at the low end because it lacks both responsiveness and demandingness; however, the present data do not support a strong conclusion for this subgroup.

This is an important scientific limitation. The correct response to an unstable subgroup result is not to force it into a theoretical narrative but to report it transparently and limit inference. Future studies should intentionally oversample uninvolved-parenting families or use multi-informant and longitudinal designs to obtain more reliable estimates.

Categorical distribution of emotional maturity

The category-wise results sharpen the study's practical message. Democratic parenting was associated with the largest proportion of adolescents in the high emotional-maturity category (38.40%), while permissive parenting was associated with no high-category respondents and an 84.20% concentration in the low category. Autocratic parenting also showed a majority in the low category (50.00%), despite having a higher mean than the permissive group. These findings suggest that mean-level comparisons, while important, can conceal clinically or educationally meaningful category distributions.

From a school mental-health perspective, the one-in-three overall prevalence of low emotional maturity is concerning. Even if the scale cut-offs cannot be clinically interpreted

without the manual, the categorical distribution indicates substantial variation in adolescents' emotional functioning. School systems may benefit from universal social-emotional learning as well as targeted counselling for adolescents who report emotionally unsupportive or inconsistently structured home environments.

Comparison with Indian evidence

The findings converge with Indian research emphasizing the role of parenting in adolescent psychological development. Francis *et al.* (2021) found that perceived parenting style was associated with psychological well-being among adolescents, while Jain *et al.* (2021) reported the relevance of parenting style to social adjustment among school-going adolescents. Mandal *et al.* (2021) found that authoritative parenting was associated with higher self-esteem in adolescents attending an adolescent health clinic, whereas authoritarian parenting was associated with lower self-esteem. Agarwal and Chauhan (2022) also reported significant associations between parenting style and adolescent emotional maturity. Pandey and Tripathi (2024) likewise reported that nurturing parenting patterns were important for emotional maturity and that authoritarian and neglectful patterns were associated with less favourable emotional outcomes.

The present study extends this regional literature by integrating emotional maturity and social adjustment in a 500-student school sample and by reporting effect sizes for both outcomes. Its findings support the relevance of parenting-style research in central India and highlight the potential value of culturally adapted parent education within school systems. At the same time, the predominance of democratic parenting in the sample suggests that Rajnandgaon families may already perceive themselves as relatively participative, or that the measure and social desirability context may influence self-reported parenting categories. This possibility should be examined through parent reports, observational methods, or multi-informant designs.

Mechanistic pathways

Several mechanisms may explain the observed associations. First, emotional socialization occurs through parental reactions to adolescent emotions: supportive responses can encourage recognition and regulation, while dismissive or punitive responses can promote suppression, avoidance, or emotional escalation. Second, autonomy-supportive parenting may strengthen internal locus of control and self-efficacy, which are foundational to mature emotional and social functioning. Third, consistent structure may reduce uncertainty and support predictable consequences, while overly punitive structure may increase fear and psychological inflexibility. Fourth, parent–adolescent communication may affect social adjustment by providing a model for negotiation, empathy and respectful disagreement.

Existing evidence supports several of these pathways. Abidin *et al.* (2022) showed that basic psychological need satisfaction and frustration mediated relationships between supportive or thwarting parenting and emotional well-being. Peng *et al.* (2021) found chain mediation through self-esteem and psychological inflexibility in the association between parenting style and adolescent mental health. Yao *et al.* (2022) reported that academic–social student–faculty interaction mediated links between parenting styles and emotion regulation among undergraduates, suggesting that family socialization may interact with later institutional contexts. These mechanisms were not directly tested in the present dataset but provide a strong agenda for future research.

Socio-demographic considerations

The sample's demographic composition may have shaped the results. Equal gender representation reduces the likelihood that the aggregate profile is dominated by one gender, but gender-specific outcomes cannot be inferred without gender-wise test results. The concentration of Class IX students may increase the representation of younger adolescents, for whom family oversight remains relatively strong. Joint-family residence was slightly more common than single-family residence and Indian joint families may distribute caregiving across multiple adults, potentially altering the meaning of dominant parenting-style classification. Urban residence was also more common, limiting the generalizability of findings to rural adolescents.

Future analyses should test whether class level, family type, residence, or gender moderate parenting-style associations. Such moderation is theoretically plausible. For example, the developmental meaning of autonomy may differ between Class IX and Class XII students, while family structure may influence the availability of alternative adult support. The present dataset did not supply these interaction tests, so the present manuscript does not speculate beyond these priorities.

Methodological interpretation of effect sizes

Both omnibus ANOVAs were statistically significant at $p<0.001$, but statistical significance alone does not establish practical importance. The emotional-maturity effect size ($\eta^2=0.111$) was more than twice the social-adjustment effect size ($\eta^2=0.053$). This pattern suggests a stronger group-level association for emotional maturity, though both effects leave substantial outcome variance unexplained. The unexplained variance likely reflects measurement specificity, individual differences, peer and school influences, socioeconomic context, genetic and temperamental factors and reciprocal adolescent effects on parenting.

A balanced interpretation therefore recognizes meaningful group differences without overstating them. Parenting style is an important developmental context, not a deterministic force. Adolescents within every group varied and some adolescents in less favourable parenting categories still demonstrated moderate or high functioning. This within-group heterogeneity is consistent with resilience research and underscores the need for person-centred as well as variable-centred analyses.

Theoretical contribution

The study contributes to parenting-style scholarship in three ways. First, it links democratic parenting to both emotional maturity and social adjustment in an Indian school population, supporting the cross-context relevance of warm-structured parenting. Second, it demonstrates that outcome-specific effect sizes can differ even when both outcomes show significant omnibus differences. Third, it highlights the value of reporting category distributions in addition to means, revealing that permissive parenting was associated with an especially concentrated low-emotional-maturity profile.

The findings also encourage theoretical refinement. Parenting styles may not influence all adolescent outcomes equally; emotional regulation may be more directly socialized within the family, whereas social adjustment may require additional supports from peer groups and institutions. A more comprehensive model would treat family parenting style as one component within an ecological system rather than as a single dominant cause.

Critical appraisal of the evidence

The study's principal strength is its relatively large, gender-balanced sample of school-going adolescents. Reporting both continuous and categorical outcomes adds interpretive depth. However, the cross-sectional design, self-report measures, unequal group sizes, small permissive and uninvolved subgroups and absence of post-hoc tests constrain causal and pairwise inference. The differing denominators across outcome tables also require careful reporting. Because the source data are aggregate, it was not possible to verify distributional assumptions, homogeneity of variance, outliers, or the influence of missing data. These analyses should be reported in a fully transparent journal submission.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a coherent empirical pattern: democratic parenting was associated with the most favourable profile, permissive parenting with the least favourable profile and autocratic parenting with an intermediate but still suboptimal profile. The result is strongest for emotional maturity, moderately supported for social adjustment and weakest for the very small uninvolved subgroup.

CONCLUSION

Among 500 adolescents from ten higher-secondary schools in urban Rajnandgaon, democratic parenting was the dominant perceived style and was associated with significantly higher emotional maturity and social adjustment than less balanced parenting patterns. Emotional maturity differed across parenting-style groups with a medium-sized association (η^2=0.111), while social adjustment showed a smaller but statistically significant association (η^2=0.053). The democratic group achieved the highest mean scores on both outcomes, whereas the permissive group achieved the lowest. Categorical findings further showed that high emotional maturity was concentrated in the democratic group, while low emotional maturity was overwhelmingly concentrated in the permissive group.

The results support the developmental importance of parenting that combines emotional responsiveness, participation, consistency and age-appropriate autonomy. They do not establish causality, but they provide a strong rationale for school-linked parent education, adolescent emotional-learning programmes and early counselling referrals for adolescents experiencing coercive, permissive, or disengaged family environments. Future studies should use longitudinal, multi-informant designs to test mechanisms and examine whether improving parenting practices produces measurable gains in adolescent emotional maturity and social adjustment.

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Conflict of Interest

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