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Research Paper

A Comparative Study in Parenting Style and Decision Making among Adolescent Boys and Girls

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ABSTRACT

Parenting style plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development, including their ability to make effective decisions. The present study examined the relationship between perceived parenting styles and decision-making among adolescents, while also investigating gender differences in these variables. A quantitative correlational research design was employed with a sample of 60 adolescents, comprising 30 boys and 30 girls. Data were collected using the Parenting Style Scale developed by Abdul Gafoor and the General Decision-Making Style (GDMS) Scale developed by Scott and Bruce. Statistical analyses included Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between the study variables and independent samples t-tests to assess gender differences. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between perceived parenting style and adolescents' decision-making, suggesting that positive parenting practices are associated with more effective decision-making abilities. Furthermore, no significant gender differences were observed in either parenting style or decision-making. These findings underscore the importance of supportive parenting in fostering adolescents' decision-making competence and contribute to the growing body of literature on family influences on adolescent psychological development.

Keywords: *Parenting style, decision-making, adolescents, gender differences, parenting practices*

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes that shape an individual's transition from childhood to adulthood. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) defines adolescence as the period between 10 and 19 years of age, during which young people experience significant biological maturation, identity formation, and increasing autonomy. This developmental period is accompanied by profound neurological changes, particularly in the maturation of the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for executive functions such as planning, reasoning, impulse control, and decision-making (Steinberg, 2014). Because these cognitive systems continue to mature throughout adolescence, young people often encounter challenges in making effective decisions while navigating complex academic, social, and emotional situations.

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Adolescence is commonly divided into three developmental stages: early adolescence (10–13 years), middle adolescence (14–17 years), and late adolescence (18–19 years). Each stage is characterized by distinct developmental tasks, including physical maturation, increasing independence from parents, identity exploration, peer relationship development, and preparation for adult roles (Sawyer et al., 2018). During these years, adolescents gradually shift from parental dependence to autonomous functioning, making the family environment particularly influential in shaping their psychological adjustment and behavioural outcomes. Among the various family-related factors, parenting style has consistently been recognized as one of the strongest predictors of adolescents' emotional, cognitive, and social development. Parenting style refers to the overall emotional climate and behavioural strategies adopted by parents in raising their children (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). It encompasses the ways parents provide warmth, establish behavioural expectations, communicate with their children, and monitor their activities. Positive parenting practices foster emotional security, resilience, academic competence, self-esteem, and adaptive social behaviour, whereas ineffective parenting has been associated with behavioural problems, poor emotional regulation, and maladaptive coping strategies (Bornstein, 2015).

The most influential framework explaining parenting styles was proposed by Baumrind (1967, 1971), who identified three primary parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Later, Maccoby and Martin (1983) extended Baumrind's model by introducing a fourth style, neglectful (uninvolved) parenting, based on the dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness. Authoritative parents combine warmth, responsiveness, and appropriate behavioural control while encouraging independence and open communication. Research consistently demonstrates that authoritative parenting is associated with favourable developmental outcomes, including higher self-esteem, academic achievement, psychological well-being, and effective decision-making (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg, 2001). In contrast, authoritarian parenting emphasizes obedience, strict discipline, and limited emotional responsiveness, which may inhibit adolescents' autonomy and confidence. Permissive parenting is characterized by high warmth but low behavioural expectations, whereas neglectful parenting reflects both low responsiveness and low parental involvement, often resulting in poorer developmental outcomes. Contemporary parenting research also emphasizes the importance of supporting adolescents' autonomy. According to Soenens et al. (2007), autonomy-supportive parenting promotes independent thinking, self-regulation, and psychological well-being by encouraging adolescents to express their opinions and participate in decision-making processes. Such parenting practices help adolescents develop confidence in evaluating alternatives, solving problems independently, and taking responsibility for their choices.

Decision-making is a fundamental cognitive process involving the selection of the most appropriate course of action from multiple alternatives in order to achieve desired goals (Miller & Byrnes, 2001). Effective decision-making requires logical reasoning, critical thinking, emotional regulation, and the ability to evaluate potential consequences before acting. During adolescence, decision-making becomes increasingly important because young people are frequently required to make choices regarding education, peer relationships, career aspirations, health behaviours, and personal values. However, the ongoing development of executive functioning and heightened sensitivity to social influences may make adolescents particularly vulnerable to impulsive or poorly reasoned decisions (Steinberg, 2008).

Scott and Bruce (1995) conceptualized decision-making as consisting of five distinct styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. Rational decision-makers systematically gather information and evaluate alternatives before making choices. Intuitive decision-makers rely primarily on feelings and experience, whereas dependent decision-makers seek advice and reassurance from others. Avoidant decision-makers tend to postpone or evade decisions, while spontaneous decision-makers prefer making quick decisions with minimal deliberation. Individual differences in these decision-making styles are influenced by personality characteristics, cognitive development, environmental experiences, and family interactions.

The family environment serves as one of the earliest contexts in which children learn problem-solving and decision-making skills. Parents influence adolescents' decision-making not only through direct guidance but also by modelling reasoning processes, encouraging autonomy, setting behavioural expectations, and fostering open communication. Adolescents raised in supportive and democratic family environments are more likely to develop confidence, independent thinking, and effective decision-making abilities, whereas restrictive or uninvolved parenting may limit opportunities for autonomous decision-making and reduce problem-solving competence (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Smetana, 2011). Previous studies have consistently reported that authoritative parenting is associated with greater self-regulation, higher psychological competence, and better decision-making outcomes among adolescents, while authoritarian and neglectful parenting are associated with poorer psychosocial adjustment (Steinberg, 2001; Bornstein, 2015). Although substantial research has examined the influence of parenting styles on adolescent psychological development, relatively fewer studies have specifically investigated their relationship with adolescents' decision-making styles, particularly within the Indian socio-cultural context. Parenting practices vary considerably across cultures, and their influence on adolescents' cognitive and behavioural development may differ accordingly. Therefore, examining the association between parenting styles and decision-making among Indian adolescents contributes to a better understanding of how family environments shape adolescents' ability to make effective decisions during this critical developmental period. Accordingly, the present study aims to examine the relationship between parenting styles and decision-making among adolescents and to explore whether significant gender differences exist in these variables. Understanding this relationship may provide valuable insights for parents, educators, school counsellors, and mental health professionals in promoting adaptive parenting practices that foster healthy decision-making among adolescents.

Aim of the Study

To examine the relationship between perceived parenting styles and decision-making among adolescents.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the gender differences in decision-making among adolescents.
2. To investigate the gender differences in perceived parenting styles among adolescents.
3. To examine the relationship between perceived parenting styles and decision-making among adolescents.

Hypotheses

- **H_{01}:** There is no significant difference in perceived parenting styles between male and female adolescents.
- **H_{02}:** There is no significant difference in decision-making among male and female adolescents.
- **H_{03}:** There is no significant relationship between perceived parenting styles and decision-making among adolescents.

Variables of the Study

- Independent Variable (IV): Perceived Parenting Style
- Dependent Variable (DV): Decision-Making

Sample

The study comprised a sample of 60 adolescents from Kerala, India, including 30 males and 30 females, aged between 13 and 20 years. Participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The sample was considered appropriate for examining the relationship between perceived parenting styles and decision-making among adolescents.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Adolescents aged between 13 and 20 years.
2. Male and female adolescents.
3. Permanent residents of Kerala, India.
4. Literate participants who were able to read and understand the study questionnaires.
5. Students enrolled in educational institutions (schools or colleges).
6. Participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.
7. Participants who provided informed consent (and parental/guardian consent for minors, where applicable).
8. Participants who completed all the study questionnaires without substantial missing responses.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Individuals below 13 years or above 20 years of age.
2. Individuals who were not residents of Kerala.
3. Illiterate individuals or those unable to comprehend the questionnaire.
4. Participants who declined to participate or withdrew from the study.
5. Participants with incomplete or missing questionnaire responses.
6. Adolescents with severe cognitive impairments or psychiatric conditions that could interfere with their ability to understand or complete the questionnaires (based on self-report or institutional records, if available).
7. Participants who failed to provide informed consent (or parental/guardian consent where required).

Instruments

- **Parenting Style Scale (Abdul Gafoor & Kurukkan, 2014)**: The Parenting Style Scale developed by Abdul Gafoor and Kurukkan (2014) was used to assess adolescents' perceptions of their parents' parenting styles. The scale is based on the parenting model proposed by Maccoby and Martin (1983) and measures two dimensions of parenting: responsiveness and control. The items assess various aspects of parent–adolescent interactions across social, educational, and personal

domains. Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Wrong) to 5 (Very Right) . Negatively worded items are reverse scored. Higher scores indicate more positive perceived parenting practices. The scale has demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties, with test–retest reliability coefficients of 0.81 for responsiveness and 0.83 for control. Criterion-related validity coefficients were reported as 0.80 for responsiveness and 0.76 for control.

- **General Decision-Making Style (GDMS) Scale (Scott & Bruce, 1995)**: Decision-making was assessed using the General Decision-Making Style (GDMS) Scale developed by Scott and Bruce (1995). The instrument consists of 25 items measuring five decision-making styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. Responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Higher scores on each subscale indicate a greater preference for the corresponding decision-making style. The scale has demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.62 to 0.87, and acceptable construct validity, with validity coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.84.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 16.0. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were computed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and the study variables.

An independent-samples t-test was employed to examine gender differences in perceived parenting styles and decision-making among adolescents. Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient (r)was used to assess the relationship between perceived parenting styles and decision-making. Statistical significance was determined at the .05 level ($p < .05$). Prior to conducting the analyses, the data were screened for completeness and checked for compliance with the assumptions underlying the statistical procedures, including normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance, where applicable.

Administration of the Tools

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the concerned authorities. Participants who met the inclusion criteria were informed about the purpose and nature of the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before administering the questionnaires. For participants below 18 years of age, parental or guardian consent was obtained wherever applicable.

The questionnaires were administered using an online survey through Google Forms. The survey link was shared with the participants through appropriate online platforms. Participants were instructed to read each statement carefully and respond honestly based on their personal experiences. They were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and that all responses would be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research purposes. Participants were also assured of their anonymity and informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. The average time required to complete the questionnaires was approximately 15–20 minutes. Upon completion of data collection, the responses were screened for completeness before being subjected to statistical analysis.

RESULTS

Gender Differences in Perceived Parenting Style

Table 1 Gender Differences in Perceived Parenting Style Among Adolescents

Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*(58)	*p*
Male adolescents	30	284.33	44.37	−0.28	.778
Female adolescents	30	287.23	34.41		

Note. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation. The test was two-tailed.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to examine gender differences in perceived parenting style. The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference between male and female adolescents, $t(58) = -0.28$, $p = .778$. Although female adolescents obtained a slightly higher mean score ($M = 287.23$, $SD = 34.41$) than male adolescents ($M = 284.33$, $SD = 44.37$), the difference was not statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in parenting style between male and female adolescents was retained.

Gender Differences in Decision-Making

Table 2 Gender Differences in Decision-Making Among Adolescents

Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*(58)	*p*
Male adolescents	30	88.33	10.32	0.48	.634
Female adolescents	30	87.13	9.04		

Note. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation. The test was two-tailed.

The independent-samples *t* test showed no statistically significant difference in decision-making between male and female adolescents, $t(58) = 0.48$, $p = .634$. Male adolescents had a slightly higher mean score ($M = 88.33$, $SD = 10.32$) than female adolescents ($M = 87.13$, $SD = 9.04$); however, this difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in decision-making between male and female adolescents was retained.

Relationship Between Parenting Style and Decision-Making

Table 3 Pearson Correlation Between Perceived Parenting Style and Decision-Making

Variable	1	2
1. Parenting style	—	.355**
2. Decision-making	.355**	—

Note. $N = 60$. p = .005, two-tailed.

Pearson's product–moment correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between perceived parenting style and decision-making, $r = .355$, $p = .005$. The finding indicates that adolescents who reported more positive perceptions of parenting style also tended to report higher levels of decision-making. Accordingly, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between parenting style and decision-making was rejected.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined gender differences in perceived parenting style and decision-making and investigated the relationship between these two variables among adolescents. The study included 60 adolescents, comprising 30 male and 30 female participants.

The first objective was to examine gender differences in perceived parenting style. The findings indicated no statistically significant difference between male and female adolescents. Although female adolescents reported a slightly higher mean score, the difference was negligible and statistically nonsignificant. This suggests that adolescents of both genders in the present sample perceived broadly similar patterns of parental responsiveness, control, and involvement.

The absence of significant gender differences may reflect the influence of broader changes in contemporary parenting practices. Parenting behaviours may be increasingly shaped by the developmental needs of adolescents rather than gender alone. The quality of parent–adolescent communication, emotional support, behavioural guidance, and autonomy support may therefore be more important than whether the adolescent is male or female. However, this interpretation should be made cautiously because research has also documented gendered patterns in parenting in some cultural contexts. For example, Dittman et al. (2023) examined gendered parenting during adolescence and highlighted the importance of considering how gender-related parenting practices may influence adolescent psychosocial development. Similarly, recent research from India has reported gender-related differences in certain parenting styles, indicating that findings may vary according to cultural context, parenting dimensions, and characteristics of the sample.

The second objective was to examine gender differences in decision-making. The findings revealed no statistically significant difference between male and female adolescents. The mean scores of the two groups were highly comparable, suggesting that gender did not significantly differentiate overall decision-making in the present sample.

This finding is consistent with the view that adolescent decision-making is influenced by multiple developmental and contextual factors, including cognitive maturation, emotional regulation, family relationships, peer influences, and opportunities for autonomy. Although gender differences may emerge in specific types of decisions or under particular emotional and social conditions, overall decision-making competence may not necessarily differ significantly between male and female adolescents. Thus, the present findings suggest that decision-making should not be understood solely through a gender-based framework.

The third objective was to examine the relationship between perceived parenting style and decision-making. A statistically significant positive relationship was found between the two variables, $r = .355$, $p = .005$. The magnitude of the association indicates that more positive perceptions of parenting style were associated with higher decision-making scores among adolescents.

This finding is theoretically consistent with research emphasizing the importance of autonomy-supportive and responsive parenting during adolescence. Adolescence is a developmental period in which young people increasingly seek independence while continuing to require parental guidance and emotional support. Parenting that combines appropriate structure with opportunities for autonomy may provide adolescents with the

opportunity to develop confidence, self-regulation, problem-solving abilities, and independent judgment.

Supporting this interpretation, Katz et al. (2018) found that adolescents who perceived greater parental autonomy support during an important career decision were more likely to make autonomous decisions. Their findings further suggested that autonomous decision-making was associated with positive cognitive and emotional outcomes.

The present finding is also consistent with longitudinal research indicating that parental autonomy support is an important aspect of adolescent development. Vrolijk et al. (2020) examined parental autonomy support and adolescent adjustment and highlighted the relevance of parents' support for adolescent autonomy in understanding developmental outcomes.

The positive association found in the present study may be explained by the role of supportive parenting in fostering adolescents' psychological competence. Parents who communicate openly, provide appropriate guidance, acknowledge adolescents' opinions, and gradually allow them to assume responsibility may create conditions that support independent decision-making. Such parenting practices can enable adolescents to learn from their choices while continuing to benefit from parental guidance.

Nevertheless, the correlational nature of the present study must be emphasized. The significant relationship between parenting style and decision-making does not establish a causal relationship. It cannot be concluded that parenting style directly causes better decision-making. It is possible that the relationship is bidirectional or influenced by other factors, such as personality characteristics, self-esteem, emotional regulation, peer relationships, socioeconomic conditions, and family functioning. Longitudinal and multivariable studies would be required to examine these possibilities more rigorously.

Overall Interpretation

Taken together, the findings indicate that gender was not significantly associated with either perceived parenting style or decision-making in the present sample. However, parenting style demonstrated a significant positive relationship with adolescent decision-making. The findings therefore suggest that the quality of the parent–adolescent relationship may be more relevant to understanding decision-making than gender differences alone.

The findings have practical implications for parents, educators, and mental-health professionals. Parenting programmes may benefit from emphasizing open communication, emotional responsiveness, appropriate behavioural boundaries, and autonomy support. Adolescents should be encouraged to participate in age-appropriate decisions while receiving appropriate parental guidance. Such an approach may help adolescents develop confidence and responsibility in decision-making without eliminating the supportive role of parents.

CONCLUSION

The present study found no statistically significant gender differences in perceived parenting style or decision-making among adolescents. However, a significant positive relationship was observed between perceived parenting style and decision-making. These findings highlight the potential importance of positive and supportive parenting practices in the development of adolescent decision-making abilities. Future research should examine these

relationships using larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, and separate analyses of specific parenting dimensions and decision-making styles.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the present study have important implications for parents, educators, mental-health professionals, and researchers working with adolescents. The significant positive relationship between parenting style and adolescent decision-making highlights the importance of the family environment in supporting adolescents' cognitive and psychosocial development.

For parents, the findings emphasize the importance of adopting parenting practices that combine emotional warmth, appropriate behavioural guidance, open communication, and opportunities for age-appropriate autonomy. Adolescents may benefit when parents provide guidance without unnecessarily restricting independent thinking and decision-making. Encouraging adolescents to express their opinions, consider alternatives, and participate in family decisions may help strengthen their confidence, responsibility, and problem-solving abilities.

The findings also have implications for schools and educational institutions. Teachers and school counsellors can develop programmes that promote decision-making, problem-solving, self-regulation, and responsible autonomy among adolescents. Parent-education programmes may also be implemented to help parents understand the developmental needs of adolescents and adopt supportive parenting strategies.

For psychologists and mental-health professionals, the findings suggest that parenting practices should be considered when assessing adolescent decision-making difficulties. Counselling and intervention programmes may involve parents in strengthening communication, emotional support, and appropriate autonomy support within the family. Family-based interventions may therefore be useful in promoting healthy adolescent development.

The findings may also contribute to the development of adolescent life-skills programmes. Training in critical thinking, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and decision-making may be particularly beneficial when combined with supportive family environments. Finally, the study highlights the importance of considering parenting as a significant contextual factor in understanding adolescent decision-making.

Scope for Further Research

The present study provides scope for further research in several directions. First, future studies may use larger and more diverse samples from different districts, states, and cultural backgrounds to improve the generalizability of the findings. Comparative studies involving adolescents from rural and urban settings may also provide greater insight into the influence of sociocultural context on parenting and decision-making.

Second, future research may examine specific dimensions of parenting, such as parental warmth, behavioural control, psychological control, autonomy support, and parental involvement, rather than examining parenting style as a broad construct. Examining these dimensions separately may provide a more detailed understanding of the specific parenting practices associated with adolescent decision-making.

Third, longitudinal studies are recommended to examine how parenting practices and decision-making develop over time. A longitudinal design could help clarify the direction of the relationship between parenting style and decision-making and determine whether changes in parenting practices predict later changes in adolescent decision-making.

Future research may also investigate other variables that could influence the relationship between parenting style and decision-making, including self-esteem, emotional regulation, self-control, locus of control, resilience, personality, peer relationships, academic stress, and social media use. These variables may function as mediators or moderators of the relationship between parenting and decision-making.

Further studies may also compare the influence of mothers' and fathers' parenting practices separately. Since parents may differ in their levels of responsiveness, control, and autonomy support, examining maternal and paternal parenting independently may provide more specific information about their respective contributions to adolescent development.

In addition, future research could examine decision-making across different contexts, including academic, interpersonal, moral, career, and risk-related decisions. This may help determine whether parenting style is associated similarly with different types of adolescent decision-making.

Finally, intervention-based research is recommended to examine whether parent-training programmes, family-based interventions, or adolescent decision-making programmes can improve decision-making abilities. Experimental and quasi-experimental studies may provide stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of specific parenting and psychological interventions in promoting adaptive decision-making during adolescence.

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