



Parenting Styles and Their Influence on Adolescent Social Development

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
History Revised format: Aug, 2018 Available Online: Sep, 2018 Keywords parenting styles, adolescents, social development, authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting	Parenting style represents the emotional environment in which parents communicate expectations, provide support, impose discipline, and encourage independence. During adolescence, these parenting behaviours become particularly important because young people are developing personal identities, emotional independence, interpersonal competence, and increasingly complex peer relationships. This narrative review examines the influence of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting styles on adolescent social development. Existing research generally associates authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, reasonable behavioral control, open communication, and autonomy support, with stronger social competence, empathy, cooperation, self-confidence, and resistance to negative peer pressure. Authoritarian parenting may produce behavioral compliance, but excessive control and limited emotional responsiveness can restrict independent decision-making and open communication. Permissive parenting provides emotional warmth but may fail to develop adequate self-discipline and respect for interpersonal boundaries. Uninvolved parenting is commonly associated with weaker parental attachment, poor emotional regulation, social withdrawal, aggression, and vulnerability to problematic peer influence. Nevertheless, parenting outcomes are shaped by cultural values, socioeconomic conditions, adolescent temperament, gender, family structure, and the quality of relationships between parents and children. Within Pakistan's collectivistic social environment, parental authority may sometimes be interpreted as involvement and protection rather than rejection. The article concludes that parenting practices combining affection, consistent boundaries, respectful communication, and age-appropriate autonomy are most likely to support healthy adolescent social development.

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Introduction:

Adolescence is a significant developmental period characterized by biological maturation, identity exploration, emotional change, expanding social networks, and a growing desire for independence. Although adolescents spend increasing amounts of time with friends, classmates, teachers, and digital communities, parents remain influential in shaping their values, communication patterns, coping strategies, and interpersonal behavior. Parenting therefore continues to function as an important developmental context during the adolescent years. Parenting style refers to the relatively stable

emotional and behavioral climate created through parental responsiveness and demandingness. Responsiveness includes affection, acceptance, emotional availability, and sensitivity to an adolescent's needs. Demandingness includes supervision, behavioral expectations, discipline, and the enforcement of family rules. The combination of these dimensions produces four commonly discussed styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive or indulgent, and uninvolved or neglectful parenting. Social development during adolescence includes the ability to communicate effectively, form supportive friendships, regulate emotions, resolve conflicts, understand other people's perspectives, cooperate in groups, resist harmful peer pressure, and behave responsibly within society. Parenting styles influence these outcomes by providing daily models of communication, power sharing, emotional expression, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. The influence of parenting should not, however, be interpreted as a simple cause-and-effect relationship. Adolescents influence their parents as parents influence adolescents, while socioeconomic circumstances, parental stress, education, cultural norms, school climate, digital media, and individual temperament may affect both parenting behavior and developmental outcomes. Consequently, parenting styles should be understood as important developmental influences rather than fixed predictors of adolescent behavior.

Conceptual Foundations and Major Parenting Styles:

Authoritative Parenting:

Authoritative parenting combines high responsiveness with appropriate demandingness. Authoritative parents express affection, listen to their adolescents, explain the reasons behind rules, monitor behavior, and maintain consistent expectations. They also allow adolescents to participate in decisions and gradually assume age-appropriate responsibility. This balance between emotional support and behavioral structure creates an environment in which adolescents can express disagreement without losing parental acceptance. Rules are presented as understandable standards rather than unquestionable commands. Research has repeatedly associated this parenting environment with adolescent competence, self-reliance, emotional security, academic engagement, and psychosocial adjustment.

Authoritarian Parenting:

Authoritarian parenting involves high demandingness but comparatively low responsiveness. Parents emphasize obedience, discipline, and respect for authority, and conformity to established rules. Communication is often directed from parent to adolescent, with limited discussion or negotiation. This style may encourage immediate obedience and discourage certain risk behaviors. However, harsh punishment, psychological control, emotional invalidation, or the absence of explanations may interfere with adolescents' development of confidence, autonomy, and interpersonal problem-solving. Excessive psychological control can constrain young people's emotional expression and make them dependent on external approval.

Permissive Parenting:

Permissive parenting combines high warmth with low behavioral control. Permissive parents may be emotionally supportive and accepting but establish few rules, impose inconsistent consequences, or avoid confronting problematic behaviour. Adolescents raised in permissive environments may feel comfortable sharing personal concerns with their parents. Nevertheless, limited supervision and inconsistent boundaries may reduce opportunities to learn patience, responsibility, emotional restraint, and respect for social expectations. Warmth is beneficial, but warmth without guidance may not provide sufficient preparation for situations requiring self-control.

Uninvolved Parenting:

Uninvolved parenting is characterized by low responsiveness and low demandingness. Parents may provide basic physical needs while remaining emotionally unavailable, inconsistent, poorly informed about the adolescent's activities, or minimally involved in school and peer relationships. A persistent lack of parental attention can weaken adolescents' sense of security and belonging. It may also increase reliance on peers for emotional support, identity validation, and behavioral guidance. Research commonly associates uninvolved parenting with weaker adjustment than parenting environments that provide either warmth, supervision, or both.

Mechanisms Connecting Parenting and Social Development:

Parenting styles influence adolescent social development through several interconnected mechanisms.

Social learning:

Adolescents observe how parents express anger, negotiate disagreements, apologize, cooperate, and respond to other people's emotions. Parents who demonstrate respectful communication provide practical models that adolescents can transfer to friendships, classrooms, and future intimate relationships.

Attachment and emotional security:

Consistent affection and availability help adolescents believe that they are worthy of respect and that close relationships can be dependable. Emotional security makes it easier to explore new social settings, initiate friendships, and recover from rejection or conflict.

Emotion regulation:

Parents who acknowledge emotions while setting limits teach adolescents that emotions can be understood and managed without aggression, avoidance, or impulsive behavior. By contrast, criticism, humiliation, rejection, and manipulative control may make adolescents conceal their feelings or respond defensively. Systematic evidence connects parental warmth and supportive parenting with healthier emotional functioning, whereas harshness and excessive control are associated with emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Autonomy development:

Adolescents require opportunities to make decisions, experience manageable consequences, and participate in family discussions. Autonomy-supportive parenting promotes independent judgment while preserving parental guidance. Excessive control can produce dependence or rebellion, whereas the complete absence of guidance can expose adolescents to poorly considered decisions.

Parental monitoring and peer management:

Parents influence social development by knowing their adolescents' friends, discussing peer difficulties, supervising activities, and encouraging participation in safe social environments. The effectiveness of these practices depends partly on the overall parent-child relationship. Monitoring is more likely to be accepted when adolescents perceive it as care rather than intrusion.

Influence on Peer Relationships and Social Competence:

Authoritative parenting is generally associated with the strongest pattern of adolescent social competence. Adolescents who experience both warmth and structure are more likely to develop confidence in social interactions, communicate their needs appropriately, and understand the importance of mutual respect. Open family discussion also provides opportunities to practice listening, negotiation, perspective-taking, and constructive disagreement. Such adolescents may be better prepared to resist harmful peer pressure because they possess both emotional support at home and experience making responsible decisions. They are not simply required to obey; they learn to evaluate choices and understand consequences. Longitudinal research indicates that differences in competence and adjustment associated with parenting patterns can remain or become more visible over time. Authoritarian parenting may produce socially controlled behavior in highly structured situations. Adolescents may follow rules and display respect toward teachers or older relatives. Nevertheless, when discipline relies on fear or unquestioned obedience, adolescents may have fewer opportunities to practice negotiation and independent social judgment. Some may become socially anxious and submissive, while others may reproduce coercive behavior in relationships or rebel when parental supervision is absent. Permissive parenting can support emotional openness and parent-adolescent closeness. However, adolescents may experience difficulties when peers, teachers, or institutions impose limits that are not negotiable. They may struggle with frustration, turn-taking, delayed gratification, or the consequences of impulsive decisions. The outcomes of permissive parenting vary because some permissive families provide substantial emotional support despite limited discipline. Uninvolved parenting presents the greatest concern when emotional distance is persistent. Adolescents who receive little attention or supervision may seek unconditional acceptance within peer groups, including groups

that encourage aggression, substance use, bullying, or other risk behaviors. Weak parental involvement can also make it difficult for adolescents to receive advice about friendship conflict, online safety, romantic relationships, and social rejection. Meta-analytic findings indicate that parental warmth, behavioral control, autonomy support, and authoritative parenting have protective associations with externalizing behaviors, although average statistical effects are generally small rather than deterministic. This reinforces the position that parenting matters but operates alongside many individual and environmental influences.

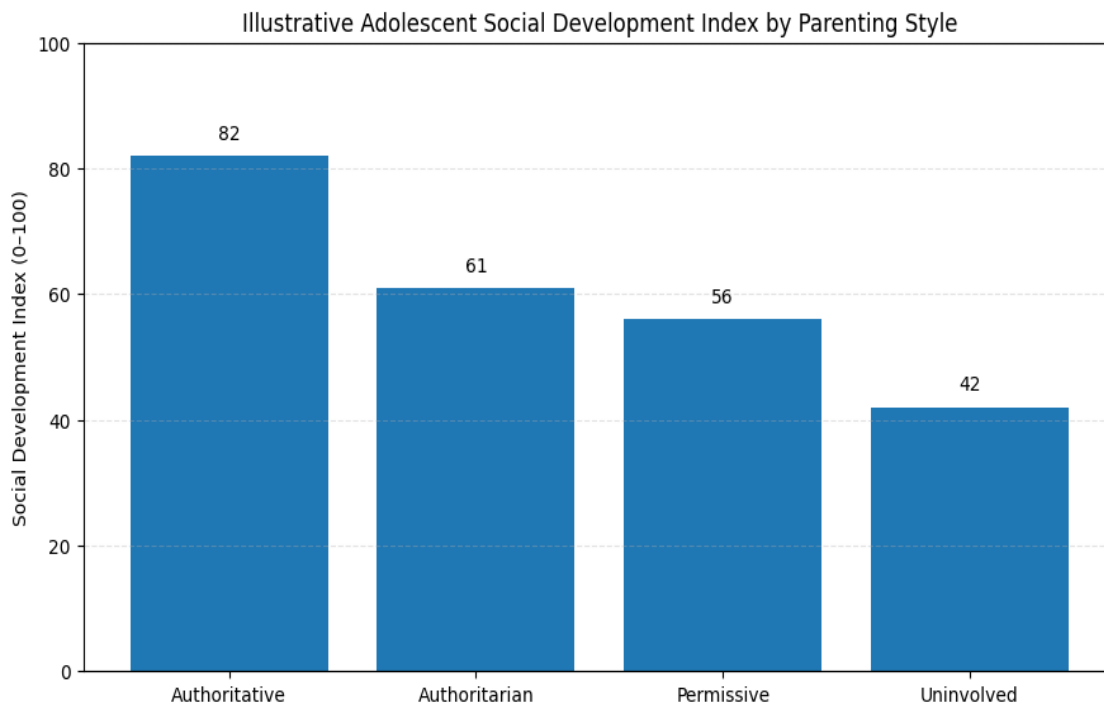
Cultural and Pakistani Context:

The interpretation of parenting behavior varies across cultures. In highly individualistic environments, adolescent independence and direct verbal expression may receive strong emphasis. In collectivistic environments, family interdependence, respect for elders, religious values, family reputation, and parental involvement in major decisions may receive greater importance. Pakistani family life is diverse and cannot be represented by one parenting pattern. Parenting practices differ according to region, language, education, social class, rural or urban residence, family structure, and exposure to global media. Extended family members, including grandparents and older siblings, may also participate in adolescent socialization. Research on Pakistani adolescents emphasizes that culturally developed or adapted measures are necessary because behavior classified as controlling in one society may sometimes be interpreted as concern, protection, or family responsibility in another. Pakistani adolescents' perceptions of parenting are therefore particularly important when examining developmental outcomes. Cultural acceptance does not mean that all controlling behavior is harmless. Humiliation, emotional rejection, physical violence, manipulation, and the denial of age-appropriate autonomy may still damage trust and emotional security. The more relevant distinction may be whether parental authority is accompanied by affection, explanation, fairness, consistency, and sensitivity to the adolescent's developmental needs. Research conducted with Pakistani adolescents has found meaningful relationships between parenting styles and psychological flexibility, demonstrating that the effects of parenting should be studied within local social and cultural conditions. For Pakistani families, an effective approach may therefore combine culturally valued parental guidance with respectful discussion. Adolescents can be taught family responsibility and social respect while also being allowed to express concerns, develop educational goals, select appropriate friendships, and participate in decisions affecting their future.

Practical Implications for Families, Schools, and Society:

Parents can support adolescent social development by maintaining consistent but reasonable household rules. Expectations concerning education, online behavior, friendships, curfews, household responsibilities, and respectful communication should be clearly explained. Consequences should be proportionate, predictable, and focused on learning rather than humiliation. Regular communication is equally important. Parents should listen without immediately interrupting, accusing, or delivering a lecture. Adolescents are more likely to disclose peer problems and risky situations when they believe that disclosure will result in calm guidance rather than automatic punishment. Parents should gradually increase autonomy according to the adolescent's age and demonstrated responsibility. Small decisions can prepare adolescents for larger educational, occupational, financial, and relational choices. Parental authority remains necessary, but its purpose should be to prepare adolescents for responsible independence. Schools can contribute by arranging parent education sessions on adolescent development, digital safety, bullying, emotional regulation, and nonviolent discipline. School counselors should involve families when social withdrawal, aggression, peer victimization, or sudden behavioral change becomes evident. Community organizations and public-health professionals should ensure that parenting programs are culturally appropriate and accessible in local languages. Programs should avoid blaming parents and instead address stress, poverty, family conflict, limited mental-health resources, and the pressures created by rapidly changing technology. Finally, researchers should conduct longitudinal and mixed-method studies involving mothers, fathers, adolescents, teachers, and other caregivers. Future

Pakistani research should examine regional differences, rural and urban communities, gender expectations, social-media use, family structure, and adolescent interpretations of parental behavior.



Note: Conceptual illustration based on patterns reported in the literature; values are not from a single empirical dataset.

Summary:

Parenting styles shape the emotional and relational environment in which adolescents learn how to communicate, cooperate, manage emotions, respond to authority, and form relationships. Authoritative parenting generally offers the most supportive combination of warmth, behavioral guidance, open communication, and autonomy. It provides adolescents with emotional security while teaching responsibility and social boundaries. Authoritarian parenting may encourage discipline but can restrict social confidence and independent judgment when authority becomes harsh, psychologically controlling, or emotionally distant. Permissive parenting offers acceptance but may not provide sufficient structure for self-control and social responsibility. Uninvolved parenting provides neither the emotional connection nor supervision required for healthy social adjustment. These patterns should not be treated as universal or deterministic. Cultural expectations, parental intentions, socioeconomic pressures, adolescent temperament, and the quality of the parent–child relationship affect how parenting practices are experienced. Within Pakistan, parental guidance and family interdependence can remain important while communication, fairness, emotional warmth, and age-appropriate independence are strengthened. The most constructive parenting approach is therefore not the complete removal of parental authority. It is the transformation of authority into supportive guidance. Adolescents benefit when parents remain involved, establish clear limits, respect developing identities, listen to concerns, and provide safe opportunities for independent decision-making.

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