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# **Preferred Parenting Style Among University Students**

Arjun Singh Baloria, Muskaan, Nidhi Prasad, Vaibhavi, Anshu Kumari

Article History	Abstract				
Received: 1-Nov-2023 Revised: 25-Nov-2023 Accepted: 20-Dec-2023	This paper aims to investigate the preferred parenting styles of modern youth, if/when they become parents. To successfully conduct the exploratory study, a preferential parenting style questionnaire was made. A sample of 195 students aged 18 to 25 was taken. ANOVA, t-test, and descriptive analysis were done using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27). It was found that the students prefer the permissive parenting style and there was no major gender difference in this preference. This paper also aims to expand the literature on parenting style preference in the context of the Indian population.				
CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	Keywords- Parenting styles, Preferred Parenting, Gender Differences,				

## Introduction

The impact of parental quality on a child's development is widely recognised as a significant determinant (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein, 2000). According to Darling and Steinberg (1993), parenting style may be defined as a collection of perspectives on the child that are conveyed to the child as well as when combined, create an emotional environment in which the parent's behaviours are shown (p. 488). Baumrind (1966) initially proposed a taxonomy of three distinct parenting styles, namely authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Baumrind (1971) subsequently made revisions to the parenting styles and formulated a typology that is grounded in the attributes of parental control and warmth. In accordance with Baumrind (1971), parents who exhibit authoritarian parenting styles establish and enforce rules without engaging in meaningful contact with their children. These parents exert significant control over their children's behaviour and tend to have colder emotional expressions compared to the other two parenting styles. In contrast, authoritative adults effectively convey rules and their underlying rationale, so promoting both autonomy and compliance with regulations. They assume a position of authority while nevertheless maintaining a kind and attentive demeanour towards their child. Permissive parenting style is characterised by a reduced emphasis on standards and order, with a preference for a low level of control and a high level of warmth. Research indicates that there is a growing recognition of parental authority as an interpersonal, fluid, and co-constituted concept. It is now understood that parental authority is not only determined by individual parents, but is instead shaped by the interactions and dynamics within family connections. The available research on relationships between parents and their kids lacks detailed specification of the notion (Kuhar, M., & Reiter, H., 2013). Parental authority is a complex concept that consists of power and legitimacy, with dimensions varying based on age and context (Paskalieva, R., 2022). It is a bi-dimensional construct, involving parental power, influence on child behavior, and obligation to obey. The concept has gained public attention in recent years. It is expressed through parent-child conflicts, with its extent varying based on the child's age and the specific context (Łopatkiewicz, A., 2022) discusses the debate on the validity of replacing the term "parental authority" with "parental responsibility" in the Family and Guardianship Code.

# **Objectives**

- 1. To see the preferred parenting style in university students.
- 2. Whether there is any significant gender difference in preferring parenting style.

## **Hypothesis**

- 1. People certainly do prefer a certain parenting style.
- 2. A notable disparity exists between genders in their preference for parenting styles.

#### **Literature Review**

Most studies have been done on the preferred parenting style of the parents, differentiating between the preferences of the mother and father. Gender has been found to be an important element in parenting styles, with women choosing authoritative parenting and males preferring authoritarian parenting (Dor, A., & Cohen-Fridel, S., 2010). The research conducted investigated the influence of parenting style on the scholastic achievement of Grade VI students at Batuan Elementary School in the Philippines. The findings revealed that the parenting style most favoured by mothers was "authoritative," and kids who exhibited this style demonstrated a level of performance categorised as "approaching proficiency." According to Labajo and Sebugan (2022), those who were raised by authoritarian moms exhibited a performance that was characterised as "developing," but those who were raised by permissive mothers demonstrated a level of proficiency. Parenting occurs within a wide range of family structures, encompassing many settings such as nuclear families, single-parent homes, adoptive families, blended or stepfamilies, foster or kinship care arrangements, as well as intergenerational or multiple family households. There is no universally prescribed method for effectively nurturing children. The efficacy of parenting methods is contingent upon the specific environmental, cultural, and societal contexts in which they are implemented. Paediatric care and living circumstances have the potential to undergo modifications during the various stages of growth and development (Sanders & Turner, 2018). Previous research has indicated that children who are brought up in tumultuous and hostile surroundings, characterised by family discord, face a heightened susceptibility to experiencing unfavourable developmental consequences (Bright & Thompson, 2018; Hughes et al., 2017). Dor, A., & Cohen-Fridel, S. (2010) also compared traditional Arab and modern Western-oriented Jewish preparenthood approaches in Israeli emerging adults to evaluate cultural impacts on their chosen parenting techniques. Both groups preferred authoritative parenting approaches, with Arab participants preferring permissive styles more.

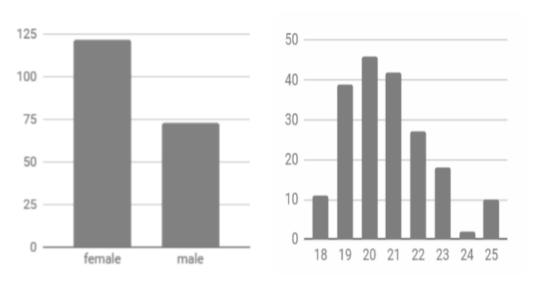
The manner in which children perceive parenting styles can have a substantial impact on their future results, necessitating parents to effectively manage a delicate equilibrium between providing support and establishing structure, taking into account the evolving needs of their children. According to McKinney and Kwan (2018), emerging adults exhibit a preference for parenting techniques that promote autonomy. However, it is noteworthy that females may encounter elevated levels of psychological difficulties when regarded as having autonomy, presumably attributable to an escalation in hazardous behaviours. The research revealed notable correlations between individuals' chosen and perceived parenting styles, wherein males reported reduced psychological issues when they perceived a congruent parenting style, whereas females reported heightened psychological problems. In a study conducted by Medora, Wilson, and Larson (2001), it was shown that there exists a negative association between parental satisfaction and feelings of loneliness and issues. Additionally, the researchers observed a positive correlation between thinking abilities and parental satisfaction. Labajo and Sebugan (2022) conducted a study to investigate the potential association between maternal parenting style and academic performance of learners. Their findings revealed that there was no statistically significant link connecting the maternal parenting style and the academic performance of the learners. Parenting styles that are positive in nature like emotionally available and condsiderateness have a positive impact on academic achievement, while negative ones like punishment, overinvolvement, and overprotection negatively affect performance (Shi, Z., 2022). The association of parenting styles and performance in school is influenced by factors such as parental roles, the ages of children, and disciplinary practises. The impact of parental emotional warmth and empathy, as well as excessive involvement and excessive protection, was also found to be contingent upon the passage of time. The research findings indicate a favourable and statistically significant correlation between parenting style and the mental health of youngsters hailing from divorced households and those who have experienced the loss of a parent. The consistency of this observation is seen in many parenting approaches (Sahu, K., 2016). The presence of powerful sentiments of acceptance, protection, engagement, care, and consideration from parents has been found to be associated with an elevated sense of a favourable orientation towards life in children, leading to enhanced psychological well-being. The use of positive parenting approaches has been found to have a favourable influence on the psychological well-being of children. During the early stage of adolescence, individuals tend to perceive higher degrees of affection compared to criticism. Moreover, moms are often viewed as being more loving than dads. The heightened perceived impact and enhanced communication were associated with increased perceptions of life purpose and decreased levels of sadness and anxiety. According to a recent study conducted by Ortega, Mateo, Jimeno, and Ricarte (2021), male individuals exhibited elevated levels of what they considered criticism and rejection. The UK Millennium Cohort Study offers valuable insights into the correlation between parenting styles and the physical and psychological well-being of children. It highlights that parenting styles can have varying effects on children's health, demonstrating varied outcomes (Yerkes, M., Hopman, M., Stok, F., & Wit, J., 2019). The influence of familial circumstances and parental advice on children's health behaviours is well recognised, particularly in relation to addressing health concerns such as childhood obesity. Within this context, mothers often serve as a central focus for policy interventions aimed at avoiding such health issues. Nevertheless, there exists a contradictory association between vigorous parenting and the well-being of children. There is a discernible positive correlation between parental child-rearing approaches and the physical health of children. However, the available data is limited in indicating that intense parenting may have an adverse impact on the well-being of children. In their study, Bayer et al. (year) conducted an analysis on a sample of 112 toddlers over a span of four years. The objective of the study was to make predictions about the occurrence of early internalising behaviours in children, taking into account factors such as parental parenting practises, anxietydepression, and stress in the family. The findings indicated that excessive parental involvement, limited warmth and engagement in parenting, and parental worry and sadness were significant predictors of internalising problems. The results of the study indicate a requirement for parental programmes targeted at early childhood development (Bayer et al., 2006). There exists a correlation between family pressures and the occurrence of anxiety and depression in parents. Family stresses that have been found to be associated with internalising problems in children encompass several factors such as traumatic events, limited social support, challenges in everyday parenting, conflicts between parents and children, the experience of losing a loved one, and a lower socioeconomic position (Cicchetti and Toth, 1998, Spence, 2001). These kinds of stressors in life can cause feelings of helplessness, guilt, low control, and unfavorable expectations, all of which can have a direct effect on children (Denham, 1998). Additionally, parenting techniques may mitigate the detrimental impacts of stress in life on kids. According to Rubin and Mills (1991), family stress can make it difficult for parents to respond to their kids' needs and can result in overbearing, harsh, or careless parenting. Research indicates that children who witness stressful events in their parents and react to them with anxiety and overprotection typically experience negative emotional reactions (Spence, 2001). However, the emotional welfare of kids may be safeguarded if parents maintain a nurturing parenting environment, take steps to keep their own mental health good while managing adversity in an adaptive manner. Emerging adults commonly express a desire for their parents to adopt a specific style of parenting, which includes the granting of increased autonomy and ongoing support (Cullaty, 2011; Schiffrin et al., 2014). Studies show that the over-controlling way of parenting, also known as "helicopter parenting," can lead to higher levels of anxiety and sadness in college students. The study, based on self-determination theory, found that students with overbearing parents reported higher levels of despair and lower life satisfaction. (Schiffrin et al., 2014). Empirical investigations have established a connection between parental behaviors and a wide range of internalizing difficulties. To illustrate, Colder et al., (1997), have presented substantial data which states, parental behaviors are indicative of child depression. Rapee, et al., (1996) have identified correlations between parental behaviour and the development of anxiety in children. According to a study conducted by Mills and Rubin (1998), it was shown that parenting practises have the ability to serve as predictors of internalising difficulties. Additionally, Vondra and Barnett (1999) have observed a relationship between parenting and insecure attachment of children. The term "affectionless control" is utilised to characterise parenting techniques that are associated with the development of emotional difficulties in children (Parker, 1983). However, the existing body of research has not conclusively shown the significance of the combined lack of love and too much authority in parenting, nor has it determined if each facet of parenting exerts its own separate impact. Several scholars have emphasised the need for more focus on the influence of family circumstances on the emergence of internalising difficulties, particularly in early childhood (Rapee, 1997; Seligman et al., 1995). Sowers (1937) observed in an earlier research that children choose parents who were nice, truthful, sociable, and self-controlled; provided tough but fair discipline without nagging; avoided physical punishment, and considered their point of view (i.e., authoritative approach). Recent research provides further evidence in support of Sower's (1937) findings, indicating that emerging adults tend to favour parental relationships characterised by an authoritative style, as highlighted by Manza (2008). Moreover, multiple studies have identified gender differences in these preferences. For instance, females tend to view authoritarian parenting styles more negatively than males, and mothers tend to be more negatively affected by such styles compared to fathers (Barnhart, Raval, Jansari, & Raval, 2013; McGillicuddy-De Lisi, & De Lisi, 2007). Tisak, M. (1986) found that children draw boundaries to parental authority and their notions of authority vary depending on the content of the social event. This study examined children's conceptions of parental authority and found that children's notions of authority are heterogeneous based on the content of social events.

# Methodology Research Design:

The study adopts an exploratory research design aiming to find out the preferred parenting style among college-going students. A survey and offline questionnaire was conducted.

# **Sampling:**

Participants included 195 young adults attending University. All the participants were chosen from the age range of 18 to 25 years (M = 20.129 years, SD = 2.107). Purposive random sampling was used to gather the data and ensure the generalizability of the findings. Around 63% of participants were female and the rest 37% were male. See Tables 1 & 2 For detailed participant demographics.



**Table 1:** No of male and female participants.

**Table 2:** Showing the age range

#### **Tools Used:**

**Preferential parenting style**: A survey was developed based on the questionnaire for parental authority (Buri, 1991) in order to determine the favored parenting style of individuals in their role as parents. The purpose of the questions is to ascertain the participants' inclination towards a certain parenting style that they would be inclined to adopt in the event that they become parents. There were a total of 9 items on the scale and the Cronbach alpha was found to be .72. Face validity has already been established for the said scale.

#### **Procedure:**

Both online and offline surveys were conducted. Google form and hardcopy questionnaire were distributed simultaneously in the month of October and the data was collected. Participants were informed about the study through written ways and verbal conversations. All the questions raised by the participants were answered during the collection of data. Basic demographic information was also taken.

#### **Inclusive Criteria:**

Students from various fields were selected.

UG and PG students were taken.

Students that were willing to participate were selected.

# **Exclusive Criteria:**

Students not willing to participate were not taken.

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Students below the age of 18 and above the age of 25 were not taken.

#### **Data Analysis:**

The primary aim of the present study was to determine the preferred parenting style among individuals enrolled in higher education institutions, while also examining any gender disparities of significance. The process of data analysis was facilitated by the utilisation of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Statistical techniques such as the T-test, mean, standard deviation, and ANOVA were employed. The gender disparities were mostly assessed using a t-test.

# **Result and Discussion:**

The present study has examined the most popular or preferred style of parenting among university students and explored potential gender disparities.

**Table 3: Independent Samples Test** 

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Permissive	0.984	193	0.326
Authoritarian	-0.222	193	0.824
Authoritative	-0.807	193	0.421

Positive t-value for permissive suggests that the sample mean is greater than the mean of the other two groups.

Table 4: ANOVA analysis showing Degrees of freedom (df), F-statistics (F) and Significance (Sig.) for the Three separate ANOVAs, for each parenting style.

		df	$\mathbf{F}$	Sig.
	Between Groups	2	1.833	0.163
	Within Groups	192		
Authoritative	Total	194		
	<b>Between Groups</b>	2	2.153	0.119
	Within Groups	192		
Authoritarian	Total	194		
	<b>Between Groups</b>	2	8.22	0
	Within Groups	192		
Permissive	Total	194		

Higher F-value for Permissive parenting style indicates that the variability between the means of that particular group is relatively larger compared to the variability within that group and the other groups.

Table 5: A detailed analysis of the mean, standard deviation, and standard mean error of the three parenting styles with respect to different genders.

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	female	122	13.5984	3.39338	0.30722
Permissive	male	73	13.0685	4.015	0.46992
	female	122	4.9672	5.12639	0.46412
Authoritarian	male	73	5.137	5.23162	0.61231
Authoritative	female	122	2.1885	1.68774	0.1528

male 73 2.3973 1.84647 0.21611

A higher mean suggests that, on average, the values in the dataset are larger.

From Tables 3 & 4 (t=0.984; F=8.22), we can conclude that the students prefer permissive parenting style more than the other two. Hence, Hypothesis 1 is accepted. This discovery aligns with prior research indicating that the young Indian people tends to see permissive parenting as more practical and beneficial. Banhart, Raval, Jansari, and P. Raval (2012) similarly discovered that a greater percentage of Indian participants had a preference for permissive parenting as their prospective parenting style. In their study conducted in 2002, Patel-Amin and Power saw a positive correlation between the level of modernity in India and the evolving parental perspectives, which exhibited a greater inclination towards individualistic values. Prior studies have indicated that parenting practises in India have undergone transformations throughout time, displaying increased levels of nurturance and involvement. This trend suggests a movement towards Western, individualistic cultural norms (Roopnarine et al., 1990).

As the results suggest from Table 5 (M=13.5984 for females and M=13.0685 for males), there is not much gender difference in the participants in the preference of parenting style. Hypothesis 2 is not accepted. The descriptive statistics for the Permissive parenting style indicate that, on average, females tend to score slightly higher (Mean: 13.5984) compared to males (Mean: 13.0685). While the descriptive statistics hint at a slight female preference for the Permissive style, the t-test results indicated that the observed differences in means between Permissive and other styles were not statistically significant. This finding contradicts the previous findings. Females find authoritative parenting more effective and prefer it. Whereas males tend to prefer permissive parenting style (Banhart & et al., 2012). The available research presents varying statistics on the prevalence of permissive parenting, while demonstrating a relatively constant endorsement of authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles (Russell & Aloa, 1998; Conrade & Ho, 2001). One potential rationale for this observation is that all of the participants were members of the upper middle class. It is noteworthy to mention that all the individuals involved in this study are enrolled in a privately funded institution of higher education. There is limited disparity in the favored parenting style across genders.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, University students have a preference for permissive parenting style. While there are subtle gender differences in mean scores for the Permissive parenting style, these differences were not statistically significant. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on parenting styles by shedding light on the preferences of university students in India. The acceptance of permissive parenting aligns with evolving cultural attitudes, while unexpected gender similarities underscore the need for nuanced analyses. These insights highlight the importance of considering diverse backgrounds in parenting research and interventions, ensuring culturally sensitive approaches for promoting positive child development and family dynamics. It underscores the need for culturally sensitive and context-specific investigations to unravel the complexities of parenting attitudes, as evidenced by the varied findings in this study compared to prior research.

#### Limitations

- Sample Size & Specificity: The findings are based on a specific sample, and caution should be exercised when generalizing these results to broader populations.
- Not many variables were studied.

## **Future Suggestions**

- Future research could incorporate a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of the results.
- Qualitative methods may be employed to explore the underlying reasons behind individuals' parenting style preferences.
- More demographics can be added.
- More variables can be studied.

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