

# Parenting Styles as Perceived by Parents and Children

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**Abstract:** *A parenting style is a psychological construct representing standard strategies that parents use in their child rearing. Parenting styles are the representation of how parents respond to and make demands on their children. Research has often studied parenting style from the perspective of parents. This study attempts to approach the phenomena from the perspective of both parents and children. 160 fathers, 160 mothers and 160 children from urban and rural middle income families were questioned on responsiveness and demandingness of parents. A simple tool was developed, pilot tested and used. The results indicated that the differences between parents and children were marked among rural sample, but were found even among urban parents and children. In general, lesser number of parents felt they were authoritarian than the perceptions of their children. More parents felt they were democratic and permissive than what their children perceived.*

**Keywords:** parenting style, authoritarian, democratic, permissive

## 1. Introduction & Review

A **parenting style** is a psychological construct representing standard strategies that parents use in their child rearing. Parenting styles are the representation of how parents respond to and make demands on their children

**Parental responsiveness defined** as "the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands" (Baumrind, 1996, p. 410, cited in Grolnick, 2003, p. 6).

**Parental demandingness** is referred to as "the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys" (Baumrind, 1996, p. 411, cited in Grolnick, 2003, p. 6).

Parenting styles affect children in many ways. Research indicates that parents tend to see themselves as democratic more often while children may not see their parents in such a light. These divergent perceptions could impact the manner in which child outcomes pan out

Research results showed that adolescents from authoritative families applied most adaptive achievement strategies characterized by low levels of failure expectations, task irrelevant behaviour and passivity, and the use of self-enhancing attributions. Adolescents from neglectful families, in turn, applied maladaptive strategies characterized by high levels of task-irrelevant behaviour, passivity and a lack of self enhancing attributions (Kaisa aunola, Haë kan stattin and Jari-erik nurmi, 2000)

Another interesting study found that only bullies and only delinquents had different parenting correlates; only bullies

had authoritarian parents and disagreed with their parents, whereas only delinquents had conflictual and low supportive parents (Baldry & Farrington, 2000)

Authoritative mothering was found to relate to higher self-esteem and life-satisfaction and to lower depression. Paternal parenting styles was also related to psychological adjustment, however, although the advantage of authoritative mothering over permissive mothering was evident for all outcomes assessed, for paternal styles the advantage was less defined and only evident for depression (Milevsky, Schlechter Netter & Keehn, 2007)

Maternal authoritative was related to a mastery orientation. Maternal authoritarianism and permissiveness were related to a performance orientation among high school children.(Gonzalez. Doan Holbein & Quilter,2002)

This study examined the relationship between children's perception of dissimilarity in parenting styles, and internalizing and externalizing problems in children. Children's perceived dissimilarity in parental emotional warmth was associated with internalizing and externalizing problems ( $\beta = 0.092, p < 0.05$ ;  $\beta = 0.091, p < 0.05$ ). Perceived dissimilarity between parents' overprotection is associated with externalizing problems ( $\beta = 0.097, p < 0.05$ ). Perceived dissimilarity between parenting styles is associated with externalizing and internalizing problems, over and above the effects of the level of the parenting styles. The results highlight the negative consequences of perceived dissimilarity between parents ( Berkien, Louwse, Verhulst, and van der Ende (2012)

Strong relationship between children's school achievement and parenting attitude and style was reported. Findings from the review revealed that authoritative parenting styles were associated with higher levels of children's school achievement, though findings remain inconsistent across

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cultures and societies. Future studies may explore some of the salient issues underlying the inconsistencies reported in the study, particularly the contradictory results between Asian and European American school children. (Kordi & Baharudin, 2010)

Another study examined the influence of perceived paternal parenting styles on emotional intelligence of adolescents. Sex differences in perceived paternal parenting style was also explored. Results indicated father's authoritative and authoritarian parenting style significantly correlated with emotional intelligence and fathers were perceived to be more authoritative towards girls than boys. Findings suggest greater involvement of fathers and adopting an authoritative approach in bringing up emotionally intelligent adolescents (Shalini, & Acharya, 2013).

## 2. Method

This study is part of a large investigation on parenting experiences. The sample distribution includes parents from urban as well as rural areas. Urban sample was collected from Hyderabad – Secunderabad cities and rural sample was collected from villages in Chittoor district.

### Sampling Distribution

Age Groups	Urban			Rural		
	Fathers	Mothers	Children	Fathers	Mothers	Children
3-5.11 yrs	20	20	20	20	20	20
6-12.11 yrs	20	20	20	20	20	20
13-15.11 yrs	20	20	20	20	20	20
16-18.11yrs	20	20	20	20	20	20
Total	80	80	80	80	80	80
Grand total = 160 fathers, 160 mothers , 160 children						

### Measurement Tool

Parenting style was measured by a simple question, after defining the two concepts operationally  
 Operational Definitions:

- 1) **Responsiveness:** responding to child's needs for activity, independence, being supportive in child's requirements for emotional, social and intellectual needs
- 2) **Demandingness:** expecting the child to be obedient, fulfil demands, making demands on child to follow in designated ways of life as dictated by the parent

Once the respondent parents placed their responses on the 10 point rating scale indicating where they placed themselves on responsiveness and demandingness, the following formula was applied to categorise them.

Children from four younger age groups were questioned on their own perception of their parents' parenting styles based on a) responsiveness b) demandingness on a ten point rating scale.

Children were asked to rate their parents on a ten point rating scale on three parameters for

- Responding a) to needs b)when in problem c) Consoling
- Demandingness a) School work b) Household work c) Obedience to commands

The following formula (for a 10 point rating scale) were applied to segregate parents a own perceptions and children's perceptions of their parents.

- 1) High on Responsive (8,9,10)+ High on Demandingness (1,2,3 )= Authoritarian
- 2) High on Responsiveness (8,9,10)+ moderate on Demandingness (4,5,6,7) = Democratic
- 3) High on responsiveness / moderate on responsiveness (4,5,6,7,8,9,10)+ low on demandingness (8,9,10) = Permissive
- 4) Low on responsiveness (1,2,3 ) + low on demandingness (8,9,10) = Neglectful

## 3. Results

**Table 1:** Children's perception of parenting styles AGE GROUP: 3-5.11 years

Children's perception of parenting style		Urban(n=40)				Rural(n=40)			
		Father (n=20)	Percent	Mother (n=20)	Percent	Father (n=20)	Percent	Mother (n=20)	Percent
1.	Authoritarian	12	60.0	15	75.0	5	25.0	7	35.0
2.	Democratic	8	40.0	5	25.0	10	50.0	8	40.0
3.	Permissive	0	0	0	0	5	25.0	5	25.0
Total(N=80)		20	100.0	20	100.0	20	100	20	100

Urban preschool children, sixty percent of them identified authoritarian parenting style for their fathers, while 40 percent said fathers were democratic. With regard to mothers, most of them found their mothers to be authoritarian and only one fourth said they were democratic. Half of the rural preschool children placed their fathers in

democratic style and one fourth in authoritarian and the other one fourth in permissive style. Rural preschool children too in higher numbers found their mothers to be authoritarian, about 40 percent said they were democratic and one fourth said they were permissive.

**Table 2:** Children's perception of parenting styles AGE GROUP: 6-12 YEARS

Children's perception of parenting style		Urban(n=40)				Rural(n=40)			
		Father (n=20)	Percent	Mother (n=20)	Percent	Father (n=20)	Percent	Mother (n=20)	Percent
1.	Authoritarian	8	40.0	10	50.0	6	30.0	7	35.0
2.	Democratic	12	60.0	7	35.0	14	70.0	10	50.0
3.	Permissive	0	0	3	15.0	0	0	3	15.0
Total(N=80)		20	20	100.0	20	100.0	20	100	20

Urban school going children, more in number, placed their fathers in democratic style and lesser in authoritarian style, but none in permissive. They placed their mothers in authoritarian style more in number and lesser in democratic style. A few of them placed their mothers in permissive style

too. Rural school going children, predominantly saw their fathers as democratic, half of them saw their mothers too as democratic. About one third of them placed both their parents as authoritarian. Few of them found their mothers permissive too.

**Table 3: Children's perceptions of parenting styles AGE GROUP: 13-15 YEARS**

Children's perception of parenting style		Urban(n=40)				Rural(n=40)			
S.NO		Father (n=20)	Percent	Mother (n=20)	Percent	Father (n=20)	Percent	Mother (n=20)	Percent
1.	Authoritarian	15	75.0	17	85.0	3	15.0	11	55.0
2.	Democratic	5	25.0	3	15.0	15	75.0	8	40.0
3.	Permissive	0	0	0	0	2	10.0	1	5.0
Total(N=80)		20	20	100.0	20	100.0	20	100	20

Teenagers mostly from urban areas found their parents to be authoritarian and small number of them found their parents to be democratic. None found their parents as permissive. Among rural teenagers, three fourths of children found their fathers to be democratic, and small numbers to be

authoritarian and few permissive too. Slightly more than half of the rural children found their mothers to be authoritarian, 40 percent found them as democratic and only one child placed them in permissive style.

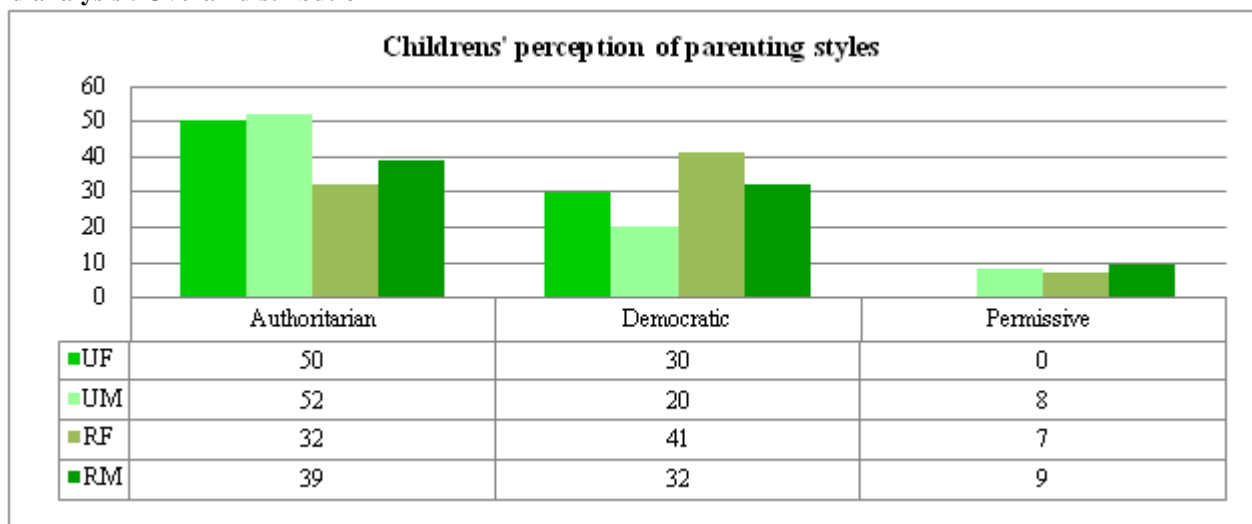
**Table 4: Children's perception of parenting styles AGE GROUP: 16-18 YEARS**

Children's perception of parenting style		Urban(n=40)				Rural(n=40)			
S.NO		Father (n=20)	Percent	Mother (n=20)	Percent	Father (n=20)	Percent	Mother (n=20)	Percent
1.	Authoritarian	15	75.0	10	50.0	18	90.0	14	70.0
2.	Democratic	5	25.0	5	25.0	2	10.0	6	30.0
3.	Permissive	0	0	5	25.0	0	0	0	0
Total(N=80)		20	20	100.0	20	100.0	20	100	20

Young adolescents from urban areas found their fathers to be authoritarian and democratic in three fourths and one fourth ratio, whereas, half of them found their mothers as authoritarian. Urban children placed their mothers in equal numbers in democratic and permissive styles, but none

placed their fathers in permissive style. Rural adolescents predominantly found their parents as authoritarian, and more mothers were placed in democratic style than fathers. none were placed in permissive style.

**Trend analysis : Overall distribution**



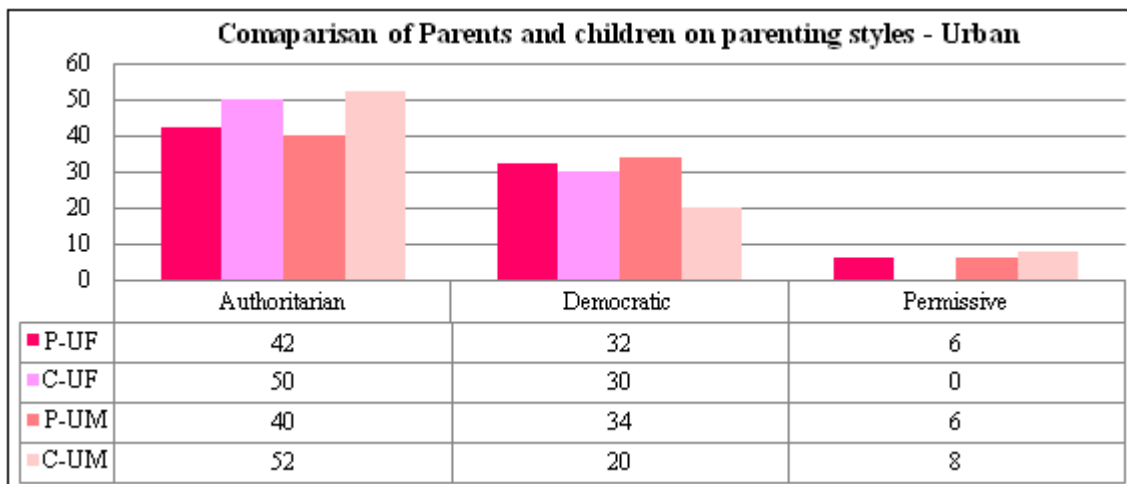
Chi square 0.001347, p < NS

Fig 1

More parents from both urban and rural families were perceived to be authoritarian, followed by democratic by children from preschool years to adolescence. Extremely small number of parents was seen as permissive. Urban fathers and mothers were found in larger numbers in authoritarian group than rural fathers and mothers. Consequently, more rural fathers and mothers were seen in

democratic style than urban parents. However, these differences were statistically not significant.

**Comparison of parents and children on their perceptions of parenting styles**



Chi square 0.036273911,  $p < NS$

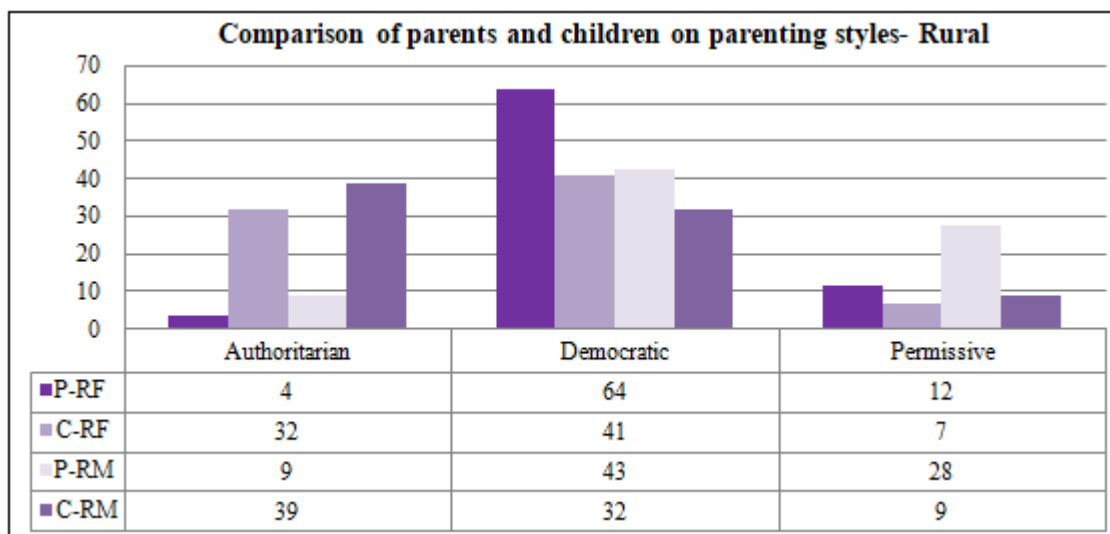
Figure 2

### Comparison of urban family's parents and children

Interesting findings could be noted when parental perceptions of their own parenting styles were compared with children's perception of their parents parenting styles. More children from urban families found their father to be authoritarian than what fathers themselves claimed. And more children found their mothers to be authoritative than what their mothers themselves claimed. Interestingly, the differences between mothers and children were much greater than the differences between fathers and children's perceptions.

With reference to democratic parenting style, the fathers and children were more or less equal in number while stating their democratic parenting style. But clearly much lesser number of children than mothers found their mothers to be democratic. Six fathers said they were permissive with their children, but none of the children said so. Interestingly six mothers too said they were permissive, but eight children found their parents as permissive. The Chi square analysis however was not found to be significant.

### Comparison of urban family's parents and children



Chi square 7.43991E-14  $p < 0.01$

Figure 3

The differences between parents and children were marked among rural sample. While only four fathers felt they were authoritarian, thirty two children felt their fathers were authoritarian. Almost similar findings were seen with regard to rural mothers and their children; only nine mothers thought they were authoritarian whereas thirty nine children found them to be authoritarian.

With regard to democratic parenting style, a large number of rural fathers felt they were democratic parents, but much lesser number of children found their fathers to be

democratic. Similarly, mothers too were perceived to be democratic by lesser number of children than what the rural mothers thought.

Similarly more rural parents thought they were permissive parents, whereas very few of their children thought that their mothers and fathers were permissive. The differences were found to statistically significant.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is interesting to note that parenting styles identified by parents themselves are not similarly perceived by their children and developmental outcomes for children may vary depending upon how they perceive their parents. Differential perceptions of parents and children on the parenting styles adopted by the parent could be one of the triggers for parent – child conflicts. Understanding how they appear to their children is a critically important insight that parents need to develop in order to be positive and effective parents.

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