

A Study on the Relationship between Parenting Styles and Behavioural Problems among Preschool Children (2-6 Years)

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Abstract: The preschool period (2–6 years) is a foundational stage for emotional regulation, social skills, and self-control. The present study examined the relationship between parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) and behavioural problems (emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, and peer problems) among preschool children. Adopting a quantitative cross-sectional correlational design, data was collected from 150 parent-child dyads using the Demographic Sheet, the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ), and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Results indicated that authoritative parenting was the predominant style ($M = 3.82$) and showed a significant negative correlation with children's total behavioural problems ($r = -.38, p < .001$). Conversely, authoritarian ($r = .35, p < .001$) and permissive ($r = .24, p = .003$) styles showed positive correlations with behavioural difficulties. Multiple linear regression demonstrated that authoritarian ($\beta = .31$) and authoritative ($\beta = -.29$) parenting significantly predicted total behavioural problem scores. Early parent interventions and school counseling are recommended.

Keywords: Parenting style, behavioural problems, preschool children, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive.

1. Introduction

Early childhood involves rapid development of language, emotional understanding, and behavioral control. Persistent behavioral issues like aggression, hyperactivity, or anxiety can impair social adjustment and school readiness. Parenting style- the overarching climate of parental warmth, expectations, and discipline- serves as a primary socialization factor. Baumrind's framework classifies these practices into:

- 1) **Authoritative:** High warmth, clear expectations, and democratic discipline.
- 2) **Authoritarian:** High demands for obedience, strict control, and lower warmth.
- 3) **Permissive:** High warmth combined with low discipline and structure.

Understanding local contextual dynamics between parenting practices and child adjustment helps tailor parenting guidance programs and early psychological interventions.

2. Literature Review & Methodology

2.1 Literature Review

Theoretical models emphasize that authoritative parenting promotes emotional self-regulation and prosocial behavior through responsive boundaries. Conversely, authoritarian styles often correlate with externalizing behaviors (aggression/conduct issues), whereas permissive styles contribute to self-regulation deficits. Empirical studies in India (e.g., Dharwad and Dehradun) highlight that 13.8%–31% of preschoolers experience borderline or clinical behavioral difficulties, with specific parenting practices directly influencing outcomes.

2.2 Methodology

- 1) **Research Design:** Quantitative, cross-sectional, non-experimental correlational design.
- 2) **Sample & Setting:** 150 parent-child dyads (children aged 2–6 years) recruited from local preschools and kindergartens via non-probability purposive sampling.
- 3) **Inclusion Criteria:** Primary caregivers living with the child for ≥ 6 months without diagnosed severe neurodevelopmental conditions.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

- 1) **Socio-Demographic Information Sheet:** Captured age, gender, family structure, and parental background.
- 2) **Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ):** 32-item Likert scale assessing Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive styles.
- 3) **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ):** 25-item parent-report tool measuring Emotional Symptoms, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity, Peer Problems, and Prosocial Behavior.

3. Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants ($N = 150$)

Variable	Category	Frequency (nnn)	Percentage (%)
Child Gende	Male	78	52.00%
	Female	72	48.00%
Child Age Group	2–3 Years	42	28.00%
	4–5 Years	68	45.30%
	5–6 Years	40	26.70%
Family Type	Nuclear	96	64.00%
	Joint/Extended	54	36.00%
Respondent	Mother	118	78.70%
	Father	32	21.30%

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Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for PSDQ and SDQ Scales ($N = 150$)

Variable	Mean (MMM)	Standard Deviation (SDSDSD)	Minimum	Maximum
Authoritative Parenting	3.82	0.54	2.1	4.9
Authoritarian Parenting	2.35	0.61	1	4.2
Permissive Parenting	2.68	0.58	1.2	4.35
Emotional Symptoms	2.45	1.62	0	7
Conduct Problems	2.8	1.55	0	8
Hyperactivity / Inattention	3.92	2.1	0	9
Peer Problems	2.15	1.48	0	6
Total Difficulties Score	11.32	4.85	2	26
Prosocial Behaviour	7.64	1.82	3	10

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix Between Parenting Styles and Total Behavioural Problems

Parenting Style	Correlation (rrr) PDF	ppp-value PDF	Interpretation PDF
Authoritative	-0.38	<.001	Statistically Significant (Negative)
Authoritarian	0.35	<.001	Statistically Significant (Positive)
Permissive	0.24	0.003	Statistically Significant (Positive)

Table 4: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Total Behavioural Problems

Predictor	BBB PDF	SE BSE\ BSE B PDF	Beta (β \beta\beta) PDF	ttt PDF	ppp-value PDF
Constant	10.25	2.15	—	4.77	<.001
Authoritative	-2.6	0.71	-0.29	-3.66	<.001
Authoritarian	2.47	0.64	0.31	3.86	<.001
Permissive	1.34	0.68	0.16	1.97	.051

Model Summary: $R^2 = .238$, Adjusted $R^2 = .222$, $F(3,146) = 15.21$, $p < .001$.

4. Discussion, Conclusion & Recommendations

4.1 Discussion

- 1) **Authoritative Parenting ($M = 3.82$):** Showed a strong inverse relationship with total difficulties ($r = -.38, \beta = -.29$). Emotional warmth, constructive communication, and clear rules act as key protective factors that foster self-regulation in young children.
- 2) **Authoritarian Parenting ($M = 2.35$):** Demonstrated a positive association with behavioral difficulties ($r = .35, \beta = .31$). Excessive control and rigid punishment without adequate emotional responsiveness correlate with elevated conduct issues and hyperactivity.
- 3) **Permissive Parenting ($M = 2.68$):** Displayed a moderate positive correlation ($r = .24$). Lack of consistent structure makes it challenging for young children to develop internal limits, though its predictive power was marginally non-significant in the final regression model ($p = .051$).

4.2 Summary and Conclusion

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

- H_1 **Supported:** Authoritative parenting is negatively associated with total behavioral problems.
- H_2 **Supported:** Authoritarian parenting is positively associated with total behavioral problems.
- H_3 **Supported:** Permissive parenting is positively associated with total behavioral problems.

Conclusion

Parenting styles play a critical role in shaping early childhood behavioral outcomes. While authoritative practices safeguard

children against emotional and conduct problems, high authoritarianism increases vulnerability to behavioral difficulties. The study's regression model accounts for **23.8% of the variance** in total difficulties, affirming that parental approaches are important, though child temperament, socio-economic dynamics, and environmental context also play significant roles.

4.3 Recommendations

- **Parenting Education:** Implement community-wide positive discipline workshops emphasizing warmth and structured limits.
- **Preschool Counseling:** Establish early screening programs using the SDQ to identify at-risk children and offer non-stigmatizing parent guidance.
- **Future Research:** Utilize longitudinal designs, incorporate multi-rater observations (teacher reports), and account for potential confounders such as parental stress and screen time.