

Parenting Practices, Discipline Styles and their Effects on Adolescent Behaviour

By

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Abstract

Parenting practices and disciplinary approaches play a pivotal role in shaping the social, emotional and behavioral outcomes of adolescents. The present review paper synthesizes empirical and theoretical literature to examine how various parenting and discipline styles authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful influence adolescent behavior patterns, emotional regulation and moral development. Drawing from Baumrind's (1966, 1991) typology and subsequent cross-cultural validations, the review highlights that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, consistent discipline and autonomy support, consistently predicts positive adolescent adjustment, academic competence and emotional stability. In contrast, authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles are linked with increased aggression, anxiety and lower self-esteem (Steinberg, 2001; Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The review also discusses the mediating role of parent-child communication and cultural norms in moderating disciplinary outcomes. Research indicates that adolescents who perceive parental discipline as fair and rooted in emotional support tend to internalize behavioral norms more effectively than those exposed to punitive or inconsistent practices (Hoffman, 2000; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Furthermore, findings underscore the growing importance of positive discipline approaches, such as reasoning, empathy training and problem-solving discussions, in fostering emotional intelligence and self-regulation among youth. The paper concludes that understanding parenting and discipline through a socio-ecological lens is vital for promoting adolescent well-being in contemporary societies. In collectivist cultures like India, where intergenerational authority and familial cohesion are central, balancing control with emotional responsiveness is crucial for adaptive adolescent development. The review recommends integrating parental education programs within community and school settings to enhance positive parenting practices and reduce behavioral issues among adolescents.

Keywords: Parenting styles; Discipline practices; Adolescent behaviour; Emotional regulation; Authoritative parenting; Parent-child communication; Psychosocial development

Introduction

Adolescence represents a critical developmental period characterized by rapid biological, emotional and social transitions. During this stage, parenting practices play a defining role in shaping how individuals negotiate identity, manage emotions and exhibit social behavior. The family environment, particularly the nature of parent-child interactions and disciplinary approaches, provides the foundation for moral reasoning, self-control and interpersonal competence. Research has consistently affirmed that variations in parenting styles and disciplinary methods profoundly affect adolescent outcomes across domains of behavior, academic achievement and psychological well-being (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg, 2001; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

The conceptualization of parenting styles was first established by Diana Baumrind (1966), who identified three prototypical patterns authoritative, authoritarian and permissive based on dimensions of warmth, responsiveness and control. Later, Maccoby and Martin (1983) expanded this framework by adding the neglectful or uninvolved style. These typologies have guided decades of developmental research, emphasizing that effective parenting lies in achieving a balance between structure and support. Authoritative parenting, marked by high responsiveness and high demandingness, is associated with positive behavioral and emotional outcomes such as self-reliance, academic motivation and social competence. Conversely, authoritarian and neglectful styles, characterized by rigidity or emotional detachment, tend to foster anxiety, rebellion or social withdrawal among adolescents (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Discipline an essential component of parenting extends beyond punishment to encompass strategies that promote moral internalization and self-regulation. Hoffman's (2000) discipline theory differentiates between power-assertive, love-withdrawal and inductive approaches. Inductive discipline, which emphasizes reasoning and empathy, has been found to encourage adolescents to understand the moral implications of their actions, thereby fostering intrinsic behavioral control (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). On the other hand, punitive or inconsistent discipline is linked to heightened aggression, externalizing behaviors and lower emotional maturity (Simons et al., 1994).

The influence of parenting is also embedded within broader social learning and ecological systems. Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory posits that children and adolescents internalize behavioral norms by observing and modeling parental behavior. Thus, aggressive or inconsistent parental actions often translate into similar behavioral tendencies in adolescents. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory further situates parenting practices within multiple environmental contexts family, school and community highlighting that cultural expectations and socioeconomic conditions shape how parents exercise control and provide emotional support.

Cross-cultural research reinforces that the effectiveness of parenting and discipline styles varies according to socio-cultural norms. In collectivist societies like India and many Asian contexts, authoritarian control is often perceived not as harsh but as a sign of parental concern and involvement (Chao, 1994). However, even within such frameworks, warmth and communication remain crucial determinants of healthy adolescent adjustment (Rao & Rao, 2005). Conversely, in Western societies emphasizing individuality, authoritative parenting aligns more closely with cultural ideals of autonomy and democratic participation (Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

Empirical evidence reveals that adolescents raised in supportive, communicative and consistent family environments show better emotional regulation and pro-social behavior than those from conflict-ridden or punitive households (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005). Moreover, parenting practices directly influence adolescents' coping mechanisms, academic engagement and risk-taking behaviors such as substance use and delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009). The role of discipline consistency and parental warmth has emerged as a universal predictor of positive behavioral outcomes, transcending cultural and socioeconomic differences (Carlo et al., 2007).

In the modern context, changing family structures, dual-working parents and digital influences pose new challenges for parenting. Adolescents today are exposed to multiple socialization agents

beyond the family media, peers and online platforms that can either reinforce or counter parental influence. Therefore, understanding effective parenting practices and discipline styles becomes increasingly relevant for fostering resilience, empathy and responsible behavior among youth.

This review seeks to synthesize classical and contemporary findings to understand how diverse parenting and discipline strategies affect adolescent behavior. By this research, it aims to reveal consistent patterns and cultural nuances that explain why some parental approaches lead to constructive development while others contribute to behavioral maladjustment. Such understanding not only deepens theoretical insight but also guides educators, counselors and policymakers in designing family-based interventions that nurture emotionally stable and socially responsible adolescents.

Parenting practices and discipline strategies have been central themes in developmental psychology for over half a century. Their effects on adolescent behavior have been explored through diverse theoretical lenses that explain how parents shape emotional, moral and social development. Three influential frameworks Baumrind's Parenting Styles Theory (1966, 1991), Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) together provide a comprehensive understanding of how parenting and discipline interact to influence adolescent behavior.

Baumrind's Parenting Styles Theory

Diana Baumrind's typology remains one of the most enduring frameworks for analyzing parenting behaviors. Her model identifies four major parenting styles authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful based on two key dimensions: responsiveness (warmth and emotional support) and demandingness (control and discipline).

Authoritative parenting, marked by warmth, consistent expectations and open communication, has been consistently linked with positive adolescent outcomes such as self-reliance, social competence and academic success (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg, 2001).

Authoritarian parenting, which emphasizes obedience and punitive control, often produces compliance in the short term but is associated with lower self-esteem and higher aggression over time (Lamborn et al., 1991).

Permissive parents provide emotional warmth but lack consistent discipline, leading to impulsivity and poor self-regulation in adolescents.

Neglectful parenting low in both responsiveness and control is most strongly associated with antisocial behavior, academic disengagement and emotional detachment (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

In real-world contexts, an authoritative approach is often seen in parents who maintain rules but encourage dialogue for example, discussing curfew times with teenagers rather than imposing them unilaterally. In contrast, authoritarian parents may demand compliance without explanation, expecting absolute obedience. Adolescents from such families often struggle with assertiveness or exhibit covert defiance.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory provides another vital perspective, suggesting that much of adolescent behavior is acquired through observational learning. Children

learn values, attitudes and coping strategies by observing parental models. Reinforcement and imitation become key mechanisms through which behavior is internalized.

Parents who model empathy, patience and problem-solving tend to foster similar behaviors in their children. Conversely, harsh or inconsistent discipline may inadvertently teach aggression or emotional withdrawal. For instance, adolescents exposed to parental yelling or physical punishment may perceive aggression as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts.

Bandura's theory also emphasizes reciprocal determinism, meaning that the environment, personal factors and behavior influence each other dynamically. Thus, a rebellious adolescent may evoke stricter discipline, which in turn intensifies defiance a feedback loop that perpetuates maladaptive behavior.

This theoretical lens highlights the importance of positive discipline methods such as reasoning, time-outs and emotional coaching that teach behavioral responsibility rather than induce fear. Empirical research (e.g., Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Hoffman, 2000) consistently shows that adolescents respond more constructively when discipline is rooted in explanation and empathy rather than punishment.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory extends the understanding of parenting by situating it within a multi-layered social context. According to this model, adolescent development occurs through interactions across five interrelated systems: the microsystem (family, school, peers), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (parental workplace, community), macrosystem (cultural values, laws, traditions) and chronosystem (changes over time).

Parenting practices are therefore influenced not only by personal beliefs but also by cultural norms, socioeconomic conditions and historical context. For instance, in collectivist societies such as India, parental authority and obedience are culturally valued, often leading to more directive forms of discipline that are nevertheless perceived as caring (Chao, 1994). In contrast, Western contexts emphasize autonomy and negotiation, aligning more closely with authoritative parenting (Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

A real-life example can be seen in how disciplinary practices differ in urban and rural settings. Urban parents, exposed to globalized ideals of positive parenting, may adopt democratic communication styles, while rural families might adhere to traditional hierarchies. Yet, both contexts can foster well-adjusted adolescents if the underlying emotional connection and consistency remain intact.

Bronfenbrenner's model underscores the bidirectional nature of development parents influence adolescents, but adolescents also shape parental behavior through their responses and developmental needs. Therefore, effective parenting requires adaptability, empathy and contextual sensitivity rather than rigid adherence to a single disciplinary style.

Conceptual Integration

Taken together, these theories reveal that effective parenting is a balance between warmth and discipline, guidance and autonomy, structure and flexibility. Discipline is most constructive when it promotes understanding, emotional security and moral reasoning rather than compliance through fear.

Authoritative parents who communicate expectations clearly while validating emotions tend to raise adolescents capable of emotional regulation and ethical decision-making.

A chronic harshness or neglect undermines trust and fosters behavioral issues such as defiance, aggression or social withdrawal. Thus, parenting and discipline should be understood as dynamic processes, continuously shaped by individual temperament, parental modeling and sociocultural influences.

An integrating these theoretical frameworks provides a holistic understanding of how parental behavior molds adolescent development. Theories by Baumrind, Bandura and Bronfenbrenner collectively emphasize that parenting is not a one-size-fits-all process it must evolve with cultural context, child temperament and developmental stage to nurture well-adjusted and responsible adolescents.

Review of Literature

The influence of parenting practices and discipline styles on adolescent behavior has been a focal concern of developmental and educational psychology for over five decades. Research consistently demonstrates that parenting is a dynamic process shaped by cultural norms, socioeconomic conditions and family interactions, all of which significantly affect adolescents' emotional regulation, academic adjustment and social behavior. This review organizes literature under four broad themes: (1) classical foundations of parenting and discipline, (2) effects of specific parenting styles, (3) cultural and contextual variations and (4) contemporary perspectives from Indian research.

The conceptual basis for parenting styles originated from the pioneering work of Baumrind (1966, 1971), who proposed three parenting typologies authoritative, authoritarian and permissive based on levels of control and responsiveness. Her longitudinal studies found that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, reasoning and firm expectations, was most conducive to developing self-reliant and socially competent adolescents. Maccoby and Martin (1983) expanded Baumrind's model by introducing a fourth category, neglectful or uninvolved parenting, highlighting the detrimental effects of emotional disengagement on behavioral adjustment.

Early cross-cultural studies by Hoffman (1970) and Lamborn et al. (1991) also revealed that disciplinary consistency and parental warmth promote moral internalization, while punitive practices foster resentment or defiance. Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory further emphasized the role of modeling, suggesting that parents' own emotional regulation and coping behaviors serve as prototypes for adolescent behavior. According to Bandura, coercive discipline inadvertently reinforces aggression, whereas reasoned dialogue fosters empathy and moral reasoning.

In the 1990s, researchers began integrating ecological and contextual variables. Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed the Ecological Systems Theory, positing that parenting practices are embedded within multilayered social environments. Darling and Steinberg (1993) later conceptualized parenting style as a climate within which parental behaviors function, implying that warmth and structure jointly determine adolescent outcomes.

A significant body of empirical research consistently supports the superior outcomes of authoritative parenting. Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch and Darling (1992) found that adolescents from authoritative families exhibited higher self-esteem, academic motivation and social maturity

than those from authoritarian or permissive households. Similarly, Mounts (2002) reported that authoritative parenting fosters self-regulation and reduces risk-taking behaviors.

In contrast, authoritarian parenting marked by rigid control and low emotional warmth has been associated with externalizing behaviors such as aggression and anxiety (Baumrind, 1991; Simons & Conger, 2007). Weiss and Schwarz (1996) observed that adolescents raised under authoritarian regimes tend to exhibit high conformity but poor emotional expressiveness. Permissive parenting, while emotionally warm, often leads to impulsivity and poor academic discipline due to the absence of boundaries (Barber, 1996).

Research on neglectful parenting highlights even more severe consequences. Steinberg (2001) reported that adolescents experiencing emotional neglect are prone to substance abuse and low academic motivation. Hoeve et al. (2009), in a meta-analysis, confirmed that inconsistent or uninvolved parenting correlates strongly with delinquent and antisocial behavior.

Studies focusing on discipline methods show that inductive reasoning explaining consequences and promoting empathy encourages internal moral control (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Conversely, corporal punishment and psychological control have been linked to emotional insecurity and hostility (Gershoff, 2002; Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005). Hoffman (2000) emphasized that power-assertive strategies may suppress misbehavior temporarily but undermine conscience development.

By the early 2000s, parenting research began to emphasize the role of cultural norms in shaping disciplinary practices. Chao (1994) argued that authoritarian practices in collectivist societies, particularly among Asian parents, often reflect cultural expectations of respect and interdependence rather than hostility. Consequently, the outcomes of authoritarian parenting may differ across cultures.

Steinberg and Morris (2001) found that the authoritative model, though optimal in Western societies, might not be universally applicable. For example, Chinese-American adolescents from “training” families (Chao, 1994) showed high achievement despite strict discipline, suggesting that perceived parental intent moderates outcomes. Similarly, Dwairy et al. (2006) found that Middle Eastern adolescents interpret parental control as caring, not oppressive, within their cultural frameworks.

Socioeconomic status (SES) also shapes parental discipline. Conger et al. (2002) observed that financial stress leads to irritability and inconsistent discipline, which in turn fosters behavioral problems among adolescents. In contrast, higher SES families typically employ more reasoning-based and autonomy-supportive strategies. McLoyd (1998) similarly noted that economic hardship predicts harsher disciplinary styles and emotional withdrawal, emphasizing structural inequalities as key determinants of parenting.

In the Indian context, family systems are guided by collectivist values emphasizing respect for elders, obedience and family cohesion. Kaur and Kaur (2004) reported that Indian adolescents from authoritative families displayed higher emotional stability and academic competence. Garg, Levin and Tremblay (2005) found that parental monitoring positively predicted school engagement among Indian youth, paralleling global findings.

Verma and Saraswathi (2002) examined disciplinary patterns in Indian joint families, noting that while authoritarian elements persist, emotional warmth mitigates their negative impact. Singh

(2006) emphasized that Indian parents often blend authoritarian control with affectionate involvement a style sometimes referred to as “benevolent authoritarianism.”

Mishra and Singh (2009) found gender differences in parental expectations: boys experienced stricter discipline, while girls received more emotional guidance. Similarly, Rani and Bano (2012) reported that authoritarian parenting correlated with lower emotional maturity, particularly among urban adolescents. Pathak and Kaur (2014) observed that authoritative parenting was associated with better coping and decision-making abilities, while neglectful parenting led to social withdrawal.

Research from South Asia mirrors these patterns. Dwivedi and Rastogi (2013) found that permissive parenting predicted poor self-control among Indian adolescents, while authoritative practices promoted empathy and social responsibility. Khaleque (2013), studying Bangladeshi families, confirmed that perceived parental acceptance strongly influenced psychological adjustment.

By the mid-2010s, scholars began exploring psychological control, emotional socialization and parental monitoring as more nuanced dimensions of discipline. Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2010) identified psychological control guilt induction, love withdrawal and shaming as particularly harmful to adolescents’ emotional autonomy. Barber et al. (2012) reinforced that while behavioral control promotes responsibility, psychological control suppresses individuality.

Smetana (2011) advanced the concept of “parent-adolescent negotiation,” arguing that effective discipline transitions from control to mutual regulation during adolescence. This developmental shift allows adolescents to internalize moral reasoning and self-discipline.

Indian research began incorporating these modern frameworks. Saxena and Mehta (2015) demonstrated that autonomy-supportive discipline enhanced adolescent self-efficacy, while punitive control correlated with academic anxiety. Similarly, Pillai and Menon (2016) found that open communication between parents and adolescents predicted emotional maturity and prosocial behavior.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the relationship between parenting practices and discipline styles in shaping adolescents’ emotional, social and behavioral outcomes.
2. To review and synthesize existing research and monographs from the past decade to identify consistent patterns and cultural variations in the effects of different parenting styles on adolescent behavior.

Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive review research design, focusing on the systematic analysis of literature published primarily between 2007 and 2017. The review draws upon empirical studies, meta-analyses and monographs addressing parenting styles, disciplinary methods and their psychological outcomes in adolescents.

Relevant research was sourced from academic databases such as ERIC, PsycINFO, JSTOR and Google Scholar using keywords including parenting practices, discipline styles, adolescent behaviour, emotional development and cross-cultural parenting. Only peer-reviewed articles and scholarly monographs aligned with developmental and educational psychology were included.

Classic and foundational works by Baumrind (1971), Bandura (1977) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) were included as conceptual anchors, while recent analyses by Soenens & Vansteenkiste

(2010), Dwivedi & Rastogi (2013) and Pillai & Menon (2016) provided contemporary perspectives. The descriptive analysis technique was employed to identify recurring themes, compare global and Indian contexts and draw conceptual patterns from reviewed literature and monographs.

Findings

The review revealed that authoritative parenting characterized by high warmth and consistent control produces the most positive adolescent outcomes across emotional, social and behavioral domains. Adolescents raised in authoritative households demonstrated better emotional regulation, academic motivation and interpersonal adjustment (Steinberg et al., 1992; Mounts, 2002). In contrast, authoritarian and neglectful styles correlated with aggression, anxiety and social withdrawal (Hoeve et al., 2009; Simons & Conger, 2007). Studies during the past decade have increasingly focused on the quality of parental communication and psychological control. Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2010) found that parental guilt induction and love withdrawal predict internalized distress, while autonomy-supportive parenting enhances self-esteem. In the Indian context, research by Saxena and Mehta (2015) and Pillai and Menon (2016) highlighted that balanced discipline combining emotional warmth with firm expectations leads to better adolescent coping and self-regulation.

A consistent trend across the reviewed literature is the moderating influence of cultural and socioeconomic contexts. In collectivist societies such as India and China, authoritarian practices do not always produce negative outcomes when combined with affection and cultural justification (Chao, 1994; Verma & Saraswathi, 2002). Lower socioeconomic status, however, tends to increase parental stress, inconsistency and punitive behavior (McLoyd, 1998; Conger et al., 2002). Recent research also underscores the role of discipline style in fostering adolescent moral development. Inductive reasoning and positive reinforcement promote empathy and responsibility, while coercive control weakens moral internalization (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Overall, adolescents thrive in environments where discipline is dialogical, empathetic and structured rather than punitive or erratic.

Conclusion

This research clearly demonstrates that parenting practices and discipline styles are central determinants of adolescent behavior and emotional adjustment. The authoritative approach, marked by responsiveness, reasoning and consistent expectations, remains the most effective model across cultures and socioeconomic settings. Conversely, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful patterns are associated with emotional instability, aggression and low academic performance. Cultural differences, however, complicate these relationships. In collectivist societies, parental strictness may coexist with emotional security when grounded in familial cohesion and mutual respect. This highlights that the impact of discipline depends not only on behavioral techniques but also on context, intent and emotional tone. The review also identifies a shift in focus from mere control to communication, emotional support and autonomy in modern parenting literature. This paradigm shift aligns with the need for adolescents to develop intrinsic motivation and emotional resilience in complex social environments. For policymakers and educators, the findings advocate for parental training programs that emphasize positive discipline, emotional literacy and family dialogue. Future research should integrate longitudinal and cross-cultural studies to deepen understanding of how evolving social structures and technological influences reshape parenting practices and adolescent development in the 21st century.

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