



Impact of Parenting Styles on Behavioural Development among School-Age Children

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Abstract

Parenting offers a dynamic social and emotional setting for school-age children to learn how to self-regulate, follow rules, do things and interact with others. The study investigated the relationship between parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) and behavioural functioning in children aged 6 to 12 years in the city of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, India. The design utilised was quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling with 75 parents/primary caregivers as samples. Parenting was measured using a 30-item structured questionnaire with 10 items corresponding to each parenting style and children's behaviour was measured using the 12-item adaptation of the Child Behaviour Rating Scale. Authoritative parenting ($\alpha = .886$), authoritarian parenting ($\alpha = .852$) and permissive parenting ($\alpha = .823$) and children's behaviour ($\alpha = .806$) had good internal consistency. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, simple linear regressions for each group separately, an independent-samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were used to analyse the data. Authoritative parenting was positively related with favourable behavioural functioning ($r = .270$, $p = .019$) and accounted for 7.3% of the variance in behavioural functioning. Authoritarian parenting ($r = -.260$, $p = .024$; $R^2 = .068$) and permissive parenting ($r = -.240$, $p = .038$; $R^2 = .058$) were negatively associated with behavioural functioning. Behaviour scores also differed by gender ($t(73) = -2.163$, $p = .034$) and across age groups ($F(3, 71) = 3.064$, $p = .034$). The results confirm the importance of warm, structured and responsive parenting and suggest that parenting accounts for a small amount of variance in behaviour. The cross-sectional and single-informant design does not allow for causal inferences. Future studies need to have larger, multi-informant and longitudinal samples and should directly test psychological well-being or self-regulation as a possible mechanism between parenting and behavioural development.

Keywords: Parenting styles, Authoritative parenting, Authoritarian parenting, Permissive parenting, Behavioural development, School age children.

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the school-age years (which generally cover the primary-school years) there is a fast growth in expectations of behaviour. Children will be expected to maintain focus, follow multi-step directions, finish tasks, play cooperatively with others, and become more independent and deal with frustration. While these capacities are being formed in the schools, in peer groups and in the broader social context, the family is a key developmental context. Parents consistently let children know what is acceptable, what the rules are, how they are enforced, and how disagreements are managed and how much

independence is allowed. These repeated interactions can help to define the behavioural environment in which children learn to exercise self-control, cooperate and problem solve.

Parenting style is a general emotional and behavioural climate in which parenting practices are set (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The classic typology of Baumrind uses the terms authoritative, authoritarian and permissive, while more recent typologies highlight the dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness (Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritative parenting is a parenting style that is warm, communicates and allows age-appropriate autonomy, while setting clear behaviour expectations. Authoritarian parenting emphasizes more on obedience, one-way control, and punitive or strict control. Permissive parenting is characterized by warmth or acceptance, but with relatively few limits and consequences. These categories are not labels as parents may exhibit one behaviour in one situation and another in another and may change as the child grows.

Contemporary literature generally indicates that parenting style is significantly associated with child adjustment, although the nature and magnitude of the association varies according to the outcome, cultural context, informant and study design. A cross-cultural review of primary-school children revealed that parental involvement and monitoring and other positive parenting dimensions were generally linked to a reduction of behavioural problems; methodological and cultural differences were responsible for the inconsistencies (Sangawi et al., 2015). Pinquart (2017a) conducted a meta-analysis of 1435 studies, which also revealed small but consistent links between authoritative or warm parenting and fewer externalising problems, while harsh, psychologically controlling, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles were linked to more externalising problems. Evidence from cross-cultural meta-analyses further indicates that the general relationships are not the same in different cultures (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018).

There is a need to give special attention to the Indian context. Parenting is part and parcel of cultural norms about respect for elders, interdependence of families, responsibilities for education and acceptable amount of child autonomy. Based on a cross-cultural review with a special emphasis on India, Sahithya et al. (2019) found that the overall trend of authoritative parenting was associated with positive outcomes while the findings on permissive parenting were inconsistent and limited in India. This is important as a parenting behaviour that is perceived as structure in one context may be perceived differently in another context. This means that, local empirical studies are required instead of assuming that relationship patterns found elsewhere will be the same in Indian families.

Recent studies have also transcended the mere direct relationships. One of the mechanisms by which the family climate is thought to impact observable behaviour is emotion regulation and self-regulation, which has become increasingly plausible. Positive parenting dimensions (warmth and support) were associated with less emotion dysregulation, and negative parenting dimensions were associated with more emotion dysregulation, in a systematic review and meta-analysis (Goagoses et al., 2023). In 2025, a meta-analysis also revealed that supportive parenting is linked to better child self-regulation while suppressive parenting is linked to poor child self-regulation (Blume et al., 2025). Longitudinal evidence has started to link positive parenting in childhood to resilience, self-regulatory efficacy and reduced behavioural issues in later childhood (Rungsattatharm et al., 2025). These results offer a good justification for the future use of psychological well-being and self-regulatory functioning as explanatory pathways.

Meanwhile, mechanisms can only be inferred if they are not directly measured. The present study has an empirical dataset comprising three variables related to parenting styles, children's behavioural functioning and demographic data such as age and gender. No measure of psychological well-being was used. Therefore, the current paper examines the relationships that fit with the current data and views psychological well-being as an extended conceptual pathway for future examination as a mediator rather than an empirically tested mediator.

The study is conducted on 6-12-year-old children of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. Behavioural functioning is here understood in terms of observable, everyday behaviours including rule following, task completion, concentration, organisation, persistence, cooperation, sharing, turn taking and hostile behaviours. Hence, the word behavioural in the title is used to indicate the quality of behavioural functioning at the school-age period and the cross-sectional design does not indicate developmental change over time.

There are three interrelated issues that give rise to the research problem. First, many studies on parenting focus on adolescent participants, clinical samples, or on very limited outcomes, as opposed to on multi-dimensional everyday behaviours in middle childhood. Second, results of permissive parenting are less consistent than the results of authoritative or harsh parenting. Thirdly, Indian evidence is sparse, especially in terms of local context, such as in Visakhapatnam. The present study aims at putting these issues into perspective by considering the relative direction and statistical significance of the association between authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting and child behaviour, as well as by comparing the behaviour scores of children in terms of age and gender.

1.1 Objectives and research questions

The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles and behavioural functioning of school-age children as well as the differences in the behavioural scores among the age groups and between the genders. The aims are to: (1) describe parents' parenting styles and 6-12-year-old children's behavioural functioning; (2) examine the relationship between each parenting style and children's behaviour; and (3) compare children's behavioural functioning according to their gender and age group.

The study aims at answering three research questions: RQ1: What parenting-style patterns and behavioural scores are observed in the sample? RQ2: What are the relationships between authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting and children's behavioural functioning? RQ3: Are there differences in behaviour scores between child gender and age group?

1.2 Significance and contribution

The study makes four contributions. It offers local evidence from an Indian urban context; it only includes school-age children and not a wide age range; it examines three parenting styles in relation to a multi-faceted behavioural outcome; and it reflects on the findings in relation to recent international evidence on self-regulation, well-being and bidirectional family processes. The results can be used for practice by parents, teachers, school counsellors and school psychologists to realise that children's behaviour is not only related to the parenting method of the parents, but also to the overall picture of family interaction, and that the parenting method is not the only cause of children's behaviour.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on evidence published in the last 15 years (2010-2026). Previous sources are only included if they are contributing to the theory or are the base of measurement for the current study.

2.1 Parenting styles and behaviour development in school-age

Behavioural functioning in middle childhood is characterised by capacities for self-directed and socially-directed functioning. Children need to plan and order materials, maintain attention, persevere with challenging tasks, self-correct and revisit unfinished tasks. They also need to take turns, share, cooperate and follow adult's directions. Issues can manifest themselves as non-compliance, hostility, impulsive reactions or aggression. These behaviours are not set, but are a maturation, temperament, parenting, peer, school expectations, and broader family conditions interaction.

Since 2010, research has grown increasingly favouring a contextual rather than a deterministic explanation. Sangawi et al. (2015) conducted a review of cross-cultural studies of primary school

children and concluded that positive involvement/monitoring was generally linked to fewer behavioural problems and that there was variation in the cultural, measurement and study designs. Pinquart (2017a) drew the same conclusion based on a much wider evidence base (meta-analytic): parenting dimensions and styles related to externalising problems but effect sizes were generally low. This is significant to interpretation. Parenting effect is statistically significant but that does not mean that it is the only factor that influences a child's behaviour.

Longitudinal work helps to strengthen the argument that family processes are important and it also shows reciprocity. The results of Yang and Chen (2025) showed that there was a bidirectional relationship between negative parenting styles, parenting stress and child problem behaviours across three years. The results highlight the need to avoid one-way causal statements as difficult child behaviour can lead to higher levels of parenting stress and cause changes in parental responses, which can then influence subsequent child behaviour. The present cross-sectional study does not allow for inferences about directionality and regression results are interpreted as statistical prediction.

A transactional family-context explanation is supported by theoretical and empirical studies. Theories of emotional security (Bowlby, 1982) have proposed caregiver availability and responsiveness as a foundation for emotional security; ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) has suggested that parent-child interaction occurs in the context of linked family, school and socioeconomic systems; and emotion-socialisation models (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Morris et al., 2007) have proposed that parents help shape how children express and regulate their emotions. Maccoby (2000) emphasised that influence is a two-way process. This reciprocity is supported by longitudinal and meta-analyses studies: Aunola and Nurmi (2005) connected affection and control with changes in problem behaviour, Rothbaum and Weisz (1994) associated caregiving with externalising behaviour, Hoeve et al. (2009) revealed monitoring, psychological control and rejection as important correlates of delinquency and Yan et al. (2021) quantified the effects of child on later parent functioning. The literature on physical punishment also suggests that coercive discipline has a wide spectrum of negative impacts on children (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). The contemporary measurement research, therefore, more and more views parenting as multi-dimensional and not a one-dimensional continuum of strict and lenient parenting (Reid et al., 2015).

2.2 Authoritative parenting

Authoritative parenting is a style of parenting that involves being very responsive, yet having age-appropriate behavioural control. There are clear expectations with explanation, emotional availability, dialogue and support for autonomy. It allows models of controlled interpersonal behaviour and predictable consequences from a social-learning point of view (Bandura, 1977). Responsiveness, from an attachment point of view, can help children feel secure and help them to more readily accept assistance, correction and to explore on their own. Children are given the opportunity to learn rules over and over again, not just follow them, from a self-regulation point of view.

The general trend in evidence from various cultures is towards this pattern. Pinquart (2017a) found that authoritative parenting was linked to lower levels of externalising problems, whereas Pinquart and Kauser (2018) found that the strength of the associations between parenting and outcomes was different across-cultural contexts, but that the overall positive effects of authoritative parenting remained. Similarly, Sahithya et al. (2019) found that authoritative parenting styles are more likely to be related to positive child outcomes in both Western and Indian contexts. Recent studies have shown that this relationship also holds true for mechanisms. Rungsattatharm et al. (2025) provided evidence for the indirect link between positive parenting in early childhood and self-regulatory efficacy and reduced behavioural problems at the age of nine. In 2025, Blume et al. also conducted a meta-analysis, which showed that supportive parenting was positively related to children's self-regulation.

Recent research also has found connections between authoritative and warm parenting and certain adaptive outcomes. Lam et al. (2018) reported longitudinal relationships between parental warmth and fewer executive-function problems, and Xiang et al. (2017) reported relationships between parenting

styles and school adjustment via achievement-goal processes. Bhide et al. (2019) found links between parenting style and socio-emotional and academic functioning of 6-8 year old children. On a more general level, Kuppens and Ceulemans (2019) demonstrated that parenting styles can be best thought of as a combination of behavioural and psychological dimensions. Authoritative parenting has been found to be positively correlated with prosocial behaviour across cultures (Wong et al., 2021) and maternal and paternal warmth and positive control are positively correlated with children's prosocial behaviour (van der Storm et al., 2022). Community evidence also suggests that parental warmth and control is associated with reduced behaviour problems in India (Sekaran et al., 2020).

The present study will thus have a positive relationship. As higher scores on the behaviour scale suggest more favourable functioning, children with higher scores on the parent's report of authoritative characteristics are expected to have higher scores on the behaviour scale.

H1a: There is a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and school-age children's positive behavioural functioning.

2.3 Authoritarian parenting

Authoritarian parenting styles are defined by high levels of control and low responsiveness, and focus on obedience, rules and little negotiation. It can create immediate compliance, but over time, using criticism, threats or punishment will not help to develop the internal regulation that is needed when external authority is not present. It's not strictness in and of itself that is the central difference. Firmness and warmth and explanation can go together. The issue is a pattern of lack of emotional response/child voice and/or rigid control.

Generally, the literature is correlated with more negative behavioural and emotional outcomes of the child with more harsh, psychologically controlling or authoritarian parenting. Pinquart (2017a) observed that there was a positive relationship between authoritarian/harsh parenting and externalising problems. Negative parenting styles were linked to more emotion dysregulation, which is strongly related to aggressive and non-compliant behaviour, according to Goagoses et al. (2023). Tripathi and Jadon (2017) also found in their review that there was a correlation between authoritarian parenting and low self-esteem. Longitudinal evidence from more recent studies suggests that parenting stress and authoritarian parenting can mutually reinforce each other over time and that they are related to problem behaviour later in life (Yang & Chen, 2025).

There is evidence other than externalisation of behaviour that relates to controlling parenting. Pinquart (2017b) reported that psychologically controlling and harsh parenting was linked to internalising symptoms and a subsequent cultural meta-analysis revealed that harsh parenting was consistently associated with internalising and externalising symptoms, but with different effect sizes (Pinquart, 2021). Meta-analyses of childhood and adolescent depression and anxiety also suggest that overcontrol and rejection and low warmth of parents is a factor (McLeod et al., 2007; Yap et al., 2014; Clayborne et al., 2021). More recent meta-analysis studies of intrusive parenting support a link with internalising and externalising symptoms of adolescents (Ryan et al., 2026). The Indian clinical evidence also reveals that parenting styles are applicable to children's anxiety (Sahithya & Raman, 2021). Tripathi and Jadon (2017) also found that low self-esteem was a common correlation with authoritarian parenting.

These results confirmed the negative expected relationship between authoritarian parenting and the favourable behaviour score in this study.

H1b: Authoritarian parenting is negatively related to positive behavioural functioning of school-age children.

2.4 Permissive parenting

Permissive parenting is usually characterised by a high level of acceptance and low level of behavioural control. It is not to be mistaken as healthy autonomy support. Permitting a child to make age-appropriate decisions can be done within a framework of guidelines, but permissiveness is specifically about the lack of or inconsistent boundaries, the lack of capacity to say no and/or follow-through with consequences. Inconsistent limits can potentially limit children's learning to tolerate frustration and wait for rewards or to behave according to rules.

Evidence of permissive parenting is less consistent than evidence of authoritative and authoritarian parenting. Sahithya et al. (2019) reported mixed results in Indian and western studies. However, Pinquart (2017a) revealed that permissive parenting was, on average, correlated with higher levels of externalising problems and Yang and Chen (2025) reported longitudinal associations between permissive parenting, parenting stress and child problem behaviours. Local testing is particularly helpful in the face of the mixed evidence. In the current study, behaviour scores will be negatively correlated as higher scores indicate more positive functioning.

The operationalisation of low control could be especially problematic with permissive parenting. Faught et al. (2022) in their study of children aged 4-12 years in families identified that permissive parenting might be a mediator between parental stress and the child's emotional outcomes. Krasanaki et al. (2022) also found that parenting styles were associated with internalised, externalised and prosocial behaviour, reflecting the need to take into account the general trend of social functioning. Uji et al. (2014) concluded that the permissive effects were not as consistently negative as the authoritarian effects, and therefore it is important to differentiate between low behavioural structure and supportive autonomy.

H1c: Permissive parenting negatively correlates with positive behavioural functioning of school-age children.

2.5 Psychological well-being and self-regulation as a possible mechanism

An extended conceptual model suggests that parenting styles can influence the behavioural development partially by influencing psychological well-being. This is a concept that could be true. Parenting influences the emotional tone of the family, the child's sense of support and autonomy and the chances for practicing emotion regulation. Small but significant meta-analytic associations between parenting dimensions and emotion dysregulation were found by Goagoses et al. (2023). Based on the synthesis of 155 studies and 79,979 participants, Huang et al. (2026) concluded that positive parenting positively related to subjective well-being and that negative parenting negatively related to well-being. They also found that these connections can be modified by age, gender and cultural background in their moderation analyses.

Supportive parenting might thus work, in part, at the behavioural level through emotional security, self-regulation, executive functioning or perceived well-being. Sangawi et al. (2018) showed that for some parenting-behaviour relationships, a child-level psychological construct (academic self-concept) can mediate the relationships. Similarly, Rungsattatharm et al. (2025) found indirect longitudinal routes through executive-function problems and self-regulatory efficacy. Sun et al. (2024) tested mediation and moderation in a family-process model of behavioural problems, in a different large Chinese dataset. All these studies contribute to the importance of an integrated model.

This extension is supported by research that focuses on the mechanisms. An early meta-analysis related parenting dimensions to preschool self-regulation (Karreman et al., 2006) and family emotion-socialisation theory focuses on modelling, responses to children's emotions and the overall emotional atmosphere (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Morris et al., 2007). Parent emotion regulation is a target for understanding and improving child emotion socialisation, with more recent work highlighting this (Hajal & Paley, 2020; England-Mason & Gonzalez, 2020), and dynamic parent-child co-regulation patterns predicting later child self-regulation (Lobo & Lunkenheimer, 2020). Parent emotion-regulation capacities

related to parenting behaviour and child adjustment were identified in a meta-analysis (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022). Positive parenting is also indirectly associated with children's mental health, such as the link between positive parenting and children's externalizing behaviours, which is mediated by parental mental health (Fang et al., 2024), and the link between positive parenting and children's prosocial behaviour, which is mediated by children's emotional intelligence (Zhang et al., 2026).

The current dataset, however, does not include a measure of psychological well-being, emotion-regulation or self-regulation. Thus, it is not possible to make a valid estimate of a mediation coefficient. This manuscript does not include psychological well-being as an empirical variable for the hypothesis tests, but rather as an extended conceptual proposition and clear direction for future research.

2.6 Age, gender and socioeconomic context

There is a significant difference in children's behavioural capabilities from age 6 to 12. Older children are expected to be more independent in completing tasks, in planning and controlling their emotions than younger children. Conceptually, age could thus be associated with behavioural scores while parenting style is kept constant. The data includes four age groups which have been reported and allows an omnibus comparison of the behavioural means for these age groups.

Developmental studies have also shown gender differences in child outcomes, but the extent and direction of the differences are dependent on the outcome, informant and cultural context (Uji et al., 2014). Thus, in the current study, gender is considered as a grouping variable and is not assumed to have a universal direction of difference. Some descriptive data on socioeconomic factors (income, parental education and occupation) were also collected, and the original analysis did not examine these as moderators. Therefore the socioeconomic status is only mentioned as a potential contextual moderator for future research.

Exposure to parenting stress can differ based on context, as can the meaning of parenting behaviour. In non-Western contexts, there are associations between socioeconomic status and parenting practices and child behaviour (Altafim et al., 2018) and longitudinal evidence of the exacerbation of transactional pathways between parenting stress and externalising behaviour among low income children (Cook et al., 2024). Indian community research reveals that social class, paternal control, maternal warmth and maternal control are applicable to behavioural difficulties (Sekaran et al., 2020) and Indian clinical studies highlight the importance of considering parenting in the context of local culture and mental health (Sahithya & Raman, 2021). Similarly, the study conducted with the neurodevelopmental samples indicates that parenting stress and parenting practices can be integrated with externalising behaviour (Suvarna et al., 2025). These findings suggest that age, gender and socioeconomic status should be considered as contextual factors and not as having a constant impact on parenting.

H2: There is a significant difference in the behaviour of the children in terms of gender.

H3: There are significant differences in children's behaviour functioning between the age groups.

2.7 Research gap

Previous research has found a relationship between parenting and children's behavioural, emotional and social adjustment, with authoritative/supportive parenting styles being generally related to better adjustment. However, there are still a number of gaps that are pertinent to the current study. The focus of evidence remains in adolescent samples or clinical or very specific outcome samples; less attention is paid to the functioning of children in everyday life (6–12 years). There are mixed results on permissive parenting. There is relatively little evidence from India and local understandings of warmth, control, obedience and autonomy are likely to shape the parenting experience. Many studies focus on age and gender alone and a single-informant is used to examine parenting-style relationships. Lastly, while there is a growing trend in using psychological mechanisms in recent research, the use of integrated mediation and moderation models is relatively rare in smaller Indian community samples. The current research aims to fill the direct and group-comparison gaps with the available data and suggests – albeit without falsely testing – a more general well-being pathway for further research.

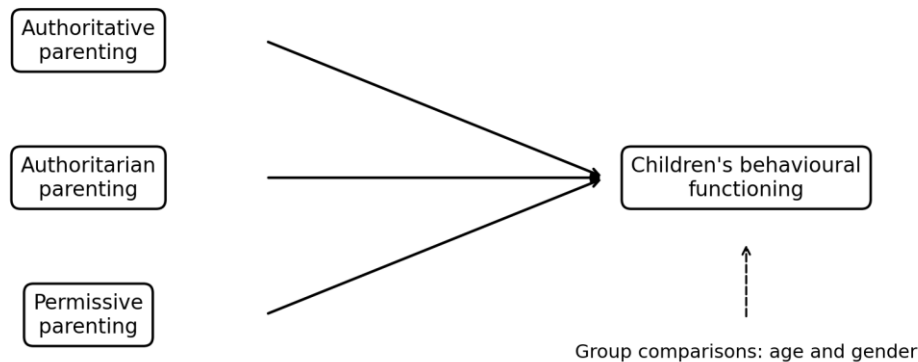
3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the current study, the empirical framework tested is based on the following:

3.1 Empirical framework

The empirical framework is shown in Figure 1, which only includes variables measured in the dissertation. Independent variables are authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting while dependent variable is behavioural functioning of the children. Comparisons between groups are made by age and gender. The model tested does not include a mediator as the psychological well-being was not measured.

Figure 1. Empirical framework which was tested with the dissertation data

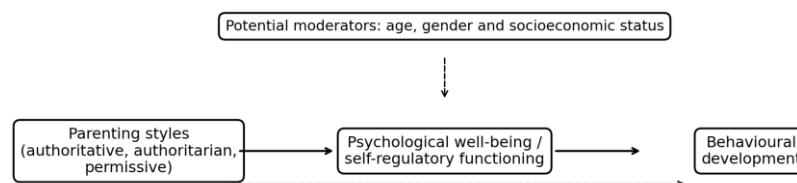


Source: Based on the conceptualisation of the authors from Baumrind (1966) and Darling and Steinberg (1993) and the variables available in the dissertation.

3.2 Proposed extended framework for future validation

Figure 2 shows the expanded framework that is proposed for future validation. In line with the recent literature, a better future model would be to have a psychological well-being or a clearly defined regulatory construct between parenting styles and behavioural development. Selected paths could then be explored for their moderation by age, gender and socioeconomic status. This type of model will need a new dataset with the appropriate measures of psychological well-being that are validated and a sample size that is suitable for mediation and moderation analysis.

Figure 2. Future research conceptual model (long-term).



Proposed extension for future longitudinal/multi-informant validation; not tested in the present dataset.

Source: Authors' conceptualisation informed by Goagoses et al. (2023), Sun et al. (2024), Blume et al. (2025), and Huang et al. (2026).

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

The type of research was quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional. One time point data collection was done and no intervention was implemented. The design allows the description and association testing and statistical prediction but not temporal order or causal effects. It is for this reason that the word impact in the title is understood to mean empirical association, and predictive relationship, not causal impact.

4.2 Setting, population and sample

The study was done in the city of Visakhapatnam in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. The population of interest were parents/primary carers of children between the ages of 6-12 years living in the study area. 75 parents/carers have attended. Convenience sampling was employed as recruitment was based on the contacts available to the community and educational system and the participants' willingness to meet the eligibility criteria and consent to participate. It is a non-probability method that is suitable for a focused exploratory study, but cannot be used to generalise to a population.

4.3 Eligibility criteria

The study considered all parents/primary carers of a child aged 6-12 years residing in Visakhapatnam, willing to participate, able to understand the questionnaire and able to give the information needed for scoring as participants. Cases were eliminated if the child was not within the age range, informed consent was not obtained, there was a lack of significant questionnaire information, the participant withdrew or there was a lack of adequate information for the behavioural assessment.

4.4 Measures

There were three sections to the structured instrument. Demographic information regarding the parent/caregiver, child and household were collected in Section A. Parenting style was assessed in Section B. In Section C the behavioural functioning of children was assessed.

Parenting styles. The parenting style questionnaire consisted of 30 items, 10 of which were authoritative, 10 authoritarian and 10 permissive. The items were adapted and/or based on conceptual dimensions of the parenting typology proposed by Baumrind and the Parental Authority Questionnaire created by Buri (1991). Authoritative items measured warmth, praise, explanation of rules, involvement and respect for feelings and age-appropriate independence. Authoritarian measured obedience, criticism, strict control, punishment, threats, rigid enforcement and discouragement of disagreement and yelling. Permissive evaluated giving in, too much freedom, lack of boundaries, lack of 'no' and inconsistent consequences. More points scored indicated the more that the appropriate style was present.

Children's behavioural functioning. A 12-item Child Behaviour Rating Scale (Bronson et al., 1990) was used to assess behaviour, with 12 items selected. The items were related to rule following, task completion, concentration, persistence, organisation, correction of errors, cooperation, sharing, turn-taking and hostile behaviour. The responses were marked out on a 5-point scale. Before totaling the behaviours, negatively worded behaviour items were reverse scored, thus higher total scores indicated more positive behavioural functioning.

4.5 Reliability

Cronbach's α was used to measure the internal consistency. The alpha values of all the study constructs were good, authoritative parenting .886, authoritarian parenting .852, permissive parenting .823 and children's behaviour .806. These coefficients are used to allow the use of composite scores in the following analyses.

4.6 Data collection and ethical considerations

The dissertation protocol outlined that the parents/caregivers that met the inclusion criteria would be informed about the purpose and procedure of the study, that the study would be voluntary, and that informed consent would be obtained prior to the administration of the questionnaires. It also included checking the questionnaires for completeness, coding the answers and reverse scoring the negatively worded behaviour items and making composite scores for analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics. The

protocol also included the following: confidentiality, right to withdraw, avoidance of unnecessary identifying information and non-judgemental reporting will be adhered to. The dissertation does not mention a name or approval/reference number of an institutional ethics committee and the provided text does not independently describe the carrying out of the described ethics procedures. The information should thus be checked prior to submission to the journal.

4.7 Statistical analysis

Characteristics of the participants and the variables of the study were summarised by descriptive statistics. Pearson correlation was used to examine the bivariate relationships between parenting-style scores and children's behavioural functioning. There were three simple linear regression models to determine the statistical prediction for behaviour from authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting. Independent-samples t-test was used for gender comparisons of behavioural scores and one-way ANOVA was used for age group (4 reported) comparisons of behavioural scores. Statistically significant results were determined by a p value of $< .05$. A mediation, moderation or structural equation model was not estimated due to the lack of measures of psychological well-being and the lack of raw data needed for additional interaction analyses.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Participant characteristics

Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the 75 parents/carers and their children that were selected. Most respondents were aged 35–44 years (42.7%), followed by 25–34 years (32.0%). The total number of respondents were 56.0% female and 44.0% male. Of the respondents 54.7% were mothers, 44.0% fathers and 1.3% another guardian. The child sample was almost evenly split among gender (52.0% boys and 48.0% girls) and included the entire age span (6-12 years). Household income, parent's education and occupation were reported to describe the sample and not for the purposes of testing moderation.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 75)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Parent age	<25	3	4.0
	25-34	24	32.0
	35-44	32	42.7
	45-54	14	18.7
	55+	2	2.6
Parent gender	Male	33	44.0
	Female	42	56.0
Relationship to child	Father	33	44.0
	Mother	41	54.7
	Other guardian	1	1.3
Child gender	Male	39	52.0
	Female	36	48.0
Child age	6-7	20	26.7
	8-9	20	26.7
	10-11	20	26.7
	11-12	15	20.0

Source: Authors' compilation from the demographic results mentioned in the dissertation.

5.2 Descriptive statistics and reliability

Descriptive statistics and internal consistency estimates are given in Table 2. Authoritative parenting was reported as being at the highest mean score ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.50$) while authoritarian ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 0.60$) and permissive parenting ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 0.65$) were reported at lower mean scores. The mean child behaviour score was 44.00 ($SD = 5.20$). Reliabilities of all scales were above .80.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and internal consistency

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Authoritative parenting	75	4.05	0.50	.886
Authoritarian parenting	75	2.45	0.60	.852
Permissive parenting	75	2.50	0.65	.823
Children's behaviour	75	44.00	5.20	.806

Source: Data compiled by authors from descriptive and reliability results found in the dissertation.

5.3 Correlations and regression analyses

Authoritative parenting was positively correlated with children's behaviour favourably ($r = .270$, $p = .019$) as shown in Table 3. Authoritarian parenting was negatively correlated with behaviour ($r = -.260$, $p = .024$) as was Permissive parenting ($r = -.240$, $p = .038$). The magnitude of these associations was small to approaching moderate and the associations were statistically significant.

Simple regression models were fitted separately, and the same trend in the direction of the regression was obtained. Authoritative parenting was a significant predictor of behaviour ($B = 2.81$, $\beta = .270$, $t = 2.396$, $p = .019$) accounting for 7.3% of the variance. Authoritarian parenting negatively predicted behaviour ($B = -2.25$, $\beta = -.260$, $t = -2.301$, $p = .024$), explaining 6.8% of the variance. Permissive parenting also negatively predicted behaviour ($B = -1.92$, $\beta = -.240$, $t = -2.112$, $p = .038$), explaining 5.8% of the variance. Thus, H1a, H1b and H1c were confirmed in the predicted ways. The small R^2 values suggest that each of the parenting style variables accounts for only a small proportion of the variance in behaviour.

Table 3. Parenting styles and children's behavioural functioning

Predictor	r	p	B	beta	R2	F	Model p
Authoritative	.270	.019	2.81	.270	.073	5.740	.019
Authoritarian	-.260	.024	-2.25	-.260	.068	5.293	.024
Permissive	-.240	.038	-1.92	-.240	.058	4.462	.038

Source: Authors' compilation based on the correlation and regression results in the dissertation.

5.4 Difference between genders and age groups

The gender and age comparisons are summarised in Table 4. Boys had a lower mean behavioural score ($M = 42.80$, $SD = 5.00$) than girls ($M = 45.30$, $SD = 5.00$). Results of the independent-samples t-test showed that there was a statistically significant difference with $t(73) = -2.163$, $p = .034$, and a mean difference of -2.50. H2 was supported.

Mean behaviour scores rose across the four age categories reported in the dissertation: 6–7 years ($M = 41.80$), 8–9 years ($M = 43.20$), 10–11 years ($M = 44.80$), and 11–12 years ($M = 46.90$), with $SD = 5.20$ in each group. The omnibus age effect was significant, $F(3, 71) = 3.064$, $p = .034$, supporting H3. The source, however, states that the last one is for the age group 11-12 years, which means that it overlaps with the previous age group (10-11 years) at age 11. This category label may need to be confirmed prior to submission as the raw age assignments were not available. Furthermore, post-hoc comparisons were not reported and therefore it is not known which age groups differ from each other.

Table 4. Behavioural scores for males and females for each age group

Grouping variable	Category	n	Mean	SD	Test result
Gender	Male	39	42.80	5.00	$t(73) = -2.163, p = .034$
	Female	36	45.30	5.00	
Age	6-7	20	41.80	5.20	$F(3, 71) = 3.064, p = .034$
	8-9	20	43.20	5.20	
	10-11	20	44.80	5.20	
	11-12	15	46.90	5.20	

Note. The age categories are taken from the source dissertation. The last category, '11–12 years' overlaps with the previous '10–11 years' category at age 11 and should be double checked with the raw data before being submitted.

Source: Authors' compilation based on the results of the t-test and ANOVA reported in the dissertation.

6. DISCUSSION

The present study explored the three parenting styles and its association with behavioural functioning of 75 school-age children in Visakhapatnam. The results indicated that, regardless of the type of behaviour, authoritative parenting was correlated with more positive behaviour, while authoritarian and permissive parenting was correlated with less positive behaviour. There was also a significant difference in behaviour scores between males and females and between the age groups. These findings are in the same direction as many other international studies, but the effect sizes were small and these findings should be interpreted with the constraints of the cross-sectional convenience sample design.

6.1 Parenting that is authoritative and positive behaviour

Authoritative parenting was positively correlated with children's behaviour, and explained 7.3% of the variance in the separate regression model. This is in line with the theoretical value on the combination of warmth and structure. Clear expectations, explanation and responsive communication can provide children with opportunities to develop an understanding of the rationale for rules, problem solving and internalising standards of behaviour. The positive direction is also in line with the findings of the meta-analysis conducted by Pinquart (2017a) and the cross-cultural study conducted by Sangawi et al. (2015). The result also holds true for evidence that is Indian focused. Sahithya et al. (2019) found that in general, authoritative parenting is related to positive outcomes in both Indian and Western contexts, with a cultural interpretation being important. The authoritative mean was significantly higher than the means of the other two styles in the current local sample, indicating that parents in this sample who participated in the study were relatively likely to engage in responsive but structured behaviours.

A plausible explanation which has been tested in recent self-regulation research and is not directly tested here is that this may be the case. Supportive parenting has been linked to improved child self-regulation (Blume et al., 2025) and longitudinal associations between positive parenting and subsequent behaviour and self-regulation have been reported (Rungsattatharm et al., 2025). All of the above are conceptually related to regulatory functioning and are included in the present behaviour scale: persistence, concentration, organisation and cooperation. These mechanisms should be measured directly, instead of being inferred from the behavioural scores, in future research.

6.2 Authoritarian parenting & less favourable behaviour

There was a negative relationship between authoritarian parenting and favourable behaviour, with the variance accounted for being 6.8%. The outcome is in line with the idea that strict control can ensure compliance but has less positive impact on internal regulation and the open exchange of ideas and self-directed problem solving. Extreme criticism, threats and punishment can also teach children how to respond to others in an unregulated manner or help create a family environment where children are only complying because they have to.

This is in line with Pinquart's (2017a) meta-analysis, which revealed a relationship between authoritarian and harsh parenting and higher externalising problems and with Goagoses et al. (2023) who found

negative parenting to be associated with emotion dysregulation. It also aligns with more recent longitudinal findings that there are reciprocal relationships between negative parenting and child problem behaviours, mediated by parenting stress (Yang & Chen, 2025). Cross-sectional data such as these cannot tell if the children's problems were caused by the authoritarian behaviour or if the authoritarian behaviour was a reaction to the children's behaviour or if another family characteristic played a role in the relationship between the children's behaviour and the authoritarian behaviour.

6.3 Permissive parenting and behaviour functioning

Also negatively related to behavioural functioning was permissive parenting which accounted for only 5.8% of the variance. This is in line with the theory of predictable boundaries for the development of frustration tolerance and behavioural self-control. Children may not be given enough opportunities to learn to accept boundaries and delay gratification when the limits are inconsistently enforced and/or withdrawn when distressed.

The conclusion should be treated with more caution, however, than the authoritative conclusion due to the mixed literature on permissive parenting. In particular, Sahithya et al. (2019) mentioned that the results of the permissive/indulgent parenting were not consistent in different cultures. Some of these variations may be due to differences in operationalisation of permissiveness, autonomy and warmth. The present instrument highlighted too much freedom, not enough boundaries, not knowing how to say no, and inconsistent consequences, which conceptually is more of a low structure than autonomy support.

6.4 Differences between the genders and ages

The present sample of girls scored higher than boys on the average on the favourable-behaviour items. The behavioural measure incorporates concentration, co-operation, adherence to rules and hostility and a gender difference could be a result of developmental, socialisation and reporting issues. It must not be taken as an indicator of the respective genders' inherent behavioural ability. Parent expectations and types of behaviour observed or tolerated may vary by gender and the use of a single-informant may exacerbate these differences.

There was also an increase in behavioural scores with age and an omnibus ANOVA was statistically significant. This is developmentally appropriate as older school-age children are likely to be able to sustain attention, complete tasks, be organised and self-controlled. But, there was no report of any post-hoc tests so the analysis is unable to determine which age group comparisons underlie the overall effect. A larger sample would allow for more reliable age modelling, preferably without the use of small groups, but using continuous age and developmental covariates.

6.5 Effect sizes: Understanding the small effect sizes

An important result is that all three parenting styles were statistically significant and each of the three single-predictor models accounted for less than 8% of the variance in behaviour. It has a very significant substance. Temperament, peer relationships, school climate, family stress, socioeconomic factors, neurodevelopmental capacities and parent-child processes are all factors that influence children's behaviour. The findings thus suggest that parenting is a context of meaning for development and not a full explanation. This is a more conservative view than the determinist views of parenting style and more in line with current developmental science.

6.6 Proposed pathway: Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being or self-regulation is a potentially fruitful mechanism as supported by the literature. Huang et al. (2026) revealed strong meta-analytic associations between positive and negative parenting and subjective well-being, and Goagoses et al. (2023) and Blume et al. (2025) reported additional evidence related to emotion regulation and self-regulation. Sun et al. (2024) demonstrate how family-process variables can be included in the mediation and moderation models when the required measures and sample size are available. It is therefore scientifically unsound to conclude that mediation is a result of this study, but rather a hypothesis for future studies.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Theoretical implications

The results confirm the value of parenting style as a family-climate variable, rather than an individual parenting behaviour. The opposite findings for authoritative and authoritarian versus permissive parenting styles are in line with theories that make a distinction between responsive structure and coercive control and low structure. Concurrently, the small R^2 values confirm ecological and transactional views of parenting in which parenting happens in conjunction with other child factors and broader situations. Future tests of the theory should thus incorporate mechanisms at the child level like self-regulation, psychological well-being or executive functioning and model the bidirectional effects.

7.2 Implications for parents in practice

The results suggest that the optimal parenting style is one that is warm and has clear, consistent expectations for the child, for parents. You don't need to be permissive or take away boundaries to put it into practice. Parents can, however, clearly state rules, explain reasons (developmentally appropriate), use predictable consequences, listen to the child's point of view, acknowledge feelings and gradually increase independence. The results cannot be used to label individual parents as good or bad, but do provide identification of interaction patterns related to behavioural scores in this sample.

7.3 Implications for school and professionals

Family interaction might be considered when evaluating persistent issues of concentration, compliance, peer cooperation or aggression, by teachers, counsellors and psychologists. Consistency of expectations, supportive discipline and age-appropriate autonomy can be the areas of school-family communication. Since parenting is only a small part of the equation, other factors such as learning needs, peer context, school stress, temperament, neurodevelopmental conditions and other family pressures should be taken into account during professional assessment.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Firstly, the sample size is small ($N = 75$) and the sample was taken using convenience sampling in one city, thus reducing the statistical power and generalisability.

Second, the cross-sectional design does not allow to determine temporal sequence or causal impact. Parenting can have an impact on child behaviour, child behaviour can have an impact on parenting and both can be affected by third factors.

Thirdly, the parenting and child behaviour reported is within a narrow measurement framework. The study would be enhanced by the inclusion of parent, teacher and child reports and, if possible, observational measures.

Fourth, the social desirability may influence the answers related to discipline, criticism, yelling or permissiveness.

Fifth, there were important contextual factors that were not a part of the original inferential model. Household income, parental education/occupation were described but not tested as a moderator and variables such as family structure, parenting stress, school climate, peer relationships and child temperament were not well modelled.

Sixth, no measure of psychological well-being was taken. The mediation pathway from parenting styles to psychological well-being and then to behavioural development is thus only an extension of the concepts and not an empirical finding.

Seventh, the age ANOVA was significant, but no post-hoc testing was done, so no between group differences should be inferred.

Future studies need to include significantly larger and more heterogeneous samples of Indians and to be of a longitudinal or repeated-measures design. An especially robust next study would directly assess child psychological well-being or self-regulation, include bootstrapped confidence intervals for testing mediation, and include age, gender and socioeconomic status as pre-specified moderators. Common-method bias would be minimized if data were obtained from multiple informants (parents, teachers and children). If the sample size and the measurement model are appropriate, structural equation modelling might be a consideration.

9. CONCLUSION

In the case of school-age children (6-12 years) in Visakhapatnam, the authoritative parenting style had a positive correlation with good behavioural functioning among the 75 parents/caregivers who participated, whereas the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles had a negative correlation. There was also a significant difference in behaviour scores between males and females and between the age groups. This is in line with broader research which has shown that children thrive when their parents are warm, communicative, have clear expectations and boundaries. However, the percentage of variance in behaviours due to parenting was only small and the cross-sectional nature of the study precludes causal conclusions. The most valuable aspect of the study is thus the local empirical evidence of the relevance of parenting style in middle childhood, along with a clear plan for conducting larger longitudinal studies to directly test the mechanisms (psychological well-being and self-regulation) and boundary conditions (demographic and socioeconomic factors).

Declarations

Ethics statement

The original dissertation outlined an ethics protocol that would be followed that included voluntary participation, informed consent from parents/legal guardians prior to data collection, confidentiality, withdrawal without penalty, and avoiding unnecessary identifying information. It does not mention a name of an institutional ethics committee or an approval/reference number and the text of the dissertation does not confirm on its own the implementation of these procedures. It is thus important to confirm and add the ethics approval and implementation details before submitting the article to the journal, if applicable.

Data availability

The analyses presented in this manuscript are based on the empirical data and statistical findings presented in the original dissertation. The underlying raw data should be made public and/or reused according to the permission of the data owner/institution.

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