# Parental Influence on Aggression and Self-Esteem Among Young Adults: An Indian Context

# Misbah Batool<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology University of Delhi

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between parenting styles (authoritative and authoritarian), self-esteem, and aggression among young adults aged 18 to 25 in Delhi . Grounded in Baurmind's theoretical framework , the study aims to understand how different parental approaches influence psychological outcomes in emerging adulthood. A sample of 104 participants was selected through convenience sampling. Standardized self-report measures—validated for the Indian population—were used to assess parenting style, self-esteem, and aggression. Data was collected via both online and offline administration and analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient in Microsoft Excel. Results indicated a high positive correlation between authoritative parenting and self-esteem (r = 0.40), and a high negative correlation between authoritative parenting and aggression (r = -0.36). Conversely, authoritarian parenting was negatively correlated with self-esteem (r = 0.28) and positively correlated with aggression (r = 0.28). Self-esteem and aggression were also inversely related (r = -0.48). These findings suggest that authoritative parenting may foster healthier emotional and behavioral outcomes, while authoritarian parenting may be linked with lower self-worth and higher aggression in young adults. This study emphasizes the enduring effect of the way parents treat their offspring , on personality development and behavioral adjustment in the Indian cultural context.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Authoritative, Authoritarian, Self-Esteem, Aggression, Young Adults, India.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping the psychological and behavior development of individuals. Among the various parenting styles identified in psychological literature, authoritative and authoritarian styles are considered particularly influential. The Authoritative approach combines emotional support, open communication and clear boundaries, while authoritarian parenting is defined by strict control, low responsiveness, and minimal emotional support. These differing approaches to parenting are known to significantly affect a child's psychological well-being, including their levels of self-esteem and tendencies toward aggression. Self-esteem represents an individual's personal assessment of their own significance and capability, and is a critical component of mental health, especially during young adulthood—a stage marked by identity exploration, emotional growth, and increasing autonomy. Aggression, on the other hand, includes behaviors intended to cause harm or assert dominance and can be influenced by early parental modeling. In the Indian context, where traditional family structures are evolving under the influence of globalization and urbanization, it becomes essential to examine how these parenting styles continue to affect emerging. In rapidly urbanizing societies like India, young adults face unique challenges as traditional family dynamics evolve... Despite existing research on adolescents, there is limited empirical work focusing on emerging adults in the Indian context. This research aims to investigate how different parenting practices are associated with self-esteem and aggressive behaviors among young adults between the ages of 18 and 25.

# Objectives and Hypothesis

The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of parenting styles-specifically authoritative and authoritarian—on two important psychological outcomes in young adults: self-esteem and aggression. The study aims to explore how different parenting approaches, as perceived by individuals in the 18–25 age group, relate to their levels of self-worth and tendencies toward aggressive behavior. In particular, the research seeks to understand whether authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and firm guidance, is associated with higher self-esteem and lower aggression, and whether authoritarian parenting, marked by strict discipline and low emotional responsiveness, correlates with lower self-esteem and increased aggression. Additionally, the study investigates the direct relationship between self-esteem and aggression to determine whether young adults with lower self-esteem are more likely to exhibit aggressive tendencies. Based on these aims, the study hypothesizes the following:

- Authoritative parenting will be positively correlated with self-esteem.
- Authoritarian parenting will be negatively correlated with self-esteem.
- Authoritarian parenting will be positively correlated with aggression.
- Authoritative parenting will be negatively correlated with aggression.
- Self-esteem will be negatively correlated with aggression. These hypotheses reflect foundational psychological theories and prior empirical evidence from both Western and South Asian regions

#### II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A substantial body of research confirms that parenting styles exert a notable impact on psychological growth, with particular effects on self-esteem and aggression. This review highlights major theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, drawing on studies by Masud & Ahmad, Kloos et al., Chua, Phan Ubon, Hosiri, Anjum, Noor & Sharif, and Beh Xin Yun et al.

> Theoretical and Community Psychology Perspective (Kloos et al.)

Community psychology explores how individual development interacts with societal systems (Kloos et al., 2012). Parenting styles operate within complex ecological systems—family, school, religious, and cultural spheres that collectively shape self-esteem and aggression outcomes. This approach emphasizes that parental behaviors cannot be understood in isolation but are embedded within broader cultural and community context.

### ➤ Masud and Ahmad on Parenting Aggression

Masud, Ahmad, Cho, and Fakhr (2019) conducted a systematic review of 34 studies examining parenting styles and aggression among children and adolescents. Their metaanalysis concluded:

- Authoritative parenting is consistently associated with lower aggression.
- Authoritarian and permissive style correlate with high aggression.

This aligns with Bandura's social learning theory, indicating that punitive and rigid parenting often models aggressive responses that children subsequently.

# Malaysian evidence: Ben Yun et al. (2019)

Beh Xin Yun, Tan, and Ng (2019) conducted a quantitative survey in Penang involving 500 adolescents aged 13-17, investigating correlations between perceived parenting style and self-esteem. Using the Parental Authority Questionnaire and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, SPSS correlation analyses showed:

- Authoritative and permissive parenting negatively correlated with self-esteem.
- Authoritarian parenting was positively correlated with self-esteem, contrary to Western findings.

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Though modest in magnitude, the results highlight unique Malaysian cultural dynamics-perhaps reflecting collectivist values where strict parenting is viewed positively.

#### Anjum, Noor and Sharif (2024) in Pakistan

Anjum, Noor, and Sharif (2024) examined Pakistani students, exploring perceived parenting, aggression, and academic performance. Their findings showed:

- Authoritative parenting correlated with lower aggression and better academic outcomes.
- Authoritarian parenting correlated strongly with verbal and physical aggression.
- Permissive parenting was also linked to increased verbal aggression.

These results mirror our hypotheses and underscore the transnational relevance of parenting styles in shaping behavior and emotional health.

# ➤ The "Tiger Mother" Debate

In Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother (Chua, 2011), Chua advocates strict authoritarian practices to drive excellence. Critics argue this model often produces anxiety and diminished self-esteem. Chua's account, though anecdotal, raises critical questions about the emotional toll of authoritarian parenting, reinforcing concerns highlighted in quantitative studies like Masud & Ahmad (2019) and Beh Xin Yun et al. (2019).

#### > Phan Ubon (2018) and Hosiri (2020) in Southeast Asia

Phan Ubon (2018) found among Thai adolescents that authoritative parenting—with its nurturance and clear expectations—reduced aggression and supported selfesteem, whereas authoritarian parenting led to aggression and emotional suppression. Hosiri (2020) similarly observed that in Indonesian collectivist communities, low parental responsiveness (a hallmark of authoritarian exacerbated aggression, while higher responsiveness promoted emotional regulation.

These studies reinforce the idea that authoritarian parenting, even when culturally accepted, may hinder emotional development.

- Synthesis and Research Gap
- ✓ Consistent Pattern: Authoritative parenting fosters selfesteem and lowers aggression; authoritarian parenting often results in emotional and behavioral difficulties.
- ✓ Cultural Nuances: Beh Xin Yun et al.'s Malaysian finding also suggests context influences interpretation.
- ✓ Community Perspective: Ecological models (Kloos et al.) underscore that parenting operates within broader cultural and social systems.
- ✓ Geographic Emphasis: Limited research has focused on young adults (18-25) in South Asia, especially India.
- Integrated Constructs: Few studies simultaneously examine both self-esteem and aggression in emerging adults.

#### Link to Present Study

Drawing from these researches, the present study examines the influence of both parenting techniques on the self-esteem and aggression of young adults aged 18 to 25 in Delhi, India. This work builds upon prior findings by Masud & Ahmad regarding aggression, incorporates the cultural perspectives discussed by Beh Xin Yun et al., and addresses an existing research gap in understanding both psychological and behavioral development during emerging adulthood.

#### III. **METHOD**

#### > Research Design

This study used a quantitative, correlational method to assess the connection between perceived parenting styles and levels of self-esteem and aggressive tendencies among young adults. The aim was to identify the direction and strength of associations between these psychological variables, without manipulating any conditions or assigning experimental groups.

#### > Participants

The sample contained 104 young adults (55 females and 49 males) aged 18 to 25 years, residing in Delhi, India. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling method from undergraduate programs in colleges and universities. Inclusion criteria included:

- Age between 18 and 25 years
- Ability to understand and respond to English-language questionnaires
- Willingness to provide informed consent

Participants with diagnosed psychological disorders or those undergoing therapy were excluded to avoid confounding factors related to clinical interventions.

# > Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling was used due to accessibility, time constraints, and availability of the target population in educational setting. While this method limits generalizability, it allowed for rapid data collection and access to the required demographic.

#### ➤ Measures

Three standardized, self-report instruments were used:

# Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) – Buri (1991)

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) consists of 30 items that assess individuals' perceptions of their mothers' and fathers' parenting styles separately. For the purposes of this research, only the authoritative and authoritarian subscales—each comprising 10 items—were employed. Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and 5 indicated "strongly agree." The PAQ has been shown to possess satisfactory reliability and validity in various cultural settings, including both Western and Asian populations.

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- ✓ Example item for Authoritative parenting: "My parents support open discussions when I believe family rules are unjust."
- Example item for Authoritarian parenting: "My parents forbids me from challenging any decisions they make."

In the current study, Cronbach's alpha values were 0.81 for the authoritative subscale and 0.79 for the authoritarian subscale, demonstrating good internal consistency.

• Rosenberg Self - Esteem Scale (RSES) - Rosenberg (1965) The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a widely recognized instrument consisting of 10 items designed to evaluate an individual's overall self-esteem. Each statement is rated on a 4-point Likert scale, with options ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 4 ("strongly agree"). The total scores can fall between 10 and 40, where higher values reflect greater self-esteem. This tool has demonstrated reliable

✓ Example item: "Overall, I feel satisfied with myself."

psychometric properties in the Indian context.

In this sample, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.84, indicating good internal consistency.

Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) – Buss & Perry (1992)

The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire includes 29 items aimed at capturing four distinct aspects of aggression: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. Participants indicate their agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 ("extremely uncharacteristic of me") to 5 ("extremely characteristic of me"). For the present study, a combined aggression score was calculated by summing responses across all items to provide an overall assessment of aggressive tendencies.

✓ Example item: "Given enough provocation, I may hit another person.

Cronbach's alpha in the current study was 0.86.

#### > Procedure

Data collection took place over four weeks in offline and online platforms in Delhi. After receiving ethical approval from the host institution, participants were briefed about the aim of the study and asked to sign an informed consent form. Confidentiality and voluntary participation were emphasized.

- ✓ Participants completed the questionnaires either in person using printed forms or online via Google Forms.
- On average, participants took 15–20 minutes to complete the full set of instruments.
- ✓ No identifying information (e.g., name, email, institution) was collected to preserve anonymity.

Participants were debriefed after submission, and those with elevated aggression scores were provided contact information for local counseling services."

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#### > Ethical Considerations

The research followed the ethical guidelines of the **American Psychological Association (APA)** and adhered to institutional research protocols. Key considerations included:

- All participants were asked to sign the informed consent.
- Participants were allowed to withdraw at any stage without penalty.
- Data was kept confidential and used strictly for academic purposes.
- No deceptive practices were used.

#### ➤ Data Analysis

Responses were systematically organized and input into Microsoft Excel, with further analysis performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were calculated for each variable. To determine the nature and degree of associations between variables, the analysis utilized Pearson's r statistic.

- ✓ Authoritative parenting and self-esteem
- ✓ Authoritarian parenting and self-esteem

- ✓ Authoritative parenting and aggression
- ✓ Authoritarian parenting and aggression
- ✓ Self-esteem and aggression

Significance levels were set at p < .05 for all analyses.

#### IV. RESULT

The findings below summarize the main statistical results and explore how different parental approaches—ranging from supportive to controlling—relate to self-esteem and aggressive behaviors in the sample of young adults from Delhi aged 18–25 years.

# ➤ Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed for all key variables. The sample (N = 104) included 55 female and 49 male participants.

# ➤ Correlation Analysis

Pearson's r was employed to evaluate the associations among the study variables. Table 1 presents the results.

Table 1 Correlation Matrix of Parenting Styles, Self-Esteem, and Aggression

Variable Pair	r	p-value	Significance
Authoritative Parenting & Self-Esteem	0.40	< .01	Significant
Authoritative Parenting & Aggression	-0.36	< .01	Significant
Authoritarian Parenting & Self-Esteem	-0.28	< .01	Significant
Authoritarian Parenting & Aggression	0.28	< .01	Significant
Self-Esteem & Aggression	-0.48	< .01	Significant

## ➤ Interpretation of Findings

- Authoritative parenting showed a positive and statistically significant correlation with self-esteem (r = .40, p < .01), supporting the hypothesis that warm, responsive parenting fosters self-worth.
- A negative correlation was observed between authoritative parenting and aggression (r = -.36, p < .01), indicating that such parenting reduces aggressive tendencies.
- Authoritarian parenting had a negative correlation with self-esteem (r = -..28, p < .01), suggesting that rigid control and low warmth contribute to poor self-image.
- A positive correlation was found between authoritarian parenting and aggression (r = .28, p < .01), indicating that harsh parenting may model aggressive behaviors.
- Finally, self-esteem and aggression were negatively correlated (r = -.48, p < .01), indicating that lower self-esteem is associated with higher aggression.

All correlations were statistically significant at the 0.01 level, supporting the five proposed hypotheses.

#### V. DISCUSSION

This analysis examined the relationships between two distinct parenting methods—authoritative and authoritarian—and their impact on self-esteem and aggression in young adults aged 18 to 25 in Delhi. The

findings revealed statistically significant associations that aligned with theoretical expectations and supported all five of the proposed hypotheses.

# ➤ Interpretation of Key Findings

#### • Authoritative Parenting and Self-Esteem

A high positive correlation was found between authoritative parenting and self-esteem (r = .40, p < .01). This indicates that young adults who perceive their parents as supportive, nurturing, and democratic are more likely to have a positive self-image. These results align with Baumrind's (1991) typology and are reinforced by studies such as Masud & Ahmad (2019) and Phan Ubon (2018), which emphasize that warmth and reasonable boundaries promote internal self-worth.

The finding also corresponds with Kloos et al. (2012), who argue that individuals thrive emotionally when their microsystem—like the family—validates and empowers them. In India's changing urban context, where young adults are increasingly independent but still embedded in strong family systems, authoritative parenting appears to balance autonomy and emotional support effectively.

# • Authoritative Parenting and Aggression

There was a significant reduction in aggression associated with higher scores on the authoritative parenting scale (r = -.36, p < .01). This suggests that such parenting may serve a protective function, reducing the likelihood of

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hostile behavior. Authoritative parents may model emotional regulation and encourage constructive expression of feelings, reducing the need for aggressive coping mechanisms.

This finding supports Bandura's (1973) social learning theory, which posits that behaviors are learned through modeling. It also aligns with Hosiri (2020), who observed reduced aggression among youth raised with high parental responsiveness in Indonesian communities.

#### • Authoritarian Parenting and Self-Esteem

A significant negative correlation between authoritarian parenting and self-esteem ( $r=-.28,\ p<.01$ ) reinforces previous research. This confirms that rigid, punitive, and emotionally distant parenting may erode self-worth, particularly when children's autonomy is suppressed. Participants in this study who perceived their parents as controlling were more likely to score lower on self-esteem.

Interestingly, this aligns with findings from Masud & Ahmad (2019) and Anjum, Noor & Sharif (2024) but contrasts slightly with Beh Xin Yun et al. (2019) in Malaysia, where authoritarian parenting had a weak positive correlation with self-esteem. The discrepancy might stem from different cultural interpretations of control and discipline. In Indian urban settings, rising individualism may lead young adults to interpret authoritarian behaviors more negatively.

# • Authoritarian Parenting and Aggression

A statistically significant positive association was identified between authoritarian parenting and aggression (r = .28, p < .01). Children raised with high control and low warmth may internalize aggressive responses or model them from parental behavior. The consistent finding across South Asian literature (e.g., Anjum et al., 2024; Ranjana & Moudgil, 2017) suggests that harsh discipline fosters resentment, emotional repression, and externalizing behaviors.

# • Self-Esteem and Aggression

A negative correlation between self-esteem and aggression (r=-.48, p<.01) indicates that lower self-worth may increase the risk of aggressive tendencies. This supports existing literature (Orth & Robins, 2014) which notes that young adults with low self-esteem are more likely to experience frustration and emotional instability, often expressed through aggression. This finding reinforces the mediating role of self-esteem in how parenting styles shape behavioral outcomes.

# VI. IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

### > For Families and Parents

The study highlights the importance of adopting authoritative parenting, especially in rapidly urbanizing contexts where traditional authoritarian practices may no longer yield adaptive outcomes. Encouraging open communication, providing consistent boundaries, and validating emotions may lead to more resilient and emotionally intelligent young adults.

# > For Mental Health Professionals

Psychologists and counselors working with young adults should explore clients' family dynamics, particularly the perceived parenting style, as part of assessments related to low self-esteem or aggression. Family therapy and parenting workshops can be designed to address maladaptive patterns and promote emotionally responsive parenting practices.

# ➤ For Educators and Institutions

Universities and colleges can include parenting and selfdevelopment modules in their outreach programs. Educators can play a preventive role by promoting awareness of the long-term effects of parenting and emotional socialization.

#### > Cultural Considerations

India is in a transitional phase between traditional collectivist norms and globalized individualism. While authoritarian parenting has historically been normalized (especially for boys), this study shows that such practices may no longer support the psychological well-being of modern urban youth. The influence of western values, increased exposure to mental health awareness, and shifting gender roles mean young adults are now more attuned to emotional environments and personal boundaries.

Moreover, the contrast between Indian and Malaysian results (e.g., Beh Xin Yun et al.) demonstrates the complexity of interpreting parenting styles across cultures. What is perceived as "supportive authority" in one context may be seen as "oppressive control" in another.

# VII. LIMITATIONS

- ➤ While this Study Offers Valuable Insights, Several Limitations Must be Acknowledged:
- Sampling Method: The use of convenience sampling limits generalizability. The findings may not reflect the experiences of young adults in rural or non-urban Indian settings.
- **Self-Report Measures**: All data were self-reported, increasing the risk of social desirability bias or inaccurate recall of parental behaviors.
- Cross-Sectional Design: The study captured a single point in time. Longitudinal research would be needed to track the evolving effects of parenting styles.
- Limited Diversity: The sample was primarily composed of university students in Delhi, with limited representation from other socioeconomic or linguistic backgrounds.

# VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Longitudinal studies examining how perceived parenting styles influence self-esteem and aggression over time would offer richer insights.
- Future research should examine the role of permissive parenting, sibling relationships, or the specific impact of maternal vs. paternal styles.

- Qualitative interviews could provide deeper understanding of how cultural perceptions of parenting affect emotional responses.
- Studies involving diverse regional, linguistic, and religious groups would provide a more comprehensive picture of parenting influences in India.

#### IX. CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings emphasize that parenting style remains a crucial determinant of emotional and behavioral development in young adulthood. While authoritative parenting fosters self-worth and emotional regulation, authoritarian parenting may be counterproductive in modern Indian settings. These insights have implications not just for families, but also for educators, therapists, and policy-makers working toward a more emotionally healthy youth population.

#### > Conclusion

The above presented analysis explored the relationships between parenting styles—specifically authoritative and authoritarian—and the psychological outcomes of self-esteem and aggression among young adults aged 18 to 25 in Delhi. Through quantitative analysis of data collected from 104 participants, the study found that warmth and supportive parenting along with some required rules was significantly associated with higher self-esteem and lower aggression, while authoritarian parenting correlated with lower self-esteem and higher aggression. Additionally, a negative relationship between self-esteem and aggression further highlighted the interconnected nature of emotional and behavioral development.

These results are consistent with both Western and South Asian research, including those by Masud & Ahmad (2019), Anjum, Noor & Sharif (2024), and Beh Xin Yun et al. (2019), while also contributing to the limited but growing literature on emerging adults in the Indian context. The findings reinforce Baumrind's parenting typology and the principles of community psychology, emphasizing that young adults' psychological well-being is profoundly shaped by their early caregiving environments.

In an era where parenting practices are rapidly evolving due to globalization, urban stressors, and shifting family dynamics, this study holds practical value. It encourages parents, educators, and mental health professionals to reflect on how discipline and warmth are balanced in Indian households. Promoting authoritative parenting—characterized by emotional support, autonomy, and firm boundaries—can play a key role in fostering resilient, confident, and emotionally regulated youth.

Nonetheless, the study's limitations call for cautious interpretation and suggest the need for broader, more diverse, and longitudinal research. Understanding parenting within diverse cultural, religious, and socioeconomic Indian settings remains crucial to formulating evidence-based interventions and parental guidance programs.

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In conclusion, parenting styles are not merely behavioral blueprints—they are powerful emotional ecosystems that shape how young adults see themselves and relate to others. As India continues to navigate cultural transformation, the role of adaptive, emotionally intelligent parenting has never been more vital.

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