

## The Impact of Parenting on Adolescent Behaviour: A Review of Styles, Practices, and Developmental Pathways

Dr. Chinmayee Dwivedi

MD Resident, Pathology, Government Medical College, Kota

chinmayeedwivedi7684@gmail.com

### Abstract

Adolescence is a developmental period marked by rapid physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional change, during which the family remains one of the most powerful contexts of influence. This paper reviews contemporary empirical and theoretical literature on how parenting style and parenting practices shape adolescent behavior, drawing on Diana Baumrind's classic typology of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting, as later extended by Maccoby and Martin. The review synthesizes findings on internalizing outcomes (anxiety, depression, low self-esteem), externalizing outcomes (delinquency, aggression, substance use), and positive developmental outcomes (school engagement, self-regulation, resilience). It further examines mediating mechanisms — including self-esteem, psychological flexibility, resilience, and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs — through which parenting is thought to shape behavior. The paper concludes that authoritative parenting, characterized by high warmth combined with reasonable structure, and consistent parental monitoring are the most reliable protective factors across cultural contexts, while harsh, coercive, or neglectful parenting substantially raises the risk of adjustment problems. Implications for parents, educators, clinicians, and policymakers are discussed, along with limitations of the existing evidence base and directions for future research.

**Keywords:** *parenting styles; adolescent behavior; authoritative parenting; parental monitoring; adolescent mental health; family influence*

### 1. Introduction

Adolescence, typically spanning the ages of 10 to 19, is a transitional stage in which individuals negotiate identity formation, increasing autonomy, and heightened sensitivity to social and emotional experience. While peers, schools, and broader cultural forces all shape adolescent development, the family remains the earliest and most enduring context of socialization. Parents influence not only what adolescents know and value, but also how they regulate emotion, manage stress, form relationships, and respond to risk. Understanding how parenting shapes adolescent behavior is therefore central to prevention science, clinical practice, and public policy aimed at promoting healthy youth development.

A large and growing body of research links parenting style and specific parenting practices to a wide range of adolescent outcomes, from academic engagement and self-esteem to depression, delinquency, and substance use. This paper reviews that literature with three goals: first, to summarize the major theoretical

frameworks used to classify parenting, particularly Baumrind's model of parenting style; second, to synthesize empirical findings on the association between parenting and both problematic and adaptive adolescent behaviors; and third, to examine the psychological mechanisms that appear to explain why parenting exerts such influence. The paper closes with practical implications and a discussion of limitations in the current evidence base.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: Parenting Style

The most widely used framework for classifying parenting comes from the work of developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind, who in the 1960s identified three parenting styles — authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive — based on the degree of demandingness (control) and responsiveness (warmth) a parent shows toward a child. In the 1980s, Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin extended this model by adding a fourth style, neglectful (or uninvolved) parenting, to describe parents who are low in both warmth and control. Figure 1 illustrates this two-dimensional model.

|                                                    |                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Authoritarian</b><br>(low warmth, high control) | <b>Authoritative</b><br>(high warmth, high control) |
| <b>Neglectful</b><br>(low warmth, low control)     | <b>Permissive</b><br>(high warmth, low control)     |

*Figure 1. Baumrind's two-dimensional model of parenting style, showing how demandingness and responsiveness combine to produce four parenting styles.*

Authoritative parents combine high warmth with reasonable, consistently enforced expectations; they explain rules, listen to their adolescent's perspective, and grant autonomy in an age-appropriate way. Authoritarian parents are highly demanding but low in warmth, relying on strict obedience and punitive discipline with little explanation. Permissive (or indulgent) parents are warm and responsive but set few rules or consequences. Neglectful parents are low in both warmth and control, providing minimal guidance, supervision, or emotional support. Table 1 summarizes the typical behaviors and adolescent correlates associated with each style, as reported across the studies reviewed in this paper.

**Table 1. Baumrind-Maccoby-Martin Parenting Styles and Associated Adolescent Correlates**

| Parenting Style | Warmth / Control          | Typical Parental Behaviors                                                                                                  | Commonly Reported Adolescent Correlates                                                                                            |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Authoritative   | High warmth, high control | Sets clear, reasonable expectations; explains rules; responsive to the child's viewpoint; encourages autonomy within limits | Higher self-esteem, better emotion regulation, stronger school engagement, lower rates of internalizing and externalizing problems |
| Authoritarian   | Low warmth, low control   | Demands strict obedience; relies on punishment                                                                              | Higher risk of anxiety, depression, and externalizing problems                                                                     |

| Parenting Style         | Warmth / Control         | Typical Parental Behaviors                                                     | Commonly Reported Adolescent Correlates                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                         | high control             | on punitive discipline; offers little explanation or negotiation               | depression, lower self-esteem, and — in some studies — elevated suicidal risk behavior                                                                            |
| Permissive / Indulgent  | High warmth, low control | Lenient and nurturing but sets few rules or consequences; avoids confrontation | Difficulties with self-regulation and authority; mixed findings on school adjustment; some studies link it to better short-term wellbeing but weaker self-control |
| Neglectful / Uninvolved | Low warmth, low control  | Minimal supervision, involvement, or emotional support                         | Poorest outcomes overall: low self-control, low self-esteem, and elevated externalizing behavior such as delinquency and substance use                            |

*Note. Adolescent correlates are drawn from patterns reported across multiple studies cited in this review and should be interpreted as general tendencies rather than deterministic outcomes for any individual family.*

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1 Parenting Style and Emotional/Behavioral Outcomes

Numerous studies link parenting style to adolescent mental health. Peng, Hu, Yu, Xiao, and Luo (2021), studying 916 Chinese adolescents, found that parental emotional warmth was associated with better mental health through a chain of two mediators: higher self-esteem and lower psychological inflexibility. Conversely, parental rejection and over-protection were associated with poorer mental health through the same pathway — lower self-esteem and greater psychological inflexibility. This suggests that parenting does not act on adolescent behavior directly so much as through the psychological resources it builds or depletes in the child.

A large meta-analysis encompassing more than a thousand studies, reported by Pinquart and summarized in subsequent reviews, found that harsh control, psychological control, authoritarian parenting, and neglectful parenting were consistently associated with elevated internalizing symptoms such as anxiety and depression, while parental warmth was linked to lower depression. A cross-sectional community study of 583 adolescents in Bheemdatt Municipality, Nepal, similarly found that authoritarian parenting was strongly associated with suicidal risk behavior, reported by 11.3 percent of the sample, while authoritative parenting was positively associated with self-esteem. A related study noted that adolescents whose parents were minimally engaged reported markedly higher rates of attempted suicide and anxiety than adolescents with more engaged parents.

Findings from a large sample of high-risk adolescents in urban China similarly showed that negative parenting styles increased the risk of depression, but this effect operated indirectly — through adverse

childhood experiences and learning burnout — and differed somewhat between male and female adolescents. Together, these studies indicate that the link between parenting and adolescent mental health is not simply direct, but is transmitted through the child's own psychological state, historical experiences, and coping resources.

### 3.2 Parenting, Delinquency, and Substance Use

Beyond emotional wellbeing, parenting is strongly linked to externalizing and risk behaviors. A review of adolescent behavior problems concluded that authoritative parenting is the style most consistently associated with positive external adjustment, while authoritarian parenting is the most strongly associated with externalizing problems such as aggression and rule-breaking. The same review noted that parental control is beneficial when exercised as supervision or guidance, but harmful when exercised as psychological or coercive control.

Parental monitoring — the degree to which parents know about and track their adolescent's activities, whereabouts, and companions — has received particular research attention as a protective factor against delinquency and substance use. In a two-year study of 1,423 high-risk adolescents attending alternative high schools in Washington State, higher parental monitoring at baseline predicted significantly lower subsequent use of alcohol, marijuana, and several other substances, with protective effects still detectable roughly a year later. Other longitudinal work, including studies using structural equation modeling with adolescents from urban Chicago schools, found that parental monitoring was negatively associated with adolescent alcohol use, violent behavior, and delinquency, and that it interacted with peer influence: strong parental monitoring buffered adolescents against the risk posed by having deviant peers.

It is worth noting that later research by Kerr and Stattin, along with more recent twin studies, has refined this picture: adolescents' own willingness to disclose information to parents appears to be at least as important as active parental surveillance in explaining why monitored adolescents engage in less delinquent behavior. This refinement suggests that the parent-adolescent relationship and communication quality — not just rule enforcement — underlie the protective association between monitoring and behavior.

### 3.3 Parenting and Positive Youth Outcomes

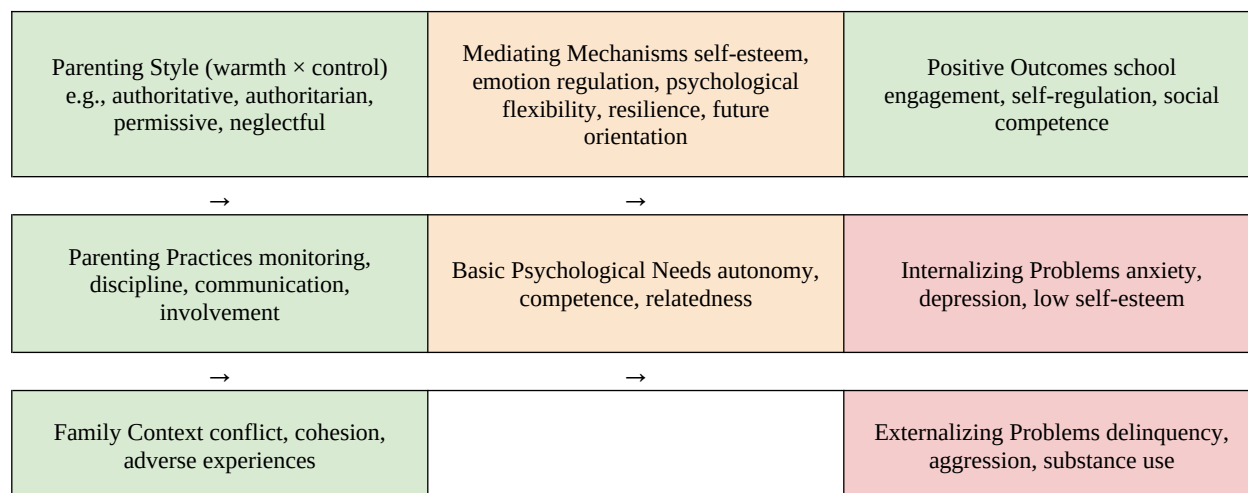
Parenting is not only related to the presence or absence of problems; it also shapes positive developmental outcomes. A study of Spanish adolescents found that an indulgent (high-warmth, high-acceptance) parenting style was associated with better self-regulated learning and lower academic stress than more controlling styles, a relationship that held regardless of the adolescent's sex or school level. Other research examining school engagement across four educational stages found that caring, autonomy-supportive parenting directly promoted school engagement and also did so indirectly by strengthening adolescents' future orientation — their sense of purpose and planning for the future — whereas controlling parenting reduced engagement, although this negative effect weakened at higher grade levels.

Similarly, work on emotional wellbeing framed through self-determination theory found that supportive parenting enhanced adolescent wellbeing by satisfying their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This body of work reinforces the idea that authoritative, need-supportive

parenting cultivates the internal resources adolescents rely on to engage productively with school and social life.

### 3.4 Mediating Mechanisms

Across the literature reviewed above, a recurring theme is that parenting rarely influences adolescent behavior in a single, direct step. Instead, its effects are transmitted through psychological mechanisms internal to the adolescent. Self-esteem is one of the most frequently studied mediators: authoritative, warm parenting tends to raise self-esteem, which in turn is protective against depression, anxiety, and suicidal risk behavior. Psychological inflexibility — the tendency to rigidly avoid or struggle against unwanted internal experiences — has emerged as a second mechanism, worsened by rejecting or over-protective parenting and linked to poorer mental health. Resilience is a third mechanism: adolescents raised with positive parenting tend to show higher resilience, which helps buffer the effects of stress and adversity on emotional and behavioral problems. Finally, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness has been shown to explain part of the relationship between supportive parenting and adolescent wellbeing.



*Figure 2. Conceptual pathway illustrating how parenting style, parenting practices, and family context influence adolescent behavioral outcomes through psychological mediating mechanisms.*

Table 2 provides a consolidated summary of the key studies reviewed in this paper, including sample characteristics and principal findings, to give readers a quick reference for the empirical basis of the conclusions drawn here.

**Table 2. Summary of Key Studies on Parenting and Adolescent Behavior**

| Study / Source                                     | Sample                                  | Key Finding                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Peng et al. (2021), <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> | 916 Chinese adolescents (M age = 14.44) | Parental emotional warmth improved mental health via higher self-esteem and lower psychological inflexibility; rejection and over-protection worsened it through the same mediators. |

| Study / Source                                                   | Sample                                    | Key Finding                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pinquart (2017) meta-analysis, cited in Ammar et al. (2025)      | 1,015 studies                             | Harsh control, psychological control, authoritarian, and neglectful styles were associated with more internalizing symptoms (anxiety, depression) across studies. |
| Community study, Bheemdatt Municipality, Nepal (2022–23)         | 583 school-going adolescents              | Authoritarian parenting was strongly associated with suicidal risk behavior (11.3% prevalence); authoritative parenting was linked to higher self-esteem.         |
| García & Serra (2019), Frontiers/PMC                             | Spanish adolescents                       | Indulgent (high-warmth, low-control) parenting was associated with better self-regulated learning and lower academic stress relative to authoritarian parenting.  |
| Marcone, Affuso & Borrone review, cited in Fuentes et al. (2019) | Multiple studies reviewed                 | Authoritative parenting most consistently promoted positive external adjustment; authoritarian parenting was the most harmful for externalizing problems.         |
| Wright et al. (2012), Journal of Prevention                      | 1,423 high-risk US adolescents, 14–20 yrs | High parental monitoring at baseline predicted significantly lower use of alcohol, marijuana, and other substances up to a year later.                            |
| Chinese urban sample study (2024–25), PMC                        | 3,180 high-risk adolescents               | Negative parenting styles increased depression risk indirectly through adverse childhood experiences and learning burnout; effects differed by gender.            |
| School-engagement study (2024), ScienceDirect                    | Adolescents across four school stages     | Caring, autonomy-supportive parenting directly and indirectly (via future orientation) increased school engagement; controlling parenting reduced it.             |

## 4. Discussion

Taken together, the reviewed literature converges on several consistent conclusions. First, authoritative parenting — characterized by the combination of warmth, reasonable structure, and respect for the adolescent's growing autonomy — is associated with the most favorable pattern of outcomes across emotional, behavioral, and academic domains. Second, harsh or coercive control, whether expressed as authoritarian discipline or psychological control, is one of the more consistent risk factors for both internalizing problems (anxiety, depression, low self-esteem) and externalizing problems (aggression, rule-breaking). Third, neglectful parenting, marked by low warmth and low structure, tends to produce the poorest outcomes overall, reflecting the absence of both the emotional support and the guidance adolescents need. Fourth, permissive or indulgent parenting produces more mixed results: high warmth appears protective for wellbeing and academic adjustment in some studies, but the corresponding lack of structure can undermine self-regulation and create difficulties with authority.

A second major theme is that parenting operates through the adolescent's internal psychological world rather than acting on behavior directly. Self-esteem, psychological flexibility, resilience, and need

satisfaction each appear repeatedly as mediators, suggesting that interventions aimed at strengthening these internal resources — alongside efforts to improve parenting itself — may offer complementary routes to better adolescent outcomes. A third theme concerns parental monitoring: while long assumed to work through active surveillance, more recent evidence suggests that adolescent disclosure, shaped by a trusting parent-adolescent relationship, may be the more powerful ingredient. This reframes monitoring less as a matter of surveillance and more as a matter of relationship quality and open communication.

## 5. Implications for Practice and Policy

For parents, the evidence favors an authoritative approach: combining consistent expectations and monitoring with warmth, explanation, and respect for the adolescent's developing autonomy, rather than relying solely on strict control or, alternatively, minimal structure. For clinicians and school counselors, interventions that strengthen adolescents' self-esteem, emotion regulation, and resilience may help offset the effects of less optimal parenting environments, particularly where family-level change is difficult to achieve quickly. For educators, awareness of a student's family context can inform how school engagement and behavioral difficulties are interpreted and addressed. For policymakers, the strength and consistency of the parental-monitoring and parental-warmth findings support continued investment in parent-education and family-strengthening programs, particularly those that build communication skills and authoritative practices rather than punitive discipline alone.

## 6. Limitations and Future Research

This review has several limitations common to narrative syntheses of this kind. Most of the studies cited are cross-sectional, which limits causal inference: it is possible that adolescent behavior also shapes parenting, rather than the reverse, a dynamic known as child-driven effects. Findings drawn from specific cultural contexts, such as China, Nepal, or Spain, may not generalize directly to other populations, and cultural norms can shift what counts as 'authoritative' or 'controlling' parenting in the first place. Measurement also varies considerably across studies, from self-report parenting scales to observational coding, which can affect comparability. Future research would benefit from more longitudinal and genetically informed designs (such as twin studies), broader cross-cultural replication, and closer attention to how digital-age parenting practices, such as monitoring adolescents' online activity, interact with the classic dimensions of warmth and control identified by Baumrind.

## 7. Conclusion

Parenting remains one of the most consistently documented influences on adolescent behavior, shaping outcomes ranging from self-esteem and school engagement to depression, delinquency, and substance use. Across diverse cultural samples, authoritative parenting — warm, structured, and responsive — and consistent, relationship-based parental monitoring emerge as the most reliable protective factors, while harsh, coercive, or neglectful parenting elevates risk. Because these effects appear to operate through the adolescent's own psychological resources, effective support for families should combine attention to parenting practices with direct efforts to strengthen adolescents' self-esteem, resilience, and coping skills.

## References

- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology*, 4(1, Pt.2), 1–103.
- Chinese urban high-risk adolescent sample study. (2024–2025). The impact of parenting styles on depression among high-risk adolescents of different genders in Chinese urban samples: The mediating effects of adverse childhood experiences and learning burnout. PMC. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC12571868/>
- Community-based cross-sectional study, Bheemdatt Municipality. (2023–2024). Relationship of parenting styles on depression, anxiety, stress and self-esteem of adolescents. PMC. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC12674523/>
- Fuentes, M. C., García-Ros, R., Perandones, T. M., & Lacomba-Trejo, L. (2019). The role of parenting styles on behavior problem profiles of adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(15), 2767. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6696141/>
- García, O. F., Serra, E., Zacarés, J. J., & García, F. (2019). Parenting styles and short- and long-term socialization outcomes: A study among Spanish adolescents and older adults. PMC. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6696365/>
- Longitudinal parenting-style and abuse study (Switzerland, 2021–2023). Parenting style patterns and their longitudinal impact on mental health in abused and nonabused adolescents. PMC. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11911485/>
- Maccoby, E. E., & Martin, J. A. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction. In P. H. Mussen (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 4. Socialization, personality, and social development* (pp. 1–101). Wiley.
- Parental monitoring and peer deviance longitudinal study, Project Northland Chicago. Effects of parental monitoring and peer deviance on substance use and delinquency. Academia.edu. <https://www.academia.edu/27870595/>
- Parenting style and emotional/behavioral problems study, Chinese adolescents. Effect of parenting style on the emotional and behavioral problems among Chinese adolescents: The mediating effect of resilience. PMC. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10935827/>
- Peng, B., Hu, N., Yu, H., Xiao, H., & Luo, J. (2021). Parenting style and adolescent mental health: The chain mediating effects of self-esteem and psychological inflexibility. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 738170. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.738170>
- School-engagement and future-orientation study. (2024). Parenting styles and adolescents' school engagement: The mediating role of future orientation. ScienceDirect. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740924003049>
- Twin-study of parental monitoring and substance use. (2023). Evaluating longitudinal relationships between parental monitoring and substance use in a multi-year, intensive longitudinal study of 670 adolescent twins. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10213319/>
- Well-being and basic psychological needs study. (2022). Parenting style and emotional well-being among adolescents: The role of basic psychological needs satisfaction and frustration. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.901646/full>
- Wright, D. R., et al. (2012). Predicting high risk adolescents' substance use over time: The role of parental monitoring. *Journal of Prevention*, 33(2–3). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-012-0266-z>