

Exploring the Influential Power of Parenting Styles on Children's Development: A Study of Behavioural and Emotional Growth

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ABSTRACT

Parenting styles have a significant impact on children's emotional regulation and behavioral outcomes. In Pakistan, societal norms often dictate how children are raised, leading parents to impose academic and personal choices on their children due to competition and jealousy. This external pressure not only stifles children's interests in their academic and life choices but can also cause long-term emotional harm. This study investigates the culturally driven causes of these parenting styles and their effects on children's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development. It aims to compare different parenting styles to identify the underlying reasons for the societal neglect of healthy parenting strategies and to assess the psychological consequences that children face. The study utilized a qualitative, exploratory design to gather data from 30 participants, consisting of 10 children and 20 parents. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews with children, open-ended questionnaires for parents, and direct observation. Thematic analysis revealed that while 42.5% of parents self-identify as authoritative, there are often contradictions between their stated beliefs and their disciplinary actions, which frequently align more closely with authoritarian parenting, particularly under academic stress. Permissive parenting, representing 27.5%, has increased in response to a growing awareness of mental health issues, yet it remains influenced by cultural expectations for high achievement. The findings indicate that many parenting decisions stem from parents' upbringing and external societal pressures rather than a well-informed understanding of child psychology. This research highlights the need for evidence-based parenting guidance and calls for more academic focus on improving child-rearing practices in Pakistan. By addressing the root causes of emotional neglect and misaligned parenting choices, the study advocates for a shift towards informed parenting strategies to prevent long-term harm to children's development.

Introduction

Persistent parental guidance in a child's life is integral to emotional and social growth. It is vital to children's subsequent social behaviour and mental health that their parents' methods of childrearing nurture their emotional and social skills (Zheng, 2025). Therefore, it is just as essential to design an effective parenting strategy to provide emotional support as it is to cater to a child's physical needs. Darling and Steinberg (1993, as cited in Candelanza et al., 2021) described these parenting strategies as a marriage between the interactions of parents and their offspring; they called them a set of practices that paint a clear picture of the relationship between the parents and the children. When executed correctly, parenting fosters a child's potential for blossoming in their ever-changing environment and provides the skillset required to manoeuvre themselves through the complexities of life, thereby excelling at every turn (Ahmed, 2025).

Several psychologists have given evidence that suggests a link between the behaviour of parents and the development of their child (Meadows, 1996), thus highlighting the significance of analyzing approaches to parenting and the correlation of those approaches with the resulting mental, emotional and behavioural growth of the youth of today. The highest impact of parental influence on child development occurs in early childhood due to the lack of external relationships, such as friendships, during this phase of their young lives (Okubo et al., 2022). One of the major factors influencing emotional and behavioural problems in children and adolescents is the family system, along with parent-child interactions (Wang et al., 2024). Due to this, more and more studies have turned to empirical analysis of parenting patterns and children's behaviour, especially in promoting positivity in children's emotional development (Aikaterini et al., 2023).

While the phenomenon of parent-child relations and its intricacies have been established since the dawn of time, it was the revolutionary contributions of Diana Baumrind in 1967 that defined a basic pattern and designed a framework for future research on the topic of Parenting Styles. Moreover, after thirty years of research on parenting styles (Gfroerer et al., 2004), her results established three major parenting styles: Authoritative, authoritative, and permissive. These were the basis of Diana's Pillar Theory, which discussed the correlation of these three parenting styles with the welfare and behaviour of children (Candelanza et al., 2021). Afterwards, the research of Maccoby and Martin added the term Neglectful Parenting or Uninvolved Parenting to Diana's three initial classifications (Ahmed, 2025). Contrastingly, Asian studies regarded the parenting styles that emerged from Lewin's leadership studies. This research laid the basis for Baldwin's parenting styles: scientific democracy and warm democracy (Okubo et al., 2022). Moreover, due to the varied cultures in Asia, the parenting styles also showed diversity, thereby outlining the need for taking into account the cultural values while relating parenting styles, as the results of these researches will show variation from the studies done in Western society (Yim, 2022).

Still, Baumrind's (1991, as cited in Khanum et al., 2023) parenting styles form a concise foundation for research on parenting and how it relates to young minds' emotional and social development. The current situation in Pakistan shows an influx of new techniques and ideologies when it comes to tackling the extremely important task of childrearing. A study in Pakistan successfully predicted the correlation of parenting strategies with the character development and emotional maturation of early adolescents (Khan et al., 2023). These results may be influenced by Western media, awareness of mental and emotional health or even repressed childhood trauma. It has become clear that the psyche of parents is a determining factor when it comes to the success and maturation of a child (Aziz, 2025).

This modernized approach to parenting is becoming increasingly prevalent among Pakistani parents. This is proven by the greater influx of research in the past five years. Research in Pakistan on the effect of parenting styles on various aspects of character development, emotional development, and mental health is ongoing. (Aziz, 2022; Kalhoro et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2023). A study in Nawabshah even demonstrated how a mixture of parenting styles is more commonly observed and linked the use of a stricter approach to parenting with mental health in adolescents (Kalhoro et al., 2024).

Problem Statement

Baumrind's and many other parenting theories form the foundation of various countries' most modern parenting techniques. Among the 3 types, authoritative parenting is the most widely applied and accepted globally (Febiyanti & Rachmawati, 2021). On the other hand, the new approach called gentle parenting, driven by social media influence during the pandemic, is characterized by utmost care for children, support to regulate their emotions, and benefits for children. Despite its popularity and studies in Western and European countries (Tiwari, 2022), it lacks research that validates this method (Pezalla & Davidson, 2024) for behavioural and emotional regulations in children, especially in Pakistan. This research reviews existing research by Pezalla & Davidson (2024) and Sunseri (2024), which provide a study of gentle parenting in the United States but lack a study of long-term effects on socio-economic cultures in Pakistan.

Furthermore, research by Altaf et al. (2021) examines the positive impacts of the authoritative style in Pakistan but does not highlight the effects of the gentle parenting method. The lack of clarity on the effects of gentle parenting compared to authoritative parenting, despite its increasing popularity, creates a problem as parents' use of unproven methods could have negative consequences on children's lives. Moreover, parents often seek guidance on the most effective parenting strategies, so comparing gentle parenting to the well-known, authoritative style provides practical, evidence-based recommendations for parents seeking validation to adopt this new approach.

Research Gap

Comprehensive research studies are also being conducted in Pakistan to investigate the significance of parenting style in influencing child behaviour. A study by Kamran et al. (2023) in southern Punjab shows that authoritative and permissive parenting styles are common in that area. It concludes that the child's misbehaviour is associated with the parent's mistaken beliefs, poor communication between child and parents and the child's lack of confidence, and recommends training of parents. Therefore, it cannot be said that Pakistani research is negligible regarding the correlation between parents' attentiveness and socio-emotional character development (Khan et al., 2023). The issue arises with children's emotional intelligence in correlation with the type of parenting strategy adopted and how much importance parents give to the topic. It is a point to ponder whether there may be a difference between how the current generation is being raised and the previous one. In Pakistan, parents treat their children according to societal expectations. They pressure them to choose the subjects in competition or a state of jealousy, masking their children's interests. The number of researchers is very low in Pakistan, so society usually neglects this topic. The research will conclude that the root causes of why this topic is ignored by the majority in Pakistan and the horrible consequences faced by them in the form of injured personality individuals.

Research Questions

The following three research questions guide this study:

1. How do authoritative and permissive parenting styles impact emotional and behavioural development in children?
2. What causes parents to select one parenting style over another?
3. What challenges do parents face when practising permissive parenting compared to authoritative parenting?
4. How effective is permissive parenting compared to authoritative parenting in the Pakistani socio-cultural context?

Research Objectives

Child development researchers have yet to investigate the popular gentler and softer parenting method compared to other forms of parenting, mainly authoritative, as it is most widely accepted globally. Thus, this study aims to explore the effect of different parenting styles on children's development, particularly

1. To determine the causes contributing to the preference for a particular parenting style.
2. To study the impact of authoritative and permissive parenting styles on the regulation of emotions and behaviour
3. To assess the effectiveness of authoritative and permissive parenting styles in raising children
4. To investigate the challenges faced by parents who adopt permissive parenting compared to authoritative parenting
5. To compare authoritative and permissive parenting styles to determine the most effective parenting approach

Assumption

This study is based on the following assumptions:

1. Authoritative parenting influences children's emotional regulation and behavioural development more than permissive parenting.
2. Permissive parenting results in lower anxiety levels and better emotional regulation in children.
3. Parents practising permissive parenting experience higher stress levels than those practising authoritative parenting.
4. Permissive parenting may not be as effective in Pakistan as that emphasizes traditional authoritarian and authoritative methods.

Literature Review

An impactful, balanced, and responsive parenting style is fundamental in fostering better cognitive development and adaptive behaviour in children, who are the foundation of future societies. Cultural and societal factors also influence a child's psychological dynamic, but the actions and gestures of surrounding identities influence a child's behavioural and emotional growth. The behaviour and interaction of parents with their children and with each other is defined as parenting style. Children are the blueprint of what they learn from their environments. The great English Philosopher denoted the mind of the newborn as "tabula rasa," or a "blank slate" (Locke, n.d.).

Continued Research studies have been conducted regarding the effect of parenting style on children's behaviour and emotional development worldwide. Upon observing detrimental shifts in children's cognitive and behavioural patterns, numerous research studies have been undertaken to examine the impact of parenting style on these changes. Multiple research studies support the perspective that family institutions are crucial in encouraging the healthy psychological development of children. The study conducted in Constanta, Romania, concluded that 100% of the children showed higher sociability when raised by democratic parents (Morolanu et al., 2024). According to a study conducted in China, the active participation of parents in a child's education and development provides cognitive opportunities for learning and growing (Kong and Yasmin, 2022). Research has also elucidated the specific effect of various parenting styles on children. In a study by Kong and Yasmin (2022), the authoritative parenting style, characterized by strong parental confidence, is highly associated with better learning outcomes during early childhood.

These seminal studies highlight the crucial factors necessary for fostering mentally and behaviourally healthy child development. They offer insights into addressing the underlying issues and elucidating the root causes of the problem. Also, comprehensively describing the effects of different parenting styles helps choose accurate parenting methods.

A significant surge of unhealthy mental and behavioural patterns among children worldwide has persisted for several decades, underlining the importance of addressing this concern. There is an alarming rise in unusual psychological dynamics among children, especially in adolescents, and a better understanding of the problem, as a consequence of which concern arises, is required to be addressed. Mental and behavioural growth is affected by unhealthy relationships between parents or family members. Depression, abnormal behaviour, aggression, poor academic progress, poor decision-making, and diverged focus are mainly caused by not having emotional support and stressful surroundings. A research study by M Fosco et al. (2023) highlights the issue that parents' interpersonal conflicts are highly associated with an increased risk of psychopathology in adolescents. Implementing Corporal punishments to establish particular psychological effects in children negatively affects feedback, especially during early childhood. Research in 2022 concludes that children subjected to corporal punishments majorly struggle with anxiety, depression, and neural disorders (Burani, 2022).

Parents have a strong impact on shaping the life of an individual. Parenting involves a series of decisions to ensure children's well-being and development (Ibrar et al., 2024). Diana Baumrind's theory divides parenting into authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative styles (Baumrind (1967) as cited in (Yang, 2024b)).

The authoritarian parenting method is characterized by strict control, greater demandingness, and high expectations from the child. This is paired with little to no acceptance from the parents; since they fear their grip on their child would loosen, they do not facilitate a comfortable space for open communication. The second method is authoritative parenting, which involves moderately demanding parents who hold certain expectations for their kids but balance those expectations with acceptance, responsiveness, and trust. This trust in the child, coupled with open communication and encouragement, generally results in happy and independent children, as shown by the research of Baumrind (1967). The Permissive parenting style is in visible contrast to Authoritarian parenting; it is non-demanding, has no proper parental control, holds low expectations, and ensures very high acceptance and communication. The final parenting style is called uninvolved or Negligent parenting, as shown in multiple recent studies. These parents are neither responsive towards their children nor demanding; their child often lacks parental supervision regarding their behaviour, and the parents are mostly inattentive. (Ballantine,2001, as cited in Khanum et al.,

2023). Among these, authoritative parenting is widely regarded as the most effective in fostering children's educational and emotional development (Febiyanti, 2021). However, in recent years, strict parenting expectations and popular parenting guidance from self-proclaimed experts on social media have introduced a new 'gentle parenting' style that gives children a high level of parental support. Gentle parenting encourages children to set "boundaries" and allows them to make their own decisions. It further focuses on understanding children's emotions instead of rectifying them for their actions (Pezalla & Davidson, 2024). This research explores the critical role of parenting approaches, particularly authoritative and gentle parenting, on children's emotional regulation, conflict resolution skills, and overall behavioural traits. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for parents, educators, and child development experts to foster healthy and well-adjusted individuals.

Studies conducted by Baumrind (1966) and Maccoby & Martin (1983) claim that gentle parenting has evolved from an authoritative method of parenting (Sasmita & Zannatunnisya, 2025). While Authoritative parenting is considered a 'balanced' approach that provides 'rules and boundaries' as well as the support children need (Yang, 2024), gentle parenting, despite being favourable for the children, is proving to be quite demanding for the parents. It was observed during the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided some parents with increased time at home with their children. However, for many others, the pandemic experience left negative effects. Studies show that gentle parenting causes an increase in parental stress and a decline in parenting competence as parents struggle to maintain work-life and childcare balance with the closing of children's facilities. As such, parents deserve individual support, particularly as parental burnout, which is a severe and persistent form of stress, is increasing rapidly. Furthermore, the usage of social media content from self-proclaimed experts about gentle parenting without validation can increase anxiety among parents (Pezalla & Davidson, 2024). Given these concerns, there is a growing need for research to assess the true impact of gentle parenting on children's emotional and behavioural development and to determine whether it is a good long-term approach for parents.

Various research has been conducted to see the diverse effects of different parenting methods on children based on how they deal with emotions and boundaries (Yang, 2024). In the context of academic success in children, authoritative parenting was identified as the best approach according to a survey conducted in the United States and Japan, whereas Authoritative parenting provided positive results for children in Asia (Tiwari, 2022). Cultural norms, societal pressures, financial stability, and personal values affect their parenting approach (Ibrar et al., 2024). This is evident in Australia, where children are encouraged to openly convey their feelings, while in Indonesia, cultural norms often discourage speaking out to maintain family harmony (Tiwari, 2022). Compared to the authoritative style, the concept of gentle parenting was not developed by academics but gained popularity through social media compared to other types. Despite its reputation, no academic research has shown what gentle parenting truly means to those who adopt this method (Pezalla & Davidson, 2024), particularly in Pakistan. While research has shown practices of the three parenting styles, mainly authoritarian and authoritative in Pakistan (Bibi et al., 2021), research on the effects of gentle parenting on children's behavioural and emotional development remains limited.

Research conducted by Kong and Yasmin (2022) suggests that the role of family has been a crucial aspect in the development of children as parent's involvement encourages children to learn essential demeanours. As such, children need to have a close understanding of their families. However, to preserve a positive relationship, parents should support their children's independence and teach them to work together with others to explore the possibilities (Tiwari, 2022). Each

parenting style expects different results from children. Children with authoritative parents have the closest bonds with their parents. These parents know their children's feelings and do not set unrealistic hopes that children cannot handle (Kong & Yasmin, 2022).

On the other hand, according to the book 'Gentle Parenting Reimagined' by Sunseri (2024), the pandemic significantly negatively impacted our child's social development. Children were excluded from all socializations like sports, family and friends and compelled to live alone, frequently without supervision. Only social media, social gaming, and the internet served as their main means of communication and entertainment. Both parents and children had higher levels of stress, which unavoidably resulted in increased family strife and discord. Many children felt nervous and unprepared to reintegrate into normal relationships and responsibilities in the real world after the pandemic ended. Queues were lined up to seek help from therapists to deal with this issue. Parents were also exhausted and overburdened once more with a new challenge. About a 'one-third' of these parents were observed to be gentle parents. The results of practising gentle parenting have mainly been positive, with children managing emotions effectively and having low anxiety levels. However, studies on gentle parenting have primarily focused on White European populations (Pezalla & Davidson, 2024), raising questions about its effectiveness in culturally diverse societies like Pakistan. Given that Pakistan has mainly followed authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative parenting models (Bibi et al., 2021), it is essential to explore whether gentle parenting yields similar benefits in children.

Parenting patterns have long been identified as indispensable in shaping kids' development, with widespread implications for their behavioural and emotional well-being (Morris et al., 2017). Children need care that fosters positive emotional health and well-being, which encompasses improving overall mental health, handling stressful circumstances, managing emotional reactions, conquering fears, and handling disappointments and frustrations.

For a long time, educational models have been defined as indispensable for forming children's development and a wide range of behavioural and emotional wells. (Morris et al., 2017). Workers require treatment to contribute to positive emotional health and wells, which covers the ability to increase general mental health, deal with positive self-evaluation, cope with stressful situations, control emotional reactions, get fear, and accept disappointment and disappointment. Family members are important for children in controlling emotional excitement and overcoming and managing actions. They play this role to provide positive statements, express love and respect, and create a safe feeling. Support provided by parents helps to reduce the risk of internalization related to anxiety and depression. Symptoms like extreme fearfulness, helplessness, hopelessness, apathy, depression, and withdrawal are signs of emotional distress that have been noticed in very young children who receive insufficient parental care (Osofsky & Fitzgerald, 2000).

Research conducted by García and Gracia (2009) in Spain emphasized that disengaged parenting was linked to diminished self-esteem and heightened behavioural issues among adolescents. In the past two decades, research has been conducted on children with externalizing problems (aggression and disobedience) and internalizing problems (anxiety and withdrawal) (Cartwright & Hatton, 2005).

Existing studies emphasize the complex characteristics of childrearing in children, which are authoritative, authoritarian and permissive styles in individual ways (NAIMAH et al., 2022). Authoritative parenting, defined by a mix of warmth, responsiveness, and suitable levels of control, is widely known to be the most profitable for children's growth. Authoritarian parenting, characterized by elevated control and minimal warmth, has been associated with social removal

and aggressive trends in children. (Khanum et al., 2023). On the contrary, permissive parenting, which lacks structure and direction, was connected to emotional and behavioural issues (Bibi et al., 2021). Parents who are neglectful or uninvolved, providing limited guidance or emotional support, have been associated with significant emotional and behavioural issues. Studies show that children who have grown up in ignorant environments are faced with difficulties in increasing the risk of depression, inappropriate academic achievements and formation of healthy relationships (Steinberg, 2001). It is very important to admit that cultural norms and values can influence the effects of parenting styles. For example, in certain Southern European cultures, elevated levels of parental control are prevalent and may not be viewed unfavourably. Nevertheless, excessive control devoid of warmth can still have negative results. A research study by Dwairy et al. (2010) in Mediterranean nations found that children's authoritarian education is related to increased psychological stress in adolescents and emphasized the global importance of parents' warmth and support.

Previous studies describe how educational methods affect children's psychological flexibility, social technology and emotional regulations. (Bibi et al., 2021). This study is based on various sources, including cross-research on the effects of educational style on psychological flexibility between Pakistan and quantitative studies that study children's education (Khanum et al., 2023). Previous studies' findings emphasize authoritative parenting's main role in fostering well-rounded and thriving children. According to Baumrind's analysis, understanding the relationship between parenting style and the child's behaviour can help advance higher parenting interventions and teaching methods to direct children's psychological well-being.

Parenting styles profoundly impact child psychology, building and shaping their personality that persists into adulthood. Children are born with certain rights, the fulfilment of which their parents are strictly accountable. Any parenting strategy, according to Baumrind, either authoritative, authoritarian, permission or negligence, leaves a different mark on a child's progress and personality (Fadlillah and Fauziah, 2022).

The balance between the parents' demands and responses to their children helps the parents shape their stable personalities (Fadlillah and Fauziah, 2022). Healthy parenting styles result in reduced negative consequences related to children's behavioural and academic development. An authoritative approach leads to self-confidence and academic performance. On the other hand, negligence leads to a deteriorated personality, both behaviorally and academically (Ahmed, 2025). Physical punishment given to children, rather than for academic performance or for making children adopt obedient behaviour, has a long-term effect on how social they will be. The research was conducted in a township in Romania to check the impact of different parenting styles on the friendliness of children in classrooms. The study concluded that choosing a democratic parenting style could increase friendliness in children's behaviour (Moroianu et al., 2024).

The research was conducted by 306 families in Russia regarding disagreements between spouses regarding the concept of parenting style. The study concluded that leniency of both could lead to behavioural issues in offspring, the strictness of dad could result in moderate and his warm behaviour could create fewer mental health problems (A. Zukova et al. 2023). Another research on teenagers in Shenyang, China, including 895 teenagers, was executed. The study deduced that children who experience inappropriate or unsuitable parenting strategies are more prone to emotional and behavioural problems. On the other hand, the ones whose parents are well aware of how to treat them or one who has stable enough personalities are at lesser to be affected by behavioural and mental consequences (Wang et al., 2024).

Adopting wrong parenting styles and thus raising individuals with inappropriate personalities is a worldwide problem. Parenting styles give children enough confidence to prepare themselves to become independent. This attempt could break the chain of poverty and assist the United States in achieving sustainable development (Tripon, 2024). Preschool mental health problems, either internal or external, are also one of the big issues in developing countries. Studies proved that pupils experiencing authoritative parenting styles instead of authoritarian ones are less likely to have preschool mental disorders (Wang et al., 2024).

Research Methodology

To obtain a resolute answer to the questions plaguing this research and determine the validity of the aforementioned assumptions, an appropriate research methodology was adopted, which had the highest probability of success. The problem of this research was to study what factors influenced parenting styles, thereby judging which approach is most common in Pakistan presently and discussing how their parenting correlates to their child's behaviour. For this study, the research team has opted for an exploratory research design by the qualitative research method. The most suitable population for this research was a group of parents and children. To narrow down the data collection, it was decided that the appropriate age group of children to study would be between the ages of 8 and 10 years old, as the researchers needed to see the social and emotional development of the children during their developmental stages. The overall sample size was 30 individuals in the entire research, which was categorized into 10 children and both of their parents, i.e. mother and father. This resulted in 20 parents and 10 children selected using the chosen sampling technique. These research participants were selected non-randomly due to the qualitative research method.

Furthermore, the non-probability convenience sampling technique was applied to this study. At the time of the data collection procedure, the main source of data came from primary data collection during fieldwork combined with other research in the form of secondary data. The tools used for primary data collection were based on the qualitative standard.

The research team used a set of open-ended questionnaires, interviews and observations.

The ten children were asked questions in semi-structured, in-personal, and phone interviews recorded with parental consent.

On the other hand, the twenty parents were each given an open-ended questionnaire.

These questions and discussion points were created under predesigned themes and codes corresponding to this research's objectives and questions. The recovered data was then subjected to thematic analysis and interpretation.

Research Analysis and Interpretation

The exploratory and qualitative nature of the study prompted the researchers to opt for thematic analysis for analysing the collected data.

Table 4.1: Parents Responses for Parenting Styles and Parental Involvement

Parenting Styles	Neglectful Parenting	2	5%	50%
	Permissive Parenting	11	27.5%	
	Authoritarian Parenting	10	25%	
	Authoritative Parenting	17	42.5%	
Parenting Involvement	Criticism	17	25.7%	49.9%
	Supportiveness	19	28.7%	
	Cognitive Development	21	31.8%	
	Social Development	9	13.6%	
Themes	Codes	Frequency	Percentage	Overall percentage

Table 4.1 presents data collected from open-ended questionnaires administered to parents under the theme of parental involvement. The frequencies and percentages of individual codes show the kind of parental involvement existing in Pakistan and what it leads to concerning the young ones. The Social Development code accounts for only 13.6% of the theme, ranking it as the lowest frequency code in the theme. Cognitive Development in children shows the highest percentage at 31.8%, which is a measure of the intellectual capacity of children, as reported by their parents. The Supportiveness Code determined the level of help and support that parents would offer their child under certain circumstances; this is 28.7%. Lastly, the Criticism code highlights instances of negativity in parenting and accounts for 25.7% of the theme. The second half presents the statements relevant to the parenting styles chosen by the parents in the questionnaires. 42.5% of the theme is dominated by Authoritative Parenting, making it the most popular choice among the options. The Authoritarian Parenting code holds the highest percentage at 25%, whereas the Permissive Parenting code has the second-highest percentage at 27.5%. There were very few responses under the Neglectful Parenting code, accounting for only 5% of the theme, which suggests that a lack of parenting is rare in Pakistan. The overall percentage of the Parenting Styles theme is 50%, making it more dominant than the Parenting Involvement theme, which accounts for 49.9%.

Figure 4.1: Parents Responses for Parenting Styles and Parental Involvement

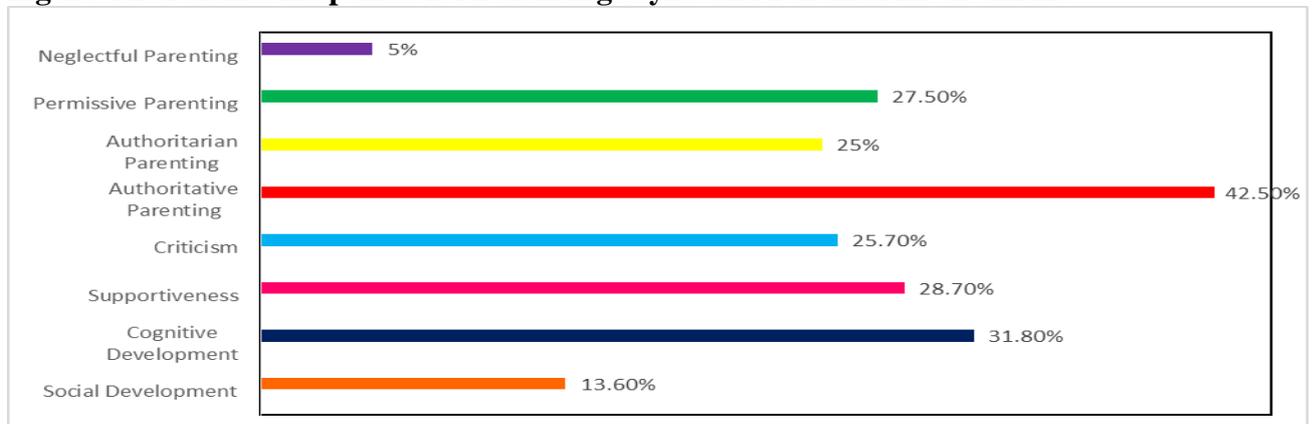


Table 4.2: Children’s Emotional Development and Behavioural Outcomes

Themes	Codes	Frequency	Percentage	Overall percentage
Behavioural Outcome	Cooperative	4	16.6%	49.8%
	Withdrawal	3	12.5%	
	Non-Compliant	1	4%	
	Compliant	9	37.5%	
	Aggression	7	29%	
Emotional Development	Fear/Anxiety	11	22%	50.1%
	Self-Esteem/Confidence	19	38%	
	Emotional Regulation	6	12%	
	Empathy	14	28%	

Table 4.2 shows data collected from children through interviews and observation. This table displays the theme of emotional development in children. The empathy code, which indicates the emotional maturity of the children, accounts for 28% of the theme. Emotional Regulation in young kids is 12% and the lowest percentage in the theme. The highest percentage, at 38%, relates to the self-esteem and confidence displayed by children. The final code is of the fear and anxiety that they are plagued with in their homes, which is 22% of the theme. At 50.1%, Emotional Development dominates the themes in the children's interviews. The second theme for children's interviews is relevant to their Behavioural Outcomes. It consists of five codes with an overall percentage of 49.8%. The Aggression in children is shown to be 29% of the theme, while their Cooperation with others is 16.6%. The highest percentage is of the Complaint code at 37.5%, making it the dominant theme in this category. Only 4% of the theme is non-compliant code. The code for Withdrawal behaviours in children is 12.5% of the theme.

Figure 4.2: Children’s Emotional Development and Behavioural Outcomes

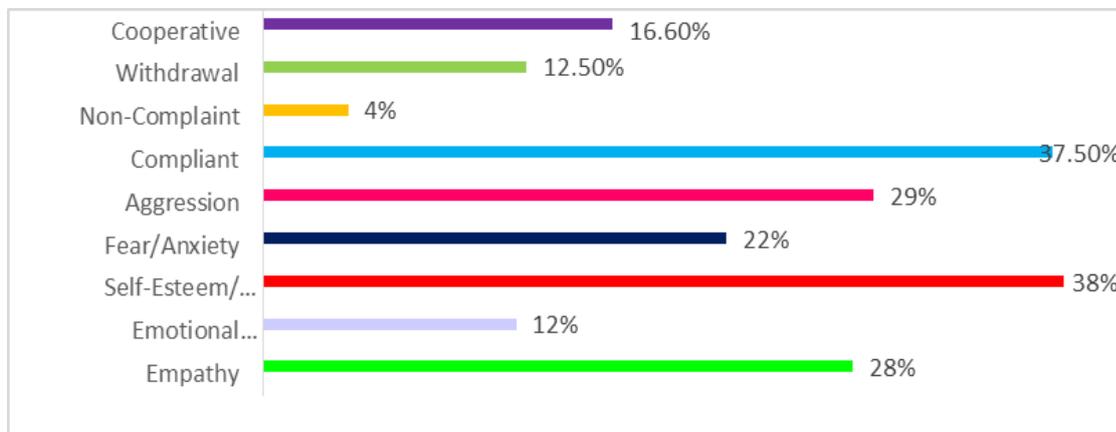


Figure 4.3: (Extract 1) Interview from Ten-Year-Old Boy

Question: What kind of rules do you have at home, and how do you feel about them?
Answer: Yes, there are some rules, like we cannot go out after sunset and we have to sleep before ten o'clock, but we are satisfied with these rules.

Question: How is your relationship with your siblings and your parents?
Answer: It's good that we play a lot. We love playing with each other.

Question: Which parent do you trust more to keep your secrets and why?
Answer: I share my secrets with my mother, as she never told anyone about them.

Question: When you make decisions, how much say do you think you have?
Answer: They decide for me most of the time.

Question: What are your thoughts on School?
Answer: I like my School. My teachers are very cooperative and friendly. I love my Friends; we play together, so I like my School.

Question: How do you make new friends and talk to new people?
Answer: I go first and talk to the people I like, asking them to be my friends.

Question: What inspires you most about your parents and why?
Answer: One thing that I admire most about my mother is that she has a big heart, I have made a lot of mistakes, but she doesn't punish me all the time when I make mistakes. And the thing that I like about my father is that he is very responsible, and I want to be like him.

Question: Would you prioritize personal relationships, such as those with loved ones or siblings, over fairness and justice in a conflict between a family member and someone outside the family? If so, why?
Answer: I will definitely take the side of the right person, even if my little sister, whom I love the most, is wrong; I will never be going to take her side because I believe we should correct them if we truly love them; I will make her realize that you are wrong and being wrong is not good.

Question: Are you satisfied with how your parents treat you daily and when you make a mistake?
Answer: Yes, I am satisfied with the way our parents treat me.

Question: What Qualities do you want your friend to have, and why are they important to you?
Answer: The qualities that I value the most are truthfulness and loyalty. I want two friends in my life: one like a mirror who never lies and the other like a shadow who never goes away.

Question: Is making mistakes good? If not, why?
Answer: Yes, making mistakes is good because we learn a lot from our mistakes, but making the same mistake again and again is not good.

Question: What do you wish your parents understood better about you?
Answer: Our parents should not compare us with other children because every person is not the same; some can do one thing in the best way, and others can do other things really well. If we are putting a lot of effort into achieving good percentages in our studies, we should be appreciated rather than criticized for not securing the first position in the class.

Question: What do you wish your parents understood better about you?
Answer: They already understand everything.

Question: How would you react if you think that someone is being unfair to you?
Answer: I will not be unfair as they are.

Question: If someone tries to start a fight with you, what do you do?
Answer: I will also fight with them.

Question: If your friend forgot to bring their lunch to school, would you share your lunch with

them?

Answer: If I will share my lunch with anyone, then what would I eat?

Question: If someone in your class gets hurt or is being bullied, what would you do?

Answer: I will not interfere.

Question: Can you tell me about a time when your parents helped you through a difficult situation?

Answer: Homework is the only difficult situation for me, and my mother always helps me with it.

Question: Can you think of a time when you solved a problem by yourself? How did you do it, and how did it make you feel?

Answer: No, I never solved any of my problems on my own.

Figure 4.4: (Extract 2) Interview from Nine-Year-Old Girl

Question: What kind of rules do you have at home, and how do you feel about them?

Answer: After Maghrib, I am not allowed to go outside. Secondly, I don't like doing my homework, but my mother says I have to do it, so I do. Quran class is also a must, and I enjoy it somewhat.

Question: How is your relationship with your siblings and your parents?

Answer: My only younger sister teases me a lot, but we fight a lot, so we fight a lot.

Question: Which parent do you trust more to keep your secrets and why?

Answer: Mother

Question: When you make decisions, how much say do you think you have?

Answer: I make decisions on my own when I have to buy something.

Question: What are your thoughts on school?

Answer: I love going to school, but home is much better because school has a lot of work.

Question: How do you make new friends and talk to new people?

Answer: Yes, I make new friends, but it takes me some time to make to do so.

Question: What inspires you most about your parents and why?

Answer: They play with me many games.

Question: Are you satisfied with the way your parents treat you in your daily life and when you make a mistake?

Answer: Yes, I am totally satisfied because my parents love and care for me a lot.

Question: What Qualities do you want your friend to have, and why are they important to you?

Answer: They should be joyful.

Question: Is making mistakes good? If not, why?

Answer: No, because my mother scolded and slapped me a lot.

Question: What do you wish your parents understood better about you?

Answer: They already understand everything.

Question: How would you react if you think that someone is being unfair to you?

Answer: I will not be unfair as they are.

Question: If someone tries to start a fight with you, what do you do?

Answer: I will also fight with them.

Question: If your friend forgot to bring their lunch to school, would you share your lunch with them?

Answer: If I will share my lunch with anyone, then what would I eat?

Question: If someone in your class gets hurt or is being bullied, what would you do?

Answer: I will not interfere.

Question: Can you tell me about a time when your parents helped you through a difficult situation?

Answer: Homework is the only difficult situation for me, and my mother always helps me with it.

Question: Can you think of a time when you solved a problem by yourself? How did you do it, and how did it make you feel?

Answer: No, I never solved any of my problems on my own.

Discussion

Through thematic analysis, this research examined the influence of parenting styles on children's behavioural and cognitive development, as well as investigating whether an authoritative or permissive style is predominant in Pakistani society for younger children. The first question asked parents about their parenting approach, which was designed to gauge their own perceptions of their parenting. The highest frequencies found were in favour of Authoritative parenting, which aligns with a previous study conducted in Nawabshah, where 56.2% of participants opted for this parenting style (Kalhor et al., 2024). The next questions in the parenting style theme were designed to gain insight into parenting style through actions in a disciplinary situation. While maximum answers showed consistency with the statements mentioned above, there were instances where a parent switched approaches. A father whose statement was in favour of the Permissive parenting style admitted to instinctively displaying anger and disappointment with the child, which fit more under the Authoritarian code. These questions revealed inconsistencies in the data, leaving more room for case-by-case interpretation. They also led the researchers to conclude that, in instances where expectations were not met, parents found it difficult to remain permissive and switched to a harsher response. Correlating parenting style, influence, and emotional development revealed that the highest percentages in the three themes were found in Authoritative parenting, which led to a high percentage of Cognitive development, in turn showing greater confidence and self-esteem. Oppositely, permissive parenting, while just as popular, showed high cognitive development but had little effect on confidence and self-esteem. The relevance of the Authoritative style and self-esteem was also discussed in a 2021 psychological study by Bibi et al. Moreover, Aggression in children was present in parents who opted for Authoritarian and Permissive parenting styles. There also appeared to be a relation between Criticism and Fear/Anxiety codes. In cases of immediate criticism, it led to fear and anxiety while sharing secrets and trusting parents, which was learned through child interviews. There were also certain withdrawal behaviours displayed by children whose parents applied Authoritarian parenting; this result was similar to Khanum et al. (2023), where authoritarian parenting led to social withdrawal and aggressive behaviour. Contrastingly, this research yielded withdrawal and low confidence in parents with Permissive attitudes as well.

Through data analysis and interpretation, it becomes clear that the greatest impact on parenting approaches stems from the parents' upbringings, as evident in their responses to questionnaires. When asked about the influence of their upbringing, out of twenty responders, fourteen responders agreed that they parent in the same way that they were raised by their parents. A father answered this question and said, "Yes, because I know myself because of my parents. I am able to become a good father due to their ways of upbringing and I am inspired by the way I brought up." On the other hand, three responders agreed that they are influenced by their upbringing, but they choose not to repeat the mistakes their parents made. On April 19th, 2025, a mother shared that she understood the drawbacks of her own mother and didn't repeat her mistakes with her son. Finally,

only two respondents vehemently denied that their upbringing had any influence on their parenting styles. Another influential aspect for parents was outside interference, as Pakistani society places a significant emphasis on social influences due to cultural traditions and family practices (Altaf et al., 2021). For this, the survey asked, "Do you think there are people that interfere with your parenting and step on your toes when you discipline your child?" A respondent in the questionnaire shared her thoughts on this: "Judgmental behaviour of society, relatives, and their interference in parenting that can sometimes interfere with parenting style." In another interesting twist, a couple gave opposing answers: the mother said, "In-laws at the start, and now my husband," while the father admitted, "Yes, my son's mother interferes at times." A previous study also touched on parents being in conflict with one another; it concluded that parents arguing and fighting in front of their children hurt their mental health, which led to anxiety and a lack of confidence (Aziz, 2025). Lastly, the roles of mothers and fathers in the Asian and Pakistani cultures differ in their level of parenting involvement. This was most highlighted when the parents were asked about the level of communication between the parent and child. Most mothers responded with maximum communication and availability, even those who were working outside the home. Only one mother responded to the contrary; "When we are free, we talk. I am more busy in doing household chores. So yes, not really enough talking."

On the other hand, the fathers gave less attention to their children daily. This is also highlighted in a previous study that examines the impact of Pakistan's patriarchal mindset (Bibi et al., 2021). The contradictory responses of some mothers and fathers help researchers understand how changing times have begun to alter the way parenting responsibilities are distributed. One father went as far as saying that he talks with his child "More than five times a day on weekdays and more than ten times on weekends."

Reviewing the findings of the research makes it clear that Pakistani parents are still heavily reliant on Diana Baumrind's three major parenting styles. The Gentle Parenting trend has not yet reached the masses, which is why parents tend to fit into the Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive categories. The most accepted and used approach is Authoritarian, with Permissive being a close second. When comparing with previous research, it shows that unlike in the past, when Authoritarian-Authoritative styles were more common (Kalhor et al., 2024), there has been an influx of permissive parenting styles. This is due to the growing importance that newer parents have given to warmth and open communication, as discussed before. While this research has linked parenting styles and cognitive development, there were enough scenarios that suggested the implications that perhaps the intelligence and confidence of Generation Alpha stem not only from their parents but also from the advancement of technology and fast-paced lifestyles. Therefore. It limits an aspect of the study where more than one factor could influence the children's skills. This study also shows the possibility of a time when stricter parenting might be fully replaced by a warmer and more relaxed approach, such as gentle parenting. The selection of parenting styles and the choice of different approaches according to the evolving personalities of children over time is also something worth studying through longitudinal research, which has not been done. The last aspect of data collection that played a role in limiting the study was instances during interviews when the researcher felt that the children were not being completely honest due to fear and anxiety regarding the repercussions of admitting something that might paint their parents in a negative light. This research contributes a new aspect to the growing body of studies in the field (Aziz, 2022; Kalhor et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2023), showing that increasing awareness of the subject has influenced Pakistani parents to be more mindful of the emotional, mental, and behavioural implications of their parenting styles.

Conclusion

The societal and cultural implications play a role in determining the method of child-rearing adopted by parents in Pakistan. This is compounded by many other factors that contribute to why parents behave the way they do regarding such a significant topic. By thematically analyzing the data in this research, it is concluded that patriarchal society and outside interference play a role in influencing parenting, even in cases where the parents themselves are aware of the gravity of their role in their child's life. The Parenting Style theme showed dominance over the Parenting Involvement theme, leading to the conclusion that there is still room for improvement in terms of parental involvement. The themes related to children were evident in the dominance, showing that while young ones exhibit a higher level of emotional maturity, the behavioural outcomes still leave much to be desired.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is significantly more awareness among parents regarding their parenting than the researchers had previously assumed. It shows promise for future generations that if more research becomes accessible to the public, it will aid them in determining the correct course of action based on information rooted in facts and the limited opinions of researchers. During analysis and interpretation, as answers were being revealed, new questions arose that have the potential to pave the way for further research. The importance of a father's role in shaping a child's personality is a notion worth exploring. In traditional societies such as Pakistan, what level of paternal involvement is considered too little, and is it possible that fathers in Pakistan are allowed to be satisfied with the bare minimum efforts? Another question that arose was whether, in two-income households, the demanding schedules of mothers affect their parenting, and if so, what impact this has on the child's development? This question is worth studying to determine if the negativity surrounding working mothers holds any logical validity.

Ultimately, this research aimed to find the root cause of parenting styles and their effects on children's growth in terms of behaviour and emotional maturity. By studying both sides of the family, parents and children, the authors have concluded exactly what motivates parents to adopt a certain style and seen how older, stricter and colder approaches have been replaced by more balanced ones. More and more adults are taking into account the significance of mental health, which is shown by the influx of permissive parenting that focuses solely on warmth and a lack of heavy expectations on the children. In conclusion, open communication is paving the way for healthier and more emotionally intelligent individuals, largely due to an evolved parenting style.

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