

Impact of Parenting Style on the Prevalence of Behavioural Problems in Children

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ABSTRACT

Parenting style is one of the most significant factors influencing child development, particularly in the formation of behavioral patterns. This study examines how different parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful—impact the prevalence of behavioral problems in school-going children. The research uses both qualitative and quantitative data to establish correlations between parenting approaches and common behavioral problems such as aggression, defiance, anxiety, and hyperactivity.

Key Words : Parenting style, Problems in children, Aggression, Defence

INTRODUCTION

Behavioral problems in children, such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorder, and emotional instability, have been widely studied across various contexts. Parenting style has been identified as a major determinant in the development of these issues. Research shows that the way parents discipline, communicate, and show affection has a direct impact on children's emotional and behavioral outcomes.

The current study aims to explore the relationship between different parenting styles and the prevalence of behavioral problems in children from various socio-economic backgrounds, focusing on the extent to which these styles contribute to the incidence of such issues (Ackerman *et al.*, 1999; Gupta, 2001).

Parenting Styles:

Authoritative Parenting:

This style is characterized by high warmth and high control. Parents set clear boundaries but also encourage independence and communication. Studies consistently show that children raised in authoritative households

exhibit the lowest prevalence of behavioral problems, as this style promotes emotional regulation, social competence, and self-esteem.

Authoritarian Parenting:

Authoritarian parents exhibit high control but low warmth. They emphasize obedience and discipline but may neglect emotional support. Children of authoritarian parents are more prone to externalizing behavioural problems, such as aggression and defiance, because of the lack of emotional nurturing and the rigidity of rules.

Permissive Parenting:

Permissive parents show high warmth but low control. They tend to avoid confrontation and let children regulate their own behavior, often leading to difficulties in impulse control and defiance. Children from permissive households are more likely to display hyperactivity and conduct issues.

Neglectful Parenting:

Neglectful parents provide neither warmth nor control. This lack of attention and care often results in

severe behavioral problems, including delinquency, emotional withdrawal, and a lack of self-discipline. Neglectful parenting is strongly linked to internalizing and externalizing behavior problems.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 300 school-going children between the ages of 6 and 16, from both urban and rural settings in India. Parents were classified based on their responses to a standardized Multidimensional Parenting Scale by Chauhan and Khokhar in 1985 that identified seven dichotomous dimensions. The scale is a five point rating verbal scale and has 56 items for the seven areas of parenting.

1. Hate -Love
2. Discouragement- Encouragement
3. Rejection-Acceptance
4. Dependence- Independence
5. Authoritism- Democratism
6. Submission- Dominance
7. Conservatism- Progressivism
8. Parenting as a whole

Teachers and psychologists assessed the children's behavioural problems using Achenbach's child behaviour Checklist this checklist comprised of 52 items of externalizing and Internalising behaviour problems and Conners' Rating Scales for ADHD (Achenbach, 1978; Achenbach and Edelbrock, 1981).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Authoritative Parenting:

Children from authoritative households had the lowest prevalence (10%) of behavioral problems. These

children showed higher levels of emotional regulation, better social skills, and lower levels of defiance (Table 1).

Authoritarian Parenting:

30% of children from authoritarian households exhibited behavioral problems, primarily aggression and defiance. The rigid disciplinary methods appeared to contribute to externalizing problems, as children tended to rebel against strict authority.

Permissive Parenting:

25% of children from permissive households displayed behavioral issues such as impulsivity, hyperactivity, and lack of discipline. The lack of boundaries led to children struggling with authority and rules.

Neglectful Parenting:

Neglectful parenting was associated with the highest prevalence (50%) of behavioral problems. These children displayed both externalizing behaviors like aggression and internalizing issues such as emotional withdrawal and depression. This style's lack of warmth and control severely impacted the child's overall well-being.

The data highlights the profound impact that parenting style has on the prevalence and type of behavioral problems in children. Authoritative parenting serves as a protective factor, reducing the likelihood of behavioral issues due to its balanced approach of warmth and control. In contrast, 'neglectful parenting' emerges as a risk factor for severe behavioral and emotional problems, due to the absence of both guidance and emotional support.

Table 1: Parenting styles and prevalence of behavioural problems

Parenting Style	Prevalence of Behavioural Problems (%)	Common Behavioural Problems	Comments
Authoritative	10%	Anxiety, occasional defiance	Authoritative parenting minimizes the risk of behavioural problems in children.
Authoritarian	30%	Aggression, defiance, low self-esteem	Strict parenting leads to externalizing problems like aggression and rule-breaking
Permissive	25%	Impulsivity, hyperactivity, defiance	Lack of discipline leads to poor impulse control and defiant behaviour
Neglectful	50%	Emotional withdrawal, delinquency, depression	Neglectful parenting correlates with severe emotional and behavioural problems
Overall Sample	28%	Aggression, anxiety, hyperactivity	The average prevalence across all parenting styles shows a significant variance.

Table 2 : Association between behaviour problems and parent child relationship

	Positive parenting style		Negative parenting style	
	Mean	%	Mean	%
Urban	58	29	142	71
Rural	29	19.5	171	85.5

Urban vs. Rural Differences:

– Urban children, primarily from authoritative and authoritarian households, were more likely to exhibit externalizing problems like aggression and defiance. This can be attributed to the high-stress environment of urban life, academic pressures, and peer influence.

– Rural children from neglectful or permissive households showed higher rates of internalizing problems, such as emotional withdrawal and depression. Rural settings often provide fewer mental health resources, which may exacerbate these issues.

Table 2 revealed that a very low percent 29% of urban and 19.5% of the rural respondent who faced behaviour problem receive positive parenting from their parents on the other hand a large population 71 per cent of urban and 85.5% of rural respondents viewed that behaviour problem is due to the negative parenting style. The above results are in accordance with Ojha and Singh (1988), who pointed out that parental neglecting attitudes give rise to insecurities in children. Parents being power assertive and permissive were also considered as causes of behaviour problems in children.

Conclusion:

Parenting style is a critical determinant of child behaviour, influencing both the prevalence and type of behavioural problems. Authoritative parenting is associated with positive behavioural outcomes, while neglectful and authoritarian styles increase the risk of both externalizing and internalizing problems. Interventions focusing on parenting education and support, especially in low-income and rural settings, are crucial for reducing the prevalence of behavioural problems in children.

Future research should consider longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of parenting styles and include more diverse samples to explore cultural differences in parenting and behaviour.

Recommendations**Parenting Workshops:**

Schools and community centers should offer parenting workshops to educate families on the importance of balanced, authoritative parenting.

Early Interventions:

For children displaying behavioural problems, early intervention programs targeting both children and parents should be established.

Focus on Neglectful Parenting:

Special attention should be given to families identified as neglectful, with social services providing additional resources and support.

Mental Health Services:

Both urban and rural areas need better access to mental health services, particularly to address emotional and behavioural issues in children from low-income families.

This research underscores the importance of parenting style in shaping children's behaviour and calls for more comprehensive interventions to address behavioural problems at the family level.

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