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## Original Research Article

## Study to determine the relationship between parenting style and adolescent self-esteem

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Parents are the basic sculptors of their child's future. There are three basic types of parenting styles - Authoritarian, Authoritative and permissive, and each parenting style has different bearing on child's nature and self-esteem. A high level of self-esteem comes handy when life goes badly so that one treats himself with tolerance and understanding at tough times of life.

**Materials and Methods:** This study was conducted on the adolescents and their parents attending the adolescent health clinic in a tertiary medical care hospital for various problems. Adolescents were interviewed using the Rosenberg questionnaire and their parents were interviewed using the Parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire and demographic data were collected. All data were tabulated and statistically analysed to find significant associations.

**Result:** Among them, 44.4% had high self-esteem, 35.2% had moderate self-esteem levels and 20.4% had low self-esteem. Regarding the parenting styles, 73.2% parents followed Authoritative parenting style, 20% followed Authoritarian and 6.8% followed Permissive style of parenting. Among adolescents receiving Authoritative parenting, 56.28% had high self-esteem levels, 30.05% had moderate and 13.66% had low self-esteem. Authoritative parenting was more common in mothers with higher levels of education ( $p=0.014$ ).

**Conclusion:** The results revealed positive influence of Authoritative parenting on self-esteem level of adolescents and Authoritarian parenting was associated with lower levels of self-esteem. Formal education of the mother is not associated with choosing appropriate type of parenting.

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## 1. Introduction

In the Indian society, parents are the primary caretakers of their children. They are the most influential people in a child's life as most children are dependent upon their parents for food, shelter, protection, finances and companionship for the first 18 years of their lives. Parent's nature of interaction with their child, discipline and punishments, dealing with child's emotions and behaviour; all have an impact on the

developing child. The example set by the parent is the basis of development of many social skills and personality traits in children.

Parenting, in simple terms, is the way a parent raises his child. This aspect was first discussed in the Parenting Style Theory created by Diana Baumrind in 1966 in which she described two orthogonal constructs of parenting - Demandingness and Responsiveness.<sup>1</sup> Demandingness refers to the extent to which parents show supervision, maturity demands and control in their parenting behaviour. Responsiveness refers to the level to which parents show

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their children effective warmth and acceptance, provide support and communicate with them. Based on these two dimensions, she identified 3 basic types of parenting – Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive.<sup>2</sup>

Parenting styles are affected by many factors like socio-economic and political system of the region, demographic features and culture of an area. These factors provide guidelines and limitations to parenting. Child's behaviour and personality develops depending on the environment they grow. As the child develops he observes his parents and internalizes their trait as their own. One such building block in their developing personality is Self-esteem which is heavily influenced by parental attitudes and behaviour. The alarming rise of psychological problems like depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies in today's youth<sup>3</sup> raises the concern whether as a parent we can help our children to have a stable and better future.

Self-esteem, invented by psychologist William James, refers to how a person identifies or evaluates his/her own definition of self. "Self" is a word with descriptive concept. It is a word that refers to the feeling about how one identifies himself or herself. On the other hand "Esteem" is an evaluative concept; how valuable one considers oneself. Self-esteem has significant impact on our daily interaction with our fellow family members. If one feels bad about oneself he will not be able to perform his duties towards other members of the family. The worse they feel about themselves the worse they will treat each other and it will further break their self esteem and this vicious circle thus continues.

Self-esteem is needed for self-identification and one's success in family and professional life also.

Self-esteem of a person develops very early from his or her family environment and it is hugely influenced by the behaviour one receives from his or her parent. To ascertain the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem of adolescents, we conducted this study.

### 1.1. Primary objective

To find out the relationship between different parenting styles and levels of self-esteem of adolescents.

### 1.2. Secondary objective

1. To identify the pattern of parenting styles of the patients attending adolescent health clinic of a tertiary medical care centre.
2. To identify the effects of different socio-demographic factors like parent's age, parent's education, number of siblings, socio-economic status on parenting styles.
3. To identify the self-esteem levels among adolescents attending adolescent health clinic of a tertiary medical care centre.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study was an observational cross-sectional study in the adolescent health clinic of a tertiary care Medical College Hospital in eastern India for the period of one year. All the adolescents aged 10-19 years attending the adolescent health clinic with their parents were included in this study after taking informed consent form the parents and assent from the adolescent. Those children who do not live with their parents or having some chronic disease were excluded from the study. This study was approved by ethical committee of the institute. Sample size was calculated 246 by taking the confidence interval 95% and marginal error 5% and assuming adolescent constitute 20% of Indian population.

Adolescents were asked to fill up the 'Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire', a pretested questionnaire comprising of 10 items which were(was) rated on a 4-point likert scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree : with possible total scores ranging from 0 to 30. Higher scores correspond to higher self-esteem levels. According to the scores obtained, self-esteem was divided into 3 categories – high (score 21-30), moderate (score 11-20) and low (score 0-10).

Parents were asked to fill up 'Parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire' (PSDQ), which consists of 30 questions rated by the parents on a 5-point likert scale ranging from never to always, and according to their responses they were sub-grouped into their predominant parenting style of Authoritarian, Authoritative and Permissive.

Both the Questionnaires were prepared in English and Bengali both. Cross-cultural translation guidelines recommended by International Quality of Life Assessment Project was used in order to translate the whole questionnaire from English to Bengali. Forward translation was done independently by three bilingual translators and minor differences were solved by the research team. The forward version was then back translated by two other bilingual translators and in a pre-final phase, the questionnaire was given to 10 people, who were encouraged to make comments and suggestions on the clarity of the wording, difficulties. Changes were made as per suggestions.

Different Socio-demographic parameters were also recorded from the parents like age of the parents, educational level of the parents, socio-economic status of the family. Education levels were classified in four categories like illiterate, primary school (1 to 4 class), middle school (class 4 to 8), high school (class 8 to 12), higher education (study beyond higher secondary examination). Socio-economic status of the family was classified using modified Kuppuswamy scale.

The data collected were analyzed statistically as appropriate. Categorical variables were expressed as

Number of patients and percentage of patients and compared across the groups using Pearson's Chi Square test for Independence of Attributes. The statistical software SPSS version 20 has been used for the analysis. An alpha level of 5% has been taken, i.e. if any p value is less than 0.05 it has been considered as significant.

### 3. Results

250 Adolescents (124 males and 126 females) were included in this study. Among them, 44.4% had high self-esteem (55.2% males and 33.6% females), 35.2% had moderate self-esteem levels (27.2% males and 43.2% females) and 20.4% had low self-esteem (17.6% males and 23.2% females) ( $p = 0.002$ ). Regarding the parenting styles, 73.2% parents followed Authoritative parenting style, 20% followed Authoritarian and 6.8% followed Permissive style of parenting. (Table 1)

Comparison of self-esteem levels with the parenting style followed showed that among adolescents receiving Authoritative parenting, 56.28% had high self-esteem levels, 30.05% had moderate and 13.66% had low self-esteem. Among the adolescents receiving Authoritarian parenting, 12% had high self-esteem, 44% had moderate and 44% had low self-esteem. Among the adolescents with Permissive parenting, 11.6% had high self-esteem, 64.71% had moderate and 23.53% had low self-esteem. By chi square test the p value was calculated to be  $<0.001$  and hence the association between parenting style and self-esteem levels of adolescents was found to be significant. (Table 2)

Comparison of socio-demographic parameters with the parenting styles in our study brought up a few more significant associations. One such association was between parenting styles and number of children in the family, which showed both Authoritarian (48%) and Permissive (52.94%) parenting were more common in families with a single child. Authoritative parenting was more common (73.33%) in case of family with two children. Authoritarian parenting was more common (26%) among fathers of older age-groups ( $>50$  years) ( $p=0.014$ ), however no such association could be established with mother's age ( $p=0.270$ ). Authoritative parenting was more common in mothers with higher levels of education ( $p=0.014$ ), however there was no relationship with fathers' education ( $p=0.149$ ). (Table 2).

Type of parenting was not statically significantly associated with gender of the child though adolescent girls had lower self esteem than boys. (Fig 1)

### 4. Discussion

To cope up in today's highly competitive world, a high level of self-esteem is helpful in facing the twists and turns of life, to accept challenges and criticism. The basis of self-

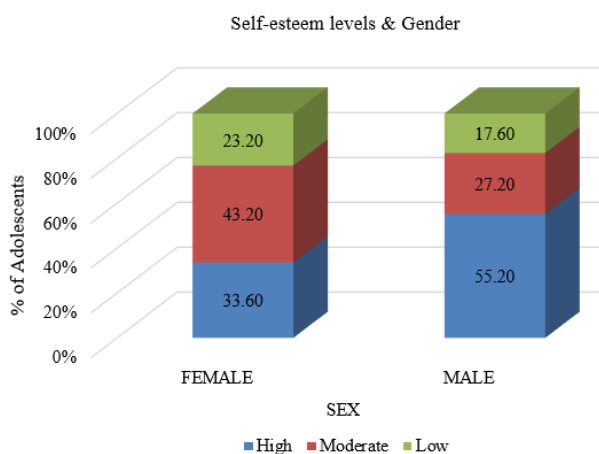
**Table 1:** Showing distribution of different factors in the study population

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender distribution	Male	126	50.4
	Female	124	49.6
Number of siblings	1	75	30.0
	2	158	63.2
	3	17	6.8
Mother's Age	30-39	70	28.0
	40-49	179	71.6
	50- 59	1	0.4
Father's Age	30-39	12	4.8
	40-49	219	87.6
	50- 59	19	7.6
Mother's Education	Illiterate	13	5.2
	Primary school	70	28.0
	Middle school	89	35.6
	High school	61	24.4
	Higher education	17	6.8
Father's Education	Illiterate	2	0.8
	Primary school	20	8
	Middle school	59	23.6
	High school	103	41.2
	Higher education	66	26.4
Kuppuswamy Scale	Upper class	11	4.4
	Upper middle class	88	35.2
	Lower middle class	106	42.4
	Upper lower class	36	14.4
	Lower class	9	3.6
Self-Esteem Levels	High	111	44.4
	Moderate	88	35.2
	Low	51	20.4
Parenting Style	Authoritarian parenting	5	20.0
	Authoritative parenting	183	73.2
	Permissive parenting	17	6.8

esteem is laid in a child by his/her parents, children observe and internalize their parents' traits as their own. Results showed that about one-fifth of the adolescents had low self-esteem, more commonly among the female adolescents. This gender difference in self-esteem is important in the Indian context as differential treatment is believed to be shown towards sons and daughters by their parents. However studies conducted by Lau and Leung (1992) on Chinese adolescents<sup>4</sup> and by Wigfield et al. on 1850 young adults<sup>5</sup> also found higher scores of self-esteem for males. This may be due to the fact that peer influence of body image dissatisfaction can affect self esteem in adolescent girls.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2:** Showing relationship of different factors with parenting style

Gender	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Permissive	P value
Male	22(44)	94(51.37)	9(52.94)	0.633
Female	28(56)	89(48.63)	8(47.06)	
Number of siblings				
1	24(48)	42(22.95)	9(52.94)	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
2	17(34)	135(73.77)	6(35.29)	
3 or more	9(18)	6(3.28)	2(11.76)	
Mother's Age				
30-39	13(26)	54(29.51)	3(17.65)	0.270
40-49	36(72)	129(70.49)	14(82.35)	
50- 59	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)	
Father's Age				
31-40	2(4)	9(4.92)	1(5.88)	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
41-50	35(70)	168(91.8)	16(94.12)	
51-60	13(26)	6(3.28)	0(0)	
Mother's Education				
Illiterate	6(12)	6(3.28)	1(5.88)	<b>0.014</b>
Primary school certificate	21(42)	43(23.5)	6(35.29)	
Middle school certificate	14(28)	67(36.61)	8(47.06)	
High school certificate	7(14)	52(28.42)	2(11.76)	
Higher education	2(4)	15(8.2)	0(0)	
Father's Education				
Illiterate	2(4)	0(0)	0(0)	0.149
Primary school certificate	5(10)	14(7.65)	1(5.88)	
Middle school certificate	16(32)	39(21.31)	4(23.53)	
High school certificate	17(34)	79(43.17)	7(41.18)	
Higher education	10(20)	51(27.87)	5(29.41)	
Socio-Economic Status by Kuppuswamy Scale				
Upper class	2(4)	9(4.92)	0(0)	0.301
Upper middle class	14(28)	68(37.16)	6(35.29)	
Lower middle class	19(38)	78(42.62)	9(52.94)	
Upper lower class	11(22)	24(13.11)	1(5.88)	
Lower class	4(8)	4(2.19)	1(5.88)	
Self-Esteem Levels				
High	6(12)	103(56.28)	2(11.76)	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
Moderate	22(44)	55(30.05)	11(64.71)	
Low	22(44)	25(13.66)	4(23.53)	

**Fig. 1:** Showing self-esteem levels in males & females separately.

Next in our study we found that authoritative parenting is associated with higher self-esteem among adolescents, followed by Permissive parenting and Authoritarian parenting respectively. Studies also have shown that authoritative parenting associated with higher self esteem in adolescent population. Some studies have shown that indulgent parenting associated with more self esteem than authoritative parenting.<sup>7</sup> In an Indian study it has been demonstrated that there is no significant difference between permissive and authoritative parenting in case of self esteem.<sup>8</sup> But both studies have confirmed that authoritarian parenting is associated with worst outcome. Many researches around the world showed beneficial effects of Authoritative parenting towards school performance and academic achievement in adolescents.<sup>9,10</sup> This improved academic performance can help to build strong self esteem in adolescent. Low self esteem can be associated

with poor mental and physical health<sup>11</sup> which can also influence academic performance negatively. However, it varies between individuals with different background and growing-up conditions.<sup>12</sup> Parenting practices have different meanings and implications for children depending on socio-cultural context in which these practices occur. A study conducted on Asian students has shown that authoritative parenting is negatively associated with school performance.<sup>13</sup> Another study conducted on Korean American adolescents have shown that 74% does not fit into any classic type of parenting but in the rest of the cases authoritative fathers did not do well than permissive fathers.<sup>14</sup> Another study have shown that adolescents with authoritarian parenting scores well in obedience and conformity but poor on self conception.<sup>15</sup> Adolescent adjustment also varies with parenting style and authoritative parenting is better than neglectful parenting in this regard.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand some studies have showed Asian and African students have low self-esteem but their academic performance and psychological adjustment improves due to authoritarian parenting style.<sup>17,18</sup> But a recent study conducted in India by Sahithya et.al showed that authoritative parenting is associated with better outcome in Indian children similar to other western countries, though both having huge socio-cultural difference.<sup>19</sup> In our study we have found that authoritative parenting is more commonly practiced in today's Indian family. In a study conducted in Arab population demonstrated that first born are raised more with permissive type of parenting, male are raised with more authoritarian type but female are raised with more authoritative type of parenting.<sup>20</sup> In our study we also found that different social factors like number of siblings, father's age, mother's education have significant influence on parenting. A study conducted on Chinese immigrant mothers have shown that more family support is associated with more authoritative type of parenting.<sup>21</sup> A Korean study conducted by SiungHee Nam also have shown that mother's employment, mother's age, parenting stress, and social support were significantly related to mother's parenting style.<sup>22</sup>

From the above discussion it is clear that different type of parenting affects adolescent self-esteem differently in different part of the world. So it is important to identify proper parenting technique for our population. On the other hand factors associated with appropriate type of parenting needs to be identified and promoted. So this study was designed to find proper parenting technique for parents of Indian Subcontinent to build adequate self esteem in their children which came out to be authoritative parenting.

## 5. Conclusion

Our study concluded that Authoritative parenting is associated with higher self-esteem level among adolescents.

## 6. Limitations of Study

Number of Permissive parents were very less in our study. Further studies with larger numbers of Permissive parents need to be conducted to support the results obtained in our study. Different psychological factors can influence parenting style they are not included in this present study.

## 7. Conflicts of Interest

All contributing authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## 8. Source of Funding

None.

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