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## *THE ROLE OF PARENTING STYLES IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT: PSYCHOLOGICAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES*

**Dr. Javed Tariq**

*Sociologist, University of Karachi.*

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### **Abstract:**

*Parenting styles have a profound impact on a child's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral development. Rooted in Baumrind's typology—authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful—these styles influence a wide range of outcomes, including self-esteem, academic performance, social competence, and psychological well-being. This article reviews key theories and empirical studies that link parenting approaches to developmental trajectories from early childhood through adolescence. It also explores how cultural, socioeconomic, and contextual factors shape parenting practices. Findings emphasize the significance of responsive and supportive parenting for fostering optimal child development, while also highlighting the potential risks associated with inconsistent or harsh parenting.*

**Keywords:** *Parenting styles, child development, authoritative parenting, behavioral outcomes, psychological development, socialization, attachment, discipline, parenting practices*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Parental influence plays a critical role in shaping children's developmental paths. Diana Baumrind's seminal research (1966) introduced a widely accepted framework for classifying parenting into four major styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. These classifications are based on dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness, which together predict a variety of cognitive, emotional, and social outcomes in children (Baumrind, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). This paper aims to analyze how different parenting styles affect developmental outcomes, drawing from cross-cultural studies, longitudinal research, and psychological theory.

Parenting plays a crucial role as a determinant of child development, shaping children's emotional, social, and cognitive growth. The quality and style of parental interactions significantly influence

a child's adjustment, behavior, and overall well-being. Understanding different parenting approaches helps clarify how family environments contribute to developmental outcomes.

One of the most influential frameworks in the study of parenting is Baumrind's typology, which categorizes parenting styles into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and later, neglectful. Baumrind's theory is grounded in developmental psychology and emphasizes dimensions of parental responsiveness and demandingness. This typology provides a structured lens to examine how varying combinations of warmth and control impact children's developmental trajectories.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of different parenting styles, as defined by Baumrind, on child developmental outcomes. By exploring this relationship, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of effective parenting practices and inform interventions that support healthy child development. The significance of this research lies in its potential to guide parents, educators, and policymakers in fostering environments conducive to positive growth.

## **2. Parenting Styles Defined**

Baumrind's typology identifies four primary parenting styles, differentiated by two key dimensions: responsiveness (the degree of warmth and support) and demandingness (the degree of behavioral control and expectations).

**Authoritative:** This style is characterized by high responsiveness and high demandingness. Authoritative parents are nurturing and supportive while maintaining clear and consistent expectations for behavior. They encourage autonomy but set firm boundaries, fostering a balance that promotes healthy child development.

**Authoritarian:** Defined by low responsiveness and high demandingness, authoritarian parents enforce strict rules and expect obedience without providing much warmth or feedback. Their approach emphasizes discipline and control, often relying on punishment rather than explanation.

**Permissive:** Permissive parents exhibit high responsiveness but low demandingness. They are affectionate and indulgent, often avoiding the enforcement of rules or consistent boundaries. This style tends to prioritize the child's freedom and expression over regulation.

**Neglectful:** Characterized by low responsiveness and low demandingness, neglectful parents provide minimal involvement, guidance, or support. This lack of attention and control can lead to adverse developmental outcomes due to insufficient emotional and behavioral regulation.

## **3. Developmental Domains Influenced by Parenting**

Parenting styles profoundly impact multiple domains of child development, shaping cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social outcomes.

**Cognitive Outcomes**

Parental engagement and discipline influence children's academic performance and executive function, which includes skills such as attention control, problem-solving, and working memory. For instance, authoritative parenting, with its balance of support and structure, is often linked to better academic achievement and enhanced cognitive regulation.

**Emotional Outcomes**

Parenting also plays a crucial role in children's self-esteem and emotional regulation. Responsive and supportive parenting fosters a positive self-concept and helps children learn to manage their emotions effectively. Conversely, neglectful or overly harsh parenting can undermine emotional well-being, leading to difficulties in coping with stress and negative emotions.

**Behavioral Outcomes**

Behaviorally, parenting affects levels of aggression, compliance, and autonomy in children. Authoritarian parenting, characterized by strict control, may reduce compliance but increase aggression or rebelliousness, while permissive parenting might lead to lower behavioral regulation. Authoritative parenting typically promotes self-discipline and autonomy, encouraging children to behave responsibly while developing independence.

**Social Development**

Finally, parenting influences peer relationships, empathy, and communication skills. Warm and responsive parenting nurtures social competence and the ability to form healthy relationships. Children raised with consistent emotional support tend to exhibit greater empathy and effective interpersonal communication, which are essential for social integration and cooperation.

**4. Theoretical Foundations**

The study of parenting and its influence on child development draws extensively on several foundational psychological theories. These theoretical frameworks provide a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which parenting behaviors shape children's cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral outcomes. Three pivotal theories—Attachment Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory—offer complementary perspectives on the dynamic relationship between parents and children.

**Attachment Theory**

Attachment theory, originally developed by John Bowlby (1988) and empirically supported by Mary Ainsworth (1978), is a cornerstone for understanding the emotional and relational dimensions of parenting. Bowlby conceptualized attachment as an innate, evolutionary mechanism through which infants form strong emotional bonds with caregivers to ensure survival. These early bonds create an internal working model that guides children's expectations about relationships and their own worthiness of love and care.

Ainsworth's seminal work expanded this theory by identifying distinct patterns of attachment—secure, avoidant, ambivalent, and disorganized—through her “Strange Situation” paradigm. Secure attachment, fostered by sensitive and responsive parenting, equips children with the confidence to explore their environment, regulate emotions effectively, and develop empathy and trust in others. This security serves as a protective factor against later psychological difficulties.

Conversely, inconsistent or neglectful caregiving can lead to insecure attachments, which are linked with emotional dysregulation, anxiety, and difficulties in forming healthy social bonds. For example, children with avoidant attachment may suppress emotional expression and avoid intimacy, whereas ambivalently attached children may exhibit heightened anxiety and dependency. Disorganized attachment, often a result of trauma or neglect, can predispose children to severe emotional and behavioral problems.

Attachment theory thus underscores the critical role of early parenting quality in shaping children's socio-emotional development and lays the groundwork for interventions aimed at promoting secure caregiving environments.

### **Social Learning Theory**

Albert Bandura's social learning theory (1977) provides a powerful framework for understanding how children acquire behaviors, attitudes, and social norms through observational learning. Bandura emphasized that learning is not merely a product of direct reinforcement but also occurs vicariously by observing the actions and consequences experienced by others—primarily parents and caregivers.

Within the parenting context, children model behaviors such as emotional regulation, aggression, empathy, and communication based on parental examples. Authoritative parents, who demonstrate warmth, self-control, and effective problem-solving, offer models that children tend to imitate, fostering prosocial behavior and adaptive coping skills. Conversely, authoritarian or neglectful parenting may model aggression, withdrawal, or poor emotional regulation, which children may replicate in their own interactions.

Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism further highlights the bidirectional influence between children and their environment. Children's behaviors can shape parental responses, creating dynamic feedback loops that reinforce certain patterns of interaction. Moreover, social learning theory accounts for cognitive processes such as attention, retention, and motivation, which mediate the extent to which observed behaviors are internalized and enacted.

This theory also explains the role of reinforcement and punishment in shaping behavior, illuminating why consistent parenting practices aligned with clear expectations and positive feedback tend to promote desirable child outcomes.

## **Ecological Systems Theory**

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) broadens the lens of child development by situating parenting within a complex matrix of environmental contexts that interact to influence development. According to this model, the child exists at the center of nested systems:

The microsystem includes immediate environments such as family, school, and peer groups where direct interactions occur. Parenting behaviors operate primarily within this microsystem.

The mesosystem refers to connections between microsystems, for example, how parental involvement in school influences child outcomes.

The exosystem encompasses external settings that indirectly affect the child, such as parents' workplaces or community resources.

The macrosystem includes broader cultural values, economic conditions, and societal norms that shape parenting beliefs and practices.

Finally, the chronosystem captures the dimension of time, reflecting how developmental transitions and sociohistorical events influence the individual's environment and experiences.

Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasizes that parenting cannot be fully understood in isolation but must be examined within these overlapping systems. For instance, cultural values embedded in the macrosystem may shape parental expectations around discipline, autonomy, and emotional expression. Economic stressors in the exosystem can impact parental availability and emotional resources. Likewise, policy changes or technological advancements within the chronosystem may affect family dynamics and child development over time.

This ecological perspective calls for a holistic approach to parenting research and intervention, acknowledging that supporting positive child outcomes involves addressing not only parental behaviors but also the broader social, cultural, and institutional factors that influence families.

## **5. Empirical Evidence and Longitudinal Findings**

A robust body of empirical research, including longitudinal studies, has consistently demonstrated the significant impact of parenting styles on various aspects of child and adolescent development. These studies offer compelling evidence regarding the differential outcomes associated with Baumrind's typology of parenting styles, highlighting the enduring influence of early parenting on academic achievement, emotional well-being, and behavioral patterns.

### **Impact of Authoritative Parenting on Academic and Emotional Success**

Authoritative parenting, characterized by high responsiveness and high demandingness, is widely regarded as the most beneficial style for promoting positive developmental outcomes. Steinberg et al. (1994) conducted a landmark longitudinal study that tracked adolescents over time to assess the effects of parenting styles on academic performance and emotional adjustment. Their findings

revealed that adolescents raised by authoritative parents consistently exhibited higher levels of academic achievement, better school engagement, and enhanced psychological well-being compared to peers exposed to other parenting styles.

The study attributed these positive outcomes to the supportive yet structured environment fostered by authoritative parents. Such parents set clear expectations while providing emotional support, which cultivates self-discipline, intrinsic motivation, and effective coping strategies. Adolescents in authoritative households also reported higher self-esteem and lower levels of depressive symptoms, underscoring the protective role of this parenting approach.

### **Consequences of Authoritarian and Permissive Parenting Styles**

Research by Lamborn et al. (1991) further elucidates the distinct developmental trajectories associated with authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. Their longitudinal analysis demonstrated that authoritarian parenting—marked by low responsiveness and high demandingness—often led to outcomes such as reduced social competence, increased anxiety, and lower academic motivation. Adolescents subjected to authoritarian control frequently exhibited compliance driven by fear or obligation rather than internalized values, potentially fostering resentment or rebellious behavior.

In contrast, permissive parenting, defined by high responsiveness but low demandingness, was linked to difficulties with self-regulation and behavioral problems. Lamborn and colleagues found that adolescents from permissive homes tended to display higher rates of impulsivity, poor academic performance, and increased engagement in risky behaviors. The lack of consistent boundaries and enforcement of rules appeared to undermine the development of responsibility and self-control.

### **Role of Neglectful Parenting in Adolescent Risk-Taking Behaviors**

Neglectful parenting, characterized by low responsiveness and low demandingness, has been consistently associated with negative developmental outcomes, particularly in adolescence. Simons and Conger (2007) provided compelling longitudinal evidence linking neglectful parenting to elevated risk-taking behaviors, including substance abuse, delinquency, and early sexual activity.

Their research suggested that the absence of parental involvement and emotional support creates a void that adolescents may fill by seeking acceptance and stimulation from potentially harmful peer groups or activities. The lack of monitoring and guidance also reduces the likelihood that adolescents will develop effective decision-making skills or internalized moral standards.

Moreover, neglectful parenting has been correlated with increased psychological distress, including symptoms of depression and anxiety, which may further exacerbate risk behaviors as coping mechanisms. These findings highlight the critical need for parental engagement as a protective factor during adolescence, a developmental period marked by increasing autonomy and vulnerability.

## 6. Moderating and Mediating Factors

While Baumrind's parenting styles provide a valuable framework for understanding parental influence on child development, empirical evidence highlights that the effects of these styles are not uniform across all contexts. Various moderating and mediating factors—including culture, socioeconomic status, parental mental health, and child temperament—play critical roles in shaping how parenting practices translate into developmental outcomes.

### Culture and Ethnicity

Cultural norms and ethnic backgrounds profoundly influence parenting beliefs, values, and behaviors, thereby moderating the impact of parenting styles on child development. Chao (1994) argued that the authoritative parenting style, widely associated with positive outcomes in Western populations, may manifest differently or have varied effects in non-Western cultural contexts. For example, in some Asian American families, a style characterized by high control and strictness—resembling authoritarianism—may coexist with warmth and support, fostering positive academic and social outcomes.

Chao's concept of "training" (*guan*) in Chinese parenting emphasizes parental involvement, guidance, and high expectations, which can be culturally adaptive and beneficial despite appearing authoritarian by Western standards. This suggests that cultural context shapes both parenting behaviors and children's interpretations of those behaviors, highlighting the necessity of culturally sensitive approaches in parenting research and interventions.

### Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status (SES) acts as another critical moderator of parenting effects. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) demonstrated that families with higher SES generally have greater access to resources, education, and support systems that facilitate authoritative parenting practices. Conversely, low-SES families often face increased stressors such as financial instability, neighborhood violence, and limited social support, which can undermine parents' ability to provide consistent warmth and structure.

Moreover, the impact of certain parenting styles may differ depending on SES. For instance, authoritarian parenting in economically disadvantaged contexts may serve as a protective mechanism, promoting compliance and safety in high-risk environments. However, prolonged exposure to high stress and inadequate parental support can exacerbate adverse outcomes, including behavioral problems and emotional distress.

These findings underscore the importance of considering socioeconomic factors when evaluating parenting styles and designing supportive policies and interventions tailored to diverse family circumstances.

## Parental Mental Health

Parental mental health is a significant mediating factor influencing the quality of parenting and its effects on children. Parents experiencing depression, anxiety, or other psychological difficulties may struggle with emotional availability, consistency, and responsiveness, which are crucial components of effective parenting.

For example, maternal depression has been linked to increased risk of neglectful or inconsistent parenting, which in turn predicts adverse emotional and behavioral outcomes in children. Additionally, parental stress and psychopathology can reduce the capacity for positive engagement and increase the likelihood of harsh disciplinary practices.

Interventions aimed at improving parental mental health can therefore have cascading benefits for child development by enhancing parenting quality and reducing the transmission of risk.

## Child Temperament

Finally, child temperament—innate differences in emotional reactivity, self-regulation, and sociability—mediates how children respond to various parenting styles. Some children are more sensitive or reactive and may be more affected by parental behaviors, while others exhibit resilience regardless of parenting style.

For instance, a child with a difficult temperament, characterized by high irritability and low adaptability, may require more patient and structured parenting to thrive. Authoritative parenting, with its balance of warmth and control, often effectively meets the needs of such children by providing clear expectations alongside emotional support.

Conversely, permissive parenting may fail to provide the necessary guidance for children with challenging temperaments, leading to increased behavioral issues. This interaction highlights the importance of tailoring parenting approaches to individual child characteristics to optimize developmental outcomes.

## 7. Parenting in the Digital Age

The rapid integration of digital technologies into daily life has profoundly transformed the landscape of parenting. As children increasingly engage with screens for education, entertainment, and social interaction, parents face new challenges and opportunities in guiding healthy digital habits. This section explores two critical aspects of contemporary parenting: screen time regulation and digital monitoring, and the impact of parental modeling of technology use.

### Screen Time Regulation and Digital Monitoring

With the proliferation of smartphones, tablets, gaming consoles, and social media platforms, managing children's screen time has become a central parenting concern. Excessive or unregulated screen exposure has been linked to a range of negative outcomes, including impaired sleep, reduced physical activity, and increased risk of anxiety and attention difficulties.

In response, parents adopt various strategies to regulate screen use, including setting time limits, enforcing device-free zones or periods (e.g., during meals or before bedtime), and supervising content consumption. Research indicates that authoritative parenting styles, characterized by clear rules balanced with warmth and communication, tend to be most effective in promoting responsible screen habits and mitigating adverse effects.

Digital monitoring tools, such as parental control software and activity tracking apps, provide parents with mechanisms to oversee online activities and restrict inappropriate content. While these tools offer benefits for safety and boundary-setting, they also raise questions about privacy, autonomy, and trust between parents and children. Effective parenting in the digital age involves negotiating these tensions by fostering open dialogue and educating children about safe and balanced technology use.

### **Impact of Parental Modeling in Technology Use**

Parental behavior around technology serves as a powerful model that shapes children's attitudes and habits toward digital media. Children tend to imitate their parents' screen use patterns, including duration, content preferences, and emotional responses to technology.

Parents who exhibit balanced and mindful technology use—such as prioritizing face-to-face interaction, demonstrating self-regulation, and using devices for productive purposes—can foster similar positive behaviors in their children. Conversely, parental overuse or compulsive screen behaviors may inadvertently normalize excessive or distracted technology engagement, undermining efforts to establish healthy digital boundaries.

Parental modeling also extends to the emotional climate surrounding technology use. For example, parents who manage digital frustrations calmly and set clear expectations help children develop better self-regulation and digital citizenship skills. This modeling supports children in navigating the complex social and ethical dimensions of online interactions.

## **8. Policy and Practical Implications**

Understanding the profound influence of parenting on child development underscores the importance of supportive policies and practical interventions aimed at enhancing parenting capacities. This section discusses key areas where policy initiatives and professional practice can promote effective parenting, improve child outcomes, and address emerging challenges.

### **Parenting Education and Support Programs**

One of the most direct approaches to strengthening parenting is through education and support programs that provide caregivers with knowledge, skills, and resources. These programs often focus on enhancing parenting styles—encouraging authoritative approaches characterized by warmth and consistent discipline—and equipping parents with strategies to manage behavioral challenges, emotional regulation, and communication.

Community-based parenting workshops, online courses, and home visitation programs have shown effectiveness in improving parenting practices, especially in high-risk or underserved populations. For example, programs such as the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) and Incredible Years emphasize skill-building in positive reinforcement, setting boundaries, and fostering emotional connection.

Policy efforts should aim to increase accessibility and cultural relevance of these programs, tailoring content to diverse family backgrounds and needs. Funding and integration with healthcare, education, and social services sectors can enhance reach and sustainability.

### **Early Intervention Strategies**

Early childhood is a critical window for intervention, as parenting behaviors during this period profoundly influence developmental trajectories. Early intervention programs targeting at-risk families—such as those facing socioeconomic challenges, parental mental health issues, or adverse childhood experiences—can mitigate potential negative outcomes.

Interventions might include mental health support for parents, parenting coaching, and resources for child development monitoring. By addressing parenting challenges early, these strategies can prevent the escalation of behavioral and emotional problems and foster resilience.

Policies promoting universal screening for parenting stress and child developmental concerns in pediatric and educational settings can facilitate timely referrals to intervention services. Additionally, supporting parental leave policies and childcare access contributes indirectly by reducing stress and improving parent-child interactions.

### **Implications for Educators, Psychologists, and Social Workers**

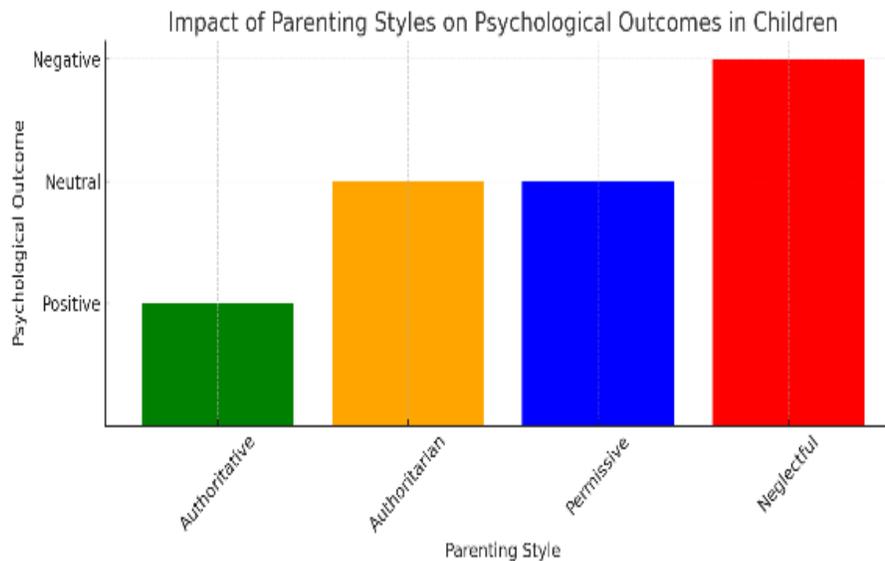
Professionals working with children and families play a pivotal role in supporting effective parenting. Educators can incorporate parent engagement initiatives, provide guidance on developmentally appropriate expectations, and facilitate communication between home and school. Psychologists and counselors offer assessment and intervention for parenting difficulties and child behavioral issues, often integrating family systems approaches.

Social workers connect families with resources and advocate for supportive services, especially in vulnerable populations. Training these professionals in the nuances of parenting styles and their developmental impacts enables them to tailor interventions effectively.

Interdisciplinary collaboration among educators, mental health professionals, and social service providers enhances comprehensive support for families. Furthermore, professional development on culturally sensitive practices ensures responsiveness to diverse parenting beliefs and contexts.

**Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad** is a researcher in the field of public administration and governance, with a focus on institutional reform, public service delivery, and governance performance in developing countries. His research emphasizes the use of governance indicators and comparative analysis to examine regulatory quality, government effectiveness, and institutional capacity. Through

evidence-based approaches, his work contributes to policy-oriented discussions aimed at improving public sector performance and strengthening governance frameworks in low- and middle-income states, particularly Pakistan.



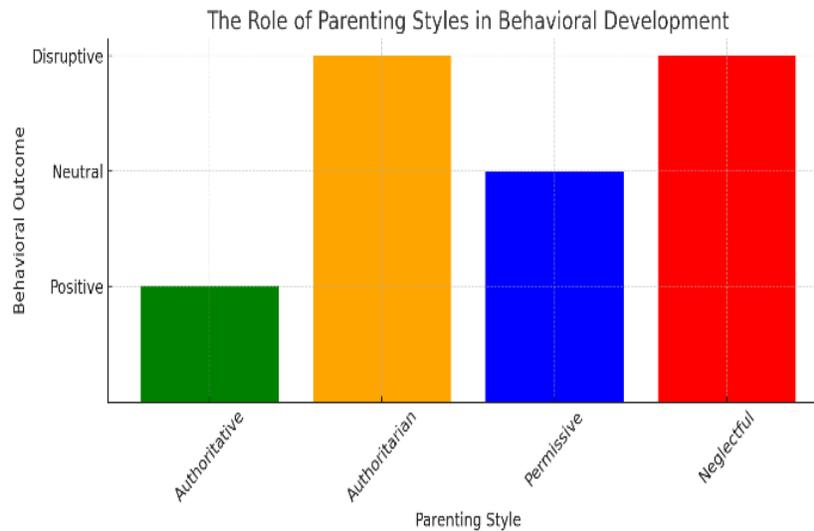
### Impact of Parenting Styles on Psychological Outcomes in Children

**X-Axis:** Parenting Style (Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, Neglectful)

**Y-Axis:** Psychological Outcome (Positive, Neutral, Negative)

#### Graph Description:

This graph will illustrate how different parenting styles impact the psychological well-being of children. The authoritative parenting style is likely to show the highest levels of positive psychological outcomes, including better emotional regulation and mental health. Authoritarian parenting might lead to neutral or negative outcomes, while permissive and neglectful parenting are likely to have more negative psychological effects, such as increased anxiety or low self-esteem.



### The Role of Parenting Styles in Behavioral Development

**X-Axis:** Parenting Style (Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, Neglectful)

**Y-Axis:** Behavioral Outcome (Disruptive, Neutral, Positive)

#### Graph Description:

This graph will show how different parenting styles contribute to various behavioral outcomes in children. Authoritative parenting is expected to lead to positive behavioral outcomes, such as good social skills and self-discipline. Authoritarian parents might lead to disruptive behavior or rebellion, while permissive parenting may result in more neutral behavior, with children being less rule-bound but not necessarily disruptive. Neglectful parenting may lead to problematic or disruptive behavior due to lack of guidance.

#### Summary

Parenting styles significantly shape a child's developmental trajectory, influencing cognitive, behavioral, and emotional outcomes from infancy to adolescence. Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and firm control, consistently yields the most favorable results across diverse settings. In contrast, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful approaches are associated with a range of developmental challenges. Cultural, socioeconomic, and individual child factors can moderate these effects. Given the long-term influence of parenting, this paper underscores the importance of supporting parents through education, public policy, and psychological intervention to promote healthier child development.

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