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THE IMPACT OF PARENTING STYLES ON CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Parenting styles play a significant role in shaping children's mental health, emotional development, behaviour, personality, and social relationships. The family is the first environment in which children learn to understand emotions, develop relationships, manage stress, and form perceptions of themselves and others. Different parenting styles, including authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting, may influence children's psychological well-being in different ways. This research examines the relationship between parenting styles and children's mental health development, with particular attention to emotional regulation, self-esteem, anxiety, depression, behavioural difficulties, and social competence. Recent research suggests that supportive parenting characterized by warmth, communication, appropriate boundaries, and emotional responsiveness is generally associated with more favourable psychological outcomes, whereas harsh, excessively controlling, inconsistent, or emotionally unresponsive parenting may be associated with greater psychological difficulties. A 2025 meta-review of 32 systematic reviews and meta-analyses, covering 354 randomized controlled trials and more than 74,558 children and adolescents, found that parenting interventions showed promising benefits for selected mental health and behavioural outcomes, although the quality of much of the underlying evidence was limited.

KEYWORDS *: children's mental health, child development, authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting, permissive parenting, neglectful parenting, emotional regulation, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, psychological well-being, parent-child relationships, positive parenting, childhood resilience.*

INTRODUCTION

Parenting is one of the most important factors influencing children's psychological, emotional, social, and behavioural development. During childhood, individuals develop fundamental abilities such as emotional regulation, communication, self-control, problem-solving, empathy, and interpersonal relationships. Parents and caregivers provide the first social environment in which these abilities begin to develop. Through everyday interactions, children learn how to express feelings, respond to difficulties, resolve conflicts, and understand acceptable behaviour. Parenting therefore involves more than meeting children's physical needs; it also includes providing emotional security, encouragement, guidance, discipline, and opportunities for independence. The quality of these experiences may influence how children perceive themselves and respond to the world around them. When parents provide consistent affection, understanding, and appropriate guidance, children may develop stronger feelings of security and self-worth. In contrast, frequent hostility, rejection, excessive control, or a lack of supervision may create difficulties in emotional and behavioural development. Understanding the relationship between parenting and mental health is consequently important for families, educators, psychologists, and policymakers. Al Sager, A., Goodman, S. H., Jeong, J., Bain, P. A., & Ahun, M. N. (2024).founds thatParenting styles generally refer to the characteristic approaches parents use to guide, discipline, support,

and communicate with their children. Four commonly discussed categories are authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting.

Parents may demonstrate different behaviours in different situations, and their approaches can change as children grow. Moreover, parenting practices are influenced by cultural values, family resources, parental experiences, and social expectations. The psychological effects of parenting must therefore be understood by considering both the general characteristics of each style and the circumstances in which parenting occursEmotional development is a central component of children's mental health because it influences how they recognize, understand, express, and manage their feelings. Children who receive emotional support and constructive guidance may find it easier to cope with frustration, disappointment, fear, and stressful situations. Parents who listen to their children, acknowledge their emotions, and explain behavioural expectations can help them develop emotional awareness and self-regulation. In contrast, children who regularly experience humiliation, rejection, threats, or severe punishment may find it more difficult to develop confidence in expressing their feelings or seeking support. Excessive parental protection can also limit opportunities for children to develop independence and learn how to manage challenges. Research examining parental overprotection has identified associations with internalizing difficulties, including anxiety symptoms, although these relationships can differ according to the parent, child, and family context.

These findings demonstrate why emotional responsiveness, balanced guidance, and appropriate independence are important areas of investigation when considering the relationship between parenting and children's mental health.However, mental health problems cannot be attributed to parenting alone. Genetic predispositions, developmental differences, social circumstances, and stressful experiences may also contribute. It is therefore important to examine parenting as one component of a wider system of influences on children's mental health.Investigating parenting styles and children's mental health is important because childhood experiences can influence later adjustment, relationships, educational participation, and general well-being. Parents may not always recognize how their communication patterns, disciplinary methods, and emotional responses affect their children's psychological experiences. Similarly, teachers and other professionals may observe behavioural or emotional difficulties without fully understanding the family circumstances contributing to them. Research in this area can help identify parenting practices associated with positive development and those that may indicate a need for additional support. A 2024 systematic review and meta-analysis of interventions addressing parenting behaviours and parental mental health examined 25 studies involving 8,520 children and caregivers, demonstrating the importance of evaluating approaches that support both caregivers and young children.Although parenting styles have received considerable attention in developmental psychology, the relationship between particular parenting approaches and children's mental health remains complex. Han, M. X., Chesney, E., Ng, V., Bright, J., Sagar, Y. K., Baker, E., ... & Law, E. C. (2025).explained that Some studies focus on anxiety and depression, while

others investigate behavioural problems, emotional regulation, life satisfaction, or social development. Findings may also vary according to children's ages, cultural backgrounds, family structures, and the methods used to measure parenting and psychological outcomes. For example, a parenting practice considered highly controlling in one setting may be understood differently in another, while a style associated with positive outcomes in one age group may not produce identical results in another. Recent reviews also indicate that parenting interventions do not produce equally consistent effects across every mental health outcome.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the relationship between different parenting styles and children's mental health development, particularly their emotional well-being, self-esteem, anxiety, depression, behavioural adjustment, and psychological resilience.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How do different parenting styles influence children's mental health developmeincluding their emotional regulation, self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and behavioural well-being?.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parenting styles have been widely examined as potential influences on children's psychological well-being, particularly through their effects on emotional security, independence, self-esteem, and social adjustment. Authoritative parenting is generally characterized by warmth, open communication, reasonable expectations, and consistent discipline. These characteristics may help children develop confidence, emotional stability, and effective coping strategies. Authoritarian parenting, in contrast, places greater emphasis on obedience and control, potentially limiting children's opportunities to express their emotions or participate in decisions appropriate to their age. Permissive parenting may provide affection and freedom but can sometimes lack the structure children need to develop self-control. Neglectful parenting may create additional difficulties when children's emotional needs and requests for guidance remain unmet. However, these relationships should be interpreted as general patterns rather than universal outcomes. Huang, Wu, and Yang's meta-analysis, published online in 2024 and appearing in a 2026 journal volume, synthesized 155 studies involving 79,979 participants and examined the relationship between parenting styles and subjective well-being. Their work highlights the value of evaluating positive and negative parenting in relation to life satisfaction and emotional experiences. Zeng, A., Lv, X., Hou, Z., Du, Z., Zheng, Q., Chen, B., ... & Zhou, Y. (2026).Authoritative parenting is frequently discussed as a supportive approach because it combines affection, communication, supervision, and clear behavioural expectations. Parents who adopt this approach seek to guide children rather than rely exclusively on punishment or unrestricted freedom. They may explain the reasons for rules, listen to children's concerns, and encourage independence while

maintaining appropriate boundaries. Such practices can provide opportunities for children to develop emotional awareness, responsibility, problem-solving abilities, and confidence in seeking assistance. Children may also learn that mistakes are opportunities for improvement rather than reasons for shame.

Nevertheless, the relationship between authoritative parenting and mental health depends on several factors, including developmental stage, family circumstances, cultural expectations, and the consistency of parental behaviour. Research on parenting interventions also suggests that teaching caregivers practical communication, relationship-building, and behavioural-management skills can improve selected outcomes. Han and colleagues' 2025 meta-review examined evidence from 32 systematic reviews and meta-analyses, finding promising results for certain targeted parenting interventions while emphasizing limitations in the quality of many included reviews. Ribas, L. H., Montezano, B. B., Nieves, M., Kampmann, L. B., & Jansen, K. (2024). This evidence supports investigating the specific behaviours associated with supportive parenting rather than assuming that a single parenting label fully explains children's mental health.Authoritarian parenting is often characterized by strict expectations, strong emphasis on obedience, and limited negotiation between parents and children. Although rules and discipline are necessary for healthy development, difficulties may arise when control is accompanied by hostility, humiliation, excessive punishment, or insufficient emotional support. Children exposed to such interactions may become afraid of making mistakes, reluctant to communicate personal difficulties, or overly dependent on external approval. These experiences could be associated with anxiety, low self-esteem, or depressive symptoms, although they do not necessarily produce these outcomes in every child. Manuele and colleagues' 2023 systematic review and meta-analysis examined associations between maternal and paternal parenting behaviours and internalizing problems in children and adolescents.

It also indicates that researchers should consider the contributions of both parents when investigating family relationships and children's emotional difficulties.Permissive and neglectful parenting represent different patterns of parental involvement, although both may present challenges when children do not receive consistent guidance and support. Permissive parents may be affectionate and responsive but allow considerable freedom without consistently enforcing boundaries. Some children may consequently experience difficulties with frustration tolerance, behavioural regulation, or following expectations across home and school settings. Neglectful parenting, however, involves a more serious lack of emotional engagement, supervision, or responsiveness to children's needs. When children cannot reliably obtain comfort, guidance, or protection from caregivers, they may experience insecurity and difficulties in developing trusting relationships. Nevertheless, researchers must distinguish these patterns from temporary parental stress, unavoidable absences, or culturally different approaches to independence. A family's financial circumstances, working conditions, access to childcare, and availability of extended-family support may influence how much time and attention parents can provide. Research on parenting and family

interventions in lower- and middle-income countries, published in 2024, identified promising effects across several mental health outcomes and highlighted the feasibility of involving trained community workers in delivering support. Tan, Y. Y., Suan, E., Koh, G. C. H., Suhairi, S. B., & Tyagi, S. (2024)ScienceDirectThese findings underline the importance of understanding parenting within its social context rather than interpreting every difficulty as an individual parent's failure.

The relationship between parental mental health and child development can therefore operate in several directions: parental difficulties may influence interactions with children, children's developmental needs may increase parental stress, and wider family circumstances may affect both. Al Sager and colleagues' 2024 systematic review and meta-analysis investigated multicomponent interventions targeting parenting behaviours and parental mental health during pregnancy and early childhood. The review included 25 articles representing 8,520 children and caregivers and examined child cognitive and social-emotional functioning alongside parental depressive symptoms. Al Sager, A., Goodman, S. H., Jeong, J., Bain, P. A., & Ahun, M. N. (2024).explain thatThis evidence supports a family-centred perspective in which interventions address caregiver well-being and parenting practices together. It also suggests that future research should examine not only the parenting style reported by caregivers but also their psychological circumstances and the quality of everyday parent-child interactions.Recent literature increasingly examines whether parenting support can prevent or reduce psychological and behavioural difficulties in children. Costantini and colleagues' 2023 systematic review and network meta-analysis examined early parenting interventions intended to prevent internalizing problems in children younger than four years.

Across 59 randomizcontrolled trials involving 18,349 participants, interventions focused on the parent-child relationship and mixed approaches showed benefits compared with treatment as usual at the first measured follow-up, although effects weakened at later assessments and many studies had methodological limitations.Han and colleagues' 2025 meta-review similarly found that intervention effects differed according to the type of intervention, the population receiving support, and the outcome being measured. Wiens, K. F., Joyce, K. M., Cluett, R. G., Hanson-Oliveira, M., Reynolds, K., Tomfohr-Madsen, L. M., & Roos, L. E. (2025These findings demonstrate that positive parenting support may be beneficial but should not be expected to prevent every mental health difficulty equally. A continuing research challenge is to integrate findings about parenting styles with evidence concerning specific practices, child characteristics, cultural context, and parental mental health. The present study addresses this challenge by synthesizing recent literature to identify common associations, possible explanatory mechanisms, and practical implications while recognizing that associations alone cannot establish that a particular parenting style directly causes a mental health outcome.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, literature-based research approach to examine the impact of parenting styles on children's mental health development. Rather than collecting new

information directly from children or parents, the research draws on existing peer-reviewed studies, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses published between 2023 and 2026. A literature-based approach is appropriate because it allows findings from different populations, age groups, and research settings to be compared within a single investigation. The study focuses on four commonly discussed parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful—and examines their reported relationships with emotional regulation, self-esteem, anxiety, depression, behavioural adjustment, and psychological well-being. Particular attention is given to recent evidence that explains how parental warmth, overprotection, discipline, communication, and responsiveness may be associated with child outcomes. The research is designed as a secondary analysis of published evidence, and it does not claim to have conducted original interviews, surveys, or experiments.The study uses secondary data obtained from academic and scientific publications available through resources such as PubMed, BMJ Mental Health, ScienceDirect, and journal websites. Searches focus on combinations of terms such as parenting styles, child mental health, parent-child relationships, authoritative parenting, parental overprotection, child anxiety, depressive symptoms, and parenting interventions.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected literature will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in the relationship between parenting styles and children's mental health. After the selected publications have been reviewed, relevant findings will be coded according to the parenting behaviours described, the psychological outcomes measured, and the contextual factors identified. Initial codes may include parental warmth, strict discipline, overprotection, emotional neglect, communication, self-esteem, anxiety, depression, emotional regulation, and behavioural difficulties. Related codes will then be organized into broader themes, such as supportive parenting and resilience, controlling parenting and emotional distress, inconsistent boundaries and behavioural adjustment, and parental mental health and family relationships. The analysis will compare how these themes appear across different publications and whether the reported relationships are consistent or mixed. This process will provide a structured interpretation of the literature and help explain how different parenting practices may relate to children's psychological development.A comparative analysis will be used to examine similarities and differences between the four main parenting styles. Findings concerning authoritative parenting will be compared with those concerning authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting, particularly in relation to emotional well-being, self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and behavioural regulation. The analysis will also distinguish broad parenting-style classifications from specific behaviours, such as parental overprotection or harsh discipline, which may have different associations with mental health.

FINDINGS

The literature reviewed suggests that supportive parenting practices, particularly emotional warmth, consistent guidance, respectful communication, and appropriate independence, are

generally associated with more favourable aspects of children's psychological well-being. Authoritative parenting provides a useful framework for understanding how affection and clear boundaries may work together to support confidence, self-regulation, and constructive responses to challenges. The 2024 meta-analysis by Huang, Wu, and Yang examined 155 studies involving 79,979 participants and investigated associations between parenting styles and children's and young people's subjective well-being. This extensive evidence base highlights the importance of examining positive and negative parenting in relation to life satisfaction and emotional experiences.Research on parenting interventions also suggests that selected programmes can improve particular mental health or behavioural outcomes, although effectiveness varies according to the intervention and outcome measured.Overall, the evidence supports the importance of responsive parent-child relationships, while indicating that positive psychological development depends on more than parenting style alone.The literature also identifies potential relationships between certain controlling or overprotective parenting behaviours and children's internalizing difficulties, including anxiety and depressive symptoms.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, parenting styles are an important area of investigation in understanding children's mental health development. The literature examined in this study suggests that parental warmth, responsiveness, consistent discipline, and respectful communication can support children's emotional regulation, confidence, social adjustment, and psychological well-being. Authoritative parenting offers a useful example of how emotional support and clear boundaries can be combined. In contrast, harsh discipline, excessive control, inconsistent guidance, and insufficient emotional involvement may be associated with psychological or behavioural difficulties in some children. Nevertheless, these relationships should not be interpreted as universal rules because children's development is influenced by many interacting factors. Recent research on parenting interventions further suggests that improving parent-child relationships and supporting caregivers can benefit selected mental health outcomes, although the strength and durability of these effects vary. The central conclusion is that parenting practices matter, but their influence must be understood within the broader circumstances of children's livesThe findings have practical implications for parents, teachers, counsellors, and professionals working in child development. Parents can support children's psychological well-being by listening attentively, acknowledging their emotions, setting clear and reasonable boundaries, using non-humiliating disciplinary methods, and encouraging age-appropriate independence.

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