

## The Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Child Development: A Longitudinal Study of Parent-Child Interactions

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### ABSTRACT

*This longitudinal study examined the factors influencing child development and parenting styles for families in Pakistan from 2020-2024. As part of the study, 300 parent-child dyads in Punjab province, both urban and rural settings, were selected using stratified random sampling. The children, aged 5-7 years old at the start of the study, were assessed for development and changes every six months using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), and other standardized child development tools. A comprehensive data set for each participant was developed from structured interviews, direct observations, and teacher ratings. Positive child development in all three domains: cognitive ( $F=45.32$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), social-emotional ( $F=38.67$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and behavioral ( $F=42.15$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) was explained by the authoritative parenting style. The results from authoritarian parenting were mixed and suggested a moderate positive effect on cognitive development while also predicting increased behavioral problems. Children exposed to permissive parenting were noted to have difficulties with self-regulation and poor academic performance. The study also examined the effect of the parenting style on cognitive and social-emotional development and behavioral outcome which suggested 38%, 42%, and 35% respectively. This study targeted the need for culturally appropriate parenting style interventions for Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Longitudinal study, factors, child development, parenting styles, families, Pakistan.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Study

Parenting styles encompass the consistent attitudes, behaviors, and emotional patterns that parents demonstrate during the process of raising a child (Baumrind, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Studies have shown that these approaches have lasting impacts on the children's cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral development (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Morris et al., 2023). In the case of Pakistan, family upbringing is more culturally elaborated and intertwined with multilayered socioreligious and socioeconomic conditions, thus making the dynamics more complex and deserving of thorough scrutiny (Khan et al., 2021; Ahmed & Malik, 2022). The prevalence of traditional family systems, complexed family networks, and collectivist cultural outlooks have been shown to alter child upbringing practices in contrast to the Western world (Rizwan & Ahmad, 2021). Such culturally grounded understandings are necessary to inform Pakistani families to the appropriate aid and support mechanisms to be developed.

### **Significance of Child Development Research**

Child development included cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral dimensions which were all important and interconnected (Santrock, 2023; Berk, 2022). Early parent-child interactions shaped lifelong patterns and frameworks (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2021). Research suggested that parental involvement of a certain quality during a child's formative years was predictive of a child's future academic success and mental health, as well as the quality of relationships and overall wellbeing (Thompson et al., 2022; Williams & Johnson, 2023). In a country like Pakistan, where nearly 40% of the population was children under 15 years of age, understanding development was crucial for social progress and national development (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

### **Parenting Styles Framework**

Diana Baumrind identified three types of parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive (Baumrind, 1971, 1991). Authoritative parenting was defined by 'high responsiveness' and 'high demandingness' and was described as 'warm, with clear boundaries, and age-appropriate autonomy support' (Steinberg et al., 2024). Authoritarian parenting consisted of highly unsanctioned control and promoted a regime of obedience devoid of emotional support, with rules that provided minimal explanation (Chen & Liu, 2023). Permissive parenting had high warmth but was devoid of control, meaning there were no demands and no structural support (Garcia & Martinez, 2022). Later on, neglectful parenting was described as low responsiveness and low demandingness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Each style highlighted different patterns of parent-child interaction and, as a result, different effects on children.

### **Cultural Context of Pakistani Parenting**

Pakistani parenting practices were affected by Islamic values, social customs of South Asia, socioeconomic status, and urbanization (Hassan et al., 2021; Naz & Rasheed, 2022). In traditional Pakistani families, customs and practices were rooted in the parenting framework and were focused on parenting practices of respect for authority, interdependence, and collective decision-making (Zahra & Khan, 2023). The authoritarian style, especially in discipline and education, became common until modernization focused on the urban educated families more authoritative practices (Malik & Baig, 2021). Social norms, expectations of birth order, and involvement of the extended family both added and complicated parenting (Siddiqui & Mahmood, 2022). Urban and rural differences, as well as socioeconomic status, created distinct parenting practices that necessitated further exploration.

### **Research Gap and Justification**

The advance of parenting research has not yet come to the longitudinal studies on parenting styles and child development within the Pakistani context (Ahmed et al., 2023). Much of the remaining research has not gone beyond the cross-sectional design paradigm which hinders the understanding of developmental trajectories and of causal relationships (Khan & Ali, 2022). Some research has included multiple informants and comprehensive tools that assess cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral domains, though these remain scant (Hussain et al., 2021). The four-year longitudinal design with repeated measures was able to longitudinally address these gaps by tracking development over the most formative early childhood years. The evidence of the influence of parenting styles on development over time was crucial in informing the design of culturally sensitive parenting interventions and family support programs.

### **Study Overview and Structure**

This longitudinal study focused on the associations between parenting styles and child development across 300 parent-child pairs in Punjab province from 2020 to 2024. Data were gathered every six months employing diverse techniques and validated instruments. Quantitative approaches included repeated measures ANOVA and hierarchical regression. Qualitative data were obtained through structured interviews and observations. The study revealed important predictors and complex interplay between parenting styles and child development outcomes. Results suggested implications for parents, educators, policymakers, and mental health practitioners working with families in Pakistan. This study documented the impacts of parenting on child development while taking into account the specific culture of Pakistan for the first time.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To analyze the four-year developmental outcomes of children's cognition across families with different parenting styles for the families in Punjab province and Pakistan.
2. To explore the relationship between parenting styles and children's socio emotional development, emotional regulation, peer relations, and psychological adjustment across rural and urban contexts in Pakistan.
3. To evaluate over time the degree to which parenting styles shape children's behaviors, adaptive and problem behaviors, and self-regulation is described in the study.

### **Research Questions**

1. In the context of Pakistani families, what is the influence of distinct parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) on the cognitive development pathways of children aged 5-11 years?
2. How do various parenting styles relate to the social-emotional development of children, primarily concerning emotional competence, peer relationships, and psychological wellness, over the study's four-year period?
3. How do parenting styles influence children's behavioral outcomes—specifically adaptive behaviors, externalizing problems, and internalizing difficulties—while controlling for confounding factors like socioeconomic status, parental education, and family structure?

### **Significance of the Study**

Within the longitudinal framework of this study, the four-year period was significant as it captured the critical formative years of early to middle childhood and the transitions involved. Findings of this study, the first of its kind in the context of Pakistan, aided in the development of culturally appropriate parenting and parenting style education. It helped frame the issues mental health specialists, teachers, and child health professionals should target in children and adolescents to assist in preschool and early child interventions. Findings also helped formulate advocacy strategies for mental health specialists, child health professionals, and educators on the early identification of children for targeted interventions. The study has built upon Western parenting literature while taking account the realities of Pakistan and fostered understanding across cultures while honoring local contexts. By integrating both urban and rural samples, the research catered to Pakistan's socio-cultural and geographical diversity. This enhances the applicability of the findings. The use of multiple evaluators: parent, teacher, and direct child, in a composite appraisal assessment provided a thorough assessment and a data set from multiple perspectives thereby strengthening the validity and reliability of the findings for subsequent research and practice.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Theoretical Foundations of Parenting Styles**

The origin of the research on parenting styles can be traced back to the work of Diana Baumrind in the 1960s and 1970s, who classified different parental behaviors based on the axes of responsiveness and demandingness (Baumrind, 1971, 1991). Responsiveness included the warmth, support, and the attunement of parents to the needs of the children, while demandingness included the control, supervision, and expectations of maturity (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritative parents amalgamated high levels of both dimensions and therefore, created environments where children had clear expectations, consistent discipline was administered, emotional support was given, and independence was fostered (Morris et al., 2023). Authoritarian parents displayed high demandingness but low responsiveness, stressing submission, and expecting the child to comply emotionally and express no feelings (Chen et al., 2022). Permissive parents were high in responsiveness but low in demandingness, allowing considerable self-regulation and imposing very few behavior constraints (Garcia & Gracia, 2023). Baumrind's framework has continued to receive support universally, although the specific forms have been shaped by the cultural context (Sorkhabi & Middaugh, 2021).

#### **Parenting Styles and Cognitive Development**

Research has shown that authoritative parenting positively predicts superior cognitive outcomes including higher academic achievement, better problem-solving, and higher executive functioning (Steinberg et al., 2024; Liu & Wang, 2023). Children of authoritative parents displayed greater intellectual curiosity, more persistence when facing challenges, and mastery of adaptive learning (Thompson et al., 2022). The cognitive stimulation, provision of autonomy, and scaffolding characteristic of this parenting approach helped neural development and the acquisition of cognitive skills (Williams & Brown, 2023). Authoritarian parenting has been associated with mixed cognitive outcomes, some research noting the achievement of academically adequate performance yet the absence of creativity and critical thinking driven by external motivation (Chen & Liu, 2023). The focus on compliance and punishment may have

restricted exploratory learning and the development of intrinsic motivation (Martinez et al., 2022). Permissive parenting has been associated with lower academic achievement, weaker self-discipline, and problems with sustained attention and goal-directed behavior (Anderson & Peterson, 2023). The absence of structure and expectations stunted the development of the executive functions that are necessary for academic success (Johnson et al., 2021).

### **Parenting Styles and Social-Emotional Development**

Positive social-emotional development such as a secure attachment style, emotional intelligence, social competence, and psychological wellbeing, were all outcomes associated with authoritative parenting (Davis et al., 2024; Kumar & Singh, 2023). Emotion regulation, empathy, and healthy relationships were sustained through the emotional warmth and responsive communication of the parents (Roberts & Taylor, 2022). A developmental balance of autonomy and connection was fundamental in the formation of identity and self-esteem (Miller et al., 2023). Authoritarian parenting was linked to heightened levels of anxiety, diminished self-esteem, and challenges in emotional expression (Lee & Park, 2024). An emotionally unsupportive environment combined with a predominant focus on control may have stunted the growth of emotional competence (Hassan et al., 2022). Nonetheless, cultural parameters moderated these outcomes with certain collectivistic cultures, considering authoritarian components a positive practice (Chang et al., 2023). Emotion regulation, relationships with peers, and anxiety and depression were outcomes associated with permissive parenting (Green & White, 2023). A lack of emotional coaching and the absence boundary-setting heightened the risks of children becoming emotionally overwhelmed and having difficulties with social relationships (Turner et al., 2022).

### **Parenting Styles and Behavioral Outcomes**

In contrast to other styles, research has shown that the authoritative approach to parenting was the most predictive of fewer behavioral problems, better self-regulation, and more prosocial behaviors (Collins et al., 2024; Zhou & Chen, 2023). It was the combination of setting clear and reasonable expectations and boundaries, fully consistent outcomes, and emotional support that helped children positively internalize the control self-regulation and self-control norms (Baker & Smith, 2023). Positive behaviors became intrinsically motivated, instead of children motivated solely externally (Morgan et al., 2022). Authoritarian styles of parenting were and continue to be associated with increased externalizing behaviors of aggression, defiance, and rule-breaking during adolescence, wherein the need for autonomy is explicitly challenged (Jackson & Rodriguez, 2023). The punitive and aggressive approaches, which characterize an authoritarian style, likely modeled the aggressive conflict resolution during the adolescent years, while also undermining internal control behavioral regulation (Foster et al., 2023). It was these styles of parenting that also predicted impulsivity, poor self-regulation, and boundary testing associated with the permissive style (Cooper & Anderson, 2024). The lack of predictability and structure that were evident within these permissive parenting styles negatively impacted the child's behavioral competence and social responsibility (Wright et al., 2022).

### **Longitudinal Studies on Parenting and Development**

Longitudinal research designs provided invaluable understanding of the developmental trajectories and temporal relationship of parenting and child outcomes (Pinquart & Gerke, 2024). Studies tracking

families for several years showed the impact of the stability versus change of the parenting style on development patterns (Harris et al., 2023). Consistently retaining authoritative parenting throughout childhood anticipated the best outcomes, while consistent or worsening quality of parenting was linked to the development of difficulties (Nelson et al., 2022). Longitudinal research also pointed out the presence of certain sensitive parenting impact periods such as the middle of early childhood and the pre-adolescent years (Campbell et al., 2024). Research also showed the bidirectional influences of child traits and behaviors and the elicitation of certain parental responses that reinforced the existing developmental patterns (Thompson & Peterson, 2023). The parenting practices cumulative effects across development showed that the absence of integrated long-term supportive parenting environments and isolated interventions, will weaken the outcome (Morrison et al., 2022).

### **Cultural Considerations in Parenting Research**

Cultural context has proved to moderate the relationships between parenting styles and child outcomes to such an extent that the use of Western models universally would not suffice (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2023; Chao & Tseng, 2022). While Western individualistic cultures tend to emphasize dependence, respect for authority, and the maintenance of family harmony, parenting styles diverge (Rothbaum et al., 2022). What Western frameworks may perceive to be authoritarian, might be an appropriate cultural practice within the parenting emphasis of respect and social harmony prevalent in many Asian cultures (Wang & Liu, 2023). Research in Pakistan has posed even greater challenges to simplistic frameworks within which authoritarianism is assumed to coexist with warmth and emotional closeness (Ahmed & Malik, 2022). Religious practices, involvement of extended family, and the additional socioeconomic complexities of parenting necessitated a culturally sensitive approach to their assessment (Rizwan & Ahmad, 2021). Cultural meanings of parenting practices have to be fully understood to develop accurate and effective interventions (Hassan et al., 2023).

### **Parenting Research in Pakistani Context**

Beginning with the 2000s, parenting in Pakistan has received a mix of interdisciplinary scholarly attention with a handful of interdisciplinary publications. As with other South Asian countries, a parenting approach in Pakistan balances authoritarian with authoritative-authoritarian hybrid variations. This speaks to the cultural aspects of parenting prevalent in South Asian countries, which emphasize obedience, respect, and the importance of family cohesion within the broader societal structure (Khan et al., 2021; Siddiqui & Mahmood, 2022). Within the local context and family structures, educational attainment, urbanization, and socioeconomic status were shown to influence parenting. More urban and educated parents were found to practice authoritative parenting (Malik & Baig, 2021). Parenting within a family structure also demonstrated division of responsibilities among parents, with mothers being the primary emotional caretakers and fathers focusing on educational expectations and discipline (Naz & Rasheed, 2022). Zahra & Khan (2023) emphasize the role of extended family, particularly grandparents, in complicating parent-child dynamics. Parenting research has demonstrated the positive impact of authoritative parenting on the psychological and emotional outcomes of Pakistani children & adolescents, in particular self-esteem and academic achievements (Shah et al., 2021). This has to be tempered by the understanding that most research of this kind in Pakistan takes a cross-sectional approach. This should be prioritized over longitudinal research that captures development over time (Ahmed et al., 2023).



### **Methodological Considerations in Parenting Research**

In order to obtain strong findings in parenting studies, a diverse range of assessments, such as validated questionnaires, multisource assessments, and observations, must be employed (Patterson & Fisher, 2023). Relying on assessments from singular sources resulted in biased outcomes and restricted the validity of the findings (Rodriguez et al., 2022). Although costly in time and resources, observational assessments allowed for the capturing of real-time interactions and self-report corroboration, and further provided multiple source assessments (Mitchell & Turner, 2023). Longitudinal research with repeated intervals fosters the ability to study developmental trajectories, temporal precedence, and patterns of change (Pinquart & Gerke, 2024). Research quality and generalizability are improved with representative samples, appropriate statistical power, and sufficient control of confounding factors (Stevens & Brown, 2023). Cultural adaptation of the psychometric tools was also crucial to ensuring appropriate measurement (Kumar & Singh, 2023). Martinez and others (2024) stress the need to employ both quantitative and qualitative research techniques to study intricate parent-child relationships.

### **Gaps in Current Literature**

The literature on parenting continues to grow, with gaps still noticeable, particularly in longitudinal studies within non-Western contexts (Ahmed et al., 2023). Few studies have focused on the parenting impacts on several areas of development concurrently using integrated assessment batteries (Khan & Ali, 2022). Investigations have also been sparse in involving multiple informants such as parents, teachers, and direct assessments of the child (Hussain et al., 2021). Most studies within the Pakistani context have relied on cross-sectional designs as highlighted in literature, which limits our understanding of the developmental trajectories and causal relations (Hassan et al., 2021). Urban-rural comparisons of the Pakistani context have also been limited especially in terms of socioeconomic and cultural diversity (Rizwan & Ahmad, 2021). The present study focused on these gaps through a four-year longitudinal design with integrated multi-domain assessments using several informant reports and varied sampling covering both urban and rural areas of Punjab.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researchers adopted longitudinal research design to investigate how parenting styles influence child development in Pakistani families over four years, from 2020 to 2024. Urban and rural Punjab province parenting and child dyads were selected for the study using stratified random sampling. At the study's beginning, the participants were parents of children aged 5 to 7 years. For the longitudinal study, the researchers used the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) to measure parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) and child development using standardized instruments with six-month intervals for cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral domains. Additionally, researchers conducted 45 to 60 minutes home engagement observations and structured interviews with parents to obtain qualitative data. For behavioral assessment, teachers provided data using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to obtain a holistic assessment. Socioeconomic status, parental education, and family structure were included as confounding variables to be controlled using demographic surveys. All data was collected by trained research assistants, fluent in Urdu and Punjabi, to the culture and participants' comfort perspective. Using SPSS, the researchers examined the longitudinal data with ANOVA for

repeated measures, as well as hierarchical regression, in order to study the influence of the different styles of parenting on the different areas of development over the different time periods.

### Results and Data Analysis

**Table 1: Distribution of Parenting Styles at Baseline and Final Assessment**

Parenting Style	Baseline (n=287)	Final Assessment (n=287)	Change
Authoritative	98 (34.1%)	112 (39.0%)	+14 (+4.9%)
Authoritarian	132 (46.0%)	118 (41.1%)	-14 (-4.9%)
Permissive	57 (19.9%)	57 (19.9%)	0 (0%)

**Description:** Authoritarian parenting was most prevalent at baseline (46.0%), followed by authoritative (34.1%) and permissive (19.9%). By final assessment, authoritative increased to 39.0% while authoritarian decreased to 41.1%. Chi-square analysis revealed significant urban-rural differences ( $\chi^2=18.42$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), with urban families showing higher authoritative rates (43.6% vs. 22.9%). Child gender didn't predict parenting style ( $\chi^2=2.34$ ,  $p=0.31$ ). Parental education strongly correlated with style ( $\chi^2=42.67$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

**Table 2: Mean Cognitive Development Scores by Parenting Style Across Assessment Points**

Time Point	Authoritative M(SD)	Authoritarian M(SD)	Permissive M(SD)	F-value	p-value
Baseline	84.2 (8.4)	76.3 (9.2)	72.8 (10.1)	32.45	<0.001
6 months	87.6 (8.1)	78.4 (9.0)	73.5 (9.8)	38.67	<0.001
12 months	91.3 (7.8)	80.7 (8.8)	74.2 (9.5)	42.83	<0.001
18 months	94.8 (7.5)	82.9 (8.6)	75.1 (9.3)	45.92	<0.001
24 months	98.2 (7.2)	85.3 (8.4)	76.4 (9.1)	48.76	<0.001
30 months	101.5 (6.9)	87.6 (8.2)	77.8 (8.9)	51.23	<0.001
36 months	104.7 (6.7)	89.8 (8.0)	79.2 (8.7)	53.45	<0.001
Final (48m)	108.3 (6.5)	92.1 (7.8)	80.6 (8.5)	56.82	<0.001

**Description:** Significant main effects emerged for parenting style ( $F=45.32$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $\eta^2=0.384$ ) and time ( $F=187.64$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $\eta^2=0.675$ ) with interaction effects ( $F=12.43$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Authoritative-parented children consistently outperformed peers. Performance gaps widened over time: baseline gaps of 10.4% (vs. authoritarian) and 15.7% (vs. permissive) increased to 17.6% and 34.3% by final assessment. Authoritative children gained 24.1 points over four years compared to 15.8 (authoritarian) and 7.8 (permissive).

**Table 3: Social-Emotional Competence Scores by Parenting Style**



Domain	Authoritative M(SD)	Authoritarian M(SD)	Permissive M(SD)	F- value	p- value
Emotional Recognition	42.6 (4.3)	35.8 (5.2)	33.2 (5.8)	67.45	<0.001
Emotion Regulation	45.3 (4.1)	36.2 (5.4)	31.8 (6.2)	78.32	<0.001
Empathy	38.7 (3.8)	32.4 (4.9)	30.1 (5.3)	56.89	<0.001
Social Competence	41.9 (4.2)	34.7 (5.1)	32.5 (5.7)	63.24	<0.001
Peer Relations	44.2 (3.9)	36.9 (4.8)	33.7 (5.5)	71.56	<0.001
Self-Esteem	46.8 (3.7)	38.3 (4.7)	35.9 (5.2)	82.14	<0.001
Overall Score	259.5 (18.2)	214.3 (24.8)	197.2 (28.3)	95.67	<0.001

**Description:** Significant main effects for parenting style ( $F=38.67$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $\eta^2=0.356$ ) and time ( $F=142.38$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) with interaction ( $F=9.87$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Authoritative children showed superior competence across all domains. Emotion regulation showed largest gaps: 25.1% higher than authoritarian, 42.4% higher than permissive. Self-esteem differences were pronounced (22.2% vs. authoritarian, 30.4% vs. permissive). Teacher ratings corroborated findings. Social-emotional gaps expanded during middle childhood, highlighting cumulative impacts.

**Table 4: Behavioral Assessment Scores (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire)**

SDQ Subscale	Authoritative M(SD)	Authoritarian M(SD)	Permissive M(SD)	F- value	p- value
Emotional Problems	2.3 (1.4)	4.7 (2.1)	5.4 (2.3)	54.23	<0.001
Conduct Problems	1.8 (1.2)	4.2 (1.9)	5.8 (2.2)	68.45	<0.001
Hyperactivity	2.4 (1.5)	3.8 (1.8)	6.2 (2.1)	72.16	<0.001
Peer Problems	1.9 (1.3)	3.9 (1.7)	4.8 (2.0)	58.34	<0.001
Total Difficulties	8.4 (3.8)	16.6 (5.2)	22.2 (6.1)	96.78	<0.001
Prosocial Behavior	8.7 (1.2)	6.8 (1.6)	5.9 (1.8)	64.92	<0.001

**Description:** Main effects for parenting style ( $F=42.15$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $\eta^2=0.372$ ) and time ( $F=23.45$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) with interaction effects ( $F=7.89$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Authoritative children showed fewer difficulties ( $M=8.4$ , normal range) versus authoritarian ( $M=16.6$ , borderline) and permissive ( $M=22.2$ , abnormal). Permissive group showed 222% more conduct problems than authoritative. Teacher-parent agreement was strong ( $ICC=0.78$ ). Behavioral problems increased over time in authoritarian and permissive groups, particularly during school transition.

**Table 5: Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Child Development Outcomes**

Predictors	Cognitive Development	Social-Emotional Development	Behavioral Outcomes
<b>Step 1: Control Variables</b>			
R <sup>2</sup>	0.156	0.142	0.134
Child Age	$\beta=0.23^{**}$	$\beta=0.19^{**}$	$\beta=-0.16^*$
Child Gender	$\beta=0.08$	$\beta=0.11$	$\beta=0.09$
SES	$\beta=0.28^{***}$	$\beta=0.24^{***}$	$\beta=-0.21^{**}$
Parental Education	$\beta=0.19^{**}$	$\beta=0.17^*$	$\beta=-0.18^*$
<b>Step 2: Parenting Styles</b>			
R <sup>2</sup>	0.534	0.564	0.489
$\Delta R^2$	0.378 <sup>***</sup>	0.422 <sup>***</sup>	0.355 <sup>***</sup>
Authoritative	$\beta=0.52^{***}$	$\beta=0.58^{***}$	$\beta=-0.49^{***}$
Authoritarian	$\beta=-0.28^{***}$	$\beta=-0.34^{***}$	$\beta=0.32^{***}$
Permissive	$\beta=-0.36^{***}$	$\beta=-0.42^{***}$	$\beta=0.45^{***}$

Note:  $*p<0.05$ ,  $**p<0.01$ ,  $***p<0.001$

**Description:** Control variables explained 13.4-15.6% variance, with SES as strongest predictor. Adding parenting styles significantly improved prediction: cognitive  $R^2=53.4\%$  ( $\Delta R^2=0.378$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), social-emotional  $R^2=56.4\%$  ( $\Delta R^2=0.422$ ), behavioral  $R^2=48.9\%$  ( $\Delta R^2=0.355$ ). Authoritative parenting emerged as strongest positive predictor across domains ( $\beta=0.52$ - $0.58$ ), while permissive and authoritarian styles negatively predicted outcomes. Parenting styles explained 35.5-42.2% additional variance beyond demographics, confirming their primacy in predicting development.

**Table 6: Developmental Outcomes by Geographic Location and Parenting Style**

Outcome Domain	Urban Auth.	Rural Auth.	Urban Authn.	Rural Authn.	Urban Perm.	Rural Perm.
Cognitive (M)	110.2	105.8	94.5	88.9	82.3	78.4
Social-Emotional (M)	265.3	251.7	220.8	205.4	203.6	188.9

Behavioral Problems (M)	7.8	9.2	15.4	18.2	20.8	24.1
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**Description:** Two-way ANOVA revealed significant effects for parenting style ( $F=52.34$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), location ( $F=28.67$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and interaction ( $F=6.45$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Urban children showed higher cognitive and social-emotional scores across all styles. However, rural authoritative parenting produced better outcomes than urban authoritarian or permissive approaches, emphasizing parenting style primacy. Differences reflected resource access rather than parenting quality. Rural families faced limited educational resources and support systems.

**Table 7: Developmental Outcomes by Child Gender and Parenting Style**

Outcome Domain	Boys Auth.	Girls Auth.	Boys Authn.	Girls Authn.	Boys Perm.	Girls Perm.
Cognitive (M)	107.8	108.9	91.4	92.9	79.8	81.5
Social-Emotional (M)	256.2	263.4	210.8	218.5	193.6	201.4
Behavioral Problems (M)	9.1	7.6	17.8	15.2	23.5	20.7

**Description:** Girls demonstrated slightly higher cognitive (1.0-2.2%) and social-emotional scores (2.8-4.0%) across styles. Boys exhibited more behavioral problems (11.9-16.5% higher). However, parenting style effects substantially exceeded gender effects: gender explained 2-4% variance while parenting explained 35-42%. Qualitative data revealed gendered parenting practices, with boys experiencing more behavioral control and girls facing autonomy restrictions, partially explaining differential trajectories.

### Qualitative Analysis of Parent–Child Interactions

**Authoritative Parents:** They demonstrated active listening as well as age-appropriate reasoning during explanations, emotional validation, and support for balanced autonomy. Across 10-minute sessions, they recorded an average of 12.4 positive interactions, specifically praising their children 8.7 times on average. They were able to stabilize their consistent core values while successfully adapting to their children’s developmental needs. They engaged their children in collaborative problem solving, but encouraged independent, guided thinking. One mother in Lahore described the engineering of her responses as follows: “I explain why behaviors are important, not just demanding obedience. When mistakes happen, we discuss improvements.”

**Authoritarian Parents:** They emphasized obedience and control to the point of external attribution. They employed 14.3 commands, and 3.2 explanations were given, and explained the rationale as punishment threats. Physical discipline was common as 67% reported occasional spanking. The emotional expressions were of low validation. They produced critical statements at the rate of 4.2 per session in contrast to the 1.3 for authoritative parents and described their control in loving terms, seeing it as protective and necessary for competition in society.

**Permissive Parents:** Parents in this category displayed a great deal of warmth yet provided minimal structure, which created challenges with inconsistencies in rule construction and enforcement. During

observations, parents issued an average of 8.7 commands during a session yet displayed follow-through of only 28% of directives (in contrast to an 89% follow-through with authoritative parents). Their children repeatedly tested boundaries and interrupted their parents during conversations more frequently than authoritative parents' children ( $M=11.4$  in contrast to 3.8). Parents defended their lack of punitive discipline by stating that they "felt" an imbalance of strictness, and many parents' behavioral concerns did not coincide with adaptive self-regulation strategies.

**Extended Family Influences:** Grandparents' participation in child-rearing was present in 58% of cases, and occasionally, divergent philosophies created disagreements on parenting practices. The interaction of joint family systems added complexity with multiple authority figures, which at times, eroded consistency in parenting. In one of these systems, multiple parents applied cross-cultural practices which, in this case, were cooperative. One mother from Faisalabad provided this example: "My mother-in-law thinks I'm too soft. She believes children should simply obey." In this context, children and grandchildren in cooperative families practiced soft authoritative parenting.

**Socioeconomic Stressors:** Financial hardship, lack of safe and adequate housing, and minimal resources were some restrictions that lower-income families faced. Balancing working and parenting were a challenge cited by working parents. One laborer from Gujranwala recounted, "After working 12 hours, I'm exhausted. Sometimes I become short-tempered." In comparison, middle-class families obtained more resources, which created ideal circumstances for authoritative parenting. Overindulgence in parenting was noted in some affluent families, which created self-regulation issues similar to permissive parenting in lower-income families. The ability to provide basic economic resources greatly affected parenting practices.

**Cultural and Religious Values:** Religious compassion and moral development teachings shaped authoritative parents. Authoritarian parents attributed control rationales to selective interpretations. In Islamic scholarship, mercy, and balance discipline correlate more to authoritative than authoritarian approaches. All families, irrespective of the style adopted, espoused strong educational values. Academic success was attributed to authoritative parents due to active involvement, motivational, and intrinsic integration. In contrast, authoritarian parents sometimes induced performance anxiety which is contrary to the hope of motivational integration.

**Longitudinal Trajectories:** During the transition to school, which takes place between the ages of 5-6, is when the difference in parenting begins to really be evident. Children granted authoritative parenting privileges had smoother transitions and developed better social relations. The period of middle childhood, between ages 8 and 10, is marked as another sensitive period when authoritarian kids laid in the gap of development with an increase in anxiety and self-ordained oppression, while permissive kids were trapped in an increase of externally focused cluster problems. In at-risk families, having support offered early is crucial, and is likely to prevent the negative paths that result from weak or no support. This notion strengthens the ideas that frameworks and support offered early are in preventing negative development. This poses an undeniable incentive for early support interventions.

**Parenting Style Stability:**

When examining the stability of parenting styles within the framework of this study, 76 percent of the sample families retained a uniform approach in the parenting styles over the four years, while 24 percent shifted primarily from authoritarian to authoritative (14 families). Each of the families that moved in the direction of authoritative parenting took either educational programs or reacted to concerning behaviors. The children's outcomes were positive, as cognitive scores improved by 8.4 points, and behavioral problems decreased by 32 percent in the span of 12 to 18 months. Conversely, families that moved in the direction of authoritarian parenting were generally experiencing significant and stressful external circumstances. This confirms the apparent bidirectionality of the phenomena.

## **DISCUSSION**

The context of the sample families fully confirms the study's findings that the four dimensions of parenting styles each uniquely contributed to the cognitive, social emotional, and behavioral development of children. Authoritative parenting is the strongest predictor of positive outcomes, as reported in the literature. However, the explained variance of 37.8 percent in cognitive development, 42.2 percent in social emotional development, and 35.5 percent in behavioral outcomes with respect to parenting styles is exceptionally high when compared to socio demographic variables. This shifts the focus to parenting practices. The high rates of authoritarian parenting (46% at baseline) within the sample reflects the cultural expectations of the dominant Pakistani culture where respect, obedience, and parental authority are culturally endorsed values. Although previously reported emotional and behavioral outcomes are negative with authoritarian parenting, the outcomes reported in this context are less severe compared to Western literature, suggesting that Westernization of the lens applied is a possible reason.

The longitudinal study indicated the benefits of consistently authoritative parenting, with the positive effects growing larger over time. Research focused on sensitive periods of development highlighted the transition periods of the school-age years and middle childhood, with the development and widening of authoritative parenting gaps. While urban-rural factors underscored the effects of resources and socioeconomic means, the effects of parenting style transcended geography, implying the quality of the relationship was more important than the environmental factors. The 24% of families demonstrating changes in parenting style during the study periods underscores the potential for intervention, particularly where families transitioned towards more authoritative parenting and showed positive change in relatively short periods.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches in the study offered rich insights within the Pakistani cultural context. Extended family systems, religious obligations, poverty, and gender roles added complexity. The warm- authoritarian style of parenting described in Western literature as authoritative was fully at odds with the Pakistani context. This mismatch showed the need to decode culturally derived meanings. The findings affirmed the need for culturally sensitive parenting interventions that integrated evidence-based practices with Islamic and collectivist values.

## **CONCLUSION**

This longitudinal study of social and emotional development over four years documented the importance of parenting styles on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development in Pakistani families. The warm, expectant, and autonomy supportive authoritative style predicted the best outcomes. Children from

authoritative families had the best cognitive skills, the most social and emotional skills, and the least behavioral problems and steepest growth in development. These benefits were only strengthened over time, and the gaps in performance extended during key development periods.

In the rural, authoritarian, most common, parenting produced poor cognitive skills and increased emotional problems, low self-worth and increased behavioral problems. Permissive parenting produced the poorest outcomes. While socioeconomic status, parental education and geographical location had an impact, parenting styles accounted for more variance in development than demographic factors. The quality of the relationship was more impactful than the material situation.

The comprehensive nature of the study relied on estimation, constructive gaps in the parenting research for Pakistan, and documented comprehensive evidence. The findings documented the need for parenting education through culturally adapted parenting education programs, early intervention services and family support consistent with the authoritative parenting style in accordance with Pakistan's culture and socio-economic context. The findings addressed the practical needs of parents, teachers, mental health professionals, and policy makers.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

For optimal child development, to start, the value of culturally sensitive, community-wide educational programs about parenting can be prioritized. These can be based around the 'authoritative' concepts of emotional attachment, constructive communication, and granting appropriate autonomy which can be coupled with Islamic principles. Next, early childhood education programs should include some parent training on constructive involvement and discipline, and Family Counseling and Mental Health Services should be made more accessible and integrated into community support for families under stress. Moreover, poverty with its related issues of insufficient employment and childcare policies need to be addressed for optimal Development. Teacher education programs should focus on the understanding of the different family structures so and how to work in collaboration with family. Also, the promotion of constructive, culturally sensitive parenting practices can be incorporated into Public Awareness Campaigns. Lastly, research should focus on the effectiveness, the long-range impact of the interventions, and the study of evidence to support the recommendations for optimal Development from other areas of Pakistan.

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