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## Self-Esteem And Happiness Of Children And Mothers Of Different Parental Authority

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### **Abstract:**

*The present study aimed at finding out how different parenting styles have relations with self-esteem and happiness of the children. For this purpose initially a total of 120 children studying in classes 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> were taken on an availability basis and their respective 120 mothers were also taken. The mothers were divided into three groups of parenting styles – permissive, authoritarian and authoritative on the basis of their highest scores on a particular parenting style. Thus, 30 mothers in each group who clearly fall into any of the three parenting styles making a total of 90 mothers were taken, 30 mothers who did not fall clearly in any of the three parenting styles were dropped. Thus, finally a total of 90 participants of selected mothers, 30 in each group were taken and 30 students of non-selected mothers were dropped. One-way ANOVA and Tukey test for multiple comparisons were carried out on the self-esteem and happiness scores of the children. Results for self-esteem showed that children of authoritative parenting style had higher self-esteem than the children with permissive and authoritarian parenting styles. However, self-esteem of children of permissive and authoritarian parenting styles did not differ significantly in their self-esteem. Further, results for happiness showed no significant difference between happiness of children with different parenting styles.*

**Key words:** *Self-esteem, Happiness, Authoritative Parenting style, Authoritarian Parenting style, Permissive Parenting style.*

### **1. Introduction**

Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviours that work individually and together to influence child outcomes. The construct of parenting style is used to capture normal variations in parents' attempt to control and socialize their children (Baumrind, 1991). Two points are critical in understanding the construct. First, parenting style is meant to describe normal variations in parenting. In other words, the parenting style typology developed by Baumrind (1991), should not be understood to include deviant parenting observed in abusive or neglectful homes. Second, Baumrind assumes that normal parenting revolves around issues of control. Although parents may differ in how they control or socialize their children and the extent to which they do so, it is assumed that the primary role of all parents is to influence, teach and control their children.

Darling and Steinberg (1993) defined Parenting style as "a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and create an emotional climate in which parent's behaviours are expressed". Parenting style has its manifold impacts on child outcome indirectly. First, style transforms the nature of parent-child interaction and thereby moderates the impact of specific parenting practices. Parenting practices are different from parenting styles. Parenting practices "are behaviours defined by specific context and socialization goals" (Darling and Steinberg, 1993). Second, parenting style modifies the child's openness to parental influence, which in turn moderates the association between parenting practices and child outcomes.

Parenting has been described as the style of child upbringing in relation to a privilege or the responsibility of both mother and father, together or independently to prepare a child for the society and culture (Veenes, 1973), where the child uses his parents as models for making his social adjustment. Parents at this stage are supposed to play a key role in perpetuating for them a more congenial, happy, lucid, and warm atmosphere along with careful nurturing for their children (Erickson, 1974) and the relationship between parents and child as a central factor in the social upliftment of the child. Furthermore, the relationship of the parent with the child and of the child with the parents always remains in a constant state of flux and requires adequate adjustment on the part of both of them. This results in a continuous delicate interplay of psychological forces, if a state of well-being in the parent-child relationship is to be maintained.

Baumrind (1971) has developed a model of parenting style, which is accepted and followed by most of the researchers. She proposed that parents fall into one of the four categories, but according to Buri (1991), within the model proposed by Baumrind three distinct prototypes of parental authority have been offered. According to Buri, they are as follows:

- Authoritarian : These parents value control and unquestioning obedience. They try to make children conform to a set standard of conduct, and punish them forcefully for acting contrary to that standard. They are more detached and less warm than other parents. Their children tend to be more discontented, withdrawn and distrustful . Authoritarian parenting also termed as dictatorial or harsh, is low on warmth/nurturance, strict on discipline, high in parent to child communication but low in child to parent communication and high on expectation. These parents show little affection and “seem aloof from their children” (Berger, 2001).
- Authoritative : These parents respect child’s individuality, while at the same time stress social reality. They direct their children’s activities rationally, pay attention to the issues rather than to a child’s fear of punishment or loss of love. They are loving, consistent, demanding and respectful of children’s independent decisions, but they are firm in maintaining standards and willing to impose limited punishment. They explain the reasoning behind the stands taken and encourage verbal give and take. They combine control with encouragement. Their children apparently feel secure in knowing that they are loved and what is expected of them. The preschool children of authoritative parents tend to be most self reliant, self controlled, self assertive, exploratory and content.
- Permissive : Permissive parents find it hard to set clear limits and provide structure. They are inconsistent disciplinarians (Huxley, 1998) and reward bad behaviour regularly (Dworkin, 1997). Children are not pushed and enforced to obey guidelines or standards even when they do exist (Barakat and Clark, 1999).

Permissive parents value self expression and self regulation. They make few demands allowing children to monitor their own activities as much as possible. They consider themselves as resources, not standard bearers or models and explain the reasons underlying the few family rules that do exist and hardly punish their children. They are non-controlling, non-demanding and relatively warm. The children tend to be immature, the least self controlled and the least exploratory.

Self-esteem is “a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self”. It essentially means how much you value yourself and how important you think you are in this world. It’s how you see yourself and how you feel about your accomplishments (Rosenberg, 1965). The term ‘self-esteem’ thus stands for the evaluation a person makes and maintains regarding himself or herself. It captures the extent to which a person believes him or herself, to be competent, important, successful and admirable (Coopersmith, 1981). It is generally considered the evaluative component of the self concept, a broader representation of the self that includes cognitive and behavioural concepts as well as evaluative or affective ones (Blascovich & Tomka, 1991). It is the degree to which children feel accepted and valued by adults and peers who are important to them. The development of a sense of self is very complex. It is developed from within a person and shaped as well by the people around them (Katz, 1995). Being able to manage one’s own life, feelings and decisions come from the foundation of a strong sense of self. Being able to manage helps people cope when difficulties arise. An important context for the development of one’s self-esteem is the family and the kinds of interactions that occur among family members (Wylie, 1961), particularly between parents and child.

Gina & Tana (2001) examined the relationship between mother’s parenting styles – permissive , authoritative, authoritarian and their young adult children’s self-esteem on the basis of young adults and mothers’ reports. Findings indicated that both young adults and mothers' reports of parenting styles were related to self-esteem. Several familial variables have been linked to the development of self-esteem in children, adolescents, and young adults (Baumrind, 1991; Buri, 1987). Buri (1987) reported that parent’s acceptance, approval , and support were significantly related to young adult’s self –esteem.

Derzon & Sale (2001) examined effects on adolescents of three parenting style: Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive. It was reported that in the authoritative parenting style, which is considered the most positive parenting approach, parents’ demand and responsiveness are high enabling an adolescent to have a sense of strong personal value, self control and a feeling of security. Bush, Mckenry & Wilson (2006) found that supportive behaviours of mothers toward their adolescent children positively predicted both self esteem and academic achievement. Suldo and Huebner’s (2004) research suggested that authoritative parenting increases general happiness and well-being. They have concluded that children raised by authoritative parents demonstrate high levels of life satisfaction, even when factors such as age, socioeconomic status, race, and family structure are considered.

Thomas & Clukey (1992) studied the relationship between parenting styles and young adult self concepts and evaluations of parents. The students’ self concepts were found to vary directly with the perceived level of parental warmth, but did not vary as a function of their parents’ level of restrictiveness. Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, and Dornbusch (1991) found that children raised by authoritarian parents are no better off in terms of positive self perception than children reared by neglectful parents. Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter, and Keehn (2007) reached a similar conclusion and found that children raised by authoritarian parents have significantly lower self-esteem than those who grow up with permissive or authoritative parents.

Lopez (2005) found a significant relationship between perceived authoritative parenting and self-esteem among college students, while no relationship between authoritarian parenting and low self-esteem was found.

Altson and Dudley (1987) proposed that happiness is the ability to enjoy one’s experiences accompanied by degree of excitement. Argyle, Martin and Crossland (1989) believe that happiness is composed of three related components-positive affects, absence of negative affects and satisfaction with life as a whole. Happiness in its pure or ideal form is a state of absolute peace, joy and contentment that results from having a perfectly harmonious and balanced soul. This complete absence of inner conflict and turmoil effectively renders the individual immune to all forms of suffering, regardless of their physical circumstances.

Cohen (2002) reported that happiness is a constructive notion and is essential in upholding a healthy life style. It is a sense of overall satisfaction with one’s whole life. Other definitions of happiness characterize it as a crucial motivator for humans and a

positive internal experience (Lu, 2001). Perhaps one of more comprehensive definitions of happiness is the one by Hills and Argyle (2002) who reported happiness to be a multidimensional entity consisting of emotional and cognitive parts. Describing a model of happiness, Lyubormirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade (2005) proposed that "a person's chronic happiness level is governed by three major factors: a genetically determined set-point for happiness, happiness relevant circumstantial factors, and happiness relevant activities and practices".

Griess (2010) investigated differences among positive psychology traits of happiness, hopefulness, and optimism, between three perceived parenting styles. Data analysis in this study supported that the perceived authoritative parenting style contributed to higher levels of optimism than the authoritarian parenting style.

Kazarian, Moghnie, Martin (2010) obtained that parental warmth correlated positively and parental overall rejection and specific rejection scores correlated negatively with subjective happiness ratings. Parental warmth tended to correlate positively with use of adaptive humor styles, and negatively with use of maladaptive humor styles, while parental rejection tended to correlate positively with use of maladaptive humor styles and negatively with use of adaptive humor styles

Against the above backdrop the present study was conducted with a view to compare self-esteem and happiness of children of parents of permissive, authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles.

## 2.Method

### 2.1.Participants

Initially a total of 120 students studying in class VIII, IX & X and their respective 120 mothers were taken as sample on availability basis from different schools of south Delhi. All the 120 students were administered self-esteem and happiness sales. These students were given parental authority questionnaire with instruction to give these questionnaires to their mothers and ask them to fill in the questionnaires as per the instructions given in the scale. On the basis of mothers' scores on a parental authority questionnaire, mothers were classified into three parenting styles. The mothers scoring the highest scores on a particular parenting style were kept in that style. For example, if mothers scored highest on the permissive style they were kept in permissive style, if mothers scored highest on authoritarian style they were kept in authoritarian style. Likewise, if mothers scored highest in authoritative style they were kept in authoritative style. 30 mothers who did not clearly fall into any category were dropped. A total of 90 children, 30 children of mothers of each group of the selected mothers were sorted out and statistical analyses of self-esteem and happiness scores of these children were made.

### 2.2.Measures

Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) : Parenting styles were measured by parenting style questionnaire developed by Buri (1991). According to Buri (1991) within the model proposed by Baumrind (1971) three distinct prototypes of parental authority have been offered- permissive, authoritarian and authoritative. This questionnaire measures these distinct prototypes of parental authority. However, Baumrind (1991) has given a fourfold classification of parenting behaviour. The fourth is 'rejecting-neglecting', but this prototype has not been included in Buri's questionnaire. This questionnaire is a psychologically appropriate and authentic tool for the assessment of parenting style. It has 30 questions. The 30 item scale contained 10 statements for each of the three types of parenting style: authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. This is a 5- point Likert type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). The potential range of scores for each of the three subscales is 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating the greater use of the particular parenting style. There are two forms of the scale one for mothers and another for fathers. In the present investigation, only the mother's form of the scale was used. The test-retest reliabilities for mother's permissiveness was found 0.81, for mother's authoritarianism 0.86, for mother's authoritative 0.78 and for father's permissiveness 0.77, for father's authoritarianism 0.85 and for father's authoritative 0.92. The internal consistency reliabilities using Cronbach coefficient alpha the values for mother's permissiveness was found 0.75, for mother's authoritarianism 0.85, for mother's authoritative 0.87 and for father's permissiveness 0.74, father's authoritarianism 0.87 and father's authoritative 0.85. The criterion related validity of PAQ was obtained by correlating Baumrind's prototypes with parental nurturance. Buri has stated that if the PAQ is a valid measure of Baumrind's prototypes, then parental authoritative should be positively related to parental nurturance, authoritarianism should be negatively related to parental nurturance and permissiveness should not be significantly related to nurturance. The authoritative parents were found to be highest in parental nurturance for both mothers ( $r=0.56$ ,  $p<0.0005$ ) and fathers ( $r=0.68$ ,  $p<0.0005$ ); authoritarian parenting was inversely related to nurturance for both mothers ( $r=-0.36$ ,  $p<0.0005$ ) and fathers ( $r=-0.53$ ,  $p<0.0005$ ) and parental permissiveness was unrelated to nurturance for both mothers ( $r=0.04$ ,  $p>0.10$ ) and fathers ( $r=0.13$ ,  $p>0.10$ ). These results at the time confirm that parental warmth is a discussion of parental authority that is inherent in the PAQ measurement.

Revised Oxford Happiness Scale : To assess the happiness of participants, the 29 item revised Oxford Happiness Scale (Hills & Argyle, 2001) was used. The scale contains 29 items or group of statements about personal happiness. Each group has four statements (a, b, c, and d) and the subject is asked to pick out the one statement that describes the way he/she is feeling. The scoring weights are 0,1,2,3 for a, b, c, and d statements respectively. The total score may range from 0 to 87. The scale has high scale reliabilities with values  $a(167)=0.92$  and  $a(168)=0.91$  respectively. The inter-item correlations for the scale ranges from 0.03 to 0.58. The correlations between corresponding items are significant at the  $P<0.001$  level. The sums of the positive and negative items both have high and virtually equal correlations with the whole scale,  $r(168)=0.92$ ,  $P<0.001$  and  $r(168)=0.94$ ,  $P<0.001$  respectively, and that the positive and negative items scores are also highly correlated,  $r=0.73$ ,  $P<0.001$ .

The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory :The Coopersmith Self-Esteem inventory (SEI) by Coopersmith (1987) was used to measure the Self-esteem of the subjects. The SEI is designed to measure the evaluative attitudes towards self in Social, Academic, Family, and Personal areas of experience. In the preset study child form of the scale was used. This form consists of 25 items. The subject has to put a "X" in the column of either "like me", if he/she thinks that the item signifies what he feels or "unlike me", if he/she thinks that the item does not signify what he/she feels. Reliability coefficients ranging from 0.71 to 0.80 have been reported when alternate forms were used.

### 3.Result

Variables	Parenting styles		
	Permissive	Authoritarian	Authoritative
Self-esteem	13.3	13.8	15.7
Happiness	48.4	47.8	50.9

Table 1 : Mean Self-Esteem And Happiness Scores Of Children Of Different Parenting Styles

Sources of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	significance
Between groups	120.867	2	60.433	6.723	<.01
Within groups	782.033	87	8.989		
Total	902.900	89			

Table 2 : One-Way ANOVA Summary For Self-Esteem

It can be observed from the above table that F-ratio for between groups was obtained significant beyond .01 level of significance. It means that at least two groups differed significantly in their mean self esteem scores, hence, Tukey's test for Multiple-comparison was applied in order to find out significant differences among means of different groups.

Parenting style	Comparison of Parenting style	Mean difference	Significance
Permissive	Authoritarian	.83	>.05
	Authoritative	2.76	< .01
Authoritarian	Permissive	.83	> .05
	Authoritative	1.93	< .05
Authoritative	Permissive	2.76	< .01
	Authoritarian	1.93	< .05

Table 3 : Results Of Tukey's Multiple Comparisons Of Means Of Self-Esteem

The above table shows that the difference between mean self esteem scores of children of permissive parents and Authoritarian parents was .83 which was not significant at .05 level of significance. However, the difference between mean scores of children of permissive and authoritative parents was 2.76 which was significant at .01 level of significance. Here Children of authoritative parents had greater mean self esteem score than children of permissive parents. The difference between mean self esteem scores of children of Authoritarian and Authoritative parents was 1.93 which was significant at .05 level of significance. In this case the children of authoritative parents had a greater mean self-esteem score than the children of authoritarian parents. Thus, children of authoritative parents had better self-esteem than children of both permissive and authoritarian styles.

Sources of variations	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Significance
Between groups	33.68	2	16.844	.136	>.05
Within groups	10764.53	87	123.730		
Total	10798.22	89			

Table 4 : One-Way ANOVA Summary For Happiness

It can be observed from the above table that F- ratio for between groups was obtained to be .136 which was not significant at .05 level of significance, hence no further statistical analysis was carried out for group comparisons.

#### 4. Discussion

The results of One-way ANOVA presented in table 1 for self-esteem showed a significant F - ratio. The post-hoc comparisons given in table 3 depicted significant difference between children of Permissive and Authoritative mothers where children of authoritative mothers had better self esteem than the children of permissive mothers (e.g. table 1). In the same way table 3 indicated significant differences between children of authoritative and authoritarian mothers on self-esteem. Here also the Self-esteem of children of mothers with authoritative parenting style had better self-esteem than children of authoritarian mothers (e.g. Table 1).

It should be recalled that according to Baumrind (1991) permissive style is characterized by the behavior that makes the parents leave the children to their own devices, simply providing the resources that the child requires. This parenting style respects the child's wishes and desires and no set standards of behaviour impose on the child by itself. On the other hand, the authoritative parent has time for both providing the child with standards of discipline as well as allowing latitude for the child when it is warranted. This style is much more open , encouraging the child to engage emotionally with the parent on the issues that are at stake. Here, everything the parent says is not law, but it has a sense that the parent has the final decision. Baumrind's analysis shows that the authoritative parenting style is mostly associated with positive outcomes for the child. Thus, authoritative parenting style with standards of discipline provided by the parents with latitude has a better outcome of self-esteem for a child than permissive one. These findings are in the line of findings of Derzon & Sale (2001).

On the other hand in permissive style the children are left to their own devices and parents provide the required resources. Here, though the child's wishes and desires are met by the parent, but no set standards of discipline is provided by them because of which the child is unable to learn right and wrong for himself. In the absence of set rules of discipline the child lacks proper guidance corrective measures which result in lower levels of self esteem in them. Herz and Gullone (1999) reported that parenting which was characterized by high levels of overprotection and low levels of acceptance was negatively related to self-esteem. The permissive style is such kind of style which overprotects and provides no decisive guidance in the rules of discipline. Thus, though it provides freedom to the child but is not as influential for the development of self-esteem as the authoritative style. The authoritarian parenting style could not be much different from the permissive style (Baumrind, 1991). It is a style characterized by the imposition of a set of rules and behaviours on the child that is strictly followed by the child. Thus, it puts a powerful control over the child's behaviour and wishes with no freedom to decide and take decisions on his/her own. The results of the present study demonstrate that both full freedom as in permissive style and the strict restrictions and impositions over child's wishes and behaviors as in authoritarian personality are detrimental for the development of self-esteem. Thus, authoritative style might be characterized as a midway between permissive and authoritarian styles, which takes the advantages of each type of parenting and combine them into a more effective approach.

ANOVA results related to happiness shown in table 4 reveals that F-ratio for between groups was found non-significant at .05 level. It means that the three parenting styles did not have any differential effect on the happiness of the child.

It seems that happiness as a feeling and cognitive aspect of personality has nothing to do with the parenting styles. 12-16 year old children get happiness from other resources, like school, peer-group, reading books, watching television, playing video-games etc. Since happiness being more emotional part of children's personality is not influenced only by family and parents as self-esteem is, the children of all parenting styles have almost equal degree of happiness from different sources. However, the results of multivariate and discriminant analyses obtained by Griess (2010) supported that perceived authoritative parenting style contributed to higher levels of optimism than the authoritarian parenting style. But here also optimism though depends on the environment is more likely to work as a personality trait. Thus, the findings of the present study related to happiness are in the expected lines.

#### 5. Conclusion

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that children of mothers of authoritative parenting style had better self-esteem than the children of mothers of permissive parenting style. They had also better self-esteem than children of mothers of authoritarian parenting style. However, self-esteem of children of mothers of permissive and authoritarian parenting styles did not differ significantly from each other. Children of mothers of three parenting styles did not differ on happiness.

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