

Cultural Variations in Parenting Styles and Their Impact on Child Development

Beiyi Cai^{1,a,*}

¹*Institute of Psychology, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK*
a. beiyi.cai@warwick.ac.uk

**corresponding author*

Abstract: With the advancement of globalization and the increase in cultural exchanges, a parenting style that adapts to globalization is necessary in order to better raise a new generation of newborns. The study explored the differences in parenting styles (PS) under different cultural backgrounds and their impact on children's development. The article focused on the interaction between culture and PS, using Baumrind's parenting style framework to review literature from different regions such as China, the United States, Nigeria, Spain and Singapore. By analyzing these articles, it was found that culture and social models were factors causing parenting style differences, but the authoritative parenting style is considered to be the best one among the four styles in most countries. PS have a profound influence on children's psychological, social, academic, and personal value generation, and the style will be passed on to children and show some similarities in their future behaviours. This study reveals the impact of cultural background on PS and its profound role in the all-round development of children, providing important theoretical basis and practical guidance for cross-cultural education and parent-child relationships in the era of globalization.

Keywords: Cultural variation, parenting style, child development, mental health.

1. Introduction

While transmitting from a child to an adult, children need a long learning process to gain knowledge of social rules and form individual goals and expectations. Bandura believes that people learn new behaviours by watching and imitating. People often imitate those who are knowledgeable, nurturing or high-status figures in daily life, and these people being imitated are called models. To children, their first and only model before they get in touch with society is their parents [1]. Children pay attention to their parents' behaviours and encourage them to disregard it is suitable or proper for their age. Meanwhile, parents' responses to the imitated behaviours from the children could greatly influence children's willingness to regenerate behaviours. Positive behaviours such as rewards or praise could give children confidence to regenerate the behaviours. Vice versa, punishments such as criticism, and assault decrease children's will to reproduce. Based on those theories towards children, Baumrind in 1967 proposed Baumrind's pattern of parenting [2]. Parents are the ones who bring their children into the social environment and give them socialization skills. The educational methods adopted by parents have a significant impact on children, impacting children's social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes [3].

There have always been similar studies, learning about the relationship between parenting style and its impact on children. With the covid-19, it can be found that the global is more closely connected through the internet and cultures communicate and interact on the internet [4]. Cultural norms and values often shape how parents approach child-rearing, leading to significant variations across different regions of the world. Whether online communication will affect parenting style and thus affect children's development under a closer connection to the world remains unknown. Globalization is an inevitable trend, and this review can show the impact of globalization on parenting styles (PS) and child development, to help find a statistically universal and good PS in the future, giving children a better future development. It is expected that under close communication, PS in different cultures will converge and their children will develop similarities in behaviour.

2. Method

The literature review is conducted through the ProQuest search platform, which includes a database of multiple research areas such as Science Direct, PubMed and Scopus. The period is limited to the last 5 years. The search terms used were "PS", "culture difference", "parent impact on child" and "child development" for most frequently mentioned psychological trauma. The search terms used were culture differences, PS and child development. The definition of PS must be based on Baumrind's theory [2].

3. Concept

PS is the standard strategy that parents use in raising their children. PS are shaped by cultural norms and significantly impact a child's development outcomes. Baumrind's theory claimed that based on strategies, behaviours and approaches, there are four types of PS depending on the degree of warmth and demand [2]. The warmth dimension, also known as responsiveness, involvement, acceptance, or implication, reflects the degree to which parents show love and affection, provide support, and engage in communication and reasoning with their children. The demand dimension, also called strictness, refers to the sense of control and parents' expectations towards children [5,6]. The four PS are respectively called: authoritative (High warmth and high strictness), authoritarian (Low warmth and high strictness), permissive (High warmth and low strictness) and neglectful/uninvolved (Low warmth and low strictness). Depending on parents' warmth and requirements towards their children, it could be divided into a four-quadrant diagram.

4. Culture Stereotypes

Culture is often described as the set of beliefs, behaviours, traditions, and values that distinguish a specific social group. It can include aspects such as nationality, ethnicity, region, religion, and other socially defined communities [7]. There are some cultural stereotypes which remain existing with evidence proven or disproved.

"Tiger parents" of Eastern parents refers to people with authoritarian PS, who emphasize education, place extreme pressure on academic achievement and reduce playtime. In China, traditional parenting emphasized obedience and family loyalty. Although modern Chinese parents have more democratic forms of control, but overprotective and indulgent parenting, often leading to the "little emperor" phenomenon, is also observed.

In American culture, children are encouraged to explore, express their opinions freely, and make their own decisions and criticism opinions from an early age. And Baumrind's PS—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—have long been influential.

South African parenting has been shaped by the country's diverse cultures, the historical context of apartheid, and socio-economic challenges. The authoritarian PS is still common, particularly among the Black African community.

In Southern European countries like Spain, the indulgent PS is more prevalent and is associated with positive outcomes for adolescents [8]. This PS emphasizes affection, involvement, and low levels of strict control [9].

5. The Outcome of PS

The impact of PS is reflected in different dimensions of children, including psychological development, academic achievement and personal value generation. It is found from different aspects and within different cultures that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and responsiveness will usually produce positive outcomes for a child which are often reflected as higher self-esteem (SE), better emotional regulation, and more prosocial behaviours because they are supported and believed by parents. They have higher achievements in academics and do not easily gain psychological disorders [10]. In contrast, authoritarian parenting, which is strict and lacks warmth, often results in children with lower SE, heightened anxiety, and poor social skills. These children might have academic achievement but with a higher possibility to attached to anxiety disorder and lower self-confidence. Permissive parenting provides high emotional safety but low strictness results in fewer academic achievements (AA). Neglectful parenting, marked by a lack of both warmth and structure, has the most detrimental effects, often leading to poor academic performance, social isolation, mental health issues, and an increased likelihood of delinquency and substance abuse [11].

Proof for the claim is Sarwar's experiment. Sarwar did researched about the relationship between PS—particularly authoritarian and authoritative styles—and juvenile delinquency [12]. By interviewing two Pakistan mothers, the researchers distinguished mothers' PS by analyzing the behaviours and attitudes described by mothers such as the language used, the way they responded to their children's behaviours, and the communication patterns in family interactions. For example, mothers who use words such as "scolding" and "anger" are classified as using authoritarian parenting, while those who use words such as "understanding", "asking" and "discussing" are classified as using authoritative parenting. Research revealed that authoritarian parenting was strongly linked to problematic behaviour in children such as delinquency, as children react to excessive control by becoming rebellious, while authoritative parenting fostered better communication and mitigated delinquent tendencies.

6. Comparison

In the following paragraphs, there will be a literature review of 9 articles from different regions about the different PS and the influence of PS on children from different aspects.

In Leung, Lau & Lam's study, they are focusing on the PS and academic achievement differences between China and United States & Australia According to their findings, PS is influenced by parents' AA and is passed on to the next generation [13]. By using self-rated questionnaires, children tell the experimenter about their parents' PS and self-academic achievement, and it is found that Chinese parents scored significantly higher in general authoritarianism compared to American and Australian parents, but also Chinese parents had the lowest education levels while American parents had the highest levels of education, divorce rates, and full-time employment among mothers. In conclusion, parents' education level could be told from how they balance control and support for their children to promote their overall development. Highly educated parents are more likely to give children a warm but low-stricting PS.

Akinsola did a questionnaire investigation and aimed to compare the PS prevalent in Nigeria and Cameroon and their impact on the perception of children [14]. Both in Africa, cultural and regional factors shape different PS: Nigerian parents primarily adopt authoritative, and a hybrid of authoritarian/authoritative PS and Cameroonian parents primarily practice permissive and permissive/authoritarian hybrid PS and they both have a positive outcome in local child such as higher social competence and greater emotional stability.

Martinez et al. aimed to investigate the relationship between PS and their effects on adolescents' SE and internalization of social values across three countries: Spain, Portugal, and Brazil [15]. The study found that indulgent parenting (characterized by high warmth but low strictness) was associated with equal or higher levels of adolescent SE and internalization of values compared to authoritative parenting (high warmth and high strictness). And considering all countries are horizontal collectivist societies, under which the focus is on sociability and interdependence with others in an egalitarian context, indulgent parenting has a better effect on children.

Martínez et al., compared the likely victims of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying in 1109 middle-class Spanish adolescents with the self-report questionnaire and found that indulgent and authoritative PS have a better-preventing effect towards children than authoritarian parenting in bullying and even found that gender differences influence the possibility of being bullied [6].

With a systematic review of literature from 2000 to 2018 on India adolescents in Sahithya Manohari & Vijaya 's research, authoritative parenting is generally associated with better outcomes for children across cultures, including higher SE, better academic performance, and fewer behavioural problems [16]. Authoritarian and uninvolved parenting was linked to negative outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and behavioural disorders and permissive parenting sometimes led to negative behaviours like substance abuse and antisocial behaviour. And especially in India, cultural factors like gender identity and family structures significantly influence PS.

In the investigation of Barnhart et al., by evaluating the rating towards hypothetical vignettes representing Baumrind's three PS, the study found that cultural context plays a significant role in how PS are perceived [17]. U.S. students favoured authoritative parenting, consistent with Western values of autonomy and independence, while Indian students showed a more mixed response, with some favouring permissive parenting, potentially reflecting cultural shifts due to globalization. Gender differences also shaped perceptions, with females leaning toward authoritative styles and males showing more variability, including a preference for permissive parenting in the U.S. and authoritarian parenting in India.

The scoping review by Cheung and Lim of PS and practices in Singapore focused on Singaporean samples and relevant child outcomes and found that optimal PS, such as authoritative parenting, were generally associated with positive child development outcomes in Singapore, similar to findings in Western contexts [18]. However, some parenting behaviours often considered suboptimal, such as high parental control, did not always lead to negative outcomes in Singapore. This suggests that cultural factors may moderate how control is interpreted and experienced by children, offering protective effects in certain contexts.

In García & Gracia 's study, researchers summarize existing research on PS and compare the effects of these PS across different cultural settings and countries using various tools, such as the Parental Socialization Scale (ESPA29) and the Authoritative Parenting Measure (APM) [19]. It is found that authoritative parenting is generally associated with better psychosocial adjustment, higher academic performance, better psychological competence, and fewer behaviour problems in children. As a general review, in comparing between countries, there is a significant vary depending on cultures. For example, in Asian and Arab societies, the authoritarian PS, typically seen as less optimal, may not be linked to negative outcomes. In South European and Latin American cultures, indulgent parenting (high acceptance, low strictness) is associated with better psychosocial outcomes for

children, even outperforming authoritative parenting in some cases such as better social competence and lower aggression and defiance. The authoritative PS might be optimal in many Western societies, but other PS like indulgent or authoritarian parenting may yield better results under different cultural environments such as horizontal collectivist cultures. Although strictness and imposition seem like negative behaviours in these cultures, it is still necessary for some contexts. Ideal PS may vary based on cultural factors and a positive PS in some contents need both warmth and strictness.

7. Differences and Similarity

Understanding how cultural difference influences PS and the effect of different PS under varied cultures is important in constructing a personalized PS. With a cross-culture review of 9 articles, it is aimed to discover the universal patterns and culturally specific outcomes in PS and child development. The reports being reviewed include countries such as China, the United States, Australia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Spain, Brazil, India, Singapore, and other regions. The differences in PS and outcomes including psychosocial development, academic achievement, and value formation are analyzed.

Under most of the situation, it is believed and found that authoritative parenting is most beneficial to the child and has the best outcome, especially in American countries like the United States and Australia. In Leung, Lau & Lam, it was found that authoritative PS are linked to better average academic outcomes and psychological well-being [13]. A similar result is also found in Barnhart et al. [17]. United States parents favour of authoritative parenting which is believed them bring academic success and strong emotional regulation. Under a warm and supportive environment, children are more willing to become individualistic and have confidence in self-realization.

In Asian and Arab cultures, the studies reveal that authoritarian parenting is more common among families than authoritative parenting. Although in Western countries, the authoritative PS seems strong controlling and rigid and not selected by American parents, it will not cause bad results in countries like China and Singapore. Leung, Lau & Lam discovered that Chinese parents rated higher in authoritarianism than American and Australian parents in the questionnaire [13]. However, AA remain a high score and are not influenced by PS. High parental control in Singapore is also found by Cheung & Lim and is protective to children for surviving in a competitive environment [18]. Concluded from García & Gracia's finding, under some Asian and Arab cultures, discipline and high control are necessary for maintaining family cohesion and authority of parents. It is believed to be an expression of care and responsibility [8].

This similarity in PS could be a result of the collectivist cultures, which are found in most Asian cultures.

Children are raised to see themselves as part of a hierarchical family structure. However, in the other region, horizontal collectivist societies like Spain, Portugal, and Brazil, Martinez et al. found that an indulgent PS will have a better psychological effect on giving children warmth and low strictness [15]. This is an interesting finding that it is usually believed that strictness is necessary to maintain the stability of the family structure, so most families will choose an authoritative or authoritarian PS. In collectivist societies, interpersonal relationships and sociability are valued higher than achievements and providing children with care and confidence gives them higher social ability. An indulgent PS is not a sense of spoiling under a culture that emphasises egalitarian family dynamics.

AA are also studied and found to be highly influenced by PS. The authoritarian PS in China did not produce significantly worse academic outcomes than the Authoritative PS [13]. Martinez et al. found that indulgent parenting in Spain, Portugal, and Brazil did not hinder academic success [15]. In conclusion to all those cultures, academic achievement is not related to PS although education is viewed as a communal endeavor supported by the family rather than children themselves. It is worth noting that although PS did not influence children's achievement in China, the academic level of parents will influence children's achievement.

In finding the PS of African culture, Akinsola compared Nigeria and Cameroon's PS and found that both authoritarian and authoritative PS plays a crucial role in raising children [14]. In Nigeria, authoritative parenting led to better psychosocial and academic outcomes, while in Cameroon, a mix of permissive and authoritarian styles also produced positive results. It could be concluded that although within the same country, regional differences and deprived cultures will have a great influence on PS.

It is worth noting that the role of gender influences PS. In Barnhart et al. 's findings, in the United States and India, females are more likely to choose authoritative parenting while males are willing to choose a hybrid of two PS or authoritarian PS [17]. It is analyzed that the difference might be due to the character of different genders within a family. Female is usually seen as a supportive and nurturing role and males take control and set out discipline, especially in patriarchal societies like India. In contrast, in a matriarchy society like Africa, women will have a higher voice and be more respected in the family. Martínez et al. also found that gender differences influenced the likelihood of being bullied, with boys and girls responding differently to PS [6]. Therefore, it is important to consider gender in cultures while analyzing PS.

It is found that personality formation has relations to PS as well. Sarwar highlights the influence of the authoritarian PS on juvenile delinquency compared to the authoritative PS [12]. Martinez et al. found that an indulgent PS led to a higher internalization of social values and less likely to commit crime with emotional support from family [15]. This finding is also supported by García & Gracia 's finding that warmth and support from PS are essential in developing personal values although the support from family reflects a different PS [19]. It is speculated that indulgent PS provide the environment for children to develop strong interpersonal values in horizontal collectivist cultures and strict PS including authoritarian and authoritative PS guiding the formation of personal values.

8. Future Topics (Criticism)

In all nine articles, most of the data collected about PS are from self-rated questionnaires from children. Regardless the data collection is too subjective, and there are no standard questions for which kinds of behaviors belong to one of the four PS or hybrid. There still needs to be further investigation into different behaviours under different cultures and reactions from children to conclude a universal standard for distinguishing the four PS.

Cultural nuances are ignored during the research. It could be found in Akinsola 's paper that under the same cultures, parents like tough and nurturing parents will have significant differences in PS selection [14]. Future research could investigate how subcultures or regions have impacts on PS and their outcomes.

The existence of cultural stereotypes has an influence on the hypothesis and aim of the research. Such stereotypes towards Chinese parents are authoritarian and dictatorial, but more parents nowadays are highly educated and will use a permissive PS and may even raise a "little spoiled emperor". It is worth mentioning while doing the research about the evolutionary and historical perspective and making an anticipation in future research.

9. Conclusion

Aiming to review the variation in PS across different cultures and their impact on children's development on different aspects, this paper examines the similarities and differences in PS in paper mentioned. It emphasizes that authoritative parenting is generally the most popular and has the best results in most western studies, but the situation also depends on the culture. Authoritarian and permissive PS can also produce favorable outcomes depending on the cultural context. The article emphasizes that a good PS should at least have appropriate warmth and control, but the situation has

a very high independent difference. The article also mentioned that with the global communication and integration, a more culturally inclusive and universally accepted PS needs to be studied and demonstrated. Future research should address the limitations of self-report data and stereotypes. A more standardized questionnaire for PS, similar to the standardized form of IQ test, needs to be developed.

References

- [1] Lei, M., & Medwell, J. (2021). *Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student teachers: How the shift to online collaborative learning affects student teachers' learning and future teaching in a Chinese context*. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 22(2), 169-179. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-021-09686-w>
- [2] Baumrind, D. (1967). *Child care practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior*. *Genetic psychology monographs*. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1967-05780-001>
- [3] Maccoby, E. E., & Martin, J. A. (1983). *Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction*. In P. H. Mussen (Series Ed.) & E. M. Hetherington (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology: Vol. IV. Socialization, Personality and Social Development* (4th Ed., pp. 1-101). New York: Wiley.
- [4] Basilaia, G., & Kvavadze, D. (2020). *Transition to online education in schools during a SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Georgia*. *Pedagogical Research*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.29333/pr/7937>
- [5] Darling, N., & Steinberg, L. (2017). *Parenting style as context: An integrative model*. In *Interpersonal development* (pp. 161-170). Routledge.
- [6] Martínez, I., Murgui, S., Garcia, O. F., & Garcia, F. (2019). *Parenting in the digital era: Protective and risk parenting styles for traditional bullying and cyberbullying victimization*. *Computers in human behavior*, 90, 84-92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.08.036>
- [7] Lansford J. E. (2022). *Annual Research Review: Cross-cultural similarities and differences in parenting*. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry, and allied disciplines*, 63(4), 466-479. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13539>
- [8] Garcia, F., & Gracia, E. (2009). *Is always authoritative the optimum parenting style? Evidence from Spanish families*. *Adolescence*, 44(173), 101-131.
- [9] Selin, H. (Ed.). (2013). *Parenting across cultures: Childrearing, motherhood and fatherhood in non-Western cultures* (Vol. 7). Springer Science & Business Media.
- [10] Steinberg, L., Elmen, J. D., & Mounts, N. S. (1989). *Authoritative parenting, psychosocial maturity, and academic success among adolescents*. *Child development*, 1424-1436. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1130932>
- [11] Awiszus, A., Koenig, M., & Vaisarova, J. (2022). *Parenting Styles and Their Effect on Child Development and Outcome*. *Journal of Student Research*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.47611/jsrhs.v11i3.3679>
- [12] Sarwar, S. (2016). *Influence of parenting style on children's behaviour*. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 3(2). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2882540>
- [13] Leung, K., Lau, S., & Lam, W.-L. (1998). *Parenting Styles and Academic Achievement: A Cross-Cultural Study*. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 44(2), 157-172. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23093664>
- [14] Akinsola, E. F. (2013). *Cultural variations in parenting styles in the majority world evidences from Nigeria and Cameroon*. In *Parenting in South American and African Contexts*. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/57003>
- [15] Martinez, I., Garcia, F., Veiga, F., Garcia, O. F., Rodrigues, Y., & Serra, E. (2020). *Parenting styles, internalization of values and self-esteem: A cross-cultural study in Spain, Portugal and Brazil*. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(7), 2370. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17072370>
- [16] Sahithya, B. R., Manohari, S. M., & Vijaya, R. (2019). *Parenting styles and its impact on children – a cross cultural review with a focus on India*. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 22(4), 357-383. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2019.1594178>
- [17] Barnhart, C. M., Raval, V. V., Jansari, A., & Raval, P. H. (2013). *Perceptions of parenting style among college students in India and the United States*. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 22, 684-693. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-012-9621-1>
- [18] Cheung, H. S., & Lim, E. (2022). *A scoping review of Singapore parenting: Culture-general and culture-specific functions of parenting styles and practices*. *Infant and Child Development*, 31(4), e2312. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01822.x>
- [19] García, F., & Gracia, E. (2013). *The indulgent parenting style and developmental outcomes in South European and Latin American countries*. *Parenting across cultures: Childrearing, motherhood and fatherhood in non-Western cultures*, 419-433. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7503-9_31