

A Study on Perceived Parenting Styles and Self-Esteem Among Emerging Adults

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ABSTRACT

Parenting experiences play a crucial role in shaping an individual's psychological development, particularly during emerging adulthood. Among the various psychological outcomes influenced by family experiences, self-esteem is considered fundamental to emotional well-being, self-worth, and overall psychological adjustment. The present study aims to examine the role of perceived parenting styles in shaping self-esteem among emerging adults. Specifically, it investigates the relationship between perceived parenting styles and self-esteem, gender differences in self-esteem and differences in self-esteem across perceived parenting styles. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was employed. Data were collected from a convenience sample of 100 emerging adults, comprising 50 males and 50 females. The Perceived Parenting Style Scale developed by Divya and Manikandan and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were used to assess perceived parenting styles and self-esteem, respectively. Statistical analyses were conducted using Pearson's product-moment correlation, an independent samples *t*-test, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in SPSS. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between self-esteem and all three perceived parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. No significant gender differences were found in self-esteem among emerging adults. However, significant differences in self-esteem were observed across the perceived parenting style groups, with participants perceiving permissive parenting reporting the highest mean self-esteem scores. Post hoc analysis further indicated that the significant difference was evident only between the authoritative and permissive parenting style groups. These findings highlight the importance of perceived parenting experiences in the development of self-esteem and suggest that perceptions of parental behaviour may play a significant role in shaping self-esteem during emerging adulthood.

Keywords: Perceived Parenting Style, Self-Esteem, Emerging Adults, Authoritative Parenting, Authoritarian Parenting and Permissive Parenting.

INTRODUCTION

In the entire life span, the family constitutes the single most important environment which impacts upon an individual's psychological development. Experiences that children and emerging adults encounter in the family are greatly determined by the home environment and the interactions of parents with their children. The two most powerful psychological variables affecting the younger people are perceived parenting style and self-esteem, each having unique contribution on one's self-worth and psychological functioning during their developmental period of exploring identity and oneself.

According to Morris Rosenberg, self-esteem is an individual's overall positive or negative evaluation of themselves, covering their appraisal of personal thoughts, emotions, and self-worth. He described it as a relatively stable yet adaptable construct shaped by social interactions and life experiences, especially within family and broader social contexts. It develops gradually through social experiences and interactions,

particularly within the family environment. Development of self-esteem begins during childhood and continues throughout adolescence and adulthood. In early life, caregiver responsiveness, acceptance, and emotional support influence children's perceptions of themselves. During adolescence, self-esteem becomes increasingly shaped by peer relationships, academic experiences, and social expectations. As individuals enter adulthood, self-esteem continues to evolve in response to life transitions, changing responsibilities, and personal achievements.

Emerging adulthood is a developmental phase typically spanning ages 18 to 25. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett coined the term which captures a distinct transitional period in Western societies and beyond. He described it as a bridge between adolescence and full adulthood, marked by growing independence alongside ongoing exploration of life's options. He outlined five core features that set emerging adulthood apart from earlier and later life stages, reflecting common psychological, social, and emotional patterns in the late teens to mid-twenties: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and seeing it as an age of possibilities. So, self-esteem is particularly important during emerging adulthood because this developmental stage involves active identity exploration along with considerable instability and uncertainty.

Parents play a fundamental role in shaping a child's personality, beliefs, emotions, and overall psychological development because they are usually the child's first and most influential social environment. Development of personality is strongly influenced by parenting behavior. Children often observe and imitate the attitudes, habits, and coping styles displayed by their parents.

Parenting styles can be understood as the regular way in which parents communicate with, guide, discipline, and respond to their children's needs and behaviors, thereby shaping the overall emotional climate of the family. The theoretical foundation of parenting styles was originally developed by Diana Baumrind in the 1960s, conceptualized parenting as a combination of parental attitudes toward childrearing and the methods used for socializing children. She identified three primary styles authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive which differ in levels of control, warmth, and parental expectations. Authoritative parents maintain a balance between the two, combining clear rules and expectations with emotional support, reasoning, and open dialogue, which promotes both independence and responsibility in children. Permissive parents are generally warm and accepting but set few rules or limits, allowing children considerable freedom in decision-making. Authoritarian parents, in contrast, emphasize strict discipline, obedience, and control, with limited emotional warmth and minimal open communication.

Later, Maccoby and Martin (1983) expanded this framework by introducing two key dimensions: responsiveness (emotional support and acceptance) and demandingness (control and supervision). Based on these, they proposed four parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful. Indulgent parents are highly responsive but low in control, offering warmth with minimal restrictions, while neglectful parents show low responsiveness and low involvement, often being disengaged from the child's emotional and developmental needs. This expanded model provides a more nuanced understanding of parenting, highlighting how different combinations of warmth and control influence child development outcomes. Perceived parenting style refers to a child or adolescent's subjective interpretation of their parents' behaviours, attitudes, emotional warmth, control, and communication patterns. It focuses on how parenting is experienced and understood by the child rather than how it is intended by the parent (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In other words, it highlights the fact that the same parental behaviour may be interpreted differently depending on the child's feelings, experiences, and relationship with their parents. While parents may act with intentions such as guidance, protection, or discipline, children may not always perceive these actions in the same way. Such as, strict monitoring of a child's activities may be intended as care and concern, but the child may experience it as excessive control or lack of trust. Thus, perceived parenting style emphasizes the child's emotional and cognitive interpretation of parenting behaviours, which contributes significantly in shaping their psychological development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous research has consistently highlighted the significant role of parenting styles in the development of

self-esteem among adolescents and emerging adults. Most studies have reported that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and appropriate control, is positively associated with higher self-esteem and better psychological adjustment (Tunç & Tezer, 2006; Milevsky et al., 2007; Sharma & Pandey, 2015; Okunlola et al., 2020; Gul et al., 2024; Ahmed, 2025). Several studies have also found that permissive parenting is associated with higher self-esteem, although these findings have been less consistent across different cultural contexts (Martínez & García, 2014; Vasudeva, 2022). In contrast, authoritarian parenting has generally been linked to lower self-esteem and poorer emotional outcomes (Tunç & Tezer, 2006; Sharma & Pandey, 2015; Ahmed, 2025).

Research has further emphasized that parental warmth, acceptance, and emotional support are important contributors to the development of healthy self-esteem (Deshpande & Chhabriya, 2013). Although some studies have reported gender differences in self-esteem (Vasudeva, 2022; Eldaffa et al., 2025), others have found little or no significant differences (Sharma & Pandey, 2015). Additionally, Eldaffa et al. (2025) found no significant relationship between perceived parenting styles and self-esteem, indicating that this association may vary across populations and cultural settings.

Overall, the existing literature suggests that supportive parenting practices are generally associated with higher self-esteem, while controlling or less supportive parenting is linked to poorer psychological outcomes. However, inconsistencies regarding the influence of permissive parenting and gender differences indicate the need for further research, particularly among emerging adults in diverse cultural contexts.

Rationale And Objective

Emerging adulthood is a crucial developmental stage during which self-esteem is shaped by earlier family experiences and perceptions of parental behaviour. Previous research has consistently shown that parenting styles influence self-esteem, with authoritative parenting generally associated with higher self-esteem (Gul et al., 2024). However, most studies have focused on children and adolescents or have classified parenting styles objectively, giving less attention to individuals' subjective perceptions of parenting.

Research examining perceived parenting styles and self-esteem among emerging adults (19–25 years) remains limited, and findings regarding the relationship between different parenting styles and self-esteem have been inconsistent. Additionally, there is a lack of culturally relevant research in the Indian context using indigenous measures such as the Perceived Parenting Style Scale (PPSS; Divya & Manikandan, 2013). Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationship between perceived parenting styles and self-esteem among emerging adults using the PPSS, thereby contributing to a better understanding of how perceived parenting experiences influence self-esteem and providing evidence that may inform counseling psychology and mental health interventions.

Objectives

The present study aims:

- To investigate the relationship between perceived parenting styles and self-esteem among emerging adults.
- To compare self-esteem across different perceived parenting style groups.
- To examine gender differences in self-esteem among emerging adults.

Method Of the Study

Design And Participants

The present study was based on non-experimental, quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the relationship between perceived parenting styles and self-esteem among emerging adults. The participants

of the present study were adults aged between 19- 25years from Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, Odisha. A convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants for the study. Around 100 participants consisting of 50 males and 50 females were taken in the study.

Measures

Perceived Parenting Style Scale: Divya and Manikandan (2013) devised the Perceived Parenting Style Scale (PPSS). The scale evaluates how people view their parents' conduct and methods of parenting. It evaluates three aspects of perceived parenting approaches namely Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive. The scale consists of 30 positive items rated on a five- point Likert Scale. The scale was administered in bilingual format (English and Malayalam) with clear instructions provided to the participants. Scores for the three parenting styles were calculated separately.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale was developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965. The scale is widely used to assess global self-esteem and measures an individual's overall sense of worth. The scale consists of 10 items rated on four -point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Higher the scores indicate higher levels of self-esteem.

Procedure

The data for the present study were collected from emerging adults aged 19-25 years residing in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, Odisha, using the offline mode through pen and paper method. Before the administration of the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the aim and purpose of the study and were assured that the information provide by them will remain confidential and would be used solely for research purpose before obtaining their consent. Basic demographic details including name, age, gender, educational qualification were collected. The participants were then asked to complete Perceived Parenting Style Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The collected data was scored and analysed using SPSS.

RESULTS

Table 1 represents the descriptive statistics of perceived parenting style, and self-esteem among emerging adults. A total of 100 participants were included in the study. The mean score for perceived parenting style was $M = 1.42$, with a standard deviation of $SD = 0.71$. For self-esteem, the participants had a mean score of $M = 21.40$ and a standard deviation of $SD = 6.24$, indicating a moderate level of self-esteem among the participants.

Table-1 Descriptive statistics of perceived parenting style and self-esteem among emerging adults

	N	Mean	SD
parenting style	100	1.42	.713
self-esteem	100	21.40	6.241

Table 2 Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between self-esteem and perceived parenting styles among emerging adults. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and authoritative parenting style ($r = .403$, $p < .01$), indicating that participants who perceived their parents as more authoritative tended to report higher levels of self-esteem. A significant positive correlation was also found between self-esteem and authoritarian parenting style ($r = .444$, $p < .01$). This finding indicates that higher perceived authoritarian parenting was associated with higher self-esteem among the participants. Similarly, the relationship between self-esteem and permissive parenting style was found to be significant and positive ($r = .391$, $p < .01$), suggesting that participants perceiving higher permissive parenting also reported higher self-esteem levels.

Table 2 Correlation between Perceived Parenting Styles and Self-Esteem

Variable	1	2	3
Self-Esteem	-		
Authoritative	.403**	-	
Authoritarian	.444**	.124**	-
Permissive	.391**	.158**	.783**

Table 3 presents the comparison of self-esteem scores between males and females. The mean self-esteem score for males ($M = 22.38$, $SD = 7.90$) was slightly higher than that of females ($M = 20.42$, $SD = 3.78$). However, the independent sample t-test revealed that the difference was not statistically significant $t = 1.58$, $p = .117$. This indicates that there was no significant gender difference in self-esteem among the participants. The effect size was small Cohen's $d = .31$ suggesting a weak practical difference in self-esteem between males and females.

Table 3 Comparison of Mean Scores of Self-esteem between Males and Females

Variable	Female (N=50)		Male (N=50)		t	df	p	Cohen's d
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Self-esteem	20.42	3.78	22.38	7.90	1.58	98	.117	.31

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of self-esteem across different perceived parenting styles among emerging adults. The findings indicate that participants who perceived their parents as permissive reported the highest level of self-esteem ($M = 26.00$, $SD = 9.43$), followed by participants with perceived authoritarian parenting style ($M = 22.50$, $SD = 6.47$). In contrast, participants with perceived authoritative parenting style reported the lowest mean self-esteem score ($M = 20.31$, $SD = 5.05$).

Table 4 Descriptive statistics of Self-Esteem across Perceived Parenting Styles

Variables	N	M	SD
Authoritative	71	20.31	5.05
Authoritarian	16	22.50	6.47
Permissive	13	26.00	9.43
Total	100	21.40	6.24

Table 5 presents the results of the one-way ANOVA examining differences in self-esteem across perceived parenting style groups. The findings revealed a statistically significant difference in self-esteem scores among the three perceived parenting styles, $F(2,97) = 5.28$ and $p = .007$. This indicates that self-esteem significantly differed according to perceived parenting style among emerging adults. As the ANOVA was statistically significant, a post hoc analysis was conducted to identify the specific group differences.

Table 5 ANOVA Summary for Self-Esteem across Perceived Parenting Styles

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between groups	378.817	2	189.408	5.284	.007
Within groups	3477.183	97	35.847		
Total	3856.00	99			

Note. SS= Sum of Squares; MS=mean Square

Table 6 presents the results of the Tukey HSD post-hoc test conducted to determine which parenting style groups differed significantly in self-esteem. The results revealed that a significant difference in self-esteem exists between permissive and authoritative parenting styles, with participants perceiving permissive parenting reports higher self-esteem scores than those perceiving authoritative parenting ($MD = 5.69$, $p = .006$). However, no significant differences were found between authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles ($p=.387$) or between authoritarian and permissive parenting style ($p = .265$)

Table 6 Tukey HSD Post-Hoc Comparisons of Self-Esteem across Parenting Styles

Comparisons groups	MD	p
Authoritative vs. Authoritarian	2.19	.387
Authoritative vs. Permissive	5.69*	.006
Authoritarian vs. Permissive	3.50	.265

Note. $p < .05$.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between perceived parenting styles and self-esteem among emerging adults, as well as gender differences and differences in self-esteem across parenting styles. Data were collected from 100 participants and analysed using Pearson correlation, independent samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA.

The correlational findings indicated significant positive relationships between self-esteem and perceived authoritative ($r = .403$, $p < .01$), authoritarian ($r = .444$, $p < .01$), and permissive parenting styles ($r = .391$, $p < .01$). These findings partially support previous research, which consistently reports that authoritative parenting is positively associated with higher self-esteem due to warmth and responsiveness (Milevsky et al., 2007; Sharma & Pandey, 2015). However, the positive associations found for authoritarian and permissive parenting contrast with most existing literature, which typically links these styles with lower self-esteem (Martínez & García, 2014; Kou, 2022). The present findings may be interpreted in light of cultural and contextual factors, particularly within collectivistic settings where authoritarian parenting may be perceived as an expression of care, discipline, or parental investment rather than psychological control. Such interpretations may alter the internalization of parenting behaviours and subsequently influence self-esteem outcomes.

The independent samples t-test revealed no statistically significant gender differences in self-esteem, $t = 1.58$, $p = .117$. This finding is consistent with Sharma and Pandey (2015), who also reported negligible gender differences in self-esteem among adolescents. The one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant effect

of perceived parenting style on self-esteem, $F(2, 97) = 5.28, p = .007$. Participants who perceived permissive parenting reported the highest self-esteem ($M = 26.00, SD = 9.43$), followed by those perceiving authoritarian parenting ($M = 22.50, SD = 6.47$), whereas those perceiving authoritative parenting reported the lowest self-esteem ($M = 20.31, SD = 5.05$). A Tukey HSD post-hoc analysis further indicated that the significant difference was specifically between the authoritative and permissive parenting styles with participants perceiving permissive parenting reports significantly higher self-esteem. No significant differences were observed between other parenting style groups. This pattern is inconsistent with a substantial body of literature that identifies authoritative parenting as the most adaptive style for self-esteem development (e.g., Milevsky et al., 2007; Sharma & Pandey, 2015; Okunlola et al., 2020). Nevertheless, some prior evidence suggests that indulgent or permissive parenting may be associated with higher self-esteem in certain sociocultural contexts (Martínez & García, 2014), indicating that the effects of parenting.

Implications, Limitations And Suggestions For Future Work

The study highlights the theoretical importance of perceived parenting styles in shaping self-esteem among emerging adults, suggesting that individuals' perceptions of parenting may be as influential as the parenting style itself. Practically, the findings emphasize the role of perceived emotional support, acceptance, and parent-child communication in fostering healthy self-esteem. They also indicate that the impact of parenting styles may vary depending on individual perceptions and cultural context. Furthermore, the study underscores the need for psychoeducational programs to promote positive parenting practices and suggests that counselling interventions for emerging adults should consider family perceptions and early parenting experiences to enhance self-esteem and psychological well-being.

The study has several limitations. The relatively small sample size ($N = 100$) and the use of convenience sampling limit the generalizability and representativeness of the findings. Additionally, the study relied on participants' subjective perceptions of parenting styles, which may not accurately reflect actual parenting practices. Finally, other factors that could influence self-esteem, such as personality traits, family structure, and socioeconomic status, were not considered.

Future research should use larger and more diverse samples to improve the generalizability of findings and consider employing additional statistical analyses. Combining self-report measures with parent-reported assessments may help reduce bias associated with subjective perceptions. Qualitative or mixed-method approaches could provide deeper insights into how individuals perceive and experience parenting styles in relation to self-esteem. Furthermore, future studies should examine potential moderating and mediating variables, such as attachment style, social support, and emotional regulation, to better understand the relationship between perceived parenting styles and self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationship between perceived parenting styles and self-esteem among emerging adults, along with gender differences and variations in self-esteem across parenting style groups. The findings indicated significant positive associations between self-esteem and all three perceived parenting styles authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. No significant gender differences were found in self-esteem suggesting that self-esteem during emerging adulthood may be influenced more strongly by interpersonal and familial experiences than by gender alone. However, self-esteem significantly differed across parenting style groups, with permissive parenting showing the highest mean scores. Tukey HSD post hoc analysis indicated that the significant difference was observed only between authoritative and permissive parenting styles. These variations in findings may be addressed by the subjective nature of perceived parenting, as individual's perceptions of their parents' behavior may have a greater impact on their self-esteem than the actual parenting style itself. The perception and internalization of parental behaviors throughout emerging adulthood can also be influenced by cultural norms, family expectations, and environmental factors.

The findings suggest that the way individuals perceive and interpret parental behaviors can meaningfully influence their sense of self-worth during this important developmental stage. Although the results partially differed from existing literature, they emphasize the influence of cultural context, subjective experiences, and family dynamics in understanding psychological outcomes. Overall, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between parenting and self-esteem and underscores the need for further research to explore these associations across diverse populations and sociocultural settings.

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