

Exploring the Relationship between Self-Concept, Adjustment and Parenting Styles in Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between self-concept, adjustment, and parenting styles among adolescent students. A sample of 110 adolescents aged 14–18 years was selected using convenience sampling from local schools and colleges. The Self-Concept Questionnaire by R.K. Saraswat, the Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS) by Sinha and Singh, and Multi-Dimensional Parenting Style Scale by Chauhan & Khokhar were used to assess self-concept, adjustment, and parenting styles, respectively. The findings suggest that positive parenting styles, such as acceptance and encouragement, significantly contribute to better emotional and social adjustment among adolescents. Democratic parenting was associated with improved interpersonal skills, while autocratic parenting exhibited a complex influence, enhancing educational adjustment but negatively impacting moral self-concept. These results highlight the role of parenting in fostering adolescents' resilience, confidence, and decision-making abilities.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage characterized by significant physical, emotional, cognitive, and social transformations. It is a period of identity formation and self-exploration, during which individuals develop a sense of self and learn to adjust to their changing environments (Erikson, 1968). Several psychological constructs influence an adolescent's overall well-being, including self-concept, adjustment, and parenting style. The interplay among these factors is essential for comprehending adolescent development and fostering positive psychological outcomes.

Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of themselves, encompassing beliefs, attitudes, and evaluations about their abilities, appearance, and social roles (Rosenberg, 1965). It is a dynamic construct shaped by social interactions and experiences, playing a crucial role in academic achievement, self-esteem, and emotional well-being (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). During adolescence, self-concept becomes more differentiated, as individuals integrate feedback from parents, peers, and teachers into their self-perception (Harter, 1999). Adolescents with a positive self-concept tend to engage more confidently in social interactions and develop stronger interpersonal relationships. A well-developed self-concept enhances their ability to resist peer pressure and cultivate healthy connections with others. In contrast, individuals with low self-esteem may be more susceptible to engaging in risky behaviors, such as substance abuse and unsafe sexual practices. Overall, self-concept plays a pivotal role in adolescent development, significantly impacting cognitive, social, and emotional well-being.

Adjustment is closely linked to self-concept as it involves adapting one's thoughts, behaviors, and emotions to navigate various situations effectively. It refers to an individual's ability to adapt to their environment, effectively manage stressors, and

maintain psychological well-being (Shaffer, 1961). Adjustment is regarded as an indicator of integration, reflecting an individual's harmonious behavior that allows them to be recognized as well-adjusted within society (Chauhan, Golhar, & Madhura, 2016). Achieving satisfactory adjustment during adolescence is crucial, as it significantly impacts self-concept and personality development (Kabir and Sultana, 2017). It plays a vital role in maintaining equilibrium between an individual's needs and their ability to fulfill them. Adolescents must have multiple domains of adjustment, including emotional, social, and academic adaptation. A well-adjusted adolescent demonstrates resilience in coping with challenges, whereas maladjustment can lead to psychological distress and behavioral problems (Santrock, 2019).

Parenting style significantly influences adolescent self-concept and adjustment. Being a parent is a complicated task involving various distinct behaviours that both individually and collectively impact a child's outcomes. Parents serve as key role models and influencers for teenagers, helping them to develop their morality, personality, character, and faith. They serve as a source of motivation for children as they grow and mature (Khairillah, 2011). Interactions with parents and family also influence children's attitudes and actions toward other individuals and society (Smith, 2007). Parents that use effective parenting practices can fulfill their duty to help their children reach their full potential (Azizi & Jaafar, 2006). Parenting style is described as the attitudes directed toward a child, reflected through actions, gestures, vocal tone, and the spontaneous display of emotions. Baumrind (1971) identified three primary parenting styles i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive each differing in levels of responsiveness and demandingness. Social competence, academic achievement, psychosocial development, problem behaviour, optimism, confidence, motivation, and attention issues are among the outcomes that can be predicted by the three parenting philosophies (Terry, 2004). Later, Maccoby & Martin (1981)

expanded this framework to include the neglectful parenting style¹. Children's behaviour and traits are influenced by their parents' parenting style (Blondin & Cochran, 2011). Research indicates that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and structure, is associated with higher self-esteem and better adjustment in adolescents (Steinberg, 2001). Conversely, authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles are linked to lower self-concept and emotional maladjustment (Dornbusch et al., 1987). Parenting styles aim to shape children's personalities to meet the needs of individuals, communities, and families for appropriate behaviour.

There is a limited number of studies in our country that explore the relationship between adolescent self-concept, adjustment, and parenting styles. Therefore, this study aims to provide an updated perspective on parenting styles and their impact on adolescents self-concept and adjustment. The primary objective is to examine self-concept, adjustment, and parenting styles among adolescents, and to analyze the relationship between different parenting approaches and adolescent self-concept and adjustment.

Objectives of the Study: The present study has the following objectives:

1. To study the self-concept and adjustment level of 3. adolescents.
2. To examine the parenting style of the adolescent parents.
3. To evaluate the relationship between self-concept, adjustment, and parenting style in adolescents.

Methodology:

Sample: The study recruited 110 participants from local schools in Delhi/NCR through convenience sampling. The inclusion criteria specified that participants be between 14 and 17 years old and currently enrolled in school. Additionally, any one of the parents of adolescents also participated in the study to examine their parenting styles.

Tools Used: The following psychological tests have been used to measure the self-concept, adjustment, and parenting style.

Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ): The Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ) was used to measure the self-concept of adolescents. It was developed by Raj Kumar Saraswat in 1984. It has 48 items, categorized into six distinct dimensions of self-concept: physical self-concept, social self-concept, temperamental self-concept, educational self-concept, moral self-concept, and intellectual self-concept. Each item in the questionnaire is rated on a five-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicate a more positive self-concept. The reliability of the inventory was found by the test-retest method, and it was found to be .91 for the total self-concept measure. The maximum obtained score is 240 and the minimum is 40.

Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS): To measure adjustment in adolescents, the Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS) has been used. It was developed by A.K.P. Sinha and R.P. Singh in 2007. It has 60 items that evaluate how well students cope with various aspects of their academic, social, and emotional lives, providing valuable insights into their overall psychological well-being. It has high reliability and validity, with item correlations above 0.90. Norms are calculated separately for males and females to aid interpretation.

The Multi-Dimensional Parenting Style Scale (MDPSS): The MDPS is a multidimensional scale that assesses both the maternal and paternal aspects of parental behavior. It was developed by Chauhan & Khokhar in 1985. It is a five-point rating scale that assesses positive and negative parenting styles on four dimensions: support, behavioral control, psychological control, and autonomy granting. It has a reliability of 0.62 for the positive dimension and 0.921 for the negative dimension. The validity is 0.67 for the positive dimension and 0.72 for the negative dimension.

Result & Interpretation

For the data analysis in the present study, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Measures such as mean, standard deviation, and correlation were utilized based on the characteristics of the collected data.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Self Concept and Adjustment in Adolescents (n=110)

Variables		Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Concept	Physical	28.71	2.64
	Social	28.94	4.04
	Temperamental	29.46	4.44
	Educational	28.91	4.64
	Moral	31.23	3.17
	Intellectual	29.77	4.10
Adjustment	Emotional	6.23	3.27
	Social	7.03	2.81
	Educational	7.40	2.96

Table 1 demonstrates the mean and standard deviation of self-concept and adjustment in adolescents. Among the six dimensions of self-concept, the moral self-concept recorded the highest mean score which is 31.23 with a standard deviation of 3.17, indicating that adolescents perceive themselves positively in terms of moral and ethical values. This finding aligns with research suggesting that moral development during adolescence is shaped by parental influence and social learning (Kohlberg, 1984; Eisenberg, 2000). The intellectual self-concept also showed a high mean score ($M = 29.77$, $SD = 4.10$), suggesting that students generally have a positive perception of their cognitive abilities. Previous studies have found a strong link between intellectual self-concept and academic achievement (Marsh & Craven, 2006). Similarly, temperamental self-concept with a mean score of 29.46 and standard deviation of 4.44 reflects adolescents' awareness and regulation of their emotions, which is crucial for social interactions and mental well-being (Harter, 1999).

Other dimensions, such as social mean score of 28.94 and standard deviation of 4.04, with an educational mean score of 28.91 and standard deviation of 4.64, and physical self-concept ($M = 28.71$, $SD = 2.64$), indicate that adolescents generally hold moderate to high self-perceptions in these areas. Research suggests that a positive self-concept is associated with higher self-esteem, better peer relationships, and greater resilience in academic settings (Santrock, 2019; Rosenberg, 1979).

Further, in the adjustment measure, the findings indicate that emotional adjustment has the lowest mean score ($M = 6.23$, $SD = 3.27$), suggesting that adolescents in the study demonstrate better emotional stability compared to their social and educational adjustment. This finding is consistent with studies indicating that adolescents with a positive self-concept tend to have greater emotional resilience and lower psychological distress (Steinberg, 2001; Sinha & Singh, 2000). However, social adjustment ($M = 7.03$, $SD = 2.81$) and educational adjustment ($M = 7.40$, $SD = 2.96$) scores are slightly higher, implying that students

face more challenges in adapting to social interactions and academic demands. Research by Sinha and Singh (2000) highlights that adolescents often struggle with social adjustment due to peer pressure, identity formation, and changing social roles. Similarly, academic stress and performance expectations contribute to difficulties in educational adjustment (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

The results suggest that while adolescents generally perceive themselves positively across different dimensions of self-concept, they experience greater challenges in social and educational adjustment. These findings support the notion that parenting styles, peer interactions, and academic environments play a crucial role in adolescent self-concept and adjustment (Baumrind, 1971; Dornbusch et al., 1987).

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Parenting Styles in Adolescents (n=110)

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Positive Parenting Styles		
Love Parenting Style	52.52	10.22
Encouragement Parenting Style	49.34	10.10
Acceptance Parenting Style	50.50	8.22
Progressivism Parenting Style	41.54	11.64
Democratism Parenting Style	48.72	11.40
Independency Parenting Style	46.81	10.09
Dominance Parenting Style	50.03	14.54
Negative Parenting Style		
Hate Parenting Style	47.60	16.65
Rejection Parenting Style	51.50	14.38
Autocratism Parenting Style	50.61	15.00
Discouragement Parenting Style	57.60	9.98
Submission Parenting Style	55.20	12.43
Conservatism Parenting Style	51.52	13.06
Dependency Parenting Style	52.14	11.60

Table 2 depicts mean and standard deviation of parenting styles in adolescents. Among the positive parenting styles, love parenting style recorded the highest mean score ($M = 52.52$, $SD = 10.22$), suggesting that adolescents in the study perceive their parents as affectionate, supportive, and emotionally warm. Research indicates that love-oriented parenting fosters secure attachment, emotional well-being, and higher self-esteem in children (Baumrind, 1991; Rohner, 2004). Acceptance parenting style ($M = 50.50$, $SD = 8.22$) and dominance parenting style ($M = 50.03$, $SD = 14.54$) also showed relatively high scores, suggesting that while parents provide a nurturing environment, they may also exert some level of control. Previous studies highlight that authoritative parenting, which balances warmth and control, is associated with higher academic achievement and emotional resilience (Steinberg, 2001; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Further, among negative parenting styles, discouragement parenting style had the highest mean score ($M = 57.60$, $SD = 9.98$), indicating that some adolescents experience critical, unsupportive, or discouraging parental behaviors. Research suggests that

discouragement can lead to low self-esteem, academic difficulties, and emotional distress (Pomerantz & Wang, 2009). Rejection parenting style ($M = 51.50$, $SD = 14.38$) and submission parenting style ($M = 55.20$, $SD = 12.43$) also exhibited high scores, suggesting that some parents either neglect their children emotionally or overly enforce obedience, potentially leading to psychological distress and poor adjustment (Grolnick, 2003; Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005). Research indicates that extreme parental rejection and hostility are associated with higher risks of depression, anxiety, and behavioral issues in adolescents (Rohner & Britner, 2002).

The findings suggest that positive parenting styles, particularly love and acceptance, contribute to healthier adolescent development, whereas negative parenting styles, such as discouragement and rejection, pose risks to psychological well-being. Studies have consistently shown that parenting styles significantly influence self-concept, adjustment, and mental health outcomes in adolescents (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Pinquart, 2017).

Table 3: Correlation Coefficient between Self-Concept, Adjustment and Parenting Styles

Variables		Adjustment			Self-Concept					
		Emotion al	Social	Educational	Physical	Social	Temper-amental	Educational	Moral	Intellectual
Positive Parenting Style	Love	0.172	.222*	-0.159	0.093	0.178	0.071	0.135	0.093	0.092
	Encouragement	0.173	.209*	-0.180	0.077	0.173	0.046	0.131	0.159	-0.008
	Acceptance	.221*	.254**	-0.172	0.069	0.122	0.116	0.160	0.182	0.097
	Progressivism	0.123	0.163	-0.105	0.050	0.031	0.116	0.084	0.001	-0.017
	Democratism	.105	.189*	0.179	-0.004	0.043	0.027	0.069	0.003	0.035
	Independency	-0.094	-0.166	-0.131	0.048	0.061	0.032	0.087	-0.023	-0.014
	Dominance	0.017	0.153	-0.101	0.105	-0.056	0.016	0.112	0.036	-0.025
Negative Parenting Style	Hate	-0.012	0.091	0.097	0.026	0.032	0.048	-0.048	-0.064	0.029
	Rejection	-0.046	0.075	0.059	-0.021	0.054	0.164	0.067	-0.067	0.034
	Autocratism	0.040	0.144	.231*	-0.069	-0.149	-0.005	-0.164	-.217*	-0.119
	Discouragement	-0.054	0.025	0.080	0.138	0.031	0.088	-0.025	-0.056	0.038
	Submissive	0.062	0.075	0.184	0.010	0.022	0.064	0.050	0.014	0.134
	Conservatism	-0.126	-0.018	0.048	-0.016	0.065	0.086	0.065	0.031	0.150
	Dependency	-0.018	0.113	0.113	0.017	0.020	0.092	0.018	-0.023	0.112

The higher mean scores for discouragement and rejection parenting styles highlight the need for parental awareness programs and counseling interventions to promote supportive parenting practices. Encouraging authoritative parenting, which balances warmth with discipline, could lead to better emotional regulation, academic motivation, and social competence in adolescents (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg, 2001).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis (table 3) reveals several significant relationships between parenting styles, adjustment, and self-concept in adolescents. Acceptance parenting style shows a significant positive correlation with emotional adjustment ($r = -0.221$, $p < 0.05$) and social adjustment ($r = -0.254$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that adolescents who perceive their parents as accepting tend to have better emotional regulation and social interactions, consistent with prior findings on parental warmth and psychological well-being (Rohner, 2004; Khaleque & Rohner, 2012). Encouragement parenting style also positively correlates with social adjustment ($r = -0.209$, $p < 0.05$), reinforcing the idea that supportive parenting fosters better social adaptability in adolescents (Baumrind, 1991). Additionally, the democratism parenting style positively correlates with social adjustment ($r = -0.189$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that adolescents raised in democratic households develop stronger interpersonal skills, aligning with research on authoritative parenting (Steinberg, 2001). On the other hand, autocratic parenting shows a significant positive correlation with educational adjustment ($r = 0.231$, $p < 0.05$) but a negative correlation with moral self-concept ($r = -0.217$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that while strict parental control may enhance academic discipline, it may simultaneously hinder moral development, supporting studies on the restrictive nature of authoritarian parenting (Pinquart, 2017). The findings emphasize that positive and democratic parenting styles contribute to social and emotional well-being, while excessively controlling parenting may foster academic performance at the cost of moral reasoning and social competence. These results align with previous research on the complex role of parenting styles in adolescent development and highlight the need for balanced parenting approaches that promote both academic success and socio-emotional well-being.

CONCLUSION

The present study highlights the significant relationship of parenting styles with adolescents' self-concept and adjustment. The findings suggest that positive parenting styles, particularly acceptance, encouragement, and democratism, contribute to better emotional and social adjustment, reinforcing the importance of supportive and nurturing parental behaviors. Conversely, autocratic parenting, while positively associated with educational adjustment, negatively influences moral self-concept, indicating that excessive parental control may hinder ethical development despite fostering academic discipline. Future research should explore longitudinal perspectives and cultural influences on parenting to deepen the understanding of these dynamics.

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