

# A Qualitative Study of the Influence of Parenting Styles and Self-Esteem

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**Abstract.** *The objective this study is to examine the influence of parenting style and self-esteem of adolescents on their groups from a school in Malaysia. This current study took place in a national type secondary school, SMJK, located in Penang Island, Malaysia. There were six students recruited, started from 13 to 17 years old and each of which was randomly selected for further interview. The interviews were rooted on the chosen questions from Parent Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). The interview process facilitates the validation of data as this method will verify the accuracy of the students' answers through the questionnaires. During the interview, researchers explored on issues of parenting style practice in the families as well as the students' perception of their own self-esteem. Moreover, it is discovered that authoritative parenting style is the most dominant method used in modern family. Through this sort of parenting style, reasoning and communication between parents and children are emphasized, and a balance between warmth and control are discovered. Majority of the respondents have mentioned a fair level of self-esteem, with only one student explains via permissive parenting style and the self-esteem is inferior compared to the others. Subsequently, the differences of parenting styles are influencing the students' self-esteem. However, there are indications of inconsistency between the answers in the questionnaires and interviews. Further studies with a bigger sample size are required so as to obtain more reliable and consistent data to determine the influence of parenting styles towards the adolescents' self-esteem.*

**Keywords:** *Parenting styles, self-esteem, and interview.*

## Introduction

There is one saying: "The first school of a human starts from home", and parents especially the mothers are the first model in contact to every new infant. The new member learns and adapts from stimulation provided through the environment and experiences. When the child grows, cognitive and social skills are also developing and enhancing. These vital aspects may determine how children attain the future.

Parents exert an enormous influence on the children's development. As parents, particularly the mother is the first member who is in contact with the child. This is an instance of parenting comes into work.

Development of every child's temperament, cognitive, coping mechanisms, and social skills may be shaped by the parenting styles applied in the family. However, over protection and lack of attention of parents will exert negative effect on a child's development. To maintain in moderation is more preferred towards shaping a child's optimal development and well-being.

Since after a memoir "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother" by a Yale law professor Amy Chua was popularized in 2011, "Tiger mom" started gained attention in the society. This term is coined by Amy Chua due to her own experience in nurturing her two daughters, Sophie and Louisa in a strict, traditional Chinese way. Since then, this term has been used as a neologism to describe a tough disciplinarian mother who

pushes and pressures their children to attain high levels of scholastic and academic achievement through authoritarian parenting methods. According to Santrock (2017), the "Tiger mom" concept is the representative of authoritarian parenting style.

The concept of tiger mom leads to the production of dramas in Singapore (Tiger Mum), China (Tiger Mom) and Hong Kong (Tiger Mom Blues), which are reflected in life how common mothers are applying into traditional Chinese parenting style. Such upbringing was causing the children to be affected socially, emotionally, emotionally and psychologically. Rooted on overhead statements, this current study is aimed to identify the influence of parenting styles towards adolescents' self-esteem precisely in Malaysian context.

## Parenting style

Baumrind (1971) proposes three different types of parental authority prototypes, which are authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles (Buri, 1991; Santrock, 2017). Parental authority patterns were suggested by Baumrind through interviews with parents and children as well as via observations of parent interaction with their children (Buri, 1991).

Authoritative parenting describes parenting style that instructs reasonable demands and high responsiveness. Authoritative parents constantly encourage children to be independent but it sets limitations and controls on their actions. They also closely interact with their

children with warmth, support and defined rules. The parent may have high expectations for their children's behavior and performance. However, they also provide love, response, resources and demand. In addition, the children are allowed to negotiate with their parents while parents are able for discussions and to take into consideration of their children's reasonable opinion. Hence, children who are nurtured with authoritative parenting style are normally more independent, achievement-oriented, and they are able to make decisions based on their reasoning.

Authoritarian parenting is characterized by high demands and low responsiveness. The authoritarian parents place high expectations for their children, yet children are less provided with nurturance and feedback. The children are expected to fully obey and respect the parents. Mistakes and offending parents usually lead to harsh punishment. The children brought up by authoritarian parents might exhibit difficulties in social situations because they are lack in social competence, dependent and end up as a conformist.

Permissive parenting, or also known as indulgent parenting exhibits high response followed by low demand. Permissive parents are usually nurturing and loving. However, there is little or even no attempt to restrain. Fewer rules set to the children, even if the rules are set, it may turn out to be inconsistent when they do exist. They tend to be lenient and trying to avoid confrontation, and very responsive to their children's needs. They are just simply afraid to do anything that may disappoint or upset their child. Children are encouraged and given authority to make their own decision and act. On a long run, the children might grow up without a strong sense of discipline and more rebellious, at the same time posing lower self-esteem although permissive parenting style is affectionate.

### **Self-esteem**

Self-esteem is an individual's subjective emotional evaluation of their self-worth or personal value. Morris Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem as "totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object". It involves a wide array of beliefs about oneself, and it can be exhibited at different levels, both positive and negative.

Positive self-esteem is characterized when a person is confident in his abilities, having a sense of self-worth and able to cope with challenges in life. Individual with positive self-esteem is usually more joyful and he tends to be successful in life. Meanwhile, a person who has negative self-esteem will neglect his own value, leave them unhappy and feel defeated or depressed. This may lead them to make unwise decision, fall into destructive relationship, or fail to work to their full potential. This shows that self-esteem is vital in a person's healthy development of life. In early 1993, Susan Harter has reported parental support as an essential element in contributing to adolescents' self-esteem, besides peer support, scholastic competence, physical ability, peer likability and sports competence.

### **Relationship between self-esteem and parenting style**

Since earlier studies are focusing on the Western context and culture. Through this study, researchers would like to investigate and explore on the relationship and the effect between the parenting style and the self-esteem of a group of adolescents in Malaysian context. This current research also focuses on parental practices carried out by mother or father. A Chinese national school (SMJK) in Penang was selected, and the following hypotheses were made based on the study; H1) Parenting style does have a relationship with the self-esteem of the adolescent students, H2) Authoritative parenting style is correlated with the self-esteem of the adolescent students, H3) Permissive parenting style is correlated with the self-esteem of the adolescent students.

### **Method**

Qualitative method was recruited in this study. The interview session was conducted after the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) inventories assessment on the same set of samples randomly selected. The interview process facilitated the validation of data as this method would be verified the accuracy of students' answers in the questionnaires.

### **Interview**

Interview was applied so as to understand and verify the consistency of the results collected from the PAQ and RSE inventories. The questions were set according to the chosen questions in the formerly mentioned questionnaires given in semi-structured form. It was done in order to see if the answers given by the interviewees were the same as the result of calculated questionnaire. All interviewees were selected randomly after the questionnaires were filled. Later, they were asked the same set of interview questions.

### **Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)**

This questionnaire contained of a set of 30 items measured on Baumrind's three distinct types of parental authority prototypes. The instrument was reviewed and published in 1991, three years after development of an earlier version of inventory known as the 24-item Parental Nurturance Scale by John R. Buri and pals in 1988. The questionnaires were named as the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and still widely utilized until present. This instrument was supported by several Parental Authority Questionnaire studies as a psychometrically sound and valid measure of Baumrind's parenting prototypes. Diana Baumrind (1971) proposed three different types of parental authority prototypes which were the authoritative, authoritarian and the permissive parenting styles (Buri, 1991; Santrock, 2017). Besides, in terms of validity, the studies also recommended the questionnaires as a valid tool in the investigation of correlation among parental authoritative, authoritarianism, and permissiveness (Buri, 1991). Reliability of the PAQ was justified

through test-retest and internal consistency reliability, with the reliability score as Figure 2.2.1:

Figure 2.2.1: Reliability of PAQ

Parent	Parenting styles	Test-retest	Internal
		Reliability	Consistency
		Reliability	Reliability
Mother	Permissive	.81	.75
	Authoritarian	.86	.85
	Authoritative	.78	.82
Father	Permissive	.77	.74
	Authoritarian	.85	.87
	Authoritative	.92	.85

This questionnaire was comprised of 30 items and designed as a phenomenological appraisal to be answered by the child. The scores obtained from the questionnaires were in reference to one of the parents, either father or mother. The three distinct parenting styles were assigned to the respective 10 set items contribute to a total of 30 items. The parenting style practiced by the particular parent was defined by looking at the highest scores achieved after adding up the scores from the results for respective items set under each parenting style.

5-point Likert-scales were applied for every item in the questionnaire, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Disagree nor Agree (3), Agree (4) to Strongly Agree (5). In this current study, the mother was selected as the research target, aiming to study the impact of parental prototype practiced by Malaysian mothers on the adolescents' self-esteem. This was due to the mothers were the nearest to nurture and in bearing of the children according to the culture pattern portrayed in Malaysia.

**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)**

The RSE was a widely used self-report inventory for assessing an individual self-esteem level. Heatherton et al. (2003) reported the instrument as a globally applied unidimensional inventory. This inventory was able to cater varying populations without having any discrimination. It has high reliability at alpha .92 even this instrument only comprises 10 items (Heatherton et al., 2003). In terms of validity, this inventory was designed to specifically test the level of self-esteem and thus suited the purpose of this study.

This inventory applied 4-point Likert-scales ranging from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree to Strongly Agree. Among 10 items, 5 were reversed questions. The scores were calculated by receiving the total from the respective scale. Higher scores indicated higher level of self-esteem, and the vice versa. Calculation of scores involved 0 score for Strongly Disagree while score of 3 for Strongly Agree. The total would be contributed to the lowest scores of 0 and the highest scores of 30.

**Result**

There are six selected subjects for a further interview on several selected questions from PAQ and RSE Scale. The interview process facilitates the validation of data as this measurement whether or not the students answer the instruments properly.

Interview feedback is collected from the respondents comprises of students from Form 1 to Form 5. Interviews pertaining issue of parenting style in the students' family, in addition to the students' own self-esteem are discussed. Table 1 below displays the questions directed to the six students, one of which is represented with a code (Q1 to Q9). Question 9 is the observation done by trainee counsellor during the interview. Table 2 describes the students' perceived parenting style and level of self-esteem. Subsequently, a matching action is carried out to confirm whether the data are valid or answered properly. This action is performed by matching the six students' interview responses to their questionnaire answers. Table 3 below illustrates the findings of whether both interview response and questionnaire answers are tallied.

**Table 1. Interview Questions to Students**

Question code	Question	Remarks
Q1	What is your birth order?	
Q2	Can you describe your parenting style?	
	What is your feeling based on your experience of the parenting style?	
Q3	What do you think for your level of self-esteem?	
Q4	Do you have the power to make your own decision even when your mother does not agree with the decision you plan to make?	PAQ Question 6
Q5	Do you have the chance to tell your mother about your expectation when you feel that your mother expectation is not reasonable?	PAQ Question 11
Q6	Does your mother discuss and admit to you when she has made a mistake that hurts you?	PAQ Question 30
Q7	Do you think yourself have a number of good qualities?	RSE Question 3
Q8	Do you feel satisfied with yourself?	RSE Question 1
Q9	What is your observation towards the child?	Observation

**Table 2.** The students' Perceived Parenting Style and Level of Self-esteem

Student's ID	Parenting style	Self-esteem
15238 (A Malay)	Authoritative. Feels it is fine.	OK. From a 10-point scale, 6 of 10.
18108	Authoritative. Feels happy.	Satisfied.
16382	Permissive. Feeling not bad.	Not bad.
16198	Authoritative. Feeling satisfied.	Feeling OK.
15397 (A Malay)	Authoritative. OK.	OK. From a 10-point scale, 6 of 10.
14374	Authoritative. Feeling not bad.	OK. From a 10-point scale, 6 of 10.

**Table 3.** Interview Responses and Questionnaire Feedback by Question

**Q4:**

- (a) Interview question (Q4): "Do you have the power to make your own decision even when your mother does not agree with the decision you plan to make?"
- (b) Questionnaire (PAQ Item No. 6): "My mother has always felt that what her children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what their parents might want."

Student's ID	(a) Interview response	(b) Questionnaire response	Tallied?
15238 (A Malay)	Yes, have.	4 (Agree)	Yes
18108	Yes, have.	5 (Strongly Agree)	Yes
16382	Yes, have.	2 (Disagree)	No
16198	Yes, but most of the time will listen to mother's word and adjust accordingly.	2 (Disagree)	No
15397 (A Malay)	Usually will discuss with mother. However, if mother disagree, will choose to listen to her decision.	2 (Disagree)	Yes
14374	Yes, have.	4 (Agree)	Yes

**Q5:**

- (a) Interview question (Q5): "Do you have the chance to tell your mother about your expectation when you feel that your mother expectation is not reasonable?"
- (b) Questionnaire (PAQ Item No. 11): "As I was growing up I knew what my mother expected of me in my family, but I also felt free to discuss those expectations with my mother when I felt that they were unreasonable."

Student's ID	(a) Interview response	(b) Questionnaire response	Tallied?
15238 (A Malay)	Yes, have.	3 (Neither Agree nor disagree)	Neutral
18108	Yes, have.	3 (Neither Agree nor disagree)	Neutral
16382	No, don't have.	3 (Neither Agree nor disagree)	Neutral
16198	Yes, mother will listen to children's opinion before making a conclusion.	5 (Strongly Agree)	Yes.
15397 (A Malay)	Yes, have.	3 (Neither Agree nor disagree)	Neutral
14374	When quarrelling. Communicate when the mood is good.	5 (Strongly Agree)	Yes.

**Q6:**

- (a) Interview question (Q6): "Does your mother discuss and admit to you when she has made a mistake that hurts you?"
- (b) Questionnaire (PAQ Item No. 30): "As I was growing up, if my mother made a decision in the family that hurt me, she was willing to discuss that decision with me and to admit it if she had made a mistake."

Student's ID	(a) Interview response	(b) Questionnaire response	Tallied?
15238 (A Malay)	Sometimes she will.	4 (Agree)	Yes
18108	Sometimes she will, sometimes not.	4 (Agree)	Yes
16382	Once only.	3 (Neither Agree nor disagree)	Neutral
16198	Yes, she will.	5 (Strongly Agree)	Yes
15397 (A Malay)	Yes, she will.	3 (Neither Agree nor disagree)	Neutral
14374	Yes, she will.	5 (Strongly Agree)	Yes

**Q7:**

- (a) Interview question (Q7): "Do you think yourself have a number of good qualities?"
- (b) Questionnaire (RSE Item No. 3): "I feel that I have a number of good qualities."

Student's ID	(a) Interview response	(b) Questionnaire response	Tallied?
15238 (A Malay)	Maybe have.	2 (Agree)	Yes
18108	OK.	2 (Agree)	Yes
16382	Don't have.	3 (Disagree)	Yes
16198	No. Feels brother is better.	3 (Disagree)	Yes
15397 (A Malay)	Yes.	3 (Disagree)	No
14374	Yes. Such as having a good temperament.	2 (Agree)	Yes

**Q8:**

- (a) Interview question (Q8): "Do you feel satisfied with yourself?"
- (b) Questionnaire (RSE Item No. 1): "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself."

Student's ID	(a) Interview response	(b) Questionnaire response	Tallied?
15238 (A Malay)	Not bad.	2 (Agree)	Yes
18108	Yes, satisfied.	3 (Disagree)	No
16382	No.	2 (Agree)	No
16198	Yes, satisfied.	2 (Agree)	Yes
15397 (A Malay)	Yes, satisfied.	2 (Agree)	Yes
14374	Not so satisfied. From a 10-point scale, 5 of 10.	4 (Strongly disagree)	Yes

**Discussion**

The result of this interview reveals that authoritative parenting style is the most commonly practiced in the families among the national school students. There is only one respondent feedbacks experiencing permissive parenting style by his/her mother. Majority of the students' perceive their self-esteem level are at satisfactory level and feeling "OK" (refer to Table 2). The findings are obtained via interview question Q2 and Q3, whereby the students are enquired with open ended questions about their own perception on parenting style especially by mother and their own self-esteem level. Most of the interview feedback is tallied to relevant questions highlighted in PAQ and RSE questionnaire. However, this result shows inconsistency with the previous studies done by Li, Costanzo, & Putallaz (2010) and Zeleke & Tadesse (1998) which say that Chinese families perceive more authoritarian parenting and it is considered uncommon among Asians.

In addition, most of the mothers respect their children's decision. It can be used as evident by the respondents' feedback through interview questions Q4

and Q5. Whereas, most of the students can make their own choices and decision even if their mothers do not agree; as well as voicing out their own expectations and feedback, precisely when they feel their mothers' expectation are not reasonable. Nowadays, mothers also portray open-minded mindset, in which they are opened to discuss and admit if discovering that they are wrong. Possible explanation for this phenomenon can be due to generational changes and results of change in parenting styles. New-fangled generations whose parents are adopting new mindset in parenting and child bearing get the influence from Western lifestyle can be the main contributor of such changes. Furthermore, Lee (2011) states that second generation of Greek-Australian parents have changed their parenting style from authoritarian which practiced by previous generation of authoritative parents.

From the interview session, it is observed that almost all the students' families (mother) that practice authoritative parenting style show positive self-esteem, except a respondent whose family practices permissive parenting shared lower self-esteem and was not satisfied with himself. These outcomes are observed via the interview questions; "Do you think yourself have a good number of qualities?" (Q7) and "Do you feel satisfied with yourself?" (Q8). This phenomenon is also supported in the previous study by New and Cochran (2007). An authoritative parenting style brings children with higher self-esteem than other parenting style especially in common Western culture.

In this study, most of the responses in interview and questionnaire are consistent as shown in Table 8. Interview sessions enable further exploration is carried out to discover what is really happening in the students' family, especially to those responses that are neutral ("Neither agree nor disagree"). From the questionnaire, it is found that many students are more reserved when answering questions related to their mothers as most of them choose "3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree". However, the realm of family's condition emerges when further exploration is performed via interview sessions. After the interview sessions, the investigators observe majority of the families are adopting the authoritative parenting style, whereby the children are given freedom to make their own choice as well as being heard. At the same time, family's rules and parents' control are also emphasized. In this kind of parenting style, reasoning and communication between parents and child are highlighted (Knox & Schacht, 2007), and there is a balance between warmth and control (Lee, 2011).

### Conclusion

In short, it has concluded that most of the students practice authoritative parenting style and the student will have higher self-esteem compare to those who practice permissive parenting style. However, it cannot be generalized to all due to the sample sizes are limited and researchers only examine one of the Chinese national schools at Penang. Interview session can be a supporting

system to understand more on the study. However, it cannot be used as the main roles to understand the study. Further study should be done to understand if any relation between parenting styles and self-esteem are correlated.

The research is conducted and may have concern where results of the study cannot be generalized to the overall population (Sedgwick, 2013). This may be due to very small sample size; only six students are selected for the interview as this academic exercise is required. More studies need to be done with a bigger sample size to obtain more reliable data consistency.

Interviewees' perceptions might be subjective and therefore change over time according to situation. The result may not be consistent after period of times caused by incomplete knowledge or fault memory of the interviewees. Power relation is also affected the process of interview. Confidence should be provided first, so that the interviewees will feel more comfortable in opening up and feeling free to express their idea. Interviewees will be more enjoyable and pleasant to express the emerging issues. The meaning of the questions may be deflected as the interviewer convey incorrectly (Richards, 2003 as cited in Alshenqeeti, 2014).

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