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## Shaping the Adolescent Mind: A Study on Perceived Parenting Styles in the Changing Educational Context of Kerala

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### ABSTRACT

Parenting forms the foundation of a child's emotional and social world. Adolescents' perceptions of parenting significantly influence their understanding of authority, empathy, and autonomy. In Kerala's evolving educational landscape—characterized by modernization, digitalization, and shifting gender norms—the study of perceived parenting styles acquires renewed relevance. This paper thematically explores the concept of perceived parenting styles and their implications for adolescent development in contemporary Kerala. Drawing upon Baumrind's typology and recent global and Indian research, it examines how authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles affect adolescent adjustment and engagement. Adopting a conceptual approach, the analysis focuses on three central themes: the transformation of parental authority, perceived parenting and adolescent adjustment, and parenting in the digital era. The paper concludes with policy recommendations that promote empathetic and communicative parenting practices aligned with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.



## 1. Introduction

Parenting is both a cultural and psychological process that profoundly shapes a child's emotional development, social adjustment, and academic achievement. It serves as the primary channel through which values, discipline, and emotional security are transmitted across generations. During adolescence—a stage marked by rapid physical, cognitive, and emotional changes—young individuals begin to negotiate the balance between dependence on parents and the desire for autonomy, making the parent-child relationship more dynamic and complex (Steinberg, 2001).

The concept of *perceived parenting style* emphasizes the adolescent's interpretation of parental behavior rather than parental intention. It reflects how adolescents experience affection, control, discipline, and communication within their families (Buri, 1991). Kerala, with its distinctive combination of high literacy, social reform heritage, and family cohesion, provides a meaningful context for examining perceived parenting.

The state's changing socio-economic and cultural conditions—such as dual working parents, digital media exposure, and redefined gender roles—are reshaping how authority and affection are expressed in families. This conceptual study explores perceived parenting styles and their significance for adolescents in Kerala's evolving educational and cultural environment.

## 2. Review of Literature

Baumrind (1971) classified parenting into three fundamental types—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—based on the dimensions of warmth and control. Later, Maccoby and Martin (1983) expanded this typology by introducing the dimensions of *responsiveness* and *demandingness*, forming the foundation of modern parenting research.

- **Authoritative parenting** (high warmth and high control) is consistently associated with positive adolescent outcomes such as academic competence, emotional regulation, and social maturity (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Rani & Singh, 2018).
- **Authoritarian parenting** (low warmth and high control), while encouraging obedience, often results in anxiety, dependence, and low self-esteem (Dwairy & Achoui, 2006).
- **Permissive parenting** (high warmth and low control) encourages emotional openness but may lead to poor self-discipline and impulsive behavior (Querido, Warner, & Eyberg, 2002).



In the Indian socio-cultural context, parenting often blends emotional warmth with traditional control (Saxena & Mehrotra, 2020). Research indicates that adolescents benefit most from a balanced parenting approach that values communication, autonomy, and empathy—qualities particularly relevant in Kerala, where family and education are central to social identity.

### 3. Methodology

This paper follows a **conceptual and analytical research design**, utilizing secondary data sources such as journal articles, theoretical papers, and research reports on parenting and adolescent development. Instead of primary field data, the study synthesizes existing scholarly literature to analyze how perceived parenting styles shape adolescents' emotional and social adjustment within Kerala's changing educational framework.

The study integrates classical theories—including Baumrind's and Maccoby & Martin's frameworks—with contemporary perspectives addressing cultural transitions, digital exposure, and family communication. This thematic synthesis provides a holistic understanding of how Kerala's adolescents perceive parenting amidst modernization and socio-educational transformation.

### 4. Analysis and Discussion

#### 4.1 Transforming Patterns of Parental Authority

Families in Kerala are witnessing a gradual transition from traditional hierarchical authority to more democratic and dialogic forms of parenting. Authoritative parenting—emphasizing reasoning, mutual respect, and supportive guidance—is increasingly prevalent among educated middle-class families exposed to global ideas. According to Steinberg (2001), such communicative and reasoning-based parenting nurtures autonomy while promoting internalized discipline.

Nonetheless, traces of authoritarian control persist, particularly in families that equate strict discipline with academic success. This coexistence of traditional and modern elements reflects Kerala's ongoing negotiation between collectivist obedience and emerging individualism.

#### 4.2 Perceived Parenting and Adolescent Adjustment

Adolescents' perceptions of their parents' behaviors profoundly influence emotional stability, self-esteem, and social adjustment. When control is experienced as supportive rather than punitive, it fosters



self-regulation, resilience, and emotional security. Conversely, excessive control or emotional neglect may lead to conflict, low motivation, and disengagement from academics (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Research confirms that **authoritative parenting** enhances adolescents' confidence and academic resilience (Rani & Singh, 2018), while **authoritarian parenting** produces compliance without fostering intrinsic motivation or creativity (Dwairy & Achoui, 2006). In Kerala's highly competitive academic environment, adolescents who perceive their parents as empathetic and communicative demonstrate higher well-being and school engagement.

### 4.3 Parenting in the Digital and Educational Transition

The post-pandemic educational landscape and expanding digital media exposure present new challenges for parents. Many oscillate between surveillance and trust. Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2020) emphasize that effective digital parenting requires open dialogue rather than restrictive monitoring.

Kerala's adolescents tend to appreciate parental monitoring when it is participatory and respectful. Padilla-Walker, Coyne, and Collier (2016) found that communicative digital guidance strengthens trust and reduces online risks. Thus, authoritative parenting—blending structure with empathy—remains the most adaptive style for managing adolescents' digital engagement while maintaining emotional closeness.

## 5. Policy Recommendations

1. **Alignment with NEP 2020:** Encourage parenting practices rooted in empathy, inclusion, and holistic development as envisioned by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
2. **Parent Education Programs:** Implement statewide initiatives to train parents in adolescent psychology, effective communication, and emotional intelligence.
3. **School–Parent Partnerships:** Institutionalize structured parenting sessions through parent–teacher associations to promote collaborative adolescent support.
4. **Curricular Integration:** Incorporate life skills, family relationships, and emotional literacy into school curricula to strengthen both student and parent capacities.
5. **Digital Parenting Guidelines:** Develop awareness campaigns and evidence-based guidelines for balanced digital supervision and participatory online engagement.



## 6. Conclusion

Perceived parenting styles shape adolescents' understanding of authority, affection, and self-worth. In Kerala's socio-cultural and educational milieu—where family and schooling remain deeply intertwined—**authoritative parenting**, characterized by warmth and structure, aligns most effectively with adolescents' developmental needs.

As Kerala's families adapt to modernization, gender equality, and digital transformation, parenting must evolve from *command* to *conversation*. Empowering parents to adopt balanced, empathetic approaches will enhance adolescent well-being and reinforce the inclusive, holistic, and value-based educational vision articulated in the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.

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