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# The relationship between parenting style and adolescent self-esteem in a secondary school

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#### Abstract

The main objective of the study was to assess the relationships between parenting styles and students' self-esteem in secondary school. The researcher selected 54 participants out of 274 students through a simple random sampling technique. The data gathering tool was a questionnaire and we used the Pearson product-moment correlation and *t*-test to test the relationship between parenting style and adolescent self-esteem. Qualitative data were organised based on descriptions, narrations and interpretations from the research questions, and triangulation was made to balance the data systematically by using document analysis. The result revealed that there is a positive, negative and weak relationship between parenting styles and students' self-esteem. The result reveals that there is significant statistical difference between boys and girls in their self-esteem. The result revealed that there are various factors that contribute to adolescent self-esteem differences, such as family background, socialisation and interaction between a child and their parents.

Keywords: Relationship, parenting style, adolescent, self-esteem, students;

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### 1. Introduction

Parenting style is a psychological construct representing standard strategies that parents use in treating their children during each stage of life (Othman & Khairollah 2013). In the infancy stage, parents interact with their children and choose their clothing, diet and entertainment. Throughout childhood they determine with whom their children interact, the activities in which their children participate and how their children manage their emotions. During adolescence parents exert influences on their children by providing advice regarding their schooling, social dilemmas, value and ethics (Hong, Long, & Rahman, 2015). Throughout their children's development from childhood to adolescence parents play a vital role in the formulation of the child's regulations of emotions and behaviour, as well as their child's self-esteem and identity (Lamb, 2012).

Various studies have demonstrated that different parenting styles can influence the personality development of children including their self-esteem. The most common styles of parenting have been defined by Baumrind as authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting. The authoritarian parenting style displays characteristics of parents who are very strict and demanding because of its high control and constantly demand maturity towards children, as well as low in nurturing and communication between parents and children. Authoritarian parents limit their children's privacy and want their children to follow the rules set without any reason given. Besides this, they also impose severe punishments on children if their children break the rules or orders that have been set. Children who are treated with authoritarian parenting styles tend to be more anxious, less social and less satisfied (Hickman, Bartholomae, & Mckenry, 2000). However, an authoritative parenting style leads children in a rational, issue-oriented, disciplined manner and explains the reasons behind the rules. As this approach helps the parents to know and understand self-reliance of children, encourages oral communication, involves their children in making decisions and wants their children to carry out responsibilities based on the needs and abilities and it increases the children's self-esteem (Ibid).

According to Baumrind (1996), the permissive style is a loose style in which parents make less demands on their children, do not encourage their children to express their feelings and do not force them to control the adolescents' behaviour. In fact, they do not require their children to be mature in behaviour and instead encourage independent behaviour in their children. Thus, it discourages the children's self-esteem throughout their life span. Parents with permissive parenting style also do not respond and control toward their children. These parents are preoccupied with their own problems without discharging the responsibilities as parents. Children who are raised in permissive parenting style are not able to control themselves, impulsive and less self-reliant. However, they are happier and recover fast from a stress or crisis situation as compared with children who grow up with authoritarian parents (Darling, 1999). But adolescents' who are treated in permissive and authoritative parenting styles have high levels of self-esteem in comparison with those treated in authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles (Zeleke, 2000).

According to a study conducted by Gota (2012), students' level of self-esteem is related to parenting styles. This is because the relationship between parents and adolescents was built in the early stages of life and can contribute to the development of self-esteem in adolescents (Barber, Ball, & Armistead, 2003). In relation to the above ideas, Steinberg, Blatt-Eisengart, and Cauffman (2006) showed that authoritative parenting style (democratic approach) is associated with high levels of self-esteem in adolescence development. In addition, Tur-Porcar, Jiménez-Martínez, and Mestre-Escrivá (2019) stated that mothers who consistently respond to their adolescents during infancy and early adolescence can build a high level of self-esteem in adolescent's academic achievement. On the other hand,

Parker and Benson (2004) and Gota (2012) stated that parenting style negatively influences students' self-esteem development and academic achievement. When parents strictly control their children, they become weak in mental health and in life as well as in their education. This leads children to have poor social skills, behave aggressively or too passively and experience mood swings (Bee, 2017). In addition, children's with low self-esteem have low educational achievement, abuse drugs and alcohol, are vulnerable to peer pressure, eating disorders and suicide. Moreover, children with low self-esteem feel defeated or depressed about their education (Zeleke, 2000). Therefore, parents play an important role in influencing students' self-esteem development in their life span.

Also, culture determines the effect of parenting style on students' self-esteem. In western culture, authoritative parenting style brings more benefits to the adolescents' self-esteem when compared with other parenting styles (Cochran, Mays, & Barnes, 2007). In addition, gender has an impact upon the development, expression and demonstration of self-esteem, and there are considerable gender differences in self-esteem of university students. Furthermore, male students reported a higher level of self-esteem as compared to female students (Malik & Saida, 2013). Therefore, self-esteem is a very important factor that determines an individual's personality. The most common difference is that males tend to have a higher self-esteem through the teenage years, which continues into adulthood. Generally speaking, when it tends to drop, males' self-esteem will not drop as low as females' self-esteem, and a male's positive feelings about himself are likely to be much more stronger than a female's self-esteem. Recent meta-analysis and studies, however, have found that male adolescents and young adults have higher self-esteem than their female counterparts, although the difference is relatively small (Ravindranadan & Tom, 2016).

According to Mruk (2006), the authoritative parenting style is more conducive and tends to develop a high level of self-esteem in adolescents. In contrast, children that grow up under authoritarian parents are under absolute authority of their parents and they are stripped of their own independence and freedom to do as they please. Under this parenting style, every action and every life decision of the children are decided by their parents. However, in permissive parenting style, children are allowed to regulate their own activities and behaviours. Children with permissive parents are often encouraged to make decisions independently with little guidance and direction from their parents. This difference is due to varying cultural practices among countries about parenting styles (Cochran et al., 2007).

According to Zeleke (2000), parents and families play an important role in the development of adolescents' thought, feeling and behaviour, as well as in their education. Parenting styles practiced by parents determine adolescent's to be successful or failure in their education. Although adolescents are able to think about their positive and negative life situation, the effect of early interaction can be effective in determining their self-esteem and academic achievement. This means that parenting styles have an important role in mental development of adolescents. Similarly, parents play an important role in shaping adolescents' personality; parents who can interact in a friendly way with their adolescents develop good discipline and personality in adolescents. This helps the youth to have higher self-esteem and be successful in their academic achievement or education (Caporella, 1998 as cited by Zeleke, 2000). On the other hand, parents who treat their adolescents negatively have low academic achievement and self-esteem (Hong et al., 2015). This leads children to be always inferior, irritability, not interested in learning and involved in anti-social behaviours (Zhang, Wei, Ji, Chen, & Deater-Deckard, 2017). Such types of effects are given low attention in children's learning and life practices especially in developing countries like Ethiopia (Tadesse, 2006).

There are various factors that contribute to adolescent's self-esteem differences such as gender, socio-economic status, personality and support from family and other relationships are all suggested as important influences in the field of developing self-esteem during adolescence. Also, socio-economic status is less strongly associated with self-esteem in comparison to personality dimensions and mental health constructs, which are very similar and strongly associated. Social support from family, friends and significant others could be seen again as conceptually more distinct in relation to self-esteem (Veselska et al., 2010).

Moreover, the study was focused on assessing the parenting styles practiced by parents that determine the successful or failure of adolescent's behaviour. So, in order to make children more effective and successful in their education, parents are expected to use appropriate parenting styles that promote children's self-esteem. In this regard, research plays an essential role in understanding the effect different parenting styles have on an adolescent's self-esteem and academic achievement. However, so far there is no study which particularly assesses the relationship between parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem. The present researcher could not find any research done regarding the relationship between parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem among students to be cited in Ethiopian context particularly in secondary school. Furthermore, when the researcher was provided a volunteer service of guidance and counselling office at Wachemo University, the practitioner has observed how parenting styles are helpful for students' self-esteem and academic achievement when done appropriately. In addition, the practitioner observed that less attention is given to the contribution of parenting styles on students' self-esteem and development in the university. This personal experience greatly consolidated the investigator's decision to search whether or not the case revealed itself in another area. So, this study focuses especially on the relationship between parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem in the school. Therefore, the researcher thought that assessing the relationship between parenting style and adolescent's self-esteem with different demographic variables such as sex and age is significant. So, assessing the relationship between parenting style and adolescent's selfesteem among secondary school students was guided by the following basic research questions:

- What is the relationship between parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem in Wachemo Secondary School?
- Is there a significant difference between adolescent boys and girls' self-esteem?
- What are the conditions that affect adolescent's self-esteem in Wachemo Secondary School?
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# 2. Materials and methods

The primary objective of the study was to assess the relationship between parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem in Wachemo Secondary School. In order to achieve this objective, the *quantitative* and *qualitative* research design was employed to assess the relationship between parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem in Wachemo Secondary School.

2.1. Population, sample size and sampling techniques

The study's target population consisted of 274 secondary school students in grades 9 and 10 who were enrolled in the 2012 academic year. The research was carried out at a secondary school in Hosanna, a southern regional state about 230 km south of Addis Ababa. To meet this objective, the researcher drew 54 out of 274 students. From all 274 students, 29 male and 25 female students were selected randomly by using a simple random sampling technique known as the lottery method to give equal chance for all students. According to Mills, Airasian, and Gay (2012), for conducting correlation research, a sample of 10% of the population is considered minimum, while for a small population, 20% may be required. 274 students (20% of the population) were taken as the sample for this study.

# 2.2. Data sources and types

In this study, both primary and secondary data was required to generate and extract all necessary information to the research, and both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to assess the relationship between parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem in secondary school. *2.3. Data collection tools and procedures* 

The instruments used for the study were primary data sources like questionnaires and interviews. A self-administered questionnaire was the major instrument that was used in data collection. The researcher designed the questionnaires by reviewing the literature. The questionnaire consisted of close ended items to generate data about parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem. The questionnaires were administered for 54 adolescent students at Wachemo Secondary School. Qualitative data was collected with the help of open-ended questionnaires and an interview to examine the condition that affects adolescents' self-esteem.

Secondary data was used through the review of the relevant literature, mainly relating to parenting style and its effects on the adolescents self-esteem. Such types of information were gathered from various sources, mainly from both published and unpublished materials, in order to strengthen appropriate justifications and to ensure the reliability and validity of information that collected from different sources that were provided in literature review.

After getting cooperation letter from the Department of Psychology the researcher is given the names of the concerned bodies. Then, participants were asked about their willingness to participate in the study. Having received their consent, the questionnaires and interview were administered to adolescent students on the place and times they preferred. The data were collected after giving a clear explanation on ultimate significance of the study to make the situation friendly to conducting the project. Along with these ethical considerations, it considered the privacy and security of the participants.

# 2.4. Method of data analysis

Finally, the data collected through questionnaire and interview was analysed through quantitative and qualitative methods. The data obtained from questionnaires was analysed by using correlational or inferential methods of data analysis (Pearson's product-moment correlation and *t*-test) to test the relationship between parenting style and adolescence self-esteem. In addition, the quantitative data was explained by using percentage, frequency and table. After gathering data, it was organised to use the data systematically. Moreover, the data obtained from the interview was analysed by using qualitative methods of data analysis like descriptions, narrations and interpretations. After gathering data, it was critical to triangulate to balance the data systematically.

### 3. Results and discussion

The analysis and interpretation of data collected from the respondents (i.e. the students, their parents and director in Wachemo Secondary School) are presented.

3.1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1. Students' demographic characteristics					
Variables	Level	Respondents			
		F	(%)		
	Male	29	55.6		
Sex	Female	25	46.4		
	Total	54	100		
	13–14	27	51.9		

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Age	15–16	7	6.0
	>16	20	42.1
	Total	54	100
	9th	28	53.7
Grade	10th	26	46.3
	Total	54	100

Source (own survey, 2019).

Table 1 shows that 54 respondents participated in the study. Among these, 29 (55.6%) were male and 25 (46.4%) were female. Of the total respondents, 28 (51.9%) students were found between the ages of 13 and 14 years and 26 (48.1%) were found between the ages of 15 and 16 years. Concerning the grade, 29 (53.7%) were grade 9 students and the remaining 25 (46.3%) were grade 10 students. Therefore, the majority of the participants of the current study are female, aged 13–14 years and grade 9 students.

Table 2. Parents'	demographic characteristics
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Variables	Level	Respondents	
		F	(%)
Sex	Male	25	46.3
	Female	29	53.7
	Total	54	100
Age	30–36	10	18.5
	37–45	26	48.5
	46–50	18	33.5
	Above 50	0	0
	Total	54	100

Source (own survey, 2019).

Table 2 indicates that out of the 54 parent respondents, 29 (53.7%) were female and the remaining 25 (46.3%) were male. Concerning their age groups, out of the 54 respondents, 26 (48.5%) were found to be between the ages of 37 and 45 age, 18 (33.5%) between the ages of 46 and 50 and 10 (18.5%) were found between the ages of 30 and 36.

### 3.2. Relationship between parenting style and adolescence self-esteem

Various studies show that the parenting styles are associated with the development of students' self-esteem. For example, a study conducted by Gota (2012) claimed that students' level of self-esteem is related to parenting styles. This is because the relationship between the parents and adolescents that was developed in the early stages of life and can contribute to the development of self-esteem of adolescents (Barber et al., 2003). Also, Steinberg et al. (2006) showed that the authoritative parenting style (democratic approach) is associated with high levels of self-esteem in adolescence development. Similarly, Chiew (2011) showed that different parenting styles are associated with self-esteem in adolescence. In order to understand the influence of parenting style (parent child interactions) on students' self-esteem, the respondents were asked to identify which parenting style, among authoritarian, authoritative and permissive, highly influenced the students' self-esteem development in general, and their response rate were analysed by using the Pearson correlation method.

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Table 3. Relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem						
Variables	Correlation Sign (2 tailed)	Students' self-esteem				
Democratic	0.008	0.356				
Authoritarian	0.029	0.835				
Permissive	0.009	0.949				

Table 2. Dalationabia batu .. 

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between parenting style and self-esteem in secondary school. As indicated in Table 3, the Pearson correlation model showed that there is positive relationship between democratic parenting style and students' self-esteem ( $R = 0.356^{**}$ , p < 0.01). This indicates that adolescents who grow under democratic parenting style have high self-esteem or a positive self-view.

Table 3 shows that there is a negative and weak relationship between authoritarian parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem (R = -0.29, p = 0.05). Therefore, the result reveals that adolescents who grow up under the authoritarian parenting style have low self-esteem.

The other result shows that there is a weak relationship between permissive parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem (R = 0.009, p = >0.05). This indicates that adolescents who grow up under a permissive parenting style have very low self-esteem in comparison to others.

In this section, the findings of the present investigation are discussed in light of findings of previous studies and possible explanations. Most of the interviewees' results revealed that students' self-esteem is highly influenced with environment factors like family background and socialisation. From this, it could be inferred that parenting styles that are used by their respective parents positively or negatively influences adolescent's self-esteem as well as their academic achievements. Therefore, the results revealed that there is a positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and adolescents' selfesteem. From this, it could be inferred that there is free communication between parents and children about their life issues. This highly encourages and promotes adolescents' self-esteem, as well as their academic achievements in the school. Previous studies indicated that adolescents who grew up under authoritative parenting style have positive self-esteem in comparison to those who grew up under authoritarian parenting style (Aremu, John-Akinola, & Desmennu, 2019). On the other hand, other results revealed that there is a negative relationship between authoritarian parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem. Previous studies indicated that the nature of the authoritarian parenting style is negatively associated with lower self-esteem (Hickman et al., 2000).

In addition, other results indicated that there is a weak relationship between permissive parenting style and adolescents' self-esteem. Baumrind (1991) stated that permissive parenting style is associated with lower adolescents' self-esteem. From this, we can conclude that there is no open discussion between parents and children about their life matters.

3.3. Difference between adolescent boys and girls' self-esteem

The other purpose of the present study was to assess the statistical mean difference in self-esteem between adolescent boys and girls in a dependent t-test were computed and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Difference in self-esteem between adolescent boys and girls

Levelness of <i>t</i> -test for equality of variable	T-test for equality of mean
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	F	Sign	Т	Df	Sign tailed	Mean difference	Standard error	95% confidence of interval difference	
								Lower	Upper
Assumed self-esteem	0.201	0.0656	1.128	52	0.265	0.85185	0.75534	0.66385	2.3675
Equal variable not assumed			1.128	51.860	0.365	0.85185	0.75534	0.66395	2.36765

p < 0.05.

Table 4 shows that the *t*-test critical value is greater than the *t*-critical value of 1.128 and *t*-observed value of 0.265 (p < 0.05, df = 52). This indicates that there is a significant statistical difference between boys and girls' self-esteem. Previous studies indicated that gender has an impact upon the development, expression and demonstration of self-esteem, and there are considerable gender differences in self-esteem of university students. Furthermore, male students reported a higher level of self-esteem as compared to female students (Malik & Saida, 2013). However, recent meta-analysis and studies have found that male adolescents and young adults have higher self-esteem than their female counterparts (Ravindranadan & Tom, 2016).

3.4. Conditions contributing for adolescence self-esteem differences

The purpose of this study was to assess various factors that contribute to adolescents' self-esteem differences in secondary school. There are various factors that contribute to adolescents' self-esteem differences. Most of the interviewees revealed that adolescent self-esteem is influenced by environmental factors such as family background, socialisation and interaction between a child and their parents. From this, it could be inferred that parenting style or family background highly affects students' self-esteem and their academic achievements. Previous studies indicated that gender, socio-economic status, personality and support from family and other relationships were all suggested as important influences in the field of developing self-esteem during adolescence. Social support from family, friends and significant others could be seen again as conceptually more distinct in relation to self-esteem (Veselska et al., 2010).

# 4. Conclusion

Depending on the findings of the study, the following concluding notes were made:

 Parenting styles that are used by parents influence adolescent's self-esteem and their academic achievements. Particularly, authoritative parenting styles highly influence adolescent's selfesteem. In contrast, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles negatively influence students' self-esteem and their academic achievements in the study area. Therefore, children reared under authoritarian or permissive parenting styles become dependent in performing and making decisions about their daily lives. This leads to a low self-esteem and negative view about themselves. Therefore, all parenting styles have both positive and negative influences on adolescents' self-esteem and academic achievements.

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• Parent's rearing style and their socialisation affect children's basic psychological makeup and behaviour at the beginning of their lives. This helps parents to follow a democratic parenting style, which is a great way to develop a child's high self-esteem and capability of performing activities and solving problems without asking for support from their parents.

## 5. Recommendations

Keeping in mind that the findings of the study are worth having to give rise to suggestions, it is recommended that

- The school has to supply opportunities (training, guidance and counselling services and other participatory activities) for students. This could be facilitated by guidance and counselling officers, teachers, directors and other concerned bodies in and out of the school.
- Family counselling and guidance offices should be available in our society to get professional support and advice about appropriate child rearing styles.
- Open discussion should be promoted between parents and children to enhance self-esteem and academic achievement of adolescent students.
- The government should give different training to society about effective parenting styles on children's self-esteem and academic achievements. Thus, helping the society know the cause and consequences of parenting style on adolescent's self-esteem and academic achievements. Also, the government should be revising and ratifying policies and strategies on how to rear children with good parenting styles.
- It is advisable to educate parents of students on how to improve their children's assertiveness and social responsibility. This can be conducted by media channels and non-governmental organisations so as to bring more advanced assertiveness to each generation.
- Further investigation should be conducted to ensure the representativeness of the findings and to assess the effect of parenting style on adolescent's self-esteem and academic achievements at national, regional and local level.

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