

Relationship between parenting styles and school bullying behaviour among adolescents

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Abstract. In recent years, the pervasive issue of school bullying has surfaced as a focal point of concern, given its deep-seated implications on the mental and emotional well-being of adolescents. This paper seeks to unearth the complex relationship between parenting styles - classified as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved - and the prevalence of bullying behaviours among adolescents in school environments. Through a meticulous analysis of recent empirical studies, the paper highlights the significant influence parenting styles exert on a child's developmental trajectory, molding their attitudes, behaviours, and peer interactions. Particularly, the study underscores the role of authoritative parenting as a protective factor against bullying, fostering resilience and positive peer relations. In contrast, authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles may potentially fuel bullying tendencies due to the absence of warmth and the establishment of rigid rules and severe punishments. The paper further identifies a notable gap in current research, emphasizing the necessity for comprehensive studies that integrate cultural nuances to develop culturally sensitive intervention strategies. In aiming to pave the way for safer and more nurturing school environments, this research illuminates the potential strategies through parental interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of bullying, promoting positive child and adolescent development globally.

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, bullying remains a pervasive problem, particularly among adolescents. This phenomenon not only compromises the safety and well-being of students but can also have long-lasting negative impacts on the psychological development and well-being of youth. At the heart of understanding and combating bullying is discerning the intricate factors that contribute to such behaviors, one of which is parenting styles.

Parenting styles wield a significant influence over a child's developmental trajectory, subtly moulding their attitudes, behaviors, and their interactions with peers. These styles can either nurture resilience and positive social interactions or foster environments conducive to bullying behaviors. This paper seeks to uncover the nuances of the relationship between various parenting styles - namely authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved - and the prevalence of bullying behaviors among adolescents. By dissecting recent empirical studies, this paper aims to delineate the complex and multifaceted relationship between parenting styles and adolescent bullying. Moreover, it aspires to offer insights into potential strategies to mitigate bullying through parental interventions, paving the way for safer and more nurturing school environments.

2. Instruction to the research objects

2.1. Introduction to the concept of bullying and its effects

Bullying, a term synonymous with distress in the school setting, refers to repetitive aggressive behavior intended to harm or distress someone perceived as weaker or different. This corrosive behavior manifests in various forms, ranging from physical aggression to verbal harassment, social exclusion, and the rapidly growing menace of cyberbullying, which transpires through digital platforms.

The repercussions of bullying are profound, casting long shadows over the mental health of the youth. Victims often find themselves ensnared in a vicious cycle of depression, anxiety, and in extreme cases, succumbing to suicidal ideation. The architecture of bullying is complex, built upon several influencing factors such as peer dynamics, school climate, and familial environment. As such, a nuanced understanding of these dynamics is indispensable in crafting targeted strategies to counteract bullying and foster a landscape of healthy adolescent development.

2.2. Introduction to the concept of parenting styles, classification, and impact

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Delving into the roots of bullying behavior, several scholars attribute its proliferation to a web of interconnected influences encompassing peer status, peer influence, community variables, school climate, and the family home environment [1]. Fielder pinpointed the family as the nucleus of significant interaction processes that potentially fertilize the ground for the development of bullying tendencies [2].

Distinguished psychologists, MacCoby and Martin, and Baumrind brought to the forefront the categorization of parenting styles into four distinct groups - authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved. These styles, delineated based on dimensions of warmth, control, and responsiveness, sculpt the familial environment that a child grows in, thereby influencing their propensity for bullying behaviors [3,4].

Authoritative Parenting: This nurturing style, marked by high levels of warmth and responsiveness, coupled with firm but fair control, creates an environment of balanced growth. Parents adopting this approach foster independence while delineating clear boundaries, thus facilitating positive development and reducing the likelihood of bullying behaviors.

Authoritarian Parenting: On the other end of the spectrum, authoritarian parenting exudes high levels of control paired with scant warmth, giving rise to a landscape of rigid rules and severe punishments. This environment can cultivate fear and resentment, potentially fueling bullying behaviors as children may mirror the aggressive tendencies manifested in their familial surroundings.

Permissive Parenting: This lenient style is characterized by abundant warmth but minimal control, resulting in non-restrictive and indulgent parenting. The absence of boundaries and structured guidance may pave the path for bullying behaviors, as children may lack the development of essential skills such as self-regulation and empathy.

Uninvolved Parenting: This neglectful approach, devoid of warmth and control, often leaves children feeling cast aside. The lack of parental guidance and emotional sustenance can engender adverse outcomes, including a heightened susceptibility to engage in bullying behaviors or becoming a victim of the same.

By unraveling the impact and implications of these parenting styles, this paper seeks to forge a critical pathway towards crafting strategies that mitigate bullying behaviors and encourage positive child and adolescent development. The ensuing sections will venture deeper into empirical studies that scrutinize the relationship between these diverse parenting styles and the prevalence of bullying behaviors, laying the groundwork for informed and effective interventions.

2.3. The current research

Several studies globally have embarked on exploring the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent bullying. For instance, studies in Western contexts have highlighted that authoritative parenting can be a

protective factor against bullying, promoting resilience and healthy peer relationships among adolescents [5].

In the Asian context, particularly in China and Indonesia, the relationship between parenting styles and bullying seems to be more intricate. The studies chosen for this research predominantly highlight the complexities involving interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, peer influence, and individual characteristics like extraversion personality in this relationship [6,7].

While existing studies have laid a significant foundation in understanding the role of parenting styles in bullying behaviours among adolescents, there seems to be a gap in comprehensive research that bridges cultural nuances with empirical findings. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to explore intervention strategies that are culturally sensitive and multifaceted, considering the complex web of influences that parenting styles cast on bullying behaviours in adolescents.

In summary, the literature presents a multifaceted view of the relationship between parenting styles and school bullying. Various factors interplay in this complex relationship, with cultural nuances playing a significant role. This research aims to further explore this relationship, drawing from recent empirical studies to provide a nuanced understanding that could guide future interventions.

3. Evidence from empirical studies

The relationship between parenting styles and school bullying behaviors has been investigated across various cultures and geographical settings. This section delves into the empirical findings from a selection of recent studies, followed by a critical analysis of these findings.

3.1 Asian Context (China and Indonesia)

The research studies conducted in China predominantly focus on deciphering the relationship between parenting styles and bullying behavior in adolescents.

3.1.1 The role of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence

In a study conducted in 2023 by He, Ye, & Zhang, the primary focus lies in comprehending how the dimensions of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence function as mediators that modulate the impact of parenting styles on bullying behaviors within the Chinese context [6]. This comprehensive survey delves into the multifaceted influences of family, school, community, and broader social structures on individual educational outcomes. The extensive participant pool comprised 19,487 seventh- and ninth-grade adolescents drawn from 28 county-level units. Ultimately, the final sample consisted of 8,730 adolescents, with an average age of 12 [6].

This investigation illuminates a complex interplay between parenting styles and the development of various intelligence facets in adolescents, with potential

implications for their propensity toward bullying. The findings of the study reveal a significant association between parenting styles and adolescents' engagement in bullying behavior [6]. Specifically, permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting styles emerge as influential factors in reducing bullying tendencies among adolescents. Adolescents raised in households characterized by these parenting styles tend to exhibit lower frequencies of swearing, quarreling, fighting, and bullying submissive peers. This suggests that these particular parenting styles may be more attuned to the emotional needs of children, resulting in a reduction of bullying behaviors. Moreover, when compared to neglectful parenting, these styles exhibit lower standard deviations in relation to fighting and bullying.

The results underscore the substantial impact of parenting styles on adolescents' involvement in bullying behavior. Importantly, the study highlights that within the Chinese context, adolescents from neglectful families are more inclined to engage in bullying behaviors [6]. However, it's essential to note that the outcomes of this study exhibit some variation when compared to findings from Western studies, reflecting the disparities between Chinese and Western cultures. Western studies tend to suggest that children from authoritarian families may be more predisposed to aggressive behavior.

3.1.2 *The role of corporal punishment*

In their study, Liu et al. delved into the issue of corporal punishment and its relationship with self-control, shedding light on how these factors interact with parenting styles to influence school bullying behaviors among Chinese adolescents [7]. This investigation painted a nuanced picture in which parenting style emerged as a conditional factor in the complex equation involving corporal punishment and bullying.

The research findings revealed that authoritative parenting was the predominant style for girls, followed by the rejecting style. Conversely, boys displayed a higher propensity for engaging in bullying behaviors at school and were subject to slightly more instances of corporal punishment [7]. Self-control demonstrated a negative association with physical bullying for both genders, with authoritative parenting mitigating the impact of self-control on bullying [7]. Furthermore, corporal punishment exhibited a positive correlation with physical bullying for both girls and boys, although authoritative parenting was associated with a lower incidence of physical bullying behaviors. Notably, the direct effect of corporal punishment on physical bullying among boys raised by authoritarian, indulgent, and authoritative parents did not significantly differ from boys raised by rejecting parents. However, the indirect effects of corporal punishment on physical bullying showed no substantive differences between boys and girls in the models.

Chinese society places a strong emphasis on collectivism, in contrast to Western cultures that prioritize individualism, leading to the prevalent use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy among

Chinese parents [7]. This study contributes by establishing a connection between parental corporal punishment within Chinese culture and the occurrence of bullying in schools. It underscores how the use of corporal punishment as an educational approach can potentially exacerbate children's inclination toward violent behavior. These findings shed light on the challenges posed by various parenting styles in Chinese family education, urging Chinese parents to take these issues seriously.

3.1.3 *The role of peer influence*

The research conducted by Zhao et al. and Fan et al. provided a comprehensive perspective by considering the role of peer influences [8,9]. Zhao et al. investigate the intricate relationship between parenting style, peer associations, and pro-bullying behaviors, whereas Fan et al. delve into the repercussions of stringent parental discipline, emphasizing the significance of moral disengagement and affiliation with deviant peer groups in understanding bullying behaviors among Chinese adolescents.

Zhao et al. discovered noteworthy correlations among adolescent parenting style, peer dynamics, deviant peer interactions, and pro-bullying behaviors [8]. Parenting style exhibited a positive correlation with peer relationships, while deviant peer interactions and pro-bullying behaviors displayed a negative correlation. Furthermore, peer relationships were found to be associated with deviant peer interactions and pro-bullying behaviors, and deviant peer interaction exhibited a positive correlation with pro-bullying behavior [8].

Additionally, Fan et al. observed that demographic factors such as gender and school type significantly correlated with instances of school bullying. Specifically, bullying was more prevalent among male students and junior high school attendees compared to senior high school students [9]. However, factors such as age, residence, and income did not exhibit significant correlations. The study also considered control variables, including gender and school type, which showed significant correlations. Harsh parental discipline, moral disengagement, and affiliation with deviant peer groups were all positively correlated with school bullying among adolescents [9].

It is noteworthy that parental violence and abuse within Chinese families emerge as the most pivotal and direct predictors of adolescent bullying behavior. The findings of this empirical study align with those of another Chinese study conducted by Liu et al. [7]. In these studies, it becomes evident that Chinese parents, influenced by Confucianism, feel a sense of obligation to intervene in various aspects of their children's lives, fostering a propensity toward adopting an authoritarian parenting style. Both empirical investigations affirm that Chinese parents' authoritarian parenting styles and the use of severe corporal punishment or harsh parental discipline exert significant influence on the prevalence of school bullying.

3.1.4 The role of personality

Moreover, Krisnana et al. from Indonesia pointed towards the significant role played by adolescent characteristics and parenting styles as determinants of bullying [10]. Parenting styles, either authoritative or permissive, can significantly impact bullying behaviors in adolescents. Authoritative parenting, which prioritizes fairness and child needs, is recommended to prevent such issues [10]. However, this Indonesian study only investigated three parental types and did not take into account the neglect type.

Another study conducted in Indonesia by Muhopilah and Tentama yielded noteworthy findings regarding the influence of parenting styles and personality traits on bullying behavior in students [11]. The study uncovered a significant positive relationship between authoritarian parenting and instances of bullying among students [11]. Authoritarian parenting, characterized by its assertive and coercive nature, emerges as a potential predictor of bullying behavior in students, as it often leads to students engaging in bullying conduct at school [11]. This can be attributed to the fact that bullying provides individuals with a sense of power and control, compensating for their perceived lack of autonomy within their homes. Students raised by authoritarian parents may develop ambivalent interpersonal relationships with their peers, resulting in an increased propensity for threats and limited problem-solving abilities.

Furthermore, the study identified a positive correlation between extraversion personality traits and bullying behavior. Teenagers exhibiting high levels of extraversion tend to enjoy popularity among their peers and are more likely to engage in bullying activities. This inclination toward bullying stems from the desire to establish social dominance over others with less influence or power.

In addition, the research indicated that conformity plays a significant role in bullying behavior. Bullying often occurs with the support and encouragement of peers, as individuals may conform to group norms. Various factors contribute to students conforming to bullying behavior, including classroom norms, an external locus of control, students' attitudes toward bullying, and their interactions within the community.

Interestingly, the study also hinted at a potential cultural dimension to bullying behavior. Countries with higher collectivist values tend to experience lower levels of bullying, while those with high individualism levels often report higher instances of bullying. However, it is crucial to note that this perspective requires further substantiation through empirical studies conducted across a broader spectrum of countries.

3.2 Western context (Canada, Spain, USA, and Greece)

Research conducted in Western contexts further reinforces these findings. Broll and Reynolds hailing from Canada, underscored the influence of parental responsibility and blameworthiness on adolescents' encounters with both traditional and cyberbullying [12].

Their study revealed that more than 35% of the participants reported experiencing traditional bullying, with over 33% falling victim to cyberbullying. Approximately 9% of respondents admitted to bullying others through traditional or electronic means, while 8% and 9% identified as bully-victims in both categories [12]. Most participants reported having authoritative or indulgent parents, with the remaining evenly split between authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles [12]. The sample primarily consisted of female middle school students, with visible minorities comprising approximately one-third of the participants. The relationship between parenting styles and traditional and cyberbullying victimization and perpetration displayed some ambiguity, but adolescents with neglectful parents were more likely to report victimization and engaging in bullying. Furthermore, parenting styles exhibited a stronger correlation with cyberbullying than traditional bullying. These findings align with the conclusions drawn by He et al. in China, indicating that students from neglectful families are more prone to experiencing school bullying [6].

In Spain, Martínez et al. placed particular emphasis on the role of parenting in the digital age, where protective and risk parenting styles were identified as significant factors influencing traditional and cyberbullying victimization [5]. Their study involved 1109 adolescents attending public high schools in middle-class neighborhoods in a Spanish city with a population of approximately one million inhabitants [5]. The study uncovered those adolescents raised in authoritative and indulgent households exhibited higher scores in cyberbullying victimization and traditional bullying victimization compared to those raised in authoritarian or neglectful households. Adolescents from authoritative and indulgent homes also displayed more positive scores in academic engagement and self-esteem. Moreover, those from authoritative or indulgent households reported higher levels of academic, social, family, and physical self-esteem compared to their counterparts from neglectful or authoritarian homes. Notably, the study identified a significant interaction between parenting style and gender, with the indulgent parenting style associated with more favorable outcomes than authoritative, neglectful, and authoritarian parenting styles. These results differ somewhat from those observed in other countries.

Studies conducted in the USA (Hong et al.) and Greece (Papatsimouli et al.) further solidify the link between varying parenting styles and the prevalence of bullying and victimization among adolescents [13,14]. Hong et al.'s study involved 1438 adolescents, with 40.9% male and 49.1% female participants, and which the average grade level was 7.42, and 12% of respondents reported poor family conditions [13]. Participants reported a range of parenting styles, with most exhibiting significant relationships. Correlation analyses did not raise concerns about multicollinearity, as all variables displayed values of less than 10 [13]. The research also unveiled that the non-involvement of mothers in parenting had a positive impact on bullying victimization and perpetration among foreign-born

Asians and U.S.-born Asians but not among White Americans [13]. Surprisingly, authoritarian parenting was associated with bullying perpetration in U.S.-born Asians, contradicting the initial hypothesis. Conversely, non-involvement and authoritative parenting were positively associated with bullying perpetration in White Americans. This study offers a cross-cultural exploration of school bullying and contributes empirical research for an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon.

Papatsimouli et al. revealed that cyberbullying victims in Greece exhibited weaker family connections compared to non-victims [14]. The study also unveiled a statistical relationship between cyberbullying victims and traditional bullying victims, as well as a correlation between cyberbullying victims and family relations [14]. These findings emphasize the need for parents and schools to prepare children for the challenges of new technology, as cyberbullying evolves alongside technological advancements. Future studies should consider larger sample sizes and aim for a deeper understanding of the dynamics between cyberbullying and traditional bullying.

3.3 African context (Nigeria)

Wokoma and Udochukwu conducted research in Nigeria to explore the impact of various parenting styles on bullying behavior among secondary school students [15]. Their study highlights the significant influence of parenting practices on the likelihood of bullying tendencies within this demographic. The research comprised a sample of 2,368 SS2 students selected from 13 public secondary schools and 24 government-approved private schools located in the Ikwere local government area of Rivers State [15].

The findings of the study suggest that bullying behavior is more prevalent among students who come from homes characterized by authoritarian parenting (48.02), permissive parenting (36.75), and authoritative parenting (16.52), as indicated by their respective mean scores [15]. However, it's important to note that the study does have limitations, particularly in that it does not address the outcomes associated with neglectful parenting styles.

4. Analysis of the above empirical studies

The above studies collectively demonstrate a consistent trend where parenting styles significantly influence bullying behaviors among adolescents. The research showcases that both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles can potentially foster environments where bullying can thrive.

Several studies emphasize the role of mediators such as interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, moral disengagement, and severe parental discipline and corporal punishment that seem to be influenced by parenting styles, thus, indirectly affecting bullying behaviors [6, 9, 7]. Moreover, the influence of peer groups and the susceptibility to conforming to bullying

behaviors seem to be significantly impacted by the parenting styles as well [8,11].

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the phenomenon of bullying transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. This indicates the necessity for a multi-faceted approach to tackle bullying, where interventions should be culturally sensitive and globally coherent. The studies also bring to the forefront the evolving nature of bullying with the advent of the digital era, necessitating an updated approach in parenting styles to safeguard adolescents from both traditional and cyberbullying [5].

In conclusion, the analysis of the empirical studies underscores the pressing need for concerted efforts in promoting positive parenting styles as a viable strategy to curb bullying behaviors in schools globally. It also hints at the potential for further research into delineating the nuanced ways through which parenting styles influence bullying behaviors, including the exploration of potential protective factors that can mitigate the adverse effects of negative parenting styles.

Through a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the existing literature, it becomes evident that parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' behaviors and their susceptibility to engage in bullying behaviors at school. Addressing this issue calls for a collaborative approach involving parents, educators, and policymakers, fostering environments that nurture positive behaviors and resilience among adolescents. Future studies should continue to explore this dynamic relationship, with a focus on developing strategies and interventions that can effectively mitigate the prevalence of bullying in schools.

5. Discussion

5.1 Implications for practice

The literature suggests that practitioners and policymakers should focus on holistic parenting education programs, promoting nurturing parenting styles that foster empathy, self-control, and positive peer relationships. Schools should develop policies and programs aimed at reducing bullying behaviors, involving parents and students, and fostering a collaborative environment to mitigate bullying. Community engagement and cultural sensitivity should be promoted, acknowledging the nuances that shape parenting styles across different cultural groups. Understanding and respecting the variations in parenting styles across different cultural groups can be pivotal in crafting effective interventions.

5.2 Future directions

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to understand the causal relationship between parenting styles and bullying behaviors. Cross-cultural comparative studies can help understand the differences in parenting styles across different cultural backgrounds, potentially leading to more inclusive strategies. In-depth qualitative investigations can uncover the psychological

mechanisms linking parenting styles to bullying behaviors, providing nuanced insights into the experiences of individuals involved. An interdisciplinary approach, incorporating psychology, sociology, and education, can help develop a comprehensive understanding and solution to the issue.

6. Conclusion

Parenting style plays a crucial role in shaping a child's behavior and interactions, including their involvement in school bullying. A parenting style that is authoritative, characterized by warmth, clear communication, and consistent discipline, tends to foster empathy, self-regulation, and positive social skills in children. On the other hand, overly permissive parenting might lead to a lack of boundaries and accountability, potentially contributing to bullying behaviors.

Conversely, overly authoritarian parenting, marked by strict rules and harsh punishments, can also increase the likelihood of a child engaging in bullying as they might internalize aggressive tendencies. And factors like peer influence, school environment, and the child's own temperament also contribute to bullying. A balanced and supportive parenting approach that fosters empathy, emotional intelligence, and respectful behavior can significantly reduce the likelihood of a child becoming involved in school bullying.

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