

# Research on the Mechanism of Authoritative Parenting on Adolescent Mental Health

Jia Li

*Department of Applied Psychology, New York University, New York, NY, USA, 10003*

**Abstract:** This study explores the mechanism of authoritative parenting on adolescent mental health, emphasizing its important role in promoting adolescents' positive psychological development, improving self-esteem and social adaptability, and reducing psychological problems such as anxiety and depression. Through literature analysis, it is found that authoritative parenting builds a supportive and trusting family environment through the combination of high emotional support and reasonable behavioral norms, helping adolescents gain psychological stability and the ability to cope with stress during their growth. In addition, authoritative parenting shows adaptability in different cultural backgrounds and has become a recognized effective parenting model in various family environments. In order to transform the advantages of authoritative parenting into practical results, this study recommends that through family education training, cooperation between schools and communities, and policy support, parents can better master this parenting style, thereby providing adolescents with a stable growth environment and comprehensive psychological support.

**Keywords:** Authoritative Parenting; Adolescent Mental Health; Self-Esteem; Social Adaptation; Family Education

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background and Importance

In recent years, the family parenting style, especially the authoritative parenting style, has gradually become an important topic in adolescent mental health research. Authoritative parenting is featured by high support, warmth and moderate control and integrates emotional care with behavioral norms. Compared to the parenting style of

authoritarian or permissive, the positive influence it has on Adolescent Mental Health is widely recognized [1][2]. Throughout the world, authoritative rearing among diverse cultural backgrounds plays a very significant role in the mental health of teenagers. Therefore, this parenting style has been proven not to only react incredibly in low psychological distress in adolescents but also to greatly enhance social adaptability and academic performance in school settings [3]. The positive influence mechanism of the authoritative parental style includes strengthening the emotional attachment and support networks between adolescents and parents [4]; hence, helping them improve their self-esteem and self-efficacy, which in turn protects adolescents from external pressures and challenges to a certain degree because of the protection barrier in psychology [5]. In particular, it gives adolescents a stable family environment in which to live during that adolescent stage full of social, academic, and other pressures because this warm and structured parenting style can reduce the incidence of their psychological problems. Indeed, existing studies have confirmed that among all the mental health problems, including depression and anxiety, the authoritative way of parenting has an obvious protective effect more than any other parental style [6].

### 1.2 Research Objectives

This study aims to explore the specific impact mechanism of authoritative parenting style on adolescent mental health and analyze its unique path in promoting adolescent positive psychological development and reducing mental health problems. This paper will focus on the core characteristics of the authoritative parenting style and their applicability in different cultural backgrounds through combing the existing literature, after which it will analyze the role of this parenting style as a

mediating and moderating variable in adolescent mental health development. The findings of this research will further add richness not only to the theoretical connection between parenting style and adolescent mental health, but also provide a scientific basis for the formulation of family education policies with a view to providing effective practical guidance for parents and

## **2.Theoretical Basis of Authoritative Parenting Style**

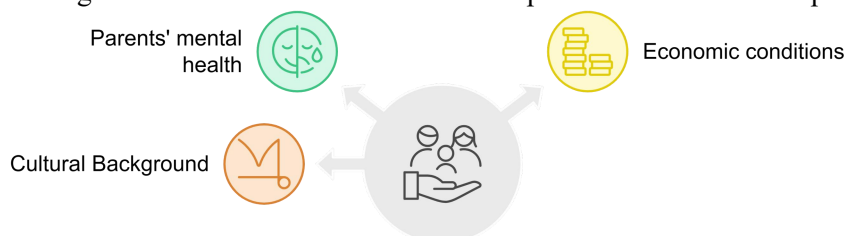
### **2.1 Definition and Main Characteristics of Authoritative Parenting Style**

The authoritative parenting style is one of the most acknowledged in adolescent development. It basically refers to a style described by a high level of emotional support and a high-to-medium level of behavior control. As regard to child-rearing, the authoritative parents are sensitive to the emotional needs of their children, warm, and supportive. In addition, they permit their children self-direction with a minimum of perceived interference [7]. Such authoritative parents focus more on clear behavioral guidelines and expectations necessary to help socialize their children through the development of sound self-management and social adaptability. Compared with the authoritarian style, in authoritative parenting, two-way communication is emphasized, taking into consideration children's opinions and feelings, and keeping boundaries that are reasonable, with a certain degree of autonomy given to the children [8]. Such a parenting style has been found to significantly improve adolescents' self-concept, social interaction, and academic performance, allowing them to become more

confident and active when facing various problems during adolescence [9]. Authoritative parents, for example, permit children to express their thoughts and feelings because they communicate openly with them, creating a positive interactive atmosphere in the family environment. This promotes adolescents' mental health and behavioral development.

### **2.2 Theoretical Basis and Formation Factors of Authoritative Parenting Style**

The theoretical basis of authoritative parenting style is deeply rooted in social learning theory and behavioral principles. According to social learning theory, authoritative parenting shapes adolescents' positive behaviors and values through positive feedback, role modeling and moderate behavior control [10]. Baumrind's classic study suggests that authoritative parenting plays an important role in enhancing children's self-esteem, self-efficacy and sense of responsibility, and this parenting model has a significant positive impact in different cultural backgrounds [11]. There are many factors that influence this parenting style (Figure 1), including parents' mental health, family economic status, and cultural background.[12] Research has found that parents with good mental health are more likely to adopt authoritative parenting because this state can enhance parents' emotional sensitivity and behavioral consistency, thereby better meeting their children's growth needs.[13] In some cultures, parents add culturally unique elements to authoritative parenting to make it more in line with local needs and adapt to the requirements of contemporary society for children's independence and social adaptability.[14]



**Figure 1: Factors that Influence Authoritative Parenting**

## **3. The Mechanism of the Influence of Authoritative Parenting Style on Adolescent Mental Health**

### **3.1 The Role of Authoritative Parenting**

### **Style in Promoting the Positive Psychological Development of Adolescents**

Authoritative parenting style plays an important role in the positive psychological development of adolescents, helping adolescents to form a healthy psychological

state through emotional support, moderate control and an open communication environment. The support and guidance provided by parents in authoritative parenting make it easier for adolescents to build self-confidence and self-efficacy. This positive self-cognition helps them maintain stable emotions and positive coping methods when facing challenges and pressure. In addition, adolescents under authoritative parenting style are more likely to form self-discipline and social responsibility in their growth due to the influence of reasonable behavioral norms, which provides psychological protection for their academic performance and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, authoritative parenting not only shapes adolescents' self-esteem and adaptability, but also promotes the multi-faceted manifestations of their positive psychological development.

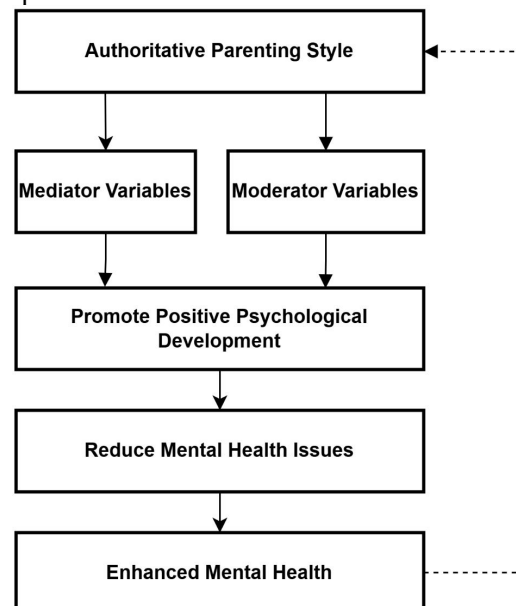
### 3.2 Potential Association Between Authoritative Parenting Style and Mental Health Problems

Although authoritative parenting style has a significant protective effect on adolescent mental health, different family backgrounds and individual differences may lead to certain variables in its effect. For some adolescents with high psychological vulnerability, mental health problems such as anxiety or depression may occur even in an authoritative parenting environment. This phenomenon may be related to the overall atmosphere of the family, the emotional state of the parents, and the consistency of the parenting style. When parents are emotionally unstable or inconsistent in their expressions when implementing authoritative parenting, it may cause confusion and emotional fluctuations in adolescents, thereby increasing the risk of mental health problems. Therefore, although authoritative parenting contributes to mental health in most situations, its specific effects may be moderated by other environmental and individual factors.

### 3.3 Analysis of the Role of Mediating and Moderating Variables

In the impact of authoritative parenting on adolescent mental health, mediating and moderating variables play an important role. First, self-esteem and self-efficacy are considered important mediating variables

because authoritative parenting can effectively enhance adolescents' self-esteem and trust in the process of providing emotional support and autonomy, thereby reducing the occurrence of mental health problems to a certain extent. In addition, factors such as family structure, parents' educational background, and social support are also considered to be important moderating variables affecting the effect of authoritative parenting. For different adolescent groups, these variables play a moderating role in the impact path, making the actual effect of authoritative parenting different from person to person. Therefore, a deep understanding of the specific mechanisms of these mediating and moderating variables will help to more effectively utilize authoritative parenting styles to promote adolescents' mental health.



**Figure2. Mechanism of Authoritative Parenting Style on Adolescent Mental Health**

Figure2 illustrates the influence mechanism of authoritative parenting on adolescent mental health. Through mediator and moderator variables, authoritative parenting promotes positive psychological development, reduces mental health issues, and creates a positive feedback loop that enhances overall mental well-being.

## 4. Discussion and Inspiration

### 4.1 Review of the Role of Authoritative Parenting in the Impact on Mental Health

Authoritative parenting provides a solid

protective effect on adolescents' mental health by balancing warm emotional support with reasonable behavioral norms. Studies have shown that this parenting style is not only effective in improving adolescents' self-esteem, social adaptability and emotional regulation, but also reduces their risk of psychological problems. The unique advantage of authoritative parenting lies in its interactive model of two-way communication. Mutual understanding and support between parents and children help build an open and trusting family environment, which provides a solid psychological foundation for adolescents to cope with emotional and social pressures during their growth. In addition, authoritative parenting also shows a positive impact in promoting adolescents' academic achievement and social behavior development, especially its adaptability in different cultural backgrounds, making it a universal positive parenting model. However, it is worth noting that the effect of authoritative parenting may be regulated by factors such as family economic conditions, parents' psychological state and family structure. Overall, authoritative parenting lays a good foundation for the healthy physical and mental growth of adolescents through a supportive family environment.

#### **4.2 Suggestions for Practical Intervention and Policy Implications**

Based on the positive impact of authoritative parenting on adolescent mental health, parents, schools and all sectors of society should work together in policy and practice to promote and support this parenting style. First, it is recommended to add relevant content of authoritative parenting to family education training, provide emotional support and parenting skills training for parents, and help them master the balance skills of caring for their children while providing appropriate guidance. At the same time, schools can set up parent classes or family education workshops to enhance parents' understanding and practical ability of authoritative parenting. At the policy level, the government should formulate relevant support policies to provide educational and psychological support to families, especially those with weaker economic conditions, to reduce the psychological burden of parents. In addition, policymakers can consider incorporating

family education into the national education policy system, promote the formation of a supportive social atmosphere, and help parents establish a positive parenting style. These suggestions and policy measures will help to comprehensively improve the mental health level of adolescents and lay a solid foundation for their future social adaptation and achievements.

#### **5. Conclusion**

This study systematically explored the mechanism of authoritative parenting on adolescent mental health. The results showed that authoritative parenting has significant advantages in promoting positive psychological development of adolescents and reducing mental health problems. By providing emotional support and reasonable norms, authoritative parenting builds a two-way interactive and trusting family environment, which not only improves adolescents' self-esteem and social adaptability, but also effectively prevents the occurrence of psychological problems such as anxiety and depression. Authoritative parenting, in particular, demonstrates strong adaptability across diverse cultural backgrounds and can support localized adolescent growth, thus being widely recognized as an effective parenting model worldwide. Although authoritative parenting shows significant positive effects in most situations, its effects vary depending on factors such as family economic conditions and parents' mental health.

At the practical level, this study suggests promoting authoritative parenting through policies and family education training to help parents find a balance between care and norms, so as to create a growth environment that is conducive to adolescent mental health. Schools and communities can provide parents with family education guidance to enhance their understanding and application of authoritative parenting. Policymakers should promote more family support programs, especially to provide emotional and economic support to disadvantaged families, so as to create a more inclusive and supportive social atmosphere. In summary, authoritative parenting not only lays a solid foundation for the mental health of adolescents, but also provides long-term protection for their

academic achievement and social adaptation.

## References

- [1] Dwairy, M., Achoui, M. M., Abouserie, R., Farah, A.: Parenting Styles, Individuation, and Mental Health of Arab Adolescents. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 37, 262-272(2006).
- [2] Fatima, A., Ahmed, M., Slatch, J. M., Slatch, I. M.: Effect of Parenting Style on Adolescent Depression. *Pakistan Journal of Medical and Health Sciences*, (2022).
- [3] Steinberg, L., Lamborn, S., Dornbusch, S., Darling, N.: Impact of parenting practices on adolescent achievement: authoritative parenting, school involvement, and encouragement to succeed. *Child Development* 63, 1266-1281(1992).
- [4] Newman, K., Harrison, L., Dashiff, C., Davies, S.: Relationships between parenting styles and risk behaviors in adolescent health: an integrative literature review. *Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem* 16, 142-150(2008).
- [5] Wang, Z.: The relationship between parenting style and depressive symptoms during adolescence. *SHS Web of Conferences*, (2023).
- [6] Piko, B., Balázs, M. Á.: Control or involvement? Relationship between parenting style and adolescent depression. *Psychiatria Hungarica* 25, 538-544(2010).
- [7] Darling, N., Steinberg, L.: Parenting Style as Context: An Integrative Model. *Psychological Bulletin* 113, 487-496(1993).
- [8] Chen, X., Dong, Q., Zhou, H.: Authoritative and Authoritarian Parenting Practices and Social and School Performance in Chinese Children. *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 21, 855-873(1997).
- [9] Tiwari, A. P.: Authoritative Parenting: The Best Style in Children's Learning. *American Journal of Education and Technology* (2022).
- [10] Gray, M. R., Steinberg, L.: Unpacking authoritative parenting: Reassessing a multidimensional construct. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61, 574-587(1999).
- [11] Takeuchi, M., Takeuchi, S.: Authoritarian Versus Authoritative Parenting Styles: Application of the Cost Equalization Principle. *Marriage & Family Review* 44, 489-510(2008).
- [12] Cheah, C. S. L., Leung, C., Tahseen, M., Schultz, D.: Authoritative parenting among immigrant Chinese mothers of preschoolers. *Journal of Family Psychology* 23, 311-320(2009).
- [13] Chao, R.: Beyond parental control and authoritarian parenting style: understanding Chinese parenting through the cultural notion of training. *Child Development* 65, 1111-1119(1994).