

The Influence of Parenting Styles on Learning Motivation and Academic Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

Parenting style is widely studied in adolescents academic development. However existing research focuses mainly on direct correlations. The mediating pathways, developmental differences, and cultural moderators have yet to be sufficiently verified. This review systematically examines how parenting styles influence learning motivation and academic self-efficacy. It synthesizes peer-reviewed articles and analyzes mediating mechanisms including self-efficacy, coping styles, and basic psychological need satisfaction. It also compares findings across age groups and cultural contexts. The result shows that warm and autonomy-supportive parenting enhances intrinsic motivation and academic confidence. Overly controlling or permissive parenting has negative effects. These effects operate through the mediators. At the same time parenting influence is stronger in middle school than in university. In collectivist cultures, parental control may have different meanings and may be less harmful than Western findings suggest. Most existing studies use cross-sectional designs, so causal conclusions remain limited. Future research needs longitudinal studies. It should examine fathers and mothers separately and compare different cultural contexts directly.

Keywords

parenting styles, learning motivation, academic self-efficacy

1. Introduction

Parenting styles play an important role in adolescents' academic development. In daily life, many parents face a difficult choice. Too much control may reduce children's intrinsic motivation. Complete permissiveness may lead to academic disengagement and low confidence. Understanding how parenting shapes learning motivation and self-efficacy is socially and educationally important. A large number of research has confirmed that warm, autonomy-supportive parenting style enhances students' learning motivation and academic self-efficacy (Guo et al., 2023; Çelik, 2024). However, several limitations remain in existing literature. First, most studies focus on direct correlations rather than integrated mediating pathways. Second, most studies rely on cross-sectional designs, which makes causal inference difficult. Third, the moderating roles of developmental stage and cultural context have not been adequately compared. In addition, the differential effects of fathers versus mothers and the negative impact of permissive parenting still need systematic synthesis. Previous reviews often treat learning motivation and self-efficacy separately. Furthermore an integrated framework is missing. Thus, a comprehensive review is necessary to fill these gaps. This review will synthesize existing

evidence, evaluate mediating mechanisms, and clarify how developmental and cultural factors influence parenting effects on academic outcomes. The findings will provide evidence-based guidance for parents and identify directions for future research. This review systematically examines how parenting styles influence adolescents' learning motivation and academic self-efficacy. Peer-reviewed articles were retrieved from major databases. Key mediating pathways were synthesized, and findings were compared across different age groups and cultural contexts. This study tends to integrate current evidence, offer practical guidance for parents, and identify directions for future research.

2. Core Variables

2.1 Parenting Styles

Parenting styles refers to a stable behavioral pattern, affection attitude and values that parents show in the procedure of raising and educating their children. Preliminarily, it is divided into three types: authoritative authoritarian and permissive. Subsequently, Maccoby expanded the theory that introduced the fourth style neglectful. After all forming the most widely known four-category model nowadays. However the current research on parenting styles has shifted from traditional four category classification to the process and quality of parenting behaviors. This shift reflects a recognition that fixed categorical labels may oversimplify the dynamic and reciprocal nature of real life parent-child interactions. Meanwhile include the modern contexts like digital media internet use and mental health. A large number of studies introduced self-determination theory to explain the difference of parenting styles that whether they satisfy children's three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Another notable investigation is that under the cross-culture research, same parenting style lead to different outcomes. Under the collectivist context such as China, the control has its special cultural meaning, unlike the western contexts which parental control is often associated with negative development, in the collectivism culture, parental control can accompany by high level of affection and instrumental support. Children will regard it as care rather than interference. This not only allows researchers to more precisely study the relationship of between specific components of parenting styles and education outcomes. But also indicates that the effects of parenting styles may vary across cultural contexts.

2.2 Learning Motivation

Learning motivation is the force system that initiates, guides, and sustains goal-directed academic behavior. It determines why students choose to engage in learning tasks, how much effort they invest, and how long they persist when obstacles arise. Most of researchers relied on a simple binary framework. They distinguished between intrinsic motivation, which stems from interest and enjoyment, and extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external rewards or pressures. However, contemporary research has shifted its focus from the quantity of motivation to its quality. Crucially, not all extrinsic motivation is detrimental. When students act because they personally value an activity, their motivation becomes internalized and closely resembles the intrinsic drive. This transformation is not automatic; it requires supportive conditions, especially parents and teachers who respect children's autonomy and provide meaningful rationales rather than external pressures. Current investigations center on several critical issues. Scholars examine the environmental conditions that promote motivational internalization and explore how the satisfaction of basic psychological needs facilitates this process. The enduring effects of motivation quality on deep learning and psychological adjustment also remain central concerns.

2.3 Learning Self-Efficacy

Learning self-efficacy refers to a learner's personal judgment of how well they can handle academic tasks. This is not about what a student actually knows. It is about what they believe they can do. Such beliefs often shape behavior more directly than objective ability does. Students with higher self-efficacy tend to set more ambitious goals and persist longer in the face of difficulty. In contrast, those with lower self-efficacy are more likely to disengage before making a genuine attempt. Where does this self-belief come from? It does not appear overnight. Personal experience of success builds it up. Watching similar person succeed helps as well. At the same time, encouraging words from trusted adults can offer a boost. Body signals, like a racing heart, can either undermine or strengthen confidence depending on how they are interpreted. Interestingly, the importance of these sources seems to change as children grow older. Younger children may rely heavily on

what parents say. Older students weigh their own past performance more heavily. Researchers today are moving past simple correlations. Instead they want to exactly know how students shape efficacy through daily talk and action. They also wonder whether ages make confidence more fragile. These are useful questions, answering them will move the field from description toward genuine understanding of how to support lasting academic confidence.

3. The Impact of Parenting Styles on Learning Motivation

Researchers have confirmed the connection between parenting styles and students' learning motivation. However, they still focus on the specific mechanisms that connect these two factors (Guo et al., 2023; Çelik, 2024). Early studies have only explored the general relationship between different types of parenting and the level of learning motivation. These studies largely relied on cross-sectional data, which could not reveal the underlying mechanisms through which parenting influences motivation. More recent work has overcome this shortcoming by developing and testing mediation models that specify the intermediate steps in the process (Guo et al., 2023; Çelik, 2024). Scholars have put basic psychological needs, self-efficacy, and coping styles at the center of their research (Guo et al., 2023). This paper will review two typical studies.

Guo et al. (2023) examined mediation mechanisms with a sample of 677 Chinese nursing undergraduates. Parenting was measured along three separate dimensions: care, encouragement of autonomy, and control. This dimensional approach allowed distinct effects to emerge. The mediation proportions tell a key pattern. Parental care promoted intrinsic motivation both directly and indirectly. The indirect route has operated through enhanced self-efficacy and improved coping styles, and this path has accounted for about half of the total effect. Encouragement of autonomy showed a different structure. Its effect on intrinsic motivation was almost entirely indirect, with mediation accounting for roughly 71 percent. Autonomy support has not directly pushed students to study. Instead, it reshaped how students view themselves and approach difficulties, and these internal shifts then fueled their desire to learn. Parental control worked in the opposite direction. It has directly dampened intrinsic motivation and has also weakened self-efficacy and adaptive coping strategies. The data came from a single wave of self-reports, so causal direction remains uncertain. Moreover, the sample consisted exclusively of nursing undergraduates, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other student populations or academic disciplines. Even with these caveats, the study clarifies one important point. Different parenting behaviors have operated through different underlying logics. Encouragement of autonomy has exerted its effects through indirect channels. Parental control has imposed both direct and hidden costs on students. This distinction has provided more concrete guidance than simply advising parents to be warmer and less strict.

Çelik (2024) has put forward a totally different explanatory path. This study also explored the relationship between parenting styles and academic motivation, but it has concentrated on a more specific dimension: autonomy support. It has raised a clear research question: when parents fully respect their children's choices and listen to their real ideas, how will such behaviors change children's internal motivation? This study has adopted structural equation modeling and recruited a group of adolescents as research subjects. It has tested a complete sequential mediation model. The results shown that autonomy-supportive parenting can meet three basic psychological needs of teenagers first, which include autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomy-supportive parenting refers to explaining rules clearly instead of giving direct orders, and accepting children's opinions instead of denying them easily. Higher levels of psychological need satisfaction will further promote the development of self-control ability. When students have stronger self-control, they can form higher-quality autonomous motivation. Every link in this mediation chain has been supported by empirical data. This pathway can clearly explain a key phenomenon, helps researchers understand why some children can form stable internal motivation even when parents do not adopt strict guidance. Autonomy support does not mean giving up necessary constraints. It means setting clear boundaries while letting children take partial control of their learning process. In this situation, children will take the initiative to take responsibility for their own learning, instead of passively completing the tasks arranged by parents. However, the cross-sectional design does not permit causal inference. Also, the sample was limited to one cultural setting, so it remains unclear whether the findings hold for adolescents in collectivist or non-Western contexts, where autonomy support might be understood differently and have different effects. Even so, this study has still added an important part to the whole research system. Parenting behaviors can not only influence what children can do, but also influence their inner feelings. These feelings include whether they have been respected, whether they can trust their own abilities, and whether they can restrain immediate desires for long-term development.

Many other related studies have verified the relationship between parenting styles and learning motivation in different cultural and educational environments. These studies have reached a consistent conclusion. Parental warmth and support for autonomy can effectively predict higher levels of learning motivation (Guo et al., 2023; Çelik, 2024; Tang et al., 2018; Alhadabi et al., 2019; Li et al., 2025). Tang et al. have confirmed this correlation in Chinese high school students (Tang et al., 2018). Alhadabi et al. have repeated the verification process in adolescent groups in Oman (Alhadabi et al., 2019). Li et al. have extended the research conclusion to college students (Li et al., 2025). They have proved that early parenting styles can continue to affect individual motivation until young adulthood. These studies have provided a unified view: parenting practices foster learning motivation not merely through external incentives, but by nurturing the internal psychological resources---autonomy, competence, and relatedness, that underlie sustained academic engagement (Çelik, 2024; Alhadabi et al., 2019). Children who have received enough respect and have built self-confidence will more easily accept the value of learning. They will regard academic efforts as their own choices rather than external pressure (Guo et al., 2023; Çelik, 2024). However, these studies still have some limitations. Most of them have used cross-sectional designs, so researchers cannot confirm clear causal relationships (Li et al., 2025). Tang et al. found that in collectivist cultural contexts, parental control may be less detrimental or even benign when accompanied by high levels of warmth and support, a pattern that suggests cultural meaning shapes the impact of specific parenting behaviors (Tang et al., 2018; Li et al., 2025). This finding, however, requires further empirical verification across diverse samples. Despite these problems, existing studies have reached a core consensus. Parenting styles based on warmth and respect can provide stable support for lasting academic motivation (Guo et al., 2023; Çelik, 2024; Alhadabi et al., 2019).

4. The Impact of Parenting Styles on Learning Self-Efficacy

Researchers have paid a great attention to the relationship between parenting styles and academic self-efficacy. Most of early studies have only examined whether there is a correlation between two factors. For instance, students who have authoritative parents will usually report they have a higher academic self-efficacy (Li et al., 2025). Recent studies have raised more specific research questions. These studies want to find out what kinds of mechanisms can transfer the effect of parenting styles to academic self-efficacy (Guo et al., 2023; Çelik, 2024). They also want to know whether this relationship will change across different age groups or different cultural contexts (Tang et al., 2018). Scholars have introduced several mediating variables to explain this process, and these variables include basic psychological needs, self-acceptance, and academic resilience. This paper will review two representative studies as follows.

Shengyao et al. (2024) and his colleagues conducted a study in 2024, and they examined the relationship between parenting styles and academic self-efficacy among a sample of 518 Chinese university students. The researchers adopted the structural equation modeling to analyze the relationship between parenting styles and academic self-efficacy. The final results showed that parenting style could positively predict students' academic self-efficacy, and the relevant coefficient was $\beta = 0.616$ with a significance level of $p < 0.001$. The students who had perceived more warmth and support from their parents usually had stronger confidence in their academic abilities. In this particular study, the researchers mainly treated academic self-efficacy as a mediating variable. This variable could help researchers explain how parenting styles affect students' academic resilience. Even so, the positive relationship between parenting styles and academic self-efficacy had still been proven. The study had only used cross-sectional data for the analysis, so the researchers could not determine the clear causal relationship between the variables. The sample of the study was limited to only a few Chinese universities. Therefore, researchers need to be cautious when try to generalize the findings of this study to other populations. Nevertheless, this study had confirmed a basic premise of that positive parenting behaviors would effectively help improve students' academic self-efficacy.

Unlike Shengyao et al. (2024) and colleagues, Aldhafri et al. (2020) and his colleagues wanted to know whether the influence of parenting style on self-efficacy would gradually weaken as children grew older. They conducted a questionnaire survey among middle school students and university students in Oman. The researchers also analyzed the effects of mothers and fathers separately. The final results of the study revealed a clear developmental pattern. In the sample of middle school students, parenting styles could explain 21% of the variance in self-efficacy. Both authoritative parents and even authoritarian fathers had shown positive effects on students' self-efficacy. In the sample of university students, the explained variance had dropped to only 10%. Only authoritative parents still had significant effects on students' self-efficacy. This result

suggested that family influence was stronger during the middle school period and would gradually weaken as students entered university and became more independent. The study had adopted a cross-sectional comparison method. So, the differences between age groups might reflect cohort effects. The study was carried out in Oman, which is a typical collectivist culture. The finding that authoritarian fathers had positive effects on middle school students was different from western research. This result had indicated that cultural context could influence the specific direction of parenting effects on study self-efficacy.

Other researchers have also reached similar conclusions in different settings. Researchers have consistently found that autonomy support from parents and teachers can effectively enhance students' academic self-efficacy (Llorca et al., 2017; Girelli et al., 2018). Longitudinal research evidence has shown that this positive effect can last for several months (Girelli et al., 2018). Some studies have also revealed that authoritative parenting ---marked by both warmth and appropriate limits, supports academic confidence, whereas excessive permissiveness, particularly from mothers, erodes children's academic self-efficacy by offering too little structure (Llorca et al., 2017; Hao & Li, 2022). When researchers take all these findings together, they can reinforce the same consistent pattern. Warm parenting that respects children's autonomy has been reliably associated with stronger academic self-efficacy in students.

Taken together, these studies point to a clear conclusion. Warm, supportive, and autonomy-respecting parenting styles are associated with higher academic self-efficacy (Girelli et al., 2018). Overly permissive parenting tends to have negative effects (Llorca et al., 2017; Hao & Li, 2022). The influence of parenting styles is not fixed. It is stronger in middle school and weaker in university (Aldhafri et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2024). Across different cultures, the same parenting behavior may carry different meanings. Most existing studies use cross-sectional designs, so causal claims remain uncertain. However, positive parenting, especially that is both warm and autonomy provides a reliable foundation for the stable development of academic self-efficacy (Guo et al., 2023; Çelik, 2024; Shengyao et al., 2024).

5. Discussion and Suggestions

The literature reviewed above leads to several general conclusions. First, parenting styles consistently predict students' learning motivation and academic self-efficacy (Guo et al., 2023; Çelik, 2024). Warm, supportive, and autonomy-respecting parenting, the authoritative style, is generally associated with higher intrinsic motivation and academic confidence (Guo et al., 2023; Girelli et al., 2018). Overly controlling or permissive parenting tends to have negative effects on intrinsic motivation and academic self-efficacy (Llorca et al., 2017; Hao & Li, 2022). Second, these effects are not direct in most cases. They operate through multiple mediating pathways, such as self-efficacy, coping styles, and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Third, the influence of parenting styles is moderated by developmental stage and cultural context. The effect is stronger in middle school than in university. In collectivist cultures, paternal control may carry a positive meaning that differs from Western findings. However, most existing studies use cross-sectional designs, so causal conclusions must be drawn with caution (Aldhafri et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2024).

Based on these conclusions, this study put forward the following suggestions for parents. First, parents should adopt warm and moderately guided parenting styles. They should refrain from purely controlling or completely permissive parenting (Llorca et al., 2017; Hao & Li, 2022). Specifically, parents can listen to their children's views carefully. They can explain the reasons behind the rules to their children, but not give direct and harsh orders to their children. They can also provide appropriate choices for their children in academic tasks (Girelli et al., 2018). This kind of autonomy-supportive parenting can satisfy children's basic psychological needs (Girelli et al., 2018). It can further enhance children's intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy (Shengyao et al., 2024). Second, parents need to pay special attention to the negative effects of maternal permissiveness (Hao & Li, 2022). The research has shown that permissive mothers will weaken their children's academic confidence (Llorca et al., 2017). Therefore, mothers should maintain appropriate expectations and guidance for their children. They can provide enough emotional support to their children at the same time. Fathers should avoid controlling their children without any support. Strict control without warmth will have a negative backfire effect on children. Third, parents should adjust their parenting strategies according to their child's age (Aldhafri et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2024). Middle school is the period when the influence of family is the strongest. Parents should use positive parenting methods during this critical stage. These methods can help children build stable academic confidence. When children enter the university, parents

can gradually shift their focus to emotional support (Girelli et al., 2018). They can reduce direct intervention in their children's daily life and study.

Future research should address several limitations in the current literature. First, most existing studies have used cross-sectional designs. These designs cannot establish clear causal directions. Researchers need to conduct more longitudinal studies. It can clarify whether parenting actually causes changes in motivation and self-efficacy also reveal at what ages children are most sensitive to parenting (Xu et al., 2024). Unlike cross-sectional studies, longitudinal data can distinguish a child's genuine growth and separate individual change from cohort effects. Second, researchers should examine the roles of fathers and mothers separately (Aldhafri et al., 2020; Llorca et al., 2017). The limited evidence has shown that fathers and mothers may have different effects on children. Third, researchers need to conduct more cross-cultural research (Tang et al., 2018; Li et al., 2025). The same parenting behavior, such as parental control, can carry different meanings in collectivist and individualist cultures. Fourth, current studies have relied heavily on student self-reports. Future research can add parent reports or observation measures. These measures can reduce common method bias in the research. Such improvements can help researchers clarify the boundary conditions. They can also reveal the underlying mechanisms of how parenting shapes children's learning motivation and academic self-efficacy (Guo et al., 2023; Shengyao et al., 2024).

Taken together, these studies point to a clear conclusion. Warm, supportive, and autonomy-respecting parenting styles are associated with higher academic self-efficacy. Overly permissive parenting tends to have negative effects (Shengyao et al., 2024; Hao & Li, 2022). The influence of parenting styles is not fixed. It is stronger in middle school and weaker in university. Across different cultures, the same parenting behavior may carry different meanings. Most existing studies use cross-sectional designs, so causal claims remain uncertain. However, positive parenting, especially that is both warm and autonomy provides a reliable foundation for the stable development of academic self-efficacy (Guo et al., 2023; Çelik, 2024; Llorca et al., 2017).

6. Conclusion

This review examined how parenting styles influence adolescents' learning motivation and academic self-efficacy. The evidence shows that authoritative and autonomy-supportive parenting enhances both intrinsic motivation and academic confidence. In contrast, controlling or permissive parenting, particularly when mothers are excessively permissive, tends to undermine these outcomes. These effects operate through mediating mechanisms such as self-efficacy, coping styles, and basic psychological need satisfaction. At the same time they vary across developmental stages and cultural contexts. Parents are advised to combine emotional warmth with clear behavioral expectations, while also respecting the child's need for independence. The findings demonstrate that positive parenting does not merely regulate behavior through external pressure; it builds the internal psychological resources—autonomy, competence, and relatedness, that sustain long-term academic engagement.

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Conflicts of Interest

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