

Abstract

This research examines parenting styles of adolescents' parents in Kandy District, Sri Lanka to understand the various individual and cultural factors that shape parenting practices in this context. Based on surveys with 120 participants as well as in-depth interviews with 16 of the initial participants, the study highlights four main themes and subthemes that reveal how parents' childhood experiences, cultural preferences, and role models shape their parenting practices. The results indicate that authoritative and permissive parents tend to have positive childhood experiences, positive relationships with their own parents in their childhood, and positive role models that have influenced their parenting practices. Authoritarian and uninvolved parents, on the other hand, report mostly negative childhood experiences with their own parents and fewer positive role models. Cultural preferences also vary within the four main parenting styles. For example, authoritative parents report more preference to apply what they perceive as both Eastern and Western cultural elements regarding parenting compared with other parenting styles. Authoritarian parents report using corporal punishment more than other study participants who represent the other parenting styles. The study concludes that more parenting styles-focused research regarding these factors is needed globally and in the Sri Lankan context.

Keywords: parenting styles, adolescence, role model, childhood experiences

1. INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt that primary caregivers' (typically parents') behaviour—and "home life" in general—have a profound influence on children's lives, both in terms of their psychological and physical development as well as their wellbeing. However, examining the complex relationship between parenting and children's outcomes—as well as the many factors that shape how adults parent their children—has required conceptual frameworks that could capture the diverse ways that parental practices are organized. *Parenting practices* can be defined as directly observable specific behaviors that parents use to socialize their children (Darling and Steinberg 1993). Accordingly, a *parenting style* is a "constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed" (Darling and Steinberg 1993, p. 488).

The conceptual framework of parenting styles was developed by Baumrind (1971) who identified three parenting styles to describe how typical parenting behaviors differ from one another: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. In the 1980s, Maccoby and Martin (1983) attempted to bridge Baumrind's typology and the conceptual framework of parenting dimensions. Based on the combination of two dimensions, demandingness and responsiveness, they defined four parenting styles: authoritative (i.e., high demandingness and high responsiveness); authoritarian (i.e., high demandingness and low responsiveness); permissive (i.e., low demandingness and high responsiveness); and neglectful (i.e., low demandingness and low responsiveness). These two parenting dimensions are similar, yet not identical, to the dimensions of 'parental support' and 'parental behavioral control.' Based on Maccoby and Martin's work, Baumrind (1989,1991) expanded her typology with a fourth parenting style, namely the 'neglectful' parenting style.

Subsequently, researchers applied an "exploratory clustering approach" that assess specific parenting practices to show the typologies that emerge empirically from within a particular population. Many studies have identified three or four parenting styles that align with Baumrind's original model, adding certain variations and nuances (Kuppens and Ceulemans 2018, p. 170). For example, Kuppens and Ceulemans (2018) examined psychological control as well as the potential effects of varying maternal and paternal parenting styles. The analysis accounting for these factors did not yield additional parenting styles but did help to explain the relationship between psychological control and harsh punishment. Furthermore, this study, like many others, found a similar pattern of positive outcomes

associated with authoritative parenting and negative outcomes associated with authoritarian parenting, especially when both parents practiced this style (2018, p.177).

Baumrind's framework continues to be referenced and utilized by researchers interested in the impacts of parenting on children (Carlo et al. 2018; Lange et al. 2018; Pinquart and Gerke 2019;). Moreover, while the framework is based on parenting practices commonly found in North America, it has been applied in various contexts across the world, generating insights about cross-cultural as well as cross-generational differences in parenting and its effects (Checa and Abundis-Gutierrez 2018; Garcia et al. 2020; Sahithya et al. 2019).

1.1 The Impact of Parenting Style on Adolescent Children

1.1.2 Authoritative Parenting Style

According to Baumrind (1966), authoritative parents provide proper guidance to their children in a problem-oriented and logical way. While this parenting style has a higher level of demandingness, authoritative parents generally welcome effective communication between themselves and their child (Piko & Balazs, 2012). Hoskins (2014) points out that by increasing support for positive behaviors, authoritative parents show more responsiveness to the child's strengths and goals. Moreover, these parents encourage their children verbally, set rules and explain the reasons for these rules in order to shape children's behavior. Previous researches found that the authoritative parenting style was correlated with higher subjective well-being, self-esteem, life satisfaction, academic achievement, and most optimal long term development of children (Calafat et al., 2014; Chan & Koo, 2010; Chang, 2007; Hovee et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2009;). Though a more recent meta-analysis suggests that children's self-esteem, for example, cannot be interpreted as "purely" the effect of parenting styles and more longitudinal research is needed to understand the relationship between parenting and children's self-esteem (Pinquart and Gerke 2019, p. 2029).

1.1.2 Authoritarian Parenting Style

Contrasting with the autonomy and respect at the heart of the authoritative parenting style, the core values of the authoritarian parenting style include obedience and restricted autonomy (Baumrind, 1966, p. 890). Authoritarian parents seek to shape, evaluate, and control their children's attitudes and expect them to adhere to strict rules of conduct. These rules are known as absolute standards, and children will be penalized if they fail to comply with them. Cherry (2015) showed that authoritarian parents generally fail to present reasons behind such rules. According to Hoskins (2014), authoritarian parents exhibit high demandingness and lower responsiveness, expecting their child's obedience without explanations. Compared to the authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting is related to negative outcomes such as negative mood, poorer social skills, feelings of insecurity and hostility, and even higher levels of aggression (Barber et al., 2005; Casas et al., 2006). While some studies suggest that in cultural contexts where authoritarian parenting practices are normative this style may not have the same negative effects (e.g., on children's academic achievement) (Checa and Abundis-Gutierrez 2018), others have argued that the general pattern of authoritarian parenting having negative outcomes (e.g., in relation to self-esteem or academic achievement) appears to hold cross-culturally (Pinquart and Gerke 2019, p. 2029; Sahithya et al. 2019).

1.1.3 Permissive Parenting Style

Psychological autonomy, lax behavioral control, and acceptance are promoted by permissive parents (Baumrind et al., 2010). The permissive parenting style is characterized by unpredictability, lack of discipline, and lack of boundaries. Children of permissive parents are more likely to grow up in uninvolved homes than children who grow up with authoritative parents (Barber, 1996). Such a lack of guidance and involvement from parents in shaping their children's cognitive, social and emotional abilities affects adolescents' cognitive and behavioral development (Lambom et al., 1991). Adolescents of permissive parents have less self-control, less self-confidence, and less curiosity than children of authoritarian or authoritative parents (Baumrind, 1971). They may also develop maladaptive high confidence about their social abilities, which may be related to their social interactions (Lambom et al., 1991). Permissive parents tend to have lower expectations of their child, which may encourage the child to have lower expectations of him or herself (Baumrind, 1971). However, some studies suggest that in particular cultural contexts (e.g., Spain) when permissive or

indulgent parenting is characterized by warmth but not strictness, outcomes for children can be positive, even more so than with authoritative parenting (Garcia et al. 2020).

1.1.4 Uninvolved Parenting Style

As opposed to other parenting practices, uninvolved parents exhibit careless conduct control and even rejection towards their children (Baumrind, 2013). This sort of parent acts to limit parental involvement and often fails to respond to the child's needs. Having uninvolved parents is associated with a number of negative outcomes, including adolescent children's somatic complaints, low grades, and delinquency (Lambom et al., 1991) and low scores on self-esteem and social competence measures (Beams & Farrell, 1992). Girls who grow up under uninvolved fathers were shown to be more aggressive towards their classmates than girls who grow up under authoritative parents (Hart et al., 1998).

1.2 The Impact of Parents' Childhood Experiences on Parenting Styles

Many pieces of literature have examined the transmission of parenting, or how childhood experiences impact later parenting practices (Putallaz et al., 1998; Garcia et al., 2020). Many previous studies have focused on the transmission of harsh, authoritarian parenting practices over several generations, showing that adolescents who experienced authoritarian parenting with harsh discipline were more likely in adulthood to behave aggressively toward their own children ((Bower-Russa, 2005; Hops et al., 2003; Simons et al., 1992). Furthermore, parenting styles can be predicted by parental characteristics in the past, including stress and family supportive relationships (Cowan et al., 1996). These problems can have long-term consequences for parents and children in terms of mental health and quality of interpersonal relationships. More specifically, parents' history of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse during childhood is considered as a risk factor for the enactment of negative parenting styles in adulthood (Hughes & Cossar 2016). Living with an abusive or uninvolved parent during one's childhood can lead to emotional problems such as experiences of mistrust, uncertainty, and the avoidance of close relationships (Banyard et al., 2003).

1.3 Disciplinary Strategies and Parenting styles

Studies have shown that parenting values and beliefs can influence parents' disciplinary responses toward their adolescent children (Pinderhugz et al., 2000). Parental attitudes transmitted from generation to generation can be a significant factor influencing parents' disciplinary practice towards their children. The findings are consistent with the fact that parents who were physically abused during childhood are more likely to physically punish their children (Ghate et al., 2003) or to approve of physical punishment (Deater-Deckard et al, 2003). A study of factors which predict mothers' use of corporal punishment for their children focused on mothers' knowledge of child development and alternative responses to family conflict (child-parent), disciplinary goals, childhood experience of corporal punishment, and approval of physical punishment. Results suggest that approval of physical punishment was the strongest predictor of whether a mother would use it or not (Durrant et al., 1999). A study carried out in the United Kingdom by Ghate et al (2003), similarly found that parents who accept corporal punishment were five times more likely to use it than parents who did not accept the practice. The frequency of harsh disciplinary practices over time has been found to be associated directly with an authoritarian parenting style (Robinson et al., 1995).

1.4 Role Models, Cultural Norms, and Values Related to Parenting

Along with childhood experiences and attitudes towards particular disciplinary practices, parental role models as well as cultural norms and values are also key in shaping parents' behavior. Positive role models have been linked to positive outcomes among adolescents. Werner (1995) identified positive role models, including family members, peers, and school teachers, as a contributing factor to resilience in high-risk behaviors of adolescents. A previous study has shown that having a positive family role model can protect adolescents from negative psychosocial risks (Bryant and Zimmerman, 2003). Similarly, parental role models can influence adolescents' later parenting behaviors. Henry et al. (1992) suggest that it is important for adolescents to have same-sex parenting role models as they

try to shape their own identities and prepare for the future role of a parent. Echoing earlier studies which found that women list their mothers and men their fathers as the most important role models in their lives (Galbo 1983), the following analysis reveals that among Sri Lankan parents, their own mothers and fathers emerge as significant figures who shaped their approach to parenting.

Parenting practices vary across different cultures and societies (Sanders, 2005) as well as undergo changes over the course of generations (Garcia et al., 2020). Russell et al. (2010) offer a summary of literature focused on parenting in Asian-American families and White American families to highlight the key differences between these broad cultural groups. The studies reviewed suggest that what is accepted by White Americans as good parenting generally falls under the category of authoritative parenting. In mainstream White American culture, authoritarian parenting is identified as a negative parenting type, which affects adolescents' wellbeing negatively and which is not as effective as authoritative parenting. However, against the core values of authoritative parenting which emphasizes open communication, Chinese adolescents reported that their parents show their love by instrumental support with basic needs and sacrifice rather than by verbal support (Russell et al., 2010). This, too, differs from the emphasis on children's autonomy and independence, which is embedded in the authoritative parenting style. Indeed, in many Western cultures, children are encouraged to develop autonomy and self-expression, and social initiative is highly valued. In many Asian societies, on the other hand, social initiative is not as highly appreciated because it can interfere with interpersonal relationships (Chen and French, 2008). A recent review of the literature has similarly found that across diverse contexts, such cultural differences influence how children view specific parenting practices as well as the outcomes particular parenting styles have on academic achievement (Checa and Abundis-Gutierrez 2018). Interestingly, a study that compared the impact of parenting styles on children in India versus Western countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia found that, while cultural differences existed, the authoritarian parenting style was associated with positive outcomes across contexts (Sahithya et al. 2019).

In the Sri Lankan context, despite a strong cultural emphasis on family life and widespread concern among parents and educators to foster effective parenting and children's wellbeing, research on parenting styles and affecting factors has been very limited. The present study contributes to understanding parenting practices by exploring the parenting styles of parents of adolescents in Kandy District, Sri Lanka, and the key social, cultural and psychological factors affecting the main four parenting styles. Study findings will help educators and counseling professionals understand parenting styles in the Sri Lankan cultural context, which in turn may inform the development of more appropriate training and counseling strategies to improve parenting skills and family wellbeing. The main research objectives are a) to explore the prevailing parenting styles of parents of adolescents in Kandy District, Sri Lanka; b) to identify potential unique parenting styles and practices and parents' justification for their parenting behaviors; c) to discover how childhood experiences, values, role models, and cultural preferences influence parents' parenting styles; and d) to identify the criteria that the parents use to discipline their children

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The present research explores perceived parenting styles among parents of adolescents in Sri Lanka's Kandy District through surveys and semi-structured, qualitative interviews with a subset of survey respondents. Kandy District is situated in the Central Province of Sri Lanka, known for its hilly terrain and tea producing regions. The district has a population of 1.37 million and, home to the country's second largest city, it is well resourced in terms of both public and private services, including schools, hospitals and clinics. Through the study author's extensive professional network as well as activities, including school-based mental health awareness programs, potential participants were identified and invited to participate in the first phase of the study, the parenting style survey. Thereafter, participants who took the survey were asked whether they would like to participate in the second phase of the study, the in-depth qualitative interview. Interviews were arranged according to the participants' convenience, most taking place at their homes.

2.2 Participants

The study is based on a purposive sample of 120 parents of adolescents (n=120). The participants were between ages 30 to 70 years (M=1.98, SD, .64799). Among them 60 (50%) participants were male and 60 (50%) participants were female. There are 116 (95.1%) Buddhists, 2 (1.6%) Christians and 2 (1.6%) Muslims. Focusing on the family types of the participants, 3 (2.5%) participants represent single parent families, 98 (80.3%) participants represent nuclear families and 17 (13.9%) represent extended families. Among participants 13 (10.7%) completed their higher education, 30 (24.6%) completed their first degree and 77 (63.1) completed only GCE Advanced Level. The participants represented families with healthy children that did not have any identifiable mental health, behavioral or learning issues.

The sample includes an even split between parents of adolescent boys and girls (Boy's mother = 30; Boy's father = 30) and (Girl's mother = 30; Girl's father = 30) and an even split between mothers (60) and fathers (60). For the qualitative phase, 16 parents who participated in the quantitative portion of the study were selected for in-depth interviews. Study participants were selected based on their children's age and education level. The parents had to have an only child between the ages of 10 and 18 and a minimum educational qualification of GCE A / L or beyond. Parents were selected, both working and non-employed, to represent the government and private sectors. Although attempts were made to select a sample representative of Sri Lanka's four major religious communities, the sample includes only parents belonging to Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim religions. A Hindu parent who fit the selection criteria could not be found. Some parents participating in the study were single parents.

2.3 Instruments and Procedure

During the first phase of the study, the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (Kimble 2014) was administered to 120 participating parents to assess their parenting style. As a rehearsal for the major study, a pilot study was conducted to evaluate the feasibility of the proposed major study. The second phase of the study involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 16 participants selected from among the initial 120 respondents. The 16 respondents represent the four parenting styles (4 for each of the four styles). The interview questions were developed along two main dimensions: the childhood background of the parent and parents' cultural and moral values regarding childcare. In the childhood background part, questions focused on personal information about childhood (village, family members, schooling, etc.) as well as the respondents' relationship with his or her own parents. The questions also cover the relationship between the respondent and his or her spouse and their feelings about the spouse's parenting style as well as the respondent's role models as a child regarding parenthood and their impact on present parenting attitudes. The second section of the semi-structured interview focuses on the parents' cultural values related to parenting, attitudes about stereotypical parenting styles that make children better, and experiences of positive or negative outcomes of those stereotypical parenting styles. To protect participants' confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity the researcher used codes on data documents that were recorded and transcribed without using participants' names or other identifying details. SPSS was used to analyze survey data from the first phase of the study, which yielded descriptive statistics about the participating parents and determined that the sample represented the four parenting styles. The qualitative in-depth interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis to understand the parents' perspectives on parenting and the main factors that shaped their self-reported parenting practices.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected in the qualitative phase of the study focused on parents' perspectives and experiences as they relate to four main factors that are theorized to influence parenting style and practices. These include: 1) parental influence; 2) the parent-child relationship; 3) role models; and 4) cultural values. The results reveal patterns consistent with existing literature on parenting styles such as the correlation between authoritarian parenting in adulthood with adverse childhood experiences in the context of family of origin. However, respondents' self-reported experiences also paint a picture of the kinds of struggles and challenges, both economic and interpersonal, which mark contemporary family life in Sri Lanka. The data suggest that participants who practice authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles experienced more family dysfunctions and a less secure parent-child bond in their own childhood. On the other hand, participants who represent authoritative and permissive parenting

styles generally reported healthy and positive childhood experiences, which suggests that there were no family dysfunctions or childhood traumatic stressors. Among participants who have had negative childhood experiences and who practice authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles, the main source of family dysfunction has been their father's alcohol abuse, which was in turn often connected with domestic violence and poverty. The findings provide a window onto experiences of family problems captured in sociological analyses of alcohol abuse and domestic violence in Sri Lanka (Ariyasinghe et al. 2015; Guruge et al. 2015; Zavos et al., 2015). The following section offers a detailed discussion of the above-mentioned factors and how participants described the impact these had on their parenting practices. The discussion further explores the other relevant themes, which include parents' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with their own children; the influence of role models on parenting practices; and parents' cultural preferences in relation to perceived "Western" or "Easter" influences on parenting.

3.1 Parental Influence

Parental influence here refers to participants' childhood experiences regarding parental involvement—that is participants' experiences with their own parents. The relationship with one's parents as well as wider family dynamics shape many aspects of a person's development into adulthood. The interviews sought to explore the various dimensions of this influence as it pertains to participants' approach to their own parenting practice with their children.

3.2 Family Issues

Parents who practice authoritative and permissive parenting styles reported not having serious family issues in their childhood and being satisfied with their childhood family lives. There are no gender differences regarding this matter, which means both mothers and fathers with authoritative and permissive parenting styles tend to have positive childhood experiences with their families. As the representative responses below indicate, they also have positive feelings about their parents:

"Mother helped us a lot with our education. Father was like that too. Both are very good. We were treated well. We did everything well. So we have a positive feeling ..."
(Permissive_Mother_Girl)

"Father always told us to learn. He did all things for us, especially our education. According to their knowledge, we were always asked to study from childhood. Education is not just a lesson." (Authoritative_Father_Girl)

Moreover, the participants mentioned above who practice authoritative and permissive parenting styles reported that there was a good relationship between their own parents. That is, within their families, the mother and father had a good relationship. They always worked in the home together and motivated the child (participant) to work hard.

In contrast, most of the parents practicing authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles reported some family issues compared with the other parenting styles. They faced family conflicts between the mother and father and these conflict situations pushed them to a depressed mood as children. Some participants reported domestic violence situations, which they connected with poverty and alcoholism. Asked whether his father was addicted to alcohol, one study participant answered:

"Yes, was. He used to get alcohol every day. Therefore fights each and every day. We feel sad about mom. We were sad when tears fall from our mother's eyes."
(Authoritative_Father_Girl)

The association between negative childhood experiences and less responsive and emotionally involved parenting in adulthood has been reported in the literature. Zalewski et al. (2013), found that mothers who self-reported childhood emotional abuse were rated by their children as being significantly lower in acceptance and higher in psychological control, which means more likely to enact an authoritarian parenting style. Pereira et al. (2012) similarly report a significant relationship between the maternal experience of childhood emotional neglect and family dysfunctions, increased ratings of parental distress, and dysfunctional interaction with the child.

3.3 Quality of Past Parent-Child Relationship

Authoritative and Permissive participants reported that they have had a good relationship with their parents. They spent most of their childhood with their parents and maintained a healthy relationship throughout the life course. Some participants reported their fathers worked far away from home. The father would come home once or twice a week. Although they were busy, they always tried to be with their children.

“Father worked at the CTB. My mother was at home. She did not work. When we got up, father had gone to work. Father was no longer at home, so we stayed with Mom. There was a strong connection. So, we are not like these days. At that time the relationship was more than ever. We work together.” (Permissive_Father_Girl)

Compared with the other two parenting styles (authoritative and permissive), participants who practice authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles report having a poor relationship with their own parents. Due to alcoholism and family conflicts, they tried to avoid their parents. With this kind of conflicted background, they hadn't received well motivated advice from their parents. Therefore they always tried to develop their targets themselves.

“Father had harsh behaviors. Those behaviors had not decreased... And it has not decreased now also. Continuously he has it. Mother was tormented with father's behavior. There were tears and sadness. After mom got sick, father's behavior changed a bit. The relationship turned a little better.” (Authoritarian_Father_Girl)

This pattern is consistent with previous research which suggests that individuals with a history of abuse and family dysfunction are at an increased risk for uninvolved or authoritarian parenting characteristics towards their own children (Dixon et al., 2005; Greene et al., 2020; Markowitz, 2001; Pears & Capaldi, 2001).

3.4 Quality of Present Parent-Child Relationship

All sixteen participants, across the four main parenting styles, believe that they have a healthy and good relationship with their children. All participants also reported spending much time with their children and scheduling their days in such a way that they can allocate more time for them. Interestingly, this stands in tension with the uninvolved parenting style, which is characterized by a relatively low level of connection, involvement and strictness for one's children (Kremers et al., 2003). Yet even those parents claimed to make time for their children.

“We have to live in such a way that there is no blemish on us, that we don't have to hear a word from anyone. We both advise and admonish. We set aside our time for him and do those things.” (Uninvolved_Father_Girl)

One of the main reasons for this contradictory finding may be the impact of social desirability bias, which is the tendency to present oneself to be socially acceptable even when this representation is not wholly reflective of one's reality (Grimm, 2010). At the same time, however, this contradiction suggests that being an attentive and involved parent is socially valued in this context, and even those parents who are not able to live up to this expectation recognize it.

In addition to allocating more time, participants emphasized creating a good educational environment for their children. This involves encouraging their children to excel, providing available resources for children to complete their educational goals, and as much as they can, teaching valuable subject matter and offering academic advice. One father reflected on the importance of education as follows:

“All facilities have been provided. So, learn and be a good person ... I said, study well and come to a good place in society. We gave him everything for that.” (Authoritative_Father_Boy)

This emphasis on education is consistent with the high value placed on academic performance and achievement in Sri Lanka, a value that has become even more significant in a climate of an increasingly competitive labor market. Education, including the possibility of attending public university at no cost, is recognized as the most important path to social mobility. With that, parents' strong involvement in their children's education is part of the socially expected repertoire of good parenting practice, which will ensure not only a child's positive development and adjustment but also a secure and comfortable future as a productive member of society.

3.5 Role Models

Participants who practice authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles all reported that they had a role model in their childhood regarding parenting. But parents who practice the uninvolved parenting style reported they did not have any such role model in their childhood. As one mother reported:

"There is no such person. Everyone is the same. There is no one special. There are no such people in life I imitate. Not really. Anyone like that. From the youngest age, my child has been under my care. I raised my child in my own way." (Uninvolved_Mother_Girl)

With the exception of uninvolved parents, parents practicing the other parenting styles expressed a desire to emulate other parents' attributes which they value, including those of their own parents but also people outside of the family such as former school teachers. Participants reported that personality characteristics such as kindness, hard work, working according to the social norms, sensitivity and leadership skills were the main reasons for valuing a particular role model in their childhood. In the below examples, one parent reflects on her own mother's influence while the other remembers a particularly influential teacher:

"I really got protection from my mother. She is everything. My child also grew up near the mother. My mother protected us from a lot of things. Security... love... giving advice when doing something wrong ... gave us only what was essential...didn't give unnecessary things." (Authoritative_Mother_Boy)

"There was a sir who did geography... We liked him. At school... We ask and solve our personal problems as well with him. If really there was a problem, he felt free to help. Sir still gives advice... to finish your education... to go to campus and make relationships... then it is okay to do that... that is how advice was given." (Permissive_Father_Boy)

3.6 Cultural Preferences

Under the cultural preferences theme, the analysis examines the subjective cultural preferences and norms that affect the parents' parenting practices. Three main themes emerge from this data: 1) Eastern vs. Western influences; 2) parenting criteria; and 3) the use of punishment.

3.7 Eastern vs. Western Values

The majority of participants who practice uninvolved, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles like to follow and apply what they perceive to be "Eastern" cultural elements, which are understood to reflect traditional cultural values in Sri Lanka. Some participants directly reject what they see as "Western" cultural elements regarding parenting:

"I think our system is good with this and our culture. Abroad, there is no such respect. A culture looks like nothing. I think the way we go with our culture is good." (Authoritarian_Father_Boy)

These parents tend to justify their preferences based on a generalized view of the distinction between "Eastern" and "Western" societies and their individualistic or socio-centric orientations, with Sri Lanka being seen as a representative "Eastern" culture. Thus, the parents who rejected Western cultural elements felt that the child-parent bond in Western societies is not as strong when compared with Sri Lankan society. They cited cultural practices common in North America and Western Europe such as

the tendency to give adolescents more autonomy and privacy, encouraging them to live independently, and allowing them to work a part-time job while continuing their education. Respondents also noted that parents in the West emphasize personal freedom and place fewer restrictions on their children in matters of marriage, clothing, and relationships. Study participants who rejected such practices suggested that as a result, children in Western contexts are likely to have less respect for their parents as compared with Sri Lankan social norms and that families will be less cohesive and supportive.

“Our way is good. I think the way we are is good. Respect parents. Asking what is being said. It is not like that abroad. People who are in western culture do not behave well. We were all together in our childhood. Everyone was well taken care of. But abroad it is not like that. It is as if children are being separated from their parents at an early age. Our way is good.” (Authoritarian_Father_Boy)

On the other hand, participants reported the most influential and important cultural elements of parenting in the Sri Lankan or “Eastern” context. They mentioned that in Eastern societies parenting reflects the value of putting family first and that family members are emotionally connected and supported. In Eastern cultures, parents' expectations of their children can lead to stricter routines and discipline, and children usually continue to live with their parents until they get married. As one mother explained:

“Asians have family unity. According to culture everything... from birth to these days everything is done according to culture. They like it... that is, they like to associate grandparents with adults. Going to the temple for a birthday like that ... but now with the society, a girl over the age of 18 should be kept with family at least until she gets married.” (Authoritarian_Mother_Girl)

In contrast, participants who practice the authoritative parenting style mentioned that they prefer to incorporate both Western and Eastern cultural elements regarding parenting. While they appreciate Eastern cultural elements such as family closeness and respect, they do not reject those they perceive as positive Western ones.

“Our system is good. I think we can live anywhere in the world if we adapt to our system. There are many things to get from the West. I mean the Sri Lankan system is better than the Western one. But its not a problem to take good things from the West. Our family unit is valuable. Our way is valuable. It is also valuable to get the good things from both cultures.” (Authoritative_Father_Girl)

The results coincide with the existing research, which suggests that the authoritative parenting style is more liberal and closely aligned with the core values in Western societies. Authoritative parents usually welcome effective communication and feel free to apply different types of practices used in different cultures for the betterment of the child (Piko & Balazs, 2012). However, it has to be noted that there is very little previous literature on how various parenting styles impact on parents' willingness to engage with diverse cultural elements for their parenting practices.

3.8 Disciplinary Strategies

All participants who practice the authoritarian parenting style use some type of punishment as a means of disciplining their children. The most common disciplinary practices include shouting and removing some positive reinforcement. Three participants who practice the authoritarian parenting style reported hitting as a punishment method as well. For example:

“So I'm not going to give advice all the time. It is a bother to her. Then she will not listen. If I get angry, I scold... if I feel like hitting, I take a stick and hit about two times. Then you get scared of it. Then she doesn't do that again... If you give too much leeway it will be difficult to fix.” (Authoritarian_Father_Girl)

Other participants who represent permissive and uninvolved parenting styles, such as the mother quoted below, reported mostly shouting as a method for disciplining their child:

“We are like friends. When he asks what he doesn't know, I teach him. But he is scared. (Laughter) I don't scold either. But if you needed, I will scold. It's frightening these days. Now, even if he tries to do something unwanted, he just says that his mother will scold him.” (Uninvolved_Mother_Boy)

In contrast to these parents, participants who practice authoritative parenting reported mostly using the removal of some positive reinforcement as a method of punishment. Only one participant reported that he rarely shouts at his child. None of the authoritative parents reported hitting their children as punishment.

“Yes. I don't make big rules, but he's a little tougher than me. But I did not even raise my hand. I don't hit. The wife did not even hit. He is not allowed to watch TV when he does something wrong. Or to get his phone. But afterward I feel sad.” (Authoritative_Father_Boy)

The findings are consistent with studies, which suggest that authoritarian parents use punishment as a primary strategy for disciplining their children. Authoritative parents, on the other hand, reported *not* using negative punishments. This is consistent with the ways that current literature tends to represent the authoritative parenting style as avoiding punishment. However, it should be mentioned that Baumrind's original model does not suggest authoritative parents avoid punishing their children and Baumrind's later writings distinguish between confrontive and coercive strategies to differentiate between authoritative and authoritarian approaches to punishment (Gunnoe 2013, p. 961).

In thinking about parental discipline of children, it is important to consider not only how but also *why* parents discipline or punish their children in particular ways. The present study has found that despite differences in preferred forms of discipline according to parental style, most participants use punishments towards their children because of the same reasons. Namely, majority of the interviewed parents stated that they use punishments because they want to raise well socialized and caring children. In addition, they often apply their own experiences of discipline and punishment, and they continue those into the next generation.

“One should be a good child. One should behave well. You have to learn well. Your qualities should be as good as learning like that. I really like my child to be a good citizen. There is nothing else to do. That's why we do like this. Punishment and other all for this.” (Authoritative_Father_Girl)

The present research aligns with findings from previous studies, which highlight the various factors that impact the development of different parenting styles. Among these is the way that adverse childhood experiences with one's own parents shape parenting behavior in adulthood. However, this study also suggests that in Sri Lankan society there are cultural values and norms which provide crucial context for specific parenting practices and imbue them with unique meanings for parents. In light of the limited research that has been done on parenting styles in Sri Lanka and many other countries, the present study suggests that more research is needed into the four parenting styles and how they manifest in actual parental practices as well as the effects they have on children's development and wellbeing.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting styles have been widely researched and discussed across numerous contexts. In the present study, participants (n = 120) were asked to complete the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (Kimble 2014) and of the sample of respondents, 16 were selected for in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the aim of exploring how childhood experiences, cultural preferences, and role models shaped their parenting practices and styles. The study results are typical of contemporary psychological research: authoritative and permissive parents report having positive childhood parenting experiences as well as positive role models that have influenced their own parenting approach. Authoritarian and uninvolved parents report negative childhood parenting experiences and fewer positive role models. One striking finding, however, is that all participants, irrespective of parenting style classification, reported that they

maintain a healthy, positive relationship with their children and emphasized that they always consider their children's wellbeing, future, and education. This suggests that even as authoritarian parenting continues to be associated with parents' own negative childhood experiences, it may nevertheless have ambiguous meaning within the current family context. In other words, whereas in research authoritarian parenting tends to be associated with negative outcomes for children and is deemed as the least favorable for positive child development, in Sri Lanka, like in some other contexts (Checa and Abundis-Gutierrez 2018), it may take on different, less negative meanings. Exploring the cultural meanings and effects of authoritarian parenting is therefore an important area for future research.

Cultural preferences also vary within the main four parenting styles, particularly in regards to punishment, the use of Eastern and Western cultural elements in parenting practice, and parenting criteria. The study faces a limitation due to its purposive sampling method, which does not reflect the average population and thus will impact the generalization of the results. Nevertheless, the study reveals the need for further parenting styles-based research in Sri Lanka and points to fruitful directions for future study of the various factors which shape parents' behavior and its effects on children's outcomes. We must consider not only general parenting practices but also unique parenting styles and practices which emerge in the Sri Lankan context. While this study shows the importance of positive parenting-based programs in Sri Lanka and the use of counseling awareness programs to promote positive parenting, it also suggests that cultural context matters, and it is important to understand Sri Lankan parents' and children's experiences along with the various factors that influence them.

Consent

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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