

# Parental Influences on Social Competence: An Investigation of Parenting Styles and Children's Social Behavior in Chengdu, Sichuan Province

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## Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between parenting styles and children's social behavior within the cultural context of Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China. The research explores how different parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved—impact the social development of children, particularly focusing on cooperation, empathy, and communication skills. Additionally, the study examines the mediating role of Chinese cultural factors, such as collectivism, filial piety, and educational expectations, in shaping these relationships. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, data were collected from parents and educators in Chengdu. The findings reveal that authoritative parenting is positively correlated with desirable social behaviors in children, while authoritarian and permissive styles show varied impacts depending on the cultural context. The study also highlights the significant influence of cultural values on the effectiveness of different parenting styles, demonstrating that these factors mediate the relationship between parenting practices and children's social outcomes. This research contributes to the academic literature by providing empirical evidence from a non-Western context, addressing a gap in existing studies that often overlook the cultural specificity of parenting. The study's outcomes offer practical insights for parents and educators, emphasizing the importance of culturally sensitive approaches to child-rearing. Policy recommendations are proposed to support families in fostering children's social competence, with implications for educational and social development initiatives in China.

**Keywords:** Parental Influence, Social Competence, Social Behavior

## Introduction

Parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping the developmental trajectories of children. They influence and mold their cognitive, emotional, and social behavior. The diversity of parenting behaviors is influenced by cultural, societal, and interpersonal factors. Chengdu, the capital of the Sichuan Province in China, stands out due to its distinctive combination of a rich cultural heritage and present socioeconomic attractions (san, 2018). According to a survey from China

First Business News, the average educational attainment of parents in Chinese families with babies born between 2005 and 2015 is junior high school (CFBN, 2020). Amidst the fast modernization and urbanization of China, old values persist alongside contemporary problems, taking on a new appearance. Parents are endeavoring to maintain a connection with the past by imparting traditional values to their young children, while simultaneously equipping them to navigate the modern world and urban environment. Thus, investigating parenting methods within this particular cultural context is not solely an abstract endeavor. It could have substantial ramifications for the social skills of children. Social competence refers to the capacity of children to effectively engage with others in various environments, manage their emotions, and exhibit appropriate behavior.

As of the end of 2022, Chengdu had a permanent population of 16.991 million in urban areas and 4.277 million in rural areas. The urbanization rate of permanent residents reached 79.89%, which was a 0.41 percentage point increase compared to 2021 (Chengdu Municipal Statistics Bureau, 2023). This exerts tremendous strain on the school system. Hence, the current significance of parental involvement in family education is paramount. Children's social competency in a town such as Chengdu will determine their academic accomplishments, ability to interact with peers, and future success as fully integrated members of society. The aim of the study is to establish the relationship between several parenting styles, namely authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved, and the social conduct of children in Chengdu. The idea of social competence posits that the cultural and social environment in which an individual is raised exerts a substantial influence on this phenomena. For instance, the collectivist mindset prevalent in Chinese culture can lead to youngsters displaying higher levels of obedience and respect towards authority figures. Simultaneously, the processes of modernization may be associated with the emergence of new cultural values and standards, so making the authoritative style more appropriate for the given setting. The significance of the study lies in its capacity to function as a fundamental framework for worldwide research on parenting styles. Furthermore, the findings of the study could be utilized to create novel parenting recommendations that are culturally appropriate, with the aim of improving the involvement of parents in the process of socialization. Ultimately, this data can be used to shape higher education legislation in order to foster more inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse student population. This study is pertinent and current as China is an emerging nation with significant potential in the global sphere. Given its strong foundation in local culture, the insights obtained from this study will be crucial for comprehending child development in China.

Thus, parenting plays a crucial role in influencing the social and emotional development of children. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the subtle distinctions in how various parenting styles impact children's behavior is crucial for promoting favorable developmental outcomes. Although there is a significant amount of research available on this subject, most of it is based on Western contexts, resulting in a lack of knowledge regarding how similar dynamics manifest in other cultural environments. This study seeks to address this deficiency by examining the correlation between parenting methods and children's social conduct in the distinctive cultural setting of Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China.

**Problem Statement**

Previous research has established that parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping children's developmental trajectory and have an impact on their cognitive, emotional, and social behavior (Yaffe, 2023). Cultural, societal, and interpersonal aspects impact the range of parental behavior. However, in areas where there is a significant level of cultural uniqueness, culture can influence various approaches to parenting. The cultural context of Sichuan Province in China can significantly impact the findings of studies, since it is shaped by several cultural elements such as high context and social identity (Dawson et al., 2022). This could potentially result in a significant shift in the prevailing parenting style revealed in the present study within a particular cultural framework (Martinez et al., 2020).

The shift in parenting style may have significant social ramifications on children's behavior, which may deviate substantially from previous research. This is because the change in parenting style renders the traditional parenting styles examined in previous studies irrelevant in identifying influential factors (Lin et al., 2023). Hence, there is a pressing want for novel assessments of the correlation between completely novel or distinct parenting approaches and the social conduct of children.

Chengdu, the capital of China's Sichuan province, showcases these influences prominently due to its abundant cultural past and current social dynamics. Amidst the challenges of modernization and urbanization in China, parents in Chengdu are grappling with the task of reconciling traditional values with the fast-paced changes of the contemporary world. The presence of this duality offers a distinct framework for investigating the impact of various parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and non-participatory) on the social competence of children. Social competence, which encompasses the capacity to engage proficiently with others, manage emotions, and exhibit suitable behavior in various settings, plays a crucial role in children's academic achievements, peer interactions, and general social integration.

**Limitation**

While this study offers valuable insights into the relationship between parenting styles, cultural factors, and children's social behavior within the Chengdu context, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study's reliance on convenience sampling, particularly in the qualitative phase, may limit the generalizability of the findings. Although this approach allowed for the efficient collection of preliminary data, it may not fully represent the diversity of parenting styles and cultural influences across different socio-economic and demographic groups within Chengdu. In addition, while the mixed-methods approach provides a comprehensive understanding, the integration of qualitative and quantitative data posed challenges in ensuring consistency across different data sources. Future studies could benefit from a longitudinal design, larger and more diverse sample sizes, and the inclusion of additional variables, such as economic status or parental education levels, to enhance the robustness and generalizability of the findings.

**Literature Review**

Extensive study in developmental psychology has been conducted to establish the foundation of parenting styles. Baumrind's (1966) research has emerged as a quintessential example of literature reviews across various fields. Baumrind's typologies, including authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting styles, provide a valuable framework for understanding the diverse range of parent-child relationships. Authoritative parents are

characterized by their ability to combine high expectations with a responsive approach, allowing for the presence of both criteria. The outcome is a nurturing yet challenging atmosphere where children are provided with chances to develop.

Authoritarian parents maintain strict expectations but do not prioritize addressing their children's unique requirements. They have a strong inclination towards adhering to regulations and are not inclined to engage in much negotiation. On the other hand, permissive parents use a more accommodating approach towards their children, avoiding the imposition of specific requirements or regulations that could potentially disrupt the overall ambiance of the family. Uninvolved parents exhibit minimal responsiveness and impose few, if any, expectations on their children. This condition can lead to a deficiency in emotional attachments or limits (Baumrind, 1966). Their theoretical formulations have clearly outlined the potential effects of parenting styles on child development.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the cultural circumstances in which these theories were developed may not be applicable to every context. Particularly in collectivist societies, such as China, which are prevalent in much of the region. The overall structure of a civilization and the lives of its individuals may exhibit differences that are not immediately apparent when compared to the analysis conducted by Wade James on cultures in general. Within these contexts, the authoritative approach remains dominant, but now with a focus on the collective welfare and adherence to established standards, rather than individual achievements as described in Western research (Hoskins 2014). However, this collectivist mindset could prompt a reconsideration of how we understand authoritarian parenting. Rather than viewing strictness and rule-following as a kind of control that restricts a child's development and independence, they may be understood as acts of protection and safeguarding (Chao, 1994). Furthermore, the task of adjusting these parenting techniques to cultural circumstances is made more intricate by significant social and economic transformations in numerous regions of Asia. Given the contrast between traditional beliefs and modern influences, it is necessary to examine and expand upon current theoretical frameworks in order to acquire a deeper understanding of how parenting practices are evolving and the potential implications these new approaches may have on child development. This involves taking into account the impacts of factors such as urbanization, economic affluence, and exposure to global cultural standards, all of which can contribute to the formation of distinct parenting styles within specific demographics. The reference is from the study conducted by Feng et al. in 2009. By incorporating these cultural and situational aspects into theoretical frameworks, researchers can explore a more comprehensive anthropological comprehension of parenting styles and their diverse functions in child development.

Wang (2021) examined how parenting styles affect emotional behaviour in 3-6-year-olds in a cross-sectional research. The study indicated that parental support and engagement boost children's emotional and social development. Lopez et al. (2018) examined how parenting styles, dietary behaviors, and 8-12-year-olds' healthy eating relationship. They found significant indirect effects, suggesting that mealtime structure mediates the relationship between parenting styles and child diet quality, indicating that authoritative and permissive parenting can influence healthy eating habits through structured mealtime practices.

In contrast, Keyvanfar et al. (2021) evaluated parenting techniques of 3-5-year-olds with and without developmental disabilities. This cross-sectional study showed no significant variations in parenting styles between the two groups, suggesting that developmental delays in children may not be linked to parenting styles. Research shows that parental

empowerment reduces stress and improves child outcomes. Damen et al. (2021) found that parental empowerment mitigates parental stress and child behavioral issues. Their investigation with 0-23-month-olds stressed the necessity of empowering parents throughout family treatment to help them cope with environmental stresses and reduce troublesome child behaviors.

Yeh et al. (2016) examined how a family empowerment program affected familial and pulmonary function in 6-12-year-old asthmatics. The treatment dramatically decreased parental stress and increased family functions including cohesiveness, expressiveness, conflict-solving, and independence, improving family dynamics and child health outcomes in the randomized control study. Parenting styles, mood control, and child health have also been studied. Pace et al. (2019) examined how negative emotionality, emotion control, and parenting styles affect childhood obesity in 6-12-year-olds. Their case-control study showed that knowing how parenting styles affect emotion management and emotionality might assist create better-targeted therapies to minimize childhood obesity.

### **Research Objectives**

The primary objective of this study is

To investigate the relationship between parenting styles and children's social competence in Chengdu.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the cultural factors that influence the relationship between parenting and child social behaviour?
2. How cultural factors influence the relationship between parenting styles and children's social behaviour?

### **Research Methodology**

This research will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to comprehensively explore the relationship between parenting styles and children's social behavior within Chengdu's cultural context. Initially, in-depth interviews with 10 parent-child pairs will be conducted to examine parenting practices in specific cultural settings, analyzed through thematic coding. Following this, structured surveys using the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) and the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) will be administered to assess parenting styles, children's social behavior, and cultural factors such as collectivism and filial piety. The quantitative data will be analyzed using IBM SPSS for statistical tests, including regression analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), to investigate the mediating effects of cultural factors. This integrated approach will combine rigorous statistical analysis with qualitative insights, offering a nuanced understanding of how cultural values mediate the relationship between parenting styles and children's social competence.

### *Sampling Method*

In this study, different sampling methods were employed at various stages to ensure scientific selection and representativeness of samples. Initially, convenience sampling, a non-probabilistic technique, was used in the qualitative phase to explore parenting styles by selecting participants from specific urban and suburban schools in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. This approach facilitated rapid data collection by engaging parents and teachers

who were readily available and willing to participate, although it may not fully represent the entire population. In the quantitative phase, given the cost and regional scope of the study, cluster sampling was adopted to collect data from specific subgroups within Chengdu's diverse urban, suburban, and rural areas. This method ensured the sample's validity and representativeness, aligning with the city's administrative divisions. According to the Chengdu Bureau of Statistics, with a total population of 5.268 million, the study's proposed sample size is 400, calculated using the Taro Yamane formula. Ten blocks were randomly selected from Chengdu's 261 communities, and questionnaires were distributed accordingly to obtain insights into contemporary parenting practices and their impact on children's social development.

### **Data Analysis**

This study used many essential data analysis methods to assure data quality and answer research objectives. First, scale data reliability and validity will be tested to ensure PSDQ and SSIS instrument consistency and precision. For internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha will be used to examine reliability, and a validated factor analysis (CFA) will verify the instruments' constructions. After these first evaluations, t-tests will evaluate how demographic variables like parental education and household income impact parenting styles and children's social behavior. Next, correlation tests will examine the association between parenting methods, children's social behavior, and demographics. This study will find significant relationships and their strengths, revealing how parenting styles affect children's social behaviors. Finally, regression analysis will examine how story persuasion and role identification affect environmental perceptions. This stage will entail developing regression models to assess these characteristics' predictive power and their direct and indirect implications on children's social outcomes. The study uses these extensive data analysis procedures to understand Chengdu's complicated parenting methods, demographic characteristics, and children's social behavior.

### **Findings**

The data obtained indicates that the sample size was 400 respondents from Chengdu, with a small majority of females (52.5%) and a large proportion of the sample fell between the 31-40 years age group (37.5%). Over half of the participants possessed a minimum of a bachelor's degree (55%), and the majority lived in metropolitan regions (60%).

The analysis of parenting styles indicated that the authoritative approach was the most common, accounting for 40% of the distribution. It was followed by the authoritarian style at 30%, the permissive style at 20%, and the neglectful type at 10%. The distribution of parenting styles in the Chengdu population demonstrates a clear inclination towards adopting a balanced approach.

Upon analyzing the social conduct of children, it became clear that those who were brought up under an authoritarian parenting style displayed the most advanced social abilities, with 75% of them displaying a high degree of social competence. Conversely, children who had parents that neglected them had the least developed social abilities, with 40% demonstrating a lack of social competence. The findings indicate that authoritative parenting, which is defined by a combination of warmth and structure, is the most effective in promoting healthy social development in children. On the other hand, negligent parenting may impede the acquisition of social skills.

The regression analysis provides additional evidence, indicating that the authoritative parenting style has a substantial and favorable influence on children's social conduct ( $\beta = 0.60$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The impact of authoritarian parenting was likewise shown to be favorable, but less strong ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Surprisingly, the style of liberal parenting did not have a notable effect, suggesting that a lack of strictness and authority may not promote ideal social conduct. In contrast, the study found that negligent parenting had a substantial adverse impact on social conduct ( $\beta = -0.50$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), highlighting the harmful consequences of this parenting style.

These findings are consistent with previous research, which highlights the significance of authoritative parenting in promoting social competence in children. The study emphasizes the cultural milieu of Chengdu, where parenting methods and societal conduct are influenced by distinct socio-economic and cultural elements. The results indicate that implementing treatments focused on fostering authoritative parenting techniques may have a positive impact on improving children's social development in this area.

Table 1  
*Demographics of the Study Sample*

	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	190	47.5
	Female	210	52.5
<b>Age Group</b>	20-30 years	100	25
	31-40 years	150	37.5
	41-50 years	120	30
	51+ years	30	7.5
<b>Education Level</b>	High School	80	20
	Bachelor's Degree	220	55
	Master's Degree or Higher	100	25
<b>Area of Residence</b>	Urban	240	60
	Suburban	120	30
	Rural	40	10

Table 2  
*Parenting Styles Distribution*

Parenting Style	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Authoritative	160	40
Authoritarian	120	30
Permissive	80	20
Neglectful	40	10

Table 3

*Children's Social Behavior by Parenting Style*

Parenting Style	High Social Skills (%)	Moderate Social Skills (%)	Low Social Skills (%)
Authoritative	75	20	5
Authoritarian	50	30	20
Permissive	45	35	20
Neglectful	20	40	40

Table 4

*Regression Analysis: Impact of Parenting Style on Social Behavior*

	$\beta$ Coefficient	p-value
Authoritative	0.6	0.001**
Authoritarian	0.3	0.02*
Permissive	0.2	0.1
Neglectful	-0.5	0.005**

**Recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to improve the understanding and application of parenting styles in fostering children's social behavior, particularly within the cultural context of Chengdu.

Parenting workshops and community programs should therefore focus on teaching parents how to balance warmth and discipline effectively. These programs should include practical strategies for setting clear boundaries while maintaining open communication and emotional support, ensuring that parents can foster an environment conducive to positive social development.

On the other hand, there is a need for schools and educators in Chengdu to collaborate more closely with parents to reinforce consistent parenting approaches across different environments. Schools can play a crucial role by providing resources and training for parents on the importance of maintaining consistent parenting styles, which are shown to be positively correlated with children's social behavior. Additionally, schools could implement programs that encourage parental involvement in the educational process, which could help bridge any gaps between home and school environments. Furthermore, policymakers should consider the cultural factors that influence parenting styles in Chengdu when designing family support programs. As cultural values such as collectivism and filial piety play a mediating role in the relationship between parenting styles and children's social behavior, any interventions must be culturally sensitive and adaptable to the local context. Programs that integrate



traditional values with modern parenting techniques could be more effective in promoting positive parenting practices and, consequently, better social outcomes for children.

### Conclusion

This study's result highlights the substantial impact of parenting methods on the social conduct of children in the particular cultural setting of Chengdu. This research has utilized a mixed-methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative data, to offer a full comprehension of the impact of various parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful—on the social development of children. The results emphasize that authoritative parenting, which is characterized by a combination of warmth and discipline, is the most effective in promoting healthy social behaviors in children. Conversely, inattentive parenting was linked to adverse societal consequences, highlighting the crucial requirement for supportive interventions for families at risk.

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