

# The Protective Shield: Authoritative Parenting as a Predictor of Reduced Anxiety and Depression in Urban Malaysian Adolescents

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## Abstract

Adolescent mental health has become an increasing public health concern, particularly in rapidly urbanizing societies. Despite growing awareness of psychological distress among adolescents in Malaysia, limited empirical research has examined how parenting styles influence anxiety and depression within urban multicultural contexts. This study examined the predictive relationship between perceived parenting styles and levels of anxiety and depression among adolescents in Selangor, Malaysia. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 107 secondary school students aged 13–17 years through stratified random sampling. Parenting styles were measured using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), while anxiety and depression were assessed using the State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that authoritative parenting significantly predicted lower levels of anxiety ( $\beta = -.845, p < .001$ ) and depression ( $\beta = -.796, p < .001$ ). These results highlight the protective role of supportive and responsive parenting behaviours in promoting adolescent psychological well-being. The study contributes to the growing literature on adolescent mental health in urban Malaysia and suggests that fostering authoritative parenting practices may serve as an important strategy for reducing psychological distress among adolescents in rapidly changing urban environments.

**Keywords:** Parenting Styles, Adolescents, Anxiety, Depression, Malaysia

## Introduction

Adolescence is widely recognized as a crucial developmental stage characterized by substantial emotional, cognitive, and social changes. During this period, individuals transition from childhood to adulthood while experiencing rapid physical development, increasing academic expectations, evolving peer relationships, and the gradual formation of personal identity. These developmental transitions often expose adolescents to new psychological pressures as they adjust to expanding responsibilities and changing social environments. Consequently, adolescence is frequently considered a period of heightened vulnerability to mental health challenges, particularly anxiety and depression.

Adolescent mental health has become an increasingly important global public health concern. Reports from the World Health Organization indicate that approximately 14% of adolescents worldwide experience mental health disorders, with anxiety and depressive conditions among the most common forms of psychological distress. These disorders often emerge during early or middle adolescence and may persist into adulthood if not properly addressed. Anxiety disorders are typically associated with excessive worry, fear, and heightened emotional sensitivity, whereas depressive disorders are characterized by persistent sadness, feelings of hopelessness, and a loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities. Both conditions can negatively affect adolescents' academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life.

In many countries, including Malaysia, concerns regarding adolescent mental health have grown considerably in recent years. National surveys and educational reports suggest increasing levels of emotional distress among secondary school students, including symptoms related to anxiety, depressive tendencies, and stress linked to academic demands and social pressures. The competitive educational environment, together with rapid social and technological changes, may contribute to the psychological difficulties experienced by adolescents. These patterns highlight the importance of identifying environmental and familial factors that influence adolescents' psychological well-being and emotional resilience. Among the various influences on adolescent mental health, the family environment plays a particularly important role. Parents function as primary socialization agents who shape children's emotional development, behavioural regulation, and coping strategies. Through daily interactions, parental guidance, and emotional support, parents influence how adolescents understand themselves, manage stress, and respond to life challenges. As a result, the quality of the parent-child relationship is widely considered a key factor in adolescents' psychological adjustment.

One of the most extensively studied aspects of family dynamics in developmental psychology is parenting style. Parenting styles refer to the general emotional climate in which parents raise their children, encompassing patterns of communication, expectations, and disciplinary practices that shape parent-child interactions. The concept of parenting styles was originally developed by developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind, who identified distinct patterns of parental behaviour associated with different developmental outcomes. Baumrind's framework categorizes parenting approaches into four primary styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. These parenting styles are primarily distinguished by two key dimensions: parental responsiveness, which reflects emotional warmth and support, and parental demandingness, which refers to the level of behavioural control and expectations placed on children.

Authoritative parenting is generally considered the most adaptive parenting style because it balances responsiveness and demandingness. Parents who adopt this approach typically provide warmth, encouragement, and open communication while maintaining clear behavioural expectations and appropriate levels of discipline. Adolescents raised in authoritative households often experience supportive family environments in which their opinions are respected, and their emotional needs are acknowledged. As a result, numerous studies have linked authoritative parenting with positive developmental outcomes, including

higher self-esteem, stronger emotional regulation, better social competence, and lower levels of anxiety and depression.

In contrast, authoritarian parenting is characterized by high levels of behavioural control combined with relatively low emotional responsiveness. Parents who adopt this style tend to emphasize obedience, strict discipline, and adherence to rules while limiting open communication with their children. Although authoritarian parenting may promote compliance and respect for authority, it may also create an environment in which adolescents feel pressured or emotionally unsupported. Research suggests that adolescents raised in highly authoritarian households may experience greater psychological distress, including higher levels of anxiety, lower self-esteem, and increased vulnerability to depressive symptoms.

Permissive parenting represents another parenting style characterized by high emotional warmth but limited behavioural control. Parents who adopt this approach are generally supportive and accepting but may avoid establishing clear rules or consistent boundaries. While adolescents raised in permissive households may benefit from close emotional relationships with their parents, the lack of structure and guidance may limit the development of effective self-regulation skills. Consequently, these adolescents may encounter difficulties with decision-making, responsibility, and coping with challenges, which may increase their susceptibility to emotional difficulties.

Neglectful parenting, sometimes referred to as uninvolved parenting, is characterized by low responsiveness and low demandingness. Parents who exhibit this parenting style provide minimal supervision, guidance, or emotional engagement. Adolescents raised in neglectful family environments may experience feelings of emotional detachment, isolation, and limited parental support. Such conditions can significantly affect psychological development and have been associated with increased risks of behavioural problems, anxiety disorders, and depressive symptoms.

The influence of parenting styles on adolescent development must also be considered within broader cultural and social contexts. In Malaysia's multicultural society, parenting practices are often influenced by cultural values that emphasize respect for elders, family hierarchy, academic achievement, and collective responsibility. These cultural norms may shape parental expectations and disciplinary approaches, sometimes encouraging stricter parenting behaviours aimed at promoting academic success and social conformity.

However, Malaysia has also undergone rapid urbanization, modernization, and increased exposure to global parenting perspectives in recent decades. These societal changes have gradually influenced parenting attitudes and family dynamics, particularly in urban regions such as Selangor. Parents in urban environments may increasingly adopt parenting practices that combine traditional cultural values with more supportive and communicative approaches to child-rearing.

Despite the growing awareness of adolescent mental health concerns in Malaysia, empirical research examining the relationship between parenting styles and psychological outcomes among Malaysian adolescents remains relatively limited. Although international studies have

extensively explored these relationships, fewer investigations have focused specifically on adolescents within Malaysia's multicultural and rapidly developing context. Research examining how parenting styles predict both anxiety and depression among adolescents in urban Malaysian settings remains scarce.

Understanding how parenting styles influence adolescents' mental health is therefore essential for developing effective family-based interventions and educational programs. Insights from such research may contribute to parenting education initiatives, school counselling services, and mental health policies aimed at promoting adolescent well-being. This study is particularly important in addressing the urgent need to better understand adolescent mental health within Malaysia's rapidly changing urban context. Despite increasing awareness of anxiety and depression among adolescents, there remains limited context-specific evidence on how parenting styles function as protective or risk factors in shaping psychological outcomes. The significance of this study lies in its ability to provide empirical insights that are directly applicable to real-life settings. The findings are expected to benefit parents by offering guidance on effective parenting approaches that promote emotional well-being, educators and school counsellors by supporting the development of early intervention and student support programs, and mental health professionals by informing family-based prevention strategies. Furthermore, this study highlights the practical utility and effectiveness of authoritative parenting as a protective factor, providing actionable knowledge that can be used to reduce anxiety and depression among adolescents in everyday family and educational environments.

This highlights the importance of examining parenting styles not only as theoretical constructs but also as practical mechanisms for enhancing adolescent well-being.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine how perceived parenting styles predict anxiety and depression among adolescents in Selangor, Malaysia, with the goal of providing practical insights for improving adolescent mental health outcomes. By exploring these relationships, the study seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on adolescent mental health and family dynamics within Southeast Asian contexts. Additionally, the findings may provide valuable insights for parents, educators, and mental health professionals seeking to foster supportive family environments that promote positive psychological outcomes among adolescents.

## **Literature Review**

### *Parenting Styles Theory*

Parenting styles play a significant role in shaping children's psychological, emotional, and behavioural development. The concept of parenting styles was introduced by developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind, who identified patterns of parental behaviour that influence child development outcomes. Baumrind's parenting styles theory provides one of the most widely used frameworks for understanding parent-child relationships and their impact on adolescent development.

According to Baumrind's framework, parenting styles can be categorized into four main types based on two key dimensions: responsiveness and demandingness. Responsiveness refers to the degree of warmth, emotional support, and acceptance parents show toward their children, while demandingness refers to the level of behavioural control, expectations, and

discipline parents impose on them. The combination of these two dimensions produces four parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful.

Authoritative parenting is characterized by high responsiveness and high demandingness. Parents who adopt this style provide emotional support and warmth while also maintaining clear behavioural expectations and boundaries. Authoritative parents encourage open communication and allow children to express their thoughts and opinions while still providing guidance and supervision. Research has consistently demonstrated that adolescents raised under authoritative parenting tend to exhibit positive psychological outcomes, including higher self-esteem, better emotional regulation, and stronger social competence (Jannah et al., 2022; Kang et al., 2023). Additionally, supportive parental behaviour helps adolescents develop resilience and coping strategies when facing academic and social challenges.

Authoritarian parenting, in contrast, is characterized by high demandingness but low responsiveness. Parents adopting this style emphasize strict discipline, obedience, and respect for authority. Communication between parents and children in authoritarian households tends to be one-directional, with parents imposing rules and expecting compliance without discussion. Although authoritarian parenting may encourage discipline and rule-following behaviour, it may also contribute to emotional stress among adolescents. Studies have indicated that adolescents raised in authoritarian environments may experience higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of self-esteem due to the lack of emotional warmth and open communication (Masiran, 2022; Liu et al., 2024).

Permissive parenting represents another parenting style characterized by high responsiveness but low demandingness. Permissive parents are generally warm, nurturing, and accepting toward their children but tend to avoid enforcing strict rules or behavioural expectations. While adolescents raised in permissive households may experience strong emotional connections with their parents, the absence of clear boundaries may hinder the development of self-discipline and responsibility. Research suggests that adolescents exposed to permissive parenting may struggle with behavioural regulation and decision-making when confronted with academic or social challenges (Tan et al., 2021; Noor et al., 2022).

Neglectful parenting, also known as uninvolved parenting, is characterized by low responsiveness and low demandingness. Parents in neglectful households provide minimal supervision, emotional support, or guidance to their children. Adolescents raised in such environments may experience feelings of emotional isolation, insecurity, and lack of parental support. Previous studies have linked neglectful parenting with negative developmental outcomes, including increased behavioural problems, emotional distress, and psychological difficulties (Khairuddin et al., 2024; Thamburaj et al., 2024).

Overall, Baumrind's parenting styles theory highlights how different parenting behaviours influence adolescents' emotional and psychological development. The theory has been widely applied in research examining the relationship between family dynamics and adolescent mental health outcomes.

### *Parenting Styles and Adolescent Mental Health*

Adolescent mental health has become an important area of research due to the increasing prevalence of emotional and psychological difficulties among young people. Adolescence is a period marked by significant developmental changes, including identity exploration, social pressures, and academic demands. These factors may contribute to emotional vulnerability and increase the likelihood of mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression.

Globally, mental health disorders affect a significant proportion of adolescents. Reports from international health organizations indicate that anxiety and depressive disorders are among the most common mental health issues experienced by young people (WHO, 2024). These psychological conditions can negatively affect adolescents' academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and long-term well-being.

Parenting style has been widely recognized as a crucial factor influencing adolescent mental health outcomes. Supportive family environments provide adolescents with emotional security, encouragement, and guidance, which help them develop effective coping mechanisms when facing life challenges. Research indicates that adolescents who perceive their parents as supportive and communicative tend to exhibit lower levels of psychological distress (Yen et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2023).

Authoritative parenting has been consistently associated with positive mental health outcomes. Adolescents raised by authoritative parents often demonstrate higher levels of emotional resilience and psychological well-being. The balanced combination of parental warmth and behavioural guidance helps adolescents develop confidence, independence, and emotional stability (Kang et al., 2023). Furthermore, open communication within authoritative families allows adolescents to share their concerns and seek advice when facing difficulties.

Conversely, authoritarian parenting has often been associated with increased psychological stress among adolescents. Strict disciplinary practices and limited emotional support may create environments where adolescents feel pressured to meet parental expectations. Such conditions may contribute to feelings of anxiety, frustration, and low self-worth (Masiran, 2022; Liu et al., 2024). Adolescents raised in authoritarian households may also experience difficulties expressing their emotions due to the lack of open communication.

Permissive parenting may also present challenges for adolescent emotional development. While the warmth and acceptance characteristic of permissive parenting may foster close parent-child relationships, the lack of structure and discipline may prevent adolescents from developing strong self-regulation skills. As a result, adolescents may struggle with impulse control and stress management (Tan et al., 2021).

Neglectful parenting is widely considered the most detrimental parenting style for adolescent psychological development. Adolescents who perceive their parents as emotionally distant or uninvolved may experience feelings of loneliness, abandonment, and insecurity. Such emotional neglect may significantly increase adolescents' vulnerability to anxiety and depressive symptoms (Khairuddin et al., 2024).

Several empirical studies have confirmed the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent mental health. For example, research conducted among adolescents in Southeast Asia has shown that supportive parenting practices are associated with lower levels of depression and anxiety, while harsh or disengaged parenting behaviours are linked to higher levels of emotional distress (Janius et al., 2024; Adnan et al., 2024).

These findings highlight the critical role of parenting behaviours in shaping adolescents' emotional well-being and emphasize the importance of supportive family environments in promoting healthy psychological development.

#### *Parenting Styles in the Malaysian Context*

Parenting practices are influenced not only by individual family dynamics but also by broader cultural and societal factors. In Malaysia, parenting styles are often shaped by cultural values emphasizing collectivism, family cohesion, respect for elders, and academic success. These cultural norms influence how parents interact with their children and the expectations they place upon them.

Many Malaysian parents place strong emphasis on educational achievement as a pathway to social and economic success. As a result, parenting practices may sometimes involve strict supervision and discipline to ensure academic performance. Research has shown that parental expectations related to education can influence adolescents' emotional well-being, particularly when academic pressure becomes excessive (Gopinathan et al., 2022; Hamzah et al., 2023).

At the same time, Malaysia's rapid urbanization and modernization have led to shifts in parenting attitudes and family structures. Exposure to global parenting philosophies, increased awareness of mental health issues, and changes in socioeconomic conditions have influenced how parents approach child-rearing. Many urban parents now attempt to balance traditional cultural values with more supportive and communicative parenting practices (Zamri et al., 2024).

Selangor, as one of Malaysia's most developed and urbanized states, provides a particularly relevant setting for examining these evolving parenting practices. The state is home to a diverse population consisting primarily of Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities. This multicultural environment creates a unique context in which different cultural traditions and parenting philosophies interact.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of examining adolescent mental health within Malaysia's multicultural context. Researchers have noted that parenting behaviours may vary across ethnic groups due to differences in cultural values and social expectations (Zakaria et al., 2022; Yakub et al., 2024). However, despite these cultural variations, supportive parenting practices appear to consistently promote positive psychological outcomes among adolescents.

Although awareness of adolescent mental health issues in Malaysia has increased in recent years, empirical research examining the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent psychological outcomes remains relatively limited. Several studies have explored factors

influencing adolescent mental health, including academic stress, peer relationships, and family dynamics (Pauzi et al., 2025; Hasbullah et al., 2024). However, fewer studies have specifically examined how parenting styles predict anxiety and depression among adolescents in urban Malaysian settings.

Understanding the influence of parenting styles within Malaysia's cultural and societal context is therefore essential for developing effective mental health interventions. Insights from such research can help educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals design family-based programs that promote supportive parenting practices and improve adolescent well-being.

Therefore, the present study seeks to examine how perceived parenting styles predict anxiety and depression among adolescents in Selangor. By investigating these relationships, the study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on adolescent mental health and provide valuable insights into how family environments influence psychological outcomes among Malaysian adolescents.

### **Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development**

The literature reviewed above highlights the important role of parenting styles in shaping adolescents' psychological development and emotional well-being. Parenting behaviours influence how adolescents regulate emotions, cope with stress, and interpret social experiences. As adolescents navigate the challenges associated with academic pressures, peer relationships, and identity formation, the presence of supportive parenting practices can significantly influence their mental health outcomes.

Baumrind's parenting styles theory provides the theoretical foundation for examining how different parenting behaviours affect adolescents' psychological well-being. According to this framework, parenting styles differ in terms of responsiveness and demandingness, which influence the emotional climate within the family environment. These parenting behaviours shape adolescents' perceptions of support, control, and autonomy, which may in turn affect their vulnerability to psychological distress.

The present study also aligns with the Intention–Attention–Attitude (IAA) model, which explains how individuals' internal cognitive and emotional processes influence behavioural outcomes. Within the context of parenting, the IAA model suggests that parents' intentions regarding child development, the attention they give to their child's emotional needs, and their attitudes toward communication and discipline may shape the overall parenting environment experienced by adolescents. Parents who demonstrate mindful attention to their children's emotional experiences and maintain supportive attitudes toward open communication may be more likely to adopt authoritative parenting behaviours. Adolescents may perceive these behaviours as caring, fair, and supportive, which in turn influences their emotional security and psychological well-being. Therefore, authoritative parenting may reflect the behavioural expression of positive parental intentions, attentive engagement, and supportive attitudes, which together contribute to healthier adolescent mental health outcomes.

Previous research has consistently shown that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and appropriate behavioural expectations, is associated with positive developmental outcomes among adolescents. Adolescents raised in authoritative households often experience greater emotional security, stronger coping skills, and higher levels of self-esteem. These protective factors may reduce the likelihood of experiencing anxiety and depressive symptoms (Kang et al., 2023; Yen et al., 2021).

In contrast, authoritarian parenting, which emphasizes strict discipline and obedience while limiting emotional communication, may increase adolescents' vulnerability to psychological distress. Adolescents raised in highly authoritarian environments may experience pressure to meet parental expectations without receiving sufficient emotional support. Such conditions may contribute to heightened stress, anxiety, and depressive tendencies (Masiran, 2022; Liu et al., 2024).

Similarly, permissive parenting, although characterized by warmth and acceptance, may lack the necessary structure and behavioural guidance required for adolescents to develop effective self-regulation skills. Without clear expectations and boundaries, adolescents may struggle with decision-making and emotional regulation when confronted with academic and social challenges (Tan et al., 2021).

Neglectful parenting, which involves minimal parental involvement and emotional engagement, has been widely associated with negative psychological outcomes. Adolescents who perceive their parents as uninvolved or emotionally distant may experience feelings of insecurity, loneliness, and lack of support. These experiences may significantly increase adolescents' risk of developing anxiety and depressive symptoms (Khairuddin et al., 2024).

Drawing from these theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, parenting styles are expected to influence adolescents' mental health outcomes, particularly levels of anxiety and depression. Supportive parenting behaviours may serve as protective factors, while controlling or disengaged parenting practices may contribute to psychological distress. Based on the literature reviewed, this study proposes a conceptual framework in which perceived parenting styles function as independent variables influencing adolescents' anxiety and depression levels, which serve as the dependent variables.

### Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework of the study is illustrated as follows:

Parenting Styles (Independent Variable)

- Authoritative
- Authoritarian

- Permissive
- Neglectful

Adolescent Mental Health Outcomes (Dependent Variables)

- Anxiety
- Depression

This framework suggests that adolescents' perceptions of their parents' parenting behaviours may significantly influence their psychological well-being.

### *Hypotheses Development*

Based on the theoretical framework and empirical evidence discussed above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H1:** Parenting styles significantly predict adolescents' levels of anxiety.

**H2:** Parenting styles significantly predict adolescents' levels of depression.

More specifically, authoritative parenting is expected to be associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression, while authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles may be associated with higher levels of psychological distress.

These hypotheses guide the empirical analysis conducted in this study, which examines the relationship between perceived parenting styles and adolescent mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Selangor.

## **Methodology**

### *Research Design*

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between perceived parenting styles and adolescent mental health outcomes, specifically anxiety and depression. Quantitative research methods are widely used in psychological and behavioural studies because they allow researchers to measure relationships between variables objectively and analyse them using statistical techniques.

A cross-sectional design was considered appropriate for this study because it enables the collection of data from participants at a single point in time. This design allows researchers to examine associations between variables without requiring long-term follow-up. In the context of adolescent mental health research, cross-sectional studies are commonly used to explore how environmental and familial factors influence psychological outcomes.

The primary objective of this study was to investigate whether adolescents' perceptions of their parents' parenting styles could significantly predict their levels of anxiety and depression. The independent variable in this study was perceived parenting style, while the dependent variables were adolescent anxiety and depression levels.

By employing quantitative statistical analysis, the study aimed to identify patterns and predictive relationships between parenting styles and adolescent mental health outcomes. This approach allows for objective interpretation of the data and provides empirical evidence regarding the influence of family environments on adolescent psychological well-being.

### *Participants*

The study sample consisted of 107 secondary school adolescents aged between 13 and 17 years from schools located in Selangor, Malaysia. Adolescence within this age range

represents a critical developmental period characterized by increased emotional sensitivity, social pressures, and identity formation. As a result, adolescents in this stage may be particularly susceptible to psychological stress and mental health challenges.

Participants were selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across key demographic characteristics, including gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. Stratified sampling involves dividing the population into smaller subgroups or strata and randomly selecting participants from each group. This approach helps improve the representativeness of the sample and reduces sampling bias.

Selangor was selected as the research setting because it is one of Malaysia's most urbanized and demographically diverse states. The population in Selangor consists primarily of Malay, Chinese, and Indian ethnic groups, reflecting the multicultural nature of Malaysian society. Examining adolescents within this context allows the study to capture diverse family backgrounds and parenting practices.

Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before the questionnaires were administered. Ethical considerations were carefully observed to ensure that participants' rights and privacy were protected throughout the research process.

### *Instruments*

Three standardized psychological instruments were used in this study to measure the key variables of interest: parenting styles, anxiety levels, and depressive symptoms. These instruments were selected because they are widely used in psychological research and have demonstrated strong reliability and validity in previous studies.

#### *Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)*

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) was used to assess adolescents' perceptions of their parents' parenting styles. The PAQ is a widely used instrument designed to measure parenting behaviours based on Baumrind's parenting styles framework. The questionnaire categorizes parenting practices into three main dimensions: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles.

The PAQ consists of a series of statements describing parental behaviours and attitudes. Participants are asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement using a Likert-type scale. Higher scores within each dimension indicate stronger perceptions of that parenting style.

The PAQ has been widely used in studies examining parent-child relationships and adolescent development. Previous research has reported satisfactory levels of reliability and internal consistency for the instrument. In the present study, the PAQ was used to determine how adolescents perceive their parents' parenting behaviours and how these perceptions relate to their psychological well-being.

### *State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)*

The State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) was used to measure anxiety levels among adolescents. The STAI is a widely recognized psychological instrument designed to assess both temporary (state) anxiety and long-term (trait) anxiety tendencies.

The instrument consists of two subscales:

- 1. State anxiety**, which measures temporary feelings of tension and nervousness experienced at a particular moment.
- 2. Trait anxiety**, which measures general tendencies to experience anxiety across different situations.

Participants respond to statements describing emotional states using a Likert-type scale. Higher scores indicate greater levels of anxiety.

The STAI has been extensively used in psychological and clinical research and has demonstrated strong reliability and validity across different age groups and cultural contexts. In this study, the instrument was used to assess adolescents' levels of anxiety and examine whether parenting styles significantly predict anxiety outcomes.

### *Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)*

The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) was used to measure depressive symptoms among adolescents. The BDI is a widely used self-report instrument designed to assess the severity of depressive symptoms, including sadness, pessimism, feelings of guilt, and loss of interest in activities.

The questionnaire consists of multiple items describing symptoms associated with depression. Participants select statements that best reflect their emotional experiences over a specific period. Each response is scored according to a standardized scale, with higher scores indicating more severe depressive symptoms.

The BDI has been widely validated in psychological research and is commonly used in studies examining adolescent mental health. Its strong psychometric properties make it a reliable tool for assessing depressive symptoms in both clinical and non-clinical populations.

In the present study, the BDI was used to evaluate adolescents' levels of depression and to examine the relationship between depressive symptoms and perceived parenting styles.

### *Data Collection Procedure*

Data collection was conducted using structured self-report questionnaires administered to the participants. The questionnaires were distributed to students in a controlled setting to ensure consistency in the data collection process.

Participants were provided with clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaires and were encouraged to respond honestly based on their personal experiences. The completion of the questionnaires took approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

To ensure confidentiality, participants were not required to provide identifying information on the questionnaires. This approach helped reduce response bias and encouraged participants to provide accurate responses regarding their perceptions of parenting styles and their emotional experiences.

### *Data Analysis*

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Several statistical techniques were employed to examine the relationships between the study variables.

First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and provide an overview of the data. Descriptive statistics included measures such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Second, Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between parenting styles and adolescent mental health outcomes. The Spearman correlation coefficient was used because it is suitable for analysing relationships between variables that may not follow a normal distribution.

Finally, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive effect of parenting styles on adolescents' levels of anxiety and depression. Multiple regression analysis allows researchers to assess the extent to which independent variables contribute to predicting variations in dependent variables.

By using these statistical procedures, the study aimed to identify whether specific parenting styles significantly influence adolescents' psychological well-being. The results of the statistical analysis provide empirical evidence regarding the relationship between family environments and adolescent mental health outcomes.

## **Results**

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to summarize the central tendencies and variability of the key variables examined in this study. The variables included adolescents' perceptions of parenting styles—specifically authoritative and authoritarian parenting—as well as levels of anxiety and depression.

Descriptive statistics provide an overview of the distribution of the data and allow researchers to understand the general patterns present in the sample. Measures of central tendency, including the mean, indicate the average score of participants on each variable, while measures of variability such as the standard deviation indicate the extent to which participants' responses differ from the mean.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the key variables measured in this study.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables*

Variable	Mean	SD
Parenting Style (Total)	36.95	8.55
Anxiety	9.74	6.29
Depression	6.56	4.19

Note. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation

As shown in Table 1, the descriptive statistics provide an overview of adolescents' perceptions of their parents' parenting styles as well as their levels of anxiety and depression. These statistics serve as an important preliminary step before conducting inferential analyses because they help identify general trends in the data and provide context for interpreting the regression results.

The results indicate that variations exist in adolescents' perceptions of parenting styles, suggesting that participants experienced different parental approaches within their family environments. Similarly, the variability observed in anxiety and depression scores indicates that adolescents in the sample exhibited differing levels of psychological well-being.

Understanding these variations is important because differences in parenting behaviours may influence how adolescents cope with stress, manage emotions, and respond to challenges in their academic and social lives. The descriptive findings therefore provide a foundation for further statistical analysis examining the relationships between parenting styles and adolescent mental health outcomes.

#### *Regression Analysis Predicting Anxiety*

To examine the predictive relationship between parenting styles and adolescent mental health outcomes, multiple regression analysis was conducted. Regression analysis is a statistical technique used to determine the extent to which one or more independent variables can predict variations in a dependent variable. In this study, parenting styles served as the independent variables, while adolescents' levels of anxiety and depression served as the dependent variables.

Multiple regression analysis allows researchers to assess the relative contribution of each predictor variable while controlling for the influence of other variables included in the model. This method is particularly useful in psychological research when examining complex relationships between family environment factors and mental health outcomes.

The first regression model examined whether parenting styles significantly predicted adolescents' anxiety levels. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 2.

The regression model significantly predicted adolescent anxiety, accounting for 71.5% of the variance ( $R^2 = .715$ ,  $F(5,101) = 50.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Table 2  
*Regression Analysis Predicting Anxiety*

<i>Predictor</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Authoritative Parenting	-.845	-14.64	<.001

#### **Model Summary**

$R^2$	<i>F (5.101)</i>	<i>P</i>
.715	50.65	<.001

As shown in Table 2, authoritative parenting emerged as a significant predictor of adolescents' anxiety levels. The standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta = -.845$ ,  $p < .001$ ) indicates a strong negative relationship between authoritative parenting and anxiety. This finding suggests that adolescents who perceive their parents as more authoritative tend to report lower levels of anxiety.

The negative beta coefficient indicates that as perceptions of authoritative parenting increase, adolescents' anxiety levels decrease. This relationship highlights the protective role of supportive and balanced parenting behaviours in promoting adolescents' psychological well-being.

Authoritative parenting is typically characterized by warmth, emotional support, open communication, and clear behavioural expectations. Such parenting behaviours may help adolescents feel secure, valued, and understood within the family environment. When adolescents experience supportive parent-child relationships, they may develop stronger coping skills and greater emotional resilience when faced with stress or challenges.

Although the regression analysis primarily highlighted the significant role of authoritative parenting, other parenting styles such as authoritarian and permissive parenting were also included in the model. However, these parenting styles did not demonstrate the same level of predictive strength as authoritative parenting in explaining variations in adolescents' anxiety levels within this sample.

The findings suggest that the emotional support and guidance associated with authoritative parenting may play an important role in reducing psychological distress among adolescents.

#### *Regression Analysis Predicting Depression*

A second regression analysis was conducted to examine whether parenting styles significantly predicted adolescents' levels of depression. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3  
Regression Analysis Predicting Depression

<i>Predictor</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Authoritative Parenting	-.796	-12.44	<.001

#### Model Summary

$R^2$	<i>F (5.101)</i>	<i>P</i>
.649	37.36	<.001

The regression model significantly predicted adolescent depression, accounting for 64.9% of the variance ( $R^2 = .649$ ,  $F(5.101) = 37.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The results indicate that authoritative parenting also significantly predicts adolescents' levels of depression. The standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta = -.796$ ,  $p < .001$ ) demonstrates a strong negative relationship between authoritative parenting and depressive symptoms.

This finding suggests that adolescents who perceive their parents as more supportive, responsive, and communicative tend to report lower levels of depression. In contrast, adolescents who experience less supportive parenting environments may be more vulnerable to emotional difficulties.

The strong negative association between authoritative parenting and depression highlights the importance of emotional warmth and parental involvement in supporting adolescents' mental health. Parents who maintain open communication with their children and provide consistent guidance may help adolescents develop positive self-esteem and emotional stability.

Furthermore, adolescents raised in authoritative family environments may feel more comfortable seeking support from their parents when facing personal challenges or emotional distress. This supportive dynamic may reduce feelings of isolation and helplessness that are often associated with depressive symptoms.

Overall, the regression findings suggest that parenting style—particularly authoritative parenting—plays a significant role in shaping adolescents' psychological well-being. The results indicate that supportive and balanced parenting behaviours may act as protective factors that reduce adolescents' risk of experiencing anxiety and depression.

The predictive relationships between authoritative parenting and adolescents' anxiety and depression are visually illustrated in Figure 1.

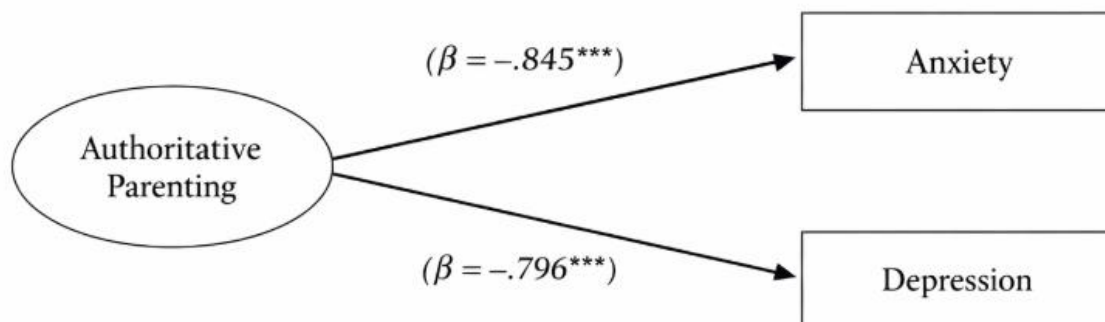


Figure 1 Path model illustrating the negative predictive relationship between authoritative parenting and adolescents' anxiety and depression.

### Summary of Findings

The results of this study provide empirical evidence supporting the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent mental health outcomes. The regression analyses revealed that authoritative parenting significantly predicts lower levels of both anxiety and depression among adolescents.

Specifically, authoritative parenting demonstrated a strong negative predictive relationship with anxiety ( $\beta = -.845, p < .001$ ) and depression ( $\beta = -.796, p < .001$ ). These findings suggest that adolescents who perceive their parents as supportive, responsive, and communicative are less likely to experience psychological distress.

The findings highlight the importance of family environments in shaping adolescents' emotional well-being. Supportive parenting behaviours may promote psychological resilience, emotional regulation, and positive coping strategies among adolescents.

These results contribute to the growing body of research emphasizing the protective role of authoritative parenting in promoting positive mental health outcomes. The findings also provide valuable insights for parents, educators, and mental health professionals seeking to support adolescent well-being through family-based approaches.

Overall, the results demonstrate that parenting styles are important predictors of adolescent mental health and underscore the need for continued research examining the influence of family dynamics on psychological development.

### Discussion

The present study aimed to examine whether perceived parenting styles predict anxiety and depression among adolescents in Selangor, Malaysia. The findings provide empirical evidence supporting the significant influence of parenting behaviours on adolescents' psychological well-being. In particular, the results indicate that authoritative parenting functions as a strong protective factor against both anxiety and depression among adolescents. Regression analysis

revealed that authoritative parenting significantly predicted lower levels of anxiety ( $\beta = -.845$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and depression ( $\beta = -.796$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These results suggest that adolescents who perceive their parents as supportive, communicative, and responsive tend to report fewer symptoms of psychological distress.

These findings align with established perspectives in developmental psychology, which emphasize the critical role of parenting behaviours in shaping adolescents' emotional development. The results also provide empirical support for the parenting style framework proposed by Diana Baumrind, which suggests that parenting practices characterized by both responsiveness and appropriate behavioural expectations are associated with healthier developmental outcomes. Authoritative parenting, which combines emotional warmth, responsiveness, and structured guidance, may foster a family environment that promotes emotional security, mutual trust, and open communication. Within such environments, adolescents may be more likely to develop adaptive coping strategies and stronger emotional resilience when faced with life stressors.

The results of the present study are also consistent with previous empirical research identifying authoritative parenting as one of the most beneficial parenting styles for adolescent development. Earlier studies have shown that adolescents raised in supportive and well-structured family environments tend to demonstrate higher levels of self-esteem, improved emotional regulation, and lower levels of psychological distress. When parents provide consistent guidance while maintaining emotional warmth and understanding, adolescents may be better equipped to navigate the developmental challenges associated with adolescence, including academic demands, peer relationships, and identity exploration. One possible explanation for the protective effect of authoritative parenting lies in the quality of communication within the parent-child relationship. Authoritative parents generally encourage open dialogue and allow adolescents to express their thoughts and emotions freely. Such a communicative environment may enable adolescents to seek parental guidance when experiencing stress, anxiety, or personal difficulties. In contrast, adolescents raised in less supportive or more restrictive family environments may feel hesitant to share their concerns with their parents, potentially contributing to feelings of isolation and emotional distress.

Another factor contributing to the positive outcomes associated with authoritative parenting is the development of emotional regulation abilities. Emotional regulation refers to an individual's capacity to manage and respond to emotional experiences in constructive ways. Adolescents who grow up in supportive family environments may acquire effective coping strategies through parental modelling, guidance, and feedback. These learned skills may help adolescents manage stressful experiences more effectively, thereby reducing their vulnerability to anxiety and depressive symptoms.

The findings of this study also highlight the broader importance of family environments in promoting adolescent mental health. Adolescence is characterized by rapid biological, cognitive, and social transitions, which often increase adolescents' exposure to psychological stressors. During this developmental stage, parental support remains an essential source of emotional stability. Adolescents who perceive their parents as understanding, supportive, and fair are more likely to feel secure and confident when managing life challenges.

Within the Malaysian context, these findings carry relevance. Malaysia is a multicultural society where parenting practices are often shaped by cultural values emphasizing respect for elders, family cohesion, and academic achievement. Many Malaysian parents place strong emphasis on educational success as a pathway to future opportunities and social mobility. While such expectations may encourage discipline and motivation, excessive academic pressure may also contribute to emotional stress among adolescents.

An important observation from the present study is that ethnicity did not emerge as a significant predictor of adolescents' anxiety or depression. Malaysia is often described as a multicultural society consisting primarily of Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities, where parenting practices may vary across cultural backgrounds. However, the findings of this study suggest that the psychological benefits of supportive parenting behaviours may extend across ethnic groups, particularly within urban Malaysian contexts. In highly urbanized regions such as Selangor, rapid modernization, increased educational exposure, and shared academic pressures may contribute to a convergence of parenting practices among different cultural groups. Rather than ethnicity itself, adolescents' perceptions of parental warmth, communication, and responsiveness appear to play a more influential role in shaping their psychological well-being. This observation suggests that supportive parenting behaviours may function as broadly beneficial protective factors for adolescent mental health.

Urban environments such as Selangor may also introduce additional psychological challenges for adolescents. Rapid urbanization, competitive educational environments, and evolving social expectations may increase the pressures experienced by young people. Urban adolescents often encounter demanding academic schedules, extracurricular commitments, and increased exposure to digital technologies that influence their social interactions and self-perceptions. These contextual factors may increase adolescents' vulnerability to mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression.

Within such environments, authoritative parenting may be particularly beneficial. Rapid social and economic changes in urban areas may influence the ways in which parents interact with their children. While traditional Asian parenting approaches have sometimes emphasized stricter discipline and obedience, contemporary urban families may increasingly adopt parenting strategies that combine guidance with emotional support. Authoritative parenting, which integrates clear expectations with warmth and open communication, may therefore be especially effective in supporting adolescents living in demanding urban contexts. Supportive parental communication and emotional responsiveness may help buffer the psychological stress associated with academic competition, social comparison, and changing societal expectations.

The findings of this study also highlight the importance of adolescents' perceptions of parenting behaviours. Adolescents interpret parental actions through their own experiences within the family environment. When adolescents perceive their parents as supportive, fair, and understanding, they may develop stronger self-confidence and emotional security. Conversely, adolescents who perceive their parents as overly controlling or emotionally distant may experience feelings of insecurity, frustration, or diminished self-worth.

The strong negative association between authoritative parenting and depressive symptoms further emphasizes the importance of emotional support within the family environment. Depression during adolescence can significantly affect academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and long-term psychological development. Adolescents who feel supported by their parents may be more likely to seek help when experiencing emotional difficulties, which may reduce the severity and persistence of depressive symptoms.

These findings also have important practical implications. Encouraging supportive parenting practices may play a crucial role in improving adolescent mental health outcomes. Parenting education programs may help parents recognize the importance of balancing emotional warmth with appropriate guidance and discipline. Promoting authoritative parenting behaviours may therefore contribute to healthier family relationships and improved psychological well-being among adolescents.

Educational institutions may also play a significant role in supporting family-based mental health initiatives. School counsellors and educators can collaborate with parents to promote positive communication and supportive parent–child relationships. Providing parents with resources and guidance on effective parenting strategies may strengthen the emotional support systems available to adolescents.

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between parenting styles and adolescent mental health outcomes. Although the findings demonstrate significant associations, longitudinal studies would be necessary to examine how parenting behaviours influence adolescents' psychological development over time.

Second, the study relied on self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias. Adolescents' perceptions of parenting behaviours may differ from parents' own perspectives or actual parenting practices. Future research may therefore benefit from incorporating multiple data sources, such as parent reports or observational methods, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of family dynamics.

Third, the study sample consisted of 107 adolescents from Selangor, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions of Malaysia or different cultural contexts. Future studies involving larger and more diverse samples may provide broader insights into the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent mental health.

Future research may also examine additional factors that influence adolescent psychological well-being, including peer relationships, academic stress, social media use, and socioeconomic conditions. Exploring how these contextual variables interact with parenting styles may provide deeper insights into the complex influences shaping adolescent mental health.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the important role of parenting styles in influencing adolescents' psychological well-being. Authoritative parenting was found to significantly predict lower levels of anxiety and depression among adolescents, emphasizing

the protective value of supportive and responsive family environments. These results underscore the importance of promoting positive parenting practices to support adolescent mental health, particularly within rapidly evolving urban environments such as Selangor. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of research examining family influences on adolescent mental health and provides valuable insights for parents, educators, and policymakers seeking to create supportive environments that foster positive psychological development among adolescents.

### **Conclusion**

The present study examined the relationship between perceived parenting styles and adolescent mental health outcomes among secondary school students in Selangor, Malaysia. Specifically, the study investigated whether parenting styles could significantly predict levels of anxiety and depression among adolescents. The findings provide empirical evidence that parenting style plays a meaningful role in shaping adolescents' psychological well-being. In particular, the results demonstrated that authoritative parenting significantly predicts lower levels of both anxiety and depression, highlighting the protective role of supportive and balanced parenting practices.

Authoritative parenting, characterized by emotional warmth, open communication, and appropriate behavioural expectations, appears to foster a family environment that supports adolescents' emotional development. Adolescents who perceive their parents as supportive, responsive, and understanding may feel more comfortable expressing their concerns and seeking guidance when faced with challenges. This supportive dynamic may strengthen adolescents' emotional resilience and reduce their vulnerability to psychological distress. The findings therefore reinforce existing psychological theories suggesting that parenting behaviours are important determinants of adolescent emotional and mental health outcomes.

Within the context of Malaysia's rapidly urbanizing society, these findings are particularly relevant. Adolescents today face increasing academic demands, social pressures, and exposure to technological influences that may contribute to emotional stress. In such environments, positive family relationships and supportive parenting practices may serve as important protective factors that help adolescents maintain emotional stability and cope with the challenges of adolescence.

The results of this study also highlight the potential value of family-focused mental health initiatives. Parenting education programs that promote effective communication, emotional support, and balanced disciplinary approaches may help parents adopt more supportive parenting practices. Schools and community organizations may also play an important role in promoting adolescent mental health by providing counselling services, parent education workshops, and mental health awareness programs.

Despite the contributions of this study, future research is needed to further explore the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent mental health. Longitudinal studies involving larger and more diverse samples would help provide a deeper understanding of how parenting behaviours influence adolescents' psychological development over time.

Additionally, future research could examine other factors that may interact with parenting styles, such as peer relationships, academic stress, and social media influences.

The present study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from an urban Malaysian sample demonstrating that supportive parenting behaviours may function as universal protective factors for adolescent mental health, regardless of ethnic background. The findings also highlight the importance of culturally informed parenting research within rapidly modernizing Southeast Asian societies.

In conclusion, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of supportive and responsive parenting in promoting adolescent psychological well-being. By fostering positive family environments and strengthening parent–child relationships, parents, educators, and mental health professionals can play a crucial role in supporting healthy emotional development among adolescents.

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