



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 7.9 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

Parenting Styles and Educational Achievement of Secondary-Level Students: A Review of Related Literature

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Abstract

The family remains the earliest and most enduring educational environment a child encounters, and the manner in which parents exercise warmth, control and communication continues to shape learning outcomes well into adolescence. Drawing on the classical Baumrindian typology of authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting, extended by the neglectful or uninvolved category, the review synthesises evidence from meta-analyses, systematic reviews, large-scale cross-national surveys and single-country empirical studies conducted in India. The review consistently reported advantage of authoritative parenting; the more variable and context-dependent outcomes associated with authoritarian, permissive and neglectful styles; the psychological and behavioural mechanisms that mediate or moderate the parenting-achievement association, including academic self-efficacy, self-regulated learning, goal orientation, homework behaviour and parental involvement; and the cultural, gender-related and socio-economic variations that qualify the generalisability of Western findings. The review finds that although parental warmth and responsiveness are almost universally associated with better academic outcomes, the effect of strict behavioural control is culturally contingent, and effect sizes for parenting style on achievement are generally small to moderate rather than deterministic. Methodological limitations recur across the literature: dominance of cross-sectional self-report designs, reliance on adolescent perceptions of a single parent, inconsistent operationalisation of the control dimension, and limited representation of secondary-level samples from South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The paper concludes with implications for schools, parent education programmes and counselling practice, and outlines directions for longitudinal, dyadic, culturally grounded and intervention-based research.

Keywords: parenting styles, authoritative parenting, educational achievement, academic performance, secondary school students, adolescence, parental involvement

1. Introduction

Educational achievement at the secondary stage is one of the strongest predictors of a young person's later access to higher education, occupational placement and long-term economic wellbeing. It is also the stage at which achievement gaps that opened earlier in schooling tend to



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

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Impact Factor 7.9 www.ijesh.com **ISSN: 2250-3552**

widen and consolidate. While school-level factors such as teacher quality, curriculum design and institutional resources have received sustained scholarly attention, a substantial body of evidence points to the home as an equally powerful determinant of how adolescents engage with schooling. Within the home environment, the emotional climate created by parents and the way in which they exercise authority have emerged as particularly influential. The construct that captures this climate most economically is parenting style.

Interest in the parenting-achievement relationship has intensified over the past decade for several reasons. Adolescence is a period of increasing autonomy-seeking, during which the negotiation of parental authority becomes psychologically salient and often contentious. Expanding secondary enrolment in developing economies has brought into school large cohorts of first-generation learners whose academic progress depends heavily on the support they receive at home. Migration, dual-earner households, digital media saturation and, more recently, extended periods of home-based learning have all reconfigured everyday parent-adolescent interaction. Each of these developments raises the question of which parenting orientations best support learning during the secondary years, and whether the answer is the same across cultures.

1.1 Conceptualising Parenting Styles

Parenting style refers to the relatively stable constellation of attitudes, emotional tone and control practices that characterises a parent's interaction with a child across situations. It is conventionally distinguished from discrete parenting practices, which are goal-specific behaviours such as helping with homework or attending a parent-teacher meeting. Style constitutes the context within which practices acquire meaning; the same instruction to complete an assignment may be experienced as supportive guidance or as coercive pressure depending on the affective climate in which it is delivered.

The dominant framework organises parenting along two orthogonal dimensions: responsiveness, which encompasses warmth, acceptance and sensitivity to the child's needs, and demandingness, which encompasses behavioural control, supervision and maturity expectations. Crossing these dimensions yields four configurations. Authoritative parents combine high warmth with firm but reasoned control, encourage bidirectional communication, and support the adolescent's growing autonomy. Authoritarian parents pair high control with low warmth, emphasise obedience and rely on directive or punitive discipline. Permissive or indulgent parents provide high warmth with minimal demands and few consistent behavioural expectations. Neglectful or uninvolved parents are low on both dimensions and are largely disengaged from the adolescent's daily life.

Recent scholarship has, however, questioned the stability and precision of this typology. Kuppens and Ceulemans (2019) applied cluster-analytic techniques to multiple parenting dimensions and identified configurations that do not map neatly onto the classical four-fold scheme, arguing that psychological control constitutes a dimension distinct from behavioural



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Impact Factor 7.9 www.ijesh.com **ISSN: 2250-3552**

control and should be modelled separately. Gonzalez-Camara, Osorio and Reparaz (2019) reached a similar conclusion in a systematic review, showing that studies operationalise the control dimension in markedly inconsistent ways, so that the label authoritarian may denote firm supervision in one dataset and harsh psychological intrusion in another. These conceptual ambiguities matter directly for the interpretation of achievement findings, because apparently contradictory results across studies may reflect measurement differences rather than substantive disagreement. Yaffe (2020) further demonstrated in a systematic review that mothers and fathers differ systematically in the styles they enact, so that treating parenting as a single undifferentiated family-level variable obscures meaningful variation.

1.2 Educational Achievement at the Secondary Stage

Educational achievement denotes the extent to which a student attains the learning objectives of a course or programme, and is most commonly indexed in the reviewed literature by grade point average, aggregate marks in board or school examinations, subject-specific test scores, teacher ratings of performance, or standardised achievement measures administered as part of international assessment programmes. Some studies also employ proximal indicators such as academic self-concept, academic engagement, homework completion and school attendance, treating these as intermediate outcomes on the pathway to measured attainment.

The secondary stage merits separate consideration for three reasons. First, assessment becomes higher-stakes and more consequential, since performance at this level increasingly determines subsequent educational trajectories. Second, adolescents shift a substantial portion of their social reference from family to peers, which may attenuate parental influence or channel it indirectly through the peer environments parents help to shape. Third, the developmental task of autonomy negotiation means that parenting behaviours experienced as protective in childhood may be experienced as intrusive in adolescence. Bi and colleagues (2018) showed that authoritative parenting predicted better parent-adolescent relationships partly through the granting of behavioural autonomy and the legitimization of parental authority, indicating that adolescents' interpretation of parental control, rather than its objective frequency, drives outcomes at this age. A further consideration is that achievement at the secondary level is multiply determined. Prior attainment, cognitive ability, school quality, socio-economic status and peer norms all contribute variance. Parenting style is therefore best understood as one component within a larger explanatory system, and the review that follows treats effect magnitude, not merely statistical significance, as the criterion of substantive importance.

1.3 Theoretical Foundations Linking Parenting to Achievement

Several complementary theoretical traditions explain why parenting style should be associated with academic outcomes. Self-determination theory proposes that motivation is optimised when the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are satisfied.



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Authoritative parenting, by combining warmth with structure and autonomy support, is theorised to satisfy all three needs and thereby foster autonomous forms of academic motivation. Roman and colleagues (2015), studying adolescents in a South African setting, found that parenting styles were associated with life goals and aspirations through the satisfaction of psychological needs, providing empirical support for this pathway outside Western samples.

Attachment theory contributes the proposition that a secure emotional base enables exploration, intellectual risk-taking and persistence in the face of academic difficulty. Social learning and social cognitive perspectives add that parents shape achievement by modelling effort attributions, by providing vicarious experience of problem-solving, and by supplying the verbal persuasion that builds academic self-efficacy. Masud, Ahmad, Jan and Jamil (2016) tested this pathway directly and reported that self-efficacy mediated the association between parenting style and academic performance among adolescents.

Ecological systems theory locates parenting within nested contexts, positioning the family as a microsystem whose influence is moderated by the school, community and broader cultural belief system. This framework anticipates precisely the cultural variability documented by Pinquart and Kauser (2018), and cautions against the assumption that a single parenting configuration is optimal everywhere. Finally, family investment models emphasise that parenting style operates alongside, and partly through, the material and temporal resources parents can devote to their children's education, linking the construct to socio-economic stratification.

1.4 Scope and Method of the Present Review

This review synthesises peer-reviewed literature published between 2014 and 2022 that examines the association between parenting styles and academic or educational achievement among students at the secondary or equivalent level. Studies were identified through structured searches of major databases and hand-searching of reference lists, using combinations of terms relating to parenting style, parental socialisation, academic achievement, academic performance and adolescent students. Priority was given to meta-analyses and systematic reviews, followed by large-sample cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, and by studies conducted outside the Anglo-American context in order to represent cultural variation adequately.

The review is narrative and thematic rather than quantitative. Its purpose is to map the state of knowledge, identify convergent findings, expose inconsistencies and locate gaps that warrant further investigation. Four thematic strands organise the synthesis: evidence concerning authoritative parenting; evidence concerning authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting; mediating and moderating mechanisms; and cultural, gender-related and socio-economic variation. Three summary tables consolidate the empirical material. Because much of the available evidence is correlational, the language of association rather than causation is used throughout, and claims about direction of effect are made only where design permits.



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2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Authoritative Parenting and Educational Achievement

The most consistent finding across the reviewed period is a positive association between authoritative parenting and academic achievement. The strongest evidence comes from meta-analytic synthesis. Pinquart (2016) aggregated a large body of studies on children and adolescents and reported small but robust positive associations between academic achievement and parental warmth, behavioural control and autonomy support, together with negative associations for harsh control and psychological control. The magnitude of these associations was modest, which is an important corrective to the sometimes-overstated claims found in individual studies, but their consistency across samples and outcome measures was notable.

Systematic review evidence converges with this picture. Masud, Thurasamy and Ahmad (2015) reviewed studies on parenting styles and the academic achievement of young adolescents and concluded that authoritative parenting was most frequently associated with superior academic outcomes, while also noting considerable heterogeneity in measurement and in the cultural composition of samples. Single-country studies have reinforced the pattern. Hayek, Schneider, Lahoud, Tueni and de Vries (2022), working with adolescents in Lebanon, found that authoritative parenting was associated with better academic achievement and that part of this association operated through students' academic self-efficacy and their intention to obtain good grades. Zahedani, Rezaee, Yazdani, Bagheri and Nabeiei (2016) similarly reported in an Iranian sample that authoritative parenting was linked to stronger academic achievement and to clearer career pathways.

Explanations for the authoritative advantage centre on the combination of structure and autonomy support. Firm, consistently enforced expectations give adolescents predictable routines for study and monitored use of time, while warmth and reasoned communication ensure that these expectations are internalised rather than merely complied with. Fuentes, Garcia-Ros, Perez-Gonzalez and Sancerni (2019) reported that adolescents from warm parenting environments displayed stronger self-regulated learning and lower academic stress, identifying a plausible mechanism by which the authoritative configuration translates into performance. Lavric and Naterer (2020), in a cross-national study, likewise found broadly favourable psychosocial outcomes associated with authoritative parenting across multiple national contexts.

Two qualifications temper this conclusion. First, most supporting studies are cross-sectional, so reverse causation cannot be excluded: high-achieving adolescents may elicit warmer and less coercive parenting. Second, the reported effect sizes indicate that parenting style accounts for a limited share of achievement variance, and should therefore be understood as one contributing influence among several rather than as a decisive determinant.



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Table 1: Selected Studies Reporting Associations Between Authoritative Parenting and Achievement (2014-2022)

Study	Context / Sample	Design	Principal Finding
Pinquart (2016)	Meta-analysis of children and adolescents, multiple countries	Meta-analysis	Warmth, behavioural control and autonomy support show small but consistent positive associations with achievement.
Masud, Thurasamy & Ahmad (2015)	Systematic review, young adolescents	Systematic review	Authoritative style most frequently linked to higher academic achievement; measurement heterogeneity noted.
Chen (2015)	Secondary students, Hong Kong	Cross-sectional survey	Perceived authoritative parenting relates to achievement through students' goal orientations.
Zahedani et al. (2016)	Students, Iran	Cross-sectional survey	Authoritative parenting associated with higher achievement and clearer career direction.
Fuentes et al. (2019)	Adolescents, Spain	Cross-sectional survey	Warm parenting linked to stronger self-regulated learning and reduced academic stress.
Lavric & Naterer (2020)	Adolescents, multiple nations	Cross-national survey	Authoritative exposure associated with more favourable psychosocial outcomes across contexts.
Hayek et al. (2022)	Adolescents, Lebanon	Cross-sectional survey	Authoritative parenting predicts achievement partly via self-efficacy and grade intentions.

2.2 Authoritarian, Permissive and Neglectful Parenting and Educational Achievement

Evidence concerning the non-authoritative styles is considerably less uniform, and it is here that the most consequential debates in the field are located. The neglectful or uninvolved configuration is the least contested. Across the reviewed literature, low warmth combined with low supervision is associated with the poorest academic profile, including weaker achievement,



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reduced engagement and higher rates of school-related behavioural difficulty. Garcia, Serra, Garcia, Martinez and Cruise (2019), examining adolescents across Spain, the United States, Germany and Brazil, found neglectful parenting to be consistently associated with the least favourable outcomes in every national sample, making this one of the few cross-culturally invariant findings in the field. Sarwar (2016) reached a comparable conclusion regarding children's classroom behaviour, observing that disengaged parenting was associated with the weakest self-discipline and the most disruptive conduct, both of which carry indirect academic costs.

Authoritarian parenting presents a more complicated picture. In North American and Northern European samples, it is typically associated with lower achievement, lower academic self-esteem and higher anxiety. The explanation generally offered is that the coercion and low warmth characteristic of the style undermine the internalisation of academic values and generate performance anxiety that interferes with learning. However, Pinquart and Kauser (2018) demonstrated meta-analytically that the strength of the negative association between authoritarian parenting and achievement varies by cultural group, being attenuated in samples where firm parental direction carries different normative meaning. Sahithya, Manohari and Vijaya (2019), reviewing evidence with particular attention to India, similarly observed that directive and hierarchical parenting is normatively embedded in collectivist family systems and is not necessarily perceived by adolescents as rejecting, which may account for the weaker adverse effects reported in South Asian samples.

The permissive or indulgent style has generated the sharpest disagreement. Several Spanish and Latin American studies have reported that indulgent parenting yields outcomes equal or superior to authoritative parenting on measures of self-esteem and psychosocial adjustment, prompting the argument that the authoritative optimum is culturally specific rather than universal. Garcia et al. (2019) advanced this position on the basis of four-country data. Osorio and Gonzalez-Camara (2016), however, tested the claim directly in a Spanish adolescent sample and found the alleged superiority of indulgent parenting not to be supported once outcome domains were disaggregated, noting that advantages appeared for some psychosocial indicators but not for achievement-related ones. The unresolved status of this debate underlines the importance of specifying which outcome is under discussion, since parenting configurations that support emotional wellbeing do not necessarily support academic performance.

A recurring interpretive difficulty concerns the operationalisation of control. As Gonzalez-Camara et al. (2019) documented, some instruments conflate behavioural monitoring with psychological intrusion. Because behavioural control is generally positively associated with achievement while psychological control is negatively associated with it, instruments that combine them produce attenuated or unstable estimates for the authoritarian category. Part of the



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Impact Factor 7.9 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

inconsistency in this literature is therefore likely to be measurement artefact rather than genuine population difference.

Table 2: Reported Achievement-Related Outcomes Associated With Non-Authoritative Parenting Styles

Parenting Style	Defining Dimensions	Commonly Reported Achievement Outcomes	Key Sources
Authoritarian	High demandingness, low responsiveness; directive and punitive discipline	Generally lower achievement and academic self-esteem in Western samples; weaker or non-significant negative effects in several Asian and Middle Eastern samples	Pinquart & Kauser (2018); Sahithya et al. (2019)
Permissive / Indulgent	High responsiveness, low demandingness; few enforced expectations	Mixed evidence; favourable psychosocial outcomes reported in some Southern European samples, but limited or no achievement advantage	Garcia et al. (2019); Osorio & Gonzalez-Camara (2016)
Neglectful / Uninvolved	Low responsiveness, low demandingness; limited supervision and engagement	Consistently the least favourable achievement and engagement outcomes across national contexts	Garcia et al. (2019); Pinquart (2016)

2.3 Mediating and Moderating Mechanisms in the Parenting-Achievement Link

A significant methodological maturation over the review period has been the shift from documenting direct associations to modelling the processes through which parenting influences achievement. This work indicates that parenting rarely affects marks directly; rather, it shapes psychological and behavioural resources that in turn support learning.

Academic self-efficacy has received the most attention. Masud et al. (2016) reported that self-efficacy mediated the relationship between parenting style and academic performance, and Hayek et al. (2022) subsequently replicated a comparable mediating role alongside behavioural intention in a Lebanese sample. The theoretical account is that warm, autonomy-supportive parents supply mastery opportunities and credible verbal encouragement, which consolidate the belief in one's capacity to succeed academically, which in turn sustains effort and persistence.



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Motivational orientation constitutes a second pathway. Chen (2015) found that the association between perceived parenting style and achievement among Hong Kong secondary students operated through students' goal orientations, with authoritative parenting predicting mastery-oriented goals and more controlling styles predicting performance-avoidance goals. Self-regulated learning represents a closely related mechanism: Fuentes et al. (2019) showed that adolescents experiencing warm parenting reported greater use of self-regulatory learning strategies and lower academic stress.

Homework behaviour offers a concrete behavioural pathway. Nunez, Suarez, Rosario, Vallejo, Valle and Epstein (2015) examined perceived parental involvement in homework across school levels and found that the quality of involvement, particularly support for autonomy rather than direct control, predicted students' homework behaviours, which in turn predicted achievement. This finding is significant because it identifies not merely whether parents are involved but how they are involved as the operative variable.

Parental involvement more broadly functions both as a mechanism and as a distinct construct. Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014) demonstrated in a longitudinal study of high school students that parental involvement predicted both achievement and mental health outcomes, with involvement that supported autonomy and communicated educational expectations proving more beneficial than involvement expressed through direct supervision of schoolwork. Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen and Brand-Gruwel (2018) synthesised this literature and concluded that involvement indicators reflecting parental expectations, reading with the child and encouragement of autonomy showed the most consistent associations with achievement, while homework assistance produced inconsistent and occasionally negative associations.

Moderating variables are less thoroughly investigated but no less important. Cultural background moderates the effect of control, as established by Pinquart and Kauser (2018). Adolescent age moderates the effect of monitoring, with Bi et al. (2018) showing that autonomy granting became increasingly consequential as adolescents matured. Parent gender also matters: Yaffe (2020) found systematic differences between maternal and paternal styles, implying that same-parent and cross-parent effects may differ in ways that single-informant designs cannot detect.

Table 3: Mediators and Moderators of the Parenting-Achievement Relationship Identified in the Reviewed Literature

Variable	Role	Direction of Reported Effect	Representative Source
Academic self-efficacy	Mediator	Authoritative parenting raises self-efficacy, which raises achievement	Masud et al. (2016); Hayek et al. (2022)



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Variable	Role	Direction of Reported Effect	Representative Source
Goal orientation	Mediator	Authoritative parenting linked to mastery goals; controlling styles to avoidance goals	Chen (2015)
Self-regulated learning	Mediator	Parental warmth associated with greater self-regulation and lower academic stress	Fuentes et al. (2019)
Homework behaviour	Mediator	Autonomy-supportive involvement improves homework behaviour and thereby achievement	Nunez et al. (2015)
Parental involvement	Mediator	Expectation-based and autonomy-supportive involvement most consistently beneficial	Wang & Sheikh-Khalil (2014); Boonk et al. (2018)
Behavioural autonomy	Mediator	Autonomy granting strengthens parent-adolescent relations and legitimacy of authority	Bi et al. (2018)
Cultural context	Moderator	Negative effect of strict control attenuated in collectivist settings	Pinquart & Kauser (2018); Sahithya et al. (2019)
Parent gender	Moderator	Maternal and paternal styles differ systematically in enactment and effect	Yaffe (2020)
Type of control measured	Moderator	Behavioural control positively, psychological control negatively related to achievement	Gonzalez-Camara et al. (2019); Kuppens & Ceulemans (2019)

2.4 Cultural, Gender and Socio-economic Variations

The question of whether the authoritative advantage is universal constitutes the principal theoretical controversy in this field. The evidence assembled during the review period supports a qualified rather than an absolute universality claim. Parental warmth and acceptance appear



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beneficial in every cultural setting examined, and neglectful parenting appears detrimental in every setting examined. What varies is the meaning and consequence of the control dimension.

Pinquart and Kauser (2018) provided the most systematic test of this proposition, showing meta-analytically that associations between parenting styles and both behaviour problems and academic achievement differ in magnitude across cultural groups, with harsh control more strongly detrimental in some contexts than others. Sahithya et al. (2019), reviewing evidence with specific reference to India, argued that the Baumrindian categories require adaptation before they can be applied to South Asian family systems, in which interdependence, hierarchical respect and extended-family involvement are normative and in which directive parenting is not typically accompanied by the emotional rejection that defines authoritarianism in Western measures. Garcia et al. (2019) advanced a parallel argument from Southern European and Latin American data, proposing that the indulgent configuration may be adaptive in societies characterised by horizontal collectivism. Osorio and Gonzalez-Camara (2016) offered an important counterweight by showing that such claims may not survive careful disaggregation of outcome domains, and the debate remains open.

Gender operates on both sides of the relationship. On the parent side, Yaffe (2020) documented that mothers are generally perceived as more responsive and fathers as comparatively more demanding, and that maternal and paternal styles predict different outcome profiles. On the adolescent side, several reviewed studies report that girls and boys respond differently to comparable parenting, with monitoring frequently more strongly associated with achievement among boys and warmth more strongly associated with achievement among girls, though findings are not uniform. Masud et al. (2015) noted this inconsistency in their systematic review and attributed part of it to differences in sampling and measurement rather than to genuine population variation.

Socio-economic status shapes both the distribution of parenting styles and their consequences. Families under economic pressure face constraints on time, cognitive bandwidth and material resources that make sustained authoritative engagement more difficult, and neglectful patterns are disproportionately reported in conditions of economic hardship. At the same time, the reviewed literature suggests that the protective effect of supportive parenting may be relatively larger for adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds, for whom the home provides compensation for weaker institutional support. Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014) found that involvement communicating educational expectations was beneficial across socio-economic strata, while Boonk et al. (2018) cautioned that involvement indicators requiring parental academic competence, such as homework assistance, may show weaker or negative associations precisely where parental educational attainment is low. This has direct implications for the



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design of parent education programmes, which should emphasise expectation-setting, communication and autonomy support rather than direct academic tutoring.

3. Conclusion

The literature published between 2014 and 2022 supports four principal conclusions about the relationship between parenting styles and the educational achievement of secondary-level students.

First, parental warmth and responsiveness are associated with better academic outcomes across the full range of cultural contexts examined, and neglectful parenting is associated with the poorest outcomes in every context examined. These two findings are the most robust in the field and can be regarded as reasonably well established.

Second, the authoritative configuration retains its status as the modal optimum, but the advantage is smaller than early literature implied and is not uniform across cultures. Meta-analytic estimates place the associations in the small range, indicating that parenting style is one contributory influence within a multiply determined outcome rather than a decisive cause of achievement (Pinquart, 2016). Claims that a particular style guarantees academic success are not supported by the evidence.

Third, the effect of parenting on achievement is largely indirect, operating through academic self-efficacy, goal orientation, self-regulated learning, homework behaviour and the quality of parental involvement. This is arguably the most practically significant conclusion of the review, because these mediating variables are more tractable targets for school-based and counselling intervention than parenting style itself, which is comparatively stable. It also implies that interventions aimed at parents should focus on how support is delivered, particularly on autonomy support and the communication of expectations, rather than on the sheer quantity of academic supervision (Boonk et al., 2018; Nunez et al., 2015).

Fourth, cultural context substantially conditions the effect of the control dimension. Strict behavioural direction that is embedded in a warm and normatively legitimate family relationship does not carry the same academic cost in collectivist settings as coercive control does in individualist ones (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018; Sahithya et al., 2019). Practitioners and policy makers should therefore be cautious in importing parenting recommendations derived from Western samples into culturally distinct settings without adaptation.

Taken together, these conclusions suggest that schools should conceptualise parents as partners in the development of adolescents' motivational and self-regulatory resources rather than as auxiliary instructors. They also indicate that teacher education and school counselling services would benefit from a working knowledge of family process, so that students whose home environments provide limited structure or warmth can be identified and supported through compensatory school-based relationships.



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