

Parenting Styles and the Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Assam: A Study of Biswanath District

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Abstract

The impact of parenting goes well beyond the personality of a child; it is often seen impacting their learning process, coping mechanisms, and academic performance. This paper investigates the link between parenting styles and the academic achievement of students studying in secondary schools of Biswanath District in Assam. A descriptive survey methodology was employed. Data were collected from a sample of 240 students across six ASSEB-affiliated secondary schools (three private and three Government). Four types of parenting styles, namely, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved, were assessed using the Parenting Style Scale (PSS) developed by Gupta and Mehtani (2017). The students' academic achievement was measured based on their HSLC exam scores. It has been found that an authoritative parenting style was positively correlated with achievement; however, permissive and uninvolved styles were significant negative predictors. Moreover, the type of school management has also been found to play an important role in predicting the achievement level of students, where students studying in private schools performed better compared to students studying in government schools. Achievement did not differ significantly in the case of the gender of the students.

Keywords: parenting styles, academic achievement, secondary school students, authoritative parenting, Biswanath district, Assam

1. Introduction

Long before a child sits for his or her first board exam, he or she has already spent years in a much smaller classroom, the home. The way parents speak to their children, the freedoms they grant or withhold, and the degree to which they involve themselves in their child's daily life all leave an imprint, and researchers have long asked whether that imprint can be measured in something as precise as an exam percentage. Baumrind's (1971) pioneering work on authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting gave the field its foundational vocabulary. Maccoby and Martin (1983) later refined this framework by mapping parenting along two dimensions, responsiveness and demandingness, which yielded a fourth, previously overlooked style: the uninvolved or neglectful parent, neither warm nor demanding. This two-dimensional model gave researchers a more complete picture of the parenting landscape, one that could account for children who received neither guidance nor warmth from their caregivers. Darling and Steinberg (1993) added a further distinction, separating parenting style, the emotional climate in which a child is raised, from parenting practices, the specific actions parents take to socialize their children. Since then, studies

from Pakistan, Ghana, Kenya, and other countries have arrived at remarkably consistent findings: warm, demanding parenting correlates positively with academic performance, while permissive parenting and uninvolved parenting, most of all, tend to undermine it.

However, one aspect that has been neglected in this body of literature is the case of India's Northeast. Most of the existing studies have not studied the impact of parenting styles on academic achievement in a place such as Biswanath District in Assam, which consists of both private and public schools with very different contexts. It is this gap that this research seeks to fill by using an instrument designed for use in the Indian context, that is, the Parenting Style Scale by Gupta & Mehtani (2017), as measured against actual HSLC board examination performance.

One thing to note at the outset is the fact that, unlike several earlier studies in this field, this study has retained the failed students within the analysis, instead of silently excluding them. Excluding the failed students from the sample tends to bias the dependent variable of achievement downwards and therefore makes parenting style appear more important than it truly is. The inclusion of all 240 students within the analysis, therefore, gives us a full range of outcomes achieved by the families in Biswanath District.

2. Review of Related Literature

According to Baumrind's (1971) original typology, parenting could be analyzed in terms of two aspects: how responsive parents are and how demanding parents are, resulting in three major parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Maccoby and Martin later suggested the fourth one, neglectful or uninvolved parents, and Darling and Steinberg (1993) considered the style to be the emotional background for particular parenting practices.

There have been several studies on the topic in Pakistan with fairly reliable results. In particular, Hassan et al. (2022) observed 720 secondary school students in Punjab and found that authoritative parenting correlated better with self-regulated learning than with self-efficacy. Rizwan et al. (2021), using a similar sample of Punjabi students, linked parenting style and self-efficacy to be the joint predictors of achievement. Yasmin, Kiani, and Chaudhry (2014), in their work with 350 Pakistani intermediate students, found that both parents' authoritative parenting predicted achievement, whereas authoritarian parenting from both parents decreased achievement.

In the case of Ghana and Kenya, there exists a relatively similar pattern with some variations here and there. According to Ayisi-Boateng et al. (2022), parenting style influenced the academic achievements of Junior High School students in Ghana, but gender did not have much bearing on this matter, a phenomenon that will be seen in this research paper's results on gender. According to Nyarko (2011), authoritative parenting from both parents was found to influence the performance of 239 Ghanaian senior high school students positively. Odongo, Aloka, and Raburu (2016), through a combination of surveys and interviews, found authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles hindering performance in 263 Kenyan secondary students. Mumina et al. (2022), comparing public and private institutions of learning in Lamu County of Kenya, found parenting style to influence achievement minimally, which is an important point to take note of since such connections are not necessarily universal everywhere. Poor parenting style negatively influences the academic performance of girls in Kenya, as found by Kiama et al. (2018). Chibuike (2021), working with Nigerian school students, found that a democratic parenting style influenced performance positively compared to an autocratic style.

Additional layers of information are provided by Iran and studies conducted in 2014. According to a study by Besharat et al. (2011), carried out with 371 high school students from Tehran, maternal authoritative

parenting emerged as the only significant predictor of academic performance. In 2012, research by Dehyadegary et al. (2012), involving 382 Iranian adolescents, showed not only the positive effect of authoritative parenting on achievement but also that permissive parenting predicted poor achievement. Kashahu et al. (2014), studying 654 Albanian elementary-grade children, discovered strong associations between authoritative parenting and achievement, especially prevalent among the better-off families. The synthesis of nine meta-analyses on the role of parental involvement in educational success provided by Wilder (2014) revealed that involvement associated with high expectations was the strongest factor. It is also important to mention that Checa & Abundis-Gutiérrez (2018) warned that categorization suggested by Baumrind and mostly referring to the Western context may not be easily applicable to other cultures. In terms of our region, there have been some Indian studies employing the same Parenting Style Scale. For example, in Gupta & Mehtani's (2017) validation study of 598 students of senior secondary education level from Haryana, it was found that democratic parenting style yielded significantly higher scores than the other styles together, whereas school management had no significant effect, which is in contrast to the strong influence of school management found in the results below. Bashir (2020) found that democratic parenting was positively correlated with aspiration, while autocratic and uninvolved parenting were negatively correlated in the case of Kashmiri adolescents. Rukwal, Pandita, & Aman (2023), using a sample of eleventh-standard students in Samba district, found that a permissive parenting style was positively correlated with academic achievement for boys; this was contrary to the negative correlations found in Biswanath and is an important caveat in assuming similar findings of these variables in all contexts. Basumatary & Baglari (2021) studied 138 students at the higher secondary stage of Udalguri, Assam, and found a significant positive correlation between democratic parenting style and academic achievement.

3. Objectives

1. To study the relationship between parenting styles and academic achievement among Class 10 students of Biswanath District.
2. To compare the academic achievement of Class 10 students in relation to gender and school management.

4. Hypotheses

H01 There is no relationship between parenting styles and academic achievement among Class 10 students in Biswanath District.

H02 There is no significant difference in academic achievement among Class 10 students with respect to school management.

H03 There is no significant difference in academic achievement among Class 10 students with respect to gender.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

In the research, a descriptive survey design of correlational and causal-comparative types was used to investigate the correlation between parenting styles and academic achievement and to make comparisons based on achievement by gender and school management.

5.2 Sample

The sample consisted of 240 Class 10 students (120 boys and 120 girls) from 6 secondary schools in Biswanath District, Assam. The schools selected in the study include 3 private schools (Stella Maris HS, Saint Xavier's School, Srimanta Sankarguru Jatiya Vidyalaya) and 3 government schools (Dolonguri HSS, Bir Lachit HS, Pub Buroi HS). There were 40 students (20 boys and 20 girls) sampled from each school. In contrast to earlier research utilizing similar datasets, the current study retained all sampled students. This includes the 44 individuals (18.33%) who failed the HSLC examination, ensuring no achievement outliers were omitted.

5.3 Tools

The Parenting Style Scale (PSS) was developed and standardized by Gupta & Mehtani (2017) and used to measure the parenting style, which provides four subscale scores, namely, Democratic, Autocratic, Permissive, and Uninvolved. The academic achievement was measured as the percentage marks of each student in the HSLC Board examination.

5.4 Statistical Procedures

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) were calculated for all the variables. Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to determine the association between the scores on each PSS subscale and achievement percentage (H01). An independent samples t-test was performed using Welch's correction because the variance was different among the groups (H02, H03). All the procedures were conducted at the significance level of $\alpha = .05$.

6. Results

6.1 Sample and Achievement Distributions

Table 1 displays the distribution of the sample by school, management type, and gender. The design was perfectly balanced for schools and gender, with 40 students (20 boys and 20 girls) per school. Table 2 shows the achievement of the sample students in the HSLC examination held in the year 2025.

Table 1: Sample Distribution

School	Management	Boys	Girls	Total
Stella Maris School	Private	20	20	40
Saint Xavier's School	Private	20	20	40
Srimanta Sankarguru Jatiya Vidyalaya	Private	20	20	40
Dolonguri HSS	Government	20	20	40
Bir Lachit HS	Government	20	20	40
Pub Buroi HS	Government	20	20	40
Total	---	120	120	240

Table 2: Division-wise Results of the HSLC Examination 2025

Division	Frequency	Percentage
1 st Division	87	36.25%
2 nd Division	83	34.58%
3 rd Division	26	10.83%

Fail	44	18.33%
Total	240	100%

18.33% of the sample consisted of failed candidates, emphasizing the need to keep the failed candidates in the study rather than focusing on the successful candidates only.

6.2 The relationship between parenting styles and academic achievements (H01)

Pearson correlation coefficients of each score in the PSS scales and the HSLC percent score of achievement are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Between Parenting Style and Academic Achievement

Parenting Style	r	p-value	Interpretation
Democratic	.12	.073	Negligible, non-significant
Autocratic	-.10	.112	Weak negative, non-significant
Permissive	-.35	< .001	Moderate negative, significant
Uninvolved	-.30	< .001	Weak-to-moderate negative, significant

Scores in the permissive and uninvolved subscales were found to be significantly and negatively correlated with achievement, while scores in the democratic and autocratic subscales had no significant correlation with the achievement percent score. The moderate negative correlation of permissive parenting ($r = -.35$) and the weak to moderate negative correlation of uninvolved parenting ($r = -.30$) indicate that as the permissive and uninvolved parents increase, there would be a decrease in achievement, whereas having warm or more disciplined (democratic) and stricter or more authoritarian (autocratic) parents have no dependable linear correlation. Hence, H01 can be partially rejected since parenting style has a significant relation to achievement in terms of permissive and uninvolved aspects, but not in democratic and autocratic aspects.

6.3 Achievement by School Management (H02)

Table 4: Achievement by the type of School Management

Management	n	Mean (%)	SD
Private	120	59.74	15.12
Government	120	49.48	10.30

Using independent samples Welch's t-test, it was found to be a statistically significant difference in the achievement of the participants from private schools as compared to those from the government schools, $t(209.90) = 6.14$, $p < .001$. The effect size was very large (Cohen's $d = 0.79$). Therefore, H02 is rejected.

6.4 Achievement by Gender (H03)

Table 5: Achievement by Gender

Gender	n	Mean (%)	SD
Male	120	54.67	13.54
Female	120	54.55	14.31

No significant difference was found in the achievement of the participants based on their gender, $t(237.27) = 0.07$, $p = .944$ ($d = 0.01$). Hence, H03 is retained.

7. Discussion

While some of these findings are quite consistent with previous literature, others are not, but both need to be considered. The lack of significance of gender with respect to achievement was consistent with Ayisi-Boateng et al. (2022) and Mumina et al. (2022), adding to a growing body of evidence that wherever there is an achievement gap, it is likely not related to gender.

It is also noteworthy that parenting that was characterized as democratic did not emerge as a statistically significant correlate of achievement, despite being in contradiction with the findings of Hassan et al. (2022) and Rizwan et al. (2021), where an authoritative or democratic style of parenting emerged as a significant factor of academic success in Pakistan. In addition, the results contradict those from the one other Assam study related to this topic, a Udalguri survey by Basumatary and Baglari (2021), where a statistically significant positive correlation between the style of democratic parenting and achievement was revealed. One possible explanation might be the significant difference in resources and teaching between private and government institutions in Biswanath District, which was already emphasized by Mumina et al. (2022), who warned about the potential differences in the parenting-achievement connection in different schools.

One thing that can be said with certainty in relation to this study is that there is a consistent negative relationship between permissive and uninvolved parenting styles and achievement. It is fully congruent with the findings by Kiama et al., (2018) who discovered a strong negative relationship between poor parenting and the performance of Kenyan girls and it fully corresponds to Darling and Steinberg's (1993) hypothesis: either permissive parents ask little of their children or uninvolved parents do not provide warmth, but still leave their children without structure needed for consistent achievement in any case.

However, while there is an established relationship between parenting and achievement, the strongest effect in this study is related neither to any type of parenting nor to any type of achievement measures but to the schools attended by the participants. Private school attendees scored significantly higher results than government school attendees ($d=0.79$). That is also confirmed by several previous studies in this field and differs considerably from the findings reported by Gupta and Mehtani (2017), who did not observe any significant differences between achievements of government school attendees and private school attendees within their own Haryana sample.

It is also important to note that the inclusion of the 44 unsuccessful candidates (18.33% of the sample), as opposed to excluding them as was the case with some previous studies in the same field, made an important difference since the two significant predictors permissive and uninvolved parenting style along with private schooling proved valid throughout the whole continuum of results, starting from the top scores and down to those students who have failed to pass the examination.

8. Educational Implications

The foremost practical implication of this study for people who run programmes of parent-counselling or school outreach in Biswanath District is to focus their efforts on encouraging permissive and uninvolved parents, rather than persuading all of them to become democratic parents. In other words, it may mean providing parents with some concrete advice on remaining consistently involved, checking their children's homework, and attending school functions. From the school perspective, the finding regarding the difference between private and government schools would mean that the latter will need some additional academic support from the side of teachers' training and examination preparation.

9. Limitations and Potential for Future Research

The participants in the current study have been drawn from only six schools of one district of Assam and, therefore, an attempt to generalize the findings beyond the confines of that particular district and of Assam as a whole is highly inappropriate. While the adoption of the cross-sectional method in the current study has helped identify a relationship between permissiveness and underachievement, it has not helped to prove that the former leads to the latter. It is also not possible to establish through the correlational and comparative approaches adopted in the current study that variables such as the socioeconomic status of the families and their educational background are irrelevant to the findings.

10. Conclusion

The types of parenting that seem to have played an important role for the Class 10 students of Biswanath district were not the democratic kinds of parenting that get most of the attention in the literature; instead, it was the other extreme forms, the permissive and uninvolved parenting, which were positively associated with low levels of achievement, even when taking into consideration those candidates who did not succeed. In this particular situation, the most important aspect that impacted success was not the kind of parenting but rather the kind of schooling the individual went through, since private schools excelled more than government schools. The gender did not seem to make any difference at all.

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