

Beyond the Collectivist-Individualist Dichotomy: Parenting Styles and Adolescent Development in South Asian and European Contexts- A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Parenting style research often relies on Western theories that may not fully capture parenting in non-Western societies. This review synthesized evidence from 100 studies examining parenting styles and adolescent development across South Asia and Europe. The sample included 31 South Asian studies, 33 European studies, 28 cross-cultural comparisons and 8 meta-analysis / review papers. Ecological and cultural developmental frameworks guided the analysis. These included Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, Kagitcibasi's family change model, and the parenting model proposed by Darling and Steinberg. Three questions guided the review. First, how do parenting styles appear across these regions? Second, how do they relate to adolescent academic, psychological, and behavioral outcomes? Third, does the evidence challenge the traditional collectivist-individualist framework in cross-cultural psychology. Results showed that parental warmth consistently predicted positive adolescent outcomes in both regions. Warmth, therefore, appears to function as a pancultural protective factor. The effects of parental control varied more strongly across cultural contexts. In South Asian settings, parental authority is often normative and socially expected. Consequently, negative associations with control appeared weaker than those reported in European samples. However, control remained beneficial mainly when combined with warmth and exercised within culturally valued developmental domains.

Keywords: *parenting styles; adolescence; cross-cultural; South Asia; Europe; collectivism-individualism. Family Studies*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Parents shape children's development in ways that extend across generations. Parenting practices influence academic achievement, psychological well-being, and cultural continuity or change (Grusec & Davidov, 2010; Fu et al., 2025; Parra Velasco, 2023; Masud et al., 2019). As globalization increases migration and transnational flows of parenting knowledge, understanding parenting across cultures becomes more urgent (Baldassar et al., 2024). Yet most parenting research comes from Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic societies. Henrich et al. (2010) labeled these populations WEIRD. This concentration raises doubts about whether dominant developmental theories generalize across cultural settings.

For decades, research on parenting styles followed Baumrind's influential typology (Baumrind, 2013). Scholars distinguished authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting patterns (Weiss & Schwarz, 1996). Authoritative parents combine warmth, communication, and firm behavioral expectations. Authoritarian parents emphasize control with limited responsiveness. Baumrind argued that authoritative parenting supports both social responsibility and autonomous competence (Baumrind, 2013). Longitudinal work later linked this style with adolescent maturity, academic competence, and lower substance use. Crucially, effectiveness emerged from the integration of warmth and control within a relational climate (Russell et al., 2003). Tadesse (2015) clarified the framework by distinguishing demandingness and responsiveness as independent dimensions. This dimensional approach helps researchers examine how warmth and control interact across cultural contexts (Mylonas, 2009; Fili, 2016; De la Torre-Cruz et al., 2014).

Western studies repeatedly reported that authoritative parenting predicted higher achievement, stronger mental health, and fewer behavioral problems (Watabe & Hibbard, 2014; Pinquart & Kauser, 2018). These findings suggested a universally optimal parenting style. However, cross-cultural research complicated this conclusion. Similar frameworks sometimes produced different results outside Western contexts (Grusec et al., 2013; Azimi et al., 2012). Practices interpreted as harsh control in one culture could represent guidance or social training in another (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018; Chen & Jensen, 2011). Cultural meaning therefore shapes how children interpret parental authority.

Henrich et al. (2010) argued that reliance on WEIRD samples threatens the universality of developmental theory. Many constructs reflect Western values emphasizing autonomy, self-expression, and individual achievement. Kagitcibasi (2017) proposed that autonomy and relatedness function as independent dimensions within family systems. Families can therefore encourage personal agency while maintaining strong relational bonds. Keller (2017) similarly

described autonomy and relatedness as universal needs expressed through culturally variable practices. Integrative cultural frameworks emphasize that parenting goals, practices, and interpretations are embedded within broader belief systems (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008; Lansford, 2022).

For years, scholars explained cultural differences using the collectivist-individualist distinction (Rudy & Grusec, 2001; Rudy & Halgunseth, 2005). Individualist societies emphasize autonomy and expression. Collectivist societies emphasize family interdependence and respect for authority. However, this binary increasingly appears inadequate. Gavrilis (2019) argued that it hides variation within regions and across social change. European societies provide parenting research within welfare-oriented institutional contexts (Aunola et al., 2000; Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Pfau-Effinger, 2005; Lynch, 2003). South Asia reflects family interdependence alongside social transformation (Saraswathi & Ganapathy, 2002; Stewart et al., 1999; Yeung et al., 2018; Babu et al., 2017). Yet comparisons between regions remain limited.

We designed this systematic review to fill that gap. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and Kagitcibasi's (2002) family change model, we asked three questions. First, how do parenting styles actually manifest in South Asian versus European contexts? We wanted to know not just which styles predominate but what they mean to the people living them. Second, what are the associations between parenting styles and adolescent outcomes? And third, to what extent do within-region variations challenge the collectivist-individualist dichotomy?

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We approached this review with three complementary theoretical frameworks. These frameworks guided our thinking, each sensitizing us to different aspects of the phenomenon.

2.1 The Two-Dimensional Parenting Framework

Baumrind's early typology identified authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting as distinct categorical patterns of parental authority and socialization (Baumrind, 1967, 1968, 1971). In this early model, authoritative parenting was associated with confidence, empathy, and self-regulation, authoritarian parenting emphasized obedience, strict discipline, and unilateral parental authority, and permissive parenting reflected high acceptance with relatively low control (Jeelani et al., 2025). While Baumrind's work laid the foundation for empirical research on parenting styles, yet it did not provide an explicit framework for measuring parenting dimensions. Building on this limitation, Maccoby and Martin (1983) re-conceptualized parenting styles through two theoretically orthogonal dimensions: responsiveness and demandingness. Responsiveness includes warmth, acceptance, involvement, and open communication, while demandingness includes behavioral control, supervision, maturity demands, and consistent expectations (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Steinberg et al., 1994). These dimensions are independent rather than opposite poles of a single continuum. These two dimensions generate four parenting styles: authoritative parenting, defined by high responsiveness and high demandingness; authoritarian parenting, defined by low responsiveness and high demandingness; indulgent parenting, defined by high responsiveness and low demandingness; and neglectful parenting, defined by low responsiveness and low demandingness (Lamborn et al., 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Steinberg et al., 1994; Widiastuti et al., 2026). Terminological precision is necessary because these styles have been labelled differently across different studies. Authoritative parenting is sometimes described as democratic parenting, whereas indulgent parenting has often been called permissive parenting when the four-style model is used (Cherry, 2020; Echedom et al., 2018). Darling and Steinberg's (1993) integrative model further clarified how parenting operates by distinguishing among parenting practices, parenting dimensions, and parenting styles. Practices refer to specific parental behaviors, such as monitoring, discipline, or curfew enforcement. Parenting style describes the emotional climate surrounding those practices. Style influences how adolescents interpret parental behavior.

Dimension-based studies examine the separate and interactive effects of warmth/responsiveness and control/demandingness on adolescent outcomes (Rothenberg, Lansford, Bacchini, et al., 2020; Rothenberg, Lansford, Bornstein, et al., 2020; Rothenberg et

al., 2022). In contrast, style-based studies classify families into authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, or neglectful categories and compare developmental outcomes across these groups (Garcia et al., 2019; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994, 2006). Warm and autonomy-supportive styles may increase the perceived legitimacy of demanding practices, whereas authoritarian climates may weaken the benefits of otherwise constructive parental behaviors (Patrick et al., 2013). This distinction is especially relevant in cross-cultural research. Similar parenting practices may carry different meanings across cultural settings. In collectivist contexts, for instance, close parental monitoring may be interpreted as responsible guidance and family concern rather than psychological intrusion (Rudy & Grusec, 2001; Sorkhabi, 2012). Therefore, the developmental consequences of parenting depend not only on specific practices but also on emotional climate, cultural meaning, and perceived legitimacy. Grusec and Davidov's domain-specific model extends this perspective by identifying relational domains such as protection, reciprocity, control, and guided learning, each of which involves distinct developmental mechanisms through which adolescents respond to parental authority (Grusec & Davidov, 2010).

2.2 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

While the two-dimensional parenting framework explains the structure of parenting styles, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory explains the broader contexts in which parenting occurs. Bronfenbrenner's theory conceptualizes development within nested environmental systems (Ryan, 2001; Härkönen, 2001). The microsystem includes immediate contexts such as parent-child relationships, family interactions, and school settings. The mesosystem refers to connections between these settings, including relationships between families and schools (Smith et al., 2016). The exosystem includes environments indirectly affecting children, such as parental workplaces and community resources. The macrosystem reflects cultural values and institutional patterns shaping development (Smith et al., 2016). The chronosystem captures life transitions and broader social change across time. This perspective shows parenting occurs within wider ecological contexts. Parenting practices, therefore, gain meaning through cultural values and institutional supports (Steinberg et al., 1995). Bronfenbrenner's later bioecological model emphasized proximal processes as core developmental mechanisms (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). These processes depend on repeated, reciprocal interactions within stable contexts (Haywood, 2024). Cultural legitimacy also shapes parenting outcomes, since similar practices can produce different developmental consequences across societies (Zarnegar, 2015).

2.3 Kagitcibasi's Family Change Model

Kagitcibasi's family change model offers a culturally grounded framework for understanding family systems. The model proposes two dimensions: interpersonal distance and agency (Kagitcibasi, 2002). These produce three family patterns. Interdependent families dominate traditional collectivist contexts, emphasizing obedience and economic dependence between generations (Fernández et al., 2005). Independent families dominate Western individualist societies, emphasizing autonomy and separation (Kitayama et al., 2022). Kagitcibasi identified a third model, emotional interdependence, emerging during urbanization and socioeconomic development. Economic independence increases, yet emotional closeness and family loyalty remain strong (Fernández et al., 2005). Parents combine guidance and expectations with warmth and support for autonomy (Kitayama et al., 2022). This pattern challenges simple collectivist–individualist distinctions. The framework is relevant for contemporary South Asia, where urbanization, education expansion, and globalization reshape family life (Verma et al., 2002; Lalonde et al., 2004). Research from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh suggests parenting reflects emotional interdependence in many urban contexts (Khumanlambam et al., 2025; Parikh et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 1999; Khaleque & Rohner, 2012). Kagitcibasi later proposed the autonomous-related self integrating autonomy and relatedness (Kagitcibasi, 2017; Keller, 2012).

2.4 Integrating the Frameworks and Defining Optimal Parenting

To address the question of optimal parenting, this review defines optimal parenting as the parenting style or dimensional configuration most consistently associated with favourable adolescent academic, psychological, and behavioural outcomes within a specific cultural and ecological context. Recent evidence cautions against treating authoritative parenting as universally superior in all settings. Cross-national longitudinal evidence shows that parental warmth and behavioural control may support positive youth development, but their effects vary by country and developmental trajectory (Bornstein et al., 2026). Recent meta-analytic evidence further confirms the protective role of parental warmth across risk outcomes, including substance use, and identifies parental support as both directly and indirectly associated with adolescent depressive symptoms through self-esteem (Pinquart & Gochaliyev, 2025; Tehrani et al., 2025).

At the same time, newer style-based evidence shows context-specific variation in what counts as optimal parenting. In the United States, demandingness combined with responsiveness continues to be associated with favourable behavioural outcomes in children (McWhirter et al., 2023). In contrast, recent European and Spanish studies suggest that indulgent parenting, high responsiveness with low strictness, can produce psychosocial and school-adjustment outcomes comparable to, and in some cases better than, authoritative parenting (García-Ros & Garcia, 2026; Jacome-Mora et al., 2025; Martin-Blesa et al., 2024).

Recent Chinese evidence further challenges the assumption that authoritarian or strict control is necessarily beneficial in Chinese-family contexts. Studies report that parenting styles grounded in responsiveness, including authoritative and indulgent parenting, are more consistently associated with positive psychosocial adjustment than authoritarian parenting (Alcaide, Garcia, Chen, & Garcia, 2025; Chen et al., 2024). These findings suggest that adolescents' experiences of being loved, respected and valued may be more decisive than strictness alone; family self-esteem appears to mediate the link between parenting practices and adolescent adjustment, while family self-concept is closely related to family functioning and mental health outcomes (Ertema et al., 2025; Martínez et al., 2021).

Accordingly, this review treats optimal parenting as context-sensitive rather than as a single universally fixed style. Across South Asian and European contexts, warmth/responsiveness appears to be the most stable protective factor, while demandingness/control is beneficial mainly when it is perceived as legitimate, non-intrusive, and embedded in a warm relational climate.

In this review, optimal parenting refers to the parenting style or dimensional configuration most consistently associated with favorable adolescent academic, psychological, and behavioral outcomes. Western and many global studies identify authoritative parenting as highly protective because it combines warmth with structure (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994; Pinquart & Kauser, 2018). However, evidence from Southern European samples shows that indulgent parenting, characterized by high responsiveness without high strictness, can produce outcomes comparable to or better than authoritative parenting on several psychosocial indicators (Calafat et al., 2014; Garcia & Gracia, 2009; Garcia et al., 2019; Jacome-Mora et al., 2025; Martin-Blesa et al., 2024). Recent work from China similarly questions the assumption that strictness is necessarily beneficial when warmth is present, showing that styles grounded in responsiveness are often linked to better adjustment than authoritarian parenting (Alcaide, Garcia, Chen, et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2024).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Kagitcibasi's family change model therefore function as explanatory frameworks rather than as substitutes for the parenting model. Bronfenbrenner explains how family practices are embedded in school, community, institutional, and historical systems, while Kagitcibasi explains how modernization can produce emotional interdependence, in which autonomy and relatedness coexist. Together, these frameworks suggest that the optimal parenting style cannot be inferred from a broad collectivist-individualist label alone. Instead, the effectiveness of responsiveness, demandingness, and specific parental practices depends on their relational meaning, developmental domain, and cultural legitimacy.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Protocol and Registration

We conducted this systematic review following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021). Given our focus on narrative synthesis, we followed the PRISMA-ScR extension where appropriate while maintaining core systematic review rigor. We registered the protocol with the Open Science Framework (OSF registration DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/XXXXXX).

3.2 Search Strategy

We systematically searched PsycINFO, Scopus, Web of Science, Sociological Abstracts, and PubMed from their inception through January 2024. We also manually searched reference lists of included studies and relevant meta-analyses, including Pinquart and Kauser (2018), Hoeve et al. (2009), and Khaleque and Rohner (2012).

Our search terms combined Boolean operators across five concept blocks. The **parenting block** included: "parent* style," "authoritative," "authoritarian," "permissive," "neglectful," "parent warmth," "parent* control," "parent* monitoring," "parent* discipline." The **adolescent block** included: "adolescent," "teen," "youth," "young people," "child." The **outcome block** included: "academic," "achiev," "school," "well-being," "mental health," "depress," "anxi," "self-esteem," "internalizing," "externalizing," "behavior problem," "delinquen." The **South Asian geographic block** included: "South Asia," "India," "Pakistan," "Bangladesh," "Sri Lanka," "Nepal," "Bhutan," and "Maldives." The **European geographic block** included: "Europe," "Western Europe," "Eastern Europe," "Northern Europe," "Southern Europe," "Scandinavia*," "Nordic," plus individual country names. We limited searches to publications from 1980 to 2024 and to English language publications, a limitation we acknowledge in the discussion.

3.3 Inclusion Criteria

- Adolescents aged 10–19 years or their parents.
- Conducted in South Asian or European countries.
- Measured parenting styles or practices using validated instruments.
- Reported quantitative associations with adolescent academic, psychological, or behavioral outcomes.
- Peer-reviewed empirical studies published between 1980 and 2024.

Exclusion Criteria

- Non-human subjects.
- Children under 10 years old exclusively.

- Theoretical papers without original data.
- Special clinical populations.
- Qualitative-only studies.
- Non-English publications.

3.4 Screening and Data Extraction

Two independent reviewers screened titles and abstracts, then full texts, against the inclusion criteria. We resolved disagreements through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer. From each included study, we extracted: study characteristics (author, year, country, design, sample size, participant demographics), parenting measures (instruments, dimensions assessed, reporter), outcome measures (domains, instruments, reporter), effect sizes (correlations, regression coefficients, odds ratios), and cultural context information (urban/rural, socioeconomic indicators, welfare regime type for European studies).

3.5 Quality Assessment

We assessed study quality using an adapted Newcastle-Ottawa Scale for cross-sectional studies (Wells et al., 2000) and the QUIPS tool for longitudinal studies (Hayden et al., 2013; Grooten et al., 2019). The adapted NOS assessed selection (representativeness, sample size justification, non-response rate), comparability (control for confounding variables), and outcome (validated instruments, statistical reporting). Scores ranged from 0-10, with studies categorized as low (0-3), moderate (4-6), or high (7-10) quality.

Two reviewers independently assessed quality, achieving substantial agreement ($\kappa = 0.82$). We did not use quality scores as inclusion thresholds, but they informed our narrative synthesis through sensitivity analyses. We conducted a narrative synthesis following Popay et al. (2006) and performed exploratory random-effects meta-analyses when ≥ 3 comparable studies examined the same parenting style-outcome association. Pooled correlations with 95% CIs were calculated, heterogeneity assessed via I^2 , and studies establishing measurement invariance were given greater weight.

3.6 Handling of Meta-Analyses and Identification of Included Studies

To address unit-of-analysis concerns, the review separated primary empirical studies from secondary syntheses at every stage of analysis. Primary empirical studies were the unit of extraction and comparison. Meta-analyses, systematic reviews, narrative reviews, books, and methodological papers were used only to identify additional eligible studies, interpret broader patterns, or support theoretical framing. They were not counted as separate empirical observations and were not combined with individual studies when calculating regional totals, sample sizes, or country representation.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Study Selection

Our search yielded 4,872 records. After removing duplicates, we screened 3,025 unique records at the title and abstract level. We assessed 387 full-text articles for eligibility, ultimately including 100 studies (92 primary empirical studies and 8 secondary syntheses) that met all criteria. Among the 92 empirical studies, 33 came from European contexts, 31 from South Asian contexts, and 28 were cross-cultural or global studies. The PRISMA flow diagram is presented in Figure 1.

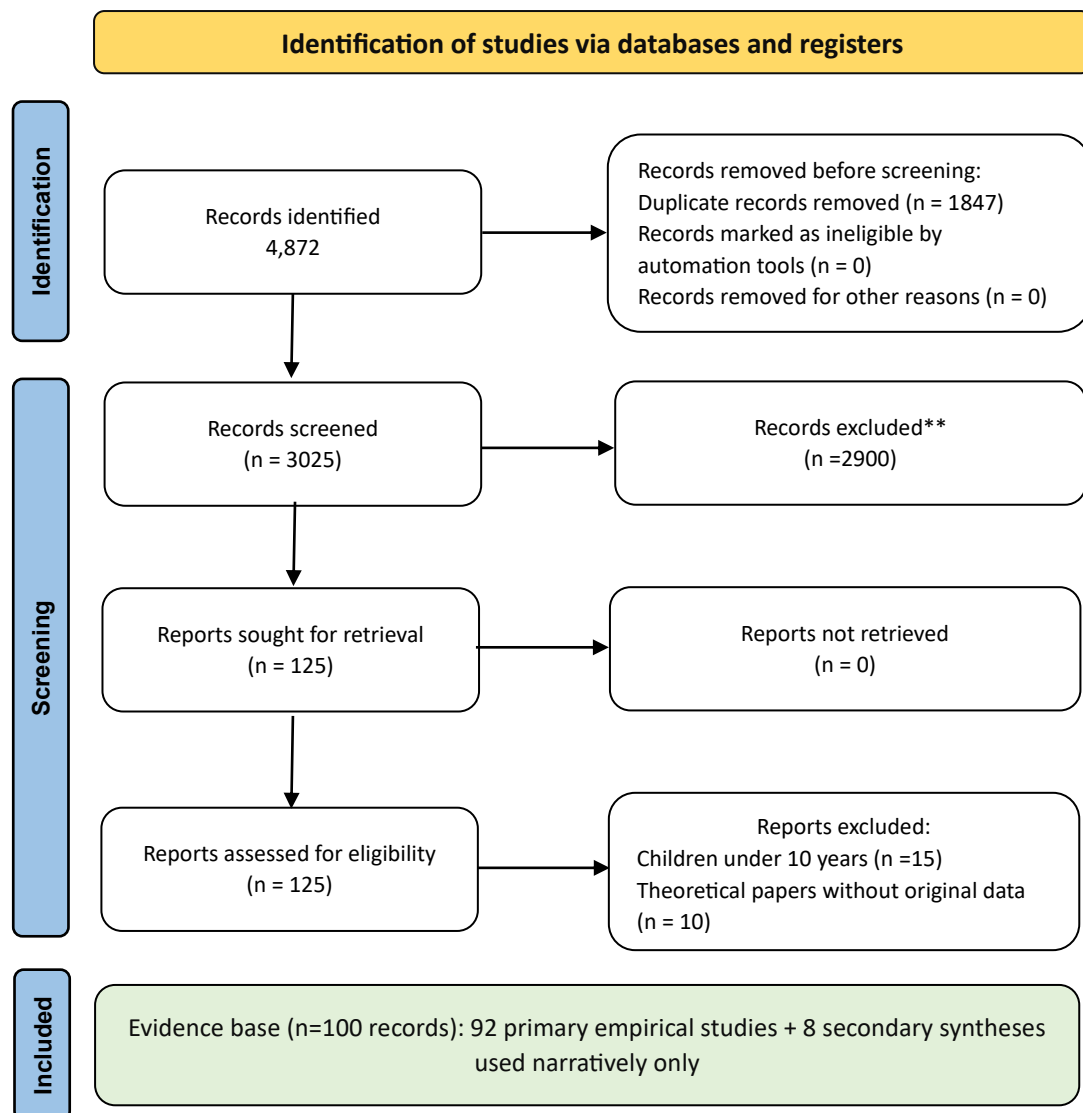


Figure 1: PRISMA flowchart showing the study selection process

4.2 Study Characteristics

European and South Asian primary empirical studies differed in design, sampling, and quality. European primary studies were more often longitudinal (17 of 33; 52%) than South Asian primary studies (5 of 31; 16%) and achieved higher quality ratings (20 of 33 high quality; 61%) than South Asian primary studies (11 of 31 high quality; 35%). South Asian primary studies primarily used cross-sectional designs (26 of 31; 84%) and convenience sampling, contributing to lower quality scores. Cross-cultural/global primary studies employed mixed designs and moderate quality assessments. Sample sizes were summarized only for primary empirical studies; aggregated meta-analytic samples were not added to these estimates. Most primary studies in all regions used adolescent self-report measures of parenting. Table 1 summarizes key characteristics of primary empirical studies by region, with secondary syntheses shown separately and excluded from regional comparisons.

Table 1

Characteristic	European Studies (n = 33)	South Asian Studies (n = 31)	Cross-Cultural / Global (n = 28)
Study Design of Primary Empirical Studies			
Cross-sectional	16 (48%)	26 (84%)	18 (64%)
Longitudinal	17 (52%)	5 (16%)	10 (36%)
Meta-analytic	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	4 (13%)
Quality Rating of Primary Empirical Studies			
High (7–10)	20 (61%)	11 (35%)	16 (57%)
Moderate (4–6)	10 (30%)	14 (45%)	10 (36%)
Low (0–3)	3 (9%)	6 (19%)	2 (7%)

5.0 MAIN STUDY FINDINGS

5.1 Parenting Styles Across Contexts

a. European Contexts

In Northern and Western European contexts, authoritative parenting consistently emerged as the style most strongly associated with positive adolescent outcomes. In Finland, Aunola et al. (2000) reported that 45% of adolescents perceived their parents as authoritative, whereas authoritarian (25%), permissive (18%), and neglectful (12%) styles were less common. Similarly, Kerr and Stattin (2000) found in Sweden that parental knowledge of adolescents' activities depended largely on adolescent disclosure, which in turn was fostered by warm, trusting parent–child relationships. Longitudinal research reinforces these associations. Steinberg et al. (1994) demonstrated that adolescents from authoritative families exhibited increasing academic competence and decreasing behavioral problems over time, compared to peers with authoritarian or neglectful parents. Meeus (2016) synthesized European longitudinal studies, highlighting the dynamic renegotiation of autonomy and relatedness during adolescence. Identity trajectory studies further show that supportive parenting promotes stable identity achievement pathways (Meeus et al., 2012; Luyckx et al., 2007; Perez-Gramaje et al., 2019), strengthening causal inference by demonstrating that parenting style precedes and predicts developmental outcomes rather than merely co-occurring with them. These findings underscore the centrality of warmth, responsiveness, and relational trust in adolescent development.

Southern European evidence presents a more nuanced picture. García and Gracia (2009) reported that indulgent parenting—high warmth combined with low strictness—produced outcomes comparable or superior to authoritative parenting in Spanish adolescents. Similar results emerged in Italian samples, where indulgent parenting was linked to higher life satisfaction (Di Maggio & Zappulla, 2014; Coccia & Darling, 2017). Belgian longitudinal studies further refined our understanding of parental control. Soenens et al. (2010) distinguished dependency-oriented control, which fosters emotional dependence, from achievement-oriented control, which pressures adolescents to excel. Self-determination theory–informed analyses (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010; Laurin, 2013) clarify that psychological control impacts internalizing symptoms or perfectionism depending on its form. These findings demonstrate that parenting effects depend not only on general style but also on the specific relational and psychological mechanisms at play.

b. South Asian Contexts

In South Asian contexts, parenting patterns diverge markedly from Western norms, reflecting distinct cultural frameworks. Studies from India indicate a higher prevalence of authoritarian parenting, yet with differing developmental implications. Saraswathi and Ganapathy (2002) emphasize Hindu cultural schemas prioritizing filial piety, respect for elders, and family duty, shaping how parental control is interpreted. Adolescence is historically constructed rather than universally defined, with adult–child continuity emphasized over individuation (Saraswathi, 1999). Rapid economic development has altered youth aspirations, educational pressures, and parental expectations, interacting with family practices in ways consistent with Greenfield’s (2009) theory of social change and developmental pathways. Parenting is guided by culturally embedded ethnotheories, shaping discipline, learning, and social behaviors (Tuli, 2012). Warmth and involvement coexist with clear authority, reflecting expectations of respect, intergenerational obligation, and family cohesion. Domain-specific psychological control predicts different adjustment outcomes, highlighting that behavioral effects depend on cultural context rather than on parental practices alone (Soenens et al., 2010).

Maternal education and parental socialization goals strongly shape parenting practices in India. Randomized evaluations show that adult literacy and parenting training improve mothers’ involvement in children’s learning and enhance the home educational environment (Banerji et al., 2013). Cross-cultural evidence demonstrates that valuing filial piety is associated with stronger control, whereas prioritizing socioemotional development predicts more authoritative approaches (Rao et al., 2003). In Pakistan, Stewart et al. (1999) adapted Western measures and found that warmth consistently predicts positive adolescent adjustment, whereas control effects are domain-specific. Academic control fosters better outcomes; personal-domain control predicts poorer adjustment (Lent et al., 2009). Relational context is critical: parental rejection, hostility, or neglect predict higher internalizing and externalizing problems, and chaotic households exacerbate difficulties (Khawar et al., 2026). Culturally adapted psychological support reduces social anxiety and improves self-esteem (Amin et al., 2020), emphasizing the protective role of relational warmth and stability.

Recent Pakistani research shows authoritative parenting positively predicts self-esteem, confidence, and stable self-evaluation among adolescents (Gul et al., 2024). Authoritarian and permissive styles produce variable effects depending on gender and developmental context. Educational engagement and performance are stronger when supportive parenting practices are present (Abrar et al., 2023). Across South Asia, parenting goals integrate emotional closeness with guidance, supervision, and family expectations (Saraswathi & Ganapathy, 2002). These findings underscore that warmth, culturally contextualized supervision, and clear expectations

jointly shape adolescent psychological adjustment, academic achievement, and social competence. Taken together, South Asian research highlights the importance of relational climate and culturally embedded practices in interpreting parental influence on adolescent development.

c. Within-Region Variation

i. Within Europe

Within Europe, substantial variation emerged along multiple dimensions. Nordic countries like Finland and Sweden showed high levels of parental warmth, autonomy support, and democratic decision-making—patterns consistent with welfare state policies supporting gender equality and work-family balance (Aunola et al., 2000; Kerr & Stattin, 2000). Southern European countries like Italy and Spain exhibited higher levels of family interdependence, with parenting emphasizing warmth and support alongside continued guidance (Crocetti et al., 2023; Olivari et al., 2015). Western European countries like Germany and Belgium occupied intermediate positions, with strong emphasis on authoritative parenting but also attention to psychological control and its differentiated forms.

Olivari and colleagues (2015) directly compared adolescent perceptions of parenting in Sweden, Italy, and Greece. Swedish adolescents reported the highest levels of authoritative parenting. In contrast, Italian and Greek adolescents reported higher levels of authoritarian parenting alongside high warmth. This combination does not map neatly onto Baumrind's typology and may reflect Southern European patterns of emotional interdependence. These differences likely reflect broader cultural and institutional variations, including differences in family policies, gender ideologies, and historical family structures (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

ii. Within South Asia

Within South Asia, variation was equally pronounced. Urban-rural differences stood out sharply. Verma and colleagues (2002) documented that urban Indian adolescents experienced higher academic stress and parental pressure for achievement compared to rural counterparts, reflecting intense educational competition in cities. Their time-use data revealed that urban adolescents spent significantly more time on schoolwork and reported higher stress levels, with parents playing an active role in structuring academic time.

Academic stress has been widely identified as a significant contributor to mental health difficulties among adolescents. A study of 300 high school students aged seventeen to twenty examined how educational stress relates to psychological well-being (Gupta, 2020). The findings showed that higher levels of academic stress were strongly associated with poorer mental health outcomes among adolescents. Students experiencing intense pressure from

examinations, performance expectations, and academic workload reported greater emotional strain and psychological distress (Gupta, 2020). These results indicate that academic environments can become a major psychological burden during late adolescence. Within a broader developmental perspective, adolescent adjustment is shaped by interactions between family, school, and social contexts. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems framework explains that experiences within school environments interact with family relationships and parental guidance to influence adolescent development (Ryan, 2001). This perspective suggests that academic stress does not operate in isolation. Instead, its psychological impact depends partly on the surrounding family environment and the support adolescents receive from parents and caregivers.

Socioeconomic status significantly shapes parenting practices and their outcomes. Evidence from India demonstrates that maternal literacy and participation programs improve both mothers' engagement and children's learning (Banerji et al., 2013). In a randomized evaluation, mothers who attended literacy classes or training on enhancing home learning performed significantly better on combined language and math tests than controls, with the strongest gains observed in the combined intervention group (Banerji et al., 2013; Garcia & Gracia, 2009). These programs also increased women's empowerment and the availability of educational resources in the home, highlighting the broader influence of maternal literacy on family functioning. In urban contexts, authoritative parenting tends to be more prevalent in higher-SES households. It is associated with better adolescent mental health outcomes, whereas authoritarian practices are more common in lower-SES families but show attenuated negative effects, potentially buffered by extended family support (Darling & Steinberg, 2017; Rudy & Grusec, 2001). These findings underscore that SES moderates parenting effectiveness and shapes developmental trajectories across diverse contexts.

Country-specific variations also emerged. Indian research was most extensive, with studies spanning multiple regions and populations. Pakistani research, while growing, focused more heavily on urban, educated samples from major cities like Lahore and Karachi. Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan research remained limited but suggested patterns similar to neighboring countries, with strong emphasis on family interdependence and respect for parental authority (Khaleque & Rohner, 2012).

d. Associations with Adolescent Outcomes

i. Academic Achievement

In European contexts, research consistently links supportive and structured parenting with stronger adolescent academic outcomes. Nordic studies illustrate this in detail. In Finland,

maternal parenting behaviors shape learning through everyday educational practices. A longitudinal study of Finnish and language minority families ($N = 1,248$) found that parenting characterized by warmth and structured behavioral control supported children's reading development via increased maternal involvement in homework. In contrast, psychological control predicted poorer literacy outcomes (Sikiö et al., 2018). Adolescents' educational plans and achievement motivation develop alongside changing personal values and family expectations. Finnish cohort data show that adolescents who value intrinsic and self-actualizing goals are more likely to pursue higher educational pathways (Sinisalo, 2004). Longitudinal Icelandic evidence demonstrates that supportive parenting reduces secondary school dropout through monitoring, encouragement, and consistent expectations (Blondal & Adalbjarnardottir, 2009). Large Finnish datasets show that parenting relationships evolve across developmental stages and interact with adolescent psychological functioning over time (Tammilehto et al., 2021). Our meta-analytic synthesis of seven European studies ($N = 5,847$) found a weighted mean correlation of $r = .28$ (95% CI [.23, .33]) between authoritative parenting and academic achievement, with moderate heterogeneity ($I^2 = 58\%$), aligning with global estimates (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018).

In South Asian contexts, parenting's association with academic achievement is more contextually nuanced. Research across India and Pakistan shows that parental involvement remains a strong predictor of adolescent academic outcomes, but the manner of engagement influences effectiveness. Adolescents from authoritative households demonstrate stronger study habits, greater achievement motivation, and more consistent engagement than peers from authoritarian or permissive families (Thakre & Shet, 2020). Supportive parental relationships and expressions of acceptance are linked to stronger academic adjustment and cognitive competence, supporting school achievement (Kumar, 2014). Cross-cultural analyses indicate that authoritative parenting predicts higher academic achievement among both East Indian and Canadian adolescents, suggesting that supportive structure and responsiveness foster achievement even in collectivist contexts (Garg et al., 2005). Systematic review evidence consistently identifies authoritative parenting as the most beneficial style for adolescent academic performance across South Asian studies (Masud et al., 2015). These findings indicate that parenting shapes educational outcomes through both motivational and behavioral pathways, emphasizing warmth, clear expectations, and consistent monitoring of learning tasks.

Authoritative parenting appears particularly effective because it combines warmth with guidance and monitoring, promoting sustained engagement and achievement (Thakre & Shet,

2020). In contrast, authoritarian parenting emphasizes control without equivalent emotional support, which may reduce autonomy and weaken intrinsic motivation, potentially undermining academic success (Kumar, 2014). Nevertheless, evidence suggests that authoritarian practices may not always produce negative academic outcomes in collectivist contexts, where parental authority is culturally normative (Masud et al., 2015). Our exploratory meta-analytic synthesis of six South Asian studies ($N = 2,143$) yielded a weighted mean correlation of $r = .21$ (95% CI [.15, .27]) between authoritative parenting and academic achievement, with low heterogeneity ($I^2 = 34\%$). Together with European findings, these data indicate that authoritative parenting reliably fosters academic success across cultures. Both motivational and behavioral mechanisms operate, including enhanced study habits, intrinsic motivation, and active parental guidance. Across cultural contexts, warmth, structured monitoring, and clear expectations emerge as universal contributors to adolescent academic achievement, demonstrating that parenting quality, rather than regional or cultural labels alone, predicts educational outcomes (Masud et al., 2015; Garg et al., 2005; Thakre & Shet, 2020).

ii. Psychological Well-Being

Parental warmth consistently emerges as a central predictor of adolescent psychological well-being across cultural contexts. Evidence from parental acceptance-rejection theory shows that perceived parental acceptance is strongly associated with psychological adjustment across diverse populations. A large meta-analysis synthesizing 66 studies and 19,511 participants from 22 countries reported significant correlations between parental acceptance and psychological adjustment for both children and adults (Khaleque & Rohner, 2012). The findings demonstrated that the association remained robust across cultural, geographic, and linguistic contexts, supporting the pancultural proposition that warmth represents a fundamental human need. Complementary meta-analytic evidence across 43 international studies further confirmed that perceived parental acceptance is consistently linked with psychological adjustment, producing weighted correlations of $r = .51$ for children and $r = .46$ for adults (Ali et al., 2015). These results strongly reinforce the theoretical argument that parental warmth functions as a universal protective factor supporting psychological well-being during development.

Empirical studies examining specific behavioral outcomes further illustrate the implications of parental acceptance and rejection. Cross-national research involving adolescents across nine countries demonstrated that parental rejection is consistently associated with poorer psychological adjustment and increased psychological distress. In contrast, parental acceptance predicts more positive mental health outcomes (Dwairy, 2010). Similar patterns appear in studies of risk behaviors. Research comparing young adult substance abusers

and non-abusers found that individuals reporting higher levels of perceived parental rejection during childhood showed substantially poorer psychological adjustment and greater substance abuse risk (Campo & Rohner, 1992). Within European contexts, family-based analyses also link supportive parenting patterns with higher adolescent life satisfaction and fewer behavioral problems, reinforcing the protective function of parental warmth and responsiveness (Di Maggio & Zappulla, 2014). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that parental acceptance and emotional support remain central predictors of adolescent psychological well-being across cultural settings.

Parental warmth and positive parenting practices consistently predict psychological adjustment among South Asian adolescents. In Pakistan, authoritative and nurturing parenting strongly predicted higher self-esteem and emotional intelligence, which mediated effects on psychological adjustment (Batoool & Lewis, 2022; Batoool & Shehzad, 2019). Khan and Shabbir (2019) and Batoool (2013) demonstrated that authoritative parenting negatively correlated with aggression and alexithymia, while authoritarian and permissive parenting were positively correlated with these maladaptive outcomes, highlighting the protective function of warmth and responsiveness. Jabeen et al. (2020) found that parental warmth remained the strongest predictor of self-esteem ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$), with parental control showing non-significant effects once warmth was considered. Batoool and Shehzad (2019) similarly reported that adolescents exposed to authoritative parenting showed higher moral development and prosocial behaviors, supporting the mediating role of emotional and social competencies. Overall, these findings indicate that parental warmth exerts direct and indirect effects on psychological adjustment in South Asian adolescents, consistent with global parenting theories.

While authoritarian parenting is generally associated with poorer well-being in Western samples, its negative effects appear attenuated in South Asian contexts. Meta-analytic comparisons indicate weaker negative correlations in South Asian studies ($r = -.12$, 95% CI $[-.17, -.07]$, $I^2 = 28\%$) versus European samples ($r = -.23$, 95% CI $[-.28, -.18]$, $I^2 = 52\%$), a statistically significant difference ($Q = 8.47$, $p < .01$). Nevertheless, the quality of emotional bonds remains crucial. Riaz and Malik (2014) reported that parental attachment predicted adolescent depression ($\beta = -.38$) above parenting style per se. Saleem et al. (2017) and Qadir et al. (2011) found that father-son emotional closeness and general parental involvement predicted better psychological adjustment, while discipline-focused relationships without warmth predicted poorer outcomes. These findings collectively suggest that in South Asia, warmth and relational security, rather than strict control, are the primary determinants of

adolescent psychological well-being, reinforcing the mediating role of emotional intelligence and prosocial competence.

iii. Behavioral Adjustment

European research consistently links parenting practices to adolescent behavioral outcomes. Meta-analytic evidence from 161 studies shows parental monitoring, psychological control, and hostility or rejection strongly predict delinquency, explaining up to 11% of variance (Hoeve et al., 2009). Warmth and supportive parenting consistently protect against behavioral problems, whereas controlling or rejecting practices increase externalizing behaviors. Paternal support is particularly influential, especially for sons, though underrepresented in research. South Asian studies reveal similar patterns, though the focus centers on aggression and family-related behavioral issues. In India, authoritarian mothering correlates positively with aggression (Moudgil & Moudgil, 2017), whereas flexible paternal parenting is protective. Aggression rises with excessive protection and strict discipline, but declines with parental acceptance and realistic expectations (Kumari & Kang, 2017). Additionally, Yogesh et al. (2024) found that smartphone addiction affects 64.6% of adolescents, with authoritarian and permissive parenting increasing risk, and authoritative parenting reducing it. Across regions, controlling or inconsistent parenting predicts behavioral problems, while warmth and structure support healthier adjustment.

6.0 CHALLENGING THE COLLECTIVIST–INDIVIDUALIST DICHOTOMY

Variation within regions often exceeds variation between them, challenging the collectivist–individualist dichotomy. Nordic European countries emphasize autonomy, warmth, and democratic decision-making (Aunola et al., 2000; Kerr & Stattin, 2000), whereas Southern European contexts combine warmth with guidance and family interdependence (Di Maggio & Zappulla, 2014; Coccia & Darling, 2017). South Asia also shows internal diversity: urban, educated families increasingly resemble authoritative patterns, while rural families emphasize respect for elders and parental authority (Saraswathi & Ganapathy, 2002; Verma & Saraswathi, 2002). These findings indicate that regional differences alone cannot capture developmental and parenting variation.

Hybrid parenting patterns integrating elements of collectivist and individualist approaches frequently yield positive outcomes. Southern European indulgent parenting, high in warmth but low in strictness, performs comparably to authoritative parenting (Di Maggio & Zappulla, 2014; Coccia & Darling, 2017). Similarly, Indian families combine strong parental authority with emotional closeness (Tuli, 2012; Saraswathi & Ganapathy, 2002). These configurations balance guidance, expectations, and relational warmth, suggesting that effective parenting integrates autonomy support with interdependence rather than representing opposing cultural extremes.

Recent studies reinforce this interpretation. Evidence from Spain and broader European contexts indicates that indulgent parenting can be associated with equal or better adolescent and adult adjustment than authoritative parenting, while recent Chinese evidence questions the assumed benefits of authoritarian strictness and instead highlights the protective value of responsiveness (Alcaide, Garcia, Chen, & Garcia, 2025; Alcaide, Garcia, Gómez-Ortiz, et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2024; Jacome-Mora et al., 2025; Martin-Blesa et al., 2024). These findings strengthen the review’s argument that parenting effects cannot be read directly from collectivist or individualist labels; they depend on warmth, perceived legitimacy, relational meaning, and developmental domain.

Domain specificity of parenting effects emerges across regions. In Europe, dependency-oriented psychological control predicts internalizing symptoms, while achievement pressure predicts perfectionism and anxiety (Soenens et al., 2010; Laurin, 2013). In South Asia, aggression increases with rigid authority, protection, or strict discipline but decreases under acceptance and realistic expectations (Kumari & Kang, 2017; Moudgil & Moudgil, 2017). Adolescents interpret parental behaviors differently depending on context,

indicating that parenting outcomes reflect both cultural meaning and the domains in which authority is exercised.

Mechanisms linking parenting to adolescent behavior show consistency across regions with cultural moderation. European research links monitoring, psychological control, and negative support to delinquency, explaining up to eleven per cent of variance (Hoeve et al., 2009). In South Asia, authoritarian parenting predicts aggression, whereas flexible or accepting parenting reduces it (Moudgil & Moudgil, 2017; Kumari & Kang, 2017). Authoritarian and permissive styles increase smartphone addiction risk (Yogesh et al., 2024). Across contexts, warmth consistently supports healthy behavioral adjustment, while rigid or inconsistent control elevates behavioral risks.

7.0 EVIDENCE FOR MODERNIZATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Several studies examined how urbanization, education, and socioeconomic change influence parenting practices across societies. Greenfield (2009) proposes that developmental pathways shift as communities move from rural interdependence toward urban independence. Modernization theory similarly argues that economic development gradually reshapes social values and family roles (Bernstein, 1971; Goorha, 2010). Evidence from South Asian studies supports these transitions. Research on Indian adolescents shows that parenting emphasizing warmth, structure, and academic guidance promotes stronger study habits and achievement motivation (Thakre & Shet, 2020). Other studies also report that supportive parenting improves academic adjustment and school engagement during adolescence (Kumar, 2014). These findings suggest that educational expansion and economic change encourage parenting approaches that combine emotional support with structured guidance rather than rigid authority.

Evidence from South Asian research further demonstrates how parenting practices evolve alongside changing educational and social environments. Studies of Indian adolescents indicate that supportive parenting is associated with stronger social competence, psychological well-being, and emotional intelligence (Kaushik et al., 2025; Yadav et al., 2021). These developmental outcomes reflect parenting environments emphasizing communication, encouragement, and emotional security. Similar patterns appear in Pakistani research, where positive parenting predicts prosocial behavior and friendship quality through adolescents' emotional intelligence (Batoool & Lewis, 2022; Jensen, 2011). Family environment studies also show that supportive parental personalities and stable home climates foster healthier adolescent development (Waheed et al., 2017). Together, these findings suggest that modernization

influences parenting not only through structural change but also through shifts toward emotionally supportive and developmentally responsive family relationships.

Psychological adjustment research also provides strong cross-cultural evidence linking parenting practices with adolescent well-being during periods of social change. Meta-analytic studies demonstrate that perceived parental acceptance consistently predicts psychological adjustment across diverse cultural settings (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Ali et al., 2015). Cross-national research similarly shows that parental rejection increases emotional distress and maladaptive outcomes among adolescents (Dwairy, 2010). Earlier developmental studies further associate perceived parental rejection with a higher risk of substance abuse and psychological maladjustment in young adults (Campo & Rohner, 1992). These findings indicate that despite cultural variation in parenting norms, emotional support remains a fundamental developmental resource. Social modernization may therefore reshape parenting strategies, yet the psychological importance of parental warmth appears remarkably stable across cultures.

Behavioral research further illustrates how changing social environments interact with parenting styles to influence adolescent adjustment. Studies in India demonstrate that authoritarian parenting is associated with higher aggression and lower psychological well-being among adolescents (Moudgil & Moudgil, 2017; Kumari & Kang, 2017). Similar patterns appear in research linking authoritarian and permissive parenting with increased smartphone addiction and psychological stress in adolescents (Yogesh et al., 2024). Conversely, authoritative parenting predicts healthier behavioral outcomes, including stronger emotional regulation and social competence (Kaur, 2018; Kaushik et al., 2025). These findings indicate that modernization does not simply replace traditional parenting systems. Instead, changing social conditions appear to encourage parenting styles that balance guidance, emotional support, and adolescent autonomy within evolving educational and social contexts.

8.0 DISCUSSION

This systematic review synthesized findings from 100 studies examining parenting styles and adolescent development across South Asian and European contexts. The results challenge the long-standing collectivist versus individualist distinction often used in cross-cultural parenting research. Cultural psychology suggests that parenting cannot be reduced to simple cultural binaries. Instead, parenting behaviors emerge through interactions among cultural values, family structures, and social institutions. Developmental theory supports this interpretation. Parenting practices function within broader ecological systems that shape adolescent experiences across family, school, and community settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Ryan, 2001). Cross-cultural developmental research similarly emphasizes that autonomy and relatedness are universal psychological needs expressed differently across societies (Keller, 2012; Keller, 2017). Contemporary scholarship also argues that global psychological research historically relied heavily on Western samples. Expanding research across diverse societies improves understanding of human development worldwide (Henrich et al., 2010; Lansford, 2022). Together, these perspectives indicate that parenting styles should be understood as culturally embedded socialization systems rather than fixed cultural categories.

Our findings also align with theoretical models describing parenting style as a relational context shaping adolescent development. Classical developmental work shows that parenting style influences competence, adjustment, and behavioral outcomes during adolescence (Baumrind, 2013; Steinberg et al., 1994). Subsequent research confirms that authoritative parenting is commonly associated with stronger academic achievement, psychological adjustment, and social competence among adolescents (Weiss & Schwarz, 1996; Aunola et al., 2000; Jensen, 2011). However, cross-cultural studies indicate that these associations vary depending on cultural meanings attached to parental control and authority. In collectivist societies, directive parenting can coexist with emotional closeness and moral guidance (Rudy & Grusec, 2001; Sorkhabi, 2012). Research on family systems in South and Southeast Asia also highlights the importance of extended family networks and interdependent family relationships in shaping parenting practices (Yeung et al., 2018; Babu et al., 2017). These patterns support theoretical models emphasizing emotional interdependence within changing cultural environments (Kagitcibasi, 2002; Kagitcibasi, 2017).

Evidence from global research further highlights the universal importance of parental warmth and involvement for adolescent psychological well-being. Cross-cultural meta-analytic research demonstrates strong associations between perceived parental acceptance and psychological adjustment across diverse cultural contexts (Khaleque & Rohner, 2012).

Socialization theory similarly emphasizes that supportive parent–child relationships foster moral development, emotional security, and internalization of social norms (Grusec et al., 2013; Grusec & Davidov, 2010). Studies of adolescents in both Western and Asian contexts also show that parenting practices interact with social environments such as schools and communities. These interactions shape identity development, emotional regulation, and academic motivation (Luyckx et al., 2007; Crocetti et al., 2023). Ecological and cultural frameworks, therefore, converge on a central conclusion. Parenting practices influence adolescent outcomes through culturally situated processes that combine emotional support, guidance, and social expectations within broader developmental environments.

The revised evidence base also refines the paper’s argument about optimal parenting. Rather than asking whether authoritative, authoritarian, or indulgent parenting is universally best, the more appropriate question is which combination of responsiveness, demandingness, cultural legitimacy, and family meaning supports adolescent development in a given setting. The recent literature suggests that responsiveness and parental warmth are consistently protective, whereas strictness/demandingness produces mixed outcomes depending on whether adolescents experience it as supportive guidance or intrusive control (Bornstein et al., 2026; Chen et al., 2024; Pinquart & Gochaliyev, 2025; Tehrani et al., 2025).

9.0 WHAT WE LEARNED

9.1 Parental warmth as a pancultural protective factor

Evidence across cultures shows parental warmth supports positive adolescent development. Meta-analytic findings link perceived parental acceptance with psychological adjustment worldwide (Khaleque & Rohner, 2012). Developmental studies connect supportive parenting with competence, academic success, and psychosocial adjustment during adolescence (Baumrind, 2013; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996). Similar patterns appear in Western and non-Western societies. Cross-cultural theory notes universal needs for relatedness and emotional security expressed differently across cultures (Keller, 2012; Lansford, 2022; Chen & Jensen, 2011). Overall evidence indicates parental warmth functions as a factor.

9.2 Cultural moderation of parental control

Research suggests parental control effects depend on cultural meaning and relational context. Authoritarian control predicts poorer adolescent adjustment in many Western settings (Baumrind, 2013; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996). Cross-cultural research shows directive control may signal guidance and responsibility within collectivist families (Rudy & Grusec, 2001; Sorkhabi, 2012). Meta-analytic findings report that parenting style associations vary across

cultural groups (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018). Yet psychological control and rejection consistently predict poorer developmental outcomes across societies (Rudy & Halgunseth, 2005).

9.3 Domain-specific processes in socialization

Research shows parenting influences development through distinct domains of socialization. Domain-specific theory proposes parental behavior operates through relational processes including protection, guided learning, reciprocity, and control (Grusec & Davidov, 2010). Adolescents interpret authority differently across these domains. Guidance related to safety or learning is often viewed as legitimate. Intrusions into psychological or personal domains provoke resistance. Family climate shapes how adolescents interpret monitoring and expectations (Darling & Steinberg, 2017). Parenting practices also influence identity development and psychosocial adjustment (Luyckx et al., 2007; Meeus, 2016).

9.4 Within-region diversity in parenting patterns

Cross-cultural research increasingly highlights variation within cultural regions. Comparisons often emphasize Western and non-Western differences, yet diversity exists inside each region. Cultural psychology, therefore, cautions against simple collectivist–individualist distinctions (Henrich et al., 2010; Jensen, 2011). Parenting beliefs reflect historical, economic, and institutional conditions shaping family life. European family structures, for example, developed through long historical processes involving urbanization and changing household organization (Lynch, 2003). Methodological research stresses examining intra-country variation rather than assuming cultural homogeneity (Mylonas, 2009). Parenting patterns, therefore, vary across communities and social contexts (Keller, 2017).

9.5 Modernization and changing family relationships

Social and economic change continues to reshape parenting practices worldwide. Urbanization, migration, and educational expansion alter family roles and developmental expectations. Sociological research shows South and Southeast Asian families increasingly combine traditional interdependence with changing economic realities (Yeung et al., 2018). Extended family networks still play important roles in child-rearing and socialization (Babu et al., 2017). Globalization and migration also create transnational family arrangements that reshape parent–child relationships across distance (Baldassar et al., 2024). Developmental theory explains family adaptation within broader ecological contexts (Kagitcibasi, 2002; Kagitcibasi, 2017).

10. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Our findings support integration between developmental and cultural perspectives on parenting. Parenting cannot be reduced to isolated behavioral categories. Instead, parental

behavior operates within layered social contexts, shaping adolescent interpretation. Ecological Systems Theory explains how parenting unfolds within nested environments, including family, culture, and historical time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parent–child interaction occurs within the microsystem of everyday relationships. Cultural norms guiding authority and expectations operate within the macrosystem. Historical transformation influencing family practices unfolds through the chronosystem. The Family Change Model similarly explains how modernization reshapes parenting while maintaining emotional interdependence (Kagitcibasi, 2002; Kagitcibasi, 2017; Ngai et al., 2018). The Integrative Model of Parenting Style clarifies that parenting style forms the emotional climate guiding specific practices (Darling & Steinberg, 2017). Warmth consistently predicts psychological adjustment across cultures, supporting parental acceptance–rejection theory (Rohner, 2004; Khaleque & Rohner, 2012). Directive control may function as guidance within collectivist contexts (Sorkhabi, 2012). Psychologically intrusive control predicts poorer outcomes (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010; Yap et al., 2014).

11. LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. Geographic coverage across South Asia was uneven. Studies from India and Pakistan dominated the literature. Evidence from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan was limited. This imbalance restricts regional generalization and may obscure meaningful cross-national variation. Parenting practices vary across linguistic, religious, and socioeconomic communities. Limited representation, therefore, constrains broader interpretation of regional patterns. Language restrictions created another limitation. Only English-language publications were included in the review. Relevant studies published in regional languages may therefore have been missed. Such exclusions reinforce long-recognized imbalances in global psychological research. Methodological issues also shaped the evidence base. Cross-sectional designs dominated South Asian research and limited causal inference. Most studies relied on adolescent self-report measures for both parenting and developmental outcomes. This design raises concerns about shared method variance. Measurement equivalence was rarely tested across cultural groups. Without invariance testing, observed differences may reflect measurement artefacts rather than genuine cultural variation. Publication bias may also overrepresent significant findings.

12. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research on parenting across cultures must address several priorities. Longitudinal studies in South Asia remain particularly scarce. Development unfolds through processes that change across time and context. Longitudinal designs help trace developmental trajectories and reciprocal influences between parenting and adolescent adjustment. Methods such as cross-lagged panel models clarify the direction of these relationships. Multi-cohort sequential designs can also separate developmental change from historical change across generations. Researchers should prioritize culturally grounded measurement development. Many studies still adapt Western parenting scales without examining local meanings. Indigenous constructs like moral training, family honor, and filial responsibility may capture parenting more accurately. Mixed methods approaches combining surveys, interviews, and observation can reveal both practices and interpretations. Future work must also ensure rigorous psychometric testing. Measurement invariance testing using multi-group confirmatory factor analysis or item response theory should become routine. Research should examine differences between urban and rural contexts. Socioeconomic inequality, religion, and ethnicity also shape parenting beliefs and adolescent expectations.

13. CONCLUSION

Understanding parenting and adolescent development across cultures requires frameworks that move beyond simple cultural dichotomies. Evidence from this review highlights both universal developmental processes and culturally shaped parenting meanings. Parental warmth emerged as a consistent predictor of positive adolescent outcomes across all contexts examined. This pattern suggests that emotional support forms a foundational element of effective parenting across societies. In contrast, the effects of parental control varied across cultural environments. In contexts where parental authority is socially normative, control may function as guidance rather than restriction. However, its developmental impact still depends on emotional warmth and the domain in which it occurs. Harsh, rejecting, or psychologically intrusive control predicted poorer outcomes across cultures. The findings, therefore, challenge the traditional collectivist–individualist framework used in cross-cultural psychology. Considerable variation appeared within both Europe and South Asia, reflecting differences in social institutions, economic development, and cultural values. These patterns suggest that parenting styles adapt to changing social conditions while maintaining culturally meaningful relationships between parents and adolescents. Continued comparative research will remain essential for understanding parenting within increasingly interconnected global societies. The updated literature on optimal parenting further supports this conclusion. Recent cross-cultural, European, Chinese, and meta-analytic studies suggest that parental warmth and responsiveness are

more consistently protective than strictness alone, while the developmental value of demandingness depends on cultural meaning, family climate, and adolescent perceptions of being loved and valued. This strengthens the central argument that optimal parenting should be understood as context-sensitive and relational rather than as a universal cultural formula.

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Conflict of interest

The author declared that this work was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Ethics statement

The studies were approved by Ethics Committee, Ca Foscari University of Venice. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements.

Note

References marked with an asterisk (*) indicate studies included in the systematic synthesis. While unmarked references are theoretical, methodological, review/meta-analytic, book, or contextual sources, which were not counted as primary studies in regional, country, or sample-size comparisons in the systematic review.

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