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The Impact Of Parenting Styles On Social Emotional Growth In Early Years

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ABSTRAK:

Background/purpose.
This study investigates how different parenting styles influence the social emotional development of early childhood. The research was prompted by concerns over the prevalence of negative or inappropriate parenting approaches that may hinder emotional growth and social competence among young children. The main purpose is to explore the types of parenting practiced by parents and their direct correlation with children's emotional regulation, empathy, and social behavior.

Materials/methods.
This qualitative study utilized a case study and survey approach. Data were collected through observation, structured questionnaires, and in-depth interviews with 10 parents of children aged 4–6 years in South Cikarang, West Java, Indonesia. The analysis involved descriptive statistics, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and qualitative coding.

Results.
Findings revealed that the authoritative parenting style is most prevalent and is positively associated with healthy social emotional growth. Children raised under this style demonstrated greater empathy, communication skills, and emotional regulation. In contrast, authoritarian and permissive parenting were linked with emotional withdrawal or poor self-regulation.

Conclusion.
Parenting style significantly shapes the emotional and social capacities of young children. A balanced approach with clear structure and emotional warmth fosters optimal development. Increased parenting education is needed to encourage more supportive practices.

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1. Introduction

Early childhood represents a crucial phase in the formation of a child's social and emotional identity. During this period, interactions between children and their primary caregivers—most notably parents—play a significant role in shaping emotional regulation, empathy, and the ability to build social relationships. However, in many communities, including in Indonesia, awareness and understanding of appropriate parenting practices are still limited. This gap often results in suboptimal social-emotional development among young children. Parenting style refers to the emotional climate in which parents raise their children. According to Baumrind (1966), parenting styles can be categorized into three primary types: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Each style exhibits distinct characteristics in terms of warmth, discipline, responsiveness, and communication, all of which influence child behavior and emotional growth. Authoritative parenting, which combines warmth and firm limits, is often associated with positive developmental

outcomes, while authoritarian and permissive styles tend to be linked with emotional dysregulation or social withdrawal.

The significance of this study lies in its focus on how parenting styles specifically influence the social-emotional development of children aged 4–6 years in Cikarang Selatan, West Java. By identifying dominant parenting practices and their emotional implications for children, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights for early childhood educators, psychologists, and parents. The principal conclusion of this study suggests that authoritative parenting style most strongly supports the development of empathy, emotional regulation, and social competence in early childhood. These findings underscore the need for increased parental education and community-based support programs to promote emotionally responsive caregiving practices.

2. Methodology

This study used a qualitative research design combining case study and survey methods to obtain a deep understanding of parental practices and their impacts. The design was chosen to explore complex behavioral and emotional dynamics that are often best captured through detailed, context-rich data. The sample consisted of 10 parents residing in Cikarang Selatan, Bekasi, West Java, each with children aged 4-6 years. Participants were selected purposively based on their willingness to participate and relevance to the study's objective. Three primary methods were used: (1) structured observation of children's behavior in home or educational settings using a checklist of social emotional indicators (e.g., empathy, emotion labeling, sharing, self-regulation); (2) a parenting style questionnaire consisting of 20 Likert-scale items adapted from Baumrind's typology, covering dimensions such as warmth, control, and responsiveness; and (3) semi-structured interviews to gather deeper insights into parenting behavior and perceptions, guided by an interview protocol with open-ended questions on parenting practices, emotional coaching, discipline methods, and parent-child communication.

The questionnaire was validated through expert judgment and tested in a pilot study involving three parents outside the research sample. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine internal consistency, yielding a reliability score of 0.84. The interview protocol was refined after the pilot to ensure clarity and cultural sensitivity. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to identify relationships between parenting styles and social emotional indicators. IBM SPSS AMOS 25.0 was used for SEM modeling. Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim, coded, and categorized thematically using NVivo software. Themes were identified through inductive analysis based on recurring patterns in parental responses.

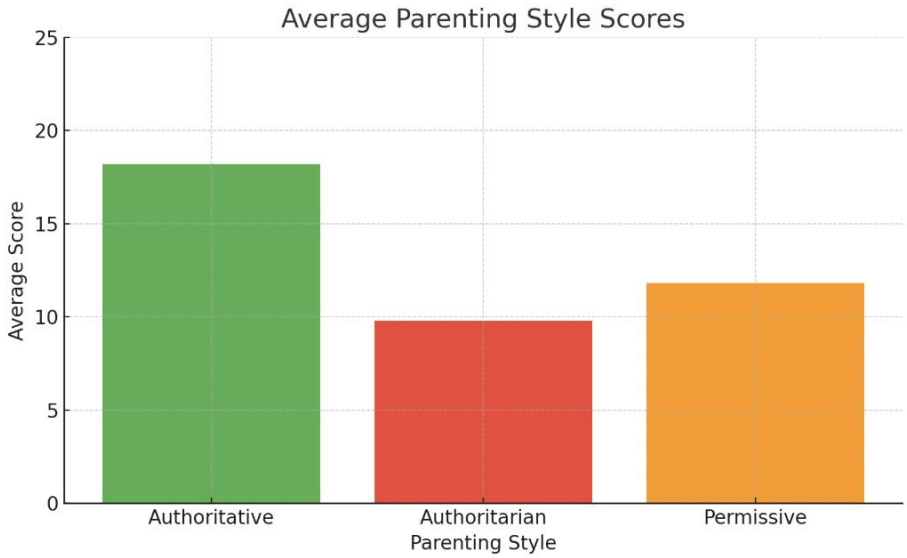
3. Result/Findings

This study involved 10 parents of children aged 4–6 years in South Cikarang, Bekasi Regency. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, focusing on three parenting style categories: authoritative**,** authoritarian**,** and permissive**.**

Table 1. Parenting Style Scores per Respondent

Respondent	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive
R1	18	10	12
R2	19	9	11
R3	17	11	13
R4	20	8	10
R5	18	10	12
R6	19	9	11
R7	16	12	14
R8	18	10	12
R9	17	11	13
R10	20	8	10
	182	98	118

Figure 1. Average Scores of Parenting Styles



Average Scores:

- **Authoritative**: 18.2
- **Authoritarian**: 9.8
- **Permissive**: 11.8

The data indicate that the majority of respondents tended to practice an **authoritative** parenting style, characterized by responsiveness, open communication, and firm boundaries. This is consistent with Baumrind's theory (1991), which suggests that authoritative parenting creates a conducive environment for children's social emotional development by combining healthy control with emotional support. Conversely, the lower average scores in **authoritarian** (9.8) and **permissive** (11.8) parenting reflect less effective outcomes. The authoritarian style, which tends to be rigid and highly directive without open dialogue, has been shown to inhibit social-emotional exploration (Baumrind, 1967). The permissive style, while emotionally indulgent, often lacks sufficient structure to foster self-regulation and empathy (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

In-depth interviews confirmed the quantitative findings. Most parents who applied authoritative parenting reported that their children could express emotions openly, demonstrated sharing behavior during play, showed empathy toward others, and managed emotions well when disappointed. In contrast, children of parents with authoritarian or permissive styles were more likely to struggle with healthy emotional expression, display high dependency on adults, and have difficulty resolving peer conflicts.

Figure 1 shows the cover of the Journal.

4. Discussion

The results of this study support the hypothesis that parenting style plays a crucial role in shaping the social emotional development of children aged 4–6 years. Specifically, the dominance of the **authoritative parenting style** among respondents and its strong correlation with positive emotional outcomes aligns with prior theoretical and empirical studies. According to Baumrind (1967), authoritative parenting—characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and clear expectations—creates an environment where children feel emotionally secure, respected, and supported. This balance fosters the development of self-regulation, empathy, and pro-social behavior. The current findings affirm these assertions: children of authoritative parents in the study exhibited traits such as emotional openness, self-control, and healthy peer interactions.

In contrast, children raised by **authoritarian** parents—those who emphasize obedience, discipline, and low emotional warmth—were more likely to demonstrate emotional withdrawal, limited expression, and anxiety in social settings. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Maccoby and Martin (1983), who noted that authoritarian parenting, though effective for short-term compliance, often undermines long-term emotional competence and autonomy. Similarly, **permissive parenting**, which prioritizes affection but lacks consistent structure and discipline, was associated with children showing impulsivity, difficulty following rules, and a lower capacity for emotional regulation. Previous studies (Darling & Steinberg, 1993) have linked permissive parenting to delayed development in emotional and behavioral control due to the lack of boundaries and consistent guidance.

The study's findings also reflect the cultural context of South Cikarang, where increasing awareness of positive parenting is observable but still unevenly distributed. While most parents displayed elements of authoritative practices, there remains a need for community-based parental education to reinforce the importance of balanced, supportive parenting strategies. Moreover, the use of a **mixed-method approach** (questionnaires and interviews) allowed a deeper understanding of how parenting practices manifest in everyday interactions. Interview data provided rich insights into how authoritative parents encourage open dialogue and emotional expression, which reinforces children's abilities to manage interpersonal relationships—a key component of social emotional development. In a broader context, this study contributes to the growing body of literature emphasizing the importance of early childhood environments. It confirms that family dynamics, particularly parenting style, are critical to fostering emotional intelligence and resilience in young children. These attributes are essential not only for personal well-being but also for academic readiness and future social competence.

5. Conclusion

This study confirms that parenting style has a significant and measurable impact on the social emotional development of children aged 4 to 6 years. Among the three major parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—the **authoritative style** was found to be the most effective in supporting children's emotional regulation, empathy, and social competence. parents who combined warmth with structured guidance created a nurturing environment that promoted healthy emotional expression and interpersonal skills in their children. In contrast, authoritarian parenting, which lacked emotional responsiveness, was associated with emotional suppression and social withdrawal. Meanwhile, permissive parenting, despite its emotional warmth, was linked to difficulties in self-control and rule-following due to a lack of behavioral boundaries.

These findings reinforce existing developmental theories (Baumrind, 1967; Maccoby & Martin, 1983) and highlight the practical importance of educating parents on balanced, responsive, and structured parenting techniques. Promoting **positive parenting programs** and awareness, especially in local communities like South Cikarang, may contribute to improved developmental outcomes for young children. Overall, the study emphasizes that fostering children's social emotional growth begins at home through intentional, supportive, and consistent parenting practices.

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