An Effect of Parenting Style on Social Maturity among Secondary School Students

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Abstract: Parenting styles are pivotal in shaping adolescents' social maturity, which encompasses interpersonal skills, responsibility, and social adaptability. This study examined the relationship between parenting style dimensions and social maturity among 300 secondary school students from Meerut and Ghaziabad. Using standardized Parenting Style and Social Maturity scales, results revealed moderate parental tendencies across dimensions and above-average social maturity in students. Pearson correlation analysis indicated generally weak but positive associations between adaptive parenting dimensions—such as realistic expectations, balanced freedom and discipline, and marital adjustment—and students' personal, interpersonal, and social adequacy. Conversely, parental rejection showed weak negative correlations with social maturity. Findings suggest that though parenting styles moderately influence social maturity, the multifaceted nature of adolescent development calls for further research, particularly considering cultural contexts and evolving parenting patterns in India. This study addresses gaps in India-specific research and highlights the nuanced role of parenting in adolescent social development.

Keywords: - Parenting Style, Social Maturity and Secondary School Students

Introduction

Parents are the first teachers and role models for their children, exerting profound influence on behavioral, emotional, and social development. The family serves as the child's earliest social environment, where learning and personality formation begin. Parenting practices not only affect immediate growth and adjustment but also establish enduring patterns of behavior and coping that remain influential across the lifespan (Backer, 1964; Erikson, 1974). A warm, democratic, and supportive home environment is essential for fostering children's hidden potential and social skills (Bharadwaj, 1995). In contrast, families characterized by conflict and aggression often hinder the development of positive communication and social competence.

Parental behavior has been defined as the characteristic pattern of interaction demonstrated toward a child (Bruno, 1986) and as the care and nurturance provided both physically and psychologically (English & English, 1958). Parenting styles, as conceptualized in the developmental literature, represent consistent frameworks of parental attitudes and strategies that establish a child's emotional environment. These styles, which vary across families and cultural contexts, have long-term implications for children's psychosocial adjustment.

Adolescence, particularly the secondary school stage (ages 12–18), is a period of significant social, emotional, and cognitive development. It represents a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, where social maturity becomes crucial. Social maturity refers to the ability to form healthy interpersonal relationships, demonstrate responsibility, resolve conflicts, and adapt to social expectations (Raj, 1996). Since this period

involves the consolidation of identity and preparation for adulthood, the role of parenting in influencing adolescents' social maturity becomes especially critical.

Given these considerations, the present study aims to explore the parenting styles and social maturity levels of secondary school students, as well as the relationship between these constructs.

Review of Literature

Diana Baumrind's typology (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) remains the cornerstone of research on parenting styles; authoritative parenting—characterized by high responsiveness and reasonable demandingness—has repeatedly been linked with positive socio-emotional outcomes in children and adolescents (Baumrind, 1967, 1971). Conceptually, parenting style sets the emotional climate within which specific parenting practices operate, making it a broad contextual construct that influences children's internalization of norms, self-regulation, and social behaviour (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). These classic propositions continue to inform contemporary empirical work.

A growing body of empirical studies links positive (authoritative/ supportive) parenting with better social competence, emotional regulation, and social adjustment in adolescence. Systematic and empirical reviews show consistent associations between supportive parenting and multiple indicators of social functioning (communication skills, problem solving, peer relations), while negative or harsh parenting tends to predict higher risk for behavioural and emotional difficulties (Salavera et al., 2022).

Recent meta-analytic and large-sample studies underscore the robustness of these associations but also point to moderators (e.g., age, gender, cultural context, and measurement differences). For example, a 2023 meta-analysis and cross-study syntheses show that positive parenting styles are negatively associated with problematic adolescent outcomes (including poor social adjustment and problematic internet use), with moderators such as measurement approach and cultural context affecting effect sizes. These syntheses highlight that the parenting–outcome relationship is real but heterogeneous across settings.

Studies conducted in India and nearby South Asian contexts reinforce the general pattern: authoritative/democratic parenting is generally associated with better social adaptability, communication, and maturity, whereas authoritarian or inconsistent parenting links to greater emotional difficulties and lower social skills (Rawat, 2018; Bharadwaj, 1995). However, Indian research also reports important nuances: maternal and paternal styles may have differential influences, urban–rural differences emerge, and cultural values (e.g., emphasis on respect/obedience) sometimes modify how an ostensibly "authoritarian" style affects outcomes (Rawat, 2018; Shitole, 2014).

Contemporary Indian research has started to examine modern parenting phenomena (e.g., helicopter parenting) and to develop culturally sensitive scales (e.g., a 2024 scale for helicopter parenting in India), signaling that parental involvement patterns are evolving amid changing educational pressures and digitalization. Such constructs may predict adolescents' social responsibility or dependence differently from the classic Baumrind categories, and therefore deserve attention in present-day studies of social maturity. Several recent empirical papers (including longitudinal or school-based studies) link parenting not only to global social maturity but also to domain-specific outcomes (peer relations, school social competence, internet use, mental health). These studies demonstrate that authoritative parenting tends to foster social-emotional competence and school adjustment, while negative parenting styles increase vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and maladaptive behaviours (Salavera et al., 2022; Arifin et al., 2024). They also show that gender and age can moderate the size and direction of these associations.

Gaps, inconsistencies, and need for contextualized Indian research. Despite the consistent general pattern linking supportive parenting to positive social outcomes, gaps remain: (1) relatively few large-scale,

representative studies in India focus specifically on *social maturity* as operationalised by scales like Raj's Social Maturity Scale (1996); (2) cultural moderation and parental gender differences are often reported but not fully explained; (3) emerging parenting forms (helicopter, digital monitoring) are under-studied with respect to social maturity; and (4) many studies are cross-sectional, limiting causal inference. Addressing these gaps requires rigorous measurement (validated social maturity scales), attention to parental roles (mother vs. father), and exploration of newer parenting constructs in Indian secondary-school contexts.

Taken together, the literature supports the expectation that parenting styles will be related to adolescents' social maturity—especially in domains such as communication, responsibility, and interpersonal problem solving—while also indicating that cultural specifics and newer parenting behaviors must be considered. The present study addresses the gap in India-focused research on social maturity among secondary school students and examines how classic parenting styles (as well as culturally salient parenting patterns) relate to multi-dimensional social maturity indicators.

Research Gap

Although extensive research has highlighted the influence of parenting styles on children's development, most studies have been conducted in Western contexts, where cultural norms and family structures differ significantly from those in India (Baumrind, 1991; Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Cross-cultural evidence suggests that the same parenting style may yield different developmental outcomes depending on cultural expectations, values, and socialization practices (Chao, 1994). In India, where collectivist traditions and hierarchical family structures are prevalent, the associations between parenting styles and adolescent social outcomes may not fully align with findings from Western populations.

Furthermore, while several Indian studies (e.g., Bharadwaj, 1995; Rawat, 2018; Sharma, 2012) have examined parenting and adolescent adjustment, relatively few have focused specifically on **social maturity** as a multidimensional construct encompassing communication, responsibility, interpersonal relations, and problem-solving skills (Raj, 1996). Existing research tends to emphasize emotional or academic outcomes, leaving social maturity comparatively underexplored. Additionally, many studies are limited by small, localized samples or cross-sectional designs, which constrain the generalizability and depth of understanding.

Finally, emerging parenting patterns in the Indian context, such as overprotective or "helicopter" parenting, have only recently begun to be studied (Sood, 2024). Their impact on adolescents' social maturity remains largely unexplored. Taken together, these gaps underscore the need for a focused investigation of parenting styles and social maturity among Indian secondary school students. By addressing this gap, the present study contributes to a more contextualized understanding of how parental behaviors shape adolescents' social development in contemporary India.

The objectives of this study are threefold. First, it seeks to examine the parenting styles of secondary school students. Second, it aims to assess the level of social maturity among these students. Finally, the study intends to analyze the relationship between parenting styles and social maturity in order to better understand how parental behaviors influence adolescents' social development.

Research Methodology

The selection of the method was guided by the nature of the research problem and the type of data required to address it. For the present investigation, a descriptive research design was employed. This design was considered appropriate for examining existing conditions and relationships among variables without manipulating them.

Population

The population for the study comprised secondary school students enrolled in government and private schools in the cities of Meerut and Ghaziabad. Although research ideally aims at generating findings that may be generalized to larger populations, it is often impracticable to study the entire population. Therefore, a representative sample was identified.

Sampling

A total of 300 students were selected through purposive sampling techniques. The sample consisted of 150 students from government secondary schools and 150 students from private secondary schools located in Meerut and Ghaziabad. The tools were administered to this sample in order to collect data relevant to the objectives of the study.

Tools

Two standardized instruments were utilized for data collection. The first was the Parenting Style Scale developed by R. L. Bharadwaj, which is designed to measure parenting patterns across key dimensions such as rejection versus acceptance and freedom versus discipline. The second instrument was the Social Maturity Scale developed by Nalini Rao, intended to assess various aspects of social maturity among adolescents, including personal adequacy, interpersonal adequacy, and social adequacy.

Data Analysis

Parenting Style of the Students

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation scores of parenting style among male and female students. The mean parenting style score for female students was 742.93 ($N = 150$, $SD = 112.42$), while the mean score for male students was 739.56 ($N = 150$, $SD = 111.00$). The overall mean score for the total sample ($N = 300$) was 740.12 ($SD = 111.00$).

Table 1 Parenting Style of the Students

Groups	N	Mean	SD
Female	150	742.93	112.42
Male	150	739.56	111
Total	300	740.12	111

According to the Parenting Style Scale manual (Bharadwaj, 1995), the sten score of both male and female students was 6. A sten score between 5.6 and 7 is interpreted as reflecting moderate tendencies across parenting dimensions such as rejection versus acceptance, carelessness versus protection, neglect versus indulgence, utopian expectations versus realism, lenient standards versus moralism, freedom versus discipline, faulty role expectations versus realistic role expectations, and marital conflict versus marital adjustment.

The obtained results indicate that the parents of the sampled students demonstrate parenting practices that fall within the moderate range. While the scores are above the lower cut-off, they do not reflect highly effective or positive parenting styles. Instead, they suggest the presence of parenting approaches that are somewhat adequate, though not consistently healthy or optimal. In other words, the data reveal only a slightly favorable parenting style among the population under study.
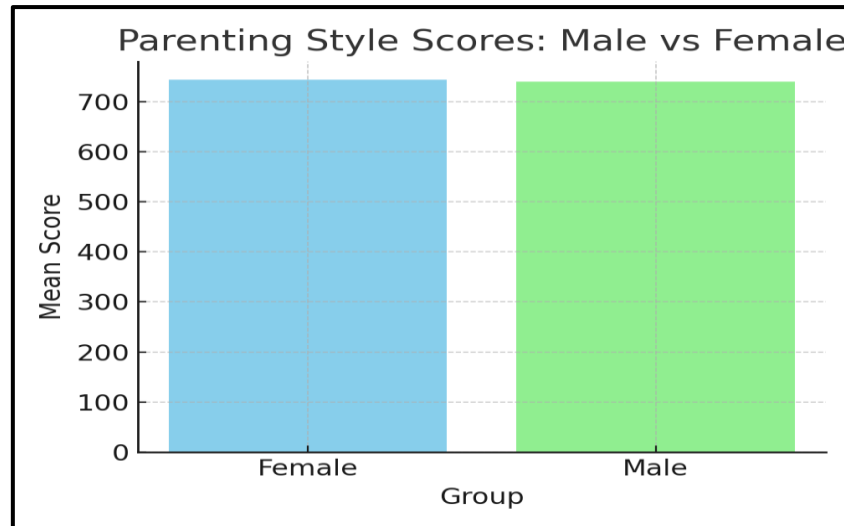
Figure 1
Parenting Style Scores: Male vs Female

A comparison of mean parenting style scores between male and female students is presented in **Figure 1**. The social maturity of male and female students was nearly identical, with mean scores of 258.93 for males and 259.22 for females. The diagram confirms minimal gender differences, showing both groups achieved comparable social maturity levels.

Social Maturity of the Students

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation scores of social maturity among male and female students. The mean social maturity score for female students was 259.22 (N = 150, SD = 8.19), while the mean score for male students was 258.93 (N = 150, SD = 17.18). The overall mean score for the total sample (N = 300) was 259.08 (SD = 13.44).

Table 2: Social Maturity of the Students

Parenting Style	N	Mean	SD
Female	150	259.22	8.19
Male	150	258.93	17.18
Total	300	259.08	13.44

When the raw scores were converted into z-scores, the values obtained for female, male, and total groups were all +1.12. According to the scoring manual (Rao, 1986), a z-score of +1.12 corresponds to Grade C, which is interpreted as an above-average level of social maturity.

The findings suggest that students in the sample, regardless of gender, exhibit above-average social maturity. This indicates that both male and female students possess relatively well-developed social skills, self-direction, and interpersonal adjustment, aligning them with a maturity level that supports constructive social functioning.
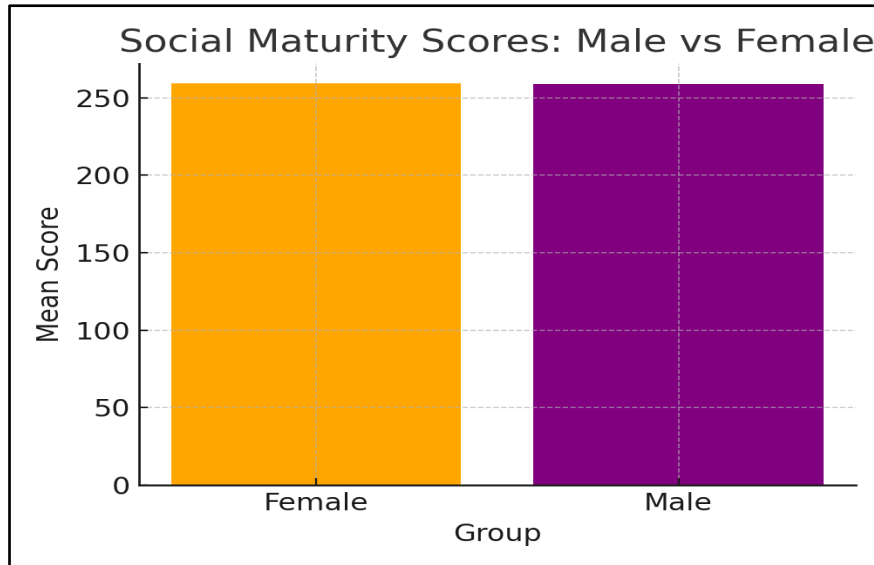
Figure 2
Social Maturity Scores: Male vs Female

Relationship between Parenting Style and Social Maturity

To examine the relationship between parenting style and social maturity was analyzed across dimensions of personal adequacy, interpersonal adequacy, and social adequacy. Table 3 anf figure 3 presents the correlation coefficients (*r*) between the eight dimensions of parenting style and the three domains of social maturity.

To examine the associations between parenting style dimensions and students' social maturity, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed for the eight parenting style dimensions (A–H) and the three social maturity subscales: Personal Adequacy, Interpersonal Adequacy, and Social Adequacy. As depicted in *Figure 3*, the majority of correlations were positive but small in magnitude (23 out of 24 *r* values ranged from .006 to .078), indicating weak positive associations overall between adaptive parenting dimensions and greater social maturity across all subscales. No substantial gender differences were apparent in the aggregated data, though subgroup analyses were not conducted here.

Table 3:

Relationship of Parenting Style Dimensions with Social Maturity of Students (Male & Female)

Parenting Style Dimension	Personal Adequacy	Interpersonal Adequacy	Social Adequacy
A. Rejection vs Acceptance	-0.031	-0.039	-0.034
B. Carelessness vs Protection	0.018	0.006	0.025
C. Neglect vs Indulgence	-0.013	0.034	0.021
D. Utopian Expectation vs Realism	0.067	0.070	0.054
E. Lenient Standard vs Moralism	0.017	0.018	0.031
F. Freedom vs Discipline	0.023	0.055	0.078

G. Faulty Role Expectation vs Realistic Role Expectation	0.062	0.056	0.071
H. Marital Conflict vs Marital Adjustment	0.052	0.052	0.063

The strongest associations emerged for the Freedom vs. Discipline dimension (r = .023 to .078), particularly with Social Adequacy (r =.078), suggesting that greater parental allowance for autonomy, balanced with structure, modestly supports broader societal adaptation. Similarly, realistic expectations in role assignments (Faulty Role Expectation vs. Realistic Role Expectation; r= .056 to .071) and marital adjustment (Marital Conflict vs. Marital Adjustment; r=.052 to .063) showed consistent, albeit weak, positive links across all maturity aspects. In contrast, the Rejection vs. Acceptance dimension yielded the only negative correlations (r = –.031 to –.039), implying that higher parental rejection is weakly associated with diminished maturity in personal, interpersonal, and social domains. All other dimensions (e.g., Carelessness vs. Protection, Neglect vs. Indulgence) exhibited near-zero to small positive correlations, with negligible practical implications.

These findings align with prior research on authoritative parenting styles fostering social competence (Baumrind, 1991), though the small effect sizes underscore the multifaceted influences on adolescent development. Future studies should explore moderators such as cultural context or sample demographics to elucidate these modest relationships.
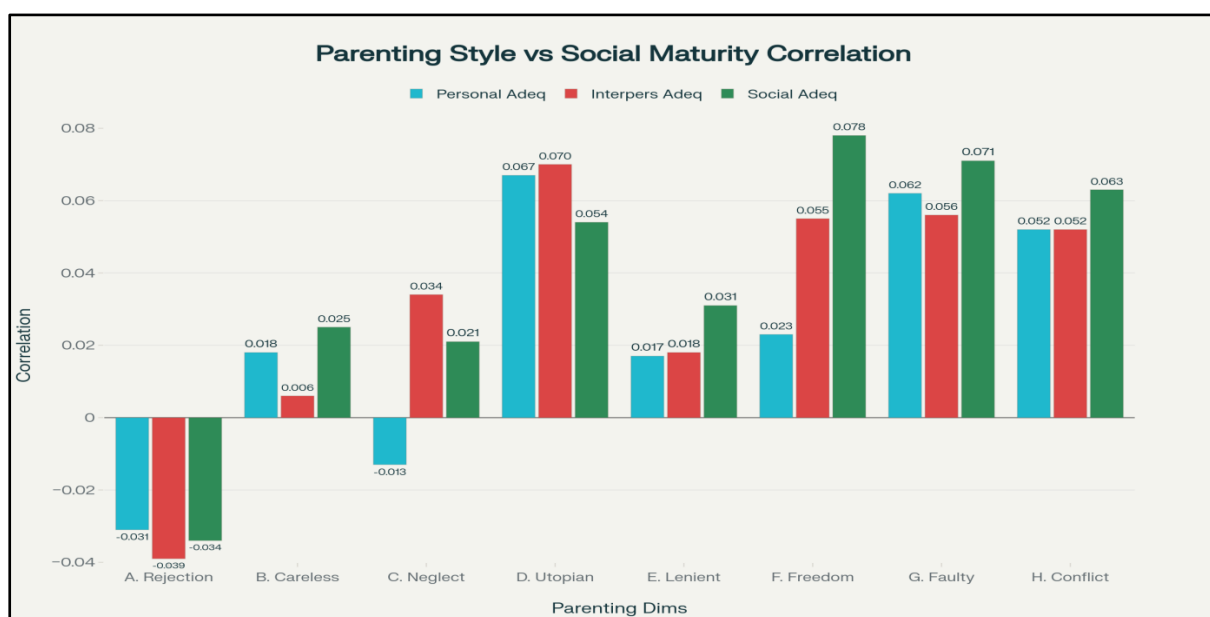

Figure 3

Correlations between Parenting Style Dimensions and Social Maturity Subscales

Results

The study revealed that the parenting styles among parents of secondary school students in Meerut and Ghaziabad generally fell within a moderate range, suggesting parenting approaches that were somewhat adequate but not highly optimal. The students exhibited above-average social maturity, indicating well-developed social skills and interpersonal adjustment across genders. Correlations between parenting style dimensions and social maturity were mostly weak but positive, with stronger associations seen in dimensions such as freedom versus discipline, realistic role expectations, and marital adjustment. Parental rejection was

weakly negatively correlated with social maturity. These findings are consistent with earlier research indicating that balanced parenting fosters social competence (Baumrind, 1991; Rao, 1986).

Conclusion

Overall, the results suggest that moderate parenting styles characterized by a balance of autonomy and realistic expectations are modestly linked to higher social maturity among adolescents. Although the associations are weak, this reflects the complex, multifaceted influences shaping adolescent development, where parenting is one important but not exclusive contributor. The subtle role of parenting practices in social competence development aligns with prior studies demonstrating the importance of supportive yet structured parenting for positive adolescent outcomes (Baumrind, 1991; Bharadwaj, 1995).

Implementation and Recommendations

To enhance adolescent social maturity, it is important for schools and community organizations to develop parenting programs that encourage balanced discipline alongside freedom and realistic parental expectations. Counseling services addressing family dynamics can reduce parental rejection and foster more positive parent-child relationships. Training teachers to recognize the effects of parenting styles would enable better student support for social and interpersonal development. Further research is needed in diverse cultural contexts to explore moderators that may influence these relationships more strongly. Policymakers should prioritize family-centered initiatives that engage parents and promote environments conducive to adolescent social growth, ultimately supporting better developmental outcomes (Rao, 2006; Bharadwaj, 1995).

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