

## PARENTING STYLES AND THEIR IMPACT ON ANGER EXPRESSION IN PAKISTANI CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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### Abstract

**Background:** Anger dysregulation in children and adolescents is a growing concern worldwide, including in Pakistan, where familial dynamics significantly shape emotional development. Parenting style is considered a critical psychosocial factor influencing emotional behavior in youth.

**Objective:** To assess the relationship between parenting styles and anger expression among Pakistani children and adolescents.

**Methodology:** A cross-sectional study was conducted from October 2024 to March 2025 at the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry OPD of Liaquat University of Medical & Health Sciences, and the Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Institute of Psychiatry, Hyderabad. A total of 232 children aged 10–17 years were included. Parenting style was assessed using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), and anger was measured with standard psychometric tools. Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were used to analyze the data using SPSS v25.0.

**Results:** Participants included 50.9% males and 49.1% females. The most common parenting style was authoritative (44.0%), followed by authoritarian (36.6%) and permissive (19.4%). Mean anger score was  $50.8 \pm 10.3$ . No significant associations were found between parenting style and gender ( $p = 0.709$ ) or mother's education ( $p = 0.094$ ). However, parenting style was significantly associated with anger levels ( $p = 0.013$ ), with permissive and authoritarian styles linked to more extreme anger responses.

**Conclusion:** Authoritative parenting is associated with healthier anger regulation in Pakistani children and adolescents. These findings support the promotion of balanced, structured parenting to enhance youth emotional well-being.

## INTRODUCTION

Anger is a fundamental human emotion that plays a pivotal role in social and psychological development. However, chronic or poorly regulated anger in children and adolescents has been increasingly recognized as a significant contributor to behavioral problems, academic challenges, interpersonal conflicts, and mental health issues, including aggression and depression [1,2]. Globally, up to 25% of children and adolescents exhibit maladaptive anger responses, leading to long-term psychosocial impairments if left unaddressed [3].

Parenting style is a crucial environmental factor that shapes the emotional and behavioral outcomes of children, including anger regulation. Diana Baumrind's well-established model categorizes parenting styles into three main types: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—with each varying in responsiveness and demandingness [4]. Studies have shown that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and consistent discipline, is associated with better emotional regulation and lower levels of anger in children. Conversely, authoritarian (strict, controlling) and permissive (lenient, inconsistent) styles are often linked with heightened anger expression, impulsivity, and externalizing behaviors [5,6].

In the South Asian context, particularly in Pakistan, parenting practices are deeply influenced by cultural, religious, and patriarchal norms [7]. Parents often adopt an authoritarian style under the perception that strictness ensures discipline and obedience. However, such approaches may hinder emotional expression and escalate frustration, particularly in adolescence—a period marked by identity formation and emotional vulnerability [8].

Recent studies from Pakistan have highlighted the growing concern of emotional and behavioral problems among school-aged children. A 2021 study conducted in Lahore found that over 31% of school-going adolescents exhibited significant anger-related behaviors, with a strong association to family conflict and parental control [9]. Another cross-sectional study in Karachi reported that over 40% of adolescents experienced frequent anger episodes, often unrecognized or dismissed by caregivers as disobedience or stubbornness [10]. These findings underscore a pressing public health issue that remains

underexplored in terms of its psychosocial determinants, particularly parenting style.

Anger-related issues in children have also been linked to an increase in school violence, bullying, and even early substance experimentation in Pakistani youth [11]. With the increasing prevalence of mental health challenges among children and adolescents—estimated to affect 10–15% of the population under 18 years in Pakistan as of 2023—there is an urgent need to investigate modifiable familial factors that can mitigate these outcomes [12].

Despite the growing burden, there is a scarcity of empirical data examining how specific parenting styles influence anger expression within the socio-cultural landscape of Pakistan. Most local studies have focused on academic achievement or general behavioral conduct, with limited focus on internal emotional states like anger. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by investigating the relationship between parenting styles and anger expression among Pakistani children and adolescents.

## METHODOLOGY

This cross-sectional study was conducted over a period of six months, from November 2024 to April 2025, at Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Outpatient Department (OPD) of the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences at Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Institute of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Hyderabad.

The target population comprised children and adolescents aged 10 to 17 years, accompanied by at least one primary caregiver (mother or father), attending the outpatient departments for non-acute psychiatric evaluations. Participants were recruited using a non-probability, consecutive sampling technique. Children with neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, or active psychosis were excluded to avoid confounding effects on emotional expression and parental interaction. The final sample size was estimated to be  $n = 232$ , based on anticipated frequency of anger-related behaviors in adolescent as 31%, 90% confidence interval and 5% margin of error. The sample size was calculated using OpenEpi version 3.01.

Data were collected through structured face-to-face interviews with the parent and child, after obtaining

informed consent and assent. Two validated psychometric tools were employed. Parenting style was assessed using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) which classifies parenting into authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles. The PAQ has been previously used and culturally adapted for Pakistani populations in prior research, demonstrating acceptable reliability. Anger expression in children and adolescents was measured using the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory – Child and Adolescent version (STAXI-CA), which evaluates both the frequency and manner of anger expression (internalized, externalized, and controlled forms). Demographic and clinical data, including age, gender, parental education, occupation, number of siblings, birth order, and history of psychological complaints, were collected via a structured proforma.

Data entry and analysis were performed using SPSS version 25.0. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages) were calculated

for demographic variables. Chi-square tests were applied to compare anger expression scores across different parenting styles. A  $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

### RESULTS:

The study sample consisted of 232 children and adolescents, with a nearly equal gender distribution: 50.9% male and 49.1% female. Most participants were aged 10–12 years (40.1%), followed by 13–15 years (34.5%) and 16–17 years (25.4%). Regarding maternal education, the largest proportion had secondary education (33.6%), while 19.8% were illiterate. Fathers were more likely to have secondary education (40.1%), with only 8.6% being illiterate. The majority of participants came from medium-sized families with 3–4 siblings (50%). First-born children constituted the largest birth order category (31.5%), closely followed by last-born (28.9%) and middle children (28.4%).

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHICS AND FAMILY INFORMATION (N = 232)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	118	50.9%
	Female	114	49.1%
Age Group	10–12 years	93	40.1%
	13–15 years	80	34.5%
	16–17 years	59	25.4%
Mother's Education	Illiterate	46	19.8%
	Primary	45	19.4%
	Secondary	78	33.6%
	Graduate	63	27.2%
Father's Education	Illiterate	20	8.6%
	Primary	56	24.1%
	Secondary	93	40.1%
	Graduate	63	27.2%
Number of Siblings	1–2	72	31.0%
	3–4	116	50.0%
	5+	44	19.0%
Birth Order	First-born	73	31.5%
	Middle	66	28.4%
	Last-born	67	28.9%
	Only child	26	11.2%

Among parenting styles, authoritative parenting was the most prevalent (44.0%), followed by authoritarian (36.6%) and permissive (19.4%). The average anger

score was  $50.8 \pm 10.3$ , indicating moderate anger levels. Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) subscores showed highest mean for authoritative style

(30.5 ± 4.9), followed by authoritarian (25.4 ± 5.0), and lowest for permissive (20.2 ± 4.7), suggesting a

stronger perceived parental control and warmth in authoritative families.

TABLE 2: PARENTING STYLE AND PAQ SCORING

Parenting Style	Frequency	Percentage
Anger Score	50.8 ± 10.3	
PAQ Authoritative	30.5 ± 4.9	
PAQ Authoritarian	25.4 ± 5.0	
PAQ Permissive	20.2 ± 4.7	
Authoritative	102	44.0%
Authoritarian	85	36.6%
Permissive	45	19.4%

No significant gender differences were found across parenting styles ( $p = 0.709$ ). Similarly, maternal education was not significantly associated with parenting style ( $p = 0.094$ ). However, a significant association was found between parenting style and anger levels ( $p = 0.013$ ). Children with authoritarian

parents had a higher proportion of low anger (22.35%), while high anger was more prevalent among children with permissive parenting (22.22%). Authoritative parenting was most associated with moderate anger levels (73.53%).

TABLE 3: RELATION OF PARENTING STYLES WITH GENDER, EDUCATION, AND ANGER LEVEL

Variable	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive	p-value
Gender				
Female	53 (51.96%)	39 (45.88%)	22 (48.89%)	0.709
Male	49 (48.04%)	46 (54.12%)	23 (51.11%)	
Mother's Education				
Graduate	30 (29.41%)	21 (24.71%)	12 (26.67%)	0.094
Illiterate	20 (19.61%)	18 (21.18%)	8 (17.78%)	
Primary	19 (18.63%)	17 (20.00%)	9 (20.00%)	
Secondary	33 (32.35%)	29 (34.12%)	16 (35.56%)	
Anger Level				
Low	11 (10.78%)	19 (22.35%)	6 (13.33%)	0.013
Moderate	75 (73.53%)	53 (62.35%)	29 (64.44%)	
High	16 (15.69%)	13 (15.29%)	10 (22.22%)	

## DISCUSSION

The present study examined the association between parenting styles and anger expression among children and adolescents in Pakistan, revealing significant patterns consistent with both national and global literature. The most prevalent parenting style observed was authoritative (44.0%), followed by authoritarian (36.6%) and permissive (19.4%), aligning with prior findings that authoritative parenting is the dominant or idealized model in many urban Pakistani families [13]. This supports earlier research by Qadir et al. which described the gradual

shift in Pakistani urban parenting towards a more democratic and emotionally responsive approach [14]. The key finding of this study is the significant relationship between parenting style and anger levels ( $p = 0.013$ ). Adolescents exposed to authoritative parenting demonstrated predominantly moderate anger levels (73.5%), indicating healthier emotional regulation. In contrast, children under permissive parenting had higher rates of extreme anger (22.2%), a pattern supported by international studies showing that low parental control and inconsistent discipline under permissive parenting may lead to externalizing

behaviors like aggression and poor impulse control [15,16].

These results are echoed in a 2022 cross-cultural meta-analysis by Pinquart, which concluded that authoritative parenting consistently correlates with lower levels of psychological distress and improved emotional outcomes in adolescents, whereas authoritarian and permissive parenting are linked to elevated emotional dysregulation [17]. A similar pattern was observed in a Turkish study by Kaya et al. (2023), where children with authoritarian parents reported higher trait anger and lower anger control scores [18].

Interestingly, our study did not find significant associations between parenting style and either gender ( $p = 0.709$ ) or maternal education ( $p = 0.094$ ). These findings differ from earlier Pakistani studies suggesting that maternal education significantly influences parenting behaviors and emotional outcomes in children [19]. One explanation could be the urban setting and relatively educated sample population in our study, which may have minimized educational variability.

In comparison, an Indian study by Saini et al. (2021) found gender-specific effects of parenting, where boys exhibited more externalized anger under permissive parenting, while girls internalized emotions [20]. However, such gender differences may be mediated by cultural expectations and family dynamics, which require deeper qualitative exploration in the Pakistani context.

Globally, similar findings have been documented. A 2020 U.S. study by Zeytinoglu et al. confirmed that authoritative parenting reduced anger reactivity and aggression in adolescents, regardless of socioeconomic background [21]. Likewise, a large-scale Chinese study involving over 1,500 adolescents found authoritarian parenting significantly predicted higher anger rumination and aggression, particularly in boys [22]. The mean anger score in our sample ( $50.8 \pm 10.3$ ) falls within a moderate range, consistent with local estimates of emotional-behavioral problems among school-aged children. Ahmed et al. (2021) reported that 31% of adolescents in Lahore exhibited problematic anger expression, often associated with parental control and harsh discipline [23]. This reinforces the utility of anger assessment as a screening tool in child psychiatry services.

Notably, our findings complement the emotional regulation framework proposed by Gross (2020), suggesting that parental modeling, warmth, and consistent limit-setting—hallmarks of authoritative parenting—facilitate the development of adaptive emotional coping strategies in youth [24]. Conversely, inconsistent or overly rigid parenting may hinder the maturation of prefrontal-limbic circuits involved in anger regulation, as discussed in recent neurodevelopmental studies [25].

In the Pakistani context, cultural factors such as respect for authority, family honor, and intergenerational hierarchy complicate the adoption of emotionally responsive parenting. However, this study underscores the urgent need to educate caregivers about the emotional consequences of parenting style. As noted by Mubeen et al. (2023), parental psychoeducation programs integrated within school-based and outpatient mental health services can significantly reduce behavioral problems [26].

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals that authoritative parenting is the most common style among families in the studied Pakistani population and is associated with lower levels of anger expression in children and adolescents. Although parental education and gender did not show significant associations with parenting style, anger levels varied significantly with parenting approach. Children with permissive or authoritarian parents showed more extremes in anger, either high or low, compared to those with authoritative parenting who mostly exhibited moderate and regulated anger.

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