

# The Effect of Parenting Style on a Child's Self-Esteem

Nia-Simone Dupree

Mr. Jason Scott  
Math Senior Seminar  
May 2026

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to see what parenting style is best when it comes to a child's self-esteem. Previous research has studied parenting and how it affects children's GPA. We had three hypotheses: one was that there would be a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and self-esteem, the second was that there would be a relationship between authoritarian parenting levels and students' self-esteem, and lastly, we hypothesized that there would be a relationship between permissive parenting and self-esteem. Information about parenting styles and self-esteem was collected from 60 TNA students and they filled out two questionnaires: PAQ-SV and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. We found that authoritative parenting had a weak and positive relationship. This study helps strengthen the claim that authoritative parenting could be the best way to parenting when it comes to self-esteem. Our data suggested this is logical because authoritative parenting looks at how to make the situation better instead of going straight to punishment.

## Introduction

A child's self-esteem can be affected heavily by how their parents raise them (1, 2, 3, 4). According to research, there are three different parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive (2). They differ in how the parents see their child and how lenient they are. This is very important because, depending on the way the parents act, it may have different effects on the child. Although many researchers have found that authoritative parenting is associated with the highest levels of self-esteem, questions remain about permissive parenting (3). Also, there is some mixed evidence that black teens respond better to authoritarian parenting (5). Resolving this question is important because we want parents to know the type of parenting style that is more preferred for the well-being of their children. In our study, we gave students a parenting and self-esteem questionnaire to examine the relationship between the two.

There are three different types of parenting styles. First developed by Baumrind, and with the help of other researchers, they identified the main parenting styles as: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting (2). A fourth style, uninvolved parenting, has also been proposed, although not frequently studied (2).

In authoritarian parenting, children are expected to follow certain strict rules made by their parents. The parents are usually obedience and status-oriented. Research suggests that due to the effect of this parenting, the children are very obedient but can also have increased anxiety, low self-reliance, and reduced motivation (2). Authoritative parenting sets rules and guidelines that children are expected to follow. The parents are good at setting standards and monitoring their children's behavior. Their methods are more assertive and supportive than restrictive and intrusive. Their goal for their children is to raise them to be responsible, cooperative, and self-regulated. Authoritative parents give room for children to make mistakes and learn from them. Research suggests that the result of this parenting style is children being happier, successful, and capable adults as they grow up (2).

Permissive parenting is seen as indulgent, and parents do not have many demands for their children. Their expectations for their children are low in terms of their maturity and self-control. They are more of a friend than a parent to their children. Due to this, research suggests their children aren't as happy or self-regulated. They also often act up and do poorly in school (2). Finally, uninvolved parents often neglect their children. Due to this, the children lack self-control, have higher rates of delinquency, and poor self-reliance (2).

Self-esteem is the overall personal wealth or value of a person, as perceived by themselves (6). Healthy self-esteem can influence motivation, mental well-being, and overall quality of life. Some elements of self-esteem are: self-confidence, feelings of security, identity, sense of belonging, and feelings of competence. Self-esteem impacts decision making, thinking, and the relationships people have with others. The four characteristics of healthy self-esteem are: a firm understanding of one's skills, the ability to maintain healthy relationships with others as a result of having a healthy relationship with oneself, realistic and appropriate personal expectations, and an understanding of one's needs and the ability to express those needs (6). Self-esteem is most commonly measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which is a 10-question survey that asks people to reflect on themselves (7).

### *Studies on Self-Esteem*

In this section, we discuss the relationship between self-esteem and parenting. Specifically, parent-adolescent cohesion and parent-adolescent conflict can have an effect on adolescents' self-esteem. Singh conducted this study in which three hundred Indian adolescents, aged 15-18, took three questionnaires (8). As hypothesized, it was found that higher parent-adolescent cohesion leads to higher self-esteem levels among adolescents. This suggests that highly conflictual parent-adolescent relationships and low parent-adolescent cohesion have a negative impact on self-esteem. In our study, we are interested in how the parent-child relationship affects a child's identity, especially in the context of black adolescents from the US.

In addition, Driscoll also studied the relationship between the four different types of parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful) and the child's self-esteem over three periods of their lifetime (1). They found that authoritative parenting was the most common parenting style across all ages, and children's self-esteem was the lowest at age 14. As participants grew up, they reported higher self-esteem if their parents became less restrictive over time, but did not have higher self-esteem when the parents didn't ease up. The author found some small differences in that authoritative parents were better than authoritarian parents regarding self-esteem, but the effect was small. In our study, we were interested in whether the teens at TNA would show the same results, given that we are a private school and most parents want what's best for their children and maintain a good balance of authority and responsiveness, which is found in authoritative parenting.

Other researchers have also examined parenting style and self-esteem. Zakeri and Karimpour conducted a study using 546 Iranian university students (4). They filled out the Steinbergh Parenting Style Scale and the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale. The researchers found a positive relationship between both authoritative and permissive parenting to self-esteem. Authoritarian parenting did not have any relationship to self-esteem. This further explains the consensus of previous researchers about the role of authoritative parenting.

Parenting styles and parenting are an important part of a child's development. In a review article, Kou analyzes the different studies on the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem (3). This article found many different ideas from the studies. Kou argues that growing self-esteem and positive emotion are essential to life satisfaction. Parenting style can impact a child's self-regulation skills, and it can ultimately impact self-esteem. But there is also some confusion on the relationship between self-esteem and parenting styles. Some say authoritative parenting styles have a positive impact on children's self-esteem, and others say authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles have a negative effect on children's self-esteem. However, some studies suggest that permissive parenting is related to higher self-esteem. Positive parenting can increase kids' self-esteem, reduce mental health symptoms, procrastination, and imposter feelings, but there is some disagreement on which parenting styles are the best. There is broad agreement on the negative effects of the authoritative parenting style and the neglectful parenting style. But the outcome of authoritarian and permissive parenting styles still sparks controversy in the research.

### *Other Effects of Parenting Styles*

Self-esteem is often related to positive outcomes, like school performance. In a previous study at The Neighborhood Academy, Myers and Scott studied the effect that school climate and parenting style had on academic achievement (5). The researchers conducted the study by using 61 students from TNA. They were given two surveys. One was the PAQ (Parental Authority Questionnaire), and the other was a school climate survey. The study showed that permissive parenting and GPA had a negative relationship, meaning students with permissive parenting had a lower GPA. Authoritative parenting had no relationship to GPA. Authoritarian parenting had a positive relationship with GPA, meaning stricter parenting had a higher GPA. This is surprising, because most studies find that authoritarian parents lead to lower self-esteem, and we expected higher self-esteem to be linked to better grades. Myers and Scott thought that culture might play a role in which parenting style is preferred. In our study, we used TNA students to see if the argument about culture has any support for self-esteem.

### *Study Hypotheses*

Overall, the research says parenting affects self-esteem, mental health, and grades. Certain parenting styles have a different effect than others (8, 1, 3, 4). This study contributes to our understanding of how self-esteem is affected by TNA students. While most research is in agreement, previous research at TNA found unexpected results for authoritarian parenting and grades. We want to clarify whether this applies to self-esteem at TNA. In our study, we administered surveys to TNA students and assessed their self-esteem using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Questionnaire (7) and their caregivers' parenting style using the Parental Authority Questionnaire - Short Version (PAQ-SV) (9).

We hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and self-esteem. This is because research says authoritative parenting increases self-esteem (3, 4). Second, we hypothesized that there would be a relationship between authoritarian parenting levels and students' self-esteem (1,5). This is nondirectional because research says authoritarian parenting has mixed reviews, with research suggesting a negative effect, no effect on self-esteem, or a positive effect on grades (5). Lastly, we hypothesized that there would be a relationship between permissive parenting and self-esteem. This is nondirectional because research says permissive parenting has both positive and negative effects (3).

### **Methods and Materials**

A total of 60 high school students from TNA participated in this survey. Most of the students were African American, with the exception of 2 white students. The sample was 54% male and 46% females and ranged from 14-18 years old. The participants were given two questionnaires to complete. The first one was a PAQ-SV (9). The score for their perception of their parents' parenting is broken into 3 parts: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. The survey consisted of 20 statements in total. For example, "My father/mother directed the activities and decisions of the children through reasoning and discipline." Based on the participants' responses to those statements, they would answer strongly agree, agree, neither,

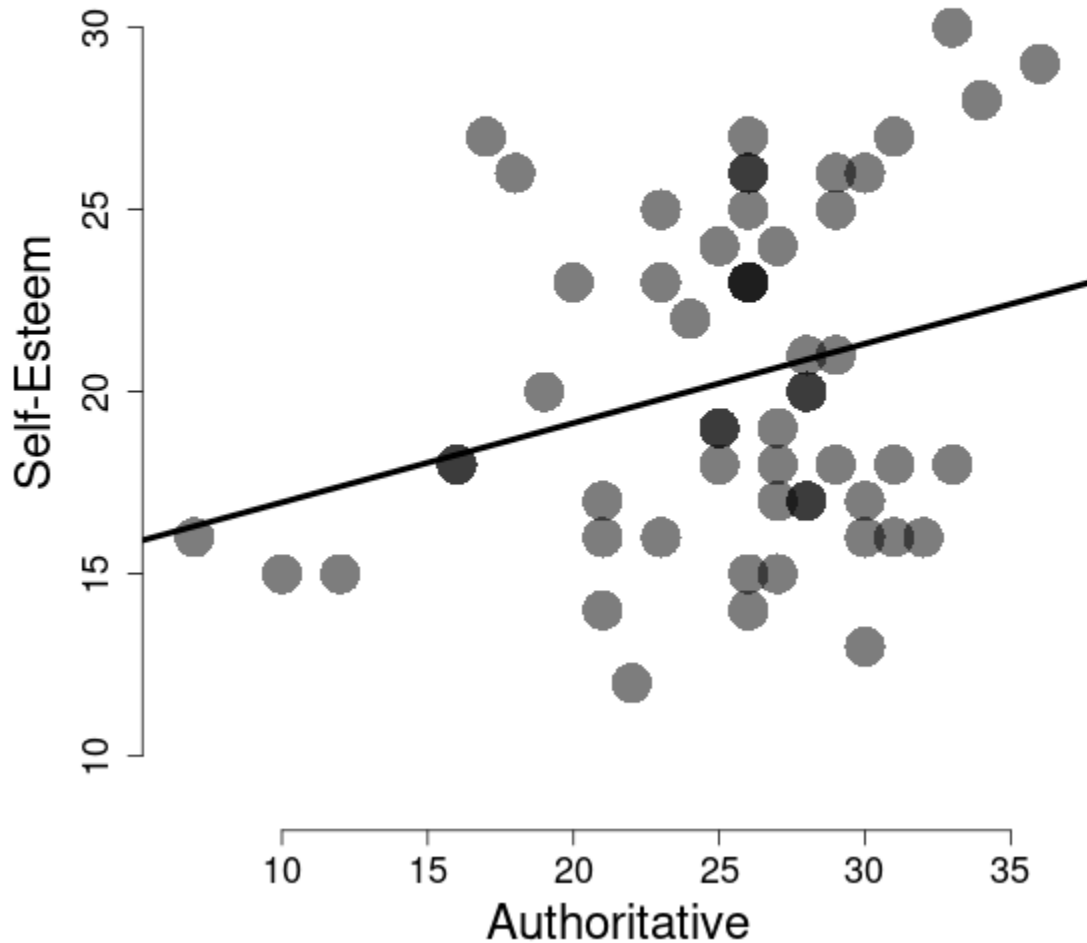
disagree, and strongly disagree. The participants were scored by their ratings being added up for 1-5 for each of the three styles. The second questionnaire was the Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale, to see their scores on how they see themselves. The survey consisted of 10 statements in total about the way they see themselves. For example, "All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure." Based on the participants' responses to those statements, they would answer strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. The participants were scored by their ratings being added up for 0-3. Some questions were reverse-coded, so the point values were opposite. The score recorded ranges from 0 to 30, with higher scores meaning more self-esteem.

First, we recruited teachers and requested 10 minutes of their class time to pass out the surveys. Then, upon entering a classroom, we handed out a PAQ-SV and a self-esteem questionnaire to every student in the class. Relationships in parents' styles and self-esteem were measured using an r-test. The abbreviation "r" is called the Pearson correlation coefficient. All tests were calculated using [vassarstats.net](http://vassarstats.net) with a 0.05 significance threshold.

## Results

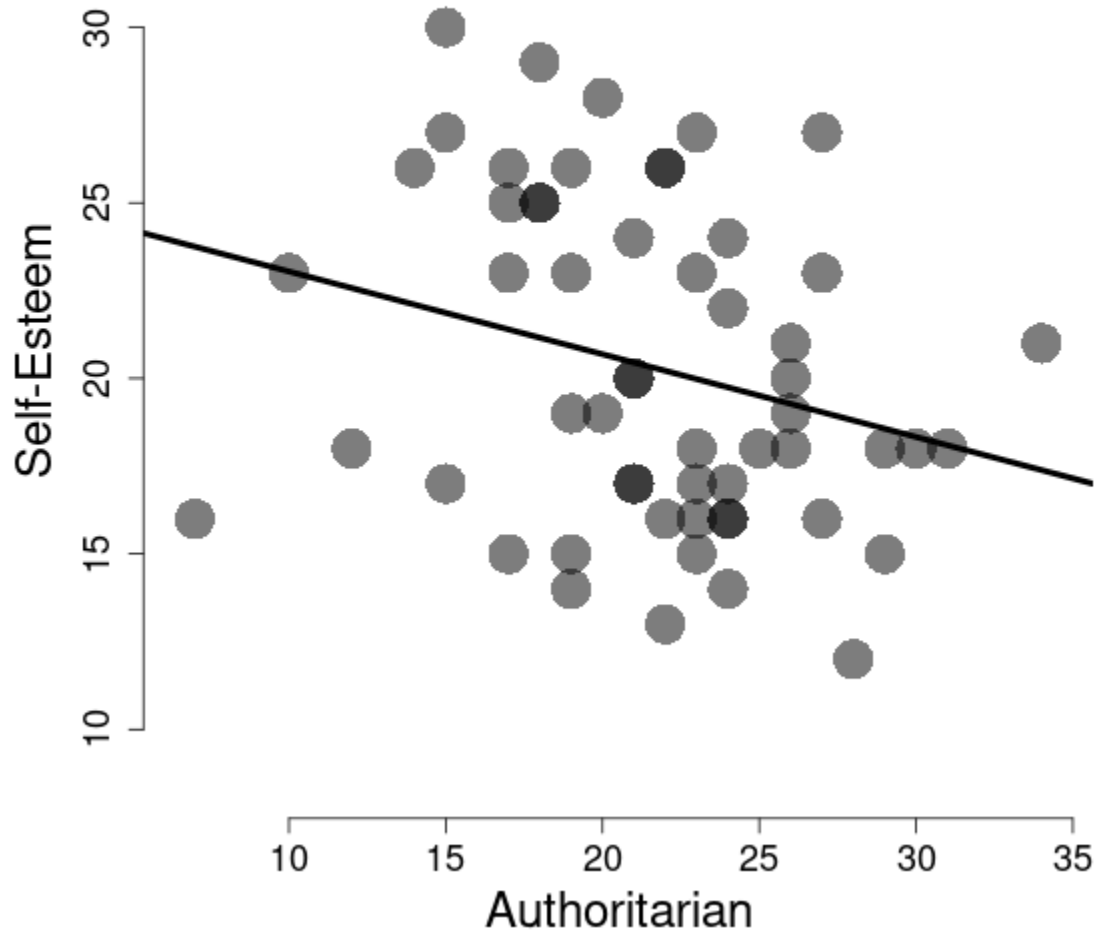
The purpose of this study was to see the relationship between self-esteem and different parenting styles. When given the survey, we used 60 TNA students. They first took a questionnaire about how the household is run by either their mother or father, called the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ-SV) (9). Then, the next questionnaire they took was a self-esteem survey called the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (7).

Our first hypothesis was that there would be a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and self-esteem. The Pearson correlation coefficient r-test found a significant relationship between authoritative parenting and self-esteem ( $r = 0.27$ ,  $p = 0.042$ ). This is a weak, positive relationship; the more authoritative the parent, the higher the self-esteem of the student.



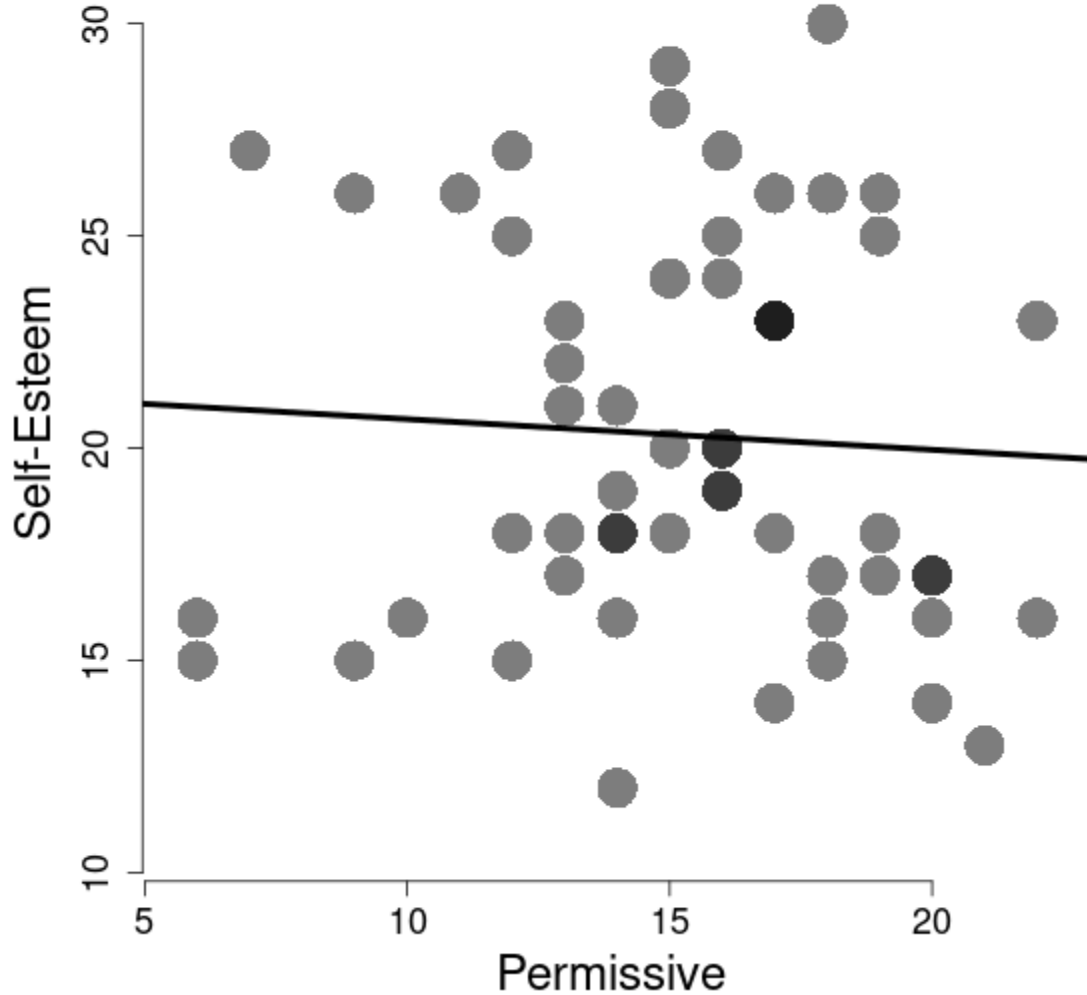
**Figure 1. There is a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and self-esteem.** A total of 60 TNA students completed the PAQ-SV and self-esteem questionnaire. A positive relationship was found between the two scores ( $r = 0.27$ ,  $p = 0.042$ ).

Our second hypothesis was that there would be a relationship between authoritarian parenting levels and students' self-esteem. The r-test found a negative relationship between authoritarian parenting and self-esteem ( $r = -0.26$ ,  $p = 0.049$ ). This is a weak, negative relationship; the more authoritarian the parent, the lower the self-esteem.



**Figure 2. There is a negative relationship between authoritarian parenting and self-esteem.** A total of 60 TNA students completed the PAQ-SV and self-esteem questionnaire. A positive relationship was found between the two scores ( $r = -0.26$ ,  $p = 0.049$ ).

Our third hypothesis was that there would be a relationship between permissive parenting and self-esteem. The r-test found no relationship between permissive parenting and self-esteem ( $r = -0.058$ ,  $p=0.67$ ). Permissive parenting doesn't affect self-esteem.



**Figure 3. No relationship between permissive parenting and self-esteem.** A total of 60 TNA students completed the PAQ-SV and self-esteem questionnaire. A positive relationship was found between the two scores ( $r = -0.058$ ,  $p=0.67$ ).

## Discussion

In our study, we set out to examine the relationship between self-esteem and different parenting styles. Our first hypothesis was that there would be a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and self-esteem. This was supported because of the weak, positive relationship, meaning the more authoritative parent, the higher the self-esteem of the student (**Figure 1**). Our second hypothesis was that there would be a relationship between authoritarian parenting levels and students' self-esteem. This was supported because of the weak, negative relationship, meaning the more authoritarian the parent, the lower the self-esteem (**Figure 2**). Our third hypothesis was that there would be a relationship between permissive parenting and self-esteem. This was not supported because, regardless of permissive parenting, it doesn't affect self-esteem (**Figure 3**).

Our results are consistent with other research by **Zakeri and Karimpour** (4). They found a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and self-esteem (4). Our study found that authoritative parenting had a weak and positive relationship. This study helps strengthen the claim that authoritative parenting could be the best way to parent when it comes to self-esteem. This is logical because authoritative parenting looks at how to make the situation better instead of going straight to punishment. Children who are given space to solve problems on their own and reflect on situations are likely to grow up to become more confident and independent.

Authoritarian parenting yielded mixed findings regarding its relationship with self-esteem and parenting. **Myers and Scott** found that self-esteem improves children at TNA's grades (5), but authoritarian parenting had a non-significant effect for authoritarian parenting (1). Furthermore, **Zakeri and Karimpour** found no relationship (4). Our study found a negative relationship between authoritarian parenting and self-esteem. This study helps understand the importance of why authoritarian parenting isn't the best way to parent when it comes to self-esteem. Logically, this makes sense because authoritarian parenting is characterized by harsher punishments. Children who aren't given the ability or space to fully understand what they did and why it was wrong without feeling scared or afraid of what comes next, causing them to be less confident and independent.

Our third results were inconsistent with a review article by **Kou** (3). They reported that other studies identified both negative and positive relationships between self-esteem and permissive parenting. Our study found no relationship between self-esteem and permissive parenting. This makes logical sense because permissive parenting isn't really considered a parent at all. Children either have to figure out how to grow up and learn by themselves or never really grow up at all. However, it is also possible our results regarding permissive parenting may be due to measurement limitations, as described below.

Our only limitation would appear to be selection bias in our data for permissive parenting. There wasn't enough data shown on the higher end of the permissive parenting scale in Figure 3, suggesting that parenting style is not common at TNA. The parenting scale ranges from 7 to 35, but only two participants scored over 20. Children with permissive parents don't often send their children to TNA. If the parents didn't care, why would they send them here?

In future research studies, one of our suggestions would be to branch out and use other dependent variables related to parenting style. For example, finding how parenting affects mental health or body image, but not only wanting to see how it affects mental health, but to see if it's accurate or not.

According to our research, we found that authoritative parenting is the best way to parent for self-esteem. These results are also broadly consistent with other research. It's the most effective way to parent if a parent wants to see emotional growth in their child. Therefore, parents, especially those who send their children to TNA, should consider adopting an authoritative parenting style if they care about their child's self-esteem. Parents should prioritize collaboration, communication, independence, and firm limits that have appropriate consequences. This is important because self-esteem is a necessary trait that can change the outcome of one's life for the better.

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