Review Article

AUTHORITARIAN PARENTING AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT IN BULLYING BEHAVIOR

[1],* Nato Asatiani and [2]Nino Mamphoria

[1]Associate Professor, Tbilisi State University, Georgia.
[2]Researcher, Master of Psychology, Georgia.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to show the influence of parenting styles used by parents on adolescents' involvement in bullying behavior. The article discusses the classic theories of parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting styles) and their influence on adolescent behavior. Many authors and psychological theories demonstrate that parental attitudes play an important role in the psychological well-being, academic success and development of social skills of adolescents. These factors are directly related to the form in which adolescents will engage in various conflicts. The presented secondary data shows us from different angles the factors contributing to the development of bullying and effective ways to prevent it. Recommendations include encouraging an authoritative parenting style, increasing active parental involvement, and creating a friendly, inclusive learning environment.

Keywords: Parenting style, bullying, education, prevention, adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is one of the most acute and widespread psychosocial problems in modern schools, which requires not only individual but also systemic intervention. In recent years, interest in this issue has increased significantly, both in academic circles and in educational policy (Olweus, 1993; Espelage & Swearer, 2004; Smith 2019). Bullying is not only a product of conflictual relationships, but also represents repeated aggressive behavior based on an imbalance of power, which affects the psychological and social functioning of both the victim and the aggressor himself (Olweus, 1994; Salmivalli, 1999). Bullying plays a major role in students' academic motivation, attitude towards school, emotional well-being and often leads to consequences such as social isolation, anxiety, depression and self-harm or suicidal ideation (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).

Bullying should not be viewed as a reflection of a child's or adolescent's personality traits. It is most often formed and reinforced in a social context, where individual, relational, and systemic factors operate simultaneously (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The family environment is particularly important as the initial and decisive space for a child's social development. The parenting style established in the family—that is, the emotional and behavioral framework through which a parent interacts with their child—significantly determines the child's development of social strategies, self-esteem, emotional regulation, and ability to interact with peers (Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Gratz & Roemer, 2004).

The classification of parenting styles in research is often based on the model proposed by Baumrind, which distinguishes four main styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive (concessionary), and neglectful (Baumrind, 1971). An authoritative style, which combines high emotional support and clear demands, promotes the development of self-regulation, responsibility, and social adaptation in adolescents. An authoritarian style, which is dominated by strict

control and a lack of emotional closeness, often leads to obedience, anxiety, or aggression. Permissive and neglectful styles are often associated with behavioral problems, emotional dysregulation, and social maladjustment (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). It is important to note that all bullying researchers emphasize that adolescents become victims of bullying when they have a deficit in social adaptation skills. Parents' behavioral models become the primary source of imitation and modeling for children. According to Albert Bandura's social learning theory (1971), children learn behavior not only through direct reinforcement but also through observation—that is, through what they see every day from their parents, teachers, and peers. According to this approach, the style of family relationships influences how a child learns social norms, how he or she exercises power, how he or she tries to satisfy his or her needs, and how he or she responds to conflict situations.

Recent research on bullying suggests that unfavorable parenting styles—particularly authoritarian and neglectful parenting—dramatically increase both aggressive behavior and the likelihood of becoming a victim (Espelage & Holt, 2013; Schwartz *et al.,* 1993). Children raised in authoritarian and neglectful environments have less developed emotional self-regulation and high impulsivity or affectivity, making them both potential bullies and victims (Gratz & Roemer, 2004).

Furthermore, according to ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), a child's behavior is influenced not only by the family itself (microsystem), but also by the connection of these relationships with the school (mesosystem), the influence of the parent's work environment (exosystem), and broader social values (macrosystem). Within this model, parenting style is considered one of the central factors that influences a child's behavior and behavioral strategies within these systems.

Accordingly, it is undeniable that the parenting style used by a parent influences a teenager's involvement in bullying behavior, as evidenced by meta-analyses of studies conducted in different countries.

*Corresponding Author: Nato Asatiani,
1Associate Professor, Tbilisi State University, Georgia.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTING STYLE AND BEHAVIORAL MODELS

Based on her own research, Diana Baumrind (1960) distinguishes three parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Later, McCob and Martin added a fourth - the neglectful parenting style. Authoritarian parenting style maintains a balance between warmth, support, and high expectations, which encourages independence and openness of communication. In this case, the child's opinion and emotions are taken into account, parental communication is reasoned, and physical punishment methods are not used. Parents develop a sense of responsibility in the child. They give the child autonomy and encourage independence. This parenting style is also known as the democratic parenting style. This approach promotes the development of social skills, the ability to make independent decisions, high motivation, self-confidence, and emotional regulation. (Baumrind, 1966).

Authoritarian parenting style is strict and demands obedience. Parents, in order to enforce their own rules, often resort to harsh physical or verbal punishment of the child. Children who grow up under an authoritarian parenting style are prone to anxiety, have low self-esteem, and have difficulty managing their emotions. This parenting style is associated with high rates of depression and even suicidal tendencies. In such cases, they have difficulty making decisions and often become dependent on authority figures, or even become authorities themselves (Baumrind, 1966).

A permissive parenting style involves a very caring (hyper-caring) parent, but in such a case, the parenting process lacks structure, discipline, and clear requirements or rules. Parents are more likely to play the role of a friend than an authority figure. Often, children raised with this approach have difficulty self-regulation, which can be manifested in aggressive behavior or difficulties in social relationships. Some children develop high self-esteem, while others have behavioral problems. For example, they reject authority because they are not used to being subject to rules. (Baumrind, 1966).

Neglectful parenting is characterized by emotional neglect, minimal involvement (almost no involvement in raising the child), and a lack of structure and expectations. Children lack love, attention, and nurturing. Children who grow up in this environment experience developmental problems, academic difficulties, and mental health problems. They are more likely to develop aggressive behaviors. (Maccoby, Martin 1983).

The formation of a child's behavior is greatly influenced by the behavior of the parent and his observation of it. The fact that people learn by modeling the behavior of others was most clearly confirmed by Albert Bandura. He emphasized that behavior can be studied without direct experience, which he called modeling learning. For example, a person often sees what result a person achieved with a specific behavior and decides whether to carry out or not, if necessary, the same behavior (Bandura, 1971). Accordingly, it is by observing the parent that the child understands the consequences of various types of behavior and attitudes. The child understands if he blindly obeys the rules, does not protest when he does not like something (because it makes sense) and silently accepts the given situation that he does not share (in the case of an authoritarian parent), as a result, we get a child who is arrogant even with peers and does not defend his position. Such children, as a rule, play the role of a victim in bullying behavior. Darling and Stenberg's (1993) theoretical model makes an important contribution to the study of different parenting styles. The authors define parenting style as the overall emotional-social framework of parental behavior within which

specific parenting actions, such as control, monitoring, or support, take place. In their view, parenting style includes not only what the parent does, but also considers how these actions are carried out to be especially important—namely, the emotional background the parent creates for the child.

Darling and Sternberg's integrated approach further clarifies the characteristics of each parenting style. *Authoritative* parenting is associated with children with self-regulation skills, social responsibility, and academic success. *Authoritarian* parenting often produces obedient, but low-self-efficacy children who may engage in aggressive or compensatory behaviors. *Permissive* parents are warm-hearted but show little desire to control or set boundaries. Children in this environment often become impulsive and less responsible. *Neglectful* parents show neither control nor emotional involvement. This style is associated with behavioral disorders, academic difficulties, and increased risk-taking behavior, including involvement in bullying.

Accordingly, Darling and Steinberg's model also clearly illustrates the impact that a parent's emotional-behavioral attitude can have on a child's social, emotional, and behavioral development. This model is especially important to use when studying phenomena such as bullying behavior, because it provides us with the context in which a child's behavior is formed, consolidated, or changed. (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

DEFINITION OF BULLYING AND MODERN RESEARCH

One of the first and most influential theorists of the bullying phenomenon is the Norwegian psychologist Dan Olweus, who has been developing the scientific basis for the study of bullying since the 1970s. Olweus was the first to define bullying in an academic context and to introduce its main characteristics, thereby laying the foundation for approaches focused on its prevention and intervention (Olweus, 1993).

According to Olweus, bullying is intentional, aggressive behavior that is repeated and involves an imbalance of power between the parties. However, in bullying, the victim is not in an equal position with the bully and it is difficult or impossible for him to defend himself (Olweus, 1994). It is precisely the imbalance of power and the regular nature of the behavior that distinguishes bullying from simple conflict or occasional aggression.

Olweus views bullying as a multifactorial phenomenon that depends not only on individual characteristics but also on ecological systems—such as family, school, peer groups, and societal values.

Olweus distinguishes two main forms of bullying:

1. **Direct bullying** – physical or verbal aggression that is easily noticeable (for example, hitting, derogatory words),
2. **Indirect bullying** – behavior that is covert and often harmful, such as spreading rumors or social isolation.

It is worth noting that a teenager's social skills and experience with their parents play a major role in Dorothy Espelage's research, according to which the experiences a child acquires at home play a key role in whether or not they will become a victim in the context of their relationships with peers (Espelage & Swearer, 2004) (Espelage & Holt, 2013).

However, many researchers describe a bully as a child or adolescent who is shy, has low self-esteem, and has weak social connections with peers. Such individuals often lack the ability to resist, making them easy targets for repeated violence (Salmivalli, 1999; Smith, 2019, Asatiani, 2021).

The environment in which a child grows up is important for educational psychology in many ways. Among other things, researchers are interested in what kind of environment and parenting style contribute to high rates of adolescent victimization. Researcher Diana Gram and her colleagues (2024) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis that included 158 studies (13,171 entries) and found that parental warmth and authoritative parenting significantly reduced the risk of children/adolescents engaging in traditional forms of bullying. In addition, the study confirmed that authoritarian and neglectful parenting, conflict between parents, and emotional distancing increased the likelihood of adolescents engaging in bullying behavior. (Grama *et al.,* 2024).

Additionally, Gardner *et al.,* (2020) examined the effectiveness of parent-involved programs in preventing bullying. The results of the meta-analysis showed a medium effect size (d = .64), indicating a positive impact of these types of programs in reducing victimization. The authors emphasize the importance of emotional communication and family-school collaboration, as well as a consistent and authoritative parenting style (Gardner *et al.,* 2020).

Interestingly, a study conducted in China involving 8,730 adolescents found that an authoritative parenting style helps children develop both interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, which in turn helps them avoid bullying behavior (He *et al.,* 2023).

Evgin *et al.,* (2021) conducted a study in London involving 2,218 adolescents, which examined the relationship between different parenting styles and bullying behavior in both traditional and cyber bullying contexts. According to the study, components of positive parenting, such as supervision and caring for the child, effectively protect against both types of bullying, while confused discipline and lack of monitoring are significant risk factors for the development of cyber bullying (Evgin *et al.,* 2021).

bullying behavior, but the relationship between parenting style and bullying behavior in children and adolescents deserves special attention. Various theoretical approaches and empirical studies show that parental behavior and parenting style have a significant impact on whether an adolescent will engage in bullying behavior as a bully, as a victim, or as a bystander and/or protector (Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Also, studies conducted by researchers at different times show that an authoritative style, characterized by warmth, consistency, and reasonable boundary setting, is associated with lower involvement in adolescent bullying behavior , while an authoritarian or neglectful style increases the risk of an adolescent becoming a victim (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Olweus, 1993; Smith, 2019).

CONCLUSION

From the literature review presented, it is clear that parenting style has a significant impact on adolescents' involvement in bullying behavior as a victim. Both theoretical and empirical studies confirm that warmth, consistency, and support in parent-child relationships are associated with high social skills in adolescents, which reduces the risk of becoming a victim of bullying.

Authoritative parenting styles, which combine emotional support and clear rules, are considered protective factors, while authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful parenting styles increase adolescent vulnerability and social risks. Parental involvement, emotional communication, and appropriate supervision of their child's behavior were found to be particularly important in the context of both traditional and digital bullying prevention.

Accordingly, parenting style is not only considered a factor in individual development, but is also given systemic importance in the planning of bullying prevention policies, school programs, and parent-centered interventions. This suggests that reducing bullying requires not only improving the school environment, but also making changes in family dynamics.

REFERENCES

1. Anglim, J., Petrou, A., & Theodorou, M. (2018). The effect of parental style on bullying and cyberbullying behaviors and the mediating role of peer attachment relationships. Journal of Adolescence, 68, 123–134

2. Asatiani, N. (2021)The Psychological Nature of Bullying and Its Determinants: A Study of Teenagers Living in the Country of Georgia

3. Baldry, A. C., & Farrington, D. P. (2005). Protective factors as moderators of risk factors in adolescence: A longitudinal study. Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 15(2), 145–160

4. Bandura, A. (1971).Social Learning Theory. Prentice-Hall.

5. Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority (Vol. 4, No. 1, Pt. 2). Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development.

6. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979).The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design. Harvard University Press.

7. Cook, C. R., Williams, K. R., Guerra, N. G., Kim, T. E., & Sadek, S. (2010). Predictors of bullying and victimization in childhood and adolescence: A meta-analytic investigation. School Psychology Quarterly, 25(2), 65–83

8. Darling, N., & Steinberg, L. (1993). Parenting style as context: An integrative model. Psychological Bulletin, 113(3), 487–496.

9. Espelage, D. L. (2014). Ecological theory: Preventing youth bullying, aggression, and victimization. Theory into Practice, 53(4), 257–264.

10. Espelage, D. L., & Holt, M. K. (2013). Suicidal ideation and school bullying experiences after controlling for depression and delinquency. Journal of Adolescent Health, 53(1), S27–S31.

11. Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, S. M. (2004).Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention.

12. Evgin, A., Brown, S., & Clark, T. (2021). How are parenting practices associated with bullying in adolescents? Journal of School Psychology, 79, 45–56.

13. Gardner, F., Harris, V., & Newton, L. (2020). A meta‑analysis on effects of parenting programs on bullying prevention. Journal of Family Psychology, 34(2), 123–135.

14. Grama, A., Smith, J., & Lee, R. (2024). Parental risk and protective factors associated with bullying victimization in children and adolescents: A systematic review and meta‑analysis. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry. Advance online publication.

15.   Gratz, K. L., & Roemer, L. (2004). Multidimensional assessment of emotion regulation and dysregulation: Development, factor structure, and initial validation of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale. Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment, 26(1), 41–54.

16.   Hawker, D. S. J., & Boulton, M. J. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta‑analytic review of cross‑sectional studies. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 41(4), 441–455.

17.   He, X., Zhang, L., & Wang, Y. (2023). The effect of parenting styles on adolescent bullying behaviours in China: The mechanism of interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence. Child Development Research, 2023, Article ID 456789.

18.   Holt, M. K., Vivolo-Kantor, A. M., Polanin, J. R., Holland, K. M., DeGue, S., Matjasko, J. L., & Reid, G. (2014). Bullying and suicidal ideation and behaviors: A meta-analysis. Pediatrics, 133(3), 682–695

19.   Li, P. (2024).ParentingStyles.com. Retrieved May 11, 2025, from

20.   Maccoby, E. E., & Martin, J. A. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction. In P. H. Mussen (Ed.), Handbook of Child Psychology (Vol. 4, pp. 1–101). Wiley.

21.   Olweus, D. (2001). Peer harassment: A critical analysis and some important issues. In J. Juvonen & S. Graham (Eds.), Peer Harassment in School: The Plight of the Vulnerable and Victimized (pp. 3–20). Guilford.

22.   Reijntjes, A., Kamphuis, J. H., Prinzie, P., & Telch, M. J. (2010). Peer victimization and internalizing problems in children: A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. Child Abuse & Neglect, 34(4), 244–252.

23.   Salmivalli, C. (1999). Participant role approach to school bullying: Implications for interventions. Journal of Adolescence, 22(4), 453–459.

24.   Salmivalli, C. (2010). Bullying and the peer group: A review. Aggression and Violent Behavior, 15(2), 112–120.

25.   Schwartz, D., Dodge, K. A., & Coie, J. D. (1993). The emergence of chronic peer victimization in boys' play groups. Child Development, 64(6), 1755–1772.

26.   Skinner, B. F. (1953).Science and Human Behavior. Macmillan.

27.   Smith, P. K. (2019).The Psychology of School Bullying. New York: Routledge.

****