

Shift in Parenting Style

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Abstract

Parenting style refers to the combination of attitudes, practices, and emotional climate that parents create when interacting with their child. This paper aims to compare the parenting style of parents in the present generation with the previous generation. Interview method was used to gather data for this qualitative research from 20 participants chosen by convenience sampling. Authoritarian style was predominant in the earlier generation. But the present generation parenting style revolves around authoritative or permissive majorly and neglectful in some cases. It has also witnessed a shift in focus aspects from behaviour, values and discipline of the child to academics, success and achievements of the child.

Keywords: Parenting style, authoritarian, authoritative, permissive

Introduction

Parenting style refers to the combination of attitudes, practices, and emotional climate that parents create when interacting with their child. It captures two important elements of parenting: parental responsiveness (parental warmth or supportiveness) and parental demandingness or behavioural control. (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

The four parenting styles are:

- Permissive (lenient, more responsive)
- Authoritarian (strict, more demanding)
- Authoritative (right balance of responsive and demanding)
- Neglectful (uninvolved, lack of responsive and demanding)

The benefits of authoritative parenting and the detrimental effects of uninvolved parenting are evident as early as the preschool years and continue throughout adolescence and into early adulthood. Although specific differences can be found in the competence evidenced by each group, the largest differences are found between children whose parents are unengaged and their peers with more involved parents. (Darling, Nancy 1999)

High success in education is strongly associated with parenting styles. It has been found that very successful students at school with high scores had parents with firm styles. (Zahed 2016)

Most experts, including the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP), recommend the authoritative parenting style, as proven to be strongly associated with positive behavioural outcomes, and good mental health in children and adolescents. (Awiszus 2022)

Parental practices have changed over time. Nowadays, fathers are becoming increasingly involved in the family sphere and child-rearing, indicating a shift toward modern, equal parenting. (Bandalovic 2024)

Objective

This paper aims to compare the parenting styles of parents in the present generation with the previous generation.

Methodology

Interview method was used to gather data for this qualitative research. 20 participants, who are parents of school-age children were chosen by convenience sampling. Open-ended questions were asked to the participants to bring out the thoughts on their parenting style, focus aspects of the child, gratification pattern of the child's desires and how different it is from the parenting style of their parents in the earlier generation.

Results and Discussion

- While buying things to fulfil child's desires, present day parents mostly delay but sometimes get it immediately. Earlier parents delayed or didn't buy at all or they got what was good for the child, not what the child wanted, only if necessary. Financial constraints were a part of earlier generation and the value of objects was learnt through reality. Now, less or nil financial constraints in the family doesn't provide any chance for the child to learn financial value unless it is taught explicitly.
- Earlier, parents were stricter on aspects like behaviour, food and health. Now, strictness is seen more with respect to academics.
- Earlier, child listened and obeyed the parent's instruction without any need for explanation. Now, children don't obey much, explanation is needed to make the child fulfil the expectations and at times, the parent yield to the child's tantrums. Child doesn't hesitate to refuse or argue with the parent. It gives a sense of freedom to the child but at the same time, hampers the child's ability to listen to or to be controlled by anyone.
- Individual growth of each child is considered and taken care of in a better way than in the earlier generation.
- More spoon feeding to the child is done now along with a parent's doubt if they are making the child more dependent. But the innate fear that the child may lag without the extra effort and care makes it impossible to withdraw the same.
- Physical hitting of the child was more common and seemed to give good results in the past. But now, parents are more conscious about not hitting the child. Even when they hit while losing temper and control, it seems to have a negative impact on the child by making him/her more aggressive. Not just physical hurt, avoiding the child's emotional hurt is now given more importance too.
- Earlier parents were more receptive to the suggestions and advice from relatives, friends and society. They also cared more about adhering to societal norms and acceptance. Now more importance is given to the desires of the child and parents.
- Academics and scoring more marks were given major importance earlier. Now, parents consider extracurricular activities too. If the child shows a real interest or talent in a particular activity or sport, parents encourage them to explore and get trained and even plan their career based on it. Varied opportunities available in the present career world and new emerging fields also has helped in bringing about this change.

- Importance of values have now reduced. Terms have changed from hard work to smart work. Being ethical is now considered as impractical and misfit. Being manipulative and viewing success as the only goal is celebrated as smartness.
- Electronic gadgets were never available in the previous generations. Now it seems inseparable from the child. Though it can be used for good, in reality it creates more negative effects like addiction and lack of focus in other important things.
- Parents play with the child more than the earlier generation.
- The participants rated their parents as better parents than themselves.

Conclusion

There is a shift in parenting styles. Most parents learn what to do or not to do from their experience as a child. Changes in parenting are inevitable. It's also important to pass on the basic values, knowledge and skills that only a parent can teach a child. The changes in parenting must be for the betterment of the child and not based on factors like parent's convenience or peer pressure.

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