

PARENTING STYLES AND PERCEIVED CHILD DEVELOPMENT OF TEEN MOTHERS ENROLLED IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: *The developmental, emotional, and financial demands of adolescent motherhood may influence how young women perform their parenting roles while pursuing college education. This study examined the dominant parenting styles of college-enrolled women who became mothers during adolescence and tested selected relationships among demographic variables, parenting style, and perceived child development outcomes. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was used with 31 randomly selected student-mothers. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire covering demographic profile, four parenting styles, perceived child development outcomes, parenting challenges, and coping strategies. The 24-item instrument showed acceptable internal consistency in the pilot test (Cronbach's alpha = 0.758). Frequency, percentage, weighted mean, Spearman's rho correlation, and the Kruskal-Wallis H test were used at the 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that authoritative parenting was the most evident style (AWM = 4.50), followed by authoritarian (AWM = 3.67), permissive (AWM = 2.94), and neglectful parenting (AWM = 2.18). Family structure, employment status, and monthly income were not significantly related to parenting style. Number of children showed a borderline positive association with parenting style ($\rho = 0.354$, $p = 0.050$), which should be interpreted cautiously due to the small sample. Parenting style was not significantly related to perceived child development outcomes ($\rho = 0.164$, $p = 0.377$), and perceived outcomes did not differ significantly by family structure ($H = 2.444$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.485$). Findings suggest that student-mothers commonly report warm and structured parenting practices despite financial and academic pressures. Higher education institutions may strengthen student-mother support through parenting education, psychosocial services, peer support, referral mechanisms, and flexible academic arrangements.*

Keywords: teen mothers, parenting styles; authoritative parenting; perceived child development; higher education; student-mothers

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescent motherhood is a demanding life experience because young women are expected to assume parental responsibilities while they are still transitioning into adulthood. Globally, adolescent pregnancy remains associated with health, social, and economic consequences for young mothers, their children, families, and communities [1]. In the Philippines, national data reported that 5.4% of Filipino women aged 15-19 had ever been pregnant in 2022 [2]. For young women who became mothers during adolescence and later continued or returned to college, parenting is carried out alongside academic work, child care, family expectations, and financial concerns.

Parenting styles are commonly understood through the dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness. Foundational parenting theory classified parental behavior into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful styles [3, 4]. Authoritative parenting reflects warmth, communication, and firm but reasonable expectations. Authoritarian parenting emphasizes obedience and control, permissive parenting is warm but less consistent in setting limits, and neglectful parenting is marked by low involvement and limited guidance. Later measurement and empirical studies continued to use these dimensions in examining parent-child interaction and child outcomes [5-7].

Parenting behavior is also influenced by factors beyond individual attitudes. Family resources, socioeconomic conditions, mental health, social support, and parent-child attachment may affect how young mothers manage their roles [8-10]. Social support has been associated with parental efficacy among single teen mothers [11]. Studies on mental health service use and adolescent mothers' mental health outcomes also show why psychosocial support should extend

beyond the immediate postpartum period [12, 13]. Reviews on pregnant and parenting adolescents further indicate that early childbearing intersects with schooling, stigma, community support, and economic vulnerability [14, 15].

Although adolescent mothers may face financial burden, disrupted education, societal stigma, emotional strain, and limited access to parenting resources, these challenges should not lead to the assumption that teenage mothers are ineffective parents. Research on intervention programs suggests that parenting practices and family outcomes can be strengthened by culturally responsive support, parenting self-efficacy training, peer-led parenting education, and child-development coaching [16-18]. Institutional assistance is therefore important when young mothers continue their education.

The parenting experiences of teen mothers enrolled in higher education remain underexamined. Their continuing enrollment may indicate resilience, but it may also reflect the pressure of balancing multiple responsibilities. Colleges and universities can design practical support such as parenting seminars, counseling, flexible academic schedules, peer support groups, and referral services when they understand the parenting styles and support needs of student-mothers.

Anchored in the parenting style framework of Baumrind and the expanded typology of Maccoby and Martin [3, 4], this study examined the parenting styles of college-enrolled women who became mothers during adolescence. Specifically, it described their demographic profile, identified the dominant parenting styles, assessed perceived child development outcomes and parenting challenges, and tested whether selected demographic variables were significantly associated with parenting style and perceived child development outcomes.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

The study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component presented the demographic profile, parenting styles, perceived child development outcomes, parenting challenges, and coping strategies of the respondents. The correlational component tested whether selected demographic variables were significantly related to parenting style and whether parenting style was significantly related to perceived child development outcomes.

2.2 Respondents and Sampling

The respondents were 31 college-enrolled women who became mothers during adolescence. They were selected randomly from the identified population of student-mothers. To be included, a respondent had to be currently enrolled in college, have at least one child, have become a mother during adolescence or the teenage years, and voluntarily agree to participate. Individuals who did not meet these criteria or declined participation were excluded.

2.3 Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire. The instrument covered demographic profile, parenting styles, perceived child development outcomes, parenting challenges, and coping strategies. The parenting style section measured authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting indicators using a Likert-type scale. Responses were summarized using weighted means and verbal interpretation. The instrument was reviewed for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the objectives before the main survey. A pilot test was conducted to examine internal consistency. The 24-item instrument obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.758, indicating acceptable reliability for the present study.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Permission was secured from the concerned office before data collection. Eligible respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality of responses, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained before the questionnaire was administered. No names or identifying details were included in the report. Completed forms were checked, encoded, summarized, and subjected to statistical analysis. The study followed institutional ethical guidelines for research involving human participants.

2.5 Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Weighted mean was used to summarize parenting styles, perceived child development outcomes, parenting challenges, and coping strategies. Spearman's rho correlation tested the relationships between selected demographic variables and parenting styles and the relationship between parenting style and perceived child development outcomes. The Kruskal-Wallis H test determined whether perceived child development outcomes differed significantly across family structures. All inferential tests were interpreted at the 0.05 level of significance. Because of the small sample, p-values near the threshold were treated with caution.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

Most respondents were 21-23 years old (42%), followed by those aged 24 years and above (39%), while 19% were aged 18-20 years. All respondents were enrolled in college at the time of the survey. In terms of family structure, 39% belonged to nuclear families, 36% to extended families, 22% to single-parent households, and 3% to other family arrangements. Most respondents had one child (77%), while 17% had two children, 3% had three children, and 3% had four or more children. Regarding employment, 65% were unemployed, 29% were working part-time, 3% were working full-time, and 3% were self-employed. Monthly income was generally low, with 39% reporting income below PHP 5,000. These results show that many respondents were managing motherhood with limited financial resources while continuing their education.

Table 1. Summary of respondent profile

Profile item	Percent
Age: 18-20 years	19%
Age: 21-23 years	42%
Age: 24 years and above	39%
Educational status: Enrolled in college	100%
Family structure: Nuclear family	39%
Family structure: Extended family	36%
Family structure: Single-parent household	22%
Family structure: Other	3%
Number of children: One child	77%
Employment status: Unemployed	65%
Monthly income: Below PHP 5,000	39%

3.2 Parenting Styles of Teen Mothers

The respondents reported the highest agreement with authoritative parenting indicators, with an average weighted mean of 4.50. This suggests that they generally practiced warmth, open communication, reasonable rules, and appropriate discipline. Authoritarian parenting followed with an average weighted mean of 3.67, indicating the presence of firmness, obedience, and consequences for misbehavior, although this style was less dominant than authoritative parenting. Permissive parenting obtained a neutral average weighted mean of 2.94, while neglectful parenting was lowest with an average weighted mean of 2.18. Overall, the results suggest that respondents did not view themselves as detached or uninvolved. Rather, they tended to combine affection and structure in child-rearing.

3.3 Perceived Child Development Outcomes

Respondents agreed that their parenting practices contributed positively to their children's development, as reflected in the average weighted mean of 4.18. They perceived their children as emotionally secure, socially responsive, and able to interact with others. Although these are self-reported perceptions, the result suggests that student-mothers viewed their parenting as supportive of children's emotional and social growth.

3.4 Parenting Challenges and Coping Strategies

The respondents agreed that they experienced parenting challenges and used coping strategies, with an average weighted mean of 3.45. The finding indicates that they encountered difficulty balancing motherhood, schooling, finances, and personal responsibilities. At the same time, the respondents reported coping through family support and personal adjustment strategies. This supports the need for psychosocial services, parenting education, and flexible academic arrangements for student-mothers.

Table 2. Summary of parenting styles and major outcomes

Measure	Result / interpretation
Authoritative parenting	AWM = 4.50; most evident
Authoritarian parenting	AWM = 3.67; present, less dominant
Permissive parenting	AWM = 2.94; neutral tendency
Neglectful parenting	AWM = 2.18; least evident
Perceived child outcomes	AWM = 4.18; positive perceived outcomes
Challenges and coping	AWM = 3.45; challenges with coping

3.5 Relationship Between Demographic Variables and Parenting Styles

Spearman's rho results showed that family structure ($\rho = -0.081$, $p = 0.666$), employment status ($\rho = -0.311$, $p = 0.089$), and monthly income ($\rho = -0.125$, $p = 0.509$) were not significantly related to parenting style. Number of children showed a positive borderline association with parenting style ($\rho = 0.354$, $p = 0.050$). Because the p-value was exactly at the 0.05 threshold and the sample was small, this result should be interpreted cautiously. It may suggest that caregiving experience and responsibility influence parenting behavior, but further testing with a larger sample is needed.

3.6 Difference in Perceived Child Development Outcomes by Family Structure

The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed no significant difference in perceived child development outcomes across family structures ($H = 2.444$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.485$). This means that respondents from nuclear, extended, single-parent, and other family arrangements reported broadly similar perceived child development outcomes. The result should be treated cautiously because one category had only one respondent.

3.7 Relationship Between Parenting Style and Perceived Child Development Outcomes

Parenting style was not significantly related to perceived child development outcomes ($\rho = 0.164$, $p = 0.377$). Although the relationship was positive, it was weak and statistically non-significant. This suggests that other factors, such as family support, economic resources, child characteristics, and practical assistance, may also shape perceived child development outcomes within this sample.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the parenting practices of college-enrolled women who became mothers during adolescence. The most evident parenting style was authoritative parenting,

followed by authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting. The reported parenting practices were generally characterized by emotional involvement, open communication, kindness, and reasonable discipline. While authoritarian tendencies were present, permissive and neglectful practices were less evident.

The findings also showed that respondents perceived positive child development outcomes and reported coping strategies for managing parenting responsibilities. Family structure, employment status, and monthly income were not significantly related to parenting style. Number of children showed a borderline positive association with parenting style, but this result should be interpreted with caution. Family structure did not significantly affect perceived child development outcomes, and parenting style was not significantly related to perceived child development outcomes. Taken together, the findings suggest that the experiences of student-mothers are shaped by several interrelated factors, including caregiving responsibility, support systems, economic conditions, and institutional assistance.

Higher education institutions are encouraged to develop parenting education, psychosocial counseling, peer support groups, flexible academic support, and referral mechanisms for student-mothers. These initiatives may help young mothers manage stress, strengthen authoritative parenting practices, and balance family and academic responsibilities. Future researchers may use larger sample sizes, qualitative interviews, and validated parenting measures to deepen understanding of student-mothers' lived experiences. Intervention studies may also test whether structured parenting and self-efficacy programs improve parenting confidence, coping, and child-development outcomes [16-18].

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The author declares that no funding was involved in this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares no conflict of interest.

ETHICS APPROVAL AND INFORMED CONSENT

This study was reviewed and approved by North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU). Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw from the study.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request. Data that could compromise the privacy of participants are not publicly available.

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