

Association Between Parental Socioeconomic Factors and Parenting Approaches in Parents of Early School-Aged Children

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Abstract:

Background: Socioeconomic characteristics play a pivotal role in shaping parental behaviors and disciplinary approaches. However, empirical data exploring this association in Bangladesh are scarce. This study aimed to assess the relationship between parental socioeconomic factors and parenting approaches among parents of early school-aged children in urban areas. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted among 162 parents of 5–10-year-old children in AGB Colony, Motijheel, and Dhanmondi, Dhaka, Bangladesh, from January to December 2020. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire incorporating the Parenting Style and Dimension Questionnaire (PSDQ). Socioeconomic variables included parental education, occupation, income, family type and residence. Statistical analyses included ANOVA, Chi-square tests, and multiple regression, with significance set at $p < 0.05$. **Results:** Authoritative parenting was significantly associated with higher educational attainment, service occupations, and income above 50,000 BDT ($p < 0.05$). Authoritarian and permissive practices were more common among lower-income and non-service-holder parents. Regression analysis identified education ($\beta = 0.311$, $p = 0.006$), income ($\beta = 0.286$, $p = 0.009$), and residence type ($\beta = 0.185$, $p = 0.047$) as independent predictors of parenting styles ($R^2 = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$). **Conclusion:** Socioeconomic advantage is associated with more adaptive authoritative parenting, whereas lower socioeconomic status predicts controlling or indulgent approaches. Policies promoting parental education and socioeconomic stability can enhance parenting quality and child developmental outcomes in urban Bangladesh.

Keywords: Parenting styles, socioeconomic factors, authoritative parenting, parental education, Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

Parenting represents a complex social and psychological process through which parents shape their children's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral development. Among the numerous determinants of parenting, socioeconomic and demographic factors play a decisive role in shaping parental attitudes, expectations, and disciplinary practices [1]. The concept of parenting style, initially formulated by Baumrind (1971), categorizes parental approaches into authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive types—each characterized by differing levels of responsiveness and demandingness [2]. These styles are influenced not only by personality traits or cultural norms but also by socioeconomic resources, education, and family environment [3].

Socioeconomic status (SES) has long been recognized as a critical determinant of parenting behaviors. Parents with higher educational attainment, stable occupations, and adequate income are generally more inclined toward authoritative practices, which combine warmth and structure, fostering autonomy and self-regulation in children [4]. Conversely, economic hardship or low educational background may lead to more controlling or inconsistent patterns of parenting, often associated with

authoritarian or permissive styles [5]. The pathways through which SES shapes parenting include differences in cognitive stimulation, stress exposure, and access to parenting knowledge and support [6].

In urban South Asian contexts such as Bangladesh, the implications of SES on parenting are particularly relevant. Rapid urbanization and changing family structures have reshaped traditional caregiving dynamics. The prevalence of nuclear families and dual-working parents may influence how authority, warmth, and discipline are negotiated within households [7]. The urban middle class, in particular, demonstrates a shifting paradigm from traditional authoritarian norms toward more democratic, authoritative parenting approaches, reflecting the influence of education, professional engagement, and exposure to global child-rearing ideals [8]. Yet, empirical evidence exploring how these socioeconomic gradients affect parenting styles in Bangladesh remains limited.

Existing global research consistently indicates that parental education and occupation are positively related to authoritative parenting and negatively associated with coercive or neglectful practices [9,10]. In contrast, economic stress or low SES environments have been linked to harsher, less responsive parenting styles due to

increased psychological distress and limited resources for child development [11]. However, in transitional societies, where educational attainment and income do not always align with psychosocial well-being, the relationship between SES and parenting can be more nuanced [12].

Despite the growing body of literature on parenting and child behavior, few studies in Bangladesh have systematically examined how parental socioeconomic and demographic profiles influence their chosen parenting approach. Most local research has focused on behavioral outcomes in children rather than on the antecedent parental characteristics that shape them [13]. Understanding these relationships is critical to developing culturally relevant parental guidance programs and preventive interventions that strengthen family dynamics and promote children's socio-emotional well-being.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the association between parents' socioeconomic factors—such as age, education, occupation, income, family type, and residence—and their predominant parenting style, among parents of early school-aged children in urban Dhaka. By highlighting the social determinants of parenting, the study contributes to contextualizing the parenting paradigm within the socioeconomic realities of Bangladeshi urban families.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This cross-sectional study was conducted among urban parents residing in AGB Colony, Motijheel, and Dhanmondi residential areas of Dhaka city. The study duration spanned from January to December 2020. A total of 162 parents of children aged 5–10 years were included. The research population consisted of biological parents meeting the inclusion criteria outlined below.

Sample Selection

Inclusion Criteria:

- Parents of children aged 5–10 years.
- Biological parents residing in the selected urban areas.

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS:

Most parents were middle-aged and lived in nuclear families. Nearly half had a monthly income below 50,000 BDT, and 41.4% resided in government colonies. Educational status ranged from higher secondary to postgraduate, with a notable proportion working in service positions or healthcare professions.

Significant differences in parenting style were observed across education, occupation, and income groups. Parents with postgraduate education, service occupations, and higher income demonstrated higher authoritative scores and lower authoritarian/permissive tendencies. Family type showed no statistically significant difference, though nuclear families had slightly higher authoritative means.

- Parents who had completed at least higher secondary education (H.S.C).
- Participants who provided informed written consent.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Parents suffering from severe illness.
- Parents whose children had serious medical or developmental disorders.
- Parents are unable to communicate or participate meaningfully.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered using a semi-structured questionnaire through face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire comprised three sections: (1) sociodemographic information, (2) Parenting Style and Dimension Questionnaire (PSDQ) to assess authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles, and (3) items on socioeconomic and family environment variables. Interviews were conducted by the researcher to ensure uniformity. The data were verified daily for accuracy and completeness. To minimize bias, standardized instructions and pretested instruments were used, ensuring internal consistency and reliability.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSOM). Written consent was obtained from all participants after a clear explanation of the study purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality assurance. Data were anonymized and stored securely for research use only.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency, and percentage were used for baseline data. Associations between parenting styles and socioeconomic variables were examined using Chi-square tests, ANOVA, and regression analyses. A p -value ≤ 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Table 1: Baseline characteristics of parents (n = 162)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age group (years)	21–30	43	26.5
	31–40	97	59.9
	41–50	19	11.5
	51–60	3	1.9
Education	Higher Secondary	62	38.3
	Graduate	20	12.3
	Postgraduate	53	32.7
	Medical Science	26	16
	Engineering	1	0.7
Occupation	Service Holder	67	41.4
	Housewife	43	26.5
	Doctor	26	16
	Businessperson	14	8.6
	Self-employed	6	3.7
	Unemployed	5	3.1
Family Type	Nuclear	119	73.5
	Joint	43	26.5
Monthly Income (BDT)	≤50,000	76	46.9
	50,001–100,000	44	27.2
	100,001–150,000	14	8.6
	>150,000	21	13.5
Residence Type	Government Colony	67	41.4
	Building (non-AC)	71	43.8
	Building (AC)	22	13.6
	Half Building	2	1.2

Table 2: Distribution of parenting styles by sociodemographic variables

Variable	Authoritative (Mean ± SD)	Authoritarian (Mean ± SD)	Permissive (Mean ± SD)	p-value
Education (Postgraduate vs others)	4.33 ± 0.42	1.62 ± 0.38	1.47 ± 0.58	0.031
Occupation (Service vs non-service)	4.28 ± 0.45	1.65 ± 0.40	1.48 ± 0.62	0.016
Income (>50,000 vs ≤50,000 BDT)	4.35 ± 0.39	1.70 ± 0.43	1.67 ± 0.60	0.001
Family type (Nuclear vs Joint)	4.30 ± 0.41	1.69 ± 0.46	1.53 ± 0.61	0.072

Table 3: Regression analysis identifying predictors of parenting style

Predictor Variable	β Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Education level	0.311	2.78	0.006
Monthly income	0.286	2.63	0.009
Occupation (service)	0.214	2.11	0.036
Family type	0.098	1.23	0.221
Type of residence	0.185	2.01	0.047

Regression analysis identified education level, monthly income, occupation, and residence type as significant independent predictors of parenting style. These variables collectively explained 38% of the variance in parenting approaches, indicating a strong socioeconomic influence on parenting behavior.

Table 4: Association between type of residence and parenting style

Residence Type	Authoritative (Mean ± SD)	Authoritarian (Mean ± SD)	Permissive (Mean ± SD)	p-value
Residential Area	4.35 ± 0.40	1.77 ± 0.38	1.92 ± 0.52	0.001
Government Colony	4.18 ± 0.42	1.56 ± 0.43	1.67 ± 0.55	0.001

Residence type was significantly associated with parenting style. Parents living in private residential areas had higher authoritative and permissive mean scores, whereas those living in government colonies scored higher on authoritarian dimensions. This suggests environmental and socioeconomic context influences parental approach.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the association between parental socioeconomic factors and parenting approaches among parents of early school-aged children residing in urban Dhaka. The findings demonstrate a significant relationship between socioeconomic characteristics—particularly education, occupation, income, and residence type—and the dominant parenting style practiced. Specifically, higher educational attainment, stable employment, and higher family income were positively associated with the authoritative parenting style, whereas authoritarian and permissive tendencies were more common among parents with lower socioeconomic indicators [14,15]. These results align with the conceptual understanding that socioeconomic context substantially shapes parenting behavior through its influence on parental resources, stress, and psychosocial outlook [3,16].

The current findings corroborate Baumrind's (1971) classical theory, which emphasizes that authoritative parents balance responsiveness and demandingness, often reflecting higher psychological maturity and awareness of child development principles [1]. Parents with better education and income levels are more likely to adopt democratic decision-making and effective communication in child-rearing. Such families also possess greater access to information and child-oriented resources, which may encourage practices emphasizing emotional support and autonomy. In contrast, parents facing financial constraints or limited educational exposure may experience stress and diminished self-efficacy, which can result in inconsistent or harsh disciplinary styles characteristic of authoritarian or permissive approaches [17].

A significant association was found between parental occupation and parenting style, indicating that service-holder and professionally employed parents tend to exhibit more authoritative behaviors. These findings are consistent with previous evidence from South Asian studies suggesting that working parents, particularly those in structured occupations, possess higher exposure to child development knowledge and psychosocial awareness [18]. In contrast, non-service or self-employed parents often operate under variable work hours and limited family support systems, which may reduce their capacity for consistent supervision and emotional engagement. Similar outcomes were reported

by Saragih and Kusnendi, who found that stable employment correlated positively with parental responsiveness in Indonesian families [12].

Education emerged as a strong predictor of parenting style in regression analysis. This association has been widely reported across different contexts. Parents with higher education are more likely to apply reasoning, negotiation, and empathy, which are central to authoritative parenting. Educated parents also tend to value children's individuality and use non-coercive control strategies, promoting self-regulation and social competence. These findings echo those of Masud et al., who observed that parents with tertiary education favored democratic parenting approaches over punitive or indulgent ones [10]. In contrast, lower education may constrain understanding of effective child behavior management, predisposing parents to rigid or inconsistent methods.

Income level was another significant determinant. Families with higher monthly income (>50,000 BDT) reported greater authoritative tendencies. Financial security allows parents to maintain stable family environments, engage in enriched educational activities, and provide positive reinforcement rather than punitive control. Conversely, families with limited income were more likely to report authoritarian or permissive practices. This may be explained through the family stress model proposed by Conger and Donnellan, which posits that economic hardship induces emotional distress and harsh parenting behaviors [11]. The pattern observed in this study closely parallels the findings of Hoeve et al., who identified similar links between socioeconomic stressors and less adaptive parenting styles [18].

Interestingly, the type of residence also showed a significant association with parenting style. Parents residing in developed residential areas were more likely to practice permissive and authoritative approaches, whereas those living in government colonies exhibited more authoritarian patterns. This may reflect environmental and cultural differences in neighborhood context, where social norms, exposure to peer families, and housing conditions shape child-rearing ideologies [20]. Parents in better living conditions often experience less crowding, higher perceived safety, and stronger social capital, which can enhance emotional availability and patience in interactions with children [21]. In

contrast, restrictive living environments may limit privacy and increase stress, influencing stricter control or less engagement.

Family type, while not statistically significant, showed a trend indicating that nuclear families exhibited slightly higher authoritative mean scores compared to joint families. This aligns with modern urban dynamics in which nuclear households emphasize independence, open communication, and shared parental responsibility. Joint families, although offering extended support, may reinforce hierarchical authority patterns that lean toward authoritarian styles. Comparable results were noted by Raj and Raval, who observed that joint family settings in collectivist cultures often maintained stricter behavioral expectations [8].

Overall, the results reflect a transitional pattern of parenting in Bangladesh's urban context. The prevalence of authoritative parenting among educated, working, and higher-income parents suggests an ongoing cultural shift from traditional authoritarian practices toward more dialogic and psychologically informed parenting. This transformation likely mirrors broader socioeconomic changes, including urbanization, women's empowerment, and increased exposure to global educational paradigms. Nevertheless, the persistence of authoritarian and permissive styles among lower-income groups underscores ongoing disparities in parental awareness and access to psychosocial resources.

The study findings are consistent with global and regional literature emphasizing the socioeconomic determinants of parenting. Bradley and Corwyn highlighted that higher SES environments facilitate enriched parental interactions and cognitive stimulation [6]. Similarly, a Bangladeshi study by Mullick and Islam found that parental education and income significantly influenced both parenting behaviors and children's emotional regulation outcomes [7]. Collectively, these findings reinforce that socioeconomic empowerment is integral to improving parenting quality, which in turn influences child development trajectories.

However, it is crucial to interpret these results in the context of social and cultural values. In collectivist societies like Bangladesh, extended family involvement, traditional gender roles, and societal expectations can moderate the expression of parenting styles. Hence, interventions must be culturally sensitive, focusing not only on parental education but also on reducing socioeconomic stress and enhancing family resilience.

Limitations of the study

This study was limited to two urban areas of Dhaka, and the findings may not be generalizable to rural or

semi-urban populations. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference between socioeconomic factors and parenting style. Data were based on self-reporting, which may introduce social desirability bias. Additionally, the study did not account for psychological variables such as parental stress or marital satisfaction that could mediate the observed associations.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that parental socioeconomic factors—particularly education, occupation, income, and residential context—significantly influence parenting approaches. Authoritative parenting predominated among parents with higher education, professional occupations, and stable incomes, whereas authoritarian and permissive patterns were more prevalent among lower socioeconomic groups. These findings emphasize the importance of socioeconomic empowerment and parental education in promoting adaptive parenting practices. Strengthening family counseling, parent education programs, and community-based awareness initiatives could foster positive parenting behaviors, ultimately benefiting children's emotional and behavioral development.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

Ethical approval

The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee.

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