

# Parenting styles and student academic achievement: An exploration among secondary-school graduates in Beijing, China

Kexin Feng<sup>1,\*</sup>, Michael Gaffney<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Higher Education Development Centre, Dunedin, 9016, New Zealand

<sup>2</sup>College of Education, University of Otago, Dunedin, 9016, New Zealand

\*Corresponding author: [fenca314@student.otago.ac.nz](mailto:fenca314@student.otago.ac.nz)

**Abstract:** *In the past decade, numerous scholars and educationalists have highlighted the importance of parenting style and its influence on the learning outcomes of children. Parents are commonly the first caregivers that children know and grow up with, and thus, it is expected that the parenting style they adopt profoundly influences their child's future development. This research focuses on investigating the relationship between authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles and student academic achievement from the perspectives of recent secondary-school graduates in Beijing, China. This study adopted a mixed-methods research approach by using a sequential exploratory design, including both quantitative and qualitative research phases. Although the quantitative results revealed that there was no direct relationship between parenting styles and student academic achievement, the qualitative findings provided evidence for how authoritarian parenting styles could have a mixed influence on student school performance in the Chinese cultural context. The findings also suggest that Chinese authoritarian parents could be considerate and caring within a flexible parental authority, which may often be misunderstood. This research recommends that further exploration of parenting styles in the context of different cultural backgrounds to check its wider construct/content validity.*

**Keywords:** *Parenting Styles, Student Academic Achievement, Secondary School Graduates, Chinese Parenting, Mixed-Methods Research*

## 1. Introduction

A robust body of research highlights that there is a strong relationship between parenting styles and student academic achievement (Dagnew, 2015; Kordi & Baharudin, 2010; Sopia et al., 2021; Verenikina et al., 2011) <sup>[1]</sup>. Most of the research, focusing on European and North American families, has indicated that an authoritative parenting style is positively associated with student academic performance. Whereas a permissive parenting style (Abesha, 2012; Aunola et al., 2000; Castro et al., 2015; Nyarko, 2011; Talib et al., 2011; Tilahun, 2012) or an authoritarian parenting style (Pong et al., 2005; Rogers et al., 2009) can have a negative impact on student academic achievement <sup>[2]</sup>. However, Owusu-Gyan's (2013) research conducted in Malaysia provides some evidence that authoritarian parenting styles can also have a positive impact on student academic performance. This contradictory finding may be attributed to the differences in cultural beliefs and parental values in different cultural contexts. Many Asian parents view being controlling and restrictive as a way of loving and protecting their children, which is based on the cultural perception: that it is a means of shielding their children from both physical and emotional harm <sup>[3]</sup>. Although a few studies have investigated the relationship between parenting styles and student academic achievement in Asian cultural contexts (Elham et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2012; Pong et al., 2010), very little existing research has systematically examined this topic in China. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by drawing on the perspectives of recent Chinese secondary school graduates to discuss the relationship between three parenting styles, namely authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive and their relationship to student academic achievement <sup>[4]</sup>.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Parenting styles and student academic achievement

Parenting styles are most often considered as the approach that parents adopt to interact with and

socialize their children. Different typologies of parenting styles have been developed. Baumrind's (1978) three parenting typologies emerged from a scale with a continuum of responsiveness through to demandingness. Authoritative parents are both supportive and disciplining, establishing achievable goals and setting boundaries while providing guidance and logical explanations (Berg, 2011; Bioh et al., 2018; Jeffrey, 2013). Permissive parents are caring but undemanding, allowing children absolute freedom without establishing rules or regulating children's inappropriate behaviours (Boateng et al., 2019, Rossman & Rea, 2005). Authoritarian parents are demanding but unresponsive to a child's needs, enforcing strict obedience without providing positive feedback (Zupancic et al., 2004). Although Baumrind's typology is one of the most common categorizations of parenting styles, its assessment does not take socioeconomic background and cultural differences into account.

The authoritative parenting style, characterized by encouragement and guidance, has been found consistently to have positive effects on student academic achievement (Aunola et al., 2000; Nyarko, 2015; Talib et al., 2011). A study shows that a warm parent-child relationship and respectful communication are features of children who have been raised by authoritative parents, which contributes to cognitive growth and academic success<sup>[2]</sup>. In contrast, the permissive parenting style has often been associated with lower academic attainment because parental demand is missing (Darko, 2018; Elham et al., 2012; Tilahun, 2012)<sup>[2][5]</sup>. Although permissive parents tend to have lower academic expectations, they are still receptive to their children's needs. However the evidence is not consistent, for example, Boateng and colleagues (2020) undertook a study in Ghana in which permissive parenting style was not having a negative impact on student achievement. The authoritarian parenting style, characterized by strict discipline and relatively little affection toward children, has generally been associated with negative student academic outcomes (Areepattamannil, 2010; Dagnew, 2015; Mohammed et al., 2011; Rogers et al., 2009)<sup>[2]</sup>. Hong (2012) found that both high pressure and parental involvement in education can cause stress and rebellion in children, which lowers their academic performance. However, some recent studies conducted in Asian countries, particularly in China, have indicated a beneficial impact of authoritarian parents on student academic achievement (Addai et al., 2017; Owusu-Gyan, 2013). This raises the question as to whether consequences may differ according to cultural circumstances?

## ***2.2 Chinese parenting styles and student academic achievement***

The stereotypical view of parenting approaches adopted by Chinese parents is that they adopt an authoritarian parenting style. For example, the term "tiger mother" is often associated with Chinese parenting, based on an authoritarian parenting style (Lui & Rollock, 2013). It is characterized by disciplinary parenting, high parental expectations, and strictness, as well as "maternal restrictiveness and achievement demands" (Cheung & McBride-Chang, 2008, p.17). Unlike the commonly perceived authoritarian style, "tiger parents" are more likely to focus on academic success than overall competence (Juang et al., 2013). It could be argued that this is because academic grades in China are important to future students' career success. For example, if students get a better score in the National College Entrance Examination, they are more likely to be employed by well-known companies and earn a higher salary (Lui & Rollock, 2013). Therefore, the desire of "tiger parents" to ensure their child has a brighter future than those around them makes them eager to see the next generation achieve academic excellence.

Nonetheless, the concept of traditional Chinese "tiger parenting", also known as the Chinese authoritarian parenting practice, is slightly different from the definition of the authoritarian parenting style explained in the previous section. Chinese parents have high expectations for their children's academic performance but showing affection and care in a particular subtle and implicit way<sup>[3]</sup>. They indicate that "tiger parents" are also concerned about their children's wellbeing. Alternatively, some Chinese parents express "tiger parenting" differently. Specifically, well-educated mothers in China are more inclined to adopt a more authoritative parenting style to educate their children in contrast to those who are less well educated.

Previous research has established that there is a positive relationship between Chinese authoritarian parenting style and student academic achievement (Addai et al., 2017; Bioh et al., 2018; Owusu-Gyan, 2013)<sup>[6]</sup>. Chinese parents have high expectations of their children and some of them are extremely demanding. As an old Chinese saying goes "(parents) long to see their son become a dragon and their daughter become a phoenix" (Wenkang, 1878, p. 36). Dragons and phoenixes are symbolized as the most powerful and successful animals in China, which indicates that Chinese parents wish their children to be flourishing individuals in both academia and their future career. Most Chinese parents believe that being restrictive and controlling can promote student academic performance (Owusu-Gyan, 2013), and thus, strict regulation of children is common in China. In addition to this, Chinese student say they are more likely to study harder to live up to their parents' expectations<sup>[3]</sup>, which makes them become "parent

pleasers”.

### 2.3 Critique

The main challenge to replicating this published research reviewed above was that there is no guidance given about how they scored the items from the Parental Authority Questionnaire from Buri (1991), which was the most dominant means of assessing parenting styles. Very few scholars identified how they determined the parenting style for students when their parents had differing styles [2]. For example, Turner and colleagues (2009) suggested that they allowed the participants to self-identify the dominant parent in the family, while Berzonsky (2003) replaced the term from ‘a mother or a father’ with ‘parents’ in his measures. However, this blurs the judgements rather than helps differentiate parenting styles or suggests how they might combine. Although there are a few Chinese studies that specified they adopted the Parental Authority Questionnaire (Kang & Moore, 2011; Niemeier et al., 2017), none of them specified the method of scoring separate parenting styles. Therefore, this thesis follows the method initially proposed by Buri (1991), which pointed out that the score of the Parental Authority Questionnaire should be separately summed up for an individual mother and an individual father, so as to ensure its authenticity and validity [7]. This would be the most important for families where mothers and fathers have different parenting styles, however Buri does not give any guidance as to how to analyse or interpret parenting styles when parents differ. The lack of clarity about which measures of parental authority are used and how the data are analysed makes it difficult to thoroughly reviewed the literature.

### 3. Methodology and Methods

This study adopted a pragmatic methodology, focusing on a practical investigation by examining the effects of parenting styles on student academic achievement in Beijing, China. This study also employed a sequential exploratory design as part of its mixed-method approach. To complement and enhance quantitative findings, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted after the quantitative questionnaires [8], as shown in Table. 1.

Table 1: Sequential exploratory design

Phases	Brief Procedures	Potential Outcomes
Quantitative Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot test before publishing online survey.</li> <li>• Recruit participants who meet the inclusion criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic information</li> <li>• PAQ data collection</li> </ul>
Quantitative Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kruskal-Wallis H test</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of the relationship between parenting styles and student academic achievement</li> </ul>
Qualitative Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of targeted group for semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Conduct interviews via video-recording device</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enrich the details of how students perceive parenting styles which their parents adopted</li> </ul>
Qualitative Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manual transcription</li> <li>• Thematic analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpretation and clarification of the findings to further advance details from the survey</li> </ul>
Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration and explanation of quantitative and qualitative findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Implications for future research</li> </ul>

#### 3.1 Context and Participants

This study focuses on recent secondary school graduates in Beijing, aged between 17 and 20 years old. To be eligible for the study, participants must understand and critically evaluate the questionnaire statements (for survey participants), as well as effectively communicate their thoughts (for interview participants). Moreover, participants must have taken the 2022 Chinese National College Entrance Examination (Gaokao) in Beijing, as it considered as a reliable measure of their academic achievement for this research (Davey et al., 2010) [9]. The participants met the following criteria: (1) have graduated from secondary schools in Beijing in June 2022; (2) have completed the National College Entrance Examination (also known as Gaokao); and (3) they had a father and a mother living in the same household as them.

A total of 98 students from secondary schools expressed their interests in participating in this study. However, only 56 recent graduates (16 males, 40 females) met the inclusion criteria and provided valid data. Their descriptive data is shown in Table 2.

*Table 2: Demographic information of the Participants*

Demographic Information	Frequency	Percentage
Male	16	28.6%
Female	40	71.4%
17 years old	4	7.1%
18 years old	38	67.9%
19 years old	14	25.0%
Total	56	100%

### **3.2 Procedures**

In the quantitative phase, the researcher sent them a poster with a QR code once the participants had agreed to be part of this study. The designed questionnaire took about 30 minutes to complete, and the steps were accessible and easy to follow. In addition, pre-testing was conducted prior to the final distribution of the designed questionnaire to ensure its comprehensibility and validity. As the targeted participants are Chinese students, the researcher translated the items of the PAQ into Chinese before conducting the survey. Thanks to a volunteer who is in the same age range as the research participants and is proficient in English, some errors, such as misinterpretation of two words, were identified through this process of pre-testing.

At the qualitative phase, 3 participants, who had earlier signalled their willingness to participate in an interview during the survey, were selected using a stratified sampling strategy. The criteria was that the parenting styles of both mothers and fathers were the same. There was to be an interviewee from each of the three categories: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive as identified from the PAQ survey. This was possible for the authoritarian and authoritative categories, but in the absence of a permissive parenting participant a student with a permissive mother and authoritative father was chosen instead. As we explained later, this father does not play a dominant role in parenting his child. Therefore, we describe this interviewee with permissive parents. This was to allow the researcher to further investigate the influences of parenting styles on student academic achievement. A different information sheet and consent form from the survey was sent to these participants.

### **3.3 Data collection and analysis**

The authors obtained permission from the university human ethics committee before commencing the process of data collection. In the quantitative phase, the designed questionnaire was distributed via an online application named Sojump since the researcher was not allowed recruit potential participants in campuses due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The questionnaires were distributed online via WeChat, a Chinese social media application similar to Facebook. Advertisements with a QR code were used to attract respondents, and potential participants received an information sheet and consent form to ensure their informed consent. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese and collected by Sojump. Thereafter, the data was classified into demographic information (age and sex), academic achievement and responses to the PAQ. For PAQ data, each parent was scored separately; summing the scores across each parenting style. A Kruskal-Wallis H test (Statistical Package for Social Science - SPSS) was conducted after entering the student academic achievement data, as shown in Fig. 1.

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Chinese students in Chinese after translating the questions. The researcher used a video recorder to capture both verbal and physical responses. For qualitative data analysis, manual transcription was used to ensure accuracy. The transcripts were then sent back to the interviewee to review in order to verify the data before translating them into English. A manual thematic analysis (author, date) was undertaken for this qualitative phase of the study, involving coding and grouping emerging themes as shown in Figure 2.

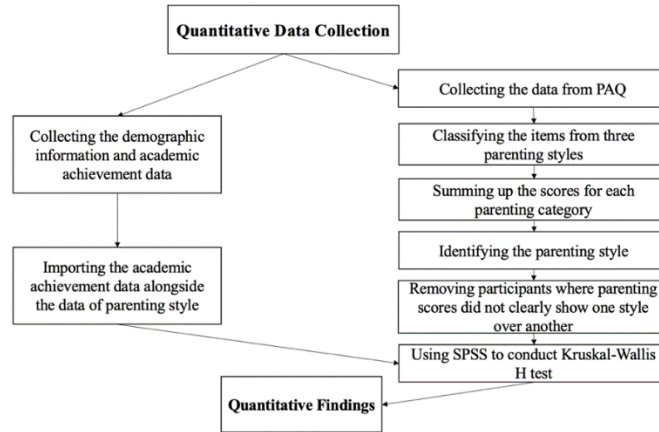


Figure 1: Quantitative Data Analysis

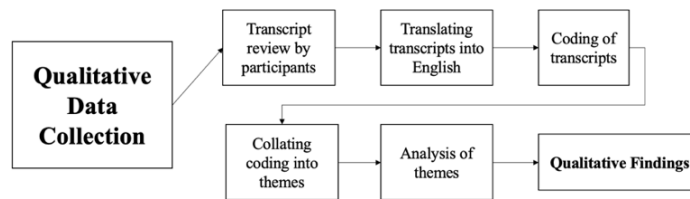


Figure 2: Qualitative Data Analysis

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Quantitative Phase

As part of their survey students offered their 2022 National College Entrance Examination scores. These were self reported. As shown in Figure 3, the largest group of respondents (37.5%) scored between 551-600. This was followed by 14 students who achieved a score between 601-650 (25%), 13 between 501-550 (23.2%), six exceeding 651 (10.7%) and two students whose scores were lower than 500 (3.6%).

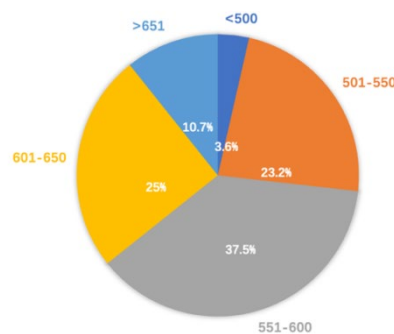


Figure 3: Academic scores of respondents in the 2022 National College Entrance Examination

Furthermore, as shown in Figure 4 below, nearly three quarters (n=41, 73.2%) of the participants suggested that their mothers adopted an authoritative parenting style, followed by nearly twenty percent reporting authoritarian (n=11, 19.6%) and less than 10 percent permissive (n=4, 7.2%). Likewise, nearly two thirds (n=36, 64.3%) of the respondents reported that their fathers adopted an authoritative parenting style, followed by just over 20 percent (n=12, 21.4%) indicating authoritarian and just under 15 percent (n=8, 14.3%) suggesting their fathers were permissive.

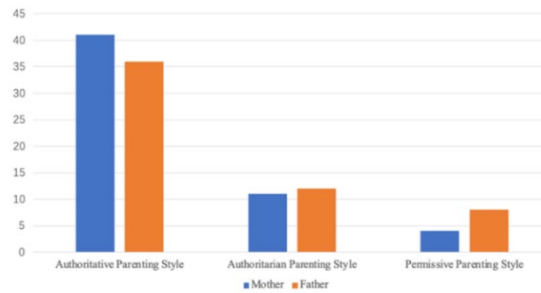


Figure 4: The parenting styles of the participants' parents adopted (%)

To investigate the statistical relevance of the relationship between parenting styles and student academic achievement, the researchers performed the Kruskal-Wallis H test (SPSS). The parenting styles of mothers and fathers were assessed separately. In terms of the parenting styles of mothers, as summarized in Table 3, there was no significant difference ( $H(2) = 1.705$ ,  $p = .426$ , NS) across the mean achievement scores of 580 for authoritative, 598 for authoritarian and 613 for permissive parenting styles.

Table 3: Kruskal-Wallis test results of mothers' parenting styles

Total N	56
Test Statistic	1.705 <sup>a</sup>
Degree of Freedom	2
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.426

Table 4 shows the equivalent statistic for the influence of fathers' parenting styles on student academic performance. The relation between these variables was also not significant,  $H(2) = 1.651$ ,  $p = .438$ , NS). The mean achievement score of achievement scores were 585 for authoritative, 601 for authoritarian and 562 for permissive.

Table 4: Kruskal-Wallis test results of fathers' parenting styles

Total N	56
Test Statistic	1.651 <sup>a</sup>
Degree of Freedom	2
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.438

#### 4.2 Qualitative Phase

Three interviewees were involved: Interviewee A had authoritative parents, Interviewee B had authoritarian parents, and Interviewee C had permissive parents. Their information is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: The information of the three groups of interviewees

Participants	Parenting styles	Academic Scores
Interviewee A	Authoritative	573
Interviewee B	Authoritarian	641
Interviewee C	Permissive	536

The interviewees shared their experiences and talked about their perspectives of how they were parented. During the process of analysis, three themes emerged: behavioural responses of parents to their children's learning; interviewees views about their parenting experience; and the values and expectations that they saw that their parents had about academic achievement.

##### Theme 1 – Students' Perspectives on Parental Behaviour

The first theme is students' perspectives on their parents' behaviours. Interviewee A stated:

*My (authoritative) parents are responsive and caring for both my learning and wellbeing. They listened to my ideas and allowed me to make my own decisions when I grew up. My parents had expectations of my academic results but, they would not set unachievable goals. In addition, my mother established strict disciplines for me when I was in high school. I must sleep before 11 o'clock, for instance.*

This parenting style is consistent with previous research findings indicating that authoritative parents are both nurturing and strict, which fosters understanding of the relationship between parents and children

and further promotes academic achievement (Bioh et al., 2018; Nyarko, 2015; Talib et al., 2011). Interviewee B, on the other hand, had authoritarian parents with very high expectations, however they were unresponsive to her feelings and thoughts. Interviewee B stated:

*My (authoritarian) parents were not familiar with my study, but they asked me to become the top student in my class. I wanted to attend extracurricular classes to improve my learning to satisfy the high expectation of my parents but, my parents did not listen to me because they simply believed I did not need one.*

Interviewee B had the highest academic score among the three interviewees, which corresponds to other studies where there was a positive association between authoritarian parenting styles and student academic success in certain Asian cultures (Liao & Larke, 2008; Owusu-Gyan, 2013). Interviewee C's permissive parents let him make his own decisions without imposing many restrictions on him. Coincidentally, Interviewee C got the lowest academic score out of all the interviewees, which happens to be consistent with the literature that a permissive parenting style is closely linked with lower academic achievement (Darko, 2018) [5].

### *Theme 2 – Students' Views to their Parenting Experiences*

The second theme explores the interviewees perspectives on the way they were parented. Interviewee B, whose authoritarian parents had extremely high expectations for her academic performance, admitted to feeling depressed and dissatisfied as a result. She experienced psychological punishment when she could not meet her parents' expectations, which produced negative feelings of guilt and discomfort. Psychological punishment can negatively impact students' emotional wellbeing, which then influences their learning motivation and academic achievement [10]. However, Interviewee B managed to reach the highest academic score despite the unpleasant feelings. Conversely, Interviewees A and C, expressed feeling supported and valued by their authoritative and permissive parents, respectively. Interviewee A's authoritative parents never used any forms of punishment; instead, they adopted positive reinforcement to make her learning process enjoyable. Both interviewee A and C had positive experiences under the approaches adopted by their parents. Although many studies have found a connection between positive emotions and academic performance (Mega et al., 2014; Peixoto et al., 2017; Villavicencio & Bernardo, 2012), it is noteworthy that interviewee A and C had lower scores compared to interviewee B despite this.

### *Theme 3 – Parental Value and Expectations*

The third theme examines how the parents value their children's academic performance and their expectations of their children as a result. Interviewee A, with authoritative parents, emphasized how her parents focused more on her learning experience and improvement rather than her final grade. In contrast, Interviewee B's parents were highly result oriented. She mentioned "the only important thing to them (her parents) was my exam results". On the other hand, Interviewee C shared that his permissive parents did not care too much about his academic achievement and were proud of him regardless of his grades. When asked to rate the importance of academic results to their parents on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 is extremely unimportant and 10 is extremely important), Interviewee A rated her authoritative parents as 5, Interviewee B rated her authoritarian parents as 9, and Interviewee C rated his permissive parents as 2. These ratings help us infer the level of parental expectation for their children's academic achievement. The authoritarian parents had the highest expectations and demandingness when compared to authoritative and permissive parents.

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1 The Survey**

The present study investigated the relationship between parenting styles and student academic achievement based on the perceptions of recent senior-secondary school graduates in Beijing, China. Contrary to the general literature, the current study found no significant relationship between parenting styles (adopted by either fathers nor mothers) and student academic achievement. This is similar to previous research of Masud et al. (2015), who also found no evidence of a relationship between parenting styles and student academic performance. As described earlier, several researchers have demonstrated that parenting styles do have a strong relationship with academic achievement of adolescents (Boateng et al., 2019; Darko, 2018) [1].

There are several possible explanations for why there was no statistical relationship between parenting styles and student academic achievement on this occasion. Firstly, parenting styles may change

over time throughout the development of children. Although it is assumed that parenting styles tend to be stable during adolescence, shifts have been found in the past<sup>[9]</sup>. For example, Interviewee C suggested that his mother switched from an authoritarian to a permissive parenting style because she was worried about his mental health. If such transitions in parenting styles are common then they might influence student academic performance (Masud et al., 2015). Secondly, the cultural tendency in Chinese society is to avoid extreme ratings on questionnaires, which could have influenced the results of this study (Shou et al., 2016). It is noticed that many participants were more likely to rate 2 or 3 or 4 than 1 or 5 which could suggest a distortion. Thirdly, some external factors, such as the school system, teaching quality, family socioeconomic status, and peer pressure, can also affect student academic achievement and might interact with parenting styles (Aturupane et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2020; Moldes et al., 2019). These factors were not considered in this study. Lastly, and most importantly, the small sample size of this study limited its statistical power and capacity to reach robust statistical conclusions. Even though a small sample size may undermine the accuracy of the research findings, Bacchetti (2013) highlighted that regardless of the sample size we should look beyond the p value to further thoughtful analysis and insightful discussion behind the study. Which is why the interview element of the study was included.

## 5.2 The Interviews

The follow-up interviews in the qualitative phase of this study provided additional evidence of the respondents' views about their parents' behaviour, which we call theme 1. All three interviewees have the parents with the same parenting styles, but each was different. However, both Interviewee A (authoritative) and B (authoritarian)'s parents adopted a "strict father and kind mother" approach<sup>[3]</sup>. This is a well-established approach in the majority of Chinese families. This raises the question of how we get different evidence from the survey compared with the interview. For example, how can the authoritarian mother (interviewee B) be described as "kind" or their authoritative father (interviewee A) be described as "strict"? One of the possible explanations is that Chinese fathers are considered to be more controlling while Chinese mothers are typically perceived to be more caring in nurturing their children. The interview evidence highlighted that their mothers played a less-dominant role in their families. Interviewee A mentioned that her mother was happy for her father to take charge of most of the household decisions, because her father had a more meticulous and responsible personality. In contrast, interviewee B stated that her mother was forced to listen to her father simply because of masculine authority. This manifests the ideology of "male domination and female subordination" (男尊女卑: nan zun nv bei), which can be dated back to the ancient Chinese feudal society (Sangren, 2009). It indicated that men were more superior than women. Although the perception "masculine domination" was a discarded leftover in the modern Chinese society, and the concept of "gender equality" is clearly stated in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (Edwards & Roces, 2000), it is still ingrained in many Chinese families<sup>[3]</sup>. It is important to note that only a few of the survey responses demonstrated the pattern of authoritarian fathers and authoritative mothers. Regardless of the contradiction between survey and interview data, it does seem to reflect how the cultural customs account for the less dominating role that mothers play in Chinese families. A comprehensive and more diverse survey method would be required for an in-depth understanding of such cultural dynamics.

However, the role of parents may shift due to the vigorous development and socio-economic changes in the entire Chinese society. Shek (2005) identified that the parenting pattern of "strict father, kind mother" has been reversed in China in recent years. It is noted that there are six students with authoritarian mothers and either authoritative or permissive fathers identified in our quantitative results. The mode of "tiger mother, panda father" has been adopted by an increasing number of Chinese families<sup>[11]</sup>. It indicates that more Chinese mothers play an authoritarian role and take responsibility for parenting their children compared to fathers nowadays. In line with previous studies highlighted in the literature review, "tiger mother" defined by strictness and demandingness has become increasingly popular in contemporary Chinese societies (Juang et al., 2013).

Notwithstanding this, the interviewees were raised by parents who adopted the same parenting approaches assessed by PAQ from Buri (1991), they conveyed that their parents were often both restrictive and responsive over time, as evidenced in theme 3<sup>[7]</sup>. This finding is supported by Lui et al. (2021), who clarified that many Chinese parents are controlling, a feature of the authoritarian parenting style, and caring, a prominent feature of the authoritative parenting style, simultaneously<sup>[3]</sup>. In the context of traditional Chinese culture, the characteristics of child obedience and parental restrictiveness in the authoritarian parenting style should not be used to imply that the parents are inconsiderate and dominating. Instead, it is the unique cultural values of Chinese parenting, which conveys flexible and sensible authority rather than adopting a purely power-centred approach<sup>[6]</sup>. In addition, the findings from



the literature review section further demonstrate that this Chinese parenting style is effective in promoting student academic achievement in China (Addai et al., 2017; Bioh et al., 2018) [6]. It is reflected in the case of Interviewee B with authoritarian parents, who mentioned that one crucial reason why she became one of the top students in her class was her parents' strong emphasis on academic achievement. Arepattamanni (2010) further confirmed that parental expectations (theme 3) and involvement (theme 1) are positive factors which have impacts on student academic achievement. Interviewee B's parents had high parental expectations of their child's school performances, which was seen in Interviewee B's academic results. The implication is that the construct validity of the authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles may not be appropriate in the Chinese context or reflect their values, beliefs and attitudes.

On the other hand, an extreme concentration on academic achievement from Chinese parents may be detrimental to student mental health and wellbeing. Chinese parents tend to express love for their children by being demanding [3]. During the schooling stage of parenting, Chinese parents are likely to request high academic results. However, a heavy emphasis and unachievable demands from Chinese parents may result in them ignoring their children's feelings or even causing anxiety and depression in their children [6]. This emerged as theme 2 within the interview data. For instance, Interviewee C with permissive parents mentioned that his parents used to push him to study harder so as to get higher academic scores. Unfortunately, he could not cope with the pressure his parents put on him, which he attributed to him eventually developing a depressive disorder. Hou et al. (2020) noted that 23.8% of the Chinese adolescents who reported having depressive symptoms, and one of the important reasons for this were the high expectations from parents. Liu and Merritt (2018) added that the Chinese authoritarian parenting style that includes excessive attention on child school performances directly predicted depression, which later could compromise student academic achievement.

Furthermore, we should consider the possibility that the impact of adopting a particular parenting style on student academic achievement may differ substantially across cultures. As explained above, the meaning of authoritarian parenting styles in Chinese culture is slightly different. The style of parental care and demandingness identified in China appears to benefit student academic achievement (Owusu-Gyan, 2013). However, a heavy parental focus by Chinese parents on their children's studies, especially examination results, may undermine student mental health, and subsequently lower their academic achievement (Liu & Merritt, 2018). Therefore, it seems that Chinese authoritarian parenting styles may have a mixed effect depending on the value of each individual parent, which is consistent with the findings of the research conducted by Boateng et al. (2020). In contrast to the results from other cultural backgrounds, it is suggested that authoritarian parenting styles are negatively associated with student academic achievement (Elham et al., 2012; Darko, 2018) [5], which was not evidenced in the qualitative data of this study.

## 6. Conclusion

The overall aim of this research was to advance an understanding of the relationship between parenting styles and student academic achievement of recent secondary school graduates in Beijing, China. Exploring authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting, the study holds significance in understanding adolescent development, particularly cognitive growth and academic success. While quantitative analysis revealed no significant relationship between parenting styles and academic achievement, qualitative insights uncovered nuances. Chinese authoritarian parenting, characterised by high expectations and parental involvement, showed a mixed impact on student performance, potentially leading to both positive academic outcomes and psychological stress.

Acknowledging Baumrind's traditional parenting styles, the study noted a prevalence of mixed approaches among parents. Interviews highlighted authoritarian parents; emphasis on academic success, influencing student motivation and future achievements. Despite quantitative results, interviews hinted at gender differences in parental roles and the complex influence of authoritarian parenting on academic success.

However, the study faces limitations, such as relying solely on student perspectives and small sample size. Future research could benefit from multi-informant methods and exploring broader aspects of parenting. Additionally, addressing parental pressure-induced depressive symptoms among adolescents suggests implementing accessible counselling programs to foster healthier parent-child relationships and support academic development.

**References**

- [1] Wintre, M. G., & Yatte, M. (2006). *First-year students' adjustment to university life as a function of relationships with parents*. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 15(1), 9-37.
- [2] Odongo, A., Aloka, P., & Raburu, P. (2016). *Influence of parenting styles on the adolescent students' academic achievement in Kenyan day secondary schools*. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(15), 101-108.
- [3] Cheung, C. S., & McBride-Chang, C. (2008). *Relations of perceived maternal parenting style, practices, and learning motivation to academic competence in Chinese children*. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 54(1), 1-22.
- [4] Baumrind, D. (1967). *Childcare practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior*. *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 75(1), 43-88.
- [5] Piquart, M. (2015). *Associations of parenting styles and dimensions with academic achievement in children and adolescents: A meta-analysis*. *Educational Psychology Review*, 28(3), 475-493.
- [6] Xu, Y., Farver, J., Zhang, Z., Zeng, Q., Yu, L., & Cai, B. (2005). *Mainland Chinese parenting styles and parent-child interaction*. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 29(6), 524-531.
- [7] Buri, J. R. (1991). *Parental authority questionnaire*. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 57(1), 110-119.
- [8] Creswell, J., & Clark, V. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. SAGE.
- [9] Zhang, Y. (2016). *National college entrance examination in China: Perspectives on education quality and equity*. Springer.
- [10] Ormrod, J. (2016). *Human Learning*. University of Northern Colorado.
- [11] Xie, S., & Li, H. (2017). "Tiger mom, panda dad": *A study of contemporary Chinese parenting profiles*. *Early Child Development and Care*, 189(2), 284-300.