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# *The Influence of Parental Authority on Adolescents' Perception of Teacher Authority*

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***Abstract.*** This paper aims to explore the correlation between parental authority styles and adolescents' perceptions of teacher authority. The parental authority types is mainly based on the Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive parenting styles by Baumrind. To measure the adolescents' perceptions of teacher authority, it has been divided into three domains: rules, morality, and personal life. The researchers collected 114 adolescents' data by adapting the Parental Authority Questionnaire-Revised (PAQ-R) and the Teacher Authority Cognition Questionnaire to design a self-examine questionnaire. The results of this study revealed no significant overall correlation between parental authority and teacher authority perceptions. However, when the researchers divided these data by students' educational system, adolescents in non-Gaokao educational systems showed specific significant correlations. In this section, permissive parenting was negatively correlated with acceptance of teacher authority in the moral domain, authoritarian parenting was positively correlated with acceptance in personal life domain. These results imply that adolescents' acceptance of teacher authority can depend on context and may be impacted by both parenting style and educational structure. This study emphasizes that authority perception has its domain-specific nature and also shows the authority perception's potential transfer from family to school contexts, offering insights into the cultural and structural factors shaping adolescent authority cognition.

***Keywords:*** Parental Authority, Teacher Authority, Adolescent Perception

## 1. Introduction

This study is aimed at discovering the correlation between parental authority styles and adolescents' perception of teachers' authority, drawing on Baumrind's three parenting styles: the Authoritarian, the Authoritative and the Permissive [1].

The study used the PAQ-R and the Teacher Authority Cognition Questionnaire to collect data, but the original questionnaires were adjusted. The one adapted from the PAQ-R was shortened from 30 to 14 items, adjusted for adolescent respondents, and the one from the Teacher Authority Cognition Questionnaire was shortened from 27 to 14 items, focusing on three contexts: rules, morality, and

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personal life (for example, choice of friends and clothing) to assess students' cognition of teachers' authority [1,2].

Previous research indicates that adolescents' perception of teacher authority is different across social domains. In the personal life domain, most students do not perceive or accept teacher authority, implying that the boundaries of teacher authority do not strongly extend into students' personal lives [3].

The study aims to examine the relationships and potential connections between adolescents' perceptions of their parents' authority and, there for, their corresponding perceptions of their teachers' authority. This study explores whether, how, and under what circumstances adolescents' experiences and interpretations of parental authority within their home context associate with or inform their views on teacher authority within the school context.

## 2. Literature review

Bi et al.'s study explains how parenting styles influence adolescents' authority perception. The Authoritarian and the Permissive parenting styles increase arguments between parents and their children, creating an unhealthy environment. This is because these two parenting styles increase adolescents' expectations of independence. In contrast, the Authoritative parenting style increases adolescents' acceptance of parental authority and reduces conflict and arguments. This is because this type of parenting style can strengthen adolescents' belief that their parents are using their authority appropriately.

Bi et al.'s study also mentioned the role of cultural values. Confucianism has been a significant influence on Chinese adolescents. This makes them more likely to suppress the expression of conflict, although both Western and Eastern adolescents experience similar conflict frequencies at home. Also, Chinese adolescents interpreted authoritarian parenting as "parental concern," which leads to lower conflict intensity compared to Western adolescents.

Helwig et al. pointed out that adolescents' perceptions of authority significantly depend on specific domains [3].

In the academic domain, adolescents are more likely to accept the teachers' professional authority. However, in other domains like personal activities, adolescents prefer to make independent decisions due to their need for fairness and also their distrust of teachers' authority in these areas.

This difference provides different dimensions of the "authority cognition framework," demonstrating that adolescents can decide under different contexts whether they obey the authority. It provides solid support for the domain-specific measurement of teacher authority.

Building on the above theories, this study employed two instruments for questionnaire design and experimentation.

These studies construct the framework of authority cognition in family and school contexts. The following study explores how adolescents' parenting authority perception are applied to students' cognition of teacher authority. The personal life domain is essential to observe whether this transfer phenomenon occurs.

## 3. Method

The study is using self-assessment questionnaires to explore the influence of parental authority on adolescents' perception of teacher authority, to clarify their association and explore how adolescents perceive and obey these authorities. There are two parts: one is the obedience of teenagers to their parents' authority, and the other is the obedience of teenagers to their teachers' authority [4].

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Based on the Parental Authority Questionnaire-Revised (PAQ-R) by Reitman et al., we designed a questionnaire measuring parental authority types [1]. Also we focus on the Teacher Authority Cognition Questionnaire compiled by Zhang Risheng and Li Linlin, and designed a questionnaire to measuring students' perceptions of teacher authority [2]. The questionnaire focuses on three core factors within its objective dimension: the rule domain, the moral domain, and the personal life domain.

The target group of the two questionnaires is adolescents—unlike young children who lack independent thoughts and adults who have long been away from school, adolescents have their own ideas and they are familiar with school scenarios. It makes them the most suitable respondents.

The first part of the questionnaire includes a demographics section with four questions: adolescents' age, gender, nationality, and educational system, which are intended to eliminate interference from external factors that may affect the study results, since parenting styles and adolescent perception can be highly related to gender and other factors [5].

For the parental authority assessment content, the original 30 questions (10 questions corresponding to each of the three parenting styles) were optimized and reduced to 14, including 6 questions for permissive parenting, 4 questions for authoritarian parenting, and 4 questions for authoritative parenting. To fit the adolescent respondents, the subjects of the original questions were adjusted from "children" to "you" (e.g., the original question "Children need to be free to make their own decisions about activities..." was revised to "You are free to make your own decisions about activities..."), and the survey also uses a 5-point rating scale (1 = never/hardly agree, 5 = always agree) for adolescents to self-evaluate their parents' authority style.

The survey on adolescents' perception of teacher authority is designed based on the Teacher Authority Cognition Questionnaire [2]. The original questionnaire was constructed based on 6 factors and included 27 questions; since this study focuses on adolescents rather than teachers, 3 factors related to teachers' own qualities were removed, and 3 factors focusing on adolescents' obedience to teachers in different scenarios (rules, morality, personal life) were retained. After screening, 14 questions were finalized for the survey. To prevent measurement errors caused by adolescents' unclear understanding of complex words, expressions like "obey" in the original questionnaire were replaced with simple words such as "willing to listen", and the survey also adopts a 5-point rating scale (1 = never/hardly do, 5 = always do) for adolescents to self-assess their perception of teacher authority.

The questionnaires in this study were designed using Wenjuanxing, an online survey platform, and then distributed online to reach the target adolescent group.

## 4. Procedure section

The questionnaire was conducted online. To avoid sample bias due to limitations within the researchers' social circle, it was forwarded to teacher groups and several secondary school teachers were invited to assist spreading the questionnaire.

## 5. Results

By reviewing the answers to the age-related question, ten questionnaires that were not completed by adolescents were removed to ensure data accuracy, leaving 114 valid responses.

Correlation analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. First, the scores of the three types of parental authority and the overall teacher authority perception questionnaire were divided

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into four variables and their correlations were analyzed. Based on the results (p=.107, p=.527, p=.137), it can be seen that no significant correlations were found between them.

Considering that the teacher questionnaire covered three distinct domains, a separate correlation analysis between the scores of the three types of parental authority and each individual question in the teacher authority perception questionnaire was conducted. It was found that the answer to the question, "When it is about clothes and how I look, I accept the teacher's guidelines," showed a significant negative correlation (p=.023) with the permissive parenting style.

Given that differences in educational systems might influence students' perceptions of teacher authority, the above correlation analysis separately for two systems: the college entrance exam (Gaokao) system and the non-Gaokao system were further conducted. The results showed that under the Gaokao system, there was no significant correlation between parental authority styles and students' perceptions of teacher authority. However, under the non-Gaokao system, four questions related to students' perceptions of teacher authority showed significant correlations with parental authority styles.

1. I will agree with the teacher's handling of theft issues. This statement shows a significant negative correlation with the permissive authority style (p=.046).

2. I will agree with how the teacher deals with causing damage to school things. This statement shows a significant negative correlation with the permissive authority style (p=.041).

3. When it is about small things in life, I accept teachers' guidelines. This statement shows a significant positive correlation with the authoritarian authority style (p=.037).

4. When it is about planning my free time, I accept teacher's guidelines. This statement shows a significant positive correlation with the authoritarian authority style (p=.044).

## 6. Discussion

These phenomena above may occur because that issues like causing damage and theft are not similar to being late, leaving early or exam cheating. Issues like causing damage to school objects and theft aren't things that teachers are familiar dealing with, there for have a vague boundary within the school context. These behaviors may not be the teachers' responsibility, which means students raised under permissive parenting are likely to question the teacher's authority in such areas. When moving to the personal life domain, questions like small daily decisions and how to spend after school time show a significant positive correlation with the authoritarian parenting style. This suggests that under authoritarian parenting, students' perception of teacher authority is different. These students may be more used to obey authority in all fields, there for their view of parental authority extends to their perception of teacher authority [4].

Results also showed that when it came to personal appearance like clothes choosing, there was a significant negative correlation with the permissive parenting style.

Previous studies mainly focused on Western adolescents, who tend to have a broader and more clearly definition of personal autonomy. However, Chinese schools control students in a stricter and more extensive way, which is why Chinese students are likely to perceive a narrower personal domain compared to Western adolescents [5].

This may explain why some borderline personal issues in our survey did not show significant correlations, while the most private and clearly defined issue showed a negative correlation with permissive parenting. Cultural differences have a impact on how authority and personal autonomy are perceived by students in school [4].

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## 7. Conclusion

In this study, the relationship between parental authority styles and adolescents' perceptions of teacher authority has been explored. The findings indicate that there is no overall significant correlation between these two. However, when considering different educational systems, researchers found notable correlations especially under the non-Gaokao system. It shows that permissive parenting was negatively linked with adolescents' perceptions of teacher authority in moral domains. Also it shows that authoritarian parenting was positively linked with adolescents' perceptions in personal life areas.

It is true that adolescents' authority cognition is various in different context or domain. The transfer of their authority perception from parents to teachers happens in specific situations. This study shows how the domain-specific and cultural factors can help people understand the way adolescents perceive and respond to authority figures.

One of the most important findings in this work is how teachers' authority works in personal life domain. Additionally, the comparative analysis between educational systems provides a new dimension to the literature on authority cognition.

Future research could expand on these findings by expending larger and more diverse samples, using more complex methods to further understand the system behind authority perception and its transfer. These findings can inform educational practices and parent-teacher collaborations how to build healthy authority relationships with adolescents.

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