

# The Roles of Parenting Methods in the Performance of Academic Dishonesty

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## ABSTRACT

Parenting methods play a crucial part in determining the values and personalities of children. The contrasts between children with different types of parents are noticeable in their daily behaviors and actions. This study was designed to investigate the effect of parenting methods on academic performance in terms of academic honesty. Not many studies have touched on this connection, and we have decided to analyze the many factors of stress and pressure that students face that would most likely cause them to be academically dishonest. We collected the results and feedback of over 200 participants through an online survey on parenting methods and morality. Through this process we found that the parenting style of the mother and father had contrasting effects on morality and therefore, tendencies to commit academic dishonesty. We also discovered that students with authoritarian parents had more academic stress coming directly from the parents while others, contrastingly, had similar levels of pressure but from other sources like teachers, peers, society and self.

## Introduction

### Parenting Styles

Parents play a large role in the mental development of morals, values, beliefs and behavior of their children (Breiner et al, 2016). It is widely established that there are three main styles of parenting: Authoritarian Parenting, Permissive Parenting and Authoritative Parenting (Larzelere, R. E et al, 2013). Authoritarian parenting, also known as the “one-way-mode” parenting, is when parents set strict rules for their children and the children have to obey. Authoritarian parents often hold high expectations of the children and don’t accept mistakes. If mistakes are made, their children are punished and lectured to never make them again. This method provides little autonomy and is built on strict rules and stricter control. As a result, children usually develop low self-esteem and are used to following rules (Sanvictores, 2022). These individuals have high aggression levels and have difficulty making their own decisions. Overly strict and demanding attitudes can hinder a student’s academic achievement. According to a study done by Khalida Rauf and Junaid Ahmed (2017), authoritarian parenting was shown to lead to lowered academic performances. The study also found that the lack of control the student has on their passion (career or major) can also decrease their confidence and self-esteem which leads to lower grades.

The second style of parenting is permissive parenting. These parents have little expectations or rules for their children and allow the children to figure everything out by themselves. The rare presence of discipline leads to the lack of self-control and fitting habits (Dalimonte-Merckling & Williams, 2020). For example, children can decide when their bedtime is and whether they can have snacks and junk food instead of regular and healthy food for dinner. Although children usually have certain social skills and do not have extreme tempers compared to their peers, they have high demands and are hard to control (Sanvictores, 2022). In relation to academic performance, findings have shown that students with reportedly permissive parents have lower GPAs compared to others in the study (Hammar

& Ross, 2002). There may be many factors leading to this correlation and one of them can be the diminished motivation of students with permissive parents (Nisrofah, 2023). Along with the lack of motivation, permissive parenting, according to this study, will also cause academic adaption difficulties, neglect of assignments and lack of self-control and enthusiasm for learning.

The final parenting style is known as authoritative parenting. You can think of this as a combination as the previous two types of parenting styles. Authoritative parenting is also the recommended one by developmental and cognitive psychologists (Larzelere, R. E et al, 2013). Parents develop close relationships built on trust with their children but point out clear disciplines in the household (Dewar, 2024). Communication is fostered between parents and their children and patience is required for both sides. This parenting style usually results in the healthiest upbringing, whether it's mentally or physically, and children grow into independent individuals who are confident, responsible, and able to solve problems (Sanvictores, 2022). A study on Lebanese adolescents investigated the effects of authoritative parenting on academic achievement (Hayek et al., 2022). They found that authoritative parenting methods help boost academic achievement and self-efficacy, which is an individual's belief on what they can do and how they do it. Adolescents who were raised by authoritative parents have developed confidence and therefore, achieved better results in school. As shown, parenting styles have a considerable effect on the development and growth of children. Additionally, other factors have also been shown to affect academic success such as physical and mental health, motivation, cognitive abilities, concentration, and self-directed learning (Cao et al., 2024). However, these, although being influencing factors alone, can all, hypothetically, be affected by parenting methods. For example, parents' motivation levels could guide an observing child's own motivation development.

## Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity in general is defined upholding integrity in any academic work that is done (Lumen Learning, 2024). It varies from something as simple as answering classwork questions to taking an end of term exam. It also includes instances such as plagiarism. While most people know and are taught that actions of academic dishonesty are not tolerated, research has shown that 57.3% of post-secondary students allowed another student to copy their work and 61% of undergraduate students in Sweden used materials for coursework from a book or study without referencing the original source (Baran & Jonason, 2020). A publication by the University of Chicago found that while people acknowledge the behaviors of academic dishonesty, not many have tried to combat it, and the rise of technology is making it worse. Research has shown that during COVID-19 times when schools had to go virtual, there was an increase of 200% of students asking for homework assistance on the website, Chegg (Keith, 2022). This shows that students were abusing their much easier access to the internet for academic purposes. There is no one answer as to why students cheat, but experts have estimated that the main incentives to for academic dishonesty is the desire to get good grades, fear of failing, procrastination, peer pressure, and expectations (RIT, 2018).

These incentives, hypothetically, can all be influenced by parenting methods. A study connecting parenting styles with self-esteem and academic dishonesty found that authoritative parenting methods have a significant correlation with high self-esteem levels (Khoo, Z et al, 2021). A study by Laura (2015) found that students with higher levels of self-esteem tend to show lower levels of academic dishonesty. Linking this to academic dishonesty, a study by Yang and colleagues (2021) found that students who grow up in an authoritative household have lower chances and tendencies of showing and committing academic dishonesty as compared to other parenting styles.

## Pressure From Who?

This project aims to incorporate the influences of both parenting and sources of academic pressure. Research by Northern Illinois University has shown that academic integrity is mainly caused by anxiety and pressure to do well (Whitley and Keith-Spiegel, 2001). Studies by the National Library of Medicine show that specific causes of academic pressure are the school, parents, and peers (Jiang et al., 2022). In 2020, two researchers did a study on the levels of

academic dishonesty and how that is caused by high academic pressure and found there was a connection between the two factors along with self-control (Borge, 2024).

In the present study, we hypothesize that authoritarian and permissive parents will more likely foster lower levels of morality and therefore, lead their children to have higher tendencies to commit academic dishonesty. Thus, we predict an inverse relationship between morality and tendency to cheat. This hypothesis comes from the consideration of many factors including the source of academic stress where if students got more pressure from their parents, they might have the urge to satisfy their parents' expectations in immoral ways. However, with permissive parents, it is also likely that the lack of expectations could lead to the children not caring at all, which also heightens the likelihood of academic dishonesty. An additional point we hope to discover is the contrasting effects of parenting figures: Will students be more likely to commit academic dishonesty if their mother vs. father is putting pressure on them?

## Methods

*Participants.* Participants were 204 adults recruited through Amazon's mechanical turk. Participants were between the ages of 20-33 years old. The mean age of the sample was 26.1 years ( $SD = 2.5$ ). The distribution of participants' racial background was as follows: 13.4% Asian or Pacific Islander, 15.9% Black/African American, 10.9% Hispanic, 56.2% White/Caucasian, and 2.9% other. Random participants were paid to take part in this survey through Amazon surveys. The highest level of education completed of the participants is: 6.9% associate degree, 44.3% bachelor's degree, 1% doctorate degree, 11.9% high school diploma, 15.4% master's or professional degree, 17.9% some college, 1.4% other.

*Measure.* Participants completed a survey which included 1) Parental Authority Questionnaire, 2) Student Moral Stance on Examination Malpractice Questionnaire, and 3) Slider scales on level of academic pressure.

*Procedure.* This research was conducted in the summer of 2024. Participation was voluntary, and the participants completed the questionnaire for payment on Amazon's mechanical turk.

*Parental Authority Questionnaire.* The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991) was used to evaluate the parenting styles of the participants. The PAQ requires respondents to go through 30 statements and rate from 1 {strongly disagree} to 5 {strongly agree}. The 30 questions reflect a permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting style. Separate scores are calculated by adding up the scores of each category. The participants completed the scale for both their mother and fathers parenting.

*Student Moral Stance on Examination Malpractice Questionnaire.* The Student Moral Stance on Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (SMSEMQ; Nwosu et al., 2018) was used to evaluate the views and opinions of the people about academic integrity. Such questions involve "It is not wrong to hire a mercenary to write exams for people" and "It is not wrong to exchange ideas in examination hall with my colleagues." The survey includes 18 questions and participants were asked to rate them from 1 to 4. Separate scores of the questions will then be added together to calculate the total morality value of each participant. Higher scores indicated a higher propensity to participant in immoral behavior.

*Sources of Academic Stress.* To get a measure of sources of academic stress we gave participants a set of slider scales. Participants were asked to "Think back to when you were in grade school and/or colleague. Who do you think applied the most academic pressure on you. Rate each of the sources below on a scale from 0 (no pressure) to 100 (extreme amount of pressure)." Participants were then given six sliders to fill out for the following sources: Mother, Father, Peers, Teachers, Society, and Self.

## Results

Parenting style for each participant was determined by their response to the PAQ. Participants received a score for each parenting type and were grouped into the parenting style for which they had the highest score. For mother

parenting style, 25 (22.8%) were permissive, 80 (40.4%) authoritarian, 85 (43%) authoritative and 8 (4%) combine (a mix of two or more styles). For father parenting style, 32 (16.2%) were permissive, 71 (35.9%) authoritarian, 72 (36.4%) authoritative, and 23 (11.6%) combine (a mix of two or more styles).

**Table 1.** Correlations between academic dishonesty and Parenting style

Parent		Mother			Father		
Type	Permissive	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Permissive	Authoritarian	Authoritative	
	0.22**	0.10	0.02	0.08	0.17*	-0.06	

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 1 shows the correlation between participants score for each type of parenting and scores of the SMSEQ. As mentioned above, higher scores reflected a greater willingness to engage in immoral behavior. Interestingly we found different patterns for each of the different parents. Participants with more permissive mothers were more likely to cheat in school ( $r = 0.22$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). However, a permissive father did not show any relation to academic integrity ( $r = 0.08$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ). In contrast, having a father who was authoritarian was related to immoral behavior in academics ( $r = 0.17$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ) while having an authoritarian mother had no effect ( $r = 0.10$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ). For neither parent was the level of authoritative parenting found to have any effect ( $ps > 0.1$ ).

**Table 2.** Correlations between Parenting style and Source of Academic Stress

	Mother	Father	Society	Self	Peers	Teachers
Mother Authoritarian	0.425***	0.153*	0.037	0.041	0.065	-0.07
Father Authoritarian	0.246**	0.488**	0.020	-0.02	-0.023	0.009
Mother Authoritative	-0.035	0.011	0.185**	0.013	0.156*	0.162*
Father Authoritative	-0.088	-0.163*	-0.026	-0.134	0.202**	0.167*

Mother Permissive -0.219\*\* -0.097 0.082 0.001 0.068 0.09

Father Permissive -0.039 -0.039 0.022 -0.07 0.163\* 0.108

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 2 shows the correlations between parenting styles and levels of academic stress from different sources: mother, father, society, self, peers, and teachers. For both mother and father's parenting styles analyses, we can see that participants with authoritarian parents have higher academic stress coming from themselves. Having an authoritarian mother was related to higher academic stress from both a participants' mother ( $r = 0.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and father ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ). Similarly, having an authoritarian father was also related to greater academic stress from both parents (mother:  $r = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; father:  $r = 0.49$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It is not too surprising that stricter parenting would lead to higher academic stress from parents. However, surprisingly we found that for participants who rated their parents higher in other parenting styles, especially authoritative, academic stress was not removed but came from other sources. For participants with authoritative mothers, they reported higher academic stress from society ( $r = 0.19$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ), peers ( $r = 0.16$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ), and teachers ( $r = 0.16$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ). Participants who had an authoritative father similarly had higher levels of academic stress from peers ( $r = 0.20$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ), and teachers ( $r = 0.17$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ), while also having a significantly lower level of academic stress from their father ( $r = 0.16$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ). Permissive parenting did not have as strong of an effect. Participants with more permissive mothers reported less academic stress from their mother ( $r = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), but permissive mothering did not have an effect on any other form of academic stress ( $ps > 0.1$ ). Permissive fathering was found to lead to greater academic stress from peers ( $r = 0.16$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ) but had no effect on any other source of stress ( $ps > 0.1$ ).

Finally, we looked into how different sources of academic stress were linked to levels of academic dishonesty. We found somewhat significant correlations between academic stress from both one's mother ( $r = 0.13$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ) and father ( $r = 0.14$ ,  $p = 0.06$ ) on academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty was not correlated with any other source of academic stress ( $ps > 0.1$ ). A connection between academic stress and dishonesty could explain why authoritarian parenting is linked to academic dishonesty. However, more research is needed on this topic.

## Discussion

The results confirm our hypothesis of parenting styles having an impact on academic pressure and thus the likelihood of the individual showing academic dishonesty. We can especially see the results if we evaluate the sources of academic stress of the individuals having permissive parents. These individuals tend to get less pressure from their parents and any incentive to cheat would be from stress from other sources such as society, teachers, peers, or themselves. However, we are aware that academic pressure does not directly link to the tendency of academic dishonesty, but several sources prove that there is a correlation between the two variables. In addition, we also found that the mother and father's differing parenting styles have an effect on the individual. For example, if the mother is authoritarian and the father permissive, the individual would still tend to have higher academic pressure than if their mother was permissive and father authoritarian. This result displayed a different pattern within the family with the mother generally having more influence on the child's potential act of academic dishonesty. In addition, morality levels were also considered since their morality numbers had a larger impact on how they perceive acts of academic dishonesty and how comfortable they are doing it, even under high stress.

## Limitations and Conclusion

In this project, as in any other, there were several variables we were not able to account for. Since every individual is different, it was hard for us to locate the limited variables we could consider. Things like intelligence, school they attend, subject/topic differences, all have an impact on certain individuals. For example, if this individual's school was more lenient about tests, the student might not see the problem of acting on academic dishonesty. We also sought to limit the age range of our participants to between 18-30 years old. We did this because we wanted for all participants to have at least somewhat recently been students. We also wanted to, as much as possible, avoid participants who might have children old enough to be testing in school. Due to limitations with the populations, we had access to, we were not able to test high school students. It might be interesting to see if these results replicate in that population.

Some drawbacks to psychological research are that participants are aware that they are part of a study. With this consciousness, they're more likely to uphold an "impression" and this could have influenced our final results in that some actions of the parents were not reported accurately. However, we did choose very commonly seen questionnaires with no intentionally misleading questions. The same is recommended for future research. The topics and connections between academic dishonesty and parenting styles are not fully discovered since many intervening aspects should be considered. Concepts like Self-Control, personality, intelligence, Self-Esteem, etc. can all be factors influencing our results. This time, we analyzed the source of academic stress and how that might impact the students' performance in school.

Overall, this study was successful in that it reflected the different parenting styles' effects on children's development academically. It was proven, for example, that children with permissive parents are less likely to have parental academic pressure and thus, have lower levels of tendency to commit academic dishonesty. There are many factors contributing to the relationship between academic dishonesty and parenting styles and we hope to discover more in the future.

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