

# THE IMPACT OF PARENTING STYLES ON CHILD-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS AMONG CHINESE MOTHERS OF PRESCHOOLERS IN SABAH, MALAYSIA

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## Abstract

Studies exploring the influence of parenting styles on the child-parent relationship have been widely undertaken among parents of early childhood. However, there has been limited focus on investigating this correlation within the unique context of Sabah, Malaysia. This study seeks to bridge this gap by analyzing the impact of parenting styles on the child-parent relationship among Chinese mothers with preschool-aged children in Sabah, Malaysia. Additionally, it explored the relationship between maternal education level and parenting styles within this unique context. Utilizing a quantitative approach, an online questionnaire was administered to 165 Chinese mothers of preschoolers in Sabah. After collecting the data, Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to investigate the relationships between parenting styles and the parent-child relationship. The results revealed a positive correlation between maternal education level and authoritative parenting styles, whereas an inverse correlation was found with authoritarian styles. Furthermore, authoritative parenting demonstrated a strong association with a closer parent-child relationship and moderate negative correlation with conflict levels. Conversely, authoritarian parenting exhibited a moderate negative correlation with closeness and a moderate positive correlation with conflict. However, regression analyses did not reveal significant effects of parenting styles on the child-parent relationship. These results offer insights for parents and policymakers to develop strategies aimed at enhancing or adjusting early childhood education and care within the specific context of Sabah, Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Parenting Styles, Child-Parent Relationship, Chinese Mothers, Preschooler, Sabah.

## INTRODUCTION

Parenting styles and child-parent relationships are critical factors in shaping a child's development and well-being. Research has shown that the way parents interact with preschool children can affect their academic success (Chesters, 2020), self-regulation, behavioural regulation, and social-emotional outcomes (Ren & Edwards, 2015).

The relationship between children and their parents holds significant importance in aiding children's socialization and providing them with access to social support (Horstman, Hays, & Maliski, 2016). Additionally, it plays a crucial role in nurturing emotional regulation (Lincoln, Russell, Donohue, & Racine, 2017), and facilitating learning processes (Callanan, Legare, Sobel, Jaeger, Letourneau, McHugh, Willard, Brinkman, Finiasz, & Rubio, 2020). Investigating parenting practices during the preschool years is particularly significant, given that early childhood represents a critical developmental phase characterized by rapid growth

and maturation (Olson, Kashiwagi, & Crystal, 2001). It is imperative to comprehend the factors that can either support or impede children's development during this formative period and integrate this knowledge into interventions aimed at children and their families. This approach is essential for fostering positive developmental outcomes and establishing collaborative relationships with caregivers (Saracho & Evans, 2021).

Malaysia, a nation in Southeast Asia, boasts a diverse ethnic composition. Sabah, located in East Malaysia, emerged as the third most populous state in 2020. Notably, stands as the most sizable non-indigenous ethnic group in Sabah, accounting for 7.3% of the state's overall population of 3.4 million individuals (Demographics of Sabah, 2022). In this study, Chinese refers to Malaysian Chinese, who are Malaysians of Chinese ancestry. The vast majority are descended from Southern Chinese immigrants who arrived in Malaysia between the early and mid-nineteenth centuries.

In Malaysia, numerous researchers have explored the child-parent relationship among parents of preschool-aged children. For instance, Hong (2017) conducted a study involving 319 mothers in Selangor with children aged three to six years. The results revealed a noteworthy negative correlation between a child's emotionality and the degree of closeness in the child-parent relationship, juxtaposed with a positive correlation between a child's sociability and the level of closeness in the child-parent relationship. Additionally, Rohini (2016) emphasized the substantial impact of negative maternal parenting behavior as the primary predictor of behavioral issues in preschoolers, thus highlighting the paramount importance of the mother-child relationship. Within the dynamic interplay of child-parent relationships, Yap (2015) uncovered that lower levels of conflict within this bond were linked to heightened levels of effortful control in children.

In China, Li and Liu (2020) examined 372 families with preschool children and showed closeness mother-child relationship. Similarity, the studies of Zheng, Wang, Shen, and Fang (2020), Liu and Jiang (2021), and Xu, Liu, Li, Liu, and Huntsinger (2018) also support that parents and children are in closeness relationship. According to Ren and Fan (2019), the researchers examined 688 Chinese pre-schooler parents in Shanghai, China and found out that the participants adopted authoritative parenting styles and closeness child-parent relationship.

Research has consistently shown that parental education is closely linked to parenting practices and significantly influences parental behavior (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009; Bejarano & Nicolas 2016). For instance, a study indicated that parents with higher educational attainment tend to prefer authoritative parenting styles (Teti & Candelaria, 2002). Conversely, findings from Liu, Zhai, and Gao (2022) indicated a negative correlation between lower levels of education and positive parenting practices. In the Malaysian context, Kiadarbandsari, Madon, Hamsan, and Mehdinezhad Nouri (2016) conducted a study investigating the influence of parenting styles and parental education levels on positive youth development in Selangor. Their findings revealed a significant association between parental education and positive youth development.

As known, the child-parent relationship has been extensively studied in various cultural context, including Singapore (Chung, Lanier, & Wong, 2020), the Netherlands (Schuiringa, Nieuwenhuijzen, Castro, & Matthys, 2015), and the USA (Hwang & Jung, 2021) In Indonesia, the initial picture of parenting style and child-parent relationship has been examined by Riany, Cuskelly, and Meredith in 2017. Limited studies in Malaysia focused on Western Malaysia (Yap, 2015; Hong, 2017). Currently, there is a paucity of empirical research dedicated to investigating parenting styles and the child-parent relationship among Chinese mothers of preschool-aged children in Sabah, Malaysia. Given the significance of the child-parent relationship in children's developmental outcomes, there exists a pressing need for research within the Sabah context.

### **Parenting Styles**

According to Baumrind (1991), parenting styles differ in two ways: the amount of nurturing or love children receive from their parents, and how parents control their children's activities and behaviour. The most widely used parenting style typology of Baumrind is based on a combination of responsiveness and demandingness: An authoritative parent maintains a balanced approach by combining high levels of demand with responsiveness, whereas an authoritarian parent demonstrates elevated levels of demand along with limited responsiveness. Conversely, a permissive parent is characterized by a lack of demands and a high degree of responsiveness. Finally, an uninvolved parent exhibits low levels of demandingness and responsiveness.

#### **Authoritative Parenting Style**

Positive practices such as fostering positive child-parent interactions, valuing children's ideas, and encouraging the open expression of feelings are indicative of authoritative parenting. This parenting approach creates a democratic household environment characterized by consistent and flexible boundaries, as well as elevated levels of warmth and nurturing (Baumrind, 1967).

Santrock (2011) asserts that authoritative parenting is a beneficial style that promotes children's independence while establishing appropriate and clear boundaries (high demandingness, high responsiveness). Parents provide support and encourage verbal communication with their children, fostering a sense of autonomy. This parenting style emphasizes reasoning and open communication between parents and children, striking a balance between warmth and control.

Research suggests that authoritative parenting yields the most favorable outcomes for children. For instance, authoritarian parenting has been associated with several positive outcomes among children. According to Lavrič and Naterer (2020), it is linked to greater life satisfaction. Additionally, Talib et al. (2011) found a correlation between authoritarian parenting and positive child behavior. Furthermore, Spera (2005) reported that it contributes to higher academic achievement. On the other hand, studies by Sanjeevan and Zoysa (2018) and Prativa and Deeba (2019) suggest that this style of parenting can reduce adolescent depression.

Moreover, authoritative parenting has also been associated with higher self-esteem and positive youth development in children. Hong, Long, and Rahman, (2015), Kiadarbandsari, Madon,

Hamsan, and Nouri (2016), and Woon and Chin (2018) all support this finding in their respective studies.

### **Authoritarian Parenting Style**

Authoritarian parenting is delineated by parental imposition of stringent control mechanisms, dictation of rules, and imposition of direct demands upon children, irrespective of their autonomy (Baumrind & Black, 1967). Authoritarian parenting, on the other hand, according to Santrock (2011), is a strict, demanding, and punitive parenting style that is unresponsive to the needs of the child (high demandingness, low responsiveness).

Research on authoritarian parenting styles has consistently highlighted their detrimental effects on children's behavior, academic performance, self-esteem, and psychosocial adjustments in Malaysia (Johari et al., 2011; Sumargi, Prasetyo, & Ardelia, 2020; Delvecchio, Germani, Raspa, Lis, & Mazzeschi, 2020). In addition, Hong et al. (2015) established a negative correlation between authoritarian parenting and self-esteem among university students.

Multiple studies on authoritarian parenting styles in Malaysia have repeatedly underscored their negative impacts on various aspects of children's lives. Johari et al., (2011), Sumargi, Prasetyo, and Ardelia, (2020), and Delvecchio, Germani, Raspa, Lis, & Mazzeschi (2020) have specifically emphasized the deleterious effects on children's behavior and academic performance. Furthermore, Delvecchio, Germani, Raspa, Lis, and Mazzeschi (2020) have also pointed out the negative influence of this parenting style on children's self-esteem and psychosocial adjustments.

While authoritarian parenting is often associated with adverse outcomes, it is essential to note that Asian authoritarian parenting may not invariably lead to negative consequences. Ang and Goh (2006), proposed that the impact is contingent upon the level of child adjustment in response to authoritarian parenting. Moreover, differences in parental involvement and psychological control distinguish Asian from Western parenting approaches (Masud, Thurasamy, & Ahmad, 2015; Iqbal & Golombok, 2018).

### **Permissive Parenting Style**

Permissive parenting, according to Santrock (2011), is also known as indulgent parenting. Permissive parenting is defined as parents' high involvement with their children, while no limitations or rules are in place to control their children's behaviour (low demandingness, high responsiveness). According to Buri (1991), permissive parenting is non-traditional and unrestrained, allowing children significant self-regulation while avoiding conflict between parents and children. Permissive parenting entails minimal imposition of rules and demands on children, often resulting in limited control over their behavior (Alegre, 2011; Kotaman, 2016).

Parents practicing permissive parenting are characterized by warmth and indulgence while enforcing few rules and boundaries. Although children raised in permissive environments may exhibit higher levels of problem behavior and mediocre academic performance, they tend to possess elevated self-esteem and proficient social skills (Baumrind, 1971, 1991; Kimble, 2014; Kimble, Hubbs-Tait, Topham, & Harrist, 2015).

In a study conducted by Johari and Maharam (2011) involving 200 Malay families with children aged 7 to 9 years in Malaysia, it was found that both permissive and authoritarian parenting styles were associated with adverse effects on children's behavior and academic performance.

### **Uninvolved Parenting Style**

According to Maccoby and Martin (1983), uninvolved parents reject their children and have poor behavioural control (low demandingness and low responsiveness). This type of parent will take any length of time to reduce parental effort and time. Uninvolved parents may exhibit responses to their children characterized by either hostility or complete disregard, often neglecting the child's needs altogether.

An uninvolved parenting style is one that is undemanding and uncaring toward a child. Parents who practice this parenting style show their children very little love, attention, mental and moral support, protection, and supervision (Shahimi, 2018). Parents know very little about their children. It is because the parents do not spend enough time with their children. According to Morin (2019), some parents who are neglectful of their children do so unintentionally. This could occur if the parents are too preoccupied with their jobs.

This type of parenting style frequently results in problems and crises with the child. Because the child cannot spend much time with their parents, there will be no mutual understanding between the child and the parents, resulting in the two parties not having a close relationship. If the parents try to show their love to their child, the child will have doubts about the value of the love. A child raised in this style is always associated with poor academic performance and frequently causes behavioral issues (Morin, 2019).

Children raised by rejecting, angry, or uninvolved parents are more prone to experiencing social rejection from their peers compared to children raised by warm, involved parents who consistently enforce rules. In a study conducted by Kimble and Laura (2015) involved 445 mothers of first-graders. It was revealed that an uninvolved parenting style was correlated with depressive symptoms in children.

In summary, parenting styles reflect the warmth and supportiveness of the parent-child relationship, along with the level of supervision and limit-setting by parents. These styles are influenced by cultural norms and expectations, resulting in diverse child outcomes across cultures (Kagitcibasi, 2007; Sen, Yavuz-Muren, & Yagmurlu, 2014). Parenting education is crucial in shaping parenting practices and moderating these styles (Hong et al., 2012; Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2013). While Malaysia has seen numerous studies on parenting styles, there is a notable gap in research focusing on preschool children in Sabah, particularly among Chinese mothers. It is therefore crucial to investigate the parenting styles of these mothers and explore how their educational level might influence their approach to parenting.

### **Child-Parent Relationship**

The child-parent relationship is a complex dynamic that incorporates both warmth and closeness, as well as occasional conflicts (Driscoll & Pianta, 2011). Alternatively, Flykt (2014)



views this relationship as a special bond that often begins during pregnancy and is characterized by profound emotional connections between children and their parents, particularly mothers.

### **Conflict**

According to Driscoll and Pianta (2011), conflict denotes the presence of negative emotional patterns within the parent-child relationship. Conversely, the concept of a "conflict relationship" is characterized by challenges in interpersonal harmony, with manifestations of anger or frustration expressed by the parent towards the child (Stattin & Kerr, 2000).

Conflict resolution within child-parent relationships has produced diverse findings, ranging from associations with problematic behaviors, peer rejection, and challenges in school adjustment (Weaver et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2018) to positive outcomes in terms of fostering social skills (Laible and Thompson, 2002; Boyer et al., 2016). Scholars maintain that these conflicts offer children valuable opportunities to engage in discussions about societal norms and behavioral expectations (Zhang, 2013), manage negative emotions effectively (Denham, 2007), and collaborate with their parents in problem-solving, thereby laying the groundwork for the development of their social skills (Nelson, 2015).

### **Closeness**

According to Driscoll and Pianta (2011), closeness refers to the positive emotions pattern in the child-parent relationship. Stattin and Kerr (2000) defined close relationships as characterized by mutual respect, sensitivity, and affection shared between parents and children. Such closeness is correlated with elevated levels of adaptive and social behavior among children (Troutman, 2015; David & DiGiuseppe, 2016).

### **Parenting Styles And Child-Parent Relationship**

The child-parent relationship, distinct from parenting styles and practices, is characterized by the emotional bond between parent and child, often referred to as connectedness or closeness (Clark & Ladd, 2000; Lamb & Lewis, 2011). Concurrently, parenting styles and child-parent relationships jointly influence children's development. Pinquart (2014) observed that a positive child-parent relationship and higher levels of parental responsiveness correlated with healthier lifestyle choices among children. However, Bergin (2001) suggested that increased shared reading frequency may not universally yield positive outcomes for children in conflicted child-parent relationships. Similarly, Kim and Cain (2008) found that low parental warmth was associated with heightened parent-child conflicts, while Lim et al. (2008) reported no significant relationship between parental warmth and child-parent conflict. Additionally, Dexter and Stacks, (2014) highlighted the influence of parenting and child-parent relationships on children's emergent literacy skills.

Moreover, the child-parent relationship intersects with parenting behavior and externalizing behavior in children (Schuiringa et al., 2015). Bynum and Brody (2005) noted a link between positive mother-child relationships and better behavior regulation in adolescents. Conversely, Loukas and Roalson (2006) found that negative family relations were associated with lower levels of effortful control in children. DeWolff and Ijzendoorn (1997) identified a positive

correlation between parental responsiveness and the quality of the child-parent relationship. However, Hwang and Jung (2021) discovered a positive association between parent-helicopter parenting and child-parent relationships, contradicting previous findings (Segrin et al., 2015; Bi, Yang, Li, Wang, Zhang, & Deater-Deckard, 2018).

Overall, supportive parenting styles and child-parent relationships foster positive social and academic outcomes for children (Stattin & Kerr, 2000; Silver et al., 2005; Holden, 2015; September et al., 2015). Conversely, negative parenting styles hinder positive developmental outcomes (Schuiringa et al., 2015; (Acar, Uçuş, & Yıldız, 2019). The quality of the child-parent relationship significantly influences children's emotional development, academic performance, and social growth (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Cui, Zhang, & Leung, 2021). Therefore, understanding parents' perceptions of their relationships with their children is crucial for influencing children's behavioral outcomes (Brock, Nishida, Chiong, Grimm, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Kim, Schulz, Zimmermann, & Hahlweg, 2018). Ultimately, a healthy childhood lays the foundation for successful adulthood and future prospects (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Cui, Zhang, & Leung, 2021).

In conclusion, parenting styles are intertwined with the child-parent relationship, influencing child development alongside parenting practices (Dexter & Stacks, 2014; Berger & McLanahan, 2015). While some studies suggest a positive association between parenting styles and the child-parent relationship (Hwang & Jung, 2021), others propose contrasting views (Segrin et al., 2015). Positive parental behaviors contribute to the cultivation of robust child-parent relationships (Morris et al., 2007).

### **The Current Study**

Based on different parenting styles may affect child-parent relationship to varying degrees. Therefore, we put forward the following research questions and hypotheses:

- (1) Which parenting style is mostly adopted by Chinese mothers of preschoolers in Sabah?
- (2) What extent of child-parent relationships among Chinese mothers of preschoolers in Sabah?
- (3) Is there a correlation between maternal education level and parenting styles among Chinese mothers of pre-schoolers in Sabah?
- (4) Is there a relationship between parenting styles and child-parent relationship among Chinese mothers of pre-schoolers in Sabah?
- (5) Is there any significant impact of parenting styles on child-parent relationship among Chinese mothers of pre-schoolers in Sabah?

H1: The authoritative parenting style is mostly adopted by Chinese mothers of preschools in Sabah.

H2: Chinese mothers of preschoolers would perceive closeness relationship with their preschool children in Sabah.

- H3: There is a significant correlation between maternal education level and parenting styles among Chinese mothers of preschools in Sabah.
- H4: There is a significant relationship between parenting styles and child-parent relationship among Chinese mothers of preschools in Sabah.
- H5: There is a significant impact of parenting styles on child-parent relationships among Chinese mothers of preschools in Sabah.

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

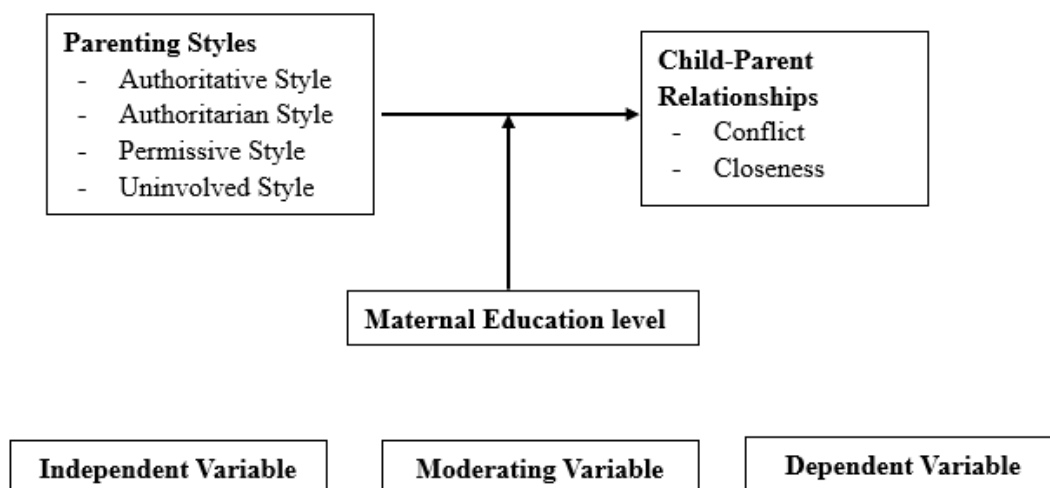


Figure 1: Research Model

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This theoretical framework provided the theoretical foundation for the study variables. The theory of parenting related to parenting styles which is independent variables in this study. Parenting styles that reflect the essence of child-parent interaction have significant consequences for children's behavioural issues and social skills (Pinquart, 2017; Rinaldi & Howe, 2012; Rose *et al.*, 2017). Attachment theory, as conceptualized by Bowlby (1982), is pertinent to the child-parent relationship, serving as the dependent variable in this investigation. According to attachment theory, children develop internal representations of relationships through interactions with their parents, which subsequently influence their ability to form and sustain relationships with others. Emphasizing the significance of nurturing relationships for normal child development, attachment theory posits that a strong bond between parent and child fosters the child's future social, cognitive, and emotional development. Illustrated by a one-way connection arrow, this study explores the association between the independent variables and the dependent variable. It was suggested that parenting styles influence the child-parent relationship (Russo, 2019; Gambin *et al.*, 2020; Hwang & Jung, 2021).



Drawing from attachment theory, the child-parent relationship is recognized as a pivotal factor influencing children's development (Levin et al., 2012; Ma et al., 2020). The investigation of parenting practices during the preschool years holds significant importance, given that early childhood is widely acknowledged as a critical phase marked by rapid developmental milestones. Consequently, this period offers an opportune moment to scrutinize parental caregiving approaches and their impact on young children (Olson, Kashiwagi, & Crystal, 2001). Numerous studies have underscored the pivotal role of parents in fostering early childhood development.

## METHOD

### Participants

A survey was conducted among mothers at Tadika Chung Hwa Penampang, a Chinese preschool in Sabah, with a total of 235 questionnaires distributed. Out of these, 165 questionnaires were deemed acceptable, representing a response rate of 70.2%. The children surveyed ranged in age from 4 to 6 years, with an average age of 4.97 years, and 56.4% of them were boys. About 58.1% of the Chinese mothers obtained a diploma or higher degree. Authoritative style was the most adopted by the Chinese mother as 43.6%. The mean value of closeness subscale (4.406) is higher than conflict subscale (2.415), showed that Chinese mothers perceived a sense of closeness in their relationship with their preschool children. Details of participants were shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Age of children, maternal education, parenting styles, and child-parent relationship (n=165)

	Number of samples	M	SD	Percentage
<i>Age (years)</i>				
4	56			33.90%
5	58			35.20%
6	51			30.90%
<i>Gender</i>				
Boy	93			56.40%
Girl	72			43.60%
<i>Maternal education</i>				
1=Primary	9			5.50%
2=Secondary	60			36.40%
3=Diploma	54			32.70%
4=Degress	38			23.00%
5=Master	4			2.40%
<i>Parenting styles</i>				
Authoritative style	72			43.60%
Authoritarian style	39			23.60%
Permissive style	29			17.60%
Uninvolved style	25			15.20%
<i>Child-parent relationship</i>				
Closeness		4.406	0.859	
Conflict		2.415	0.974	

## **Procedure**

Before data collection commenced, a meeting was arranged with the principal of the selected preschool to discuss the questionnaire administration process. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, objectives, and the anticipated use of the results. Subsequently, a letter containing the online questionnaire link was distributed to parents via class teachers, facilitated by the principal. Parents of Chinese preschoolers were requested to complete the questionnaire within a two-week timeframe. In recognition of their participation, parents were promised a preschool drawing book as a token of appreciation. The data collection form, developed using Google Forms, mandated that participants respond to all questions before proceeding to the subsequent section to prevent missing data. A total of 165 Chinese mothers participated in this study.

## **Instruments**

### **Parenting Styles Scale**

The Parental Styles and Dimension Questionnaire (PSDQ), developed by Kimble (2014), was employed to assess parenting styles in this study. The PSDQ has demonstrated good reliability and validity in previous research (Hadad, Meishar-Tal, and Blau (2020); Fitri and Hastuti (2019); Kimble, Hubbs-Tait, Topham, and Harrist (2015)). Comprising 32 questions, the questionnaire evaluates four dimensions of parenting: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved styles. Participants responded to multiple-choice items, rating each item on a five-point scale ranging from "never" to "always" (coded 1 to 5). Higher scores on each dimension indicate a greater tendency toward that particular parenting style. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was 0.763, indicating satisfactory stability and internal consistency.

### **Child-Parent Relationship Scale**

Dr. Robert Pianta developed the Child-Parent Relationship Scale-Short Form (CPRS-SF) to gauge parents' perceptions of their children's relationships. This abbreviated scale consists of 15 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale assesses both conflict and closeness in the child-parent relationship, with separate subscales for each dimension. A high score on the conflicts and closeness subscales indicate high conflict and high positive aspect of the relationship between parent and child. The CPRS-SF is appropriate for children aged 3 to 12 (Pianta, 1992). The CPRS-SF scale has been used in preschool children and parents with good reliability and validity (Bate et al. (2021); Driscoll and Pianta (2011); Escalante-Barrios et al. (2020)). The Cronbach's alpha is 0.92, showing good reliability.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 28) to process the data. The analysis involved the following structured steps:

First, descriptive statistics were utilized to examine demographic information gathered from the questionnaire, including variables such as child age, child gender, and maternal educational level. Secondly, the Pearson correlation coefficient matrix was applied to assess the

relationships between the moderating variable (maternal education level) and the independent variable (parenting styles), as well as the relationship between the independent variable (parenting styles) and the dependent variable (child-parent relationship). Finally, multiple regression analysis was performed, considering the normal distribution of variables, to investigate how the independent variables (parenting styles) predict the dependent variable (child-parent relationship).

## RESULTS

### Analysis Of Pearson’s Correlation Between Maternal Education Level And Parenting Styles

The bivariate correlations between the mother’s highest level of education and parenting styles. Pearson’s *r* showed that the mother’s highest education level has a positive relationship with authoritative style ( $r=0.183$ ,  $p=0.019<0.05$ ). Mother’s highest education level was negatively correlated with authoritarian style as its Pearson’s *r* is  $-0.175$  and *p* is  $0.024$ . Mother’s highest education level was not correlated with permissive style ( $p=0.399>0.05$ ) and uninvolved style ( $p=0.255>0.05$ ). Details showed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Pearson’s Correlation between Mother’s Highest Education Level and Parenting Styles (N=165)**

	R	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mother's highest education level (N=165)	
<b>Parenting styles</b>		
Authoritative style	0.183	0.019
Authoritarian style	-0.175	0.024
Permissive style	-0.066	0.399
Uninvolved style	0.089	0.255

### Analysis of Pearson’s Correlation Between Parenting Styles and Child-Parent Relationship

The bivariate correlation analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between parenting styles and the child-parent relationship. Specifically, the authoritative parenting style exhibited a robust positive correlation with the closeness relationship. ( $r=0.524$ ,  $p=0<0.05$ ) and moderate negative correlated with conflict relationship ( $r=-0.399$ ,  $p=0<0.05$ ). However, authoritarian style was moderate negative related with closeness relationship ( $r=-0.338$ ,  $p=0<0.05$ ) and moderate positive related with conflict relationship ( $r=0.398$ ,  $p=0<0.05$ ). In addition, permissive style was no correlation with closeness ( $p=0.788>0.05$ ) and conflict ( $p=0.426>0.05$ ). Uninvolved style was no correlation with closeness ( $p=0.349>0.05$ ) and conflict ( $p=0.805>0.05$ ) as well. Details showed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Pearson’s Correlation between Parenting Styles and Child-parent Relationship (N=165)**

	Closeness		Conflict	
	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
<b>Authoritative style</b>	0.524	0	-0.399	0
<b>Authoritarian style</b>	-0.338	0	0.398	0
<b>Permissive style</b>	0.021	0.788	0.062	0.426
<b>Uninvolved style</b>	0.073	0.349	0.019	0.805

### Regression Analysis

To establish whether the independent variables, parenting styles influence child-parent relationship, multiple regression analysis was computed. Multiple regression was conducted to identify the best predictor that contributes to child-parent relationship. The analysis result of the independent variable, parenting styles towards the dependent variable, child-parent relationship. The R-square value was 0.035. This indicated that parenting styles contributed to 3.5% for the variation of child-parent relationship. The p-value of the F-statistics was not significant ( $P=1.442>0.05$ ). This showed that there was no significant influence of parenting styles on child-parent relationship. The p value of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved style is 0.253, 0.515, 0.479 and 0.343 respectively ( $P>0.05$ ). Details showed in Table 4. This meant four types of parenting style cannot significant predict child-parent relationship.

**Table 4: Regression Analysis of Parenting Styles and Child-parent Relationship (Coefficients<sup>a</sup>) (N=165)**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.909	.609		3.135	.002
	Authoritative	.140	.122	.127	1.147	.253
	Authoritarian	.069	.106	.065	.652	.515
	Permissive	.102	.143	.072	.709	.479
	Uninvolved	.109	.115	.085	.950	.343

a. Dependent Variable: CPR

## DISCUSSION

### Correlation Between Maternal Education Level And Parenting Styles

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between maternal education level and parenting styles. The results indicated significant correlations between maternal education level and two types of parenting styles, namely authoritative and

authoritarian. A weak positive correlation between maternal education level and authoritative style was discovered ( $r=0.183$ ,  $p=0.019<0.05$ ). A weak negative correlation between maternal education level and authoritarian style ( $r=-0.175$ ,  $p=0.024<0.05$ ). On the other hand, maternal education level was not correlated with permissive style ( $p=0.399>0.05$ ) and uninvolved style ( $p=0.255>0.05$ ).

The findings revealed a positive relationship between maternal education level and authoritative parenting styles, whereas a negative relationship was observed with authoritarian style. These results are consistent with the findings of Teti and Candelaria (2002), who also reported that parents with higher levels of education tend to prefer authoritative parenting styles. In addition, Liu, Zhai and Gao (2020) also stated that low education negatively associated with positive parenting practices. A study of Hong, Baharudin, and Hossain (2012) also found authoritative parenting style is significantly and positively related to fathers' education.

On the other hand, Bejarano and Nicolas (2016) identified a strong association between parental education and parenting practices. This underscores the broader notion that parental education is significantly linked to parenting behaviors and practices (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009).

In general, the study highlights the importance of maternal education and its potential correlation with parenting styles. Parents with higher level of education may benefit from greater awareness and understanding of the benefits of authoritative parenting styles. However, it is crucial to consider economic context in which parenting occurs and address the underlying social determinants that impact parent's ability to provide supportive environment for their children.

### **Correlation Between Parenting Styles And Child-Parent Relationship**

Based on the Pearson's correlation analysis, the authoritative style was strong positive correlated with closeness relationship ( $r=0.524$ ,  $p=0<0.05$ ) and moderate negative correlated with conflict relationship ( $r=-0.399$ ,  $p=0<0.05$ ). However, authoritarian style was moderate negative related with closeness relationship ( $r=-0.338$ ,  $p=0<0.05$ ) and moderate positive related with conflict relationship ( $r=0.398$ ,  $p=0<0.05$ ). In addition, permissive style was no correlation with closeness ( $p=0.788>0.05$ ) and conflict ( $p=0.426>0.05$ ). Uninvolved style was no correlation with closeness ( $p=0.349>0.05$ ) and conflict ( $p=0.805>0.05$ ) as well.

The present study's findings align with prior research (Schuiringa et al., 2015; September et al., 2015), which demonstrated a connection between parenting styles and child-parent relationships. Additionally, Ho et al. (2022) reported a significant association between authoritarian parenting and child-parent relationships. However, there were slight discrepancies compared to the findings of Hwang and Jung (2021), who found that mothers' helicopter parenting positively correlated with the mother-child relationship, contrasting with the negative association reported by Segrin et al. (2015).

These findings have important implication for parents and caregivers, as they suggest that adopting an authoritative parenting style may be beneficial for fostering a positive and healthy relationship with children. The difference in our research findings from previous studies may be attributed to the dual influence of traditional Chinese culture, which has been preserved among the Chinese community in Sabah state, along with the impact of the local environment.

### **The Impact Of Parenting Style On Child-Parent Relationship**

In the multiple regression model, the R-square values were utilized to assess the predictive capacity of the four parenting styles scales on the child-parent relationship. The obtained R-square value was 0.035, indicating that parenting styles accounted for 3.5% of the variance in the child-parent relationship. The p-value associated with the F-statistics was not significant ( $P=1.442>0.05$ ), indicating a lack of significant influence of parenting styles on the child-parent relationship. Additionally, the p-values for authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting styles were 0.253, 0.515, 0.479, and 0.343, respectively ( $p>0.05$ ). These results suggest that none of the four parenting style scales significantly predicted the child-parent relationship.

The discovery of no significant influence of parenting styles on the child-parent relationship contradicts the findings of Schuiringa et al. (2015) and September et al. (2015), who found associations between parenting styles and child-parent relationships.. Similarity, the result also opposite view that parenting style positive associated with child-parent relationship (Hwang & Jung, 2021) and negative with child-parent relationship Segrin *et al.* (2015).

The present study's finding that parenting styles did not significant influence child-parent relationship is unexpected and contradicts previous research. Nonetheless, it is essential to take into account the contextual factors and characteristics of the sample in the current study, which may differ from those in previous research. The participants in this study might have varied cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds, potentially influencing the association between parenting styles and child-parent relationships.

### **LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

While this study provides valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, the reliance on self-report questionnaires may introduce response bias, potentially limiting the comprehensive understanding of parenting and child-parent relationships. To mitigate this issue, future research could incorporate diverse data sources such as interviews or observations. Secondly, the absence of paternal perspectives is another notable limitation, emphasizing the need for future studies to include fathers' viewpoints in examining child-parent relationships. Lastly, this study did not explore other potential moderating variables, such as religious beliefs and socioeconomic status. Including a broader range of participants and investigating additional moderating variables could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing parenting and child-parent relationships in the context of Sabah, Malaysia.



Despite these limitations, the study holds significant practical implications. Firstly, it contributes to filling the literature gap by providing insights into parenting styles and child-parent relationships among Chinese mothers of preschoolers in Sabah, Malaysia, where limited relevant research has been published. Secondly, the study highlights the positive correlation between maternal education level and authoritative parenting style, as well as the negative correlation with authoritarian style in the Sabah context. This suggests that parents aiming to enhance their parenting styles should focus on dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness, alongside improving their education and understanding of child-rearing practices. Overall, the findings of this study offer practical implications for parents and educators in fostering a supportive environment to enhance the quality of parenting and child-parent relationships.

#### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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