

## **Parents' Parenting Styles and Academic Achievement of Underachievers and High Achievers at Middle School Level**

Attiya Inam<sup>\*</sup>, Sara Nomaan<sup>\*\*</sup> and Muhammad Abiodullah<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

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### **Abstract**

The current research was conducted to find out the effect of parenting styles of both fathers and mothers on academic achievement of the underachiever and high achiever children. A sample of 210 participants including 70 students (35 low achievers and 35 high achievers) and their 70 parents (both fathers and mothers) was purposefully selected. The parents of the selected students were interviewed to find out their parenting style. The data were analyzed using SPSS 21. Parenting styles were compared to students' academic achievement through ANOVA. t-test was conducted to find difference between underachievers and high achievers. Findings showed that students whose parents were fully authoritative, fully permissive or those who were using a mix of authoritative and permissive parenting style showed significantly better result than the students whose parents were permissive in their actions only.

**Keywords:** Parenting, authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting, permissive parenting, academic underachievement

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<sup>\*</sup> Assistant Professor, College of Home Economics Gulberg Lahore. Email: attiya\_inam@yahoo.com

<sup>\*\*</sup> Lecturer, Home Economics College, Islamabad

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Assistant Professor, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore

## **Introduction**

Academic underachievement is considered to be one of the major important area related to the children's education and is continuously being studied for the last few decades (McCoach & Siegle, 2011). Emerick (1992) concluded that a brilliant child not performing parallel to his mental ability is the most bewildering condition. Underachievement is an old phenomenon but has gained recognition recently. Younger, Warrington and McLellan (2005) reported, "the underachievement of girls and boys is a complex and multi-dimensional problem."

Phillipson, 2008; Reis and McCoach (2000) and Rimm (2008) broadly defined underachievement as a difference of child's accomplishment at school and his abilities. Battle (2002) described underachievement as disparity between students' achievement and his capability. Specifically the term is used for the students performing significantly better in their aptitude test but in contrast performing significantly low in their academics.

Malik and Badla (2006) showed existence of bright underachievers. Many educators, like Abbette (2007) agreed that underachievement was one of the most serious problems faced by schools, affecting nearly one out of four children. Lupert and Pyryt (1996) concluded that the problem of underachievement was growing and was most significantly growing in grades five through eight, making it a great concern for educators of young adolescents. According to Rimm (2006) underachievement could begin in elementary school as early as third or fourth grade. Battle (2002) affirmed that the number of underachievers increases dramatically in middle school. He further elaborated that it was during six to eigh grade that a pattern of underachievement consistently emerged in academic as well as non-academic fields.

Rimm (2006) mentioned that a number of factors coalesce to make middle schools more vulnerable for underachievement such as child's stress about his intelligence and self-image, more challenging middle school curriculum, and the competitiveness with adolescents. He further elaborated that there was neither a gene nor a neurological or biological explanation for underachievement so it was important to understand that underachievers were not born; they learned to underachieve. Reasons behind the child's underachievement need exploration of main components of child's education; the home and the school. At home, the parents consciously or unconsciously prepare the child for school. According to Alarcon (1997) children are affected by the parenting style of their parents all through their life. Parenting style and parent-child relationship both have been found to be a causative factor in a

child's academic success (Hayes, 2005; Payne, 2005; Smith-Hill, 2007). Curry (2007); Difnam (2007) and Sims (2008) have also confirmed parents' contribution to be a noteworthy factor in child's academic accomplishment.

Baumrind Classification (as cited in Alarcon, 1997; Yahaya & Nordin, 2006) served as the basis of identifying and classifying parenting style. According to him, most of the parents adopt one of these parenting styles i.e. Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive. The role that parents play in their children's life influences their development (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington and Bornstein, 2000). Parenting style used by parents has an impact on the cognitive development of their children (Alarcon, 1997). The Blackwell encyclopedia of social work (Davies, 2000) describes parenting as the task of doing all the things important for proper physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth of a child throughout his life.

According to Baumrind, parenting is characterized by different ratio of balance between responsiveness and demandingness by the parents in addition to psychological control exerted on the child. Darling (1999) further explained parental responsiveness as the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands" while the parental demandingness can be explained as to how parents treat their children to become integrated into the whole family, this is shown by their demands of maturity, supervision of children, different disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobey. According to Bogenschneider, Small and Tsay (1997) proficient parenting is the one having affectionate relationship with children. Berk (as cited in Alarcon, 1997) has described Diana Baumrind's parenting styles as:

- Authoritative –demanding and responsive style of parenting
- Authoritarian –demanding parenting style which is unresponsive to requirements of the child
- Permissive – parenting style opposite to authoritarian style i.e. the one which is responsive to child but demands nothing from him.

The authoritative parents control the activities of the children in a logical and reasonable way. These parent are demanding and accepting, they appreciate oral discussions, explain the children the logic behind their plans, and solicits their objections when they disagree (Grobman, 2003; Seid & Mikre, 2008). The authoritarian parents maintain the strict control on the behaviour and demand

complete obedience from their children (Seid & Mikre, 2008). The permissive parents are more confirming to the demands and actions of their children. They themselves give less responsibilities and tasks to their children (Grobman, 2003).

Despite having different parenting styles, all parents want to raise their children as happy and confident adults. Aunola, Stattin and Nurmi (2000) stated that the personalities of people make them vulnerable towards a specific parenting style. Authoritative parenting enables the children to perform better and actively taking part in their school activities thus increasing the chances of success at school (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992).

Children's expectancies of success are more closely related to their parents' expectancies than to their own past performance (Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982). Coil (2005) concluded that some parents are not concerned with the learning of their children; they just want their children to have good grades in their exams. These parents place high importance to the result displayed on the report cards of children. Parsasirat, Montazeri, Yusoff, Subhi and Nen (2013) are of the view that one child in this family might become high achiever while other become underachiever due to the pressure of parents.

Mussen, Conger, Kagan and Huston (1998) accomplished that achievement in school doesn't only depend on child's abilities but also on many other situations. Parents' expectancies and demands concerning achievement are more likely to raise a child's achievement motivation when parents also make demands for mature behavior. Yahaya and Nordin (2006) concluded that authoritative parenting style contributes to good level of motivation amongst the students. Rehman (2001) found that self-concept also had a positive relationship with the academic achievement of students. It affects academic achievement and in turn is itself affected by the achievement of student. Self-concept is also affected by parenting as it develops by the way parents interact, judge and deal with their children.

In Ballantine's findings (as cited in Seid & Mikre, 2008) authoritative parents having high goals and standards for their children possess greater chances to have children who are high achievers. Yahaya & Nordin (2006) confirmed that the authoritative style of parenting enhances the children's achievements. Taylor (as cited in Moon & Reis, 2004) also showed the same results. Weiner (1992) found that parents of underachievers were either permissive or authoritarian. Cole and Cole (as cited in Alarcon, 1997) discovered that children with overly strict and demanding parents are usually underachievers.

Jeup (2007) found that psychosocial maturity serves to mediate the relationship between parenting style and academic achievement. Psychosocial maturity is affected by the authoritative parenting, which further affects the performance of the students in school. The factors which are used to measure psychological maturity were found to have relationship with the higher grades and authoritative parenting. Jeup (2007) discussed the relationship between parenting and academic success, the highest indicator of children's academic success from one grade to another proved to be previous academic success. Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter, and Keehn (as cited in Elias & Yee, 2009) have found that most researchers studying the relationship between parenting style and students' outcomes considered the parenting style of only one of the parents.

The findings of past studies like Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb (as cited in Elias & Yee, 2009) suggested that the studies pointing towards the advantages of authoritative parenting on children are usually based on the parenting styles of mothers only. Simons and Conger (2007) have also mentioned that researchers have often relied on parenting style of mothers and have generalized it to the fathers' parenting style. It is important to analyze the parenting style of both parents while studying its influences. Present study aims at finding the effect of parents' parenting style on academic achievement of their children.

### **Objectives**

- To find out effect of parents' parenting styles (Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive) on academic achievement of grade 6-8 students.
- To find out effect of fathers' parenting styles (Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive) on academic achievement of under achieving students and high achievers.
- To find out effect of mothers' parenting styles (Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive) on academic achievement of under achieving students and high achievers.

### **Hypotheses**

- There is statistically no significant effect of fathers' parenting styles on academic achievement of underachieving students.
- There is statistically no significant effect of fathers' parenting styles on academic achievement of high achievers.
- There is statistically no significant effect of Mothers' parenting styles on academic achievement of underachieving students.

- There is statistically no significant effect of Mothers' parenting styles on academic achievement of high achievers.
- There is statistically no significant effect of parents' parenting style on academic achievement of grade 6-8 students.

### **Method**

Data was collected from 140 participants aged between 12-14 years. These participants were selected from 9 different sections of Grades 6 – 8. An intelligence test was administered to determine their intelligence level and students who scored above 70<sup>th</sup> percentile were considered for the study. Mean scores of participants' mid-term and final exams for three subjects, English, Mathematics and Science were compared with the intelligence tests score. Students' whose mean exam scores were 10 deviation points below their intelligence test scores were classified as under achievers while students whose mean exam scores were 10 deviation points above their intelligence test scores were classified as high achievers. When high achievers and low achievers were finalized then the parents of selected students were approached for data collection with the help of school administration.

### **Instruments**

The detail of the instrument is given below:

#### **Standard Progressive Matrices (Raven, 1956)**

The Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM) is part of a series of three tests (Raven's Progressive Matrices) constructed for people of different ages and abilities. These tests contain similar problems of non-verbal reasoning. It was developed by Raven in 1938 and revised in 1956. The SPM is a test that can be conducted individually or in a group and it nonverbally assesses fluid intelligence in children and adults through reasoning of abstract tasks. It can be used for the people between 8 to 65 years of age. The test has 60 problems (five sets of 12), which are arranged in order of increasing difficulty. The test involves completing a missing part of a pattern or figure by choosing the correct missing piece from six alternatives that are given in the options. The test can also be used for non-English speakers.

#### **Interview Schedule for Parenting**

The researcher wanted to select an available questionnaire which could effectively determine the parenting style. A number of parenting quizzes were reviewed. As the available quizzes were developed by western psychologists and showed a significant cultural bias, the researcher decided to develop one according to cultural needs. A list of factors was prepared in light of available literature and an

interview schedule was developed. The interview schedule was prepared in English in accordance with available literature. It was then verified by a team of psychologists to check validity. After initial approval, it was translated to Urdu following the Mapi guidelines for convenience of parents as they could not comprehend English Language. The interview schedule was divided into two sections; belief of parents about a certain child-rearing practice and actual situation at home. Parents' responses were noted on a five point rating scale starting from totally agreed to totally disagree to a belief about child-rearing; and the extent that belief was practiced in their family. A key was also developed to evaluate the parents' responses and classify them as Authoritarian, Authoritative or Permissive.

### **Pre-test**

Prior to finalize the interview schedule, the researcher pre-tested it with 10 parents. By this pre-testing, the researcher identified some short-comings in interview schedule like addition of some inappropriate words during translation and cultural bias. The researcher made the necessary amendments in schedule. This prepared interview schedule was then checked for its reliability using Cronbach alpha which was .65.

### **Procedure**

Data was collected following the subsequent procedure. Permission was taken from Director KRL Model Colleges (KRL Model College for Girls and KRL Model College for Boys) to conduct research on middle school students. In the first phase, results of classroom exams of 120 students of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> classes were collected. The students achieving below 60% marks were termed as low achievers and short-listed and the students gaining more the 80% marks were termed as high achievers. The second phase comprised administration of Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM) on the students of 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> classes (the students were promoted to higher classes after final exams). SPM was administered in group setting in the respective classrooms along with instructions to correctly fill in the answers. After evaluating the tests of all the students, those falling in age range of 12 – 14 years were selected for further study. On the basis of the SPM test results, percentile ranking was calculated. The student falling above 70<sup>th</sup> percentile on the SPM scores, were considered for further study. In the last phase of data collection, parents of the selected underachievers and high achievers were interviewed to find out their parenting style.

**Results**

Findings are shown in Tables and Figures below:

**Table 1**  
*Effect of Parenting Styles on Academic Achievement of Underachiever and High Achiever Students*

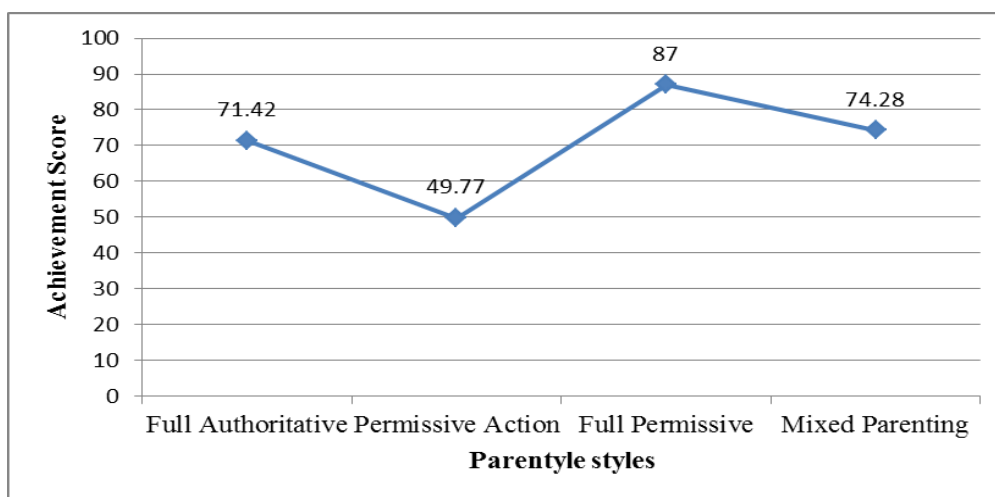
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	6343.68	3	2114.56	5.44	.002
Within Groups	25644.54	66	388.55		
Total	31988.22	69			

Table 1 shows the results of One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). ANOVA is conducted to see the statistically significant difference among various parenting styles on academic achievement of students facing underachievement. Results of ANOVA i.e.  $F(3, 66) = 5.442$ ,  $p = 0.002$  is significant at  $\alpha = 0.01$ . So, it can be inferred that there is significant difference among parenting styles on academic achievement of underachiever and high Achiever Students.

**Table 2**  
*Mean scores of Academic Achievement of Underachievers and High Achievers Regarding Different Parental Styles with Post Hoc Tukey Test Results*

Parenting	Full Authoritative (n=19)	Permissive Action (n=11)	Full Permissive (n=4)	Mixed Parenting (n=36)
Mean	71.42 <sub>a</sub>	49.77 <sub>ab</sub>	87.00 <sub>b</sub>	74.28 <sub>b</sub>

Note: same subscripts show statistically significant mean difference between parent styles.



**Figure 1:** Effect of Parenting Styles on Academic Achievement of Underachievers and High Achievers



Table 2 and Figure 1 show post hoc Tukey test results related to difference among parenting styles on academic achievement. Figure-1 reveals that the highest achievement score is possessed by students whose parents are fully permissive while lowest achievement score is possessed by students whose parents are permissive in their action but do not fully believe in the parenting style they use. There is not much difference in mean achievement scores of the students whose parents are fully authoritative or using mixed parenting.

**Table 3***Effect of Parenting Styles on Academic Achievement of High Achievers*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	25.14	2	12.57	.335	.718
Within Groups	1200.74	32	37.52		
Total	1225.89	34			

Table 3 shows difference among various parenting styles on academic achievement of high achievers. For high achievers, results of ANOVA i.e.  $F(2, 32) = 0.335, p = 0.718$  is not significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ . So, it can be inferred that there no significant difference among parenting styles on academic achievement of high achievers.

**Table 4***Effect of Parenting Styles on Academic Achievement of Underachievers*

Achievers		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Underachiever	Between Groups	62.83	2	31.41	.182	.834
	Within Groups	5524.42	32	172.64		
	Total	5587.24	34			

Table 4 shows difference among various parenting styles on academic achievement of under achievers. For low achievers, results of ANOVA i.e.  $F(2, 32) = 0.182, p = 0.834$  is not significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ . So, it can be inferred that there no significant difference among parenting styles on academic achievement of students facing underachievement.

**Table 5***Effect of Father's Parenting Styles on Academic Achievement of Underachievers and High Achievers*

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	7972.67	4	1993.17	5.395	0.001
Within Groups	24015.54	65	369.47		
Total	31988.22	69			

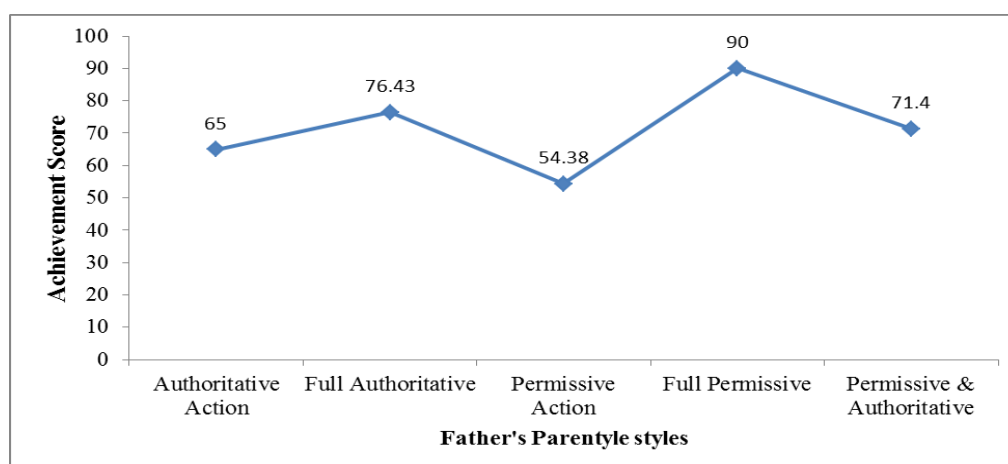
Table 5 shows the difference among various fathers' parenting styles on academic achievement of underachievers and high Achievers. Results of ANOVA i.e.  $F(4, 65) = 5.395$ ,  $p = 0.001$  is significant at  $\alpha = 0.01$ . So, it can be inferred that there is significant difference among fathers' parenting styles on academic achievement of underachiever and high achiever students.

**Table 6**

*Mean scores of Academic Achievement of Underachievers regarding Father's Different Parental Styles (Post Hoc Tukey Test Results)*

Parenting	Authoritative Action (n=7)	Full Authoritative (n=30)	Permissive Action (n=17)	Full Permissive (n=6)	Permissive & Authoritative (n=10)
Mean	65.0 <sub>a</sub>	76.43 <sub>b</sub>	54.38 <sub>bc</sub>	90.0 <sub>ac</sub>	71.4 <sub>c</sub>

Note: same subscripts show statistically significant mean difference between parenting styles.



**Figure 2:** Academic Achievement of Underachievers regarding Different Father's Parenting Styles

Table 6 and Figure 2 show that the highest achievement score are of the students whose fathers used full permissive parenting style, while lowest achievement mean score are of the students whose fathers are permissive in their action but do not fully believe in the parenting style they use. There is not much difference in achievement scores of students whose fathers are either fully authoritative, use only authoritative action or authoritative & permissive action in their parenting.

**Table 7***Effect of Father's Parenting Styles on Academic Achievement of High Achievers*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	179.45	3	59.82	1.772	.173
Within Groups	1046.45	31			
Total	1225.89	34			

Table 7 shows the difference among various fathers' parenting styles on academic achievement of high achievers. For high achievers, results of ANOVA i.e.  $F(3, 31) = 1.772$ ,  $p = 0.173$  is not significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . So, it can be inferred that there is no significant difference between fathers' parenting styles on academic achievement of high achievers.

**Table 8***Effect of Father's Parenting Styles on Academic Achievement of Underachievers*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	603.477	3	201.16	1.251	.308
Within Groups	4983.765	31	160.77		
Total	5587.243	34			

Table 8 shows the difference among various fathers' parenting styles on academic achievement of underachievers. For underachievers, results of ANOVA i.e.  $F(3, 31) = 1.251$ ,  $p = 0.308$  is not significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . So, it can be inferred that there is no significant difference among Fathers' parenting styles on academic achievement of underachievers.

**Table 9***Effect of Mother's Parenting Styles on Academic achievement of High Achievers and Underachievers*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	4414.14	5	882.83	2.049	.084
Within Groups	27574.08	64	430.85		
Total	31988.22	69			

Table 9 shows the results of difference among various mothers' parenting styles on academic achievement of high achievers and underachieving Students. Results of ANOVA i.e.  $F(5, 64) = 2.049$ ,  $p = .84$  is not significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . So, it can be inferred that there is no significant difference among mothers' parenting styles on academic achievement.

**Table 10**

*Effect of Mothers' Parenting Styles on Academic Achievement of High Achievers*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	20.77	4	5.19	.129	.971
Within Groups	1205.11	30	40.17		
Total	1225.89	34			

Table 10 shows the difference among various mothers' parenting styles on academic achievement of high achievers. For high achievers, results of ANOVA i.e.  $F(4, 30) = .129$ ,  $p = 0.971$  is not significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ . So, it can be inferred that there is no significant difference among mothers' parenting styles on academic achievement of high achievers.

**Table 11**

*Effect of Mothers' Parenting styles on Academic Achievement of Underachievers*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	176.48	2	88.24	.522	.598
Within Groups	5410.76	32	169.09		
Total	5587.243				

Table 11 shows the difference between the various mothers' parenting styles on academic achievement of underachievers. For underachievers, results of ANOVA i.e.  $F(2, 32) = .522$ ,  $p = 0.598$  is not significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ . So, it can be inferred that there is no significant difference among mothers' parenting styles on academic achievement of underachievers.

**Table 12**

*Mean and SD scores of Underachievers and High Achievers*

Underachiever (n=35)		High achiever (n=35)		t-test Results	
M	SD	M	SD	t-value	p-value
51.41	12.82	89.34	6.01	12.88	<.001

Table 12 shows the results of independent sample t-test. T-test was conducted to find the significant difference between high achiever and underachiever students on achievement scores. The value of  $t(68) = 12.88$ ,  $p < .001$  indicates that there is significant difference between high achievers and underachievers on achievement.

## Discussion

The findings of the study are based on underachievers' achievement scores as well as high achievers for better understanding of the differences in parenting styles used by parents of underachievers in relation to students who are achieving up to their capability. Separate analysis of underachievement of the students with relation to the parenting style used by their parents was also carried out. The findings of the current study showed significant difference between parenting style used by parents and the academic achievement of their children. Previous researches (Jeup, 2007; Alarcon, 1997; Yahaya & Nordin, 2006) also support the findings. Highest mean achievement score is of those students whose parents are fully permissive. Although within the group of underachievers, highest mean achievement score is of students whose parents are fully authoritative.

As the mean achievement score of underachievers is lower it drops the mean achievement score of the total sample with authoritative parents. On the other hand, full permissiveness is practiced only by parents of high achievers that increase the mean achievement score of students. This finding is not supported by previous researches. Tiller, Garrison, Block, Cramer and Tiller (2003) concluded that permissive parenting had negative relationship with the children's cognitive ability. Children whose fathers practiced full permissive parenting were found to have less cognitive ability. It might be possible that parents of high achievers had become fully permissive because of their good result. These parents believed in their parenting style contrary to the parents of underachievers who used permissiveness but did not believe it as a good parenting style. This confusion could be communicated to their children. 0303 6697490

The students whose parents were fully authoritative showed significantly better results than the students whose parents were permissive in their actions only. Previous studies (Yahaya & Nordin, 2006; Tiller, Garrison, Block, Cramer & Tiller, 2003) confirm these findings. Students whose parents are fully permissive were significantly better than students whose parents were permissive only in their actions. Contrary to the current findings, Weiner (1992) concluded that parents of underachieving students were often unduly lenient or excessively strict. The findings of present study also showed that students whose both of the parents used different parenting styles had significantly better achievement scores than students whose both of the parents were permissive in their actions only. Findings of Jeup (2007) do not support the findings. According to Jeup (2007), inconsistent parenting had negative relationship with the academic achievements. The reason of better achievement can be that more influential parent might use authoritative parenting or permissive parenting which allows for autonomy and growth of the child.

As the parenting style used by fathers and mothers can be different, separate analysis of parenting styles used by fathers and mothers was also conducted in the study. Results showed significant relationship between parenting styles used by fathers and academic achievement. Previous study by Elias & Yee (2009), however, did not show any significant correlation. In the present study, the students whose fathers were fully permissive showed significantly better result in relation to students whose fathers were authoritative in their actions only. On the other hand, students whose fathers were fully authoritative showed significant better result than students whose fathers were permissive in their actions only. The students whose fathers were fully permissive as well as students whose fathers alternatively used permissiveness & authoritativeness in their parenting, also showed significantly better achievement scores than students whose fathers were permissive only in their actions. Yahaya and Nordin (2006) confirmed significant correlation between academic achievement of the child and permissive parenting style used by his parents. Separate analysis of parenting style used by fathers of underachievers showed that among underachievers, highest mean score was of students whose fathers were authoritative in their actions. Fathers of underachievers did not show full permissiveness.

Results of parenting style used by mothers and academic achievement did not show any significant difference. Previous study by Elias and Yee (2007) supports the findings. Although the descriptive analysis shows that highest mean achievement score was of students whose mothers were fully permissive while lowest mean achievement score was of students whose mothers were permissive in their actions only. Separate analysis of underachievers also showed that among underachievers, highest mean achievement score was of students whose mothers were fully authoritative.

### **Limitations**

- This study was conducted on the students of middle school children (12-14 years), the findings of the study can only be generalized with this age group.
- The present study focused only on one variable that is parenting but various other contributing factors such as students learning styles, role of teachers and school environment, peer pressure etc. should also be considered for complete understanding of the phenomenon.

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