



## Parenting Styles and Mood Disorders

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### Abstract

Mood disorders are a prominent category of mental health concerns globally, holding the second highest prevalence of all psychiatric disorders (NIMH). Globally about 1 in every 3 women and 1 in every 5 men suffer from depression and other conditions such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia (Dattani et al.). Approximately 21.4 percent of the United States's population suffers from at least one form of mood disorder, (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH]). This research paper seeks to explore the correlation between parenting styles and the emergence of mood disorders during adolescence and early adulthood. It will review key symptoms described in the literature for Major Depressive Disorder and Bipolar Disorder, two significant mood disorders. It will then assess the prevalence and development of mood disorders in correlation to the different parenting styles, including permissive, authoritative, authoritarian, and neglectful.

### Introduction

Moods are long-lasting emotional states, while feelings are specific emotional experiences triggered by a certain event. Mood disorders are characterized by major changes in an individual's mood state, typically resulting in depression or mania. Depression is described as prolonged periods of sadness and loss of interest (American Psychiatric Association [APA]). According to the DSM-5-TR (APA), mania can be described as a distinct period of abnormally and persistently elevated, expansive, or irritable mood, which can also impact an individual's social and daily functioning. Hypomania consists of the above symptoms as well, but the symptoms persist for shorter periods and are less severe. Mood disorders have a concerning high prevalence in the United States with 21.4 percent of the population being diagnosed with them (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH]).

Mood disorders can be influenced by many factors including genetic predisposition and environmental factors (APA). Family dynamics, specifically parenting styles, are one of the numerous environmental factors associated with the development of mood disorders. According to Baumrind, there are three categories of parenting styles authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Later Maccoby added the category of neglectful parenting to Baumrind's original three. Authoritarian parenting is characterized by high levels of control and high expectations of the child (Baumrind). Authoritative parenting consists of a balance between warmth and control (Baumrind). Permissive parenting is portrayed as easy-going with low control and discipline, primarily focused on warmth and nurturing (Baumrind). Finally, neglectful parenting is characterized by low levels of warmth and control (Maccoby). This paper aims to explore three specific mood disorders (Bipolar I Disorder, Bipolar II Disorder, and Major Depressive Disorder)

and the research on how exposure to specific parenting styles in childhood contributes to the development of these disorders.

## **Mood Disorders**

### *Bipolar I disorder*

Bipolar I disorder is a mental health condition characterized by extreme mood swings that range from manic episodes to depressive episodes (APA). Individuals with bipolar I disorder experience periods of intense excitement, heightened energy, and impulsivity during manic episodes, which can lead to risky behaviors and impaired judgment. These manic episodes are often followed by periods of deep sadness, loss of interest, and a lack of energy during depressive episodes (APA). The transition between these mood states can be abrupt and disruptive, significantly impacting a person's daily functioning and overall quality of life (Mayo Clinic). Treatment for bipolar I disorder typically involves a combination of medication, therapy, and lifestyle adjustments to help manage and stabilize mood fluctuations (NIMH).

### *Bipolar II disorder*

Bipolar II is a mental health condition consisting of recurring episodes of depression and hypomania (APA). Unlike bipolar I disorder, individuals with bipolar II disorder do not experience full-blown manic episodes; rather, they go through periods of hypomania, which are milder and less disruptive than mania. During these episodes, they feel an increase in energy, creativity, and productivity. However, these episodes are often followed by depressive episodes marked by profound sadness, loss of interest, and a decreased ability to function. Bipolar II disorder can be challenging to diagnose, as the hypomanic episodes are less noticeable. With proper treatment and support, individuals with bipolar II disorder can achieve stability and lead fulfilling lives (McIntyre).

### *Major Depressive Disorder*

Major depressive disorder is a common and serious mental health condition characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest or pleasure in activities (APA). The disorder goes beyond the normal fluctuations in mood that everyone experiences and can significantly impact a person's daily functioning and quality of life (APA). Symptoms of major depressive disorder may also include fatigue, changes in appetite and sleep patterns, difficulty concentrating, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, and even thoughts of death or suicide, which can last anywhere between six to twelve months (APA). The exact causes of major depressive disorder are not fully understood, but a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors may contribute to its development (APA). Treatment

for major depressive disorder often involves a combination of medication, therapy, and behavioral interventions (APA). With appropriate treatment and support, individuals with major depressive disorder can experience relief from their symptoms and regain a sense of well-being and functionality (APA).

### *Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Child Mood Disorders*

Research results point to a relationship between parenting styles and the level of depression symptoms exhibited by children. According to a study by Ebrahimi et al, the parenting styles of authoritative and permissive parenting were correlated with lower depression symptoms, while authoritarian and neglectful parenting was associated with higher depression symptoms. In addition, a study by Rostami, M., & Saadati, N. concluded that an authoritarian parenting style predicted mood disorders, specifically depression.

Researchers Sharma et al. conducted a study with 50 females and 50 males to examine the relationship between parenting styles and depression in adolescents. Authoritarian parenting was found to have a significant positive correlation with depression whereas permissive parenting had a significant negative correlation with depression (Sharma et al.).

Another study in Asia found that how parents raise their children affects how the children think about themselves and the world. Parenting associated with more negative schemas, such as Authoritarian and Permissive parenting, affects how likely these children are to feel depressed (Nia et al.). In Iran, researchers also found that feeling abandoned by one's mother can explain why some people become depressed (Nia et al.). In India, perceived abandonment in childhood and being raised with strict conservative beliefs on how children should behave can explain why some people become depressed because of how their fathers raised them (Nia et al.).

One notable study involving 1966 junior high school students in China examined the relationship between adolescent depression and parenting styles (Zhang et al.). The results revealed that depression in junior high school students was negatively associated with permissive and authoritative parenting (i.e., parental care), and positively associated with neglectful (i.e. parental indifference) and authoritarian (i.e., parental overprotection) parenting (Zhang et al.). parental care was associated with a reduced risk of depression in junior middle school students, while parental indifference and overprotection were associated with an increased risk of depression (Zhang et al.). The study also highlighted differences in depression rates among students based on gender, age, and parenting styles, emphasizing the need for tailored education and intervention strategies for junior high school students (Zhang et al.).

Overall the examined research studies had similar results indicating that Authoritarian and Neglectful Parenting were correlated with higher rates of depression and Bipolar Disorder.



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## Future Directions

In this paper, the relationship between parenting styles and mood disorders was explored. While sufficient research explored the correlation between parenting styles and major depressive disorder and bipolar disorder, there is a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between parenting styles and less common mood disorders, such as dysthymia, cyclothymia, and substance-induced mood disorders. This body of research would also benefit from longitudinal studies to show how these disorders change over time. In the future, it would be advantageous for research to dive deeper into these connections in order to develop a deeper understanding of how environmental and family factors influence the emergence of mood disorders. Additionally, parenting styles can vary across cultures and regions. The body of literature regarding parenting styles and the development of mood disorders would benefit from the expansion of research to include cultural differences in parenting styles as it could aid with the creation of a support system for the children affected. Although these relationships would need to be examined further, prevention and intervention may benefit families if the support system is not only for the parents but the children as well.

While the relationship between parenting styles and the development of mood disorders was explored for this paper, the understanding of this relationship can be deepened by future intervention research. Additionally, researchers could partner with social program developers to create and explore the efficacy of a comprehensive parental support system to enable parents to learn effective parenting techniques and comprehend how their parenting approach impacts their children. This support system could include all parenting styles, particularly authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, as the research included in this paper has identified a relationship between these styles and mood disorders. Emphasizing these would be a significant step forward in promoting mental health and well-being among children and their families.

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