

THE EFFECT OF PARENTING STYLES ON RELATIONAL
AGGRESSION IN CHILDREN: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE
REVIEW

by

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This systematic literature review examined the effect of different parenting styles on relationally aggressive behavior in early childhood to adolescence (age 3-18). Relational aggression is the intent to harm others through damage to the relationship and often occurs at school and with peers. Although research has investigated parenting and aggression, little research has examined how the parenting styles defined by Baumrind are associated with relational aggression. There are four types of parenting styles; authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved, which are rated on dimensions of warmth, control, demandingness, responsiveness, and acceptance. Authoritative parenting is categorized by a high responsiveness and clear boundaries for children. In contrast, uninvolved parenting involves little support and low demand in the child's life. Permissive parenting involves high levels of responsiveness, warmth, and acceptance but low levels of demand. Finally, authoritarian parenting encompasses high demandingness and low responsiveness aiming to create a rigid structure with clearly defined rules. It is important to examine predictors of relational aggression throughout childhood and adolescence because it allows parents and teachers to help children and adolescents develop healthy coping mechanisms. The goal of this paper was to understand how parenting styles are related to relational aggression. In addition, this systematic review expands on a prior review published by Kawabata and colleagues (2011) but focused on parenting styles instead of

parenting behaviors and clusters. Therefore, this systematic review examined studies published from 2011- present. Two research assistants searched the database Web of Science using a structured set of search criteria. Five articles met the search criteria. Findings indicated that the authoritative parenting style was not positively correlated with relational aggression. In other words, children whose parents use the authoritative style are not at risk to show relationally aggressive behavior in the classroom school environment. In contrast, both permissive parenting and authoritarian parenting have a positive correlation with relational aggression which means that children whose parents use these styles of parenting are typically more relationally aggressive in the classroom. These findings can help identify specific strategies that parents and teachers can use to reduce children's and adolescents' relational aggression.

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Introduction

Over 60% of children are exposed to peer victimization in middle childhood (Kochenderfer-Ladd et al., 2001) and nearly 50% of adolescents have experienced peer victimization in the past year (González-Cabrera et al., 2021), suggesting that aggression towards peers is a pressing public health problem. Aggression is the intent to hurt, harm, or injure others (Ostrov et al., 2018). There are different subtypes of aggression, one of which is relational aggression. Relational aggression is defined as behaviors that harm others through damage to interpersonal relationships (Ostrov et al., 2018). Spreading rumors, excluding peers, or threatening to harm someone's relationships are all examples of relational aggression. Similarly, indirect aggression is considered "behind the back aggression" and seen as a low-cost way of harming others (Archer & Coyne., 2005). Social aggression is similarly related but has intended endpoints (Archer & Coyne, 2005). The goal is to damage another person's social status and manipulate group acceptance (Archer & Coyne., 2005). Although indirect, social, and relational aggression vary in their definitions, research has found that their examination bases should be integrated (Archer & Coyne, 2005). Because each of these subtypes are often examined cohesively, the term, 'relational aggression' is used to refer to any type of indirect, social or relational aggression.

There are distinct functions of relational aggression (Ostrov et al., 2018). Relational aggression can be proactive when the aggressive act is planned or pre-meditated (Ostrov et al., 2018). Relational aggression can also be reactive which is aggression exhibited in response to a perceived threat or provocation (Bertsch et al., 2020). For example, if a child takes a toy from another child, and in response, the child threatens to hit them, the threat is considered reactive aggression. Furthermore, relational bullying involves repeated acts of relational aggression and a

power imbalance (Olweus, 1994). In the current study, the focus was on general relational aggression which may include both functions of relational aggression and relational bullying.

The presentation and effects of relational aggression vary depending on the stage of development. In early childhood, which is usually considered ages 0-8, relational aggression is typically direct, overt, and in response to a current situation (Ostrov et al., 2018). It may be presented as verbal exclusion (e.g., “You can’t play with us,” and “You can’t come to my party”). There is usually a clear perpetrator, and the relationally aggressive act occurs directly in front of the victim (Perry & Ostrov, 2018). Proximity to peers is also a risk factor for relational aggression in early childhood; having more play partners is related to higher levels of aggression (Perry & Ostrov, 2018).

As children enter middle childhood, ages 8-12, relational aggression becomes more complex. In this stage, relational aggressive acts more commonly include spreading malicious rumors, secrets, or lies about a peer. In contrast to early childhood, relational aggression may be more discreet and less clear to an outsider who the perpetrator is (Ostrov et al., 2018). Relational aggression becomes more targeted in middle childhood such that aggressive acts may be directed towards specific children more frequently (Martin et al., 2021). In other words, there is a specific, targeted victim of relational aggression.

In adolescence, relational aggression continues to be targeted and may start to have strong effects because children begin to develop individuality, put more focus on peer relationships, and care more about social standing (Volgaridou & Kokkinos., 2015). In this period, relational aggression becomes even more complex because children have a better understanding of social status (Volgaridou & Kokkinos., 2015). If relational aggression is left

unaddressed in early childhood, it can worsen in middle childhood and adolescence and cause long-term effects on well-being.

Furthermore, at any stage of child development, relational aggression can be damaging because it is associated with poor friendship quality and academic failure (Aziptarte et al., 2017). Both victims and perpetrators of relational aggression may develop poor self-esteem that can persist throughout childhood and adolescence (Aziptarte et al., 2017). Therefore, it is important to understand the predictors of relational aggression in order to address it and stop the progression of relational aggression throughout children's development.

The aim of the study is to examine the role of parenting styles and their association with relational aggression with peers in school settings. Developmental psychologists theorized that there are four distinct parenting styles (Baumrind; 1967, 1971; Lent & Murray-Close, 2020; Maccoby et al., 1983; Power, 2013). These parenting styles are based on dimensions of demandingness (e.g., rules, expectations, and consequences) and warmth/responsiveness (e.g., closeness and positive emotionality).

The authoritative style provides structure, clear expectations, and warm responsiveness (Muraco et al 2020; Power, 2013). For example, authoritative parents are typically involved with their children and set clear expectations. If their child does not meet an expectation, they respond with understanding rather than punitive measures. It involves high demandingness and high warmth (Muraco et al 2020; Power, 2013). In contrast, authoritarian style involves strict rules (high demandingness) but low warmth/responsiveness (Power, 2013). For example, authoritarian parents often set harsh expectations and respond by punishing children who do not meet their expectations (Muraco et al., 2020). Permissive parenting encompasses high levels of warmth and responsiveness but few expectations and boundaries (Power, 2013; Muraco et al., 2020). On the

other hand, uninvolved parenting provides little communication (Power, 2013). Uninvolved parents are usually fairly detached from the child's life and in some cases can be considered neglectful. For example, they might ask a few questions about the child's school or social life and provide few parenting responsibilities (Muraco et al., 2020).

In general, meta-analytic research has determined that authoritative parenting is associated with positive developmental outcomes such as higher self-esteem (Pinquart & Gerke, 2019). In contrast, research has found that authoritarian parenting is typically correlated with higher levels of certain functions of relational aggression depending on children's gender and stress reactivity (Lent & Murray-Close, 2020). Some of the research conducted does not explicitly list uninvolved parenting as a distinct category. However, some research detects that uninvolved parenting is correlated with more relational aggression in children because it relates to a lack of emotional regulation development and harder time developing social skills (Kawabata & Crick, 2016).

It is crucial to examine whether parenting styles are associated with relational aggression at different developmental periods to understand how the impact of parenting may change over time. In context, many parents adjust their parenting style as their children enter a new stage of development. For example, parents might be more authoritative in early childhood to set a strong foundation for their children and become more permissive in adolescence as children develop more independence. Relational aggression also changes over time as noted above. Therefore, the impact of parenting on relational aggression may vary by developmental period underscoring the need to examine associations between these constructs across time.

The current systematic review extends several meta-analyses or systematic reviews. In a conceptual analysis and meta-analytic review by Kawabata and colleagues (2011), they found

four clusters of parenting constructs; positive, uninvolved, psychological controlling, and harsh parenting, and examined whether these clusters were associated with relational aggression. Results demonstrated that positive parenting was related to lower levels of relational aggression and uninvolved parenting was associated with higher levels of relational aggression (Kawabata et al., 2011). Age did not moderate these associations, suggesting that these effects may not vary by developmental period (Kawabata et al., 2011). The current study expands on these meta-analytic findings by systematically reviewing studies of parenting styles instead of the clusters evaluated by Kawabata and colleagues (2011). To ensure minimal overlap, the current systematic review focused on studies published after 2011.

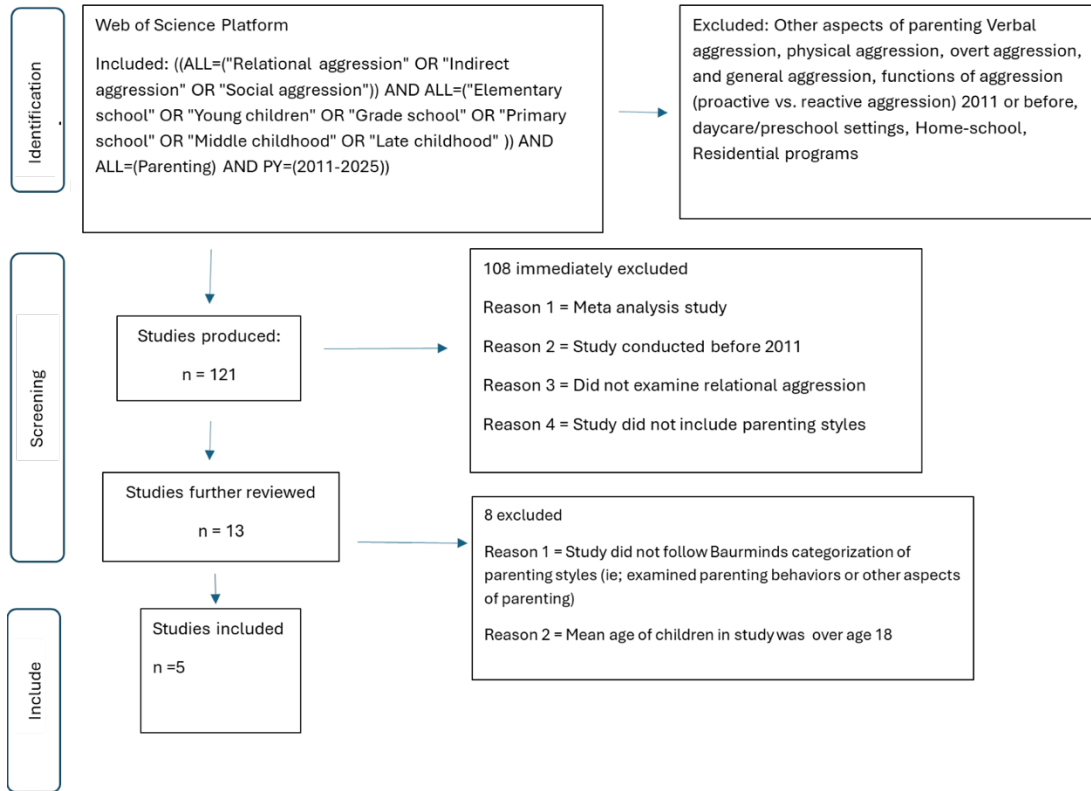
A second systematic review and meta-analysis evaluated the association between parenting styles, bullying behaviors and victimization. Results demonstrated that positive parenting (e.g., acceptance, warmth, and open communication) was negatively associated with bullying indicating that children who grow up with a positive parenting style usually exhibit fewer bullying behaviors (Chu et al., 2024). Uninvolved parenting was positively associated with bullying behaviors, suggesting that children who grow up with uninvolved parents are more likely to engage in bullying behaviors (Chu et al., 2024). The current review extends these findings by focusing on general relational aggression that does not require a power imbalance or repetition. This review also uses the four parenting styles categorized by Baumrind rather than parenting behaviors.

A third systematic review of literature examined the direct impact of parenting styles on aggression in children and adolescents (Masud et al., 2019). The paper used 34 studies across developed, developing, and underdeveloped countries. Like the previous reviews and meta-analyses, results demonstrated that the authoritative parenting style was negatively associated

with aggression whereas the authoritarian style was positively associated with aggression (Masud et al., 2019). However, this review was limited because it examined aggression broadly and not the relational aggression subtype.

This overarching goal of the current study was to synthesize the literature related to parenting styles and relational aggression since 2011. This study builds on previous research by examining how specific parenting styles (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved) are associated with relational aggression. Multiple hypotheses were generated based on prior research. It was hypothesized that authoritative parenting would be negatively correlated with relational aggression, and authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting would be positively correlated with relational aggression. Findings from this review helped determine when and how parenting practices are associated with relational aggression, potentially revealing areas for prevention/ intervention efforts.

Figure 1: Prisma Flow Diagram for Systematic Review



A Prisma Flow Diagram explaining the process of article selection

Methods

To conduct a systematic literature review on the effects of parenting styles on relational aggression in childhood, the first step was creating a list of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The purpose of this paper was to examine studies following the publication of Kawabata and colleagues (2011) meta-analysis. Studies published before 2011 were excluded. All included studies were published in peer-reviewed journals, other types of studies were excluded. All included articles contained at least one of the four distinct parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved). Parenting behaviors and categories outside of the four listed were excluded. Each included study also measured the child's relational, indirect, and/or social aggression. Studies that measured physical aggression, verbal aggression, overt aggression, or the functions of aggression (proactive vs reactive) were excluded. Included studies followed children ages 3-18 years of age while college students and people over age eighteen and under age three were excluded. Any culture, country, socio economic status or participating parent (mothers, fathers, or both) was included in the search criteria. Both public, private, and alternate schooling locations were included.

To identify the studies to be included in the systematic review a broad search in Web of Science was conducted. The following search criteria were put into the Web of Science Data Base: ((ALL=("Relational aggression" OR "Indirect aggression" OR "Social aggression")) AND ALL=(Parenting) AND PY=(2011-2025)). After 121 articles were initially produced in Web of science database, the Rayyan platform was used to help examiners categorize which studies should be included in the systematic review. Two examiners initially scanned each study to determine which studies should be reviewed in more detail. Thirteen studies were deemed included for further review by one or both reviewers and 108 were immediately excluded by

both reviewers because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. The agreement rate between the two reviewers was 95%. The 13 remaining studies were further reviewed by the two examiners and eight were deemed unusable because they did not fit the correct study criteria (see Figure 1). A final list of five studies was produced that met all inclusion criteria. The studies were then coded on the following criteria: demographics, assessment of parenting style, assessment of aggression, parent assessed (mothers, fathers or both), culture, study design, and results.

Results

Five studies were reviewed in detail. See Table 1 for the coding criteria. The first study was a cross-sectional study on the effects of paternal and maternal parenting styles on relational aggression in middle childhood (Pascual-Sagastizabel et al., 2014). The study assessed aggression through Direct and Indirect Scales measure (DIAS; Björkqvist & Österman, 1998), a peer-rating scale, and used the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (Robinson et al., 2001), a parent-report scale, to assess parenting style. The sample included 159 eight-year-olds in upper middle-class homes in Spain. In regression models, relational aggression was examined separately than physical aggression and testosterone was examined as a moderator of the association between parenting style and relational aggression. In a regression analysis, the effect of maternal permissive parenting on indirect aggression for girls was only significant for girls with average or high testosterone, indicating that the impact of parenting style may vary by physiological factors (Pascual-Sagastizabel et al., 2014). The study concluded that both paternal authoritarian parenting and maternal permissive parenting have a positive correlation with relational aggression. Paternal authoritarian parenting had a correlation of $r = .40$ ($p < .01$) showing that paternal authoritarian parenting is positively related to more relational aggression (Pascual-Sagastizabel et al., 2014). Maternal permissive parenting had a correlation of $r = .30$ ($p < .05$) indicating that maternal permissive parenting is also positively associated relational aggression (Pascual-Sagastizabel et al., 2014).

In a longitudinal study in Voronezh Russia, relational and physical aggression in preschool aged children were examined with respect to Baumrind's four parenting styles (Nelson et al., 2014). 168 children were followed from preschool (Time 1) to adolescence (Time 2). In preschool, teachers reported on children's relational aggression using a scale that has been used

in Non-Western cultures (Hart et al., 1998). In adolescence, self-report of the Peer and Romantic Relations Inventory was used to examine relational aggression (Nelson, 2005). Parenting styles were reported by fathers and mothers at the preschool time point using an adapted version of the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (Robinson et al., 2001). When examining bivariate correlations concurrently in preschool, for boys, maternal authoritarian parenting $r = .22$, ($p < .05$) and paternal authoritarian parenting $r = .23$, ($p < .05$) were positively associated with relational aggression (Nelson et al., 2014). However, paternal authoritative parenting was negatively associated with relational aggression $r = -.26$, ($p < .05$) (Nelson et al., 2014). For girls, preschool parenting style was not associated with preschool relational aggression. R s range from $-.01$ to $.24$, ($p > .05$). When examining longitudinal bivariate associations, for boys, paternal authoritative parenting was negatively associated with adolescent relational aggression $r = -.44$, ($p < .01$) and for girls, paternal permissive parenting was positively associated with adolescent relational aggression $r = .30$, ($p < .05$) (Nelson et al., 2014). When examining the impact of preschool parenting style on adolescent relational aggression when controlling for preschool aggression and adolescent physical aggression, for boys, preschool authoritative parenting was associated with less adolescent relational aggression. There were no significant associations for preschool girls (Nelson et al., 2014). In general, in preschool aged boys, paternal authoritarian and permissive parenting were correlated with more relational aggression while paternal authoritative parenting was associated with less relational aggression. The pattern held true as children moved to adolescences.

A longitudinal study conducted by Ehrenreich and colleagues (Ehrenreich et al., 2014) examined trajectories for social and physical aggression in the United States. The sample included 296 children who were followed yearly over the course of nine years (ages 9-

18). Teachers reported on relational aggression using the Children's Social Behavioral – Scale Teacher Form (Coté et al., 2007). Parenting style was assessed using the Parenting Styles and Dimensions questionnaire PSD. (Robinson & Mandleco, 1995). The study examined maternal parenting style. Most of the time, mothers self-reported their parenting style. When maternal report was not available, fathers reported on maternal parenting style. Specifically, maternal permissive parenting had a positive correlation with social aggression in grade 5, 6, 8, and 9. *Rs* range from .21 to .40, ($p < .05$) for boys. In grade 7, authoritarian maternal parenting had a significant correlation with relational aggression $r = .32$, ($p < .05$) for boys which means authoritarian parentings is linked with higher levels of relational aggression. In grade 8 for girls, authoritarian maternal parenting was significantly correlated to relational aggression $r = .24^{**}$, ($p < .05$). Permissive parenting was not significantly related to relational aggression for girls at any time point. *Rs* range from -.24 to .20, ($p > .05$). Other parenting styles, including authoritative and uninvolved, were not included in the study. Follow up analyses that included all parenting styles demonstrated that youth were more likely to have high levels of relational aggression across time if they had high levels of maternal permissive parenting (Ehrenreich et al., 2014).

A study conducted by Cole and colleagues tested the role of parenting legitimacy as a mediator in the relationship between parenting styles and relational aggression (Cole et al., 2021). Middle school and high school students ($N = 708$) were examined at four time points which occurred every six months. Parenting styles were assessed using a modified version of the Parental Authority Questionnaire; a child-report measure (Buri, 1991). For example, children responded to true or false questions such as “my parents tell me how I should act and explain the reason why.” The study examined mothers or fathers parenting style but not both parents.

Relational aggression was assessed using Orphans and Horne's (2006) 12-item reduced aggression/victimization scale. In terms of the bivariate correlations, authoritative parenting was negatively associated with relational aggression $r = -.12$, ($p < .01$), and authoritarian parenting was positively associated with relational aggression $r = .09^{**}$, ($p < .01$). Permissive parenting was not associated with relational aggression $r = .01$, ($p < .05$). Uninvolved parenting was not included in the study. However, in a path model with other rule breaking behaviors included, parenting style was not associated with relational aggression.

In a study examining negative maternal and paternal parenting styles as predictors of children's behavior problems, Braza and colleagues (2013) included 89 students in Spain. Students were first examined at age 5-6 (Time 1) and then again at age 8-9 (Time 2). To assess parenting style, mothers and fathers completed a Parenting Styles and Dimensions questionnaire independently (Robinson et al., 1995, 2001). At the second evaluation point (age 8-9) relational aggression was evaluated using the Direct and Indirect Aggression Scale (DIAS); a peer rating measurement (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992). Regarding the bivariate correlations, no parenting style had a significant correlation with relational aggression. R 's range from .03 to 0.24, ($p < 0.01$). Of note, paternal permissive parenting did have a moderate correlation with relational aggression even though it was not significant $r = 0.24$, ($p > 0.05$). The study may have been underpowered to detect significant effects relative to the other studies because the sample size was smaller.

Table 1: Results and Demographics of Each

<p>Pascual-Sagastizabel et al., 2014 Demographics: 89 boys, 70 girls, examined in middle childhood (<i>M</i> age: 8.15 years, range:7-9). Middle to high-middle class sample. Assessment of Parenting Style: Parent self-report of PSDQ. Assessment of Aggression: Peer rated DIAS. Parent: Mothers and Fathers Culture: Spain Study Design: Cross-sectional Results: Girls: paternalAN $r = .40^{**}$; maternalP $r = .30^{*}$ Boys- No significant correlations.</p>
<p>Nelson et al., 2014 Demographics: 84 boys 84 girls, (preschool aged; <i>M</i> age = 4.9) two parent biological households. Examined again a decade later. Assessment of Parenting Style: Parent self-report of adapted version of the PSDQ. Assessment of Aggression: Teachers reported in data collection 1 and students self-reported in data collection 2 using Peer Inventory Self report. Parent: Mothers and Fathers Culture: Russia Study Design: Longitudinal:10 years Results: Preschool girls- No significant correlations; Adolescence girls- paternalP $r = 0.3^{*}$; Preschool boys- paternalAA $r = -0.26^{*}$; paternalAN $r = 0.23^{*}$; maternalAN $r = 0.22^{*}$. Adolescence boys- paternalAA $r = 0.44^{*}$.</p>
<p>Ehrenreich et al, 2014 Demographics: 158 girls, 138 boys, public school districts, (<i>M</i> age = 9, 3rd grade) majority married parents at initial wave of data collection Assessment of Parenting Style: Parent self-report of PSDQ Assessment of Aggression: Teacher-report of CSBS reported yearly in grades 3-12. Parent: Mothers* (see notes) Culture: US Study Design: Longitudinal: 9 years, reported every year Results: Girls- maternalAN $r = 0.24^{*}$ Boys- maternalPP $r = r$'s range from 0.21* - 0.40*; maternalAN $r = .32^{*}$;</p>
<p>Braza et al 2013 Demographics: 42 boys 47 girls (<i>M</i> age= 5.2 years, range 5-6) medium - medium high economic status, majority two parent families Assessment of Parenting Style: Parent self-report of PAQ. Assessment of Aggression: Peer rated DIAS. Parent: Mothers and Fathers Culture: Spain Study Design: Longitudinal (Data collected at age 5-6 and 8-9) Results: No significant correlations.</p>
<p>Cole et al; 2021 Demographics: 708 middle and high school students (420 middle school; <i>M</i> age=12.28) (288 Highschool; <i>M</i> age=15.32), 415 girls, 293 boys. Results not separated by gender Assessment of Parenting Style: Child-report of modified version of PAQ. Assessment of Aggression: Child self-report of NYLS . Parent: Mothers and Fathers Culture: United States Study Design: Longitudinal (data collected every 6 months, 4 times) Results: AA $r = -.12^{**}$, AN $r = 0.09^{*}$</p>
<p>Other Notes: *$p < .05$, **$p < 0.01$. MDIAI = Mini direct indirect aggression inventory, PSDQ = parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire, CSBS= Children's social behavior scale AA = Authoritative, AN = Authoritarian, P = permissive, DIAS = Direct and Indirect aggression scale, PAQ = Parent Authority Questionnaire, NYLS = National Youth Longitudinal Survey, Mother's * = When maternal report was not available, fathers reported on mothers' parenting.</p>

Discussion

Relational aggression is prevalent and influential in multiple developmental periods, suggesting a need to further examine correlates of relational aggression. The goal of the study was to systematically examine the literature on parenting styles and children's relational aggression. Results can help inform specific strategies for parents to help reduce relational aggression in the home and school environments.

Based on previous studies, including a meta-analysis conducted by Kawabata and Crick (2011) it was hypothesized that negative parenting styles including authoritarian parenting, uninvolved parenting and permissive parenting styles would have a positive correlation with relational aggression while authoritative parenting would have a negative correlation with relational aggression. The current systematic review focused on studies published after 2011 to examine new research evaluating parenting styles and relational aggression. The impact of parenting styles on relational aggression was examined across several developmental periods. Parents may change their parenting styles across developmental periods. For example, parents might display authoritative parenting practices in early childhood and then become more uninvolved or permissive in adolescence (Lansford, 2021). In two parent households, one parent might have an authoritarian approach while another parent follows permissive parenting. Also, parents might change their parenting style in response to certain situations which is why longitudinal samples are important (Lansford, 2021).

In general, the studies examined in this paper found that permissive parenting has a positive correlation with relational aggression in children. For example, Pascual-Sagastizabel and colleagues (2014), Nelson and colleagues (2014), and Ehrenreich and colleagues (2014) found that permissive parenting is associated with higher levels of relational aggression, although

results varied by gender of the child and parent. For boys, maternal permissive parenting was longitudinally positively associated with relational aggression (Ehrenreich et al., 2014), whereas for girls paternal permissive parenting was longitudinally positively associated with relational aggression (Nelson et al., 2014). However, maternal permissive parenting was concurrently associated with relational aggression for all children in a different study (Pascual-Sagastizabel et al., 2014). While permissive parenting can involve heavy nurturing, it also involves very little structure which leads to a lack of boundaries (Cherry & Morin., 2025). When children do not have boundaries, they are more likely to have poor decision making, social and emotional, and self-regulation skills (Cherry & Morin., 2025).

Several studies also found that authoritarian parenting has a positive correlation with relational aggression. Pascual-Sagastizabel and colleagues (2014), Nelson and colleagues (2014), Ehrenreich and colleagues (2014), and Cole and colleagues (2021) found that authoritarian parenting is linked to higher levels of relational aggression. Like findings for permissive parenting, these results varied by the child and parent's gender when studies evaluated the correlations by gender. For girls, studies found that paternal but not maternal authoritarian parenting was associated with relational aggression (Pascual-Sagastizabel et al., 2014). A different study found that maternal authoritarian parenting was associated with relational aggression in boys and girls, although paternal authoritarian parenting was not examined (Ehrenreich et al., 2014). Another study found that authoritarian parenting was correlated with increased relational aggression but did not categorize parents of children by gender (Cole et al., 2021). Across studies, authoritarian parenting had a consistent positive relationship with relational aggression, suggesting that at the very least, authoritarian parenting is related to more relational aggression in girls.

These findings regarding authoritarian parenting are notable given that they spanned various cultures (e.g., Spain, Russia, United States) and developmental periods (early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence). Authoritarian parenting usually involves high levels of demands in the absence of parental warmth, which can lead to lower academic achievement and higher levels of internalizing problems (Pinquart, 2016). In addition, authoritarian parenting involves high levels of control. Excessive controlling can cause the child to develop poor communication skills which could be linked to relational aggression (Golden, 2024). It is important to note that authoritarian parenting had a consistent positive relationship when examined in samples of preschool age children and adolescents which suggests that the effects of authoritarian parenting are equally damaging throughout childhood.

In contrast, authoritative parenting was found to have a negative correlation with relational aggression. Nelson and Colleagues (2014) and Cole and Colleagues (2021) found that children whose parents use an authoritative parenting style demonstrated less relational aggression. These two studies were conducted in different countries in different developmental periods, demonstrating the universality of this effect across two cultures. However, two studies included found no protective effect of authoritative parenting on relational aggression (Braza et al., 2013; Pascual-Sagastizabal et al., 2014). Yet, these studies also did not find a positive correlation between authoritative parenting and relational aggression suggesting that at the very least, authoritative parenting is not a risk factor for relational aggression. Authoritative parenting typically involves a balance of support and discipline which helps children develop strong emotional intelligence and confidence which are less likely to influence aggressive behaviors (Masud et al., 2017). That does not mean that children whose parents use an authoritative style of parenting do not show any relational aggression. Rather, these studies indicate that authoritative

parenting may be protective against relational aggression for some children or may be a neutral factor in the development of relational aggression. It does not appear to increase the risk of relational aggression in children and adolescents.

It is important to note the gender differences in these findings. Researchers theorize that girls may be more likely to model the behaviors of their mothers and boys may be more likely to model behaviors from their fathers (Mascaro et al., 2018). On the other hand, other researchers argue that the opposing gendered parent might actually have more of an effect on children's behaviors because their behavior is more noticeable (Williamson et al., 2022). In the current study we found evidence that both same gender and different gender parenting has an effect on relational aggression. For example, Pascal-Sagastizabel and colleagues (2014) found that paternal authoritarian and maternal permissive parenting was correlated with relational aggression in girls. Nelson and colleagues (2014) found that both maternal and paternal authoritarian parenting had a positive correlation with relational aggression in boys and paternal permissive parenting was related to more relational aggression in girls. Ehrenreich and colleagues (2014) found that maternal authoritarian parenting was related to higher levels relational aggression for boys and girls. Based on the results of each study, it was concluded that gender dynamics play a factor in relational aggression, but more research is needed to determine when and how these gender differences unfold.-

Each study provided important information about the relationship between parenting styles and relational aggression in the school setting. However, there were limitations of each study that can help contextualize results and provide directions for future research. First, uninvolved parenting is a parenting style, yet it was not examined in any study. Uninvolved parenting is often less studied than the other parenting styles because it is newer-(Cherry, 2024).

Also, there are typically less overt behaviors in uninvolved parenting which makes it harder to examine. Another limitation of the current study is the small number of studies that met specific search criteria. After 121 studies were initially reviewed, only five met the inclusion criteria. Due to the small number of studies, there was a narrow range of demographics studied. For example, studies from Spain, Russia and the United States were the only three countries included in the paper. There was also large variability in sample sizes. Larger sample sizes are preferred because they provide more data and allow for a generalization of results. However, Braza and colleagues (2013) only used 89 participants which likely contributed to their lack of significant findings.

Methodologically, the tools used to measure parenting style leave room for bias. For instance, every study except for Cole and colleagues (2021) used a self-reported version of a PSDQ. Because parents are self-reporting, it is possible that they are inaccurately reporting on their parenting style due to positive impression management or other factors. In the study conducted by Cole and colleagues (2021), children reported on their parent's style of parenting which also leaves room for bias as the child might not understand the questionnaire or may inaccurately report on parenting style. Pascual-Sagastizabel and colleagues, (2014) used a cross-sectional design which means they only collected data from one time point. Because children were not examined at multiple time points, we cannot conclude how patterns of relational aggression changed over time in response to parenting styles. On the other hand, there were a few longitudinal studies. For example, the study conducted by Ehrenreich and colleagues (2014) collected data every year for nine years. The study started when children were in third grade (middle childhood) and followed the students through high school (Adolescence). Cole and colleagues (2021) collected data from children over four years through middle childhood (middle school) and adolescence (high school). Nelson and colleagues (2014) collected data at two time

points but a decade apart (preschool and high school school). Braza and colleagues (2013) also collected data across two time points, three years apart. The study started when children were between the ages 5-6 years and then children were followed until they were ages 8-9 years. The amount of time in between each examination point is important because a longer gap in-between time points accounts for more change in child development, parenting styles, and other life factors. Because each study had a different amount of time in between each examination, it is challenging to generalize results across studies.

The current study focused on children and adolescents. It is likely that the effect of parenting style on relational aggression has an enduring effect in emerging adulthood (i.e., college aged students). For example, in one study examining relational aggression for women in emerging adulthood, authoritarian parenting was significantly correlated with relational aggression (Cleveland & Yu, 2019). However, permissive parenting and authoritative parenting had no significant correlation to relational aggression in this emerging adulthood sample (Cleveland & Yu, 2019). It is important to note that this stage of development (emerging adulthood) is unique because the relationship between parents and children is different in this developmental period relative to previous periods. As children become more independent, they may not want to follow their parents' rules and expectations, and they may not live with their parents anymore. Because authoritarian parenting is based on high control, it may have a bigger impact when a child gains more independence and suddenly has more access to freedom.

One potential future direction for future studies is related to a new parenting style, gentle parenting. Gentle parenting combines elements of authoritative and permissive parenting because it encompasses high responsiveness and high warmth but avoids rewards and punishments (Edlynn, 2024). Some potential positive aspects of gentle parenting are that it encourages

children to develop strong senses of emotion regulation and empathy skills. However, some critiques are that it contains inconsistent discipline methods and a lack of boundaries (Edlynn, 2024). While there is not enough research to determine the direct effect of gentle parenting on relational aggression in the school setting, it is expected that gentle parenting is not effective for children who already struggle with aggressive behavior (Goodwin, 2023). Gentle parenting is based in constant positive behavior from the parent; yet when children are exhibiting problematic behavior such as hitting or bullying other children, positive behavior from the parent may be ineffective (Goodwin, 2023). In these cases, parents may resort to harsher techniques such as yelling or spanking. Gentle parenting can result in patterns of challenging behavior, which causes the parent to eventually wear down and damages the parent-child relationship because of a loss of positive parent-child interactions (Goodwin 2023). It is likely that there will be more focus on gentle parenting in research settings as it continues to rise in the media, and it will be important for researchers to investigate how gentle parenting is related to relational aggression.

Another future direction for the topic of parenting styles and their correlation to relational aggression in children is a continued examination of gender differences in parenting. Specifically, how the relationship between parents and children varies based on children's and parents' gender. As stated, many results in the reviewed papers varied based on gender of parent and gender of child (e.g., Braza et al., 2013; Nelson et al., 2014). As research continues, we will be able to make more definitive conclusions about the role of gender in regard to relational aggression and parenting.

It is important to understand the correlates of relational aggression in children because if left unaddressed, it has damaging effects in both the home and the classroom. One in five students are subjected to relational aggression in school every year (Kerslake, 2022). Relational

aggression changes over time which is why it is especially important to address relational aggression in early childhood to change trajectories early on. In early childhood, relational aggression is direct, overt, and in response to the current situation (Perry & Ostrov, 2018). Parenting typically has a larger influence on children's behaviors, such as relational aggression, in this stage because parents are more involved in the child's life (Fiese et al., 2020). For example, most of the time, parents are in control of the guest list for a party and can influence who their child plays with. Once the child enters middle childhood, they start to make their own decisions and decide who they want to be friends with and have clear targets for relational aggression. Being a victim of relational aggression leads to social anxiety, depression and a lower sense of self-worth (Young et al., 2011). If left unaddressed, in extreme cases these mental health issues could contribute to suicide which is one of the top leading causes of death in teenagers (Fitzgerald & Williams, 2022). However, understanding the causes and correlations of relational aggression such the role of parenting can help identify strategies to reduce relational aggression. In the current study, authoritarian parenting emerged as the most consistent risk factor for relational aggression.

Understanding the causes of relational aggression leads to the development of strategies to address and reduce relational aggression. One strategy that could be used by teachers is to increase communication with parents. Teachers can update parents on occurrences of relational aggression in the classroom and provide ideas on how to reduce it at home. For example, teachers can encourage positive interactions between parents and their children. Parents can also communicate with teachers about their children's relational aggression. They can provide insight on how they parent at home and be willing to try new practices. In addition, teachers can incorporate lessons about relational aggression into their lesson plans and promote prosocial

behaviors among children in the classroom. Specifically, they can inform students on the damaging effects of relational aggression and introduce healthier conflict resolution practices. If students have a better understanding of what relational aggression is, why it is harmful and other ways to resolve conflict, they are less likely to engage in relationally aggressive behaviors (Huang & Wang, 2009).

This study is consistent with other meta-analytic papers and reviews that conclude that authoritarian parenting and permissive parenting are positively associated with relational aggression. However, there is ample space for future studies to understand the impact of parenting on childhood aggression as it continues to develop. For example, gentle parenting is becoming more common and prevalent in the media. As this parenting term becomes more common, researchers could investigate this parenting practice in addition to parenting styles. Also, younger generations are starting to have a larger role in the media which brings in the subject of cyber bullying. As children begin to access social media in earlier developmental periods, the role of parenting style, social media, and relational aggression can be examined.

The way parenting and relational aggression is measured could also change as new tools and strategies develop. The ways schools respond to bullying and relational aggression should be examined in future studies. For example, some schools have a zero-tolerance policy for bullying which can change how students interact with each other and go about reporting occurrences of relational aggression. Relational aggression is a complex issue involving many different factors. Findings from the current study suggest that authoritarian and permissive parenting are positively associated with relational aggression as stated above. Future research should continue to evaluate the impact of parenting to help reduce relational aggression in and outside of the classroom.

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