The Relationship Between Parenting Styles and First-Year Students' Academic, Emotional, and Social Adjustment: A Study at Dong Thap University

Pham The Hung*[1]

[1*] Faculty of Political Education and Educational Management, Dongthap University, Vietnam

Email I'd: phamthehung@dthu.edu.vn,

HOW TO CITE:
Pham The Hung, (2026). The Relationship Between Parenting Styles and First-Year Students' Academic, Emotional, and Social Adjustment: A Study at Dong Thap University. International Journal of Special Education, 41(8s), 1183-1199

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:
Copyright: © 2026 Authors.
Open access publication underthe terms and conditions of the Creative CommonsAttribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

ABSTRACT:
Family education plays a critical role in shaping individuals' personality and developmental orientation, particularly during the transition to university. This study examines the relationship between parenting styles and the level of adjustment among first-year students. A survey was conducted with 808 students at Dong Thap University using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) and the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) on a five-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and linear regression. The results indicate that the authoritative parenting style is significantly and positively associated with various dimensions of adjustment, whereas the authoritarian style shows only a weak positive correlation. The dimensions of adjustment are strongly interrelated, reflecting the multidimensional nature of university adaptation; however, the model demonstrates limited explanatory power.
This study provides empirical evidence on the role of family and offers implications for supporting students during the transition to higher education..

Keywords: parenting styles; university adjustment; first-year students; academic adjustment; emotional adjustment.

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization and the rapid transformation of higher education, the transition into university is widely recognized as a critical developmental period in students' academic and psychosocial trajectories. For first-year students, substantial changes in learning modalities, academic autonomy, and social relationship structures require rapid adaptation to new institutional norms. University adjustment is a multidimensional construct encompassing academic, emotional psychological, and social domains, and its level during the first year is a strong predictor of academic success, mental well-being, and institutional engagement.

In addition to individual factors such as cognitive ability, personality traits, and self-regulation, the family environment particularly parental educational styles serves as an early socialization context that exerts long-term influence on autonomy development, emotional regulation, and problem-solving capacity. Parenting styles characterized by support, dialogue, and encouragement of independence are generally associated with higher levels of adjustment, whereas overly controlling or emotionally neglectful styles may undermine students'

capacity to cope with academic demands and transitional stressors.

In Vietnam, particularly in the Mekong Delta region, first-year university students face considerable challenges in adapting to changes in teaching methods, assessment practices, and increased demands for self-directed learning, thereby intensifying transitional stress. Against this background, the present study aims to examine the relationship between parental educational styles and the dimensions of university adjustment (academic, emotional, and social) among first-year students at Dong Thap University, using standardized measurement scales and quantitative analytical methods. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence and policy implications for family-based educational practices and student support systems during the transition to higher education.

2. Theoretical Framework: Parental Educational Styles and Student Academic Adjustment

2.1. Conceptualization and Classification of Parenting Styles

Within developmental psychology, parenting style constitutes a central construct in the socialization process, referring to relatively stable patterns of attitudes, behaviors, and strategies that parents employ in interactions with their children (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Rather than isolated parenting practices, the construct encompasses underlying value systems, belief structures, and modes of authority within the family, thereby shaping the broader socio-psychological environment that directly influences cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development. Accordingly, parenting style can be understood as a coherent system of child-rearing principles and practices that plays a formative role in shaping personality development, autonomy, and adaptive functioning.

Building upon two fundamental dimensions—demandingness (control) and responsiveness (emotional support)—the seminal framework proposed by Baumrind (1967, 1971), later refined by Maccoby and Martin (1983), categorizes parenting styles into four distinct typologies, each associated with differentiated developmental outcomes.

The authoritative parenting style is characterized by a balanced combination of high behavioral control and high emotional responsiveness, emphasizing dialogue, warmth, and autonomy support. This style has consistently been identified as the most adaptive configuration, strongly associated with self-regulation, academic competence, and optimal psychosocial adjustment (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg, 2001).

In contrast, the authoritarian parenting style reflects high control but low emotional responsiveness, emphasizing obedience and strict discipline while limiting dialogue and autonomy. Although it may produce short-term behavioral compliance, it is consistently associated with reduced autonomy, lower self-confidence, and elevated risks of psychosocial maladjustment (Lamborn et al., 1991).

The permissive parenting style is characterized by high emotional warmth but low behavioral control. While it may foster a sense of freedom and emotional expressiveness, it is frequently linked to deficits in self-regulation, discipline, and academic performance (Steinberg, 2001).

Finally, the neglectful/uninvolved parenting style, defined by low levels of both control and responsiveness, represents a disengaged parenting pattern associated with the most adverse developmental outcomes, including behavioral difficulties, poor academic achievement, and impaired social adjustment (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Collectively, this typological framework provides a robust theoretical foundation for examining how family-based socialization processes shape students' capacity for academic and psychosocial adaptation in higher education contexts.

2.2. Student Adaptation in the University Context

In educational psychology, student adaptation is conceptualized as a multidimensional process of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional adjustment

that enables individuals to meet the academic demands and social expectations of the university environment (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Credé & Niehorster, 2012). This process is particularly critical during the first year of university, when students transition from structured, teacher-directed learning to autonomous, self-regulated academic engagement, while simultaneously reorganizing their social networks and support systems. As emphasized by Tinto (1993), the level of adaptation plays a decisive role in academic and social integration, thereby strongly predicting persistence and long-term educational success.

From a multidimensional perspective, student adaptation comprises three core domains.

Academic adjustment refers to students' capacity to meet academic demands through effective self-regulated learning strategies, including time management, sustained motivation, and strategic learning engagement. It is a robust predictor of academic achievement, institutional satisfaction, and retention (Credé & Niehorster, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Emotional adjustment reflects the ability to regulate psychological states in response to transitional stressors such as separation from family, increased academic pressure, and competitive environments. Effective emotional regulation is strongly associated with psychological well-being and academic functioning, whereas emotional difficulties are linked to anxiety, stress, and motivational decline (Auerbach et al., 2018).

Social adjustment involves the capacity to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships within the university context. High levels of social integration enhance the sense of belonging, strengthen institutional attachment, and reduce dropout risk (Tinto, 1993).

2.3. The Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Student Adaptation

Theoretical perspectives in developmental and educational psychology consistently indicate that parenting style constitutes a foundational early socialization factor shaping autonomy development, self-efficacy, achievement motivation, and social competence—all of which are critical prerequisites for successful university adaptation (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Baumrind's framework (1967, 1971, 1991) suggests that the authoritative parenting style is positively and consistently associated with holistic developmental outcomes, including autonomy, problem-solving capacity, and social competence. In contrast, authoritarian, permissive, and particularly neglectful parenting styles (Maccoby & Martin, 1983) are generally associated with less favorable developmental trajectories due to an imbalance between behavioral control and emotional support.

Empirical evidence within the Vietnamese context further supports these theoretical assumptions. A cohesive family environment functions as a protective factor in adolescent development, while authoritative parenting is positively associated with academic engagement and proactive learning behaviors. Conversely, authoritarian parenting may constrain autonomy and reduce self-regulatory capacity. Studies focusing on first-year university students also highlight substantial difficulties in emotional regulation and social integration during the transition to higher education, underscoring the critical role of family-based resources in facilitating adaptation.

Overall, existing evidence suggests that the effects of parenting styles are context-dependent and culturally mediated; however, a consistent underlying mechanism can be identified. Parenting styles influence student adaptation indirectly through their impact on self-regulation, motivation, and social competence, which in turn determine academic, emotional, and social adjustment outcomes.

Accordingly, this study tests the hypothesis that parental educational styles significantly predict multidimensional adaptation among first-year students at Dong Thap University, with authoritative parenting expected to exert a positive effect, while less supportive parenting

styles are hypothesized to be associated with lower levels of adaptation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design to examine the relationship between parental educational styles and the level of university adjustment among first-year students. The quantitative approach enables systematic measurement of socio-psychological variables and allows for the estimation of the direction and magnitude of relationships through descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

In particular, Pearson's correlation analysis was utilized to assess the associations between key variables, which is consistent with established methodological approaches in university adjustment research (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Credé & Niehorster, 2012). This design is considered appropriate for capturing the structural relationships between family-based socialization factors and multidimensional adaptation outcomes within a higher education context.

3.2. Participants and Sample

The study sample consisted of first-year university students selected for the formal survey. Detailed demographic and academic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the formal survey sample

Characteristics	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
1. Sex		
Male	273	33,8
Female	535	66,2
2. Field of Study		
Educational Psychology	10	1,2
Teacher Education	750	92,8
Others	48	5,9
3. Living Arrangement		
Living with both parents	695	86,0
Living with father only	14	1,7
Living with mother only	54	6,7
Living with others	45	5,6
Total	**808**	**100,0**

The study sample consisted of 808 first-year students at Dong Thap University, selected using a convenience sampling method. The sample composition included 33.8% males and 66.2% females; 92.8% were enrolled in teacher education programs. The majority of participants (86%) reported living with both parents. The sample size meets the requirements for correlation and regression analyses in social science research (Hair et al., 2019).

3.3. Research Instruments

Two standardized instruments were employed in this study. First, the Parental Authority

Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991) was used to assess three primary parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—while the neglectful parenting style was additionally incorporated based on the conceptual framework of Maccoby and Martin (1983). Second, the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1984) was utilized to measure four dimensions of university adjustment, including academic adjustment, emotional–psychological adjustment, social adjustment, and institutional attachment.

All items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement, allowing for fine-grained measurement of psychological and behavioral constructs.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected between January and March 2026 via an online survey platform. The questionnaire was pilot-tested on a small group of respondents to ensure clarity, linguistic appropriateness, and contextual relevance prior to formal administration.

Participation was entirely voluntary, anonymous, and conducted in accordance with established ethical principles in social science research, ensuring informed consent and confidentiality of all respondents.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics through a three-step procedure. First, descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the sample characteristics and distribution of variables. Second, the reliability of measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ($\geq$ 0.60) to ensure internal consistency. Third, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the direction and strength of relationships between parenting styles and dimensions of student adjustment.

This analytical strategy provides a systematic approach for evaluating the role of family environment in shaping first-year students' academic, emotional, and social adaptation within the university context.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. First-Year Students' Adaptation to the University Environment

4.1.1. Academic Adjustment

Table 2. Results of the analysis of students' level of agreement on academic adjustment

Observed variables	Interpretation	Level of agreement			Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Level	Correlation coefficient	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
II.A.1	Motivated to study	3,980	0,806	Agree	0,686	0,862
II.A.2	Clearly understands learning requirements	3,958	0,792	Agree	0,675	0,864
II.A.3	Able to organize study time effectively	3,691	0,838	Agree	0,744	0,853

II.A.4	Proactively engages in learning and completes academic tasks	3,954	0,780	Agree	0,727	0,856
II.A.5	Satisfied with current academic performance	3,514	1,026	Agree	0,637	0,876
II.A.6	Capable of meeting academic requirements	3,896	0,798	Agree	0,718	0,858
Total		**3,900**	**0,712**	Agree		

The academic adjustment scale demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.882, indicating strong internal consistency among observed items and ensuring robust measurement validity.

The mean scores ranged from 3.51 to 3.98, suggesting a moderate to relatively good level of academic adaptation among students. In particular, participants reported relatively strong competencies in understanding academic requirements, managing study time effectively, and engaging proactively in learning activities.

However, satisfaction with current academic performance was comparatively lower than other dimensions. This finding highlights persistent transitional challenges faced by first-year students and underscores the need for further adjustment in learning strategies to meet increasingly demanding academic expectations in higher education.

4.1.2. Emotional–Psychological Adjustment

Table 3. Results of the analysis of students' level of agreement regarding emotional–psychological adjustment

Observed variables	**Interpretation**	**Level of agreement**			**Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test**	
		Mean	**Standard deviation**	**Level**	**Correlation coefficient**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
II.B.7	Feeling stressed and struggling to cope with academic demands	3,644	0,901	Agree	0,062	0,855
II.B.8	Experiencing emotional stability in university life	3,671	0,873	Agree	0,658	0,728

II.B.9	Able to effectively regulate emotions when facing difficulties	3,588	0,933	Agree	0,660	0,725
II.B.10	Rarely experiencing excessive anxiety or pressure	3,123	1,066	Neutral	0,586	0,743
II.B.11	Confident in oneself within the university environment	3,463	0,902	Neutral	0,686	0,720
II.B.12	Maintaining good mental health status	3,734	0,938	Agree	0,648	0,728
Total		**3,613**	**0,714**	**Agree**		

The results indicate that students' emotional–psychological adjustment scores ranged from 3.12 to 3.73, reflecting a moderate to moderately high level of adaptation. Overall, students reported relatively stable psychological functioning, with the highest mean values observed for good mental health status (M = 3.73), emotional stability (M = 3.67), and effective emotional regulation in response to difficulties (M = 3.59).

However, the lowest score was found in the item "rarely experiencing excessive anxiety or pressure" (M = 3.12; SD = 1.066), indicating that a notable proportion of students continue to experience considerable stress. This also reflects substantial inter-individual variability in emotional regulation during the transition to university.

The scale demonstrated an acceptable level of reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.787). Nevertheless, the item "feeling stressed when facing academic demands" showed a very low item–total correlation (r = 0.062) and increased overall reliability when deleted (α = 0.855), suggesting a lack of conceptual consistency with the emotional adjustment construct. This finding implies that the item may need to be reconsidered or separated into a distinct construct, such as academic stress, to enhance construct validity.

Overall, first-year students exhibited a moderate level of emotional–psychological adjustment, characterized by relatively stable mental states and an emerging capacity for emotional regulation. However, the persistence of stress and anxiety related to academic demands highlights a significant gap in psychological support. These findings underscore the urgent need for systematic institutional interventions, including counseling services, stress management training, and structured academic adaptation programs, aimed at strengthening emotional regulation and facilitating more effective adjustment during the university transition period.

4.1.3. Social Adjustment

Table 4. Results of the analysis of students' level of agreement regarding social adjustment

Observed variables	Interpretation	Level of agreement			Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Level	Correlation coefficient	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
II.C.13	Easily makes friends in the university environment	3,801	0,935	Agree	0,712	0,895
II.C.14	Feels comfortable communicating with peers and lecturers	3,879	0,839	Agree	0,788	0,886
II.C.15	Actively participates in the university's social activities	3,696	0,897	Agree	0,716	0,894
II.C.16	Feels a sense of belonging within the student community	3,855	0,833	Agree	0,745	0,891
II.C.17	Satisfied with personal social life	3,886	0,858	Agree	0,707	0,895
II.C.18	Has supportive social relationships	3,969	0,800	Agree	0,727	0,893
II.C.19	Feels a strong sense of attachment to the university	3,865	0,818	Agree	0,669	0,899
Total		**3,870**	**0,754**	**Agree**		

The results indicate that first-year students' social adjustment scores ranged from 3.70 to 3.97, reflecting a moderate to relatively high level of social adaptation. Notably, the highest mean scores were observed for having supportive social relationships (M = 3.97), satisfaction with social life (M = 3.89), and feeling comfortable in academic communication (M = 3.88). These findings suggest that students possess a relatively strong capacity to establish and maintain social relationships in the university context.

In addition, feelings of belongingness and attachment to the university (M ≈ 3.86–3.87) have been initially formed, representing a key psychological factor that promotes engagement and academic persistence.

In contrast, the lowest score was found in participation in university social activities (M = 3.70), reflecting a transitional-stage characteristic

n which students have not yet fully engaged in extracurricular or institutional activities.

The scale demonstrated very high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.907), with item–total correlations ranging from 0.669 to 0.788, confirming the strong internal consistency and measurement validity of the social adjustment construct.

Overall, first-year students exhibit a relatively good level of social adjustment, particularly in building interpersonal relationships and perceiving social support. However, the lower level of participation in organized activities indicates a need to strengthen institutional interventions such as student clubs, mentoring systems, and experiential learning programs to further enhance social integration and engagement within the university environment.

4.1.4. Institutional Attachment and Commitment

Table 5. Results of the analysis of students' level of agreement regarding institutional attachment and commitment to the university

Observed variables	Interpretation	Level of agreement			Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Level	Correlation coefficient	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
II.D.20	Satisfied with the learning environment at the university	3,989	0,757	Agree	0,803	0,912
II.D.21	Intends to continue long-term studies at the university	4,092	0,785	Agree	0,821	0,908
II.D.22	Proud to be a student of the university	4,099	0,815	Agree	0,832	0,906
II.D.23	Agrees with the university's values and goals	4,051	0,743	Agree	0,804	0,911
II.D.24	Determined to complete the undergraduate program	4,218	0,769	Agree	0,784	0,915
Total		**4,113**	**0,729**	Agree		

The descriptive statistical analysis indicates that the observed variables within the institutional attachment and commitment scale yielded mean scores ranging from 3.99 to 4.22, representing the highest values among all measured constructs in this study. This finding suggests that first-year students exhibit a particularly strong level of attachment and commitment to the university even at the early stage of their academic trajectory.

Specifically, all indicators of attachment and commitment reached high levels (M = 3.99–4.22), highlighting students' strong institutional bonding from the first year. The most prominent indicator was determination to complete the degree program (M = 4.22), followed by pride in being a student of the university and intention for long-term engagement (M ≈ 4.09–4.10). These results reflect a high degree of academic motivation and clear organizational identification among first-year students.

Students also evaluated the learning environment positively and demonstrated strong agreement with the university's values and goals (M ≈ 3.99–4.05). The scale exhibited excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.927), with

strong inter-item coherence across all observed variables.

Overall, first-year students demonstrate a high level of institutional attachment and commitment, expressed through pride, value alignment, and strong academic determination. However, a notable gap remains between positive attitudinal commitment and actual behavioral engagement. This underscores the need for universities to implement more robust engagement strategies—such as experiential learning, skills development initiatives, and structured learning communities—to transform attitudinal commitment into active participation and thereby enhance students' holistic development.

4.2. Parenting Styles of Parents of First-Year Students at DthU : The results of the survey on first-year students' level of agreement regarding four parental parenting styles are presented in the following figure.

4.2.1. Authoritative Parenting Style

Table 6. Results of the analysis of students' level of agreement regarding the authoritative parenting style

Observed variables	Interpretation	Level of agreement			Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Level	Correlation coefficient	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
III.A.1	My parents always listen to my opinions before making decisions	4,099	0,848	Agree	0,778	0,896
III.A.2	My parents set clear rules but provide reasonable explanations for them	3,895	0,878	Agree	0,691	0,908
III.A.3	My parents encourage me to be independent and take responsibility for my behavior	4,177	0,773	Agree	0,732	0,903
III.A.4	When I make mistakes, my parents give feedback and guidance rather than harsh criticism	3,950	0,929	Agree	0,782	0,896
III.A.5	I feel care and respect from my parents in the parenting process	4,215	0,827	Agree	0,832	0,888
III.A.6	My parents are both strict and loving toward me	4,218	0,837	Agree	0,746	0,900
Tổng		**4,172**	**0,756**	Agree		

The authoritative parenting style scale recorded relatively high mean scores (M = 3.89–4.22), indicating that students predominantly perceive their parents as adopting a supportive, respectful,

and guiding parenting approach. In particular, dimensions related to care, active listening, and the balanced integration of discipline and emotional warmth were rated most highly (M = 4.22), underscoring their salience within the parenting process.

The scale demonstrated very high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.914), with item–total correlations ranging from 0.691 to 0.832, confirming strong internal consistency and robust measurement validity.

Overall, the authoritative parenting style emerges as the dominant parenting pattern within families, aligning with empirical evidence highlighting its positive role in fostering autonomy and adaptive functioning among students. However, the observed variability in mean scores suggests inconsistencies in parenting practices, reflecting the heterogeneity of child-rearing approaches within the Vietnamese sociocultural context.

4.2.2. Authoritarian Parenting Style

Table 7. Results of the analysis of students' level of agreement regarding the authoritarian parenting style

Observed variables	**Interpretation**	**Level of agreement**			**Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test**	
		Mean	**Standard deviation**	**Level**	**Correlation coefficient**	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
III.B.7	My parents require me to follow rules and procedures without explanation	2,538	1,249	Neutral	0,811	0,897
III.B.8	My parents often make most important decisions on my behalf	2,521	1,222	Neutral	0,837	0,893
III.B.9	When I do not meet expectations, my parents tend to punish me strictly	2,524	1,247	Neutral	0,857	0,890
III.B.10	My personal opinions are rarely considered by my parents	2,473	1,244	Disagree	0,840	0,893
III.B.11	My parents regard obedience as the most important value in child-rearing	3,156	1,208	Neutral	0,688	0,914
III.B.12	I often feel pressured when I fail to meet my parents' expectations	3,210	1,215	Neutral	0,577	0,928
Total		**2,783**	**1,066**	Neutral		

The authoritarian parenting style was observed at a moderate level (M = 2.47–3.21). Items reflecting imposition of rules without explanation and parental decision-making on behalf of children recorded relatively low mean scores, indicating that such controlling behaviors are not widely prevalent.

However, indicators related to high parental expectations and perceived psychological pressure showed slightly higher scores (M = 3.16–3.21), suggesting that psychological pressure remains present, even though direct controlling behaviors are not prominent.

The scale demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.918). Overall, the authoritarian parenting style is not dominant; however, expectation-related pressure persists and may still exert an influence on students' psychological well-being.

4.2.3. Permissive Parenting Style

Table 8. Results of the analysis of students' level of agreement regarding the permissive parenting style

Observed variables	Interpretation	Level of agreement			Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Level	Correlation coefficient	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
III.C.13	My parents rarely set rules or boundaries for me	3,441	1,021	Neutral	0,590	0,876
III.C.14	I am free to make most personal decisions without being controlled	3,599	0,987	Agree	0,525	0,885
III.C.15	My parents often overlook my mistakes rather than correcting or guiding me	2,800	1,123	Neutral	0,774	0,846
III.C.16	My parents tend to indulge my wishes	2,717	1,196	Neutral	0,764	0,847
III.C.17	I am rarely required to take responsibility for my behavior	2,722	1,172	Neutral	0,757	0,848
III.C.18	My parents prioritize my happiness over enforcing discipline	3,063	1,165	Neutral	0,725	0,854
Total		**3,113**	**0,918**	Neutral		

Descriptive statistical results indicate that the observed variables in the permissive parenting style scale ranged from M = 2.72 to 3.60, reflecting a moderate-to-low level of endorsement within the sample. Items related to limited rule-setting (M = 3.44) and allowing children autonomy in personal decisions (M = 3.60) reached relatively moderate scores. In contrast, behaviors such as ignoring children's mistakes or excessively yielding to their wishes received lower ratings (M = 2.72–2.80).

Overall, these findings suggest that parents tend to grant a certain degree of autonomy, but do not

exhibit excessive permissiveness or lack of discipline. This reflects a relatively balanced parenting pattern in which autonomy support coexists with maintained expectations and behavioral standards.

The scale demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.881), with item–total correlations ranging from 0.525 to 0.774, indicating adequate internal consistency, although some items showed weaker associations.

In summary, the permissive parenting style is not a dominant pattern in the sampled families, despite some elements of autonomy support being present. The relatively low mean scores suggest that this parenting style is not strongly characterized in the sample, and some measurement limitations remain due to moderate item coherence.

4.2.4. Neglectful Parenting Style

Table 9. Results of the analysis of students' level of agreement regarding the neglectful parenting style

Observed variables	Interpretation	Level of agreement			Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Level	Correlation coefficient	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
III.D.19	My parents show little concern for my emotions or difficulties	2,444	1,186	Disagree	0,828	0,924
III.D.20	I often have to solve my problems on my own	2,775	1,205	Neutral	0,805	0,927
III.D.21	My parents rarely monitor my academic performance or daily activities	2,672	1,203	Neutral	0,840	0,923
III.D.22	I feel that my parents are minimally involved in my personal life	2,777	1,169	Neutral	0,833	0,924
III.D.23	My parents do not set clear expectations for me	2,673	1,162	Neutral	0,768	0,931
III.D.24	I feel a lack of emotional connection with my parents	2,447	1,254	Disagree	0,808	0,927
Total		**2,686**	**1,086**	Neutral		

The neglectful parenting style scale reflects the extent to which parents show low involvement and limited responsiveness in child-rearing. Descriptive results indicate relatively low mean scores, ranging from M = 2.44 to 2.78, suggesting that most students do not perceive their parents as neglectful or disengaged in the parenting process.

The lowest scores were observed for lack of emotional concern (M = 2.44) and lack of

emotional connection with parents (M = 2.45), indicating that most students still receive emotional support and care from their families. This finding aligns with the Vietnamese cultural context, where strong parent–child emotional bonding is typically maintained.

The scale demonstrated excellent reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.937), with high corrected item–total correlations ranging from 0.768 to 0.840, confirming strong internal consistency.

Overall, the low mean values suggest that the neglectful parenting style is minimally present in the sample, with limited variability across responses, indicating that most students are raised in family environments characterized by a certain level of parental care and guidance.

4.3. Relationships Between Parental Parenting Styles and Students' Academic, Emotional, and Social Adjustment

To examine the relationships among variables in the research model, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of associations between parental parenting styles and students' adjustment outcomes in the university context. The independent variables included four parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful), while the dependent variables captured students' adjustment dimensions, namely academic adjustment, emotional–psychological adjustment, social adjustment, and institutional attachment.

The analysis was performed on 808 valid observations, ensuring the reliability and representativeness of the dataset. The following research hypotheses were tested:

H1. The authoritative parenting style shows a positive and statistically significant correlation with all dimensions of student adjustment ($r = 0.449–0.592$; $p < 0.001$), underscoring its dominant role in promoting academic, emotional, social, and institutional adaptation. Accordingly, H1 is supported.

H2. The authoritarian parenting style exhibits a weak but positive correlation with adjustment outcomes ($r = 0.076–0.282$; $p < 0.05$). This suggests a limited influence, potentially reflecting its function in maintaining discipline and motivation within an Asian cultural context. H2 is therefore partially supported (weak effect).

H3. The permissive parenting style shows a weak-to-moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.168–0.320$; $p < 0.001$), indicating some emotional support effects, yet limited capacity to foster discipline and self-regulation. Its overall impact remains constrained.

H4. The neglectful parenting style is not statistically significant ($p = 0.915$), indicating no meaningful contribution to students' adjustment outcomes. Thus, H4 is rejected as a predictor.

In fact, the findings confirm that parenting styles are significantly associated with tstudents' adjustment, with the authoritative parenting style emerging as the strongest predictor across all domains.

In contrast, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles demonstrate weak or negligible effects. These results strongly emphasize the critical importance of a positive family environment—one that integrates emotional support with clear guidance—in fostering comprehensive student adaptation within the university context. The integrated pattern of relationships is illustrated in Figure 1

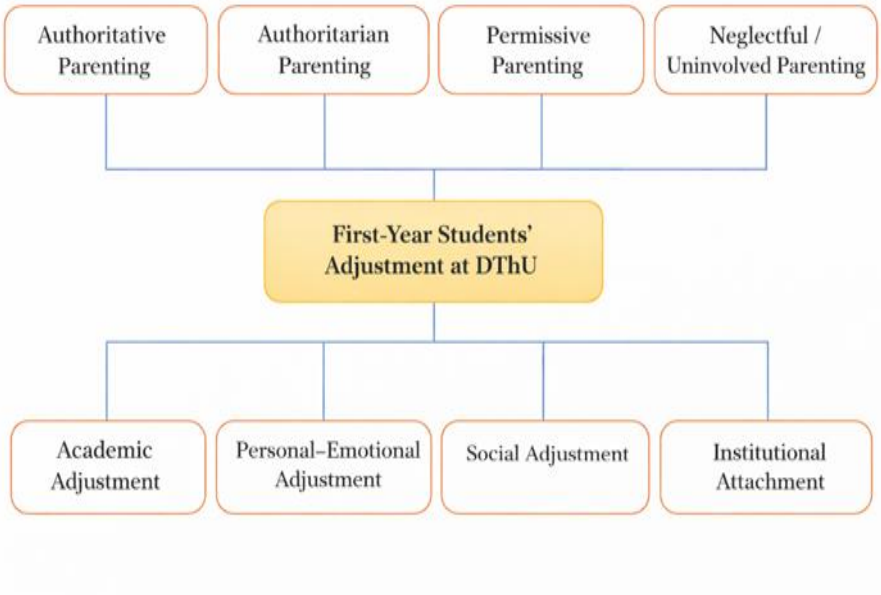

Figure 1. Correlation between Parenting Styles and First-Year Students' Adjustment at Dongthap University (DThU)

4.4. Limitations of the Research Model

The study sample was drawn from a single higher education institution with a high proportion of education majors, which limits the representativeness of the sample and the generalisability of the findings.

The explanatory power of the model is relatively low ($R^2 = 0.107$). In addition, potential multicollinearity issues and several non-significant predictors suggest that the model does not fully capture all factors influencing students' adjustment.

The analytical approach is primarily based on correlation and linear regression, which does not allow for the examination of causal mechanisms or more complex relational structures such as mediation or moderation effects.

The cross-sectional design and single-context setting prevent the analysis of temporal changes as well as the long-term effects of family factors on students' adjustment processes.

4.5. Novel Contributions of the Study

4.5.1. Theoretical Contributions

The study provides additional empirical evidence on the relationship between parenting styles and multidimensional student adjustment, including academic, emotional, social, and institutional dimensions.

It extends the applicability of parenting theories, traditionally focused on children and adolescents, to the context of higher education students.

The study clarifies differences in the magnitude of effects across parenting styles and confirms the dominant role of the authoritative parenting style in fostering autonomy and adaptive functioning.

4.5.2. Practical Contributions

The findings offer empirical evidence to inform educational management and policy development aimed at supporting first-year university students.

The study suggests important implications for families, emphasizing the need to combine emotional support with clear guidance to enhance students' adaptive capacity.

It provides a foundation for designing university-based intervention programs, including psychological counseling, learning skills training, emotional regulation, and social adaptation support.

In sum, the study integrates both theoretical and empirical perspectives, highlighting the foundational role of the family in shaping students' adjustment processes in higher education.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

This study confirms that parenting styles are significantly associated with students' multidimensional adjustment, including academic, emotional, social, and institutional dimensions, with varying levels of influence across different styles.

First, the authoritative parenting style emerges as the strongest predictor, fostering autonomy, self-regulation, and effective adjustment during the transition to university.

Second, the authoritarian parenting style shows a positive but limited association with adjustment outcomes. While it may support academic motivation within an Asian cultural context, it is also associated with potential psychological pressure and reduced autonomy.

Third, the permissive parenting style demonstrates a weak effect, providing emotional support but insufficient structure for developing discipline and self-management skills required in higher education settings.

Fourth, the findings highlight that all dimensions of student adjustment are strongly interrelated, reflecting the complex and dynamic nature of the adaptation process.

Overall, the family environment plays a foundational role in shaping students' adaptive capacity, and the results underscore the urgent need for effective collaboration between families and universities in supporting first-year students.

5.2. Recommendations

5.2.1. For Families

Parents are encouraged to prioritize an authoritative parenting approach, integrating clear guidance with emotional support. Maintaining open two-way communication is essential for fostering students' autonomy and decision-making capacity. At the same time, parents should avoid both overindulgence and excessive control by establishing balanced expectations and appropriate discipline.

5.2.2. For Universities

Universities should implement structured support programs for first-year students to enhance learning skills, self-directed learning, and time management. Psychological counseling services should be strengthened, alongside the development of a supportive campus community through extracurricular activities, mentoring systems, and academic advising. In addition, stronger home–university collaboration mechanisms should be established.

5.2.3. For Students

Students are expected to proactively develop self-management competencies, including self-regulated learning, time management, and emotional regulation. Active participation in academic and social activities is essential to maintain a positive learning attitude and long-term developmental orientation.

In sum, student adjustment is the result of a dynamic interaction among family, university, and individual factors, requiring a systemic and coordinated approach to effectively promote holistic student development in higher education.

References

Auerbach, R. P., Mortier, P., Bruffaerts, R., Alonso, J., Benjet, C., Cuijpers, P., ... Kessler, R. C. (2018). The WHO World Mental Health Surveys International College Student Project: Prevalence and distribution of mental disorders. International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research, 27(2), e1752.

Baker, R. W., & Siryk, B. (1984). Measuring adjustment to college. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 31(2), 179–189.

Baker, R. W., & Siryk, B. (1989). Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire manual. Western Psychological Services.

Baumrind, D. (1967). Child care practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior. Genetic Psychology Monographs, 75, 43–88.

Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. Developmental Psychology, 4(1), 1–103.

Baumrind, D. (1991). The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. Journal of Early Adolescence, 11(1), 56–95.

Buri, J. R. (1991). Parental Authority Questionnaire. Journal of Personality Assessment, 57(1), 110–119.

Credé, M., & Niehorster, S. (2012). Adjustment to college as measured by the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire: A quantitative review. Educational Psychology Review, 24, 133–165.

Darling, N., & Steinberg, L. (1993). Parenting style as context: An integrative model. Psychological Bulletin, 113(3), 487–496.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). Multivariate data analysis (8th ed.). Pearson.

Lamborn, S. D., Mounts, N. S., Steinberg, L., & Dornbusch, S. (1991). Patterns of competence and adjustment among adolescents from authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful families. Child Development, 62, 1049–1065.

Maccoby, E. E., & Martin, J. A. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent–child interaction. In P. H. Mussen & E. M. Hetherington (Eds.), Handbook of child psychology (Vol. 4). Wiley.

Mai, V. H. (2021). Research on parenting styles based on Baumrind's theory. Journal of Psychology, (5), 60–75.

Mạc, V. T. (2003). Parent–child relationships. Journal of Gender and Family Studies, (1), 15–21.

Nguyen, H. M. (2012). Family relationships in Vietnam: Key issues. Sociological Review, 4(120), 91–100.

Nguyễn, T. H. T. (2024). The impact of parental parenting styles on secondary students' learning engagement. Educational Equipment Journal, (326), 323–325.

Pascarella, E., & Terenzini, P. (2005). How college affects students: A third decade of research. Jossey-Bass.

Steinberg, L. (2001). We know some things: Parent–adolescent relationships in retrospect and prospect. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 11(1), 1–19.

Tinto, V. (1993). Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition. University of Chicago Press.

Truong, T. K. H. (2011a). Parenting styles of parents. Journal of Science, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, 27, 162–169.

Truong, T. K. H. (2011b). Family psychology. Vietnam Education Publishing House.

Vu, T. K. L. (2007). Current status of parenting styles among students' parents at Tran Dang Ninh Secondary School, Nam Dinh City. Journal of Psychology, (12), 17–23.

Vu, T. K. L. (2012a). The relationship between parenting styles and adolescents' active communication with parents (Doctoral dissertation).

Vu, T. K. L. (2012b). Family education in the context of contemporary society. Vietnam National University Publishing House, Hanoi.