

A Project titled

***The relationships between parenting styles and stress level of 2021 and 2022 Hong Kong
Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) candidates under the Coronavirus Disease-
2019 (COVID-19)***

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Declaration

I, Lam Cheuk Yiu , declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of Dr. WAN Lai Yin Sarah, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

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Abstract

The study was designed to investigate the relationships between parenting styles and stress level of 2021 and 2022 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) candidates under the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) in Hong Kong. The participants were 73 former HKDSE candidates who participated either in the HKDSE examinations of 2021 or 2022, currently undertaking their tertiary education. A mixed-method study was conducted, where participants were invited to complete an online questionnaire as the quantitative research, stating the parenting styles they have been receiving, their public exams results and stressors encountered when preparing for the examinations. The quantitative study mainly focused on the correlational relationships between the parenting styles and the stress level, especially the coping methods adopted by the participants. In addition to that, a qualitative research was then carried out, where seven semi-structured interviews lasted for fifteen to twenty minutes were organized. The interviews covered the authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles leading to high stress level of students; and authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and uninvolved parenting styles leading to low stress level of students. Participants of each interview were a pair of student and his/her parents. Results obtained from both the quantitative and qualitative research were further analyzed, where data from questionnaires was converted into statistics for comparisons with the use of SPSS; while qualitative data was transcribed for analysis. This study tends to give an insight into what parenting styles may be more effective to help teenagers, specifically public examinations candidates, alleviate their stress, or overcome uncertainty in Hong Kong under the occurrence of pandemic.

Keywords: Parenting styles, stress level, HKDSE candidates, COVID-19

The relationships between parenting styles and stress level of 2021 and 2022 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) candidates under the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19)

Introduction

It is well researched that the authoritative parenting style with high demandingness and high responsiveness is considered the best among the four parenting styles (Karki, Dhonju & Kunwar, 2020), where the other three are, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles. However, research was grounded mostly in a stable society, and not many relevant studies are conducted during an ever-changing period of time, for example under the pandemic of the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19). Therefore, the aim of this research project is to investigate the relationships between parenting styles and the stress level of 2021 and 2022 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) candidates under COVID-19 in Hong Kong.

Research Background

In Hong Kong, the first COVID-19 case was reported on 18th January 2020, and the outbreak first peaked in late March (Zhao, Wong, Luk, Wai, Lam & Wang, 2020). Although Hong Kong was praised as a model of having successful control over the outbreak of the pandemic, the government had established various rules and regulations to fight against the virus. Regulations on the wearing of the mask have been illustrated, and social distancing has been promoted. In order to give protection to young children, the Education Bureau has announced school closures several times and has asked schools to conduct teaching via diversified online platforms, such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Skype. Students could not enjoy their school life normally these years, and the pandemic has also greatly affected the candidates who participated in the 2021 and 2022 public examinations. The HKDSE examination is one of the milestones across Hong Kong students' academic life, where it marks an end of their secondary

school life, and decides their future prospects. Under usual circumstances, HKDSE candidates suffer from great academic stress; whereas for these two years, candidates suffered from both academic and daily stress, and were also significantly influenced by other uncertain factors. According to a survey conducted by the non-governmental organization Hok Yau Club in 2022, more than a third of participated students taking the HKDSE experienced high levels of stress, where the average stress level was 7.16 on a ten-point scale in January; and slightly increased to 7.87 in March. From its analysis, burnout, concentration issues and mood swings were mostly experienced by students under COVID-19, which lead to the greater stress levels.

Before the pandemic, candidates usually knew the confirmed, official examination dates months before. However, in 2021, the Education Bureau announced the commencement of it on 14 December 2020, which was still later than the common practices without the pandemic. Due to COVID-19, forms of examinations were also changed, for instance, Paper IV for Chinese Language and English Language were cancelled, which might affect students' overall performance since some of them may be good at speaking, but are rather weak at the other language skills. As in 2022 HKDSE, the Hong Kong government had implemented diversified measures to cater to learners' needs, for example allowing them to have their exams at the community isolation facilities. With various kinds of uncertainty, and ever-changing information, candidates for the 2021 and 2022 HKDSE examinations were overwhelmed, and were under great stress. Other than the changing public examinations rules and regulations, they might also be worried about their health, social relations, financial burden, or having difficulties in concentration or adaption to the changing environment (Son, Hegde, Smith, Wang & Sasangohar, 2020).

It is curiously judged whether the authoritative parenting style is still the best and most effective style when dealing with teenagers' stress in an era full of uncertainty. Would there be a possibility that any of the other three parenting styles would relieve teenagers' stress levels more effectively than the authoritative parenting style that less demands or responses given from parents might cause less stress to students? And which of the parenting styles might influence better on students' coping methods of stress? Hence, the potential benefits of this study may include, (1) finding out which parenting style may best alleviate Hong Kong teenagers' stress level; (2) finding out which parenting style may bring extra stress to students; and (3) finding out which parenting style might influence students' coping methods best.

Research gap in previous studies is also identified since tests of former researches were conducted mainly under a stable era, and usually marked the relationships between parenting styles and students' academic performance, relating the parenting styles to parents' expectations of children. However, fewer discussions were made during the pandemic, and researchers seldom relate the parenting styles to parents' understandings of their children. Thus, the relationships between parenting styles and stress levels of 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates under the COVID-19 are worth discussing.

Literature Review

Parenting styles

Parenting styles were first conceptualized by Diana Baumrind (1967), and were further expanded into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting by Maccoby and Martin (1983). Parenting styles are distinguished according to their demandingness and responsiveness given to children, "both authoritative and authoritarian parents are described as highly controlling" (Kerr, Stattin & Özdemir, 2012, p. 1540), the difference between them is

that the former involves high responsiveness and encourages communication; while the latter tends to shut down communication. As for permissive and neglectful parents, they tend to be less demanding, and the former tends to be indulgent and responsive to their children; whereas the latter is usually uninvolved, and has low demandingness and responsiveness (Baumrind, 1991). It is illustrated that positive parenting involves sensitivity, caring and communication would ensure positive developmental outcomes in children and adolescents, which may promote their psychological well-being. For instance, authoritative parenting fosters secure attachments between children and caregivers, which contribute to higher levels of social competence, and a better sense of autonomy of children (Karavasilis, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2003).

Stress

Stress can be a neutral, negative, or positive experience (Rajan, 1987). It can be external factors for example the environment, relationships, and daily challenges; or internal factors such as emotions and health (Lin & Yusoff, 2013). Under the pandemic, COVID-19 stressors include academic delays and effects on daily life, which are found positively related to anxiety levels of Chinese students (Huang, Xu & Liu, 2020). Students may also encounter a lack of self-discipline or a distracting learning environment (Handel, Stephan, Glaser-Zikuda, Kopp, Bedenlier & Ziegler, 2020), which evokes a higher level of stress (Bao, 2020). Besides, it is also found that high expectations from parents, academic overload, and interpersonal relationships are common stressors for adolescents, which may result in mental health problems. Under the COVID-19, the World Health Organization recommends stopping activities that may potentially cause mass crowds, and thus online learning becomes one of the trends during the pandemic (Pragholapati, 2020). According to Moore, Dickson-Deane & Galyen (2011), online learning is a kind of learning interaction with accessible and flexible internet networks. Hence,

students have limited their frequency of leaving home, and the lack of interpersonal communication creates the potential risk of mental stress, anxiety, and even depression (Zhan, Zheng, Zhang, Yang, Zhang, & Jia, 2021), which raises their stress level, both academic-wise and psychologically.

Coping methods

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1948), coping of stress is defined as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 141). According to Seeley (2009), coping methods could be separated into (1) problem-focused coping versus emotion-focused coping, and (2) approach/ active coping versus avoidance/ passive coping. It is notable that problem-focused coping and approach/ active coping emphasize gaining information, producing solutions and modifying circumstances as a direct problem solving method, whereas emotion-focused coping emphasizes expressing emotions which might lead to 2 opposite results, either regulating oneself and have positive thinking, or suffering from self-blame and self-criticism. Furthermore, avoidance/ passive coping is characterized by avoiding information and distracting oneself from the stressors, which is thought to be a less effective strategy than approach/ active coping (Power, 2004).

Research Questions

The study aims to explore the relationships between the parenting styles 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates have received and their stress levels and respective coping methods under the pandemic. To attain this purpose, the following research questions are formed:

1. What is the correlation between the parenting styles and 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates' stress level?
2. How do the parenting styles influence students' coping methods of stress?

Methodology

A mix-method research was conducted, where a correlational quantitative research served as the first study, while further qualitative research was conducted so as to investigate the correlations between the perceived parenting styles and 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates' stress level, as well as the corresponding coping methods. In this study, two variables were measured, including (1) the changing of environment due to the pandemic, and (2) the adaptation due to next stage of entering the university. It is hypothesized that students being brought up with the authoritative parenting style would tend to adopt problem-focused coping methods or active coping, leading to a lower stress level; while the other three parenting styles might lead to more emotion-focused coping, and avoidance or passive coping (Seeley, 2009), which might result in higher stress level.

Quantitative research

For the quantitative research, subjects were 73 candidates participating either in the 2021 or 2022 HKDSE examinations. 53.8% of them participated in the 2021 HKDSE, while 46.2% of them participated in the 2022 HKDSE examinations. Candidates were invited to respond to an online questionnaire via Google Form, which lasted for around 10 minutes. Participants were invited from the Education University of Hong Kong, possibly from the English Language Student Association (ELSA), or from some mandatory courses for Year 1 or 2 students to take. The participants were also invited to help spread to questionnaire so that more potential participants could be gathered. From the data collected, basic and major caregivers of the participants were their parents. As a correlational survey, fundamental information including occupations of parents, HKDSE exam results of students, perceived parenting styles, and

perceived parent-child relationships were collected by asking participants to rate the scales according to the features of the four parenting styles.

In the quantitative research, personal information and background such as gender, age, contact numbers and emails, year of study and major were collected as a source of background information. Apart from self-developed questionnaire questions on personal information, relationships with parents and parenting styles, and stress level, standardized surveys on Adolescent Parenting Attitude Four Factor Questionnaire (APA-FFQ) and the Perceived Stress Questionnaire (PSQ) were adopted as reference (see Appendix 1). The APA-FFQ is designed by Shyny (2017), which contains 40 questions, rating from 'All of the time' to 'Never' with 5 points in total. The estimated time for the completion of questionnaire would be around three to five minutes. Whereas the PSQ is designed by Shahid, Wilkinson, Marcu and Shapiro (2011), which contains 30 questions in total, rating from 'Almost' to 'Usually' with 4 points. The estimated time for the completion of PSQ is around two to three minutes. Points were then calculated to measure students' stress level, where the PSQ index equals to $(\text{raw score} - 23)/69$.

Data from the quantitative was analyzed in a correlational way with SPSS for further investigation of the qualitative research, and see if the hypothesis could be supported with the data.

Reliability

Reliability analysis was adopted to assess the internal reliability of the 5 variables in the sample of this study. The authoritarian parenting style has a Cronbach's alpha value of .854, which indicates good internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha value of the authoritative parenting style is .914, which illustrates an excellent reliability. Yet, the permissive parenting style has a

Cronbach's alpha value of .643, which implies a questionable internal consistency. Whereas the uninvolved parenting style and PSQ level have the Cronbach's alpha values of .882 and .848 respectively, which both indicate good reliability. The Cronbach's alpha values of all variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Reliability Analysis of Variables

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Authoritarian Parenting Style	7	.854
Authoritative Parenting Style	8	.914
Permissive Parenting Style	8	.643
Uninvolved Parenting Style	8	.882
PSQ level	23	.848

Note. $N = 73$

Data Analysis

After the data was collected and inputted, descriptive statistics of the variables were generated, including the authoritarian parenting style, authoritative parenting style, permissive parenting style, uninvolved parenting style and PSQ level, where frequencies such as mean, standard deviation and range were calculated. The data were then further examined in a correlational way under Pearson correlation, and scattered diagrams were used to visually present the relationships between the four parenting styles and students' stress level respectively.

Qualitative research

For the qualitative research, 7 semi-structured interviews were conducted to find out more about the correlations between the perceived parenting styles and the students' stress level, as well as their corresponding coping methods. As an extension from the quantitative research, interviewee were identified from the quantitative research, and for each interview, a pair of student and his/her parents would be participating. Among the seven designed interviews, three

cases were on parenting styles leading to high stress level, while four cases were on parenting styles leading to low stress level. Each interview appropriately lasted for fifteen to twenty minutes, and the venue was at the university. From the qualitative interviews, the impacts and influences that the parenting styles have on students' stress level and coping methods were identified and discussed. The Name code of the seven student-participants, perceived parenting styles and PSQ index are indicated in *Table 2*. Note that in this study, PSQ index with 0.5 or above was already regarded as a high stress level, while PSQ index below 0.5 was recognized as a low stress level for easier classification.

Table 2.
Overview of the interviewees' background information

Name code of the seven participants	Perceived parenting style	PSQ index	Stress level
Interviewee A	Authoritarian	0.9130434	High
Interviewee B	Authoritative	0.6231884	High
Interviewee C	Permissive	0.8840579	High
Interviewee D	Authoritarian	0.3768115	Low
Interviewee E	Authoritative	0.3043478	Low
Interviewee F	Permissive	0.1449275	Low
Interviewee G	Uninvolved	0.4942028	Low

At the beginning of each interview, brief introduction on the four parenting styles was given to the interviewees so that they could acquire basic knowledge towards the terms. A total of 10 questions were asked, where 5 were mainly for parent-participants, while the another 5 were for student-participants. In the interviews, perceived parenting styles, stress level and coping methods of stress were addressed from both the parents' and students' perspectives. Based on the discussion with the participants, follow-up questions had been asked to gain deeper insight.

Data Analysis

Responses from the qualitative research were recorded and transcribed for further analysis to investigate the relationships between students' perceived parenting styles, and their coping methods of stress.

Results

Quantitative Research

As a fundamental analysis, data collected from the quantitative research was first calculated into means and standard deviation. In Table 3, the means and standard deviation for the four parenting styles and students' stress level are reported. From the table, it is shown that the mean score for the authoritarian parenting style is 2.75, while standard deviation is .77. Whereas for authoritative parenting style, it owns a statistic of M=3.03, SD= .83; in addition to that, permissive parenting style has mean of 2.70, SD=.55; while uninvolved parenting style has a frequency of M=2.37, SD=.74. Lastly, the PSQ level shows the mean score of 2.31 and a standard deviation of .39.

Table 3.
Means and Standard deviation of variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Authoritarian Parenting Style	2.7456	.77271
Authoritative Parenting Style	3.0308	.83093
Permissive Parenting Style	2.7045	.54727
Uninvolved Parenting Style	2.3664	.73784
PSQ level	2.3067	.38718

Note. N = 73

According to the Pearson correlation conducted (see *Table 4*), it is found that to a low degree, the authoritarian parenting style is positively related to students' stress level, $r(71) = .21, p$

<.069. While the authoritative parenting style is also to a low degree, negatively related to students' stress level, $r(71) = -.28$ $p < .013$. Similarly, the permissive parenting styles is also negatively related to students' stress level to a low degree, where $r(71) = -.12$ $p < .030$. Last but not least, to a low degree or almost no correlation in between, the uninvolved parenting style is negatively related to students' stress level, $r(71) = -.003$ $p < .981$.

Table 4.

Correlations between the four parenting styles and students' PSQ level

Variable	PSQ level
Authoritarian Parenting Style	.21
Authoritative Parenting Style	-.28*
Permissive Parenting Style	-.12
Uninvolved Parenting Style	-.003

*Note. N = 73. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

From the scattered diagrams generated (see Fig. 1 – Fig. 4), insignificant positive linear relation is found between the authoritarian parenting style and students' stress level. Similarly, trivial negative linear relations are found between the authoritative, permissive and uninvolved parenting styles and 2021/ 2022 HKDSE candidates' stress level.

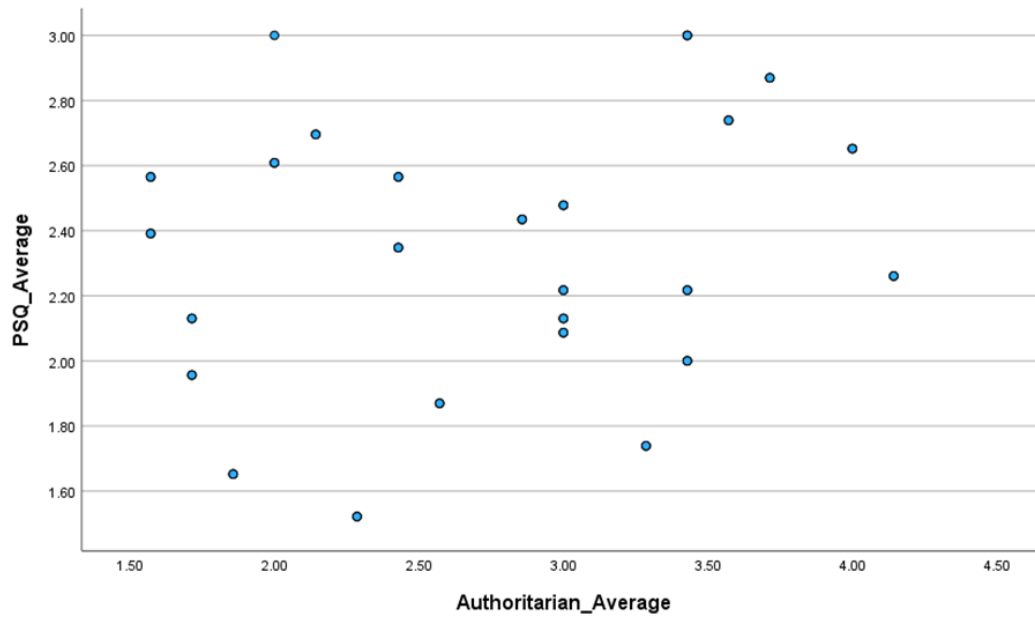


Figure 1. Relation between the authoritarian parenting style and PSQ level

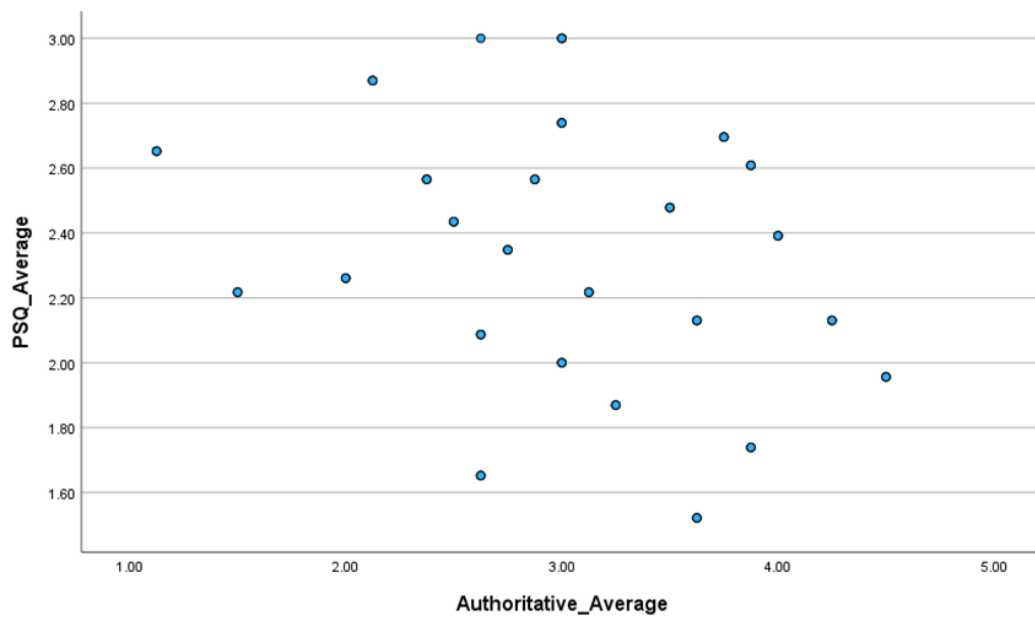


Figure 2. Relation between the authoritative parenting style and PSQ level

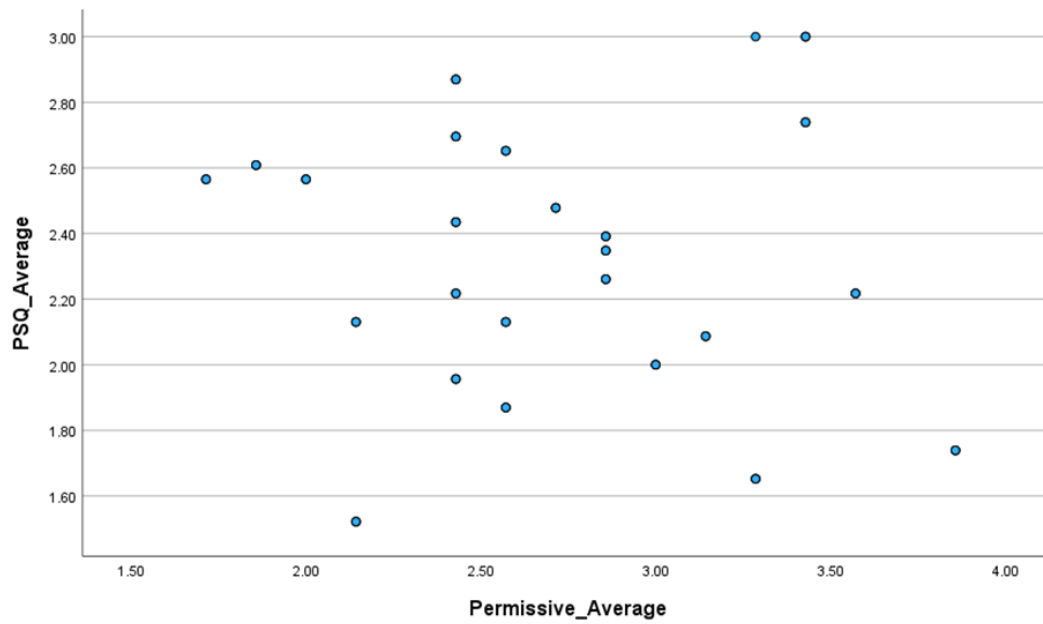


Figure 3. Relation between the permissive parenting style and PSQ level

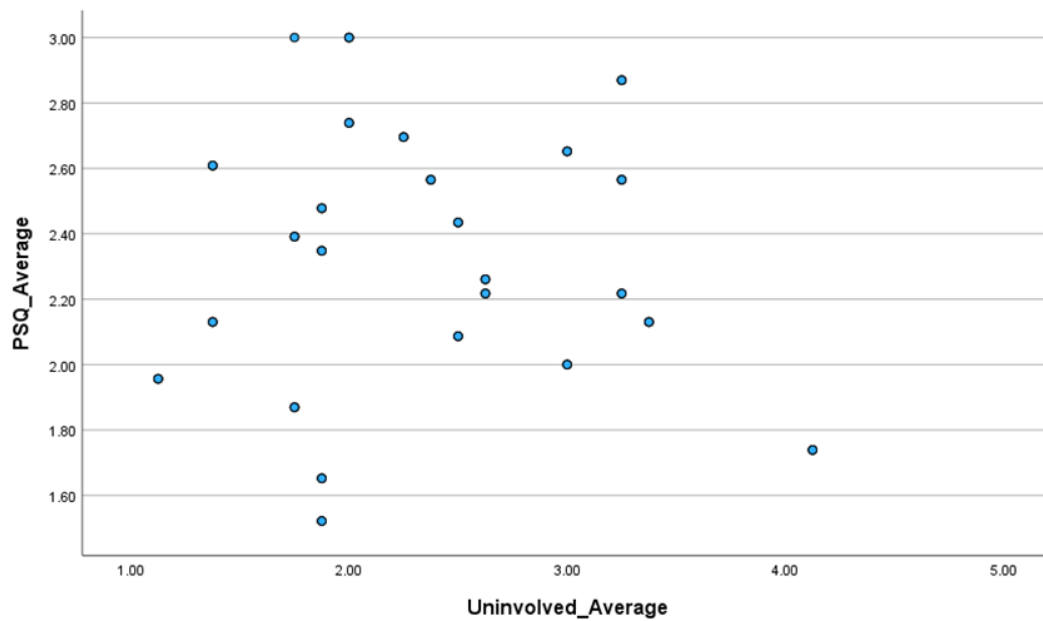


Figure 4. Relation between the uninvolved parenting style and PSQ level

Qualitative Research

As an extension from the quantitative research, potential interviewees were elicited and invited based on their PSQ level responded on the online questionnaire. During the interviews, it is found that interviewees A, B and C suffered from higher stress level, where their perceived parenting styles were authoritarian, authoritative and permissive respectively. On the other hand, interviewees D, E, F and G encountered a lower stress level, where their perceived parenting styles were authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and uninvolved respectively. From Table 5, it is illustrated that the interviewees had their own coping methods of stress.

Table 5.
Overview of the interviewees' responses

Name code of the seven participants	Perceived parenting style	Stress level	Coping method of stress
Interviewee A	Authoritarian	High	Doing exercise alone
Interviewee B	Authoritative	High	Going out for a walk and spending me-time
Interviewee C	Permissive	High	Eating
Interviewee D	Authoritarian	Low	Playing the piano
Interviewee E	Authoritative	Low	Chatting/ spending time with family
Interviewee F	Permissive	Low	Spending money
Interviewee G	Uninvolved	Low	Watching TV/ Youtube

Serving as a deeper investigation, participants were first asked if they were stressed under their perceived parenting styles. It is highlighted that interviewees A, B and C were stressed under the parenting styles they received, especially during the pandemic when they were preparing for their HKDSE. Their responses are quoted as follow:

Interviewee A: “I think so? Probably because I am not sure when will I do something wrong and be scolded. But under most of the cases, I don’t understand why. I am also not brave enough to tell them my true thoughts. For example, arranging my JUPAS choices, I wanted to apply for Chinese Education, but they were always telling me to work as a civil servant instead since being a teacher is very tiring. It’s seems that they

never try to listen to and understand me. Well, but I guess I'm already used to it. I used to 'report' my progress to them."

Interviewee B: "When I was small, I didn't feel stressed that much. I think my parents always support me no matter what decision I made. [...] They always encourage and appreciate me when I can come up with my own thoughts. But these years, I'm really stressed. However, I don't think it's due to my parents' expectations on me, instead, it's from me myself. I don't want to disappoint them. [...] With their support, I really need to worry about nothing. However, I just don't want to disappoint them because I know how much they love me."

Interviewee C: "I felt like they didn't always give me genuine advices or suggestions like the other parents do. Although they support me a lot, and give me plenty of freedom & autonomy, I am not sure if I have made the right decisions, which made me really unsecured."

From these quotes, it is evident that no matter which parenting styles the HKDSE candidates perceived, there would be an opportunity for them to encounter a higher stress level due to diversified reasons. Some may be due to the expectations parents have on them, some may be stressed since they don't want to disappoint their parents, while some may feel unsecured without a concrete suggestion provided by their parents.

On the other hand, Interviewees D, E, F and G encountered a relatively lower stress level under their perceived parenting styles respectively, even during the pandemic. Their sharing is quoted as follow:

Interviewee D: "I didn't find myself particularly stressed when preparing for the HKDSE. Perhaps I am used to finishing a number of tasks a day, I will regard myself

quite disciplined under their parenting. Therefore, I had better time management when working on the past paper and revision even during my study leave.”

Interviewee E: “My parents are also so supportive, and so, I don’t have much to worry about. All I need to do is just try my best. I know no matter what my results were, they would still love me the same and support me as always. I wasn’t really that nervous to be honest.”

Interviewee F: “My parents seldom demand high standard of behaviours or excellent academic performance from me. However, I never feel being neglected. Instead, they always buy me the things I want, and are responsive to all my needs. So, that’s why I don’t feel much pressure from them.”

Interviewee G: “My parents are super busy, and they seldom have time for me. I am used to dealing with all the things on my own. They won’t ask me how’s my day, they won’t require me to get good grades, and they aren’t those kids-spoiling parents. Anyways, I think I am independent. So as long as I am doing what I want to, and working hard for myself, it’s already more than enough.”

From the above sharing, it is illustrated that the authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parenting styles do not necessarily lead to high stress level in students. In fact, no matter which parenting styles students perceived, there could be an opportunity for them to feel less pressurized since some of them are already used to the routine-like, disciplined life; while some of them feel love and care from their parents; whereas some of them have all their wants

fulfilled with not much demands given; or some of them are independent and do not need to mentally rely on their parents and gain their recognition.

Apart from students' stress level during COVID-19, when they had to prepare for one of their important milestones in their academic life, the interviews moved on to ask the student-interviewees about their coping methods of stress and how do their perceived parenting styles have influenced their coping methods. Responses from the interviewees are quoted as follow:

Interviewee B: "I love spending time in the nature because my parents would usually bring me out when I was small. They would go hiking with me, bring me to the beach, have barbeques or so. Therefore, I love staying outdoor. "

Interviewee E: "Our family used to chat and update one another about the things happened every day during dinner time. We have this practice since I was in K1. We love and enjoy the time chatting with one another."

It is identified that from interviewees B and E, their coping methods of stress are influenced by parents. As the families used to bring the interviewee to the nature or spend family time together and chat, their children also tend to adopt these usual family practices to release their pressure, which shows that their coping methods of stress are in fact inspired or shaped by their parents.

Interviewee C: "They tended to praise me for doing good, or comfort me for not doing good enough. Therefore, I will shift to comfort eating whenever I'm not feeling relaxed or happy."

Interviewee F: “When I was sad, my parents always asked me what toys did I want, and they would buy them for me. They always fulfil my wants! I enjoy shopping and spending money to relieve my pressure.”

From what interviewees C and F mentioned, it is classified that their coping methods of stress are eating and spending money respectively, which are actually the ways of how their parents praised them when they were young. Thus, it is shown that the stress release methods adopted by students might be influenced by their parents as they tend to adopt what their parents did to them when they were small.

Interviewee A: “I don’t prefer doing exercises together with them, because I don’t want them to judge me from another aspect, especially it’s for my own sake.”

Interviewee D: “My mom forced me to learn the piano when I was small. Although I really didn’t like it, and I wanted to give up at that time, it became a way for me to release my stress.”

Interviewee G: “My parents both have to work, and they don’t have much time taking care of me, or staying with me. I’m very used to watching TV or Youtube or Netflix and Disney+ when I’m bored. They are what I have been doing since small.”

From Interviewees A, D and G’s quotations, it is indicated that they self-develop their own coping methods of stress. However, in some way, the coping methods of stress adopted are still related to the parenting. For instance, interviewee A does not prefer doing exercises with his

parents because he does not want to be judged or need to be highly demanded even releasing his stress; while interviewee D was forced to learn piano by her mom when she was young, though it gradually became a way for her to release stress. Lastly, for interviewee G, it's because her parents do not have time to accompany her, which makes her turn to watching various TV series or Youtube videos to idle away her time.

In short, the interviews suggested how students' stress level may vary under their perceived parenting styles, and how do their perceived parenting styles have influenced or impacted their coping methods of stress.

Discussion

This study aims to investigate the relationship between the parenting styles and stress level of 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates under the COVID-19. At the beginning of this project, it was hypothesized that students being brought up with the authoritative parenting style would tend to encounter a lower stress level; while the other three parenting styles might lead to more passive coping of stress, resulting in a higher stress level. To address this research topic, two research questions were developed, (1) What is the correlation between the parenting styles and 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates' stress level? And (2) How do the parenting styles influence students' coping methods of stress?

Quantitative Research

From the quantitative research, the first research question is answered. According to this study, there is no relation between the four parenting styles and students' stress level. The result against the previous research results, as recent studies indicate that children from authoritative families obtain lower scores on indicators of poor adjustment, including anxiety and depression

(Pinquart, 2017; Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter & Keehn, 2007); and while responsive support, these children are likely to feel secure in times of stress (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Moreover, it is also found that “increase in responsiveness and control of the parents lead to an increased resiliency in adolescents” (Firoze & Sathar, 2018, p. 942); and there was a positive and significant correlation between acceptance involvement style and resilience (Zakeri, Jowkar and Razmjooe, 2010). It is also illustrated that children from authoritative families showed less stress related to classroom interactions and family pressure, compared to children from authoritative and authoritarian families (Fuentes, García-Ros, Pérez-González & Sancerni, 2019, p. 10), which all suggested that the authoritative parenting style might lead to the lowest stress level in students. On the other hand, Glasgow et al (1997) suggested that “adolescents (who are being reared by the uninvolved parenting style) are the most disadvantaged with respect to measures of social competence, academic achievement, and psychological adjustment” (p.508), which depicts that the uninvolved parenting style might not be beneficial to lower children’s stress level.

Since the result obtained from this study against the previous literature, there are some possible reasons to explain the results. One possible reason is that there are other factors affecting students’ adaptational abilities to the changes over parenting styles. Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus (1981) and Rutter (1979) proposed that daily hassles are often more closely related to the adaptational outcomes and abilities than major life events. Therefore, instead of being affected by the HKDSE and the COVID-19 during these years, candidates might have adjusted their mindsets and adapted to the great changes with the experience of daily-life difficulties. Thus, participants’ stress level was not impacted by one of their major life events, nor their perceived parenting styles, but their daily challenges overcame. Therefore, there is no direct relations between the parenting styles and 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates’ stress level.

Another possible reason is that since the research background of this study is based on a period of time full of uncertainty for participants, there is a lack of study on which parenting styles might be the best parenting method for this ever-changing period. There is even a research showing that the authoritarian practices are a protective factor for children's adequate psychosocial adjustment (Baumrind, 1991; Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, & Elder, 2000; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Schonberg & Shaw, 2007), which might still bring gains to children as long as it's not over-protection. Therefore, there is still a doubt of which parenting styles might be the best to lower students' stress level under circumstances that are full of uncertainty.

In addition to this, it is suggested that the concept of coping is based on three theoretical components namely: physiological, cognitive and learned (Kumar & Bhukar, 2013, p. 6), thus, students could develop their own effective coping methods of stress to lower their stress levels or to adapt to the environment regardless their perceived parenting styles.

Qualitative Research

Whereas for the qualitative research, it aims to answer the second research question, how do the parenting styles influence students' coping methods of stress. From the results, students tend to adopt the coping methods of stress which were introduced by their parents since they were young. Most of the interviewees commented that their strategies of coping stress have been inspired or influenced by their parents. Hardy, Power & Jaedicke (1993) suggested that "parental directiveness and restrictiveness may be related to other aspects of children's behaviour besides coping style (e.g., intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation)" (p.1839), which illustrates that the parenting styles adopted do not only affect what coping methods of stress

students use, but also how and under what situation do they use those methods, explaining their intention or motivation behind (for instance, interviewee A would only do exercise to release his stress when he is alone).

It is claimed that children who approach potentially stressful events with active forms of coping have parents who are warm and supportive, and who employ authoritative control practices (Brook et al., 2002; Herman & McHale, 1993; Kliewer et al., 1996; McKernon et al., 2001; Valentiner et al., 1994); in contrast to the authoritarian parenting style is related with the lower level of ability and self-confidence to employ coping mechanisms among adolescents (Darling, 1999); therefore, it restricts a child to explore his/her capabilities and social interactions, eventually resulting in the child's dependence on parental guidance and direction (Nijhof & Engels 2007). Yet, according to the current study, candidates who receive the authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parenting styles (ie., interviewees D, F and G) are able to handle their stress and pressure with their own measures, and it is not necessary for adolescents who receive authoritative parenting style to have a low stress level (ie., interviewee B). Hence, from this study, it is shown that the form of coping methods of stress are shaped or influenced by their parents since they tend to adopt the usual practices they have been doing, or release their stress with what their parents have done to them since small. Instead of influencing students' coping methods of stress, parenting styles are more influential to the form and the way students prefer to carry out those coping methods, for example, whether they want to apply their strategies alone, or with their family members.

Limitations and Future directions of research

There are three key limitations in this research. One of the limitations is related to the choice of research background. Since it has already been one to two years after the HKDSE taken by

the candidates, it might be difficult for them to recall accurately their stress level. As stress is more an immediate feelings, the data collected from the participants might not reflect the actual situations. Moreover, since they have entered into tertiary education institutions for more than a semester, they may have encountered other more stressful events when comparing to the HKDSE. Therefore, when they looked back, they might rate their stress level towards the HKDSE in a more lenient way. Hence, the results might not be able to generalize the stress level of 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates in a precise way. Therefore, instead of conducting the research months later, it should be conducted during January and February in the years 2021 and 2022 respectively, similar to what the Hok Yau Club has done to look for more precise rate of stress levels.

The second limitation is that student-participants may have internalized their perceived parenting styles as part of themselves or part of their personalities, where incomplete pictures of the perceived parenting style is adopted throughout the research. Power (2004) proposed that the “correlations (between parenting practices and children’s coping behaviour) may reflect cognitive processes inside of the rater’s head rather than an actual relation” (p. 305). Thus, the correlation between the perceived parenting styles and the students’ stress level might not be reported as the actual situation, as the ratings or justification provided might undergo cognitive processing. It is also believed that student-participants might not expose their inner thoughts and challenge their parents’ parenting in front of them. Therefore, the student-interviewees and parent-interviewees should be interviewed separately so as to ensure they include all the essential information, and do not tend to hide any of their thoughts.

The third limitation is the limited sample size. According to the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, there were 49,976 school and private candidates sat the HKDSE in 2021;

and 47,891 sat the exam in 2022. However, the questionnaire was only distributed to 73 participants, and the pool of participants was relatively small, and therefore the results of this study might not be able to generalize to the population of 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates in Hong Kong.

Although there is literature documenting “the importance of parenting in child adjustment to major life stresses, there has been a noticeable absence of research analyzing the relation between parenting and specific patterns of child coping” (Hardy, Power & Jaedicke, 1993, p.1830). Therefore, for future studies, it is suggested to replicate the study in a different time period, for instance during the study leave break of HKDSE candidates, and expanded the research to a larger sample size so as to lay a more grounded foundation in analyzing the relationships between the parenting styles and students’ stress level under an era full of uncertainty.

Conclusion

All in all, this study was inspired by the hard time the world has been encountering, and it attempts to establish the relationship between the parenting styles and 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates’ stress level. To achieve this project objective, a mix-method research was conducted, where there were 73 respondents for the questionnaire, and 7 pairs of interviewees participated in a semi-structured interview. Although no direct correlations between parenting styles and 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates’ stress levels was identified from this quantitative and qualitative research, it shows that there isn’t a so-called “the best parenting style” in the social situation that is full of uncertainty, or when students are experiencing life stressful events to a certain extent.

(Word Count: 6331)

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Part 1. Personal Information

1. What is your gender?
 - Female
 - Male
 - I prefer not to say
2. How old are you?
3. Which year did you take your HKDSE exam?
4. Please indicate your HKDSE exams results (e.g., Chinese: 4; English: 4; Maths:3; LS:3; BAFS:5)
5. What is your father's occupation?
6. What is your mother's occupation?

Part 2. Parenting styles

Reading the following statements, then indicate and rate your responses.

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. My parents like to set up and enforce many inappropriate rules on me without understanding my strength and weakness.	5	4	3	2	1
2. My parents give me punishments according to their mood.	5	4	3	2	1
3. My parents are disciplinarians rather than friends.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I get no chance and freedom to explaining my wishes and needs in front of my parents.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Whenever I show disobedience towards my parents they scold and criticise me with bursting anger or taking away some privileges from me with no explanations.	5	4	3	2	1
6. As my parents have very rough & explosive behaviour I have a feeling that they do not know to express love and affection towards me.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I am usually trying to hide all my failure and mistakes in the fear of threats and punishments which I will receive from my parents.	5	4	3	2	1

Reading the following statements, then indicate and rate your responses.

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. My parents respect my opinions and also encourage me to express all my feelings and problems like my friends.	5	4	3	2	1
2. My parents provide me comfort and understanding when I am upset.	5	4	3	2	1
3. My parents take into consideration my wishes before they make plans for my future or buy something for me.	5	4	3	2	1

4. My parents, compliment me when I have done something well.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I am usually very proud of my parents who spent their warm and intimate time together with me.	5	4	3	2	1
6. My parents set up some appropriate rules for me regarding my study, play and other activities and are very keen to enforce it.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Whenever I fail to follow the timetable given to me, my parents remind me the consequences with a touch of love and affection.	5	4	3	2	1
8. My parents are not over ambitious and I feel their expectations on me are quite reasonable and also I try to fulfil it.	5	4	3	2	1

Reading the following statements, then indicate and rate your responses.

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Though my parents have definite goals and planning for my future, they are not able to follow it strictly because of their leniency.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Since my parents are very loving and affectionate I know they will forgive me even if I do not come to their expectations.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Even though my parents have high expectations from me they have little patience and time to hearing me.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Because of my parents lenient attitude I have no self discipline in my daily activities.	5	4	3	2	1
5. A conflict situation will not occur between me and my parents because they will always try to avoid such a situation.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I used to get expensive gifts from my parents as rewards to any of my progress.	5	4	3	2	1
7. My parents threaten to punish me but do not actually doing it.	5	4	3	2	1

Reading the following statements, then indicate and rate your responses.

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. My parents do not tell me where they are going or why they are coming too late.	5	4	3	2	1
2. My parents ignore me when I am misbehaving.	5	4	3	2	1
3. My parents find less time to look into my needs, interest and progress in studies.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I feel my parents are least concerned about me and my future.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Even if I fall sick, my parents find it difficult to take leave and look after me.	5	4	3	2	1
6. My parents have no idea regarding my friends and teachers or my life outside the home.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I am always sad and depressed because of lack of love and care I receive from my parents.	5	4	3	2	1
8. My parents grant me high autonomy with no disciplinary rules.	5	4	3	2	1

Part 3. Stress Level

1. Try to recall the moments and hard time you have gone through before having your HKDSE exam (perhaps during your study leave). Read the following statements, then indicate and rate your responses based on your feelings at that time. (If you couldn't recall it very clearly, choose the closest option)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Usually
1. I felt rested.	1	2	3	4
2. I felt that too many demands were being made on me.	1	2	3	4
3. I was irritable.	1	2	3	4
4. I had too many things to do.	1	2	3	4
5. I found myself in situations of conflict.	1	2	3	4
6. I felt tired.	1	2	3	4
7. I feared I might not manage to attain my goals.	1	2	3	4
8. I felt calm.	1	2	3	4
9. I had too many decisions to make.	1	2	3	4
10. I felt frustrated.	1	2	3	4
11. I was full of energy.	1	2	3	4
12. I felt tense.	1	2	3	4
13. I felt I was in a hurry.	1	2	3	4
14. I felt safe and protected.	1	2	3	4
15. I had many worries.	1	2	3	4
16. I was under pressure from other people.	1	2	3	4
17. I felt discouraged.	1	2	3	4
18. I was afraid for the future.	1	2	3	4
19. I felt mentally exhausted.	1	2	3	4
20. I had trouble relaxing.	1	2	3	4
21. I felt loaded down with responsibility.	1	2	3	4
22. I had enough time for myself.	1	2	3	4
23. I felt under pressure from deadlines.	1	2	3	4

*Questions 1, 8, 11, 14, 22 are inverted, ie., 1=4,2=3,3=2, and 4=1

2. How do you usually cope with your stress? You may choose more than one option.
 - Doing exercises
 - Listening to music
 - Drawing/ colouring
 - Reading
 - Eating
 - Crying
 - Sharing with family/ friends
 - Other: _____
3. Do you think your strategy/ strategies is/are helpful and effective?
 - Yes
 - No
4. If you answer is yes in the above question, please provide more information about the most effective method and explain why it is effective for you; if your answer is no, please suggest the reason(s) why you think the strategy(ies) is(are) not effective for you.
5. Do you learn the coping method(s) from your parents? Or being inspired by them? How?
6. What is your phone number or email address? All the information and data will be kept in strict confidentiality.

Appendix 2 Interview questions

Greetings

Good afternoon! Thank you for participating in the following interview. Before we start, let me give you a brief introduction on “parenting styles”. We have a total of 4 parenting styles based on the 2 aspects of parenting behaviour, control and warmth, where Parental Control means the degree parents manage their children’s behaviour, ranging from being very controlling to setting few rules demands. While Parental Warmth refers to the degree to which parents are accepting and responsive of their children’s behaviour as opposed to being unresponsive and rejecting. The 4 parenting styles are, Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved.

According to the questionnaire result, your child’s perceived parenting style is (authoritative/ authoritarian/ permissive/ uninvolved/ a combination of ...), and I am going to introduce you more on that particular parenting style(s).

Authoritative Parents *are warm but firm, they encourage their children to be independent while maintaining limits and controls on their actions. They are willing to entertain, listen to, and take into account their children’s viewpoint.*

Authoritarian Parents *display little warmth and are highly controlling. They are strict disciplinarians, use a restrictive, punitive style and insist their children follow parental directions. Phrases such as “you will do this because I said,” and “because I’m the parent and you are not” are common. They don’t engage in discussions with their children, and believe their children to accept, without question, the rules they establish.*

Permissive Parents *are very warm, but undemanding. They are passive in their parenting, and believe that the way to demonstrate their love is to give in to their children’s wishes. They invoke phrases like, “you can stay up late if you want to,” and “you do not need to do any chores if you don’t feel like it.” They don’t like to say no or disappoint their children.*

Uninvolved Parents *are not warm and don’t place any demands on their children. They minimize their interaction time, and are uninvolved to the point of being neglectful. They invoke phrases like, “I don’t care where you go,” or “why should I care what you do?” They are not interested in their children’s needs or experiences at school or with peers.*

You can always go back to the definitions of these 4 parenting styles. If you have no question at this moment, let’s conduct our interview now.

For parent-participants

1. Which parenting style(s) do you think you have adopted? How and why?
2. Do your child(ren) feel stressed under your parenting style? (e.g., due to expectations from parents to child)
3. How does the adopted parenting style(s) intensify/ lower/ maintain your child(ren)'s stress levels during the pandemic?
4. Why do you think the parenting style(s) could make such a change of your child(ren)'s stress levels?
5. Do you think your parenting style(s) has/have influenced your child(ren)'s coping methods of stress?

For student-participants

1. Which parenting style(s) do you think your parents have adopted? How and why?
2. Do you feel stressed under such parenting style? (e.g., due to expectations from parents to child)
3. How does the adopted parenting style(s) intensify/ lower/ maintain your stress levels during the pandemic?
4. Why do you think the parenting style(s) could make such a change of your stress levels?
5. How does the parenting style(s) influence you to have such coping methods with stress?

Appendix 3 Transcript 1

C: Charis; P: Parent, A: Student

C: Good morning Ms. P (Parent's name) and A (Student's name). Thank you so much for attending this interview. Before we begin, I will first give you a brief introduction on "parenting styles". We have a total of 4 parenting styles based on the 2 aspects of parenting behaviour, control and warmth, where Parental Control means the degree parents manage their children's behaviour, ranging from being very controlling to setting few rules demands. While Parental Warmth refers to the degree to which parents are accepting and responsive of their children's behaviour as opposed to being unresponsive and rejecting. The 4 parenting styles are, Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved.

Authoritative Parents are warm but firm, they encourage their children to be independent while maintaining limits and controls on their actions. They are willing to entertain, listen to, and take into account their children's viewpoint.

Authoritarian Parents display little warmth and are highly controlling. They are strict disciplinarians, use a restrictive, punitive style and insist their children follow parental directions. Phrases such as "you will do this because I said," and "because I'm the parent and you are not" are common. They don't engage in discussions with their children, and believe their children to accept, without question, the rules they establish.

Permissive Parents are very warm, but undemanding. They are passive in their parenting, and believe that the way to demonstrate their love is to give in to their children's wishes. They invoke phrases like, "you can stay up late if you want to," and "you do not need to do any chores if you don't feel like it." They don't like to say no or disappoint their children.

Uninvolved Parents are not warm and don't place any demands on their children. They minimize their interaction time, and are uninvolved to the point of being neglectful. They invoke phrases like, "I don't care where you go," or "why should I care what you do?" They are not interested in their children's needs or experiences at school or with peers.

You can always go back to the definitions of these 4 parenting styles printed on this paper. If you have no question at this moment, let's conduct our interview now.

C: Ms. P, may I know which parenting(s) do you think you have adopted? How and why?

P: I think that I am quite strict and disciplined, therefore, I usually ask my son to do whatever I say. I expect him to be obedient, and try to fulfil my requirements.

C: Could you please give us some examples?

P: Well, for example when he was young, he didn't like playing the piano. He wanted to quit, and was begging me to stop his lessons. However, I didn't want him to quit, so I forced him to keep on learning. And he has now completed the grade 8 exam. Another example was that,

when he was entering the secondary school, his school requires him to learn one musical instrument excluding piano. At that time, he wanted to learn cello, but his grandma didn't like that, and suggested him to learn erhu instead. Then, I "persuaded" with to learn the erhu.

C: So do you think you seldom listen to him? Or seldom respect the decisions he made?

P: Um... I feel so sorry for my son... I really seldom listen to his rationale behind the decisions he made. I always think that I am an adult, and I am more experienced, and I should be able to make a more suitable decision for him. Therefore, when I think he should choose A instead of B, I will directly tell him my thoughts.

C: Do you think your child feels stressed under your parenting style then?

P: I think so, probably quite a lot. I know that he has tried his best to accommodate our expectations. As an elder brother at home, we have quite a number of expectations on him. We can see that he tried very hard to work hard and study well to fulfil our wants.

C: How about you, A? Which parenting style(s) do you think your parents have adopted?

A: Um, I think mostly authoritarian. They are usually strict, ask me do as they say. Although I am not like attending a military camp at home, I am afraid that I would do something wrong, or do not meet their requirements.

C: Do you feel stressed under such parenting style?

A: I think so? Probably because I am not sure when will I do something wrong and be scolded. But under most of the cases, I don't understand why. I am also not brave enough to tell them my true thoughts. For example, arranging my JUPAS choices, I wanted to apply for Chinese Education, but they were always telling me to work as a civil servant instead since being a teacher is very tiring. It's seems that they never try to listen to and understand me. Well, but I guess I'm already used to it. I used to 'report' my progress to them.

C: How does the adopted parenting style(s) intensify/ lower/ maintain your stress levels during the pandemic?

A: I guess more or less the same? I am used to being asked what have I done and kinda like "report" my progress to them even before the DSE.

C: What is/are your coping method(s) of stress? How does the parenting style(s) influence you to have such coping methods with stress?

A: I tend to do exercises when I am stressed. However, I don't prefer letting them know, not to mention doing exercises together with them. Because I don't want them to judge me, no matter it's something about academic studies or during my leisure time. I don't prefer doing exercises together with them, because I don't want them to judge me from another aspect, especially it's for my own sake.

C: Thank you so much for your sharing today! This is the end of this interview.

Appendix 4 Transcript 2

C: Charis; L: Parent, B: Student

C: Good morning Mr. L (Parent's name) and B (Student's name). Thank you so much for attending this interview. Before we begin, I will first give you a brief introduction on "parenting styles". We have a total of 4 parenting styles based on the 2 aspects of parenting behaviour, control and warmth, where Parental Control means the degree parents manage their children's behaviour, ranging from being very controlling to setting few rules demands. While Parental Warmth refers to the degree to which parents are accepting and responsive of their children's behaviour as opposed to being unresponsive and rejecting. The 4 parenting styles are, Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved.

Authoritative Parents are warm but firm, they encourage their children to be independent while maintaining limits and controls on their actions. They are willing to entertain, listen to, and take into account their children's viewpoint.

Authoritarian Parents display little warmth and are highly controlling. They are strict disciplinarians, use a restrictive, punitive style and insist their children follow parental directions. Phrases such as "you will do this because I said," and "because I'm the parent and you are not" are common. They don't engage in discussions with their children, and believe their children to accept, without question, the rules they establish.

Permissive Parents are very warm, but undemanding. They are passive in their parenting, and believe that the way to demonstrate their love is to give in to their children's wishes. They invoke phrases like, "you can stay up late if you want to," and "you do not need to do any chores if you don't feel like it." They don't like to say no or disappoint their children.

Uninvolved Parents are not warm and don't place any demands on their children. They minimize their interaction time, and are uninvolved to the point of being neglectful. They invoke phrases like, "I don't care where you go," or "why should I care what you do?" They are not interested in their children's needs or experiences at school or with peers.

You can always go back to the definitions of these 4 parenting styles printed on this paper. If you have no question at this moment, let's conduct our interview now.

C: Mr. L, may I know which parenting(s) do you think you have adopted? How and why?

L: I think my wife and I have mostly adopted the authoritative parenting style. Due to our job nature, we have some basic knowledge related to parenting styles and also children's attachment. It is always known that the authoritative parenting style is the best for children to develop. Therefore, my wife and I try very hard to be open-minded and supportive to our kids.

C: What are the occupations of you and your wife?

L: My wife is a secondary school teacher, and I am a social worker. We both work with the youth.

C: I see. Could you please give us some examples on your parenting?

L: Umm, I think both of us (Mr. L and his wife) don't set unattainable goals for our daughter. We respect her a lot. We often give her opportunities to make her own decision. I remembered when she was in Form 3, she had to choose her own electives. She wanted to ask for opinions from us, but what we did was give factual descriptions about different electives we know. When it came to how to prioritize the electives, we let her decide on her own. We understood that she might need to be advised because she might know nothing about the electives at that moment, but at the same time, we would never tell her "studying is Biology is good", or "take Chemistry as your elective, then you can consider to be a doctor". We don't want to affect her decisions by just claiming what is supposed to be "good" from the others' perspectives.

C: Wow, so the both of you are very nice and supportive parents! I think it's always important for parents to learn how to let go and let your children to grow. Do you think your child feels stressed under your parenting style then?

L: I think when she was young, she had a rather happy and relaxing environment to develop. But these 2 years, I would say we could feel her stress. Although sometimes stress can be something positive, motivating one to improve, I guess at some points, her stress level was higher than normal.

C: What coping methods of stress do you think B have adopted?

L: I would say probably spending some me-time? She would tell us that she went to an outlying island on her own sometimes. So, I guess something similar? Going out alone?

C: Well, let's see! What is your coping method of stress, B?

B: My dad is right. I will usually leave home and go out for a walk. I will also travel to some islands or somewhere away from the hectic and busy town-life alone. For example, I will go to Discovery Bay, Ma Wan and sit in front of a beach; ride a bicycle from Tai Wai to Tai Mei Tuk. I enjoy spending me-time.

C: Before digging deeper into your coping method of stress, let's know more about your parenting style first. Which parenting style(s) do you think your parents have adopted?

B: Mostly Authoritative. Since I was small, they have always been showing their love and care to me. We usually share our days/ feelings during dinner time.

C: Do you feel stressed under such parenting style?

B: When I was small, not much. I think my parents always support me no matter what decision I made. When I make a decision, they tend to ask me why, and as long as I can justify the decision **to myself**, they will 100% support me. They always encourage and appreciate me when I can come up with my own thoughts.

C: How does the adopted parenting style(s) intensify/ lower/ maintain your stress levels during the pandemic?

B: I think under the pandemic, when I was preparing for me DSE, I believed the parenting style did somehow intensify my stress level. However, I don't think it's due to my parents' expectations on me, instead, it's from me myself. I don't want to disappoint them. They told me that when undertaking examinations, apart from my effort, it depends on the luck sometimes. Therefore, I don't have to worry much about that. And they always mention that a coin has two sides, so there's never a so-called right or wrong decision made. Even if I didn't score as expected in the HKDSE, there's always a way out. With their support, I really need to worry about nothing. However, I just don't want to disappoint them because I know how much they love me.

C: Then, let's go back to how you handle your stress. How does the parenting style(s) influence you to have such coping methods with stress?

B: I think I love spending time in the nature because my parents would usually bring me out when I was small. They would go hiking with me, bring me to the beach, have barbeques or so. Therefore, I love staying outdoor. On the other hand, although home is my shelter, I don't want them to worry about me, so I tend to explore the peaceful village-like area myself.

C: Thank you so much for your sharing today! This is the end of this interview.

Appendix 5 Excerpt of Transcript 3

C: Charis; M: Parent, Co: Student

C: Good morning Ms. M (Parent's name) and Co (Student's name). Thank you so much for attending this interview. Before we begin, I will first give you a brief introduction on "parenting styles". We have a total of 4 parenting styles based on the 2 aspects of parenting behaviour, control and warmth, where Parental Control means the degree parents manage their children's behaviour, ranging from being very controlling to setting few rules demands. While Parental Warmth refers to the degree to which parents are accepting and responsive of their children's behaviour as opposed to being unresponsive and rejecting. The 4 parenting styles are, Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved.

Authoritative Parents are warm but firm, they encourage their children to be independent while maintaining limits and controls on their actions. They are willing to entertain, listen to, and take into account their children's viewpoint.

Authoritarian Parents display little warmth and are highly controlling. They are strict disciplinarians, use a restrictive, punitive style and insist their children follow parental directions. Phrases such as "you will do this because I said," and "because I'm the parent and you are not" are common. They don't engage in discussions with their children, and believe their children to accept, without question, the rules they establish.

Permissive Parents are very warm, but undemanding. They are passive in their parenting, and believe that the way to demonstrate their love is to give in to their children's wishes. They invoke phrases like, "you can stay up late if you want to," and "you do not need to do any chores if you don't feel like it." They don't like to say no or disappoint their children.

Uninvolved Parents are not warm and don't place any demands on their children. They minimize their interaction time, and are uninvolved to the point of being neglectful. They invoke phrases like, "I don't care where you go," or "why should I care what you do?" They are not interested in their children's needs or experiences at school or with peers.

You can always go back to the definitions of these 4 parenting styles printed on this paper. If you have no question at this moment, let's conduct our interview now.

C: Ms. M, may I know which parenting(s) do you think you have adopted? How and why?

M: Probably Permissive? Since Co is the youngest daughter at home, and before her birth, I had actually received abortion twice due to the babies' health reason. That's why her father and I treat her as our precious gift.

C: Could you please give us some examples?

M: We try to fulfil her wants, and give her praises very often. If she said she wanna watch TV and do not want to do her homework first, we let her do so. We didn't want to force her to do something she didn't want to. We also praised her with food, and bought her what she wanted.

C: Do you think your child feels stressed under your parenting style then?

M: I am not so sure... I think there must be a certain level of stress? But I don't think it will be too high?

C: Instead, according to the questionnaire done by Co about her stress level during the pandemic, when she was preparing for the HDKSE, her stress level index was 0.8840579 out of 1, which showed that she encountered a quite high stress level. Perhaps we can listen from her? Co, which parenting style(s) do you think your parents have adopted?

Co: I agreed with my mum that they adopted the permissive parenting style.

C: Do you feel stressed under such parenting style?

Co: I think so. I felt like they didn't always give me genuine advices or suggestions like the other parents do. Although they support me a lot, and give me plenty of freedom & autonomy, I am not sure if I have made the right decisions, which made me really unsecured.

C: What is/are your coping method(s) of stress? How does the parenting style(s) influence you to have such coping methods with stress?

Co: Eating, my parents usually praise me or comfort me with food. For example, when I lose in a competition, they brought me an ice-cream as a compensation. They tended to praise me for doing good, or comfort me for not doing good enough. Therefore, I will shift to comfort eating whenever I'm not feeling relaxed or happy.

C: Thank you so much for your sharing today! This is the end of this interview.

Appendix 6 Excerpt of Transcript 4

C: Charis; A: Parent, D: Student

C: Good morning Mr. A (Parent's name) and D (Student's name). Thank you so much for attending this interview. Before we begin, I will first give you a brief introduction on "parenting styles". We have a total of 4 parenting styles based on the 2 aspects of parenting behaviour, control and warmth, where Parental Control means the degree parents manage their children's behaviour, ranging from being very controlling to setting few rules demands. While Parental Warmth refers to the degree to which parents are accepting and responsive of their children's behaviour as opposed to being unresponsive and rejecting. The 4 parenting styles are, Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved.

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Authoritarian Parents display little warmth and are highly controlling. They are strict disciplinarians, use a restrictive, punitive style and insist their children follow parental directions. Phrases such as "you will do this because I said," and "because I'm the parent and you are not" are common. They don't engage in discussions with their children, and believe their children to accept, without question, the rules they establish.

Permissive Parents are very warm, but undemanding. They are passive in their parenting, and believe that the way to demonstrate their love is to give in to their children's wishes. They invoke phrases like, "you can stay up late if you want to," and "you do not need to do any chores if you don't feel like it." They don't like to say no or disappoint their children.

Uninvolved Parents are not warm and don't place any demands on their children. They minimize their interaction time, and are uninvolved to the point of being neglectful. They invoke phrases like, "I don't care where you go," or "why should I care what you do?" They are not interested in their children's needs or experiences at school or with peers.

You can always go back to the definitions of these 4 parenting styles printed on this paper. If you have no question at this moment, let's conduct our interview now.

C: Mr. A, may I know which parenting(s) do you think you have adopted? How and why?

A: Probably Authoritarian. I think I am strict to my kids.

C: Could you please give us some examples?

A: I set rules in our house, and I expect them to score at least 80% of the exams paper since they were young. I wanted them to be studious and prepared for the future challenges.

C: Do you think your child feels stressed under your parenting style then?

A: Must be. But I think it's good for them.

C: D, which parenting style(s) do you think your parents have adopted?

D: Mostly authoritarian.

C: Do you feel stressed under such parenting style?

D: Especially when I was small, yes. I was jealous of my classmates' parents. Their parents were so supportive and showed a lot of love and care to them. But I couldn't feel much from my parents.

C: How does the authoritarian parenting style intensify/ lower/ maintain your stress level during the pandemic or your study leave?

D: I didn't find myself particularly stressed when preparing for the HKDSE. Perhaps I am used to finishing a number of tasks a day, I will regard myself quite disciplined under their parenting. Therefore, I had better time management when working on the past paper and revision even during my study leave.

C: What is/are your coping method(s) of stress? How does the parenting style(s) influence you to have such coping methods with stress?

D: Playing the piano. My mom forced me to learn it when I was small, she wanted me to know at least one music instrument so that I might have more advantages when applying for schools, or even if I was unemployed after my studies, I could still teach piano and live a living. Although I really didn't like it, and I wanted to give up at that time, it became a way for me to release my stress.

C: Thank you so much for your sharing today! This is the end of this interview.

Appendix 7 Excerpt of Transcript 5

C: Charis; O: Parent, E: Student

C: Good morning Ms. O (Parent's name) and E (Student's name). Thank you so much for attending this interview. Before we begin, I will first give you a brief introduction on "parenting styles". We have a total of 4 parenting styles based on the 2 aspects of parenting behaviour, control and warmth, where Parental Control means the degree parents manage their children's behaviour, ranging from being very controlling to setting few rules demands. While Parental Warmth refers to the degree to which parents are accepting and responsive of their children's behaviour as opposed to being unresponsive and rejecting. The 4 parenting styles are, Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved.

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Authoritarian Parents display little warmth and are highly controlling. They are strict disciplinarians, use a restrictive, punitive style and insist their children follow parental directions. Phrases such as "you will do this because I said," and "because I'm the parent and you are not" are common. They don't engage in discussions with their children, and believe their children to accept, without question, the rules they establish.

Permissive Parents are very warm, but undemanding. They are passive in their parenting, and believe that the way to demonstrate their love is to give in to their children's wishes. They invoke phrases like, "you can stay up late if you want to," and "you do not need to do any chores if you don't feel like it." They don't like to say no or disappoint their children.

Uninvolved Parents are not warm and don't place any demands on their children. They minimize their interaction time, and are uninvolved to the point of being neglectful. They invoke phrases like, "I don't care where you go," or "why should I care what you do?" They are not interested in their children's needs or experiences at school or with peers.

You can always go back to the definitions of these 4 parenting styles printed on this paper. If you have no question at this moment, let's conduct our interview now.

C: Ms. O, may I know which parenting(s) do you think you have adopted? How and why?

O: Authoritative? I think my husband and I treat our kids as friends rather than upholding a high position with absolute authority at home.

C: Could you please give us some examples?

O: We are supportive to our kids. Instead of asking them to score how many marks from the exams, we emphasize more on the effort they put. We know that when working on exams papers, you need both effort and fortune. Therefore, as long as they try their best and put efforts into it, we are already happy with it regardless the results. We also give our kids autonomy to choose and make their own decision. For example, when they were young, we never forced

them to attend what interest classes. Instead, when they wanted to try out something, we then found some relevant courses for them to try.

C: Do you think your child feels stressed under your parenting style then?

O: I think they must encounter stress. But I don't regard us as the source of stress.

C: E, which parenting style(s) do you think your parents have adopted?

E: Mostly authoritative.

C: Do you feel stressed under such parenting style?

E: Not really. My parents are also so supportive, and so, I don't have much to worry about. All I need to do is just try my best. I know no matter what my results were, they would still love me the same and support me as always. I wasn't really that nervous to be honest.

C: How does the authoritarian parenting style intensify/ lower/ maintain your stress level during the pandemic or your study leave?

E: I think just more or less the same. I am supported and that's why I didn't feel any differences.

C: What is/are your coping method(s) of stress? How does the parenting style(s) influence you to have such coping methods with stress?

E: Chatting or spending time with my family. Our family used to chat and update one another about the things happened every day during dinner time. We have this practice since I was in K1. We love and enjoy the time chatting with one another

C: Thank you so much for your sharing today! This is the end of this interview.

Appendix 8 Excerpt of Transcript 6

C: Charis; H: Parent, F: Student

C: Good morning Mr. H (Parent's name) and F (Student's name). Thank you so much for attending this interview. Before we begin, I will first give you a brief introduction on "parenting styles". We have a total of 4 parenting styles based on the 2 aspects of parenting behaviour, control and warmth, where Parental Control means the degree parents manage their children's behaviour, ranging from being very controlling to setting few rules demands. While Parental Warmth refers to the degree to which parents are accepting and responsive of their children's behaviour as opposed to being unresponsive and rejecting. The 4 parenting styles are, Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved.

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Permissive Parents are very warm, but undemanding. They are passive in their parenting, and believe that the way to demonstrate their love is to give in to their children's wishes. They invoke phrases like, "you can stay up late if you want to," and "you do not need to do any chores if you don't feel like it." They don't like to say no or disappoint their children.

Uninvolved Parents are not warm and don't place any demands on their children. They minimize their interaction time, and are uninvolved to the point of being neglectful. They invoke phrases like, "I don't care where you go," or "why should I care what you do?" They are not interested in their children's needs or experiences at school or with peers.

You can always go back to the definitions of these 4 parenting styles printed on this paper. If you have no question at this moment, let's conduct our interview now.

C: Mr. H, may I know which parenting(s) do you think you have adopted? How and why?

H: Probably Permissive? My wife was brought up in a very restrictive family, and had a unhappy childhood, so, she wanted to give best things to our child. Therefore, we somehow spoil our child.

C: Could you please give us some examples?

H: We don't require our child to help with the chores if he doesn't want to. During his secondary school life, he was a team member of the volleyball team. Although he always went out for training, almost every day, we wouldn't scold him. We try to tolerate what he did.

C: Do you think your child feels stressed under your parenting style then?

H: I am not so sure... But I believe not much?

C: In fact, according to the questionnaire done by F about his stress level during the pandemic, when he was preparing for the HDKSE, his stress level index was quite low. So, F, which parenting style(s) do you think your parents have adopted?

F: Mostly permissive.

C: Do you feel stressed under such parenting style?

F: My parents seldom demand high standard of behaviours or excellent academic performance from me. However, I never feel being neglected. Instead, they always buy me the things I want, and are responsive to all my needs. So, that's why I don't feel much pressure from them

C: What is/are your coping method(s) of stress? How does the parenting style(s) influence you to have such coping methods with stress?

F: When I was sad, my parents always asked me what toys did I want, and they would buy them for me. They always fulfil my wants! I enjoy shopping and spending money to relieve my pressure, especially buying shoes!

C: Thank you so much for your sharing today! This is the end of this interview.

Appendix 9 Excerpt of Transcript 7

C: Charis; I: Parent, G: Student

C: Good morning Ms. I (Parent's name) and G (Student's name). Thank you so much for attending this interview. Before we begin, I will first give you a brief introduction on "parenting styles". We have a total of 4 parenting styles based on the 2 aspects of parenting behaviour, control and warmth, where Parental Control means the degree parents manage their children's behaviour, ranging from being very controlling to setting few rules demands. While Parental Warmth refers to the degree to which parents are accepting and responsive of their children's behaviour as opposed to being unresponsive and rejecting. The 4 parenting styles are, Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved.

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Permissive Parents are very warm, but undemanding. They are passive in their parenting, and believe that the way to demonstrate their love is to give in to their children's wishes. They invoke phrases like, "you can stay up late if you want to," and "you do not need to do any chores if you don't feel like it." They don't like to say no or disappoint their children.

Uninvolved Parents are not warm and don't place any demands on their children. They minimize their interaction time, and are uninvolved to the point of being neglectful. They invoke phrases like, "I don't care where you go," or "why should I care what you do?" They are not interested in their children's needs or experiences at school or with peers.

You can always go back to the definitions of these 4 parenting styles printed on this paper. If you have no question at this moment, let's conduct our interview now.

C: Ms. I, may I know which parenting(s) do you think you have adopted? How and why?

H: Uninvolved? Um, because both my husband and I are working parents, and we are too busy. That's why we employ a domestic helper to take care G.

C: Could you please give us some examples?

I: We are too busy, and we don't have time to take a look at her homework. We don't even have time to sit down to have dinner, how can we spend time and chat with her every day?

C: Do you think your child feels stressed under your parenting style then?

I: Maybe?

C: G, which parenting style(s) do you think your parents have adopted?

G: Uninvolved.

C: Do you feel stressed under such parenting style?

G: My parents are super busy, and they seldom have time for me. I am already used to dealing with all the things on my own. They won't ask me how's my day, they won't require me to get good grades, and they aren't those kids-spoiling parents. Anyways, I think I am independent. So as long as I am doing what I want to, and working hard for myself, it's already more than enough.

C: What is/are your coping method(s) of stress? How does the parenting style(s) influence you to have such coping methods with stress?

G: My parents both have to work, and they don't have much time taking care of me, or staying with me. I'm very used to watching TV or Youtube or Netflix and Disney+ when I'm bored. They are what I have been doing since small.

C: Thank you so much for your sharing today! This is the end of this interview.

Appendix 10 Consent Form for participants (English)

**THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The relationships between parenting styles and stress level of 2021 and 2022 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) candidates under the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19)

I, _____, hereby consent to participate in the captioned project supervised by Dr. WAN Lai Yin, Sarah and conducted by Lam Cheuk Yiu, Charis, who are staff and student of Department of Psychology in The Education University of Hong Kong.

I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published. However, my right to privacy will be retained, i.e., my personal details will not be revealed.

The procedure as set out in the **attached** information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the benefits and risks involved. My participation in the project is voluntary.

I acknowledge that I have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

Signature:

Name of Participant:

Date:

Appendix 11 Information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

The relationships between parenting styles and stress level of 2021 and 2022 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) candidates under the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19)

You are invited to participate in a project supervised by Dr. WAN Lai Yin, Sarah and conducted by LAM Cheuk Yiu, Charis, who are staff and student of Department of Psychology in The Education University of Hong Kong.

The introduction of the research

It is beyond doubt that the HKDSE is one of the major milestones of Hong Kong secondary school students, and might create great stress to students. During the past 3 years, under the COVID-19, the stress level of the HKDSE candidates is expected to be even higher due to changes to the learning mode and the public exam arrangement. This mix-method study will explore how the parenting styles might influence the students' stress level and their coping styles among 2021 and 2022 HKDSE candidates under the COVID-19.

The methodology of the research

A) Participants

The study will invite 70 former HKDSE candidates who participated either in the HKDSE examinations of 2021 or 2022, currently undertaking their tertiary education to participate in the quantitative research. In the quantitative research, potential participants for the further qualitative research would also be identified, and 9 student-participants and their father/mother would be invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The interview will be about the learning experience during the COVID-19, students' stress and coping, as well as perceived parenting styles. Participants would be invited from the university, or other tertiary education institutes.

B) Procedure of the research

In this study, 70 former HKDSE candidates will be asked to fill in an online questionnaire, which will last for around 25 minutes, providing information and data on students' personal information, stress and coping, perceived parenting styles. Data from participants would be obtained from December 2022 or January 2023, and the data collection of this quantitative research should last for about 2 weeks.

For the qualitative research, 9 pairs of interviewees would be invited to participate in the semi-structured interview, each lasts for around 30-40 minutes, and the venue would be at the university. During the qualitative interviews, questions related to the parenting styles, stress level and coping methods will be covered. The interviews will be video-recorded for data analysis.

C) Potential benefits

This study is designed to present which parenting styles might be the most effective to help relieve students' stress, especially during a hard time or a period of time that is full of uncertainty. Thus, it might provide incremental information about parenting for researchers, educators as well as parents. For example, this research will explore how the perceived parenting styles might affect the students' coping methods of stress, which may provide insights on what parents could do to support their children's coping of stress.

The potential risks of the research

None. The study involves no potential risk.

Please understand that your participation is voluntary. You have every right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. All information related to you will remain confidential, and will be identifiable by codes known only to the researcher.

Confidentiality

The collection of any personal data would be kept confidential. A subject code will be assigned for data analysis to avoid disclosure of participants' personal identities.

Identifying information will be removed from the data file and stored separately, with the link between identifying information and data made through codes only. And the identifier for the code will be stored separately from the anonymized data and data file contained identifiable information will be encrypted. Moreover, entered data will be stored on a password-protected file and a password-protected computer until 5 years past publication. Permission will be obtained in advance from participants to videotape the interviews for analysis purposes, and the video data will be destroyed after the completion of the research study. Only the researcher and her supervisor can access the data. All reports of the research will be devoid of identifiers, and all video/ audio recorded will be deleted after the final thesis mark has been received.

Use of Research Data

The findings from this research will be published and presented for the Honors Project in EdUHK. All reports of the research will be devoid of identifiers.

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact me by email at _____ or telephone number _____ or my supervisor Dr. WAN Lai Yin, Sarah by email at _____.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee by email at hrec@eduhk.hk or by mail to Research and Development Office, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

LAM Cheuk Yiu, Charis
Student Investigator