Parental Burnout and Parenting Styles Fujian Province, China: Basis for Intervention Program for Parenting Burnout

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Abstract: With the development and progress of society, the importance of family education in the process of children's growth has become increasingly prominent. Taking Fujian Province as an example, this study aims to explore the relationship between parental burnout and parenting styles to provide guidance for family education. This study used a survey questionnaire to obtain research data to empirically analyze the phenomenon of parental burnout and its relationship with parenting styles in Fujian Province. This study found that parents in Fujian province reported generally low parental burnout. Most parents favored trusting and encouraging (84.1%) and emotional warmth (87.8%) parenting styles, while authoritarian, drowning, and neglectful approaches were rarely used. Social support, job satisfaction and mental health were consistently rated positively, buffering burnout. Substantial correlations ($p < 0.05$) emerged between all burnout dimensions and each parenting style. No significant differences were found in burnout or parenting style by sex, age, education, family structure, primary caregiver, income, or residence ($p > 0.05$). In order to help parents in Fujian Province get rid of parental burnout and improve the quality of childcare, this study developed a comprehensive support plan.

***Keywords*:** parental burnout, parenting style, social support, parenting burnout

1. Introduction

Fujian, a southeast coastal province in China, that combines modern urban centers with traditional family norms emphasizing filial piety and intergenerational co-residence. While family education is widely valued, accelerating work–family demands have strained parents, including entrepreneurs, civil servants, and academics alike, who often substitute material provision for emotional engagement, weakening parent–child communication. Theoretically, the Balance between Risks and Resources model posits that burnout emerges when chronic parenting demands exceed available coping resources, producing emotional exhaustion, detachment from children, and diminished parental efficacy (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2020) [1]. Empirically, recent evidence shows that higher parental burnout is linked to more negative parenting (e.g., authoritarian, neglectful) and poorer adolescent socioemotional outcomes, highlighting parenting style as a key pathway through which burnout affects youth development (Guo et al., 2024)[2]. Despite growing scholarship on each construct, studies connecting burnout and parenting style remain scarce in the Chinese context. Using a multi-city sample of Fujian parents, this research described burnout levels and parenting profiles, tested their associations, and derived practice implications.

2. Research hypotheses

Mikkonen et al. (2022) found that Finnish parents endorsing warm, autonomy-supportive practices reported lower burnout, whereas authoritarian and neglectful tendencies co-occurred with higher burnout, implying a style–burnout linkage in everyday caregiving[3]. Taken together, convergent evidence across contexts suggests systematic co-variation between how exhausted parents feel and how they parent. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H: Parental burnout is significantly correlated with parenting styles.

3. Research design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey and estimated an OLS model to test H1. Parenting styles were regressed on parental burnout with controls for demographics and context:

$$Style_i = \alpha + \beta\ Burnout_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{1}$$

4. Empirical analysis

4.1 Descriptive stats

Table 1. Parental Burnout of the Respondents

	Extremely High		High		Relatively High		Relatively Low		Low		Extremely Low	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Role Failure	1	0.37	20	7.41	12	4.44	17	6.30	185	68.52	35	12.96
Self-Contrast	1	0.37	24	8.89	8	2.96	20	7.41	192	71.11	25	9.26
Feeling Bored	8	2.96	17	6.30	8	2.96	10	3.70	134	49.63	93	34.44
Emotional Alienation	5	1.85	19	7.04	9	3.33	24	8.89	126	46.67	87	32.22
Parental Burnout			28	10.4	5	1.9	1	0.4	224	83.0	12	4.4

The overall score of parental burnout was mainly concentrated at a Low level. 83.0% of the parents were rated as low, only 10.4% were rated as relatively high, plus an extremely low proportion of 1.9% as relatively low and 0.4% as low. It indicates that the degree of parental burnout of the vast majority of parents in Fujian Province is relatively mild, and very few are truly in a state of high burnout.

In terms of role failure, 68.52% of the parents were low, 12.96% were extremely low, and only 7.78% were high or above. In self-contrast, 71.11% of the parents were low, 9.26% were extremely low, and only 9.26% experienced a relatively high degree of self-contrast. In the feeling bored dimension, 49.63% of the parents were at low, 34.44% were at extremely low, and only about 9.26% showed a moderate to high level of boredom. For emotional alienation, 46.67% were low, 32.22% were extremely low, and less than 10% of parents had high burnout. These data collectively show that the proportion of high burnout in all dimensions is extremely low, further confirming the overall easing trend of parental burnout among parents in Fujian.

Table 2. Parenting Style of the Respondents

	Relatively High		General		Relatively Low		Low		Extremely Low	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Authoritarian	6	2.22	24	8.89	3	1.11	114	42.22	123	45.56
Trusting and Encouraging	80	29.63	147	54.44	13	4.81	15	5.56	15	5.56
Emotional Warmth	210	77.78	27	10.00	2	0.74	23	8.52	8	2.96
Drowning	13	4.81	17	6.30	3	1.11	90	33.33	147	54.44
Neglectful	5	1.85	22	8.15	7	2.59	102	37.78	134	49.63

Judging from the frequency and percentage in the table, the emotionally warm parenting style is the most common and has the highest proportion compared to other types. Parents from Fujian province stand out particularly in the trusting and encouraging dimensions. About 29.6% of the parents rated themselves as Relatively High, 54.4% as General, and less than 11% of the parents scored low. In the emotional warmth dimension, 77.8% of the parents rated it as relatively high and 10.0% as General. This indicates that the vast majority of parents tend to interact with their children in a way that is trusting, encouraging, and emotionally warm. By contrast, only 2.2% of parents rated the authoritarian dimension as relatively high, 8.9% as general, and more than 87% rated it relatively low or below. Similar trends were observed in the drowning and neglectful dimensions, with 54.4% and 49.6% of parents being at the extremely low level, respectively, indicating that indulgent or neglectful parenting was extremely rare in this sample.

4.2 Person relevance test

Table 3. Association between parental burnout and parenting practices

	Role failure	Self contrast	Feeling of boredom	Emotional alienation
Authoritarian Parenting style	0.829	0.891	0.861	0.869
Trusting and encouraging parenting style	-0.791	-0.856	-0.814	-0.821
Emotional warmth parenting style	-0.817	-0.898	-0.874	-0.876
Drowning parenting style	0.774	0.841	0.800	0.797
Neglectful parenting style	0.783	0.854	0.806	0.813

According to the data in Table 3, the four dimensions of parental burnout — role exhaustion, self-contrast, boredom, and emotional alienation — were significantly positively associated with autocratic, doting and neglected parenting, with correlation coefficients between 0.774 and 0.891, respectively, and all reaching significance levels ($p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$).

The various dimensions of parental burnout were significantly negatively associated with trust-encouraging and emotion-warm parenting styles, with correlation coefficients between-0.791 and-0.898, also reaching significance levels ($p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$). Specifically, the correlation coefficient between self-contrast and emotional warm parenting was-0.898, and the correlation coefficient between boredom and trust-encouraged parenting was-0.814. This means that when parents burnout decreases, they are more likely to adopt a parenting style of trust, encouragement and emotional warmth, giving their children more understanding, support and positive emotional communication.

5. Conclusion

In summary, this study advances theory by integrating the risk–resources lens with a behavioral account of parenting, showing that distinct facets of parental burnout systematically co-vary with specific parenting styles—clarifying mechanisms often inferred but rarely tested together in Chinese contexts. Practically, the findings justify dual-track interventions that both reduce burnout (social support, work–family fit, mental-health care) and scaffold warm, autonomy-supportive parenting (skills training, coaching). Compared with prior work that examined either burnout or parenting styles in isolation, this study links multidimensional burnout to a full style profile and situates results within Fujian's cultural ecology; however, unlike longitudinal and experimental studies, our cross-sectional design limits causal inference and may understate dynamic spillovers to child outcomes. Methodologically, we refine measurement by pairing omnibus tests with dimension-by-style associations, yet unmeasured confounds (e.g., marital quality, child temperament) and single-informant bias remain unresolved. We recommend school-community consortia to deliver brief, scalable parent programs; employer partnerships to pilot flexible scheduling; and routine screening for burnout in primary care and schools. Future research should adopt longitudinal, dyadic, and mixed-methods designs, test mediators (parent–child attachment, co-parenting alliance), and evaluate culturally tuned interventions using randomized or quasi-experimental trials.

References

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