

Parenting Styles and High School Students' Coping Strategies: A Conceptual Analysis of the Mediating Role of Personality Traits in Kunming, China

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Abstract – Parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' coping strategies, influencing their ability to navigate stressors effectively. This conceptual paper examines the relationship between parenting styles and coping mechanisms among high school students in Kunming, China, with a focus on the mediating role of personality traits. Drawing upon Baumrind's and Maccoby and Martin's parenting style frameworks, Costa and McCrae's Five-Factor Model of personality, and Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress and coping, this paper explores how different parenting approaches contribute to either adaptive or maladaptive coping behaviours. Recent studies suggest that authoritative parenting fosters problem-focused coping and resilience, while authoritarian and permissive styles are linked to avoidant or emotion-focused coping, potentially exacerbating stress-related challenges. Personality traits, particularly conscientiousness and neuroticism, further mediate these relationships, influencing students' tendencies toward constructive or maladaptive coping strategies. By synthesizing theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, this paper highlights the implications for educational psychology, emphasizing the need for parenting education programs and school-based interventions that promote adaptive coping techniques among students. Ultimately, this study contributes to a broader understanding of adolescent development by providing a conceptual framework for examining the interplay between parenting, personality, and coping. Future empirical research is needed to validate these theoretical connections and develop culturally responsive interventions aimed at enhancing student resilience and psychological well-being.

Keywords – Parenting styles, Personality traits, Coping styles, High school students, China

I. INTRODUCTION

High school represents a critical developmental stage characterized by significant psychological, emotional, and social transformations. Students in this phase face a variety of stressors, including academic pressures, social interactions, and identity formation challenges. The strategies they employ to cope with these stressors are crucial for their overall psychological well-being and adaptive functioning. Coping mechanisms are broadly categorized into problem-focused coping, which involves actively addressing stressors through solution-oriented strategies, and emotion-focused coping, which aims to manage emotional distress through techniques such as self-expression, distraction, or seeking social support.

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The relationship between parenting styles and child development has been extensively studied in psychological research. Baumrind's (1967) seminal work introduced the classification of parenting styles into authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive, providing a foundational framework for understanding parental influences on child behaviour and development. Expanding on this framework, Maccoby and Martin (1983) further refined the classification by incorporating neglectful parenting as a distinct category, emphasizing the critical role of parental involvement and responsiveness in shaping children's social and emotional growth.

Personality traits — those enduring patterns in the way people think, feel, and behave — are also key to what determines how adolescents react to stress. One of the most famous models in this line of research is the Five-Factor Model (FFM) developed by Costa and McCrae (1992), which includes five factors: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Such characteristics provide a heuristic to explain variation in coping. In other words, these personality traits provide a useful framework for understanding the differences among individuals in coping with stress. Paralleling this, Eysenck's (1990) biosocial theory of personality directs attention to the reciprocal process at work between inheritable characteristics and environment in contributing to the psychological make-up of a youngster.

Coping as a psychological construct has been the subject of considerable research. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional theory of stress and coping has offered a foundational framework for comprehending the ways individuals appraise and manage stressful events. Although past studies have compared the impact of parenting styles and the role of personality on coping strategies separately, Further speaking, it explores how parenting styles or personality traits independently influence students' coping strategies. very little is known about the interaction between these factors, in particular, parents and non-western countries such as Kunming China. This theoretical work uses theory from development and personality as well as stress and coping literature to provide a framework for understanding coping in adolescents in a more comprehensive way.

Besides making theoretical contributions to the field, this study is also practically meaningful to educators and mental health workers. Through examining the relationships among parenting styles and personality and high school students' coping strategies, this study provides important information on resilience development in high school contexts. Ultimately, the aim is to inform the development of interventions to support adolescents to

cope with stress effectively, given their specific sociocultural context.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

A considerable body of empirical evidence suggests that adolescents commonly engage in maladaptive coping responses in the context of academic and social stressors during high school. For example, Wang (2019) reported up to 60% of secondary school students in China used maladaptive coping strategies like avoidance and denial. Li (2021) also found that more than half of adolescents would avoid tough situations instead of addressing them, which is part of the general trend of maladaptive coping strategies that may have a negative impact on students' mental well-being and personal growth.

More recently, Chen et al. (2024) found that 85% of students in their sample relied primarily on avoidance in response to stress, supporting the imperative of addressing this matter. Johnson (2018), examined how fantasy and escape in adolescents was developed and how a child might detach from the real world in order to deal with aspects of their life. Additional evidence was later supplied by Brown (2020) who also classified different coping strategies among adolescents, and the consistent underuse of problem-solving forms became apparent. In one longitudinal analysis, Zimmerman (2021) found high levels of stress and decline in academic performance were related to continued reliance on maladaptive coping strategies, which underscores the importance of early intervention.

While a great deal of work has focused on the coping patterns and consequences of coping use among adolescents, relatively little attention has been given to the determinants which underlie these tendencies. Especially in Kunming, China, the roles of parenting style and personality traits on the behaviours of teenagers' coping styles are less well understood and cultural and familial factors may play distinctive roles from those in the Western context. This discrepancy highlights the necessity to examine conceptually the way in which these psychological and social variables interact to affect students' strategies to manage their study skills at a crucial developmental stage.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Parenting Styles and Coping Styles

Individual growth is influenced by school, family, and society, with family being particularly crucial. Among family factors, parenting style—encompassing both nurturing and education—plays a direct and vital role in psychological development.

Research is illuminating how parents' behaviours influence their adolescents' stress-coping strategies. Adolescents who develop healthy coping habits, such as problem-solving and changing their thinking, are generally more resilient. On the contrary, if someone doesn't confront their issues or deny them, that could turn into a cause of his stress (Jain & Lokesh, 2023).

It seems when parents are warm but firm, they're helping their teens to cope with stress. This parenting is known as authoritative and it is good for adolescents as it

makes them develop the problem-focused coping responses along with handling the stress (Jain & Lokesh, 2023). On the other hand, authoritarian parents, with high control, typically raise adolescents who do not cope with problems. Very permissive parents who don't provide Requirements and constraints, only meet the demands. It might actually prevent their adolescents from learning how to cope with stress. A related study among young adults in China indicated that maternal warmth promoted coping capability against risk taking. On the other hand, rejection from their mothers and over-protection from their fathers can serve them the other way around, providing non-adaptive outcomes (Ju et al., 2020).

In addition, negative parenting practices have been associated with reduced life satisfaction, while dysfunctional coping strategies were found to be the mediators (Zhang et al., 2023). Parenting styles may therefore influence, not only the coping behaviour of adolescents, but also their mental health status in general. These results highlight the importance for parents to take a supportive and structured approach in order to promote resilience and adaptive coping in their adolescents.

Authoritative Parenting and Adaptive Coping

Authoritative parenting, also known as democratic parenting, refers to the combination of a demanding parenting style, which sets norms and places reasonable limits on and monitors children's activities and behaviours, and a responsive parenting style, which nurtures a child's sense of self-determination and individuality through warm, reasoned, democratic communication. Characterized by warmth, responsiveness and firm yet reasonable discipline, a warm and supportive approach that combines goodwill with fair discipline. Authoritative parents balance their demands and gratifications of their children, balancing their children's independence with adherence to family rules. Many experts believe that this parenting style is one of the best ways to help children build resilience and cope with challenges (Bedi, 2024). Adolescents raised by authoritative parents typically exhibit greater self-control, better problem-solving skills, and a strong drive to learn (Steinberg et al., 1992). They tend to cope with stress by facing problems head on and finding positive solutions (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Some empirical studies reveal that in a unique collectivist cultural environment like China, parents who use authoritative parenting methods balance the two well, that is, meeting family expectations on the one hand and encouraging children's independence on the other. This parenting method helps children gain a sense of stability and security, while also allowing them to focus more on learning (Wang & Chen, 2023). It is important to note in particular that its effects vary with different cultures' views on independence and self-expression (Luo et al., 2025).

Authoritarian Parenting and Maladaptive Coping

Authoritarian parenting styles, characterized by high levels of control and responsiveness, are prevalent in Chinese families, which stems from the Chinese culture's emphasis on conformity and academic success (Zhang et

al., 2023). Authoritarian parenting style, also known as strict, refers to the combination between high demands and low fulfillment in parenting styles. Similar to authoritative parenting styles, they set guidelines and have a high degree of control over their children's behaviour, but children are usually punished when they fail to follow the guidelines set by their parents. Parenting styles that do not explain the norms they set and ignore the needs of the child are essentially authoritarian parenting styles in which the parent controls the child's decisions. On the one hand this parenting style helps to reinforce discipline and work habits, but on the other hand it can also increase psychological stress and anxiety, and children may resort to emotional coping strategies such as avoidance and denial to deal with the stress (Ding et al., 2024).

From a distinctively Chinese cultural perspective, authoritarian parenting in China is often viewed as a caring and committed parent rather than a strict and repressive approach (Bedi, 2024). This warm understanding may have neutralized negative influences, and in an individualistic society where autonomy is highly valued, this type of parenting is more socially acceptable in comparison (Sun et al., 2025).

3.4 Permissive and Neglectful Parenting: Implications for Emotional Regulation

Permissive parenting, characterized by high responsiveness but minimal behavioural expectations, can lead to difficulties in self-discipline and impulse control (Kausar & Afaq, 2024). Adolescents raised in permissive environments often struggle with emotional regulation, making them more prone to escapism, avoidance, or externalizing behaviours as coping strategies (Sun et al., 2025). In Kunming, where digital entertainment is widespread, permissive parenting may contribute to excessive screen time as an avoidant coping mechanism (Elshanum, 2024).

On the other hand, neglectful parenting, defined by low responsiveness and low control, has been consistently linked to poor emotional adjustment and increased vulnerability to stress-related disorders (Rothbaum, 1994). Adolescents from neglectful households frequently resort to maladaptive coping strategies such as substance use, social withdrawal, and passive resignation (Elshanum, 2024).

3.5 The Mediating Role of Personality Traits

The personality traits moderate the relationship between parenting styles and coping strategies. Five basic dimensions of personality—openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—defined by Costa and McCrae (1992) underlie individuals' reactions to stress and attempts at coping (Hampson and Goldberg 2006). The relation between conscientiousness and problem-focused coping allows students to set goals and use structured problem-solving skills (Steinberg et al., 1992). Extraversion is correlated with active coping and seeking social support, both of which contribute to resilience and emotional well-being (Luo et al. 2025).

In contrast, emotion-focused coping, avoidance, and sensitivity to stress are highly related to neuroticism (Sandler et al., 2017). Highly neurotic adolescents frequently endure anxiety, doubting of the self, and repetitive thinking that contribute to the amplification of the adverse effects of unresponsive or controlling parenting (Brown, 2020).

It has been found that the association between parenting practices and personality is reciprocal: parenting practices mold the development of personality, but the latter also affects the way adolescents interpret and behave to the parental behaviour (Masten & Powell, 2022). This interaction underscores the importance of personality differences in relation to the effectiveness of coping mechanisms.

Relevant Theories

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on well-established psychological theories that explain how parenting styles, personality traits, and coping strategies interact in adolescent development. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, this framework provides a structured approach to understanding the mechanisms through which high school students develop coping strategies in response to stressors.

Baumrind's Parenting Styles Theory

The Theory of Parenting Styles developed by Baumrind (1967) is the essential concept that forms the basis for understanding how parental involvement influences and affects the coping styles of adolescents. This theory divides parenting into three categories: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive, based on levels of responsiveness and demandingness. Maccoby and Martin (1983) later extended the model to include neglectful parenting, further highlighting the importance of parental involvement for children's emotional and psychological well-being. Research has demonstrated that parenting class sequences like warm and structural; warm, negative and neglect; harsh and neglectful are associated with adaptive coping, whereas authoritarian and uninvolved styles of parenting are associated with maladaptive modes of coping.

The Five-Factor Model of Personality

Personality traits are important in shaping individuals' reactions to stress, acting as an intermediate variable between parenting styles and coping. Costa and McCrae's (1992) Five Factor Model (FFM) of Personality includes five basic personality dimensions: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. These characteristics influence emotional regulation, decision making, and stress management. For example, high conscientious participants are more likely to use problem-focused coping and high neuroticism individuals are more likely to use maladaptive, avoidant-oriented coping. This model provides a framework for understanding how differences in personal traits influence how adolescents cope with stress.

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

Lazarus and Forman's (1984) model of stress and coping transactions is essential for understanding how people perceive and deal with stressors. The model argues that coping is a dynamic process shaped by two main cognitive assessments: primary assessment, in which the individual determines the importance of the stressor; Secondary assessments, i.e. they assess their ability to manage stress. Coping methods are usually divided into problem-based coping, which involves addressing the root cause of stress; Emotionally oriented coping aimed at relieving emotional distress. This framework is particularly important for exploring how parenting styles and personality traits influence students' coping choices in high-pressure academic and social environments.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes observational learning, self-efficacy, and reciprocal determinism in behavioural development. This theory suggests that adolescents learn how to cope with stress by observing their parents, peers, and teachers. Different styles of parenting can affect self-efficacy, which in turn influences a person's confidence to cope with stress. For instance, students from an authoritative home may develop higher self-efficacy, which will then predispose them to making use of adaptive coping mechanisms, whereas those from controlling or neglectful backgrounds might demonstrate learned helplessness and revert to unproductive coping strategies.

In doing so, this study provides a comprehensive perspective on the parenting styles that are related to personality traits and coping strategies in high-schoolers by combining this theoretical background. Baumrind's parenting styles provide a basis for understanding impact of parenting, the Five-Factor Model illustrates differences in coping among individuals, the Transactional Model elucidates the mechanism for evaluating stress and choosing coping methods, and Social Cognitive Theory focuses on the role of learned behaviours and self-efficacy. All together, these theories provide a full structure for studying adolescent coping techniques when coping with family processes and personality development.

Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in established theories of psychology which help to explain the intricate relations among parenting styles; personality and coping in high school students. At a very basic level and at the framework's core, this is represented by Baumrind's (1967) seminal categorization of parenting styles - authoritative, authoritarian, permissive supplemented with Maccoby and Martin's (1983) addition of neglectful as a distinct category. These styles of parenting are known to have effects on children's emotional regulation, behavioural competences and social adaptation. Parenting styles directly impact on the ability of young people to perceive and manage stress by shaping early experiences of living with a family system and an emotional environment.

Personality characteristics serve as a mediation factor to explain interindividual differences in coping. This article uses Costa and McCrae's (1992) Five Factor Model (FFM) consisting of the factors: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Studies have indicated that some personality traits play an important role in coping behaviours, such as those who are high in conscientiousness are likely to employ problem-focused coping, and who are high in neuroticism often rely on avoidant-oriented or emotion-focused coping (Zhou & Liu, 2021; Li et al., 2020). This study takes the model a step further by integrating personality into the model and shows the paper demonstrates the complex psychological mechanisms of parenting styles in the process of adolescent stress assessment

This theoretical model provides a holistic perspective that helps us to better understand how parenting styles influence and shape the way students cope with stress

Additionally, the model draws upon Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping, which sees coping as a dynamic and situation specific process that is influenced by personal appraisals and environmental demand. Problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies are both important for the mental health of high school students, who are exposed on a daily basis to academic stress, social interactions with peers, and identity issues. This model highlights the role of external influences (e.g., parenting behaviours) and internal characteristics (e.g., personality traits) in the development of coping efforts.

In this model parenting styles are represented as the independent variable comprising three primary dimensions: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. Personality traits serve as a mediator and are represented by the five dimensions of the Five-Factor Model. These five dimensions are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The dependent variable of the coping strategies consists of two categories: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The framework therefore emphasizes the indirect mechanism for parenting style influences on adolescent's coping via stable personality dimensions.

By situating this study in the sociocultural environment of Kunming, China, Kunming is a provincial capital city with 26 ethnic groups. Every year, people from all over the country and the world come and live there. It is rich in biodiversity, has beautiful natural scenery and abundant cultural resources, and is open and inclusive. the conceptual model (Figure 1) provides an orderly and context relevant platform for understanding how high school students manage stress and adversity. This integrative analysis brings added value to this study within educational psychology and adolescent development offering implications for future research, parenting education and school-based mental health programming.

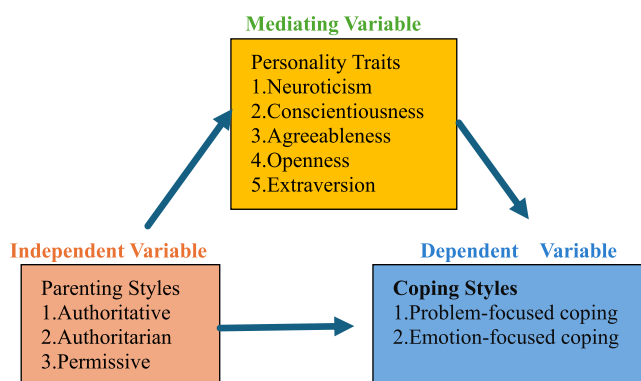


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research utilizes a quantitative research design, chosen for its capacity to systematically assess and analyse the relationships between parenting styles, personality traits, and coping mechanisms among high school students in Kunming. A survey-based approach is implemented to ensure a structured, efficient, and scalable data collection process, facilitating the generalization of findings across a wider population. The application of standardized quantitative instruments guarantees that the research adheres to the principles of objectivity, reliability, and validity, which are crucial for drawing significant conclusions.

The methodology is guided by prior research on parenting and adolescent development, particularly the studies conducted by Soenens et al. (2007) and Steinberg et al. (1992), which employed validated questionnaires to categorize parenting behaviours and evaluate their impact on adolescent outcomes. By expanding on these foundational studies, this research aims to offer empirical insights that are both contextually relevant to Kunming and theoretically situated within developmental psychology.

Study Population and Sample

The population targeted for this research comprises high school students in Kunming City, showcasing a variety of educational backgrounds, family dynamics, and socioeconomic statuses. The choice of this demographic aims to investigate the impact of various parenting styles on the coping strategies of adolescents within the distinct sociocultural landscape of Kunming. Considering the considerable population of high school students in the area, a stratified random sampling technique will be utilized. This method guarantees that students from both public and private institutions, across different grades and diverse parental backgrounds, are sufficiently included. The stratification will focus on school type and district to reduce selection bias and improve the applicability of the results.

To establish an adequate sample size, Cochran's formula for sample size determination in larger populations is employed. The minimum necessary sample size identified is 384 students. To accommodate potential non-responses

or incomplete surveys, an additional 15% will be added, resulting in a final target sample size of about 440 students.

Research Instruments

Three validated self-report questionnaires will be utilized to measure the key variables of interest: parenting styles, personality traits, and coping mechanisms. These instruments have been widely used in adolescent psychology research and demonstrate strong reliability and validity. The Buri's Parental Authority Questionnaire is designed to assess students' perceptions of their parents' behaviours. It categorizes parenting styles into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive types. Buri's questionnaire was divided into the mother's questionnaire and the father's questionnaire, each containing 30 items. After Chinese scholars conducted a large amount of research data using this questionnaire, they modified it and reduced each questionnaire from 30 items to 26 items. The questionnaire consists of Likert-scale items, where higher scores indicate more authoritative parenting behaviours, while lower scores suggest authoritarian or permissive tendencies. This scale has been extensively validated across different cultural contexts and has demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.92, Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.67$), making it a suitable tool for this study.

The Five-factor Personality Questionnaire for Middle School Students is a 50-item questionnaire that measures the Big Five personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. This instrument has been widely used to assess personality traits in adolescents and has well-established psychometric properties. Cronbach's alpha coefficients within each dimension are between 0.85 and 0.88, and the split-half reliability of the whole scale was 0.901. In this study, personality traits will be examined as mediating variables, helping to explain how parenting styles influence coping mechanisms among high school students.

The Coping Styles Scale for middle School Students differentiates between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping mechanisms. This scale was developed by Chinese scholars and has 36 items. This instrument consists of Likert-scale items that measure the frequency with which students employ various coping strategies in response to stressors. The split-half confidence coefficient is 0.88 and the correlation coefficient is 0.89. It shows high reliability. Higher scores indicate a greater reliance on adaptive coping strategies, while lower scores suggest a preference for maladaptive coping tendencies. The Scale has been validated for use in adolescent populations and is appropriate for assessing coping styles within the context of Kunming high school students. Each of these instruments will be piloted prior to the full-scale data gathering to ensure they are culturally relevant, clear, and appropriate for the target demographic.

Pilot Study

A pilot study will be carried out with 30 randomly chosen students from two high schools in Kunming before the main data collection phase. The main objective of the

pilot study is to verify that the research tools are clear, dependable, and valid for the local adolescent community. The pilot study will evaluate the clarity of the survey questions to confirm that students comprehend them as intended. It will also investigate the reliability and validity of the scales within Kunming's unique cultural and educational framework. Additionally, the time needed for completing the questionnaire will be assessed to ensure that students can finish the survey within their school schedules. Results from the pilot study will guide minor adjustments to the wording of the survey or the procedures for administration if needed. This initial phase will improve the overall quality of data collection and reduce potential biases linked to misunderstandings of survey items.

Data Collection

Data collection will be conducted in three phases to ensure methodological rigour and ethical adherence. The initial step in this process is to obtain ethical clearance and any relevant rights to conduct the study. Permission will be sought from IRBs and appropriate school personnel. Both children and their parents or guardians will be asked to provide informed consent before taking part.

In the second stage, surveys are passed out. The questionnaires will be offered digitally and on paper so that all students, regardless of where they go to school, have the chance to participate. Students will complete the surveys at the discretion of school officials, with the assistance of trained research assistants who will provide support and help to explain the survey items if there are questions.

The third step includes the privacy and anonymity preservation of the data. All responses will be collected anonymously, and no names or any personal information will be linked to the dataset. Students will be explicitly told that their participation in the study will be voluntary and have no negative consequences for any of the students involved. These measures are implemented to ensure ethical considerations and to protect the identity of participants in the context of the research.

Data Analysis

The data collected will be analysed by a multi-stage statistical analysis plan to investigate relationships of parenting style with personality and coping. The discussion will proceed in three broad stages. The first step is descriptive analyses in which frequencies, means, and standard deviations are calculated to present the demographic characteristics and distribution of parenting styles in the sample. These descriptive results will provide a cross-sectional view of the study population.

The second step is inferential statistics. For analysing associations between categorical variables (e.g., between use of parenting styles and use of coping strategies), chi-square-tests will be applied. Additionally, t-tests and ANOVA will evaluate coping differences for parenting style and personality factors. These statistical techniques should help identify significant patterns and vary-hypotheses among student groups.

At last structural equation modeling (SEM) will be used to examine direct and mediating relationships among parenting style, personality, and coping. SEM is an advanced modeling technique that allows for the examination of interaction effects, and further insight into the psychological underpinnings of adolescent coping strategies. FGD ones) which will be adding to the interpretation of data statistically and also increasing the validity of the study findings. By using the above analytical methods, we aim to identify important patterns and relationships that provide a more nuanced understanding in general how parenting styles may influence adolescents' coping style among high school students in Kunming.

V. CONCLUSION

This is a theoretical article on the relationships between parental behaviour, personality and coping style of adolescents in secondary schools of Kunming, China. Grounded in established psychological theories (and findings), the study contrasts how four different parenting modes—authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful—influence the coping responses of adolescents, with personality as a mediator. The current review emphasizes the value of coping resources to enhance resilience and mental health and also suggests a risk of maladaptation associated with worked-out coping strategies. Integrating concepts from developmental psychology with stress-coping models, this paper expands our knowledge of parenting on adolescent adjustment. These relationships need to be examined empirically in future research accounting for cultural and contextual influences to inform targeted interventions in parenting education and school-based mental health programs.

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