The effects of parenting styles on each personal growth initiative and self-esteem among Japanese university students

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated the extent to which individual differences in personal growth initiative (PGI) and self-esteem are effected by parenting style. The sample consisted of 329 Japanese university students. The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) measuring three parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive), the PGI, and the self-esteem scale were used to guide data collection. Multiple regression analyses showed that PGI and self-esteem were significantly affected by the authoritative parenting style. The study also showed that most of the subscales of PGI and self-esteem were not significantly affected by the authoritarian parenting style whereas, for female students, readiness for change which is subscale of PGI was significantly affected by the authoritarian parenting style. On the other hand, PGI and self-esteem were not significantly affected by the permissive parenting style. These results indicate the importance of the influence of the authoritative parenting style on each PGI and self-esteem among Japanese university students.

Introduction
The subjective parenting of fathers and mothers is indicated as a balance of negative and positive impacts, whereas what is not clear is how this affects their sons and daughters. On the one hand, Darling and Steinberg (1993) recommended that parenting styles should be considered in an emotional context that influences the meaning of different parenting practices. On the other, Baumrind (1971) related three major parenting styles to the behavior of preschool boys and girls. These three parenting styles are authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. For example, the authoritative parenting style directs the behavior of sons and daughters within rational and reasoned rules, with verbal give and take. The parent of authoritative style exerts firm control but does not force their opinions on the child using restrictions; individual child’s interests are recognized along with his or her own parental rights and responsibilities. Baumrind (1971) found that the authoritative parenting style, which links high control and positive encouragement, was correlated with competent, responsible, and independent behavior in girls, and to a lesser extent in boys. It also correlated with social responsibility among boys, but only among those girls who were high achievers.

Baumrind (1971) then described the authoritarian parenting style as one that controls, and at the same time evaluates the behavior of their son and daughters, according to an absolute standard set by a strong parental authority. In the authoritarian parenting style, obedience and respect are demanded,
and punishment is endorsed, while verbal give and take are not encouraged. Finally, parents of the permissive parenting style are non-punitive and accepting of the child’s impulses, desires, and behavior (Baumrind, 1971).

Steinberg (2001) suggested that adolescents gained clear benefits from having at least one authoritative parent. These benefits include less antisocial behavior, depression, or anxiety, and more self-esteem and achievement. Smetana, Crean, and Campione-Barr (2005) similarly found that the authoritative parental style was associated with less deviance and depression in late adolescence. Spera (2005) also noted that the communication manner formed by the authoritative parenting style was positively associated with altruism and empathy in children and academic achievement in adolescents. In addition, Lambom, Mounts, Steinberg, and Dombusch (1991) found that adolescents who rated their parents as authoritative showed more psychological competence and less psychological dysfunction than adolescents who rated their parents as authoritarian, indulgent, or neglectful.

To summarize, several previous studies of adolescents have suggested that the authoritative parenting style proposed by Baumrind (1971) has a positive influence on good psychological outcomes for adolescents. Based on results of these studies, we assume these good outcomes, which are significantly affected by the authoritative parenting style, as the personal growth initiative (PGI).

PGI is an active and intentional engagement in the self-change process of personal growth (Robitschek, 1998; Robitschek, 2003). PGI also encompasses cognitive and behavioral skills that include the belief, that one can change one’s circumstances, and participate in active planning and goal accomplishment of strategies directed toward attaining personal improvement (Robitschek et al., 2012). In addition, PGI is an acquired skill set for self-improvement across life domains. It is comprised of four components: readiness for change (the ability to assess one’s own psychological preparedness to engage in personal growth processes), using resources (the ability to recognize and access resources external to the self, such as other people and materials), planfulness (the ability to target-set and plan for outcomes), and intentional behavior (actual follow-through, or carrying out of self-change plans and behaviors). Finally, to optimize personal growth, these four components operate synergistically rather than sequentially (Robitschek et al., 2012).

Research has suggested that participants who have higher PGI experience more fulfilling relationships and a greater sense of autonomy, mastery, and purpose in life compared with those who are lower in PGI (Robitschek & Keyes, 2009). Other studies have found that higher levels of PGI predict lower levels of social anxiety and fear of disapproval because participants are better able to attain their desired self-attributes (Hardin, Weigold, Robitschek, & Nixon, 2007). This shows that PGI is an important psychological characteristic associated with lower levels of personal distress. Recent research has suggested that PGI is also an important predictor of optimal well-being and is associated with lower levels of psychological distress, and has proposed that it captures core tenets of human agency – those beliefs and abilities that relate to an individual’s sense of control over their life (Weigold, Porfeli, & Weigold, 2013). In addition, PGI is conceptually similar to the construct of hope (Shorey, Little, Snyder, Kluck, & Robitschek, 2007).

These findings imply that PGI may be an adaptive mindset that can be adopted to protect against distress. From the perspective of this previous research, it is important to examine the possibility that the formation of positive PGI is more significantly influenced by the authoritative parenting style among those parenting styles presented by Baumrind (1971).

On the other hand, we assume that a good outcome, affected by authoritative parenting style, is also self-esteem, in addition to PGI. Self-esteem has been considered as those set of attitudes and beliefs held by a person with which he or she faces the world (Rosenberg, 1965). These beliefs include his/her evaluations of success and failure, decisions about input efforts, assessment and attributions of failure, and success in specific life tasks. Also included are whether failure at a task will be painful, and whether he or she will become more capable as a result of difficult experiences (Coopersmith, 1981). Most researchers have been recognized the important role played by high self-esteem in one's performance and perceptions about academic achievement, and personal and social responsibilities (Spinath, Spinath, Harlaar, & Plomin, 2006).
Several studies have examined the relationships between parenting styles and self-esteem (DeHart, Pelham, & Tennen, 2006; Growe, 1980). Some found that parental authority was positively correlated to self-esteem (Buri, 1989; Buri, Louiselle, Misukanis, & Mueller, 1988). For example, Scholte, Van Lieshout, and Van Aken (2001) found that supportive parenting styles were significantly related to high levels of self-esteem. Their results showed that people who recognized that their parents engaged in more caring behaviors would have higher self-esteem, and that people who recognized that their parents were more overprotective would have low self-esteem. Nevertheless, there are only a few studies clarifying the relationship between parenting styles proposed by Baumrind (1971) and level of self-esteem. For example, Buri et al. (1988) found that the authoritative parenting style presented by Baumrind (1971) was significantly related to high levels of self-esteem in daughters. Thus, the results of research by Buri et al. (1988) show that it is possible that there is a significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and self-esteem among adolescents.

In this study, we focus on the function of parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) presented by Baumrind (1971), and then examine the effects of parenting styles on each PGI and self-esteem among Japanese university students. Our view is that in Japan, it is necessary to clarify the functioning of parenting styles as explained by Baumrind (1971). For instance, the authoritative parenting style among the three parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) as measured by the PAQ (Buri, 1991) based on the theory of Baumrind (1971), had a positive influence on Japanese children's subsequent mental health (Uji, Sakamoto, Adachi, & Kitamura, 2014). The results suggest that authoritative parenting styles have a significant influence on good outcomes such as mental health among Japanese participants as well as those from other countries. On the other hand, among Japanese participants, less is known about studies investigating the effects of the parenting styles proposed by Baumrind (1971) on good outcomes such as PGI and self-esteem. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of the parenting styles presented by Baumrind (1971) on each PGI and self-esteem among Japanese university students.

**Methods**

**Participants and procedure**

A survey was conducted among university students in Japan. We told all participants that their responses would be kept confidential, and that only summary information would be presented in any subsequent analyses. Furthermore, we assured them of complete anonymity. Overall, 329 students (164 males, 165 females), aged from 18 to 23 (SD = 1.2), volunteered to participate in our study. To prevent any leaking of personal information via survey assistants, participants responded anonymously to the survey materials.

**Measurements**

**Parenting style**

The parenting styles were measured by the PAQ (Buri, 1991), which is based on Baumrind's (1971) classification of parenting styles. The scale consists of two sets of 30 items assessing subjects' perceptions of their parents, with 10 items measuring the authoritative parenting style (e.g. ‘I had clear standards of behavior for my child as he or she was growing up, but I was willing to adjust those standards to the needs of the child’), 10 items measuring the authoritarian parenting style (e.g. ‘As my child was growing up I did not allow him or her to question any decision I had made’), and 10 items measuring the permissive parenting style (e.g. ‘As my child was growing up, I seldom gave him or her expectations and guidelines for his or her behavior’). Each item was scored by a 1–5 Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).
**PGI**
The Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS-II; Robitschek et al., 2012) is a multidimensional measure of PGI consisting of 16 items, and provides a richer assessment of one’s attunement to growth experiences and improving oneself. The Japanese version of the PGIS-II was confirmed by Tokuyoshi and Iwasaki (2014). This scale consists of 4 subscales: readiness for change (four items); planfulness (five items); using resources (three items); and intentional behavior (four items). Participants responded using a 6-point Likert scale. This scale ranged from 1 (definitely disagree) to 6 (definitely agree). The Japanese PGIS-II has strong internal consistency and concurrent and discriminant validity (Tokuyoshi & Iwasaki, 2014).

**Self-esteem**
Self-esteem was assessed by the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This scale includes 10 items and is assessed on a 5-point rating scale (5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree).

**Statistical analysis**
Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for the relationships between parenting styles, PGI and self-esteem. Secondly, we used multiple regression analyses to examine the relationships between parenting styles as the independent variables, and each PGI and self-esteem as the dependent variable. All analyses were performed using SPSS (version 23.0) for Windows (SPSS Inc., Tokyo, Japan).

**Results**

**Means and standard deviations among parenting styles, PGI, and self-esteem**
We computed the means and standard deviations of parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive), PGI (intentional behavior, planfulness, readiness for change, and using resources), and self-esteem for each male and female, as shown Table 1. Using the t-test, we found no significant gender differences in the means of the authoritative and permissive parenting styles, PGI, and self-esteem, although there was a significant gender difference in the means of the authoritarian parenting style. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients were: authoritative ($\alpha = .743$), authoritarian ($\alpha = .794$), and permissive ($\alpha = .712$) for the parenting styles, and readiness for change ($\alpha = .768$), planfulness ($\alpha = .878$), using resources ($\alpha = .732$), and intentional behavior($\alpha = .859$) for PGIS-II, and for self-esteem($\alpha = .772$).

**Correlations among parenting styles, PGI, and self-esteem**
The variables of parenting styles, PGI, and self-esteem were estimated using Pearson product-moment correlations (see Table 2). For the impact of the relationships between the authoritative parenting style and other variables on males, the authoritative parenting style was significantly associated with the

| Table 1. Means, standard deviations and $t$-value for the study variables by gender. |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|---------|---------|----------------|---------|
|                                  | Male         |          | Female  |          |          |          |          |
|                                  | $M$  | SD   | $M$    | SD    | $t$-value |          |          |
| Parenting style                  |                |          |                |          |          |          |          |
| Authoritative                    | 3.237 | .537 | 3.258 | .599 | .335 | n.s.  |          |
| Authoritarian                    | 2.676 | .590 | 2.451 | .660 | 3.264 | ***   |          |
| Permissive                       | 3.085 | .490 | 3.096 | .600 | .181 | n.s.  |          |
| PGIS-II                          |                |          |                |          |          |          |          |
| Intentional behavior             | 4.316 | .992 | 4.232 | .982 | .769 | n.s.  |          |
| Planfulness                      | 3.679 | 1.052 | 3.599 | .956 | .725 | n.s.  |          |
| Readiness for change             | 3.590 | .961 | 3.442 | .875 | 1.457 | n.s.  |          |
| Using resources                  | 3.732 | .987 | 3.807 | 1.003 | .684 | n.s.  |          |
| Self-esteem                      | 3.105 | .601 | 3.077 | .661 | .402 | n.s.  |          |

$^{***} p < .001$. 
Table 2. Correlation matrix for all the variables used in this study.

|                | Male                  | Female                |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Authoritative| .078                  | −.084                 |
| 2 Authoritarian| .377**                | .428**                |
| 3 Permissive   | −.251**               | −.433**               |
| 4 Intentional behavior| .333**                | .250**                |
| 5 Planfulness  | .318**                | .384**                |
| 6 Readiness for change| .209**                | .461**                |
| 7 Using resources| .221**                | .343**                |
| 8 Self-esteem  | .188                  | .313**                |

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
permissive parenting style, intentional behavior, planfulness, readiness for change, using resources, and self-esteem ($r = .188–.377, p < .01$). On the other hand, the relationships between the permissive parenting style and another variables for males, the permissive parenting style was significantly associated with the authoritarian parenting style ($r = -.251, p < .01$), planfulness ($r = .190, p < .05$), readiness for change ($r = .163, p < .05$), and using resources ($r = .141, p < .05$). For the relationships between the authoritative parenting style and other variables on females, the authoritative parenting style was significantly associated with the permissive parenting style, intentional behavior, planfulness, readiness for change, using resources, and self-esteem ($r = .250–.461, p < .01$). On the other hand, for the relationships between the permissive parenting style and other variables on females; the permissive parenting style was significantly associated with the authoritarian parenting style ($r = -.433, p < .01$), intentional behavior ($r = .191, p < .05$), planfulness ($r = .162, p < .05$), readiness for change ($r = .193, p < .05$), using resources ($r = .230, p < .01$), and self-esteem ($r = .205, p < .01$).

**Effects of parenting styles on each PGI and self-esteem**

Based on the results mentioned above, multiple regression analyses were employed to examine the effects of each parenting style on PGI and self-esteem, as shown Table 3. For male participants, the authoritative parenting style had significant influence on intentional behavior ($\beta = .326, p < .001$), planfulness ($\beta = .292, p < .001$), readiness for change ($\beta = .187, p < .05$), using resources ($\beta = .188, p < .05$), and self-esteem ($\beta = .170, p < .05$). On the other hand, the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles had no significant influence on PGI and self-esteem. For female participants, the authoritative parenting style had a significant influence on intentional behavior ($\beta = .197, p < .01$), planfulness ($\beta = .375, p < .001$), readiness for change ($\beta = .447, p < .001$), using resources ($\beta = .289, p < .001$), and self-esteem ($\beta = .282, p < .001$). In addition, the authoritarian parenting style had a significant influence on readiness for change ($\beta = -.138, p < .05$). On the other hand, the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles had no significant influence on most of the subscales of PGI and self-esteem.

**Discussion**

This is the first study to examine the influences of parenting styles on each PGI and self-esteem among Japanese university students. The results show that the authoritative parenting style had a significant influence on each PGI and self-esteem. On the other hand, our findings indicated that the authoritarian parenting style had no significant effects on most subscales of PGI and self-esteem although it did have a significant influence on the readiness for change in subscale of PGI. We also found that the permissive parenting style had no significant impacts on PGI and self-esteem.

Previous studies of other countries using Western participants have suggested that the authoritative parenting style had a significant effect on the formation of good outcomes, and it is, therefore, possible that this style would have a significant influence on each PGI and self-esteem. In addition, authoritative parenting was significantly associated with high self-esteem among daughters (Buri et al., 1988). These results almost correspond with our findings in this study using Japanese university students. In other words, the authoritative parenting style does significantly affect the formation of good outcomes such as PGI and self-esteem among Japanese university students as well as foreign ones. Considering our findings, to help Japanese university students having low PGI or self-esteem, it may be important to focus on the function of authoritative parenting style that they recognize.

**Limitations of this study**

Some limitations of this study should be noted. First, the participants in this study were Japanese university students. To confirm the results of this study, we should perform future research that investigates the effects of the authoritative parenting style on PGI and self-esteem using participants in various cultures including non-Western. Second, it was not made clear whether the parenting styles found in
Table 3. Multiple regression for parenting styles, PGI and self-esteem by gender.

| Dependent variable          | Male                          | Female                        |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                             | B    | Seβ | β   | $R^2$ | Adj-$R^2$ | VIF | B    | Seβ | β   | $R^2$ | Adj-$R^2$ | VIF |
| Intentional behavior        |      |      |     |       |           |     |      |      |     |       |           |     |
| Authoritative               | .604 | .152 | .326*** | .114*** | .097*** | 1.215 | .321 | .137 | .197*** | .076*** | .059*** | 1.243 |
| Authoritarian               | −.068 | .133 | −.040 | 1.124 | .119 | .126 | .080 | 1.250 |
| Permissive                  | .054 | .175 | .026 | 1.301 | .231 | .153 | .141 | 1.158 |
| Planfulness                 |      |      |     |       |           |     |      |      |     |       |           |     |
| Authoritative               | .570 | .161 | .292*** | .106*** | .090*** | 1.215 | .600 | .129 | .375*** | .153*** | .137*** | 1.243 |
| Authoritarian               | .129 | .141 | .073 | 1.124 | .121 | .119 | .082 | 1.250 |
| Permissive                  | .114 | .186 | .053 | 1.301 | .060 | .144 | .037 | 1.158 |
| Readiness for change        |      |      |     |       |           |     |      |      |     |       |           |     |
| Authoritative               | .334 | .152 | .187* | .054* | .037 | 1.215 | .656 | .133 | .447*** | .228*** | .213*** | 1.243 |
| Authoritarian               | .177 | .133 | .109 | 1.124 | −.185 | .104 | −.138 | .050* | .213*** | .126 | .061 | 1.158 |
| Permissive                  | .072 | .175 | .036 | 1.301 | .091 | .126 | .061 | 1.158 |
| Using resources             |      |      |     |       |           |     |      |      |     |       |           |     |
| Authoritative               | .345 | .156 | .188* | .063* | .045* | 1.215 | .480 | .136 | .289*** | .132*** | .116*** | 1.243 |
| Authoritarian               | −.089 | .136 | −.053 | 1.124 | .130 | .125 | .085 | 1.250 |
| Permissive                  | .202 | .193 | .099 | 1.301 | .239 | .151 | .143 | 1.158 |
| Self-esteem                 |      |      |     |       |           |     |      |      |     |       |           |     |
| Authoritative               | .190 | .096 | .170* | .047* | .029* | 1.214 | .310 | .092 | .282*** | .106*** | .089*** | 1.236 |
| Authoritarian               | −.075 | .085 | −.073 | 1.131 | −.044 | .086 | −.043 | 1.238 |
| Permissive                  | .078 | .111 | .063 | 1.308 | .077 | .102 | .069 | 1.493 |

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
this study were used by father or mother. It is necessary to emphasize that the parenting styles of the father and mother of the Japanese university students were found to almost equally influence their PGI and self-esteem. Third, we need to note any new parenting styles that the analysis of the styles based on Baumrind (1971) do not include. For example, Maccoby and Martins (1983) showed that permissive parenting in the Baumrind (1971) typology should be classified into two styles. These two styles cover indulgent and neglectful parents. The style of indulgent parents is characterized as being low on demand but high on responsiveness. Indulgent parents are warm, accepting, and tolerant, but make few demands that help to mature behavior, or exercise their authority, and therefore allow children to self-regulate as much as possible. On the other hand, the style of the neglectful parent is characterized by low demand and low responsiveness. Neglectful parents do not care about their children’s behavior and often abrogate their parental responsibilities. Future research is needed to more deeply analyze these styles. Fourth and finally, longitudinal data considering the impact of the authoritative parenting style on PGI and self-esteem is required to generalize our findings. Despite these limitations, our research shows the importance of clarifying the little-studied effects of the authoritative parenting style on each PGI and self-esteem among Japanese university students.

**Conclusions**

In conclusion, our findings provide new evidence that the authoritative parenting style has a significantly positive influence on each PGI and self-esteem among Japanese university students.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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