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EYE ON THE PRIZE: PARENTING STYLES AND THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

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Abstract
This study examines parenting styles in Eye on the Prize (2020) *by Safinah Danish Elahi using Diana Baumrind's parenting theory and Catherine Belsey's textual analysis model. The novel presents authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting through different characters. Hina and Bilal represent authoritarian parenting marked by control and high expectations. Shezray and Omer reflect neglectful parenting due to emotional absence and lack of involvement. Minahil represents permissive parenting characterized by warmth but minimal discipline. The study explores how these parenting styles influence children's emotional growth, behavior, and identity formation. Findings show that parenting practices significantly shape psychological development and reflect broader social realities.*

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Authoritarian, Permissive, Neglectful, Child Development

1. Introduction

Parenting is a foundational human process that shapes values, behavior, and identity. Baumrind (1967) describes it as highly stressful yet central to child development. Literature frequently uses parenting as a thematic lens to explore human behavior and social structures.

Parent-child relationships in fiction often reflect real societal dynamics, particularly the balance between authority, care, and independence. Baumrind's framework classifies parenting into authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful styles, each influencing child development differently.

In *Eye on the Prize (2020)*, Elahi presents contrasting parenting styles that directly affect children's emotional and psychological growth. The novel highlights how parental control, neglect, and overindulgence shape identity and behavio

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature mirrors society and family structures (Wellek & Warren, 1956). The family plays a central role in shaping personality, supported by Popkin's (1987) nature-nurture argument.

Parenting has consistently been a major literary theme, illustrating how parental influence determines emotional and behavioral outcomes in children. Baumrind's classification provides a psychological foundation for analyzing such representations.

In *Eye on the Prize (2020)*, parenting is central to narrative conflict, showing how academic pressure, social status, and emotional neglect affect children's development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Parenting significantly influences emotional and behavioral development. In literature, it also reflects societal realities. *Eye on the Prize (2020)* demonstrates how parenting decisions shape

children's life paths, making it necessary to analyze its psychological impact through Baumrind's framework.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To examine parenting styles in *Eye on the Prize*.
2. To analyze their impact on characters' lives.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How are parenting styles depicted in *Eye on the Prize*?
2. What is their effect on children's development?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to literary and psychological understanding of parenting. It highlights how fiction reflects real emotional and developmental consequences of parenting styles and deepens interpretation of character behavior.

1.6 Justification of the Study

The novel is selected due to its strong representation of parenting conflicts. Baumrind's theory provides a structured framework, while Belsey's model enables textual interpretation of psychological meaning in narrative form.

1.7 Limitation of the Research

Limited academic research exists on *Eye on the Prize (2020)*. No major studies apply Baumrind's framework to this text. This study addresses that gap by analyzing parenting styles and their psychological impact on characters.

2.Literature Review

Literature and psychology intersect in character analysis (Wellek & Warren, 1956). Parenting styles are defined by responsiveness and demandingness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983), forming Baumrind's model.

2.1 Theory on Parenting Styles

Baumrind classifies parenting into four types:

- **Authoritarian:** High control, low warmth → anxiety, low self-esteem
- **Authoritative:** Balanced → healthy development
- **Permissive:** High warmth, low control → weak discipline
- **Neglectful:** Low involvement → emotional insecurity

Parenting directly shapes emotional, cognitive, and social development.

2.2 Review of Related Studies

Prior research shows parenting strongly affects child behavior (Safitri et al., 2024; Ahmad et al., 2022). Negative parenting is linked to emotional instability and behavioral issues. However, these studies focus on other literary texts, not *Eye on the Prize*.

2.3 Research Gap

Eye on the Prize (2020) is under-researched. No detailed application of Baumrind's theory exists for this novel. This study fills that gap by analyzing parenting styles and their psychological effects on characters.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative interpretivist approach (Creswell & Poth, 2013), focusing on meaning and context.

Baumrind's theory provides the psychological framework, while Catherine Belsey's textual analysis is used to interpret language and ideology in the novel.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

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Baumrind's parenting styles explain emotional and behavioral outcomes in children. Parenting affects self-esteem, anxiety, identity, and social behavior.

Baumrind's Parenting Styles
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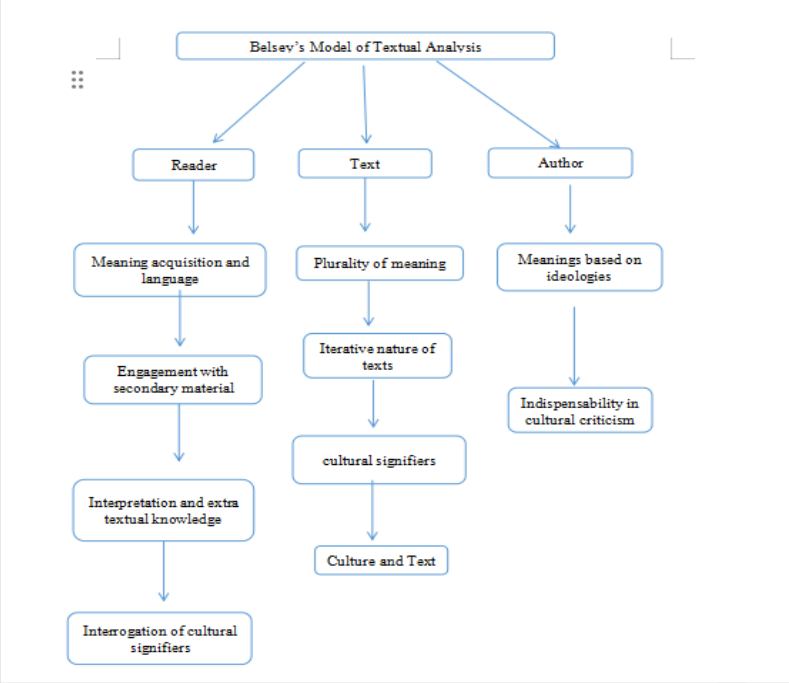
	Authoritarian Parents	Permissive Parents	Authoritative Parents	Neglectful Parents
	▪ Not very nurturing or warm ▪ Makes many maturing demands ▪ Exerts high control ▪ Expects compliance with few reasons ▪ Does not give permission for expression ▪ Uses a power approach	▪ Very nurturing and warm ▪ Makes few maturing demands ▪ Exerts little control ▪ Does not expect compliance ▪ Gives lots of permission for expression ▪ Uses a powerless approach	▪ Very nurturing and warm ▪ Exerts high control ▪ Makes high maturity demands ▪ Gives reasons for compliance ▪ Permits expression from child ▪ Uses a reasoning approach	▪ Disengaged and uninvolved ▪ Keeps interactions and contact with child to a minimum ▪ Does not respond to child's expressions ▪ Does not care whether child is compliant ▪ Used a hands-off approach

Children From Each Parenting Styles

	Authoritarian Parents	Permissive Parents	Authoritative Parents	Neglectful Parents
Socially	▪ less skilled with friends ▪ can be bullies	▪ acts on own self-interests ▪ low impulse control	▪ active in the environment ▪ assertive with friends and own needs	▪ poor social skills ▪ less interested in making friends with others
Emotionally	▪ fearful, angry, and hostile under stress ▪ apprehensiveness about tasks	▪ aloof and sometimes unfriendly ▪ low self-control and self-reliance	▪ empathic and understanding ▪ very self-reliant and has high self-control	▪ low self-control and self-reliance
Academically	▪ takes school seriously ▪ very competent	▪ less competent ▪ less serious about school	▪ most competent ▪ serious about personal achievements	▪ least competent ▪ poor achievement

3.2 Method of Textual Analysis (Catherine Belsey)

Belsey's model interprets meaning as socially constructed through language. It allows analysis of ideological and psychological meanings in texts.



4. Analysis

4.1 Context

The novel presents three families in competitive school culture. Parents prioritize achievement and status, creating emotional pressure on children. Parenting styles shape identity, behavior, and psychological well-being.

The analysis focuses on two major aspects:

1. Portrayal of Parenting Styles
2. Impact of Parenting Styles on Children

4.2 Portrayal of Parenting Styles

4.2.1.1 Shezray and Omer as Neglectful Parents

"Shezray hadn't tried to understand what was troubling her children, she suspected that her constant agitation was weighing heavy on girls. How can you be so negligent and ungrateful?" (Elahi, 2020, p. 4) reflects emotional disengagement from Shezray, where the phrase "hadn't tried" shows lack of effort in understanding her children's emotional needs. Her focus remains internal and self-centered, indicating neglectful parenting where emotional responsiveness is missing, and as a result, the children experience emotional distance instead of support. This neglect is further emphasized in the statement, "Lately, she was so overwhelmed all the venom that malicious gossipmongers spewed about her marriage that she didn't have time for her own children." (Elahi, 2020, p. 5), where external social pressure replaces parental responsibility. The phrase "didn't have time for her own children" directly highlights neglect, showing how emotional and social concerns override parenting duties and how neglectful parents prioritize external validation over child development. Similarly, "'Shukar I knew her weight and didn't have to ask you. I mean you were out drunk while our daughter was sick Omer said'. 'You weren't home either and she's your daughter too.' Shezray retorted" (Elahi, 2020, p. 134) reflects shared parental failure, as both parents shift responsibility instead of addressing the child's needs. The absence of cooperation and accountability demonstrates emotional neglect and weak parental structure. This neglect ultimately affects the child directly, as shown in "It was embarrassing how many times she had forged her mother's signature… because her mother just kept forgetting she had to sign her book." (Elahi, 2020, p. 97), which shows how neglect forces children into self-management. The mother's forgetfulness creates emotional burden on the child, who compensates for parental absence, leading to emotional independence rooted in neglect rather than healthy development.

4.2.1.2 Bilal as an Authoritarian Father

"Amaan loved to read- a habit that his father found objectionable because he feared it would make him too sensitive and unmanly. Amaan wasn't interested in athletics." (Elahi, 2020, p. 6) reflects suppression of individuality, as Bilal rejects his son's interests while prioritizing rigid masculinity. Authoritarian parenting here limits emotional expression and personal choice. This control becomes more visible in the statement, "That's it, Bilal thought. I just have to start being tougher on Amaan… 'Run' Bilal shouted at his son…" (Elahi, 2020, p. 9), where the command "Run" and shouting reflect dominance and control. Bilal uses strict discipline instead of emotional guidance, typical of authoritarian parenting, which creates fear-based obedience. Similarly, "He knew it should have filled his heart with pride… 'This is my son, goddamnit! How can he be so slow?'" (Elahi, 2020, p. 56) shows emotional frustration replacing encouragement, where the child's performance becomes a measure of worth, increasing pressure and anxiety.

4.2.1.3 Hina as an Authoritarian Mother

"She had shuttled Zara to the most expensive preparatory tuitions…" (Elahi, 2020, p. 11) reflects high academic pressure, as Hina equates success with constant training and performance, showing lack of emotional consideration. Similarly, "That she may have shattered the child's confidence entirely was a matter she didn't give much thought to." (Elahi, 2020, p. 11) highlights emotional neglect despite active involvement, where Hina remains focused on achievement while ignoring its psychological impact on Zara. This attitude is further reflected in the statement, "'Just sit down and eat your breakfast…' 'But you will win, sweetheart…'" (Elahi, 2020, p. 131), which shows conditional motivation where support is tied to performance rather than emotional understanding.

4.2.1.4 Minahil as a Permissive Parent

"'When will he learn that his son isn't interested in sport?' Minahil murmured." (Elahi, 2020, p. 5) reflects emotional awareness and acceptance of the child's individuality, as Minahil resists forced expectations and recognizes Amaan's personal interests. Similarly, "Minahil vehemently disagreed with Bilal's style of tough love…" (Elahi, 2020, p. 55) highlights her rejection of strict control and preference for emotional freedom and understanding. Her nurturing behavior is further visible when "Minahil made it a point to feed Amaan, check his drips… keep him in high spirits." (Elahi, 2020, p. 93), which shows high emotional responsiveness and care, characteristic of permissive parenting.

4.2.2 Impact on Children

Impact of Neglectful Parenting on Amarah-Noor and Natalia-Sophia

"It was embarrassing how many times she had forged her mother's signature…" (Elahi, 2020, p. 97) reflects how emotional responsibility gradually shifts from parent to child, forcing premature independence in the absence of proper parental attention. This situation highlights how neglect disrupts normal developmental support, leaving the child to manage responsibilities alone. Similarly, the description, "She seemed so serious, as if her laughter had been stolen by a lifetime of fear." (Elahi, 2020, p. 79), uses a powerful metaphor to show emotional deprivation and its long-term psychological impact. The idea of "laughter being stolen" suggests that constant neglect and emotional absence replace natural joy with fear and seriousness. Together, these instances show that neglectful parenting results in deep emotional insecurity, withdrawal from meaningful relationships, and a tendency in children to seek comfort in substitutes such as nannies, books, or other coping mechanisms rather than parental affection.

Impact of Authoritarian Parenting on Amaan

"Amaan wasn't interested in athletics." (Elahi, 2020, p. 6) highlights how his personal interests are disregarded, reflecting a clear suppression of individuality under authoritarian expectations. Instead of allowing space for self-expression, his preferences are overridden by parental control, shaping his identity according to imposed standards. This pressure is intensified in the statement, "This is my son, goddamnit! How can he be so slow?" (Elahi, 2020, p. 56), which reveals frustration and emotional intensity where the child's performance is directly linked to parental disappointment. Such reactions create a fear-based environment in which Amaan begins to associate self-worth with achievement. Consequently, continuous pressure leads to anxiety, reduced confidence, and an ongoing fear of failure, affecting his emotional stability and sense of identity.

Impact of Authoritarian Parenting on Zara

"Lately, her own daughter's speech had been reduced to grunts or muttering under her breath." (Elahi, 2020, p. 79) illustrates a clear breakdown in communication, where emotional

suppression replaces open expression. Zara's reduced speech reflects how authoritarian pressure limits her ability to communicate freely, leading to emotional confinement. This is further reinforced in the observation that "Zara was habitually wary of everyone…" (Elahi, 2020, p. 79), which highlights her growing social anxiety and lack of emotional security, as constant evaluation at home shapes her perception of the outside world as equally judgmental. The emotional strain becomes explicit in her thought, "Why must my mother be so irrational?" (Elahi, 2020, p. 161), which reveals frustration, emotional exhaustion, and a silent resistance to overwhelming control. Together, these instances show that Zara gradually develops withdrawal, fear, and reduced self-worth as a direct result of sustained psychological pressure and lack of emotional support.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that parenting styles significantly influence children's emotional and psychological development in *Eye on the Prize (2020)*.

Neglectful parenting leads to emotional detachment, authoritarian parenting results in fear and low self-esteem, and permissive parenting creates emotional warmth but weak structure.

Overall, Baumrind's theory is strongly reflected in the novel, showing how parenting shapes identity, behavior, and emotional health.

Future research should explore parenting in other contemporary South Asian texts and compare cross-cultural parenting representations. Media adaptations of such novels may also reveal shifts in portrayal of parenting dynamics.

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