

## Child's Self-Esteem Linked to Dominant Parent

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A new study from the UK suggests children's self-esteem is related to the behavior of the most powerful parent within the household.

University of Sussex researchers studied English and Indian families living in Britain. The research is the first to assess the impact on a child's wellbeing as associated with the household power structures that exist within different cultures.

Psychologists interviewed 125 English and Indian families living in West London.

They found that English children whose mothers displayed more negative parenting traits— such as detachment, intrusiveness, lax enforcement of discipline, and controlling behavior — reported lower self-esteem.

But, for Indian children, the father's behavior had more of an impact.

In Indian culture, often characterized as a more traditional culture, mothers have inferior positions to fathers, both within and outside the household.

Fathers are considered to be the head of the family, in terms of power and their role as disciplinarian.

These differences often remain in spite of immigration into Britain.

In contrast, in Western cultures, although still somewhat patriarchal, mothers have more central roles than fathers within the home and are often responsible for routine care and discipline.

Dr Alison Pike, Reader in Psychology at the University of Sussex, co-authored the study. She said, "Mothers and fathers play different roles in different cultures — these findings highlight the importance of these distinct gender-based power structures on a child's self-worth.

"Parenting literature is still dominated by mothering, reflecting Western norms. With 7.5 million foreign-born residents in the UK, we need to spend more time considering parenting practice through a cultural lens."

The study, carried out in collaboration with Dr Naama Atzaba-Poria from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel, is published in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*.

Source: [University of Sussex/EurekAlert](#)

