

FAMILY UPBRINGING PRACTICES OF NOMADIC MONGOLIANS: TRADITION AND MODERNITY

PRÁTICAS DE CRIANÇA DA FAMÍLIA DOS NÓMADAS MONGÓIS: TRADIÇÃO E MODERNIDADE

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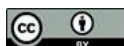
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Abstract

This study examines the ways in which traditional family upbringing practices of nomadic Mongolians have been preserved and transformed in contemporary society, drawing on empirical data collected from parents. It focuses on the interplay between educational values rooted in nomadic culture and modern parenting practices adopted by today's families. A mixed-methods research design was employed, integrating historical and logical analysis of traditional family upbringing with a quantitative survey of contemporary parenting styles. The empirical component involved 850 parents and utilized a standardized questionnaire based on the parenting style framework proposed by Baumrind and further developed by Maccoby and Martin, which classifies parenting into four types: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved. Parenting style is conceptualized as parents' general attitudes, emotional orientations, and habitual behaviors in interactions with their children (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The findings reveal both continuity and change in nomadic Mongolian family upbringing, demonstrating the coexistence of enduring traditional values and modern parenting approaches. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural adaptation in family upbringing within a rapidly changing social context.

Resumo

Este estudo examina as formas como as práticas tradicionais de educação familiar dos mongóis nômadas foram preservadas e transformadas na sociedade contemporânea, com base em dados empíricos recolhidos junto dos pais. Centra-se na interação entre os valores educativos enraizados na cultura nômada e as práticas parentais modernas adotadas pelas famílias atuais. Foi utilizado um modelo de investigação misto, integrando a análise histórica e lógica da educação familiar tradicional com um inquérito quantitativo sobre os estilos parentais contemporâneos. A componente empírica envolveu 850 pais e utilizou um questionário padronizado baseado na estrutura de estilos parentais proposta por Baumrind e posteriormente desenvolvida por Maccoby e Martin, que classifica a parentalidade em quatro tipos: autoritária, autoritativa, permissiva e não envolvida. O estilo parental é concebido como as atitudes gerais, orientações emocionais e comportamentos habituais dos pais nas interações com os seus filhos (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Os resultados revelam tanto continuidade como mudança na educação familiar nômada mongol, demonstrando a coexistência de valores tradicionais duradouros e abordagens parentais modernas. Este estudo contribui para uma compreensão mais profunda da adaptação cultural na educação familiar num contexto social em rápida mudança.



Keywords: Nomadic Mongolians. Family Upbringing. Parenting Styles. Traditional Values. Contemporary Trends.

Palavras-chave: *Mongóis Nômadas. Educação Familiar. Estilos Parentais. Valores Tradicionais. Tendências Contemporâneas.*

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

Driven by developments in information technology and the impacts of global political and economic policies, the process of globalization has intensified, leading to increasing interconnectedness among technology, culture, society, and ideology. Scholars have noted that cultural globalization poses potential threats to cultural diversity and cultural survival. The influence of information technologies and the emergence of standardized lifestyles are increasingly integrating traditions and cultural values that were once highly diverse and distinct.

In other words, cultural homogenization is progressing through the integration of cultural elements and characteristics originating from different ethnic and national backgrounds. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced among adolescents and young people, where cultural homogenization has spread rapidly. Researchers have begun to emphasize that this trend may, in the future, result in the erosion or loss of traditional cultural values of individual nations and ethnic groups.

In this context, it is critically important to examine how global cultural trends in the era of globalization are influencing the family upbringing practices and cultural traditions of nomadic Mongolians. The family constitutes the foundation of the state, and within the state it functions as a “family-like polity,” serving as the primary social environment in which individuals are formed. The family is the setting in which national culture and traditions are transmitted and renewed across generations. Moreover, traditional family upbringing represents not only a progressive cultural value but also a moral and ethical foundation that shapes Mongolian identity, serving as a form of cultural resilience and as a cornerstone of Mongolia’s national independence.

For centuries, Mongolians have lived as pastoral nomads in the Mongolian Plateau, a region characterized by high elevation and a harsh, arid, and extreme climate.

Within this ecological and historical context, Mongolians developed distinctive family upbringing practices. These practices have shaped not only everyday livelihoods and survival strategies, but also the spiritual world, moral outlook, and collective identity of the people, forming a robust cultural and psychological foundation. However, as Mongolian society is undergoing a rapid transition toward a more sedentary way of life, important questions arise regarding how these traditional family upbringing practices will evolve in the future.

In particular, the question of how the process of raising Mongolian children to become “Mongolian persons” is changing has emerged as a key issue of scholarly concern.

1.2 Research objective

The purpose of this article is to identify the traditional concepts, values, and practices of family upbringing among nomadic Mongolians and to analyze the extent to which these traditions are being preserved, as well as the directions of change they are undergoing in contemporary social conditions. This analysis is based on the results of an empirical study conducted among parents.

1.3 Research objectives

1. To identify the defining characteristics of traditional family upbringing concepts, values, and practices among nomadic Mongolians.
2. To examine contemporary parents’ current attitudes, practices, and perceptions regarding child-rearing under modern social conditions.
3. To analyze the interrelationships, tensions, and emerging trends of change between traditional and modern approaches to family upbringing.

1.4 Research methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine both the traditional foundations and contemporary trends of family upbringing practices among nomadic Mongolians.

1.5 Historical and logical analysis

To investigate the traditional family upbringing practices of nomadic Mongolians, historical and logical research methods were applied. Relevant historical sources, ethnographic studies, and scholarly literature were reviewed to identify core educational values, parenting norms, and child-rearing practices embedded in nomadic family life. The logical method was used to systematize these findings, revealing the internal coherence and continuity of traditional upbringing principles.

1.6 Quantitative survey method

The contemporary trends in family upbringing were examined using a standardized quantitative approach. A structured questionnaire was developed based on the parenting style framework proposed by Diana Baumrind and further elaborated by Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin, which classifies parental practices into distinct parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful). This framework is widely recognized and validated in international psychological and educational research, making it suitable for cross-cultural analysis.

1.7 Participants and data collection

The survey was administered to a total of 850 parents, who participated voluntarily in the empirical study. The questionnaire measured parental attitudes, behavioral patterns, and decision-making styles related to child upbringing in the context of contemporary social conditions. Data collection was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of participants.

1.8 Data analysis

Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to identify dominant parenting styles and general tendencies among parents. The quantitative findings were then interpreted in relation to the historically identified traditional upbringing values.

1.9 Comparative analysis

Finally, a comparative analytical method was employed to examine the relationships, similarities, and differences between traditional nomadic Mongolian family upbringing practices and contemporary parenting styles. This comparison allowed for the identification of continuity, transformation, and emerging trends in family upbringing within the context of social and cultural change.

2 TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN NOMADIC MONGOLIAN FAMILY UPBRINGING: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The educational values of the Mongolian family are expressed through the reverence for three generations—ancestors, the present generation, and descendants—along with an emphasis on social harmony, the establishment of norms governing daily life, and the observance of customary rules and prohibitions. Although these values have endured historical challenges and persisted to the present day, they have undergone transformation over time under changing social conditions.

For nomadic Mongolians, the family has traditionally functioned as a fundamental “school of life.” Within the multifaceted value system of Mongolian family upbringing traditions, three core values can be identified as having formed the foundation of national continuity and survival.

2.1 Raising a child to become a person: role modeling as a core value of traditional family upbringing

Mongolians have long upheld a valued tradition of paying close attention to child upbringing not only from birth, but beginning from the prenatal period. From the time a Mongolian mother conceives, she is expected to maintain calmness, emotional balance, and mental composure, while avoiding anger, harsh speech, exposure to negative words, and harmful actions. It is believed that such behaviors may influence the child's future character and temperament.¹

Within traditional family ethics, parents educated their children and prepared them for daily life primarily through personal example. The principle "Rather than instructing through words, instruct through example" guided family upbringing practices, shaping children's behavior in greeting others, showing respect, receiving guests, observing taboos, and adhering to social norms.

In Mongolian family traditions, parents worked collaboratively with their children in daily activities and intentionally devoted time to them with clear purpose and direction. Through their own actions, parents provided positive role models, assigned responsibilities, involved children in decision-making, and taught them to respect others and coexist harmoniously within the community. These practices supported children in developing appropriate self-conduct, finding their place in society, and successfully integrating into social life.

To understand and respond to their children's interests, thoughts, and emotions, parents maintained close and attentive relationships with them. By carefully observing their children's behaviors, speech, and patterns of interaction, parents were able to gain deep insight into their children's personalities and guide them appropriately. This attentiveness helped prevent serious mistakes that might later become difficult to correct, while also enabling parents to accurately identify and respond to their children's needs.

The nomadic way of life itself created favorable conditions for such close, continuous interaction between parents and children.

¹ Namjil, T. (2018). *Pedagogy of the Mongolian Family* [Монгол гэр бүлийн сурган хүмүүжүүлэх зүй]. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

2.2 Reverence for lineage: the role of the father in family upbringing

In Mongolian tradition, an ideal man is characterized by foresight, broad-mindedness, emotional composure, and a strong sense of responsibility toward his family, relatives, and ancestors. He is expected to be caring toward his spouse, capable of sustaining the household, respectful of elders, and to serve as a moral role model for his children, embodying integrity and virtuous conduct.

Fathers traditionally played a central role in child upbringing. This significance is reflected in the Mongolian proverb, “*A child with a father is like silk with a protective lining; a child without a father is like a lost foal,*” which vividly conveys the essential role of paternal guidance. Because children regarded a father’s words as authoritative, his presence provided protection, his words carried moral weight, and his actions were regarded as righteous. Growing up with an actively involved father was believed to instill psychological resilience and emotional security in children.

An important responsibility of the father was to transmit knowledge of lineage, including family names and genealogical records. By teaching children about their ancestry, fathers provided historical awareness and moral education that strengthened intergenerational continuity. In Mongolian family education, memorizing genealogical lineage was considered a primary educational goal, accompanied by instruction in maintaining harmony and solidarity within the extended family.²

The upbringing transmitted through paternal genealogical instruction can be regarded as one of the foundations of the Mongolian people’s sense of unity and cohesion. Education concerning harmony within the lineage, harmony among clans, and ultimately harmony within the state formed an interconnected and mutually reinforcing system of social values.

² Rashid ad-Din. (2002). *Jami' al-tawarikh* [Collection of Chronicles]. Translated by Ts. Sürenkhorloo. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

3 TRADITIONAL NORMS OF FAMILY RELATIONS

- The interactions among family members formed the foundation for a child's development and the overall human growth process, and they also served as a mechanism to cultivate clan values and refine socio-political relations. Therefore, all members of the family participated in learning the culture of family interaction, which was regulated according to established norms.
- In Mongolian tradition, strict adherence to these norms was a fundamental principle of educational and upbringing practices. Everything had its measure, and exceeding the proper limits was considered harmful.
- The norms of conduct were organized activities encompassing both material and spiritual values, influencing individuals and families while serving the broader goals of social relations.³
- These norms governed all aspects of family life. They were strictly observed in celebrations, weddings, and even in gender-specific customs.

3.1 Contemporary parenting styles

In modern times, as lifestyles have changed and various new family patterns have emerged, the parenting styles of mothers and fathers have attracted significant attention.

The term *upbringing* is believed by researchers to derive from the ancient Mongolian word *khümüün*, meaning “human being.” To educate or nurture (*khümüüjil*) carries the sense of cultivating human qualities. Upbringing refers to the development of personal habits, skills, and well-formed character that enable an individual to navigate social life.⁴

For a child, the family constitutes the primary environment in which personal character traits and attitudes toward life are formed. Parents play a central role in this process, as a child's development and socialization largely depend on their attention, methods, and approaches to child-rearing. For instance, American psychotherapist

³ G. *Erdene-Ochir*. Making a Human from a Human: A Source of Mongolian Wisdom. *Ulaanbaatar, 1991*

⁴ *Mongolian Language Dictionary*. Ulaanbaatar, 2020

Virginia Satir observed that a family with a negative or hostile environment often produces children with low self-esteem, involvement in crime, or susceptibility to substance abuse and other social problems.⁵

Researchers note that the macro environment for moral and character development is the family, while the micro environments - such as school, peer groups, friends, and broader social influences—serve as secondary, indirect factors.⁶

In 1967, psychologist Diana Baumrind classified parenting styles into three main categories: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Later, in the 1980s, Stanford researchers Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin introduced a fourth category - uninvolved (neglectful) parenting - resulting in the widely recognized fourfold typology:⁷

- Authoritarian – strict and controlling
- Authoritative – responsive and balanced in authority
- Permissive – indulgent or lenient
- Uninvolved – neglectful or disengaged⁸

This classification provides a framework for understanding how different parenting approaches affect child development and socialization.

3.2 Four types of parenting styles

Table 1

*Parenting Styles*⁹

| Parenting Style | Characteristics |
|----------------------|---|
| Authoritarian | Parents primarily use a child-rearing approach that aligns with their personal preferences, paying little attention to the child's opinions. They centralize all decision-making authority and apply standards and expectations according to their own rules. |
| Authoritative | This style emphasizes a friendly, guiding approach. Parents allow children some degree of autonomy and trust, maintain strict oversight of behavior, yet consider the child's opinions in decision-making. |
| Permissive | Parents adopt a cooperative approach with low demands. They listen to and communicate with their children, providing support, guidance, and acceptance. |

⁵ Satir, V. *The New Peoplemaking*. Mountain View, Calif.: Science and Behavior Books. 1988.

⁶ D. Tungalag. (2000). *Family ethics* (p. 37). Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

⁷ Baumrind, D. (1966). Effects of Authoritative Parental Control on Child Behavior, *Child Development*, 37(4), 887-907.

⁸ Maccoby, EE and Martin, JA. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction.

⁹ [https://www.unicef.org/ Child Disciplinary practices at home](https://www.unicef.org/Child_Disciplinary_practices_at_home)

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Uninvolved | Parents show low levels of supervision, care, or attention. They tend to leave all responsibilities to the child and do not fully fulfill their parental duties. |
|-------------------|--|

Researchers note that parents with an authoritative style tend to show high levels of attention and expectations toward their children, which positively influences child development. In contrast, permissive and uninvolved parenting styles are characterized by low expectations, while authoritarian and uninvolved parents provide limited support and focus primarily on their own authority, which can negatively affect child development.

3.3 Survey results on contemporary parenting styles

Based on the parenting styles framework developed and refined by American psychologists D. Baumrind, E. Maccoby, and J. Martin, a questionnaire was prepared and administered to a total of 850 parents to examine their approaches to child-rearing. The consolidated results are presented in the table below.

Table 2

Distribution of Contemporary Parenting Styles

| Parenting Style | Rank | Percentage |
|-----------------|------|------------|
| Permissive | 1 | 39.6% |
| Authoritarian | 2 | 27% |
| Authoritative | 3 | 21% |
| Uninvolved | 4 | 12.4% |

The survey results indicate the predominant parenting styles among the 850 participating parents as follows:

1. Permissive – **39.6%**

This style reflects the characteristics of modern families, where the number of children is often smaller and children are indulged. Permissive parents tend to give their children excessive freedom, setting loose limits and rules. As a result, children raised in this environment often prioritize personal freedom over discipline and structure.

2. Authoritarian – **27%**

Parents with an authoritarian style may lack sufficient knowledge and effective

methods of child-rearing. According to the survey, children raised under this style often develop an understanding based on fear, believing that mistakes are punished severely rather than being opportunities for learning. This approach can negatively affect a child's psychological well-being and, in some cases, increase the risk of family violence.

3. Authoritative – **21%**

Authoritative parents set expectations while providing explanations and considering their children's opinions. They engage in open communication with their children, helping them develop independent thinking, discipline, and decision-making skills. Unlike authoritarian parents, authoritative parents establish clear rules and limits while respecting the child's psychological and emotional needs.

4. Uninvolved – **12.4%**

Uninvolved parents are disengaged, showing little attention to their child's needs or daily interactions. They do not actively participate in child-rearing and often fail to fulfill parental responsibilities. The survey results indicate that this style accounts for the lowest proportion, suggesting that neglectful parenting is relatively uncommon among the participants.

3.4 Summary and interpretation

Overall, the findings indicate that permissive parenting is currently the dominant style, reflecting changing family structures and a tendency to prioritize children's desires and freedoms. The continued presence of authoritarian parenting highlights gaps in parental knowledge and the persistence of more traditional control-based approaches. Authoritative parenting, though less common, demonstrates an emerging trend toward balanced, reasoned, and child-centered parenting. The low rate of uninvolved parenting suggests that parental engagement remains a general norm in contemporary Mongolian families.

These results provide insight into the ongoing transformation of parenting practices, illustrating the coexistence of traditional and modern approaches within contemporary Mongolian households. They also underscore the importance of promoting

informed, balanced parenting strategies that support both emotional development and social responsibility in children.

4 DISCUSSION: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY PARENTING PRACTICES

The third objective of this study was to analyze the relationship, conflicts, and trends of change between traditional and contemporary parenting practices among Mongolian families, based on survey results from 850 parents. The comparative analysis reveals several key patterns:

4.1 Alignment and continuity

There is a clear alignment between certain traditional values and contemporary parenting trends. Both approaches emphasize affection, attention, and supportive interaction with children. For example, the traditional principle of close observation and engagement with children is mirrored in the permissive and authoritative styles, where parents remain attentive to children's needs, interests, and emotions. This continuity highlights the enduring importance of parental involvement in child development despite social changes.

4.2 Conflicts and divergences

Notable divergences between traditional and modern parenting practices were also observed. Traditional methods emphasized strict adherence to rules, discipline, and hierarchical authority, which are less evident in the dominant contemporary permissive style. While permissive parenting encourages autonomy and self-expression, it may reduce the enforcement of boundaries and expectations that were central to traditional upbringing.

Similarly, authoritarian parenting retains aspects of traditional strictness but can generate fear-based compliance rather than internalized understanding, creating a tension between traditional authority and modern child-centered approaches. These conflicts

underscore the challenges parents face in balancing respect for cultural norms with contemporary developmental knowledge.

4.3 Emerging trends

- Authoritative parenting represents a hybrid trend that integrates traditional guidance with modern principles. Parents employing this style set clear expectations while respecting children's opinions and encouraging open communication. This approach effectively combines traditional values of moral instruction and role modeling with contemporary emphasis on children's rights, autonomy, and emotional support.
- The low prevalence of uninvolved parenting indicates that, despite social changes, parental engagement remains a normative expectation, reflecting the cultural importance of family cohesion and child-centered values.

The findings suggest that contemporary Mongolian parenting is undergoing a gradual transformation:

- Traditional principles, such as moral guidance, role modeling, and observation of children, remain influential.
- Modern trends, including autonomy, negotiation, and emotional responsiveness, are increasingly integrated.
- Conflicts arise where permissiveness and reduced authority challenge traditional structures of discipline and hierarchy.

Overall, the comparative analysis indicates a dynamic interplay between continuity and change, where Mongolian families adapt their child-rearing practices to contemporary social realities while retaining core cultural values. These insights have practical implications for parenting education programs, highlighting the need to promote balanced strategies that foster both children's autonomy and adherence to socially and culturally valued behaviors.

5 CONCLUSION

Historically, the Mongolian family, with its unique cultural and civilizational characteristics, has developed traditional child-rearing practices rooted in kinship ties. Over time, three principal approaches emerged as foundational elements of Mongolian family upbringing:

1. **Moral cultivation through children** – the practice of teaching by example, emphasizing the traditional family value of nurturing virtues in children.
2. **Respect for ancestry** – highlighting the father's responsibilities and the importance of preserving lineage.
3. **Norms in family relationships** – maintaining structured rules, discipline, and conduct within the household.

These three pillars of nomadic Mongolian family upbringing have historically shaped the individual Mongolian and, through the family, laid the fundamental groundwork for the continuity and survival of the Mongolian nation.

This study examined and compared traditional values of nomadic Mongolian child-rearing with contemporary parenting practices among modern Mongolian parents. The analysis yielded the following key findings:

5.1 Alignment and conflicts between traditional and modern approaches

There is significant overlap between traditional and contemporary parenting styles, but certain contradictions exist.

- Traditional principles such as valuing children, fostering close relationships, and teaching by example align with modern **permissive** and **authoritative** parenting styles.
 - However, the traditional authoritarian principle emphasizing strict rules and discipline is not fully maintained under modern permissive approaches, leading to potential inconsistencies.
2. **Predominant contemporary parenting style**
- The most common modern parenting approach is **permissive** (39.6%), reflecting an emphasis on respecting children's rights and autonomy. While this promotes

freedom and independence, it carries the risk of weakening discipline and adherence to rules.

3. **Authoritative parenting as a balanced approach**

- The **authoritative** style combines traditional teaching and moral guidance with contemporary practices, offering a balanced method.
- It supports the development of children as disciplined, responsible, and independent individuals with their own viewpoints.

4. **Uninvolved Parenting Style**

- The fact that this style represents the smallest proportion indicates that children continue to receive active engagement in parent-child and family interactions.

5. **Impact of social and cultural change**

- The results suggest that social transformations, smaller family structures, children's rights, education, and modern cultural influences are reshaping traditional child-rearing practices, necessitating adaptation to contemporary needs.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed to support the development of children and strengthen parent-child relationships:

1. **Enhancing parental education**

- Improve parents' knowledge and skills in child-rearing, promoting child-centered approaches that balance discipline with autonomy.
- Provide training programs and workshops to address gaps in contemporary parenting knowledge.

2. **Preserving and adapting traditional values**

- Revise and modernize traditional practices such as teaching by example, maintaining structured rules, and preserving cultural heritage to align with contemporary children's rights and developmental needs.
- Encourage parents to integrate lessons from ancestry, family rituals, and ethical values into modern upbringing practices.

3. **Protecting children's psychological well-being and rights**

- Provide guidance for managing stress, fear, and potential conflicts arising from authoritarian or excessively permissive parenting styles.
- Promote awareness programs and counseling to support positive emotional and social development.

4. **Developing social infrastructure to support families**

- Establish child development centers, parental counseling services, educational programs, and family-focused support initiatives.
- Create platforms for community-based family support and networking to reinforce parent-child engagement.

5. **Future research directions**

- Conduct long-term studies on the social and psychological effects of traditional and contemporary parenting approaches.
- Examine the broader implications of evolving parenting practices on children's moral, cognitive, and emotional development within Mongolian society.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of maintaining a balance between traditional Mongolian values and modern parenting practices to ensure the holistic development of children while preserving cultural heritage. By integrating education, social support, and culturally informed parenting strategies, families can effectively nurture well-rounded, responsible, and independent individuals.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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