

## The Intergenerational Transmission of Parenting Among Lithuanian Men

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### Abstract

This article aims to analyze the intergenerational transmission of parenting among Lithuanian men. Numerous studies have proven that parenting can be transmitted intergenerationally, with both supportive and harsh parenting behaviours being passed on. However, to the authors' knowledge, there is a lack of evidence stemming from Central and Eastern European countries where, in recent decades, substantial shifts have taken place in the family gender roles and cultural scripts of parenting. Little is known about the transmission of psychological control as a parenting practice. Furthermore, most of the existing evidence on intergenerational transmission is drawn from the samples of mothers. This study is based on a large-scale representative cohort dataset encompassing middle-aged men born in the 1970s and 1980s (N = 1,745). This study's main finding is the continuity of the intergenerational transmission of parenting despite major socio-cultural shifts related to gender and family in society. We found that men's emotionally warm fathering was linked to having experienced supportive parenting during childhood. Conversely, behavioural control in fathering was attributed to the experience of authoritarian parenting in childhood. Men's psychological control, as a fathering practice, was associated with both supportive and authoritarian parenting experienced in childhood, although the predictive value was low. Additionally, the study revealed that men's parenting was associated with their personality traits and parental self-efficacy. The relationship between men's fathering and socio-economic characteristics was inconsistent.

### Keywords

fathering; intergenerational transmission; parenting practices; paternal self-efficacy; personality traits; socioeconomic status

## 1. Introduction

European societies place an increasing emphasis on fathers' involvement in child rearing. This phenomenon can be attributed to various factors, including social policy initiatives, shifts in cultural values and attitudes, and other societal developments. Evidence shows that men, no longer being exclusively breadwinners, are frequently expected to share caring responsibilities with their partners (Huerta et al., 2013). Consequently, researchers are demonstrating a growing interest in the field of fatherhood and its leading factors. Many studies acknowledge the significance of fathering for human cognitive and social development, both in childhood and later adulthood. Nonetheless, this area remains less extensively researched (Chen & Kaplan, 2001; Garcia et al., 2020; Huerta et al., 2013; Liu & Lachman, 2019; Madden et al., 2015; McWayne et al., 2013; Sebre et al., 2015) compared to the subject of motherhood and mothering, which attracts more scientific attention (Goldscheider, 2024; Vollig & Palkovitz, 2021). Even less evidence is available regarding the impact of the parenting style experienced in childhood on the role played by men of the next generation. Insufficient/little research has been conducted into the impact of the father's presence on the involvement of young adult sons in parenting roles (Bouchard, 2012; Brown et al., 2018; Furstenberg & Weiss, 2008). There are also studies that document and/or highlight possible links between parenting practices exhibited in one generation and the parenting behaviours in the subsequent generation (see Brown et al., 2018; Chen & Kaplan, 2001; Choi et al., 2021; Hofferth et al., 2012; Madden et al., 2015; Neppel et al., 2009). Nevertheless, the studies focusing on the transmission of fathering (instead of mothering), and in culturally and historically diverse societies, are scarce/insufficient.

This study takes an intergenerational approach to examining the significance of parenting styles experienced in childhood for the Lithuanian middle-aged men's fathering practices with their own children. Our focus lies on the relational aspects of fatherhood rather than the quantitative aspects of father-child relations. Consequently, we examine father involvement by analysing the attitudinal (e.g., the self-reported paternal self-efficacy and the perception of one's own parenting role), and behavioural components of fathering (e.g., behavioural/direct control, emotional warmth, and psychological control, the main fathering practices, revealing various ways in which men engage/interact with their children). We examine the links between parenting experienced in childhood and practised fathering in adulthood, considering how these links are associated with the father's personality traits as well as individual and family-level factors.

Our analysis is based on representative data obtained from the Families and Inequalities Survey conducted in Lithuania in two waves, in 2019 and 2021 (Maslauskaite et al., 2021). Using the dataset has several advantages. First, it is a large-scale survey ( $N = 4,000$ ) with a large subsample of fathers. Second, to our knowledge, the Families and Inequalities Survey, so far, is the only one of its kind in Lithuania, providing a broader perspective on the factors contributing to involved fathering, including the intergenerational context.

Having regained independence more than three decades ago, Lithuania has been undergoing a complex socio-economic transition that has profoundly affected family life and gender roles. A notable characteristic of the transition period in Lithuania, like in many other countries of the region, was the refamiliarization of family policies accompanied by a pronounced cultural shift towards neo-patriarchal gender attitudes (Saxonberg & Sirovátká, 2006). Nevertheless, contemporary developments in family policies do not escape complexities or contradictions. Lithuania has distinguished itself by its childcare policies that foster father involvement and thereby promote gender equality in childcare (Aidukaite, 2021; Dobrotić & Stropnik, 2020).

In 2007, a month of paternity leave was introduced in Lithuania, whereby parental leave could be shared. Despite legally ensured possibilities for involved fathering, the role of men in Lithuania is still—at least publicly—traditional (Lomazzi, 2022). Childcare responsibilities in families have been predominantly fulfilled by mothers (Maslauskaite, 2022). Despite the occurrence of cultural shifts in the ideas about fatherhood, the discourse surrounding the nurturing role of men and involved fatherhood remains marginal, with a greater emphasis being placed on the traditional masculine role of the male provider (Tereskinas, 2022).

The present article makes several contributions to the existing literature on the subject. First, it employs an inquiry-based approach to exploring the transmission of parenting styles across generations. The analysis of this multifaceted phenomenon aims to shed light on the underlying factors that shape the contemporary conceptions of fatherhood. Second, it makes a methodological contribution to the existing research on fatherhood by integrating psychological and sociological perspectives, thereby expanding our knowledge of the processes involved in fathering. Third, the body of fathering research conducted in Central and Eastern European countries still remains substantially more modest compared to the scope of fathering research available in Western Europe and North America.

## **2. Parenting and Its Determinants: Previous Evidence**

The psychological and sociological literature typically defines the involvement of fathers through quantitative and qualitative measures (see Choi et al., 2021; Jesse & Adamsons, 2018; Lamb, 2008; McWayne et al., 2013). Quantitative aspects capture the presence or absence of a father, the duration of childcare, and the time spent with the child. However, the involvement of fathers could be examined by observing the specific parenting practices or behaviours based on the qualitative aspects of the father-child relationship, such as emotional warmth in the parent-child relationship and adequate control in parenting.

The conceptualisation of parenting in psychological literature is characterised by a long and rich tradition, with the dimensional approach being a widely utilised methodology. Two broad dimensions of parenting have been identified: parental support and parental control, or demandingness, further comprising several distinct parenting styles. Parental support has been shown to manifest in the form of emotional warmth, acceptance, availability, and responsiveness (Baumrind, 1971; Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019). The control dimension is further subdivided into two: behaviour control and psychological control (Barber, 2002). The term “behaviour control” is a broad concept that encompasses a variety of disciplinary strategies, rules, and attempts to control behaviour, as well as forms of punishment. Psychological control can be defined as the manipulation of a child’s emotions and behaviour through psychological means (Barber, 1996, 2002).

There is evidence that parenting may be transmitted intergenerationally (Belsky et al., 2009; Chen & Kaplan, 2001; van IJzendoorn, 1992). Van IJzendoorn (1992) defined intergenerational transmission of parenting as the process by which an earlier generation purposely or unintentionally exerts its influence on the parenting attitudes and behaviours of the next generation. Furthermore, evidence was provided for the innate predispositions and contextual continuity of this process (van IJzendoorn, 1992). The intergenerational continuity of parenting in more recent studies is also explained by the direct effects of early parenting experiences on later parenting practices through social modelling and interpersonal relations (Chen & Kaplan, 2001; Choi et al., 2021; Hofferth et al., 2012; Neppl et al., 2009). However, several factors (e.g., individual psychological characteristics, family structure and dynamics, socioeconomic factors, cultural

influences) can also contribute to or modify this intergenerational continuity. As Belsky and Barends (2002) and Belsky et al. (2009) claim, parenting is multiply determined, although the studies on mediating and moderating factors of parental transmission remain scarce and scant.

A substantial body of research is found to document a link between parenting styles and the Big Five personality traits like openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism (or negative emotionality and emotional instability), and agreeableness (Belsky & Barends, 2002; Newland et al., 2013; Tehrani et al., 2024). Again, these studies were predominantly conducted with mothers and/or explored the parenting effects on personality traits in childhood (Tehrani et al., 2024). A few studies have provided evidence for the direct transmission of personality traits and parenting styles (Kitamura et al., 2009). The emotional challenges experienced by parents and adverse childhood experiences have also been demonstrated to exert an influence on adult mental health and personality formation, and have been shown to be transmissible to subsequent generations (Kaasbøll et al., 2024; Narayan et al., 2021). As Belsky and Barends (2002) have claimed, a parent's personality is the most important determinant of parenting which indicates that a parent who is psychologically healthy and mature (e.g., low in neuroticism, high in extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness, and high in self-esteem), could provide more supportive, sensitive, responsive parenting, despite the adversity in his own experience as a child.

Additionally, as demonstrated in the study by Garcia et al. (2018), individuals from neglectful and authoritarian homes demonstrated the lowest levels of self-esteem. These experiences may function as a model for social learning and contribute to lower self-efficacy in general, specifically in the context of parental self-efficacy, also yielding a more negative attitude to one's own parental role. Thus, parenting styles are also related to how parents perceive their role. Parental self-efficacy refers to parents' confidence in their ability to positively influence their children's development (Eccles & Harold, 1996). There is consistent evidence that higher parental self-efficacy is linked with more effective parenting styles and behaviour (for a review, see Albanese et al., 2019).

Socioeconomic status (SES) is another set of variables consistently addressed in parenting studies, again, with the disproportionate focus on mothering (Roubinov & Boyce, 2017). Furthermore, the results of its effects on parenting styles are not consistent, depending at least on two methodological considerations: what specific components of socioeconomic variables were included; whether these were analysed as the correlates, main predictors, or the mediators of effects. For instance, a recent study by Kaasbøll et al. (2024) found that SES had a modest effect in reducing the links between parental depression, anxiety, and parenting. In contrast, Roubinov and Boyce (2017) claim that the socioeconomic conditions may exert an influence on parenting through the effects on parental mental health and via differential access to resources. The most consistent research findings demonstrate that low SES family environments, and especially limited education, are associated with harsh and more punitive parenting practices (Liu & Lachman, 2019; Ma, 2023; Roubinov & Boyce, 2017). The existing literature, most notably the recent article of Ma (2023), and the preceding discourse of Roubinov and Boyce (2017), both reach the conclusion that the relationship between SES and parenting is complex and subject to variation across different contexts.

Last but not least, a more extensive examination of the existing literature about parenting reveals a consensus among researchers that an analysis of the intergenerational transmission of parenting must encompass the considerations of culture, temporality, and the prevailing social context (see Brannen et al., 2011; Roubinov & Boyce, 2017; Sebre et al., 2015; van IJzendoorn, 1992).

Our study aims to investigate whether paternal parenting practices are associated with the experiences undergone during childhood. In addition, based on the literature review, it is suggested that an increased presence of adaptive personality traits, such as reduced negative emotionality (neuroticism) and heightened conscientiousness, may serve as supplementary critical predictors of paternal involvement. Despite the ambiguity surrounding the significance of SES variables, we propose that less favourable SES can add to more controlling (but not supportive) fathering. We hypothesize that:

H1: Fathering based on emotional warmth is predicted by supportive parenting experienced by his parents in childhood; a higher level of conscientiousness, parental self-efficacy, and a lower level of negative emotionality may serve as supplementary critical predictors of paternal involvement.

H2: Fathering based on behavioural control, characterized by harshness, is associated with less supportive and more authoritarian parenting during the father's childhood, as well as less favourable SES and personality traits.

H3: Fathering based on psychological control is also related to the provision of support during the father's childhood, albeit in an ambiguous manner regarding experienced authoritarian parenting, and to higher levels of negative emotionality and less favourable SES.

### 3. Data and Methods

#### 3.1. Sample and Methods of Analysis

Our analysis is based on the dataset obtained from the Families and Inequalities Survey (Maslauskaite et al., 2021). The data were collected in Lithuania in two waves: in 2019 and 2021. The survey was designed as a cohort study where the sample was limited to the 1970–1984 birth cohorts in the first wave, followed by adding the cohorts born in 1985–1989 in the second wave. The effective sample size comprised 3000 respondents in the first wave and 1000 respondents in the second wave. Therefore, at the time of the survey, the respondents were aged 35–49 (the first wave) and 32–36 (the second wave).

The representative sample was obtained using a stratified sampling technique. In both waves, face-to-face interviews using a standardised questionnaire were conducted with respondents in their homes. The CAPI methodology for collecting the data was used. Though 2021 was the year of Covid-19, the fieldwork was conducted in the period after the social restrictions had been lifted. The fieldwork of both waves was contracted by the Baltic Surveys Ltd., a public opinion and market research company, a member of the Gallup Organization and ESOMAR. All ethical standards were adhered to, including the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and data protection.

The survey covered a wide range of topics related to the respondents' parental home, lifestyle, partnership and fertility history, parenting, household, well-being, and employment conditions. The second wave also included some additional variables related to Covid-19. The duration of an individual interview in the pilot survey was between 40 and 90 minutes; the information on the duration was not collected in the main survey.

The two datasets were merged by adding the cases from the second wave to the first wave. A total of 1,745 men were included in the dataset; however, for the analysis, we selected a subsample of men with children residing with the children in the same household ( $N = 1,104$ , with 832 cases from 2019 and 272 from the 2021 survey). The main analysis was based on the stepwise OLS regression applied to each fathering style. However, in the initial stages of our study, the bivariate correlation analysis was applied.

### **3.2. Variables and Measures**

#### **3.2.1. Fathering as the Main Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable is fathering, which, in this study, refers to a father's set of specific behaviours with their child, e.g., parental practices. It is measured by a shortened version of the Parenting Practices Questionnaire (PPQ; see Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Sebre et al., 2015). The PPQ instrument contains 13 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.81). The PPQ has three subscales: emotional warmth (EW), behavioural control (BC), and psychological control (PC). The exploratory factor analysis resulted in a three-factor solution (PCA and varimax rotation, cumulative loadings 60%). For further analysis, each factor was transformed into the index summary variable and standardised by the number of items.

The EW subscale includes the following items:

- I often show my child that I love him/her.
- I often tell my child that I appreciate what he/she is trying to do or achieve.
- I respect my child's opinion.
- When my child misbehaves, I talk to him/her about it and discuss what happened.
- I often joke with my child.

The EW parenting practice represents emotional closeness, appreciation, respect, guidance, and support.

The BC subscale includes the items:

- When my child misbehaves, I punish him or her.
- I teach my child that he or she will be punished in some way if he or she misbehaves.
- I think it can be useful to scold a child.

Original PPQ also includes the item: When my child misbehaves, I clap my child with my hand. However, this item was excluded from the analysis due to the prosecution of a child's maltreatment case in Lithuania, which was actively represented in the media and consequently might have affected the self-censorship of the parents at the time of the interviews.

The PC subscale includes the items:

- My child needs to understand how much I have sacrificed for him/her.
- I think my child needs to understand how much I have done for him/her.
- I expect my child to appreciate and be grateful for all the comforts he/she has.

- My child must not keep secrets from his/her parents.

The reliability is good for all three subscales: EW Cronbach's alpha = 0.79; BC Cronbach's alpha = 0.76; PC Cronbach's alpha = 0.72).

### 3.2.2. Control Variables

Following the theoretical discussion of the intergenerational transmission of parenting styles, four sets of controls were included in our analysis.

The measures related to the respondent's childhood were experienced parenting styles and the quality of the relationships with his parents. These measures were the main independent variables.

The parenting style experienced in childhood was measured by seven items, each evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale (Cronbach alpha = 0.66). The exploratory factor analysis with PCA and the varimax rotation with Kaiser normalisation resulted in a two-factor solution (factor cumulative loadings 62%). The factors were extracted and transformed into the standardised summary index variables.

The first index variable included the following statements:

- My parents were always interested in my school grades.
- When I misbehaved, my parents would talk to me first, discuss what happened.
- If there was a problem, my parents would help me with my homework.
- My parents would encourage me to do well in my studies.
- I was able to tell my parents (or at least one of them) what I was worried about, what I felt.

This variable expresses emotional closeness and support experienced in childhood. The first subscale was labelled "experienced supportive parenting" (Cronbach alpha = 0.85). The second summary index variable includes two items:

- I was punished if I did something wrong.
- My parents paid little attention to my opinions.

The variable was labelled "experienced authoritarian parenting."

The third variable related to the respondent's childhood is a retrospective subjective assessment of the quality of the relationship between the respondent and his/her parents up to the age of 15 (relationships with parents in childhood). It was measured on an 11-point scale ranging from very bad (0) to very good (10).

Personality traits were measured using the Big Five Extra Short Inventory (BFI-2-XS; Soto & John, 2017). The BFI-2-XS was developed, translated, and adapted for Lithuanian use by Rita Žukauskienė and her team; the permission to use it was granted, for which the authors are grateful (Poškus & Žukauskienė, 2017). The BFI-2-XS contains 15 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale consists of five subscales, each of which contains three items: extraversion (Cronbach alpha = 0.63), agreeableness (Cronbach alpha = 0.33),

conscientiousness (Cronbach alpha = 0.72), negative emotionality (Cronbach alpha = 0.76), openness (Cronbach alpha = 0.44). Due to the insufficient Cronbach alpha values, for further analysis, we used only three subscales of the BFI-2-X: extraversion, conscientiousness, and negative emotionality.

Satisfaction with one's own parenthood was measured by two scales. First, the overall perception of one's own parenting role (how satisfied are men with their role as fathers) was measured with the scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 10 (*very much satisfied*). Second, the parental self-efficacy was measured with nine items on a 5-point scale. The scale includes the subscales on efficacy (I can meet the needs of my child/children very well; I can put into practice what I want to pursue in child care and parenting; I feel helpless in parenting and caring for my children), parental role autonomy (I have the feeling that taking care of my child/children takes up all my strength and that my whole life revolves around it; I feel trapped by my parental duties; both items reverse), enjoyment of parenting (I enjoy being with my children), and excessive worry (Sometimes I cannot sleep at night because I imagine that something could happen to my child; I am always worrying that something could happen to my child/children; both items reverse). We compiled/constructed/designed a summary index variable accumulating all the items (Cronbach alpha = 0.72).

The individual and family level characteristics included in the analysis are as follows: the respondent's education, the number of children living in the same household, and the subjective evaluation of the financial security of the family. Descriptive statistics for all variables are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive sample statistics.

	Column percent	Means (SD)
<b>Fathering (paternal practices)</b>		
EW (1–5)		3.8 (.64)
BC (1–5)		3.0 (.77)
PC (1–5)		3.3 (.64)
<b>Parenting experienced in childhood</b>		
Experienced supportive parenting (1–5)		3.5 (.67)
Experienced authoritarian parenting (1–5)		3.2 (.63)
Relations with parents in childhood (0–10)		7.0 (1.7)
<b>Personality traits</b>		
Extraversion (1–5)		3.2 (.75)
Conscientiousness (1–5)		3.7 (.79)
Negative Emotionality (1–5)		2.4 (.84)
<b>Parenting assessment</b>		
Perception of one's own parenting role (0–10)		7.5 (.05)
Parental self-efficacy (1–5)		3.6 (.01)

**Table 1.** (Cont.) Descriptive sample statistics.

	Column percent	Means (SD)
<b>Individual and structural family characteristics</b>		
Number of children in the household (ref.: two or more)	48	
Financial security of the household (0–10)		6.4 (.05)
Education: Highest (university 6 years or more)	24	
Education: Medium (university 4 years or similar)	23.2	
Education: Secondary	42.7	
Education: Lower than secondary	9.7	
Number of subjects	1104	

Source: Families and Inequalities Survey (2019–2021).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Fathering and Experienced Parenting in Childhood

The correlation analysis revealed a positive interrelationship between the father's EW and the supportive parenting respondents had experienced in their childhood (Table 2). The BC was associated with the men being exposed to an authoritarian parenting style in their childhood ( $r = 0.151, p < 0.001$ ). Whereas PC was positively correlated with an experienced supportive parenting style in one's childhood ( $r = 0.181, p < 0.001$ ).

Moreover, experienced supportive parenting was positively associated with relationship quality with parents, which was negatively associated with the authoritarian parenting style. The bivariate correlational analysis also proved the positive link between an experienced supportive parenting style and such personality traits as extraversion and conscientiousness, while a negative association was found with the negative emotionality trait. Experienced supportive parenting was positively linked to the perception of the fathering

**Table 2.** Bivariate correlations of dependent and main independent variables.

	Experienced Supporting Parenting	Experienced Authoritarian Parenting
EW in fathering	.269**	-.070*
BC in fathering	.014	.151**
PC in fathering	.181**	.016
Relations with parents in one's childhood	.411**	-.141**
Extraversion	.247**	-.104**
Conscientiousness	.333**	-.137**
Negative Emotionality	-.263**	.110**
Perception of one's own Parenting Role	.175**	-.152**
Parental Self-Efficacy	.176**	-.110**
	1074	1075

Source: Families and Inequalities Survey (2019–2021). Notes: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ ; statistically significant coefficients are marked in bold; there are missing data on the dimensions of the parental self-efficacy and the perception of parenting role.

role and higher degrees of reported parental self-efficacy. In addition, an experienced authoritarian parenting style was negatively associated with the reported quality of the relationship with parents in one's childhood. The negative direction was observed for the personality traits extraversion and conscientiousness, but the reverse direction was found for negative emotionality. The experienced authoritarian parenting style was also negatively associated with the men's perception of their fathering role and the parental self-efficacy.

#### **4.2. Emotional Warmth in Fathering**

Multiple regression models showed robust results for the intergenerational transmission of parenting (Table 3). The positive association between EW in fathering and the experienced supportive parenting style in respondents' childhood was evident in all models. The baseline model (Model I) included the measures of experienced parenting and men's assessment of the quality of their relationship with their parents until the age of 15. There was a positive directionality for both indicators. As the next step following our theoretical considerations, we included the personality characteristics of the respondent. The effects on the intergenerational transmission of parenting remained, but the coefficient decreased, so that personality traits contributed to explaining part of it. Out of three personality traits (extraversion, conscientiousness, and negative emotionality), only one—conscientiousness—contributed to explaining the EW in fathering one's own children. The coefficients were positive and indicated the same direction, i.e., higher scores on conscientiousness were linked to higher scores on EW fathering (Model II). Model III added the controls for the respondent's perception of parenting role and parental self-efficacy. All the controls included in the previous models showed stability in the direction and very marginal differences in the magnitude. A higher score of parental self-efficacy predicted more EW; thus, men who felt more efficient in their parenting also demonstrated higher levels of EW as a fathering practice. The perception of one's own parenting role does not contribute to the explanation of EW in fathering.

The final Model IV, in addition to all the variables, included father's education, the number of children, and the perceived financial security ( $R^2 = 0.23$ ). Supplementary controls did not distort the main associations observed in the previous models. However, we observed the additional positive effects related to the extraversion trait and the men's perception of a parental role. Thus, EW was linked to the experienced supportive parenting style, the extraversion and conscientiousness traits, a positive perception of one's own parenting role, and higher self-efficacy, after the men's education and the number of children were controlled for. In addition, having more than one child increased the likelihood of an EW in fathering. Financial security had a negative coefficient, while EW was not related to education. The relative importance of variables in the final model was the highest for the respondent's parental self-efficacy (std.  $\beta = 0.23$ ), followed by the experienced supportive parenting style (std.  $\beta = 0.18$ ), conscientiousness (std.  $\beta = 0.17$ ), men's satisfaction with their parental role (std.  $\beta = 0.11$ ), and the extraversion trait (std.  $\beta = 0.10$ ).

**Table 3.** OLS regression results for fathers' EW.

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
	b	Std. errors	b	Std. errors	b	Std. errors	b	Std. errors
Experienced supportive parenting	.196***	.046	.139***	.044	.141***	.044	.166***	.044
Experienced authoritarian parenting	.003	.042	.030	.040	.049	.040	.048	.039
Relations with parents in one's childhood	.033*	.018	.019	.017	.002	.018	.005	.018
Extraversion			.048	.040	.061	.039	.088**	.040
Conscientiousness			.202***	.049	.147***	.050	.135***	.049
Negative emotionality			−.035	.045	.036	.047	.038	.047
Perception of one's own parenting role (0–10)					.036	.024	.055**	.025
Parental self-efficacy					.247***	.062	.270***	.063
Financial security							−.042**	.017
Education: University (MA or higher)							−.071	.120
Education: College							−.049	.114
Education: Secondary							−.003	.109
Number of children in the household: Two or more vs. one							.136***	.049
R <sup>2</sup>	.069		.163		.199		.230	

Source: Families and Inequalities Survey (2019–2021). Notes: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

#### 4.3. Behavioural Control in Fathering

Model I proved the statistically significant positive association between the BC as a fathering practice and the experienced authoritarian parenting style (Table 4). The baseline model also controlled for the quality of the respondent's relationships with parents in childhood. The direction of the coefficient was negative, meaning that the BC was linked to a negative relationship quality with parents in childhood. Model II added controls for the respondent's personality. The effect size for the experienced authoritarian parenting decreased, which means that other variables contributed to the explanation. Of the three personality traits, only conscientiousness was relevant, but the effect was negative. Thus, the lower the conscientiousness, the more pronounced the BC in fathering. Model III extended the analysis, and after adding men's perception of their own parenting role and parental self-efficacy, the effect of personality traits disappeared. However, the effects of the experienced authoritarian parenting style on BC remained. BC was also negatively associated with parental self-efficacy and men's perception of their own parenting role. It can be explained that men engaging in BC showed less parental self-efficacy and had lower satisfaction with their role as fathers.

In Model IV, there was the stability of the main effects observed in the previous model, but there was the significant effect of father's education and the number of children. Fathers with lower education were more likely to use the BC. There was also a positive coefficient for the number of children. Though the financial security was significant, the p-value was high ( $p < 0.1$ ). Overall, Model IV had the highest R-squared value ( $= 0.161$ ). The measures with the highest relative importance in the model were the experienced authoritarian parenting (std.  $\beta = 0.21$ ), the respondents' parental self-efficacy (std.  $\beta = -0.12$ ), and the perception of one's own parenting role (std.  $\beta = -0.11$ ).

**Table 4.** OLS regression results for fathers' BC.

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
	b	Std. errors	b	Std. errors	b	Std. errors	b	Std. errors
Experienced supportive parenting	-.048	.061	-.010	.061	-.016	.061	-.024	.062
Experienced authoritarian parenting	.316***	.056	.298***	.055	.279***	.056	.258***	.055
Relations with parents in childhood	-.046*	.024	-.036	.024	-.016	.025	-.020	.025
Extraversion			-.010	.055	-.019	.055	-.022	.056
Conscientiousness			-.122*	.068	-.081	.070	-.075	.069
Negative emotionality			.061	.062	.010	.066	.019	.065
Perception of own parenting role (0-10)					-.057*	.034	-.080**	.035
Parental self-efficacy					-.149*	.087	-.170*	.087
Financial security							.038*	.023
Education: University (MA or higher)							.214	.168
Education: College							.380**	.158
Education: Secondary							.342**	.152
Number of children in the household: Two or more vs. one							.195**	.068
R <sup>2</sup>	.08		.10		.122		.161	

Source: Families and Inequalities Survey (2019–2021). Notes: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

#### 4.4. Psychological Control in Fathering

The PC fathering practice was positively associated with the experienced supportive parenting and authoritarian parenting in the respondents' childhood (Table 5, Model I). Model II included the respondents' personality traits as well as baseline controls. The effects of the experienced parenting styles remained, but there were positive and statistically significant coefficients for negative emotionality and conscientiousness;

however, the effect size and the statistical significance for conscientiousness was lower ( $p < 0.1$ ). Therefore, men with the negative emotionality personality trait were more likely to engage in PC in fathering. In the next step of the analysis, we added the perception of one's own parenting role and parental self-efficacy; however, both variables were not statistically significant (Model III). Model IV was supplemented by men's education, financial security, and the number of children. The R-square was low (0.09), yet it was acceptable considering the complex phenomena studied (Ozili, 2022). In the final model, we observed the stable effects in the direction and the size for both parenting styles experienced in men's childhood. The negative emotionality of the respondent had a positive association with PC as a fathering practice. The same result was also observed for the number of children. The negative emotionality (std.  $\beta = 0.20$ ) and the experienced supportive parenting style (std.  $\beta = 0.19$ ) had the highest predictive power, followed by the experienced authoritarian parenting style (std.  $\beta = 0.14$ ).

**Table 5.** OLS regression results for PC.

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
	b	Std. errors	b	Std. errors	b	Std. errors	b	Std. errors
Experienced Supportive Parenting	.152***	.048	.160***	.048	.164***	.048	.187***	.050
Experienced Authoritarian Parenting	.136***	.044	.131***	.044	.139***	.044	.134***	.044
Relations with Parents in Childhood	.011	.019	.016	.019	.006	.020	.008	.020
Extraversion			−.052	.044	−.050	.044	−.036	.045
Conscientiousness				.102*	.054	.093*	.055	.089
Negative Emotionality				.142***	.049	.151***	.052	.158**
Perception of one's own Parenting Role (0–10)					.035	.027	.039	.028
Parental Self-Efficacy						.006	.069	.019
Financial Security							−.012	.019
Education: University (MA or higher)							−.083	.135
Education: College							−.076	.127
Education: Secondary							−.001	.122
Number of Children in the Household: Two or more vs. One							.142**	.055
R <sup>2</sup>	.04		.07		.07		.07	
								.09

Source: Families and Inequalities Survey (2019). Notes: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of this study was to analyze fathering from the perspective of the intergenerational transmission of parenting. To this end, we used a sample of Lithuanian men born in the 1970s and 1980s who were in their middle adulthood and raising their own children. Fathering in this study was defined as everyday parental practices with a child and was empirically measured using the well-known scales of EW, BC, and PC (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Sebre et al., 2015).

As expected, men's parenting practices were associated with their childhood experiences, even when additional variables such as personality traits, parental self-efficacy, perception of one's own parental role, and sociodemographic factors were taken into account. Fathers' emotionally responsive and warm relations with their children were best predicted by supportive parenting experienced in childhood (H1). The personality trait conscientiousness and parental self-efficacy were additional significant predictors that explained/accounted for up to 20% of the total variance in the data. Extraversion, also a more positive perception of one's own parenting role, having more than one child in the household, and, interestingly, lower financial security were/proved to be significant predictors, although together they explained only 4% of the variation in the EW in fathering.

These results align with those of several other studies that provide evidence for the intergenerational transmission of positive paternal involvement (Brown et al., 2018; Hofferth et al., 2012; Jessee & Adamsons, 2018; Narayan et al., 2021). As expected, fathers who reported higher levels of parental self-efficacy were also more involved in fostering emotional and warm relationships with their children, a finding also reported in a recent study by Shim and Lim (2019). Financial security has a mildly negative effect in our study, which is somewhat surprising given the evidence of an association between a higher SES and more supportive and emotionally close parenting styles (Ma, 2023; Roubinov & Boyce, 2017). There are at least a couple of possible explanations for this. First, financial security in this study was subjectively reported and therefore does not necessarily represent the objective/actual financial status. Second, the perception of financial security is a sensitive and inconsistent variable that can change depending on the situational context. Notably, part of the data was collected during the pandemic, and this might also be reflected in the subjective perceptions. It is worth noting that paternal EW was not explained by other sociodemographic variables in our present study, which shows it to be highly related to early experiences in childhood (e.g., supportive parenting) and to more conscious and efficient parenting practices with one's own child. Therefore, this study also highlights the importance of encouraging positive paternal practices and interventions that aim to increase paternal self-efficacy.

Our study explains fathers' BC stemming from authoritarian parenting experienced in childhood, lower self-efficacy, and a less positive perception of their own parenting role (H2). Fathers' lower level of education was an additional significant predictor of BC, and, together with having more than one child in the household, it significantly increased the determination coefficient from 12 to 16%. None of the personality traits explored in this study were significant in predicting BC as a parenting practice. Studies on the intergenerational transmission of harsher, more direct behaviourally controlling parenting reveal similar results, although they emphasise the need to research the mediation and moderation effects, in particular, the mechanisms between early experiences and later fathering (Belsky et al., 2009). This is because the linear and/or direct associations between adverse childhood experiences and later parenting behaviours are not always clear or effective (Hofferth et al., 2012; Narayan et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, the BC exhibited in parenting and authoritarian parenting may have different connotations and manifestations in various cultural contexts. It can also be explained by a social learning theory, which reveals the transmission of the direct BC through modelling and the observation of consequent interpersonal interactions (Chen & Kaplan, 2001; Choi et al., 2021; Jesse & Adamsons, 2018). Moreover, the finding of our study that lower paternal education is an additional predictor for higher BC in fathering a child suggests that more attention should be paid to providing men with knowledge on supportive parenting when they become parents.

Finally, we observed that fathers' PC was also interrelated with the parenting experienced in childhood. However, both the supportive and authoritarian parenting experienced in childhood were positively associated with psychologically controlling fathering (H3). Furthermore, negative emotionality (neuroticism) and having more than one child were additional predictors, and, importantly, none of the factors representing men's SES were significant predictors of the PC. Our findings are novel and noteworthy, regardless of the fact that the determination coefficient in predicting the father's PC was rather low, indicating the existence of other factors not researched in the present study. First, the concept of PC itself, as well as the cultural or contextual meaning attributed to it, requires further clarification and discussion. The findings of our previous study (Sebre et al., 2015) have revealed that PC has diverse effects on child emotional and behavioural adjustment in Latvia and Lithuania, two neighbouring countries, which is a call for further studies, especially in countries and cultures with more collectivist and guilt-producing values, or with historically complex backgrounds, in order to ascertain the main antecedents and consequences of PC in parenting (Sebre et al., 2015). Second, based on the results of our study, it could be presumed that PC, as a parenting practice, results from inconsistent and conflict-provoking experiences. However, this premise requires further evidence-based support.

Notably, according to our study, the number of children in a family was related to a higher likelihood of adopting all fathering practices. This means that fathers with more than one child in the household are more involved in parenting and use a wider variety of styles and practices when interacting with their children. This is not surprising, given that children within the same family can have different temperaments and exhibit various behaviours. Furthermore, child characteristics may influence parenting behaviours, as well as the other way around (Belsky & Barends, 2002; Yankati & Patil, 2024). Therefore, future studies on parental involvement should consider the exact number of children, their ages, and their individual characteristics.

The present study has several important strengths. It focuses on the psychological and sociodemographic variables of paternal practices, considers the specific time and cultural context, and uses the data from a large, representative sample. However, the study also has several limitations, primarily due to its cross-sectional nature and reliance on self-reports. First, the parenting experienced in childhood was assessed retrospectively and could therefore be biased by recent attitudes and situations. Moreover, the experienced parenting and the relationships with parents in one's childhood were assessed considering both parents together. This could also affect the internal consistency of the scales for the experienced parenting (these were satisfactory); further studies should use more precise and valid scales, as well as separate reports for both parents (caregivers). Other measures used in this study, such as parental self-efficacy, recent parenting practices, and personality traits, were also self-reported. Further studies of fathers' involvement and the intergenerational transmission of parenting should also consider the complex interplay of objectively measured psychological, structural, and contextual factors. Finally, we highly encourage

conducting studies on both positive and adverse childhood experiences, together with other researchers in the field (e.g., Narayan et al., 2021), in order to provide evidence-based prevention of harsh parenting and intervention in family adversity, especially in recognising and breaking the intergenerational transmission of it (Belsky et al., 2009).

In his comprehensive overview of father involvement, Lamb (2008) noted that there is much greater consensus about “good mothers” than “good fathers.” Building on Lamb’s idea, it is important to elaborate further on what constitutes “good fathering,” which can result in a more favourable personality and social interactions in general, as well as better psychological adjustment and father-child interactions in particular.

This discussion is of relevance when considered within the socio-cultural context of transitional societies. Lithuania’s childcare policies, which have been in effect for nearly two decades, are designed to encourage active paternal engagement and promote a more equitable gender balance. Nevertheless, the discourse on involved fatherhood remains marginal, as it does the shift towards a more nurturing role for men. The limited success of the policies aimed at the equalisation of care may be attributable to the intergenerational mechanisms of parenting. It is therefore evident that, in order to trigger change, there is a necessity to complement childcare policies with a variety of initiatives that promote supportive parenting.

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## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

## Data Availability

Data are available at the Fertility and Family Research Infrastructure Depository. The Dataset will be provided upon reasonable request (contact the corresponding author).

## LLMs Disclosure

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