





FAMILY-RELATED DETERMINANTS SHAPING EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR IN CHILDREN

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Abstract

Background: Emotional behavior in children is rarely addressed through early screening, despite its importance in child development. The family plays a central role; however, prior studies vary in the family aspects they examine, with some factors receiving more attention than others. This review aims to synthesize which family-related determinants are most frequently studied about children's emotional behavior. **Method:** A literature search was conducted using the keywords “family” AND “child*” AND “emotional OR behavior” AND “internalizing OR externalizing,” limited to English-language, full-text, open-access articles published between 2020 and 2025. Databases included ScienceDirect, PubMed, and Google Scholar. The PICO framework guided the research question. A total of 1,449 articles were initially identified. Elicit (elicit.com) was used to assist the screening and selection process. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, seven articles were eligible for review. **Result:** The seven studies examined various family-related factors influencing children's emotional and behavioral outcomes. Recurring themes included parenting style, family conflict, parenting stress, parental mental health, and family structure. Supportive parenting, consistent routines, and a positive emotional climate were associated with better emotional regulation, while harsh discipline, conflict, and poor parental mental health were linked to greater emotional and behavioral problems. Some studies identified mediating or moderating factors such as resilience, sleep quality, and neural responses, reflecting the complex interplay between family environments and child development. **Conclusion:** Children's emotional and behavioral development is shaped by multiple interrelated family factors. Interventions should be multidimensional, addressing parenting practices, caregiver mental health, and household stability to support child well-being.

keyword: family factors, children, emotion, behavior

INTRODUCTION

Children's emotional behavior refers to how they express, regulate, and understand emotions in daily interactions—abilities that are influenced by both their innate temperament and the quality of attachment with their primary caregivers. Emotional and behavioral problems in children are characterized by patterns that are extreme, persistent, and developmentally inappropriate, potentially disrupting social, academic, and family functioning (Ogundele, 2018; Malik and Marwaha, 2022). In Indonesia, 1.9% of children aged ≥ 1 year (equivalent to

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863,402 children) were reported to have developmental delays in physical, mental, or sensory functions, including 0.1% with ADD/ADHD/ODD and 0.1% with conduct disorder (Badan Kebijakan Pembangunan Kesehatan, 2023).

Family is a key determinant of children's emotional and behavioral development, as it serves as the primary environment for early socialization (Thümmeler, Engel and Bartz, 2022). However, the term "family factors" is often used broadly, encompassing various aspects such as parenting style, parent-child relationships, and parental mental health. Prior studies have assessed different components. Pritchett et al. (2010) included discipline, beliefs, and marital quality; Morris (2007) emphasized parenting practices and emotional climate; Wu (2024) focused on parenting styles and family support systems; and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2019) highlighted attachment, mental health, and housing (Morris *et al.*, 2007; Pritchett *et al.*, 2011; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; Board on Children, Youth, 2019; Wu, 2024). This variation reflects both the richness and the inconsistency in defining family factors. Therefore, this review aims to synthesize what specific aspects have most commonly been referred to as "family factors" in recent studies, and to identify the dominant themes related to children's emotional and behavioral outcomes.

METHOD

The literature search was conducted using the following keywords: "family" AND "child*" AND ("emotional OR behavior") AND ("internalizing OR externalizing"). The search using these keywords was limited to the years 2020 - 2025 (the last 5 years). In addition, the literature search was limited to literature that used English and could be accessed in full text.

This literature review implemented the PICO (population, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcome) guidelines to develop the review question guidelines. The question for this review: What are the most commonly studied aspects referred to as "family" or "family factors" that influence children's emotional and behavioral well-being?

Table 1 Breakdown of the PICO Elements Based on the Review Question

Population	Intervention	Comparison	Outcome
Children aged 0–17 years (with a focus on studies discussing emotional and behavioral development).	Family-related factors (e.g., parenting style, parenting stress, parent-child relationship, family conflict, housing, parental mental health).	Not always applicable in a literature review, but where relevant: comparison between different family factors or between different levels of exposure (e.g., high vs. low parenting stress).	Emotional and behavioral outcomes in children (e.g., emotional regulation, internalizing / externalizing problems, social competence, resilience).

During the search process, 1449 relevant articles published since 2020 were identified. The literature search process was conducted through ScienceDirect, PubMed, and Google Scholar databases. The selection process of the article included in this review was conducted using the Elicit (elicit.com) to identify relevant articles. The articles reviewed are open access, published between 2020 and 2025. Seven relevant articles meeting the criteria were identified.

Table 2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Selecting Studies in the Literature Review

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Population	Children and adolescents (0–18 years old)	Adults or unrelated populations
Exposure / Interest	Studies examining family-related factors (e.g., parenting style, parental mental health, attachment, housing, family functioning)	Studies focusing solely on non-family factors (e.g., school, peers, biological/genetic factors)
Outcome	Emotional and/or behavioral outcomes in children (internalizing/externalizing symptoms, emotional regulation, etc.)	Physical health outcomes only (e.g., nutrition, stunting, obesity)
Study Type	Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods); systematic/narrative reviews if relevant to the aim	Editorials, commentaries, protocols, or case reports
Publication Year	Published between 2020–2025	Published before 2020
Language	English	Non-English
Accessibility	Open access, full-text articles available	Abstract-only or paywalled articles

A total of seven articles were selected and included in this review, all published between 2020 and 2025. All the literature was written in English, available in full text, and open access. The included studies consisted of observational cross-sectional research and systematic reviews. This literature review used a qualitative descriptive approach by analyzing the results and discussions of each study.

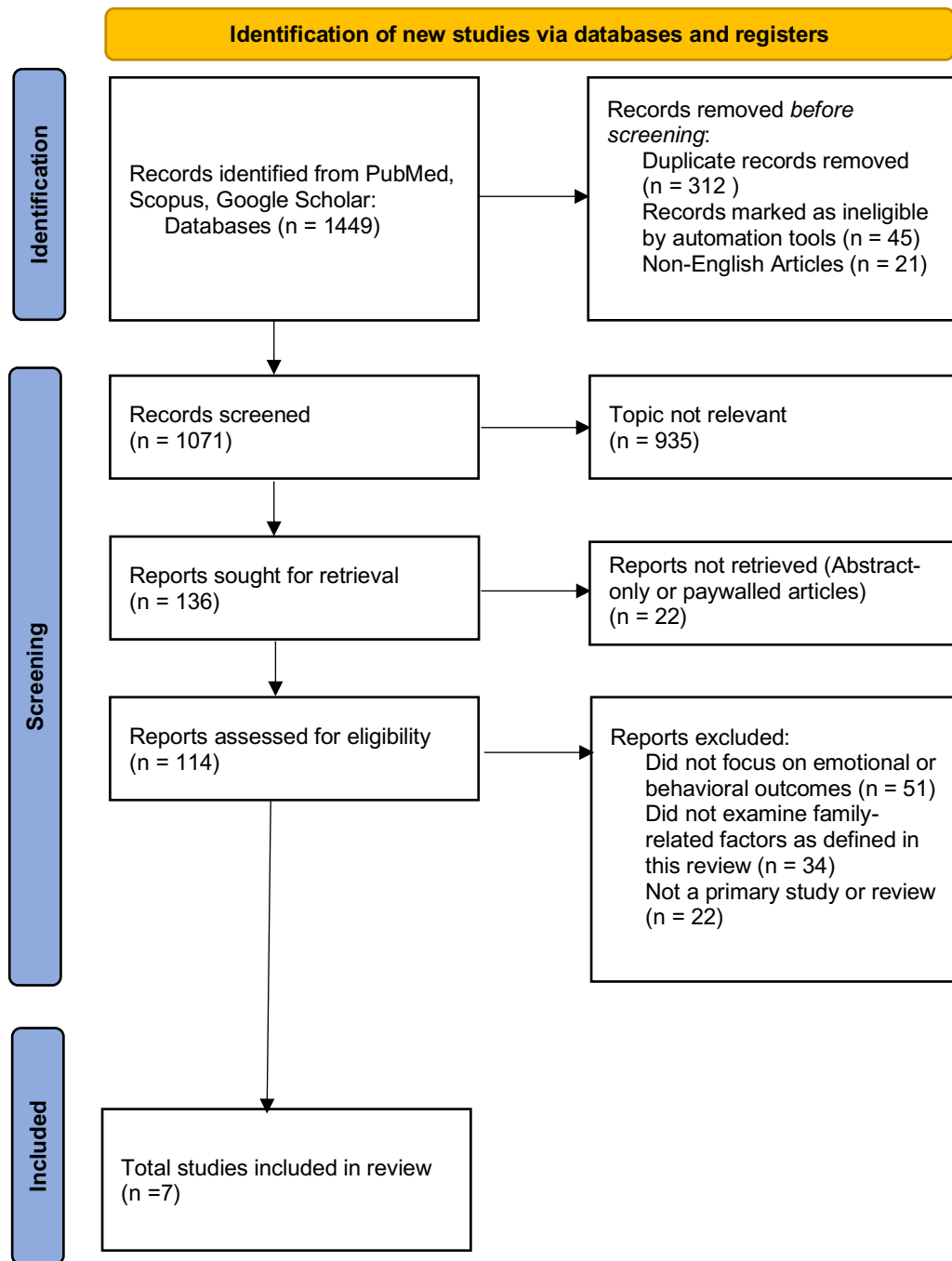


Figure 1 PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process

Duplicate records were removed based on identical titles, authors, publication years, and study objectives appearing across multiple databases. Records marked as ineligible by automation tools refers to articles excluded using automated screening on Elicit.org based on abstract content. The tool was configured to exclude studies whose abstracts did not mention key concepts relevant to this review, such as 'emotional and behavioral problems,' or 'children.' Articles that lacked any of these core terms were automatically filtered out at the abstract screening stage.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A data extraction table was created by the researcher, containing information such as the study title, author(s), year of publication, and key findings. All included studies identified "family factors" as variables influencing children's emotional and behavioral outcomes. However, each study defined and interpreted "family factors" differently. Therefore, this review aims to explore which specific family aspects are most commonly referred to as influencing children's emotional and behavioral development.

Table 3 Review Table of Articles Included in This Study

Author	Title	Objective	Method	Result
Chen <i>et. al</i> (2022)	How do Family Factors Impact Children's Emotional Regulation?	To investigate how different family factors, including relationships and environment, influence children's ability to regulate their emotions and to highlight the importance of family dynamics in emotional development.	The study is a review of previous research, analyzing various family-related influences such as parental relationships, family conflicts, violence, and emotional climate, and their effects on children's emotional regulation.	The review concludes that positive qualities of the parent-child relationship, parental responses, and emotional regulation significantly promote better emotional regulation in children. Conversely, family conflicts, violence, and insecure attachments tend to impair children's emotional regulation abilities.
Wu, Shu (2024)	The Influence of Family Nurturing Environment on Children's Emotions and Behaviors	To explore how the family upbringing environment influences children's emotional and behavioral development, and to analyze the underlying theoretical frameworks and research evidence	Systematic literature review; proposes future intervention strategies to enhance children's emotional and behavioral development through improvements in family atmosphere, parenting styles, and support systems.	the family upbringing environment significantly influences children's emotional and behavioral development. supportive parenting styles, warm family atmospheres, healthy interaction patterns, and strong social support systems—promote emotional well-being and positive behavior in children.
Song, <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Family Function and Emotional Problems in Chinese Children and Adolescent: a moderated mediation model	this study aims to examine how resilience mediates the relationship and how sleep quality moderates it through a moderated mediation model.	A cross-sectional survey of 6363 children and adolescents in Anhui Province, China, using self-administered questionnaires to measure family function, resilience, sleep quality, and emotional behavior	This study suggest that family function, which was referred as family cohesion and communication) is related with emotional and behavioral problem in children and adolescent
Ma, <i>et. al</i> (2022)	Family Correlates of Emotional and Behavioral Problems in Nepali School Children	This study aims to assess children's internalizing and externalizing problems and how it's related to their family backgrounds, that are parental	Cross-sectional observational study among 3840 Nepali children aged 6–18 years using the CBCL/6-18 and a background questionnaire to assess	Parental mental/physical illness, family conflict, disagreement in child-rearing, and physical punishment were positively associated with both internalizing and externalizing

		education, family structure, parental mental illness, family conflict, and physical punishment which is part of parenting style	family factors; analyzed with bivariate correlations and multiple regression.	problems; parental education, family structure, and migrant worker mothers were associated with externalizing problems, though effect sizes were small.
Peovska, Natasha (2022)	Family Factors and Their Effects on Child Violent Behavior	To discuss and examine family characteristics that may serve as risk factors for children's violent behavior, drawing on findings from recent criminological research, with particular emphasis on the presence of antisocial or criminal behavior in one of the parents as a major contributing factor.	A narrative review of previous research studies on family-related factors associated with children's aggressive and violent behavior.	Research on resilience and vulnerability highlights that although factors such as parental substance abuse, antisocial or criminal behavior, domestic violence, poor parent-child relationships, and adverse family events are strongly associated with increased violent behavior in children, their impact may vary depending on the presence of other mitigating influences.
Sylvia C. Lin et al. (2024)	Family and parenting factors are associated with emotion regulation neural function in early adolescent girls with elevated internalizing symptoms	To examine the relationships between family and parenting factors, neural correlates of emotional reactivity and regulation, and internalizing symptoms in early adolescent girls with elevated anxiety and depression symptoms.	The study employed functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to assess brain activity during emotional reactivity and regulation tasks, specifically focusing on early adolescent girls aged 10-12 years who were identified as having elevated internalizing symptoms. The researchers analyzed how maternal emotion regulation, maternal emotion socialization behaviors, and the family emotional climate affected neural activity related to emotion processing.	Findings indicated that a positive family emotional climate was associated with increased activation in brain regions crucial for emotional processing, such as the anterior cingulate and middle temporal cortices. Maternal difficulties in emotion regulation correlated with greater brain activation in areas connected to affect labeling. However, the study did not find significant mediation effects of brain function in the relationship between family/parenting factors and adolescent internalizing symptoms, suggesting a complex interplay that warrants further investigation.



Rikuya Hosokawa et al. (2023)	Associations between Family Routines, Family Relationships, and Children's Behavior	To examine the associations between family routines, family relationships, and the behavior of elementary school children.	The study involved a survey of parents (N = 1515) of third-grade students (8–9 years old) in Japan, where they completed a self-administered questionnaire in 2017. A path analysis was conducted to assess the relationships between family routines (predictor), family relationships (mediator), and children's behavior (criterion).	The findings indicated that family routines were significantly correlated with children's behavior, showing a positive relationship with internalizing problem behaviors, externalizing problem behaviors, and prosocial behaviors through the mediating factors of family relationships (cohesiveness, expressiveness, and conflict). Specifically, cohesive and expressive family relationships were associated with lower levels of externalizing and internalizing behaviors, while family conflict was linked to higher levels of these problems
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Parenting Style And Children's Emotional Behavior

Parenting style, shaped by parents' emotional bond and responses to their children, plays a key role in shaping children's values and behavioral standards (Kochanska *et al.*, 2015). Wu (2024) found that supportive parenting promotes emotional well-being and positive behavior, while Ma et al. (2022) showed that authoritarian practices such as physical punishment are linked to increased internalizing and externalizing problems (Ma *et al.*, 2022; Wu, 2024). These findings highlight the important role of parenting style in children's emotional health and behavioral adjustment.

Authoritative parenting balances firm rules with child participation in decision-making, using discipline as guidance rather than punishment (Sanvictores and Mendez, 2022; Wu, 2024). It emphasizes warmth, support, and open communication, fostering independence. Though demanding effort from both sides, this style is linked to positive emotional and behavioral outcomes in children (Sanvictores and Mendez, 2022). Authoritarian parenting emphasizes strict control, obedience, and harsh punishment, often with little warmth or communication. Parents expect unquestioned compliance, discourage independence, and use one-way communication (Ma *et al.*, 2022; Sanvictores and Mendez, 2022; Wu, 2024). Though it may result in temporary obedience, it is linked to low self-confidence, poor decision-making, and increased aggression in children. In contrast, permissive parenting involves high responsiveness but low demands for discipline and responsibility (Sanvictores and Mendez, 2022). These parents impose few rules and allow children significant freedom. While it may promote social confidence, it is associated with impulsivity, selfishness, and poor self-regulation. (Coulacoglou and Saklofske, 2017; Sanvictores and Mendez, 2022).

These reviewed studies show that parenting style significantly influences children's emotional and behavioral outcomes. Authoritative parenting is linked to better emotional regulation and fewer behavioral issues, while authoritarian and permissive styles are more often associated with emotional difficulties and problem behaviors. This positions parenting style as a central aspect among the family-related factors affecting children's development.



Parent-Child Relationship

The parent-child relationship is a dynamic bond shaped by ongoing interactions, whether in biological or adoptive families (Mihalec-Adkins, 2020). It is intersubjective and influenced by multiple factors, including caregiver traits, emotional mindset, parenting practices, and parental mental health (Sroufe and Rutter, 1984; Cicchetti, Toth and Lynch, 1995; Speranza *et al.*, 2020). While parenting style and parental mental health affect this relationship, they are often studied separately due to their distinct and measurable impacts on children's emotional and behavioral outcomes. Meanwhile, the parent-child relationship itself serves as an independent indicator of emotional bonding, communication, and attachment quality.

The quality of the parent-child relationship plays a vital role in children's emotional and behavioral development. Secure attachments are associated with better emotional regulation, while insecure bonds may lead to emotional difficulties (Chen *et al.*, 2022). Poor relationships increase the risk of violent behavior, whereas strong parental involvement helps foster emotional well-being and prosocial behavior (Peovska, 2022; Wu, 2024). Disagreements between parents in child-rearing practices have been linked to more internalizing and externalizing problems, indicating the importance of consistent and cooperative parenting. Additionally, family routines shared daily activities can either protect or elevate the risk of emotional and behavioral issues depending on their quality and consistency (Chen *et al.*, 2022; Ma *et al.*, 2022). Overall, the parent-child relationship serves as a core foundation for children's emotional and behavioral adjustment, with its quality shaped by attachment security, parental involvement, consistency, and shared routines, being closely linked to both protective and risk factors in child development.

Family Structure

Housing refers to residential living spaces that function as shelters, encompassing not only the physical structure of a home but also the supporting infrastructure and environment (Oxford University, 2011). It includes various measurable aspects such as residential mobility, the physical quality of housing,

household density or family composition, housing ownership and cost, and access to necessities (Clair, 2019). Similarly, O'Donnell and Kingsley (2020) outlined that housing factors consist of household density or composition, residential mobility, type of housing, neighborhood conditions, and housing-related expenditures (O'Donnell and Kingsley, 2020).

Among these various housing aspects, family structure is one of the most frequently discussed about child development, particularly emotional and behavioral outcomes. Ma et al. (2022) found that family structure is associated with externalizing behavioral problems, although the effect size was small (Ma *et al.*, 2022). In addition to family structure, household composition, specifically the number of family members living under the same roof, can also influence children's emotional behavior. Children in families with multiple siblings may experience increased competition, potentially affecting their emotional regulation and social dynamics. Furthermore, in multigenerational households, where grandparents or other extended family members co-reside, caregiving responsibilities are often shared among adults beyond the biological parents. This caregiving arrangement can shape the child's emotional development and socialization in both supportive and complex ways (Pilkauskas, Garfinkel and McLanahan, 2014; O'Donnell and Kingsley, 2020; Ma *et al.*, 2022).

Parenting Stress and Parental Mental Health

Parenting stress refers to the psychological strain experienced when parenting demands exceed available resources, often triggered by children's difficult behaviors (Coulacoglou and Saklofske, 2017). Prolonged stress can disrupt parent-child interactions and deteriorate parental mental health, increasing the risk of anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation (Neece, Green and Baker, 2012). As mental health declines, parents may struggle to provide consistent and sensitive care, potentially reinforcing children's emotional and behavioral problems. Thus, parenting stress affects child outcomes both directly and indirectly through its impact on parental mental well-being (Coulacoglou and Saklofske, 2017).



Parental mental illness is a key risk factor for children's emotional and behavioral problems, driven by genetic and socio-environmental influences. Beyond heredity, strained parent-child relationships, poor parenting skills, social isolation, and poverty can increase children's vulnerability (Ma *et al.*, 2022). Children exposed to a parent's internalizing or externalizing symptoms may lack emotional guidance and imitate maladaptive behaviors. In contexts like Nepal, underreporting due to stigma suggests the actual prevalence may be higher. When left untreated, parental mental illness can lead children to internalize distress and confusion, increasing their risk of poor emotional adjustment (Ma *et al.*, 2022).

Parental mental health issues are often accompanied by substance abuse, antisocial behavior, or criminal activity, which further destabilize the caregiving environment (Peovska, 2022). These challenges hinder parents' ability to provide emotional support and consistent care. As a result, children may experience neglect, emotional unavailability, or exposure to conflict, increasing their risk of anxiety, depression, aggression, and delinquency. Such environments not only harm children's immediate well-being but can also perpetuate emotional and behavioral problems across generations (Peovska, 2022).

In general parental stress and mental health play a pivotal role in shaping children's emotional and behavioral outcomes. When parents experience chronic stress or mental health challenges, especially in the absence of coping resources, their ability to offer stable, sensitive care is compromised. This can lead to strained parent-child interactions and increase the likelihood of children developing emotional or behavioral problems.

Family Conflict and Cohesion

Family functioning is typically assessed through cohesion, expressiveness, and conflict (Hosokawa, Tomozawa and Katsura, 2023). *Cohesion* reflects emotional bonding and support among family members, *expressiveness* refers to how openly emotions are shared, and *conflict* indicates the level of anger and disagreement within the family. Additionally, structured and repetitive daily interactions, which form family routines, provide consistency and stability in children's lives, supporting emotional regulation and overall family organization.

Several studies underscore the strong impact of family dynamics, especially conflict, cohesion, and emotional climate on children's emotional and behavioral development. Chen et al. (2022) found that family conflict and violence impair children's emotional regulation. In contrast, Wu (2024) emphasized that warm family environments, healthy interaction patterns, and strong social support promote emotional well-being and positive behavior. Song et al. (2023) also linked family functioning, particularly cohesion and communication to children's emotional and behavioral problems. Similarly, Ma et al. (2022) and Wang et al. (2024) reported associations between family conflict and both internalizing and externalizing issues. Lin et al. (2024) found that a positive family emotional climate was linked to greater activation in brain regions tied to emotional processing. Additionally, Hosokawa et al. (2023) showed that family routines, through their influence on cohesion, expressiveness, and conflict, were significantly related to children's behavioral outcomes (Chen *et al.*, 2022; Ma *et al.*, 2022; Song *et al.*, 2023; Lin *et al.*, 2024; Wu, 2024).

These findings demonstrate that the quality of family functioning, including cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, and daily routines plays a vital role in shaping children's emotional and behavioral development. Supportive and emotionally warm family environments foster healthier outcomes, while conflictual or disorganized dynamics are consistently linked to emotional difficulties and behavioral problems in children.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This literature review highlights that children's emotional and behavioral development is significantly influenced by various interrelated family factors, including parenting style, parental mental health, parenting stress, quality of parent-child attachment, family conflict, and family structure. These factors do not operate in isolation, but rather interact and contribute collectively to a child's emotional well-being, particularly in early childhood when developmental sensitivity is high.

Given the complexity of these interrelationships, effective interventions should adopt a multidimensional approach. Strategies that solely focus on one aspect, such as parenting style or mental health may not be sufficient if other



influential factors like housing instability or family conflict are left unaddressed. Therefore, integrated interventions that simultaneously address parenting practices, caregiver well-being, and living environments are essential for fostering healthier emotional and behavioral outcomes in children.

In addition, public health strategies and early childhood programs should prioritize holistic family support. Early, family-centered prevention and intervention programs have the potential to break the cycle of emotional and behavioral problems in children by strengthening family functioning as a whole.

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