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Impacts of parenting on children's schooling

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Abstract

Being the backbone of every child, 'parenting style' is an intricate aspect to grasp despite the voluminous research that exists. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to synthesise the various research on theoretical findings, in relation to Diana Baumrind's parenting styles. It examines the different ways in which parenting styles impact on children's behaviour, which, in turn, influences the predictive effects on their academic achievement. It aims to bridge the gap between children's home and school environments, bringing together the key elements of children's lives, in order to form a more-informed approach toward their learning. Essentially, every parenting style impacts differently on each child, however, common behavioural tendencies exist that can be used to support areas that need attention.



Impacts of parenting on children's schooling

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Being the backbone of every child, 'parenting style' is an intricate aspect to grasp despite the voluminous research that exists. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to synthesise the various research on theoretical findings, in relation to Diana Baumrind's parenting styles. It examines the different ways in which parenting styles impact on children's behaviour, which, in turn, influences the predictive effects on their academic achievement. It aims to bridge the gap between children's home and school environments, bringing together the key elements of children's lives, in order to form a more-informed approach toward their learning. Essentially, every parenting style impacts differently on each child, however, common behavioural tendencies exist that can be used to support areas that need attention.

Keywords: parenting styles; Diana Baumrind; behaviour; academic achievement; child development

Introduction

Finding the secret recipe to a 'perfect' parenting style has proved to be a challenge too great for humankind. "Indubitably, all parents want their children to succeed at school, but not all parents are successful in facilitating [this] success" (Mandell & Sweet, 2004, cited in Areepattamannil, 2010, p.283). In order to provide suitable support measures, it is crucial to investigate common impacts of various parenting typologies on children's engagement and, ultimately, their academic performance in school. According to the developmental psychologist, Diana Baumrind (Verenikina, Vialle & Lysaght, 2011), parenting can be classified into four parenting styles – authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved – all of which contribute differently to a child's schooling experience. While there have been criticisms of limitations in regard to Baumrind's parenting styles research, these will not be discussed in this paper, as the emphasis here is on complementary views and those that have built upon Baumrind's work.

Impacts of parenting styles

The wide-ranging literature on the successes of different parenting solutions has led to a great deal of confusion amongst parents on the most effective strategies for their child's academic performance. While many follow those actions of their own parents, others may choose to employ a different approach, often uncertain of which is best (Brown & Iyengar, 2008). Therefore, it is essential to distinguish between these



parenting styles, outlining their main characteristics and discussing their impacts, to allow parents to decide for themselves which outcomes they are hoping to achieve.

Baumrind's parenting style typologies were based on two dimensions – 'responsiveness' and 'demandingness' (Areepattamannil, 2010). While responsiveness measures the extent to which parents foster individuality with supportiveness and warmth (Baumrind, 2005), demandingness refers to the level of parental expectations placed on the children in regard to behaviour regulation and maturity (Baumrind, 2005). Often, the process of child rearing deals with a give-and-take system, whereby parents need to frequently decide on what is best for the child at a given point or circumstance – strictness *or* freedom.

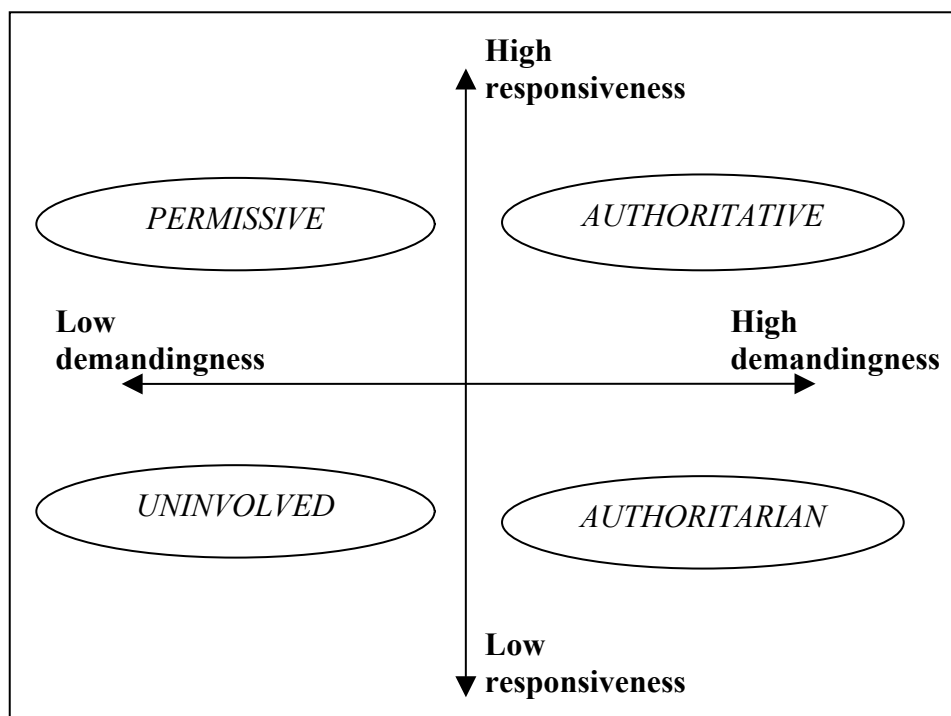


Figure 1: The relationship between Baumrind's four parenting styles

As shown in Figure 1, lying on opposite sides are the authoritarian style's high demandingness and low responsiveness, against the permissive style with low demandingness and high responsiveness. Similarly, the authoritative style with high levels of both responsiveness and demandingness opposes the uninvolved style featuring the lowest levels of both dimensions (Areepattamannil, 2010). Thus, the combined levels of each dimension help determine the type of parenting style being used, as they all share an almost crossroad-like relationship.

Authoritarian

Authoritarian parenting follows a rather dictatorial style involving the highest degree of control on children and very low levels of warmth. Parents who adopt such styles



expect strong obedience from their children and favour punitive discipline in response to acts of rebellion (Kang & Moore, 2011). They are usually found setting strict rules to abide by and monitoring their child's time as well as their activities during the day *and* night (Areepattamannil, 2010). Moreover, the use of this authoritarian style precludes effective discussion, of any sort, between parents and children, which places more pressure on the children than any other parenting style.

Authoritarian parenting is believed to have adverse effects on children's psychological development. "Empirical studies showed that children with authoritarian parents tended to exhibit anxious and withdrawn behaviours, lack self-reliance, [and] rely on authority figures to make decisions" (Baumrind, 1971, 1967; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Baumrind & Black, 1967, cited in Kang & Moore, 2011, p.134), diminishing their sense of personal value and responsibility. Additionally, the high level of parental pressure incorporated within the authoritarian style can often reduce children's intrinsic motivation, causing them to be reliant on extrinsic sources, thus undermining the process of learning (Grolnick, 2003). These types of behaviours often trigger poor communication skills (Verenikina, Vialle & Lysaght, 2011), an essential component predictor of future success.

Due to authoritarianism's high control over children, numerous studies have found the parenting style to be negatively associated with academic achievement (Dornbusch *et al.*, 1987). "A large body of research has documented that parental monitoring is related to lower academic performance (e.g., Muller 1995, Niggli *et al.* 2007; Pomerantz and Eaton 2001; Rogers *et al.* 2009)" (Areepattamannil, 2010, p.287). In fact, Brown and Iyengar (2008) have found that this overemphasis may, in fact, alienate children. Placing excessive pressure on children and interfering with their studies may lead to children having lower academic competence and, consequently, lower academic achievement (Rogers *et al.*, 2009).

Permissive

On the other end of the spectrum, permissive parenting is characterised by little control over children, aiming for high levels of warmth. Unlike authoritarian parents, punishment is very rarely used in permissive homes and children are commonly given greater opportunity to make their own decisions in life (Kang & Moore, 2011). Being more responsive than demanding, parents of this style have relatively low expectations for their children, setting very few, if any, rules. They often take a very casual and easy-going approach (Verenikina, Vialle & Lysaght, 2011) toward their children, opening up conversations and subsequently developing warmer relationships between them.

Despite the high provision of warmth, the low levels of control that permissive parents have over their children ultimately reduce their social competence. "Children reared by permissive parents tend to be less self-reliant [and] less tolerant of frustration" (Kang & Moore, 2011, p.134); they are so familiar with their wants being met at home that they expect everyone else to treat them the same way. In addition, similar to the authoritarian style, children raised by permissive parents are less likely to be intrinsically motivated, thus lacking persistence in approaching learning tasks (Kang & Moore, 2011). Ultimately, their lack of self-control often causes difficulties when engaging in social interaction (Brown & Iyengar, 2008), and they may even go



so far as to being the school bullies or, ironically, victims of bullying from other children.

Permissive parenting has a tendency to lead children toward lower academic performances. Dornbusch *et al.* (1987) found that permissive parenting is negatively associated with higher academic achievement, which is most likely the result of the parents' lack of control and discipline over their children. The majority of young children, if left to choose between work and play, are likely to choose 'play'. Consequently, the permissive parent's non-punitive and accepting approach toward their children's desires (Baumrind, 1966) does not assist the children in building an appropriate educational foundation but, rather, harms their potential for academic success.

Authoritative

The mixed balance between parental warmth and strictness summarises the general attitude belonging to authoritative parents. This democratic approach acknowledges the child's need for both discipline and individuality (Tiller, Garrison & Block, 2003), promoting an open relationship where problems can be discussed and resolved together as a team. Authoritative parents often hold high expectations for their children but, unlike the authoritarian style, the children are consistently encouraged along the way. Researchers have suggested that authoritative parents hold the central trio in good parenting – warmth, control and democracy (Steinberg *et al.*, 1992), which explains why it is often deemed as the most successful parenting style for student achievement.

The success of authoritative parenting is most notable in the various behavioural indicators exhibited by their children. Students of authoritative parents have shown such values as a "stronger work orientation, greater engagement in classroom activities, higher educational aspirations, more positive feelings about school, greater time spent on homework, more positive academic self-conceptions, and lower levels of school misconduct, such as cheating or copying" (Steinberg *et al.*, 1992, p.1267). Therefore, the supportiveness and encouragement employed within the authoritative parenting style eventually "provides their children with a sense of initiative and confidence in relation to learning" (Rogers *et al.*, 2009, p.35), paving the way for academic success.

Authoritative parenting has often been found to be positively associated with higher achievement. Several studies have suggested that children raised by authoritative parents usually achieve better than their peers in school (Steinberg *et al.*, 1992). Whilst the use of parental monitoring is beneficial to children's learning progress, authoritative parenting differs from the authoritarian style in that encouragement is used simultaneously to produce a more positive impact on children's achievement. This indicates that "rewarding learning-related behaviours with encouragement and praise" (Areepattamannil, 2010, p.287), and not ignored or punished for doing otherwise, can be seen as the key for higher achievement in school. Furthermore, Boveja (1998) has suggested that since children of authoritative parents are more enthusiastic about school, they are often found engaging in more effective learning strategies, and will thus more likely work toward higher academic results. Therefore,



when compared with other styles, children of authoritative parents tend to be higher academic achievers.

Uninvolved

The uninvolved style is predominantly characterised by low levels of both warmth and control. This often reflects the parents' emotional detachment from the children as they are often seen responding only to their children's needs out of annoyance rather than compassion (Tiller, Garrison & Block, 2003), and would otherwise be completely unresponsive. Due to the lack of care and discipline for the child, as the name of the style suggests, parents are usually uninvolved in the child's life in general. Thus, they do not often volunteer to partake in research studies (Tiller, Garrison & Block, 2003), with a massive 43 per cent of parents on average *never* participating in school activities (Steinberg *et al.*, 1992). Consequently, this has led to a deficiency of knowledge about this style and so less is known about uninvolved parenting than any other style.

Whilst the higher achievers are more likely to have parents who hold high expectations for them (Areepattamannil, 2010), children of uninvolved parents might be seen with a lack of direction in everyday life. Since uninvolved parents do not provide the necessary attention for their children's needs, the children may likely engage in socially unacceptable behaviour within and outside of school, as they attempt to seek this attention. Engaged in such activities, and with the absence of expectations from others, they may not have the necessary motivation for educational pursuits. It is thus essential that children of this parenting style, and their parents, are sought out, in order to provide appropriate supportive measures, such as counselling services, to assist and guide them in obtaining a direction in life. However, as indicated before, little is known about this style due to the uninvolved approach, thus, more research needs to be conducted.

Conclusion

There has been considerable research in support of the correlation between parenting styles, children's behaviour and, ultimately, academic achievement. "The voluminous literature on parental involvement and academic success indicates that both parental practices and parenting style influence children's school achievement" (Areepattamannil, 2010, p.284), however, this relationship has only been closely explored with the dominant European-American group, as with Baumrind's work. Increased studies will likely bring forth a greater understanding of each parenting style, which is crucial for developing appropriate support measures for each child. Nevertheless, it is impossible to have the 'perfect' parenting style; a customised parenting style suitable for each individual child should be formulated by sifting through each style's stereotypical outcomes, adopting the merits from each while ridding the 'flaws' therein.



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