



# Parenting Styles, Academic Achievement and the Influence of Culture



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## Abstract :

There is robust evidence on the influence of parenting styles on children and adolescents academic achievement. Based on Baumrind's model of parenting styles, the majority of studies conclude that the authoritative parenting style is the most efficient to enhance academic achievement, in contrast to authoritarian and permissive parenting styles that are most commonly associated with academic achievement in a negative direction. However, there is an important line of research that indicates that culture plays a crucial role in the relation between parenting and academic success and that Baumrind's model may not always fit the parenting styles observed in non-western societies.

**Keywords:** Parenting styles; Culture; Academic achievement

## Introduction

The scientific community has long been interested in the study of the variables that impact academic achievement of children and adolescents. Although different aspects of the students' academic performance have been taken as indicators of academic achievement, the majority of studies used the grades as a measure of academic success, as it is expected that student's scores reflect accomplishment of goals and results in a specific educational field, as well as the degree of knowledge acquired in a specific subject [1]. Many studies suggest that academic achievement can be enhanced or diminished based on the parenting style that is carried out [2]. Parenting styles play a significant role in children and adolescents development and have been related to different aspects of their emotional, cognitive, social and academic competencies [3,4]. Parenting style is conceptualized as the attitudes of the parents toward the child that are communicated to him or her and creates an emotional environment in which the behaviors of the parents are expressed [5].

These constellations of attitudes have been classified into four styles [6]: authoritative (highly demanding and highly responsive), authoritarian (highly demanding and lowly responsive), permissive-indulgent (low demandingness and high responsiveness) and permissive-neglective (lowly demanding and responsive). Many authors also refer to parenting styles as either assertive and sensitive, or aggressive or punitive [7]. The authoritative parenting style is a child-centered pattern characterized by a clear setting of

rules and expectations, and the use of reasoning and discussion to achieve adherence to rules [8,9]. Authoritative parents are demanding and responsive, controlling but not restrictive; they are open to communication and actively participate in the child's life showing trust and acceptance; encouraging their children to be autonomous [8]. Authoritarian parenting style is an adult-centered pattern characterized by a clear set of rules and expectations that are expected to be obeyed and achieved with no explanation.

Authoritarian parents provide an orderly environment and monitor their children's activities very carefully [6], however, in contrast to authoritative parents, they are not responsive and discourage open communication. Authoritarian parents often show little trust in their children and fear to lose control [8]. Permissive parenting style is child-centered, but a non-demanding pattern. Permissive parents are tolerant and accepting toward the child's impulses, desires, and actions, allow considerable self-regulation and make few demands for mature behavior. Permissive parents intent to be nonpunitive and avoid confrontation or over power to accomplish their means [10]. Neglective parenting style is low in both responsiveness and demanding. Neglectful parents are not warm, not supportive and uninvolved. Neglectful parents minimize interaction time with their kids and show indifference to their child needs and demands [11]. They do not monitor children activities and actions and fail in providing a structured environment, may neglect discipline entirely or use strict disciplinary practices sporadically [12].

Data from multiple investigations indicate that authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting styles are negatively associated with school performance (e.g. [13-15]), in contrast, authoritative parenting style has been consistently related to an enhanced academic achievement (e.g. [16-18]). This pattern of results suggests that warm, discipline and clear limits, are more effective to promote school success than permissiveness, strict obedience, punishment, and neglect. The emotional environment created in a family with an authoritative parenting style supports the development and boost of many abilities and skills implicated in academic achievement, such as self-regulation, rule-following, communication of needs and opinions, independence and cooperation with peers and adults [19]. The benefits of authoritative parenting styles on academic achievement of children and adolescents have been consistently reported in different countries and culture [20]. However, is important to keep in mind that most of the literature addressing parenting styles have been using western measures of parenting based on samples of White, European and American families.

Some empirical studies show that parenting styles are significantly influenced by cultural differences and social values. Specifically, there is evidence that some cultures are more tolerant to authoritarian parenting style than others. For instance, Malaysian parents from Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnic groups, promote authoritarian parenting and do not regard it as an unfavorable style of parenting [21]. College students from Nigeria, who were raised under authoritative, authoritarian, and authoritative/authoritarian parenting styles, were not different in their levels of sense of competence, need for achievement, locus of control, and academic achievement [22]. It has been also found that the relation of authoritarian parenting style and academic achievement was different among ethnic groups in western countries: it was less negative in Hispanic families than in non-Hispanic White families, while the relation of authoritative parenting to academic achievement was less-stronger in Asian minorities families than non-Hispanic White families [23].

In Spain, adolescents from permissive/indulgent parenting style families showed equal to or better scores in youth outcomes (academic, social, emotional, family and physical) than their peers from authoritative style families [24]. Another study with Spanish school-age children showed that sensitive parenting style was not related to academic achievement but to school adjustment; meanwhile, coercive parenting style was negatively related to academic achievement [19]. We would like to point out that, although the model of the four parenting styles has been widely used, the data from some non-western societies indicate that not all families can be fit into Baumrind's model. Reports of parental style perception obtained from adolescents from eight Arab societies revealed three parenting patterns (controlling, flexible and inconsistent) that combine the categories proposed by Baumrind and indicate an orientation in parenting more than a specific style [25]. Similarly, only 26% of Kim & Rohner [26] sample of Korean American families, fit into the Baumrind parenting categories.

Within this 26%, however, the authoritative parenting style was associated with adolescents academic achievement. It is noticeable, that in this study, the association between parenting and academic achievement differed from maternal and paternal reports: mothers' parenting styles were not associated significantly with adolescents' academic achievement. It is clear that the parenting style adopted within the family has an impact on children and adolescents academic achievement. The attitudes that parents have towards their kids have an effect on the involvement they show in the school, as well as in the development of skills and abilities needed to cope with school demands. Parenting styles are also a reflection of the society parents belong to, which transmits values, expectations, behavior patterns, belief system and guidelines about optimal and deficient parenting.

Culture plays a significant role so that in some contexts specific parenting styles can be valid, appropriate and effective, but obsolete in others. As many studies indicate, western societies have a tendency to favor the authoritative parenting style as the most appropriate to raise healthy children, and, as the values and ways of the West spread along the globe, many young parents from different cultures are also adopting such values to parent their kids [27]. It is also important to keep in mind that, in addition to culture, gender and individual differences also influence parental styles [28]. Although parenting styles categorization may not fit in all situations as independent constructs in a linear continuum from high to low responsiveness and demanding, most studies show that children and adolescents required a balanced relationship with their parents where warmth (acceptance-rejection) and control (permissiveness-strictness) are managed according to context and children and adolescent's personal demands and needs.

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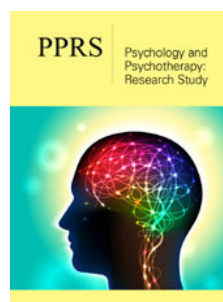
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