



## **IMPACT OF PERCEIVED PARENTING STYLES ON ADOLESCENTS' PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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### *Abstract*

*Formal operation and the flexible problem solving associated with it are not attained by all adolescents or for that matter by all adults. The study was purposed to investigate the perceived impacts of parenting styles on adolescent's psychosocial development. All students of senior high schools within the Cape Coast Metro were the targeted population. 150 students were conveniently sampled to serve as respondents of the study. Parenting authority and psychological development scales were adapted, pilot tested among 30 students and used as the study instruments. Descriptive statistics, specifically, percentages and frequencies were used to analyse the data to answer the three research questions. Findings of the study revealed that most of the mothers and fathers of the respondents aligned themselves to authoritative parenting at home. Further, the study discovered that, adolescents raised in authoritative parenting homes usually exhibit significantly higher levels of psychosocial development than adolescents from authoritarian or permissive homes. Implications are discussed in the paper for policy and practice.*

Keywords: parenting style; psychosocial; permissive; authoritarian; authoritative

### **Introduction**

Early stage of human development is said to be crucial for both psychological and psychosocial development (Hopkins, 2000). As parents' pilot their wards from complete juvenile into the stages of autonomy, their care-giving practices can have both short term and long term effects on their children's social functioning in areas such as development in morality, social development, and

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psychological development, peer play and all the way to academic achievement (Seifert, 1991). Getting the optimum outcome from children requires parents to embrace the challenge of striking a balance between maturity and disciplinary expectations they want their children to put up which helps to usher children into the family and social system as they maintain an atmosphere of warmth, responsiveness and support (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). There are several approaches by which parents rear their children. Globally, studies have reported that most families within the developed jurisdiction make use of authoritative parenting style while most families in the developing economies align themselves to authoritarian style (Dwairy, Achoui, Abouserie, & Farah, 2006; Steinberg, Dornbush, & Brown, 1992).

To develop successfully, every child or youth needs the support, information or skills of others, as well as skills in understanding and giving support to others. School-age children develop friendships, learn to be sensitive to others' thoughts and feelings, and handle issues in ways that hopefully show increasing maturity. In view of this it is necessary for the society to help individuals by meeting their specific needs in crises, and by providing particular circumstances that help development occur. If this help is not available when needed, the person may fail to resolve certain developmental tasks or, more commonly, resolve them partially.

Hopkins (2000) proposed that he agrees with Erickson's theory on the fact that a person's id is free from internal conflict but susceptible in its development to psychosocial conflict, but not internal psychosexual conflict, as Freud had claimed. He meant that conflict does not arise from the internal forces of the person, but rather from the person's interaction with his or her environment, and this is what makes the researcher see the importance of parenting styles in the psychosocial development of the individual. Further, a developmental approach to studying lifespan challenges traditional conceptualization of identity formation and provides a comprehensive view of emotional adjustment. At the core of Erikson's theory are the notions that people will continue to develop across their lifespan and that there exist developmental stages through which relevant "crisis" must be resolved (Hopkins, 2000). His theory fundamentally established a framework for understanding the typical psychosocial developmental patterns which has been the source of a great deal of research attention and has consequently been linked to a number of educationally-relevant constructs.

Adolescents are usually described as people in the process of a status change from childhood to adulthood. In other words, the adolescent is a boy or a girl who is currently in the human development transitional period from childhood to adulthood with the age between 12 and 19 years. As Mensah, Bruce and Greene (1998) put it; adolescence is a formative time of transition to adulthood, roughly concurrent with the second decade of life. Other developmental psychologists describe adolescence as the developmental period of transition from childhood to early adulthood, entered approximately at 10 to 12 years of age and ending at 18 to 22 years of age (Santrock, 2003). Adolescence, the transitional stage of development between childhood and adulthood, represents the period of time during which a person experiences a variety of biological, social and psychological changes and encounters a number of emotional issues (Udry, 1998).

During identity formation in adolescence physical development, cognitive development and social development advance to the point at which the individual can sort through and synthesize childhood identities and identifications to construct a viable pathway toward adult maturity (Kroger, 2004). Even though developing a healthy identity makes one flexible, adaptive, and open to changes in society, in relationships and in careers, this stability does not hold through the remainder of one's life (Santrock, 2003). This is because identities are developed in bits and pieces as we have to make decisions again and again: whom to date, whether or not to break up and whether to study or to play.

The home is an important aspect of adolescent psychology. Home environment and family have a substantial impact on the developing minds of teenagers, and these developments may reach a climax during adolescence. In the majority of Ghanaian societies, adults expect the youth to reason like them forgetting that their (the adults') developmental periods were different as far as economic, technological, geographical and cultural developments are concerned. Adults usually try to use a type of parenting style that will supposedly put the adolescent on track but often times when this fails, they blame the adolescents. They push the failure of adolescents purely on peer pressure or on the individual's own inability to make good use of the training opportunities that come his or her way, but if we delve deep, we will find other sources of such failures.

Since development in the psyche of an individual provides an integrative framework for outdoor the effect of family influences on the psychosocial development of adolescents, this study sought to find out if parenting styles actually have any impact on adolescents' psychosocial development in two Senior

High School students in Cape Coast in the Central Region. The study dwelt on Baumrind's three parenting styles and Erikson (1975)'s first five stages of psychosocial development.

### **Objectives**

1. Parenting styles that the selected adolescents perceive their mothers to be using.
2. Parenting styles that the selected adolescents perceive their fathers to be using.
3. The levels of psychosocial development achieved by the selected adolescents in relation to their parents parenting styles.

### **Method**

Descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study with the aim of telling explicitly what pertains to parenting styles and how it affects psychosocial development of adolescents. The target population for the study were all senior high school students within the Cape Coast Metropolis, however, for more time to deal with manageable data, the researcher accessed information from only two Co-educational senior high schools, that is, Academy of Christ the king and Ghana National College. The aforementioned schools were picked randomly out of the five coeducational senior high schools in the Metropolis.

#### *Participants*

Further, the researcher used purposive sampling procedure to select 150 students from the two institutions, that is, 55 students from Academy of Christ the King and 95 from Ghana National College. The selection of students was done without any recourse to the programme that they read. This is because the programmes (thus, Science, Business, Arts, etc.) do not form any relevant context within which the substantive issue (parenting style) was being studied.

#### *Instrumentation*

The instrument used was students' perception of parenting style questionnaire adapted from 'Parenting Authority Questionnaire' developed by Buri (1991) and measures of psychosocial development questionnaire (MPD)

developed by Hawler (1988). The questionnaire was pilot tested among 30 senior high students within Assin North Municipality. The pilot testing was purposely done to finetune the instrument in order to improve its validity (Amedahe, 2002). The questionnaire was made of two sections, that is A and B. Section A constituted 30 items which was purported to measure the parenting style that the students have been exposed to in their homes over the years. The Cronbach alpha index of this sub-section was .71. Section B of the questionnaire measured psychosocial development of the students with four (4) items. The Cronbach alpha index of the sub-scale was .62. In all, the overall reliability index of the instrument was .73.

Prior to the collection of the data, ethical clearance was sought for the instrument from Ethical Review Board of the University of Cape Coast. Again, in the data collection days (that is, two days), respondents were made to sign a consent form to ensure that they have agreed to be part of the study. Further, the respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The response rate of the survey was 100%. Descriptive statistics, specifically, percentage and frequencies were used to analyse the data to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3. The results were discussed afterwards.

## Results

*Research Question 1: Which parenting style do the selected adolescents perceive that their mothers adopt?*

The results of the study have been presented and discussed according to the research questions. The first research question sought to explore parental styles that the mothers of respondents mostly practiced at home. The parenting styles that were studied were authoritarian, authoritative or permissive mothers' parenting styles. Summary of the analysis is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of adolescents' perception of mothers' parenting style (N=150)

Parenting style	Frequency	Percentage
Permissive mother	11	7.3
Authoritarian mother	35	23.3
Authoritative mother	104	69.4
Total	150	100

Results from Table 1, show that majority (n=104; 69.4%) of the respondents believe that their mothers align themselves to authoritative parenting style. This was followed by quite a substantial number (n=35; 23.3%) who also believe instead that their mothers' practice more of authoritarian parenting. In a minority (n=11; 7.3%), some of the respondents have the inclination that their mothers' practice permissive parenting. Overall, most of the mothers of the respondents are perceived to be practicing authoritative parenting.

*Research Question 2: Which parenting styles do the selected adolescents perceive that their fathers adopt?*

The idea for this research question was to get information about the parenting style of fathers of the respondents. Summary of the analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency distribution of adolescents perception of fathers' parenting style (N=150)

Parenting style	Frequency	Percentage
Permissive father	10	6.7
Authoritarian father	28	18.7
Authoritative father	112	74.6
Total	150	100

Table 2, results indicate that in the homes of the respondents, majority (n=112; 74.6%) of fathers practice authoritative parenting. Some of the respondents also believe (n=28; 18.7%) that instead, their fathers are authoritarian fathers. However, few (n=10; 6.7%) of the respondents have the view that their fathers were permissive parents. Clearly, most fathers are authoritative in nature in their parenting as perceived by the respondents studied.

*Research Question 3: What are the levels of psychosocial development achieved by the selected adolescents in relation to their parents perceived parenting styles?*

Research question three sought to find out how far the adolescents have achieved psychosocial development in connection with their parents' parenting styles. Summary of the analysis is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Adolescents' perceived parenting styles by psychosocial development (N=150)

Parenting style	Psychosocial development				Total	
	Moderately low (30-39)		Normal range (40-59)			
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Authoritarian mother	27	39.1	8	9.9	35	23.3
Authoritative mother	31	50	73	90.1	104	69.3
Permissive mother	11	15.9	0	0	11	7.3
Authoritarian father	23	33.3	5	6.2	28	18.7
Authoritative father	36	52.2	76	93.8	112	74.7
Permissive father	10	14.5	0	0	10	6.7

Concerning parenting style of mothers connection with psychosocial development of adolescents, Table 5, shows that out of the 150 respondents a total of 69 had achieved a moderately low psychosocial development level ranging between a resolution score of 30 and 39, while 81 of the respondents indicated that they had achieved a normal level of psychosocial development ranging between a total resolution score of 40-59. Within this group of 69 respondents who had achieved a moderately low psychosocial development, 11 perceived their mothers to be permissive, whereas 27 saw their mothers to be authoritarian. The remaining 31 however saw their mothers to be authoritative. On the other hand, out of the 81 respondents who had achieved a normal range level of psychosocial development, eight perceived their mothers to be authoritarian. None of these respondents saw their mothers to be permissive but a large number, 73 of them, said their mothers were authoritative. By implication, respondents who perceived their mothers to be authoritarian or permissive scored low on the MPD items indicating moderately low achievement level in psychosocial development, while those who perceived their mothers to be authoritative scored high on the MPD items indicating a normal range level of achievement in the psychosocial development.

In the case of the fathers' parenting styles Table 5, further shows that out of the 150 respondents a total of 69 had achieved a moderately low psychosocial development level ranging between a resolution score of 30 and 39. Within this group of 69 respondents, 10 perceived their fathers as permissive, 36 saw their fathers to be authoritative while the remaining 23 perceived their fathers to be authoritarian. On the other hand, out of the 81 respondents who had achieved a normal range level of psychosocial development, five said their fathers were authoritarian, none of them indicated their fathers were permissive, whereas 76 of them perceived their fathers to be authoritative. The results indicate that

respondents who perceived their fathers to be authoritarian or permissive scored low on the MPD items indicating moderately low achievement level in psychosocial development, while those who perceived their fathers to be authoritative scored high on the MPD items indicating a normal range level of achievement in the psychosocial development. All in all, the findings in Table 5 actually mean that adolescents raised with authoritative parenting style usually exhibit significantly higher levels of psychosocial development than adolescents from authoritarian or permissive homes.

### *Discussion*

The study sought to investigate perceived effect of parenting style on psychosocial development of adolescents. As an objective, the study explored the parenting style of mothers of the respondents as perceived by the respondents themselves. Findings indicated that most of the mothers aligned themselves to authoritative parenting at home. This is to say respondents believe that their mothers at home show them great warmth and are at the same time demanding when the need be. Mothers in this case are demanding and responsive in an attempt to see their wards grow to become what society expects. The findings concur with the suggestions of Kitzinger, (1978), that mothers naturally provide warmth and also feel that the final responsibility of somehow producing a socially acceptable, happy and reasonable bright child falls on them. Again, the findings agree with Darling and Steinberg's (2001) idea that authoritative parents retain their authority, stay in control and expect mature behaviour from their children. It is also known among scholars that mothers with African origin have higher inclination for authoritative leadership (Steinberg, Dornbush, & Brown, 1992; Brody & Flor, 1998).

Again, findings of the study pointed out that most of the fathers of the respondents (adolescents) showed authoritative parenting at home. As earlier indicated with the mothers, fathers also foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to their wards special needs and demands. This finding only reiterates what some scholars found earlier in the academic literature (Baumrind, 1991; Jeynes, 2005).

Further, the study also discovered that adolescents raised with authoritative parenting style usually exhibit significantly higher levels of psychosocial development than adolescents from authoritarian or permissive homes. This assertion is supported by (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1992) who agree

that adolescents raised in authoritative families have higher psychosocial competence and lower psychological and behavioural dysfunctions than those from authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful homes. Conversely, participants whose parents were authoritarian or permissive scored low on the MPD, suggesting that authoritarian and permissive parenting styles did not foster successful resolution of the first five stages of psychosocial development. These are also in accord with the results of prior research (Baumrind, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that mothers and fathers of the respondents are more likely to show behaviours that encourage their adolescents to be independent while maintaining limits and controls on their actions. This is so because mothers and fathers were found to demonstrate authoritative parenthood.

Further, the study can conclude that majority of the adolescents who happen to find themselves in the authoritative parenting homes are more likely to exhibit initiative, purpose, goal directedness, confidence, and accurate assessments of their abilities in their daily lives. This is because the parenting style they were exposed to help them to be successful in Erikson's task resolutions of trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, and identity. The reverse is true for adolescents that found themselves under authoritarian and permissive parents.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

1. Educational psychologist and school counselors are to be engaged by Ghana Education Services purposely to educate the general public especially, parents on the various parenting styles and how they affect psychosocial development of children.
2. Ghana Education Service as a matter of policy must incorporate child rearing practices as part of their seminars and in-service training programmes for teachers. This programme will adequately inform and transform teachers in their daily interactions with children at school and also to take up the challenge of sensitizing parents about issues surrounding all the parenting styles.

3. Future researchers replicate the study in other regions within the country Ghana to make the findings more generalizable in the Ghanaian context.

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