



PARENTING STYLE AND ADOLESCENT AUTONOMY

Dr. (Mrs.) Indira Dhull¹ and Mrs. Pramila Kumari²

¹ Former Head and Dean , Faculty of Education , M.D. University, Rohtak.

² Research Scholar (SRF) , Department of Education , M.D.U. Rohtak.



ABSTRACT

This research brief provides an overview on parenting styles and their impact on adolescent development. The teenage years are often portrayed as stressful for both parents and teens. Research demonstrates that teens undergo a number of developmental adjustments including biological, cognitive, emotional and social changes on their way to becoming adults. Parenting effectively during the teen years, as in any developmental period, requires a thorough understanding of these normative developmental changes.

Parents can benefit from an understanding that how they parent, or their parenting style, provides a basis for many healthy developmental outcomes during adolescence. Understanding the different parenting styles and their impact on the parent-teen relationship may help parents—and their teens—navigate adolescence more smoothly.

Achieving Autonomy : The process of defining the self leads to a renegotiation of the parent-child relationship during adolescence. This renegotiation initially is prompted by the biological changes of puberty and a change in the way adolescents think. Adolescents become more autonomous as they choose to be part of the decision-making process, asking to be treated as more adult and taking responsibility for the consequences of the decisions they make.

The Role of Parents: The role parents play in the development of autonomy can be thought of (1) as promoting independence, in which adolescents must first distance themselves emotionally from their parents, or (2) as promoting self-determination by helping adolescents discover their interests and values. Self-determination contributes to self-esteem and well-being.

Connectedness with Parents: The sense of oneself that adolescents achieve as they distinguish their own attitudes and beliefs from those of their parents and become more self-governing is termed individuation. Family characteristics of individuality and connectedness facilitate the process of identity achievement. These qualities of family life help adolescents explore options while feeling emotionally supported even when family disagreements arise.

KEYWORDS: Parenting Style, Adolescent Development and Adolescent Autonomy.

INTRODUCTION :

Parenting is a most challenging yet rewarding experience. Baumrind, who studied parenting styles during the early 1960s, concluded that they differ in four important areas: parents' warmth/nurturance, discipline strategy, communication skills, and expectations of maturity. She posited three types of parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative (Berger 2001). Parents are the major influence in their children's lives. Thus their perception of how children think, and should be raised is crucial in determining children's

behavior. Other factors, such as genes, peers, culture, gender, and financial status, are of lesser importance. Studies reveal a correlation between parenting styles and school competence, delinquency, violence, sexual activity, antisocial behavior, alcohol and substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and self-perception.

The type of discipline we use can have a dramatic effect on the child's development. Our discipline strategies can have a big impact on the type of relationship we have with our child. The various approaches to discipline can even influence a child's mood and temperament into adulthood. Researchers have discovered four types of parenting styles. These different styles are dependent on what the parent feels the child needs from them.

As a result, each parenting style uses a different approach to discipline and each parenting style has the possibility of affecting children in different ways.

DIFFERENT PARENTING STYLES :-

1. Authoritarian Parenting:

Authoritarian parenting, also termed dictatorial or harsh, is low on warmth/nurturance, strict on discipline, high in parent-to-child communication but low in child-to-parent communication, and high on expectation. This style has been predominant throughout Western history: "It was effective in status quo times, for example in agrarian-industrial societies" (Dinwiddie 1995).

Authoritarian parenting is where parents establish the rules and expect that children will follow them without exception. Children have little to no involvement in problem-solving challenges or obstacles. Instead, parents expect that children will follow all of the rules all the time.

If children challenge the rules or ask why, they are usually told, "Because I said so." Children are not usually given the reasons for the rules and there is little room for any negotiation. Authoritarian parents may use punishments instead of consequences.

This parenting style resembles army rules which are being reflected in the poem "The charge of the Light Brigade" composed by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1854).

Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,

Although children who grow up with authoritarian parents tend to follow rules much of the time, they may develop self-esteem problems. Sometimes children become hostile or aggressive as they may focus more on being angry at their parents for the punishment rather than learning how to make decisions and solve problems.

This is the strict parent which style could be defined by the biblical phrase "spare the rod, and spoil the child."

We might be an Authoritarian Parent, if we:

- Maintain a strict approach to parenting that lacks communication and the possibility of negotiation.
- Spend a lot of time punishing our children for not following our rules, compared to time spent communicating both our expectations and potential consequences if those expectations are not met.
- Believe we need to always project the image of being in charge.
- Are somewhat aloof around the child. We do not want to appear "soft" around our child and do not allow them to see us as vulnerable.

2. Authoritative Parenting :

Authoritative parents also have rules that children are expected to follow, however, they allow some exceptions to the rule. They often tell children the reasons for the rules and they are more willing to consider a child's feelings when setting limits.

Authoritative parents tend to use consequences instead of punishments. They also use more positive consequences to reinforce good behaviors and may be more willing than authoritarian parents to use reward systems and praise.

Children raised with authoritative discipline tend to be happy and successful. They are often good at making decisions and evaluating safety risks on their own. They often grow up to be responsible adults who feel comfortable expressing their opinions.

Authoritative parents set developmentally appropriate limits and standards for behavior. They make it clear that they will help their children. If their demands are not met, they are forgiving and understanding rather than punitive (Glasgow et al. 1997; Berger 2000). Overall, this parenting style is high on mutual understanding and based on reciprocity

We might be an Authoritative Parent if we:

- Hold high standards and expectations for your child, while also being empathic and kind.
- Advocate for your child.
- Establish safe, positive, success-oriented environments that encourage strong bonding with your child.
- Have clear expectations for our child.
- Structure our child's environment with consistency, follow-through, and clearly communicated potential consequences regarding chores, homework, meal time and bed time.
- Communicate regularly with our child, checking in to see how they are feeling and use empathic process to invest them in the process of rules and consequences.

3. Permissive Parenting Style:

Permissive parents don't offer much discipline. They tend to be lenient and may only step in when there is a serious problem. There may be few consequences for misbehavior because parents have an attitude of "kids will be kids."

Permissive parents may take on more of a friend role than a parent role. They may encourage their children to talk with them about their problems but may not discourage a lot of bad behaviors. Kids who grow up with permissive parents tend to struggle academically.

They may exhibit more behavioral problems as they will likely not appreciate authority and rules. They often have low self-esteem and may report a lot of sadness.

Permissive parents take orders and instructions from their children, are passive, endow children with power (Gonzalez-Mena 1993; Garbarino and Abramowitz 1992), have low expectations, use minimal discipline, and do not feel responsible for how their children turn out.

The permissive parent is overly lenient and is unable to teach the rules, create structure, and be consistent with consequences.

We may be a Permissive Parent, if we:

- Allow our child to disobey rules regularly, without any consistent follow-through or consequences communicated ahead of time.
- Would rather compromise rather than confront conflict.
- Believe it is most important to be your child's best friend.
- Find ourselves spending a lot of time over-negotiating, over-compromising and bribing our child.

4. Uninvolved Parenting Style:

Uninvolved parents tend to be neglectful. They often do not meet their children's basic needs and may expect children to raise themselves. Sometimes this is due to a parent's mental health issues or substance abuse problems. They may also lack knowledge about parenting and child development or may feel overwhelmed by life's other problems.

Uninvolved parents tend to have little knowledge of what their children are doing. There tend to be few, if any, rules or expectations. Children may not receive any nurturing or guidance and they lack the much need parental attention.

When parents are uninvolved, children tend to lack self-esteem and they perform poorly academically. They also exhibit frequent behaviour problems and rank low in happiness.

The Uninvolved Parents are neglectful to the physical and emotional needs, safety, and care of their children.

We may be an Uninvolved Parent if we:

- Are often out from home and leave our child to take care of himself on a regular basis.
- Find ourselves preferring to be in places other than with our child.
- Are unaware of the other people in our child's life, including not knowing our child's friends or teachers.
- Make excuses and rationalize why we are away from our child so much in order to network for business, social connections, and maintain our public image.

Research on Parenting Styles :

Developmental psychologists overwhelmingly endorse authoritative parenting as the optimal parenting style for raising adolescents (Steinberg, 2001). Authoritative parenting is associated with healthy adolescent development and provides a balance between affection and support and an appropriate degree of parental control in managing adolescent behavior. This atmosphere provides opportunities for the adolescent to become self-reliant and to develop a healthy sense of autonomy within a set of parental limits, guidelines and rules.

Although an authoritative parenting style is related to positive developmental outcomes, many parents likely use a mixture of different parenting styles when parenting teens. For example, a parent may be more permissive in allowing an extended weekend curfew, but more authoritarian in disallowing their teen to ride in a car with friends after 11 p.m. Thus, parents may modify their individual parenting style to fit particular circumstances.

Parenting styles may also differ between parents (e.g., one parent is permissive while the other parent is authoritarian). In this situation, parents should discuss in private acceptable and unacceptable teen behaviors and those areas where they can reach agreement in parenting their teen. For example, if the teen breaks a rule, both parents could agree on a consequence that they are willing to enforce together, even if their individual parenting style may not warrant this action. In the case of differing parenting styles, parents should aim for consistency in setting and enforcing rules on specific teenage behaviors.

Adolescent behavior also influences parenting style. Whereas a cooperative, motivated, and responsible teen may be more likely to have parents who exercise an authoritative parenting style, an uncooperative, immature, and irresponsible teen may be more likely to elicit a parenting style that is authoritarian or uninvolved.

Like most important topics in psychology, research on parenting styles is not immune to the nature nurture debate. On the nurture side, developmental psychologist Eleanor Maccoby admits that many studies in the past have placed too much emphasis on the effects of parenting style and children's psychological outcomes. An overestimation of these environmental results was due, in part, to the fact that researchers focused on one child in a family but almost never studied more than one child in the same family. For example, on the nurture (environmental) side of the debate, researchers interested in examining the effects of parenting styles on adolescents may have focused on a 13- year-old boy in a particular family, but not on his 8- and 10- year old siblings.

Discussing particular developmental outcomes based on correlations between parenting style and specific adolescent behaviors by studying only one child in a family does not address whether the parenting style or specific individual characteristics of the child contribute to the observed outcomes. In this example, if the 8- 10- and 13-year-old siblings were exposed to the same parenting styles and

demonstrated similar outcomes then researchers may conclude, based upon correlational data, that parenting style is related to specific behavioral and developmental outcomes.

Researchers who study parent adolescent relationships are increasingly looking at the importance of the impact of parenting on adolescent development, and how experiences in the family and other contexts interact with genetic factors to influence behavioral and developmental outcomes (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein, 2000).

Parenting Styles and Ethnicity

Several reasons are proposed for these differences in parenting styles and their outcomes: Ethnic minority families may live in dangerous neighborhoods, where safety is often an issue. In this context, authoritarian parenting, which emphasizes parental control and obedience to parental authority, can be advantageous. This parenting style is potentially less harmful and more beneficial when the context of concerns about unsafe neighborhoods prompts parental behavior. Moreover, most early parenting research was conducted with White, middle-class families, and differences between authoritative and authoritarian styles may not apply as readily to parents from other cultures.

Other Considerations While research findings support a significant relationship between authoritative parenting and positive developmental outcomes, several factors warrant further consideration:

- Research supports consistent parenting, but parenting behaviors may be influenced by internal factors, such as mood and lack of sleep, as well as external factors such as stress and job responsibilities. Overall, however, one parenting style typically emerges as the dominant style.
- Individual adolescent characteristics, such as personality and temperament, are important factors in research on parenting styles as these characteristics may impact parenting behavior.
- Research studies that examine the effects of parenting styles on adolescent outcomes look at correlations, or associations, between parenting style and specific developmental outcomes. Researchers cannot devise experiments in which one group of teens is assigned to a set of parents who will solely parent in an authoritative manner and another group of teens is assigned to parents who will solely parent in an authoritarian manner. As a result, researchers can only state that specific measured outcomes are associated, or correlated with, a particular type of parenting style but not caused by a particular parenting style. Therefore, the possibility exists that a separate, unexamined variable may be contributing to the findings.
- Parenting style is a broad concept that consists of many factors. Additional research is needed to understand the components of the different styles.

ADOLESCENT & AUTONOMY:

The term adolescence comes from the Latin verb *adolescere*, which means “to go into adulthood. Adolescence is a period of rapid physical, cognitive, sexual, social and emotional changes. Basically the transition between childhood to adulthood from about the age of 13 to 19 (known as the teen years). This age period is an adjustment period for the adolescent, their parents, and those who are in frequent contact with them.

Adolescence is known to be a period of discovery when much time is spent searching for an identity or purpose in life (Hartar 1990). It is an exciting and dynamic period in one’s life (Devore and Ginsberg 2005). Adolescents are like fire - a spark at first, growing into a flame presenting the brightening into a blaze. The passage through adolescence is difficult or easy according to how he/she has been prepared for it (Barber 1990). When properly motivated and sufficiently guided they can do more in their life

Adolescent Development: - The adolescent development has various categories. Some of the major categories are:-

1. Physical Development.
2. Cognitive Development.

3. Social Development.
4. Psychosocial Development.

What is Autonomy →

The term autonomy is often used to refer to a set of psychosocial issues that are of particular importance during adolescence. Yet, the particular meaning of the term is often difficult to specify. Moreover, explaining how individuals become autonomous – and why some either do not or do so only partially—varies, depending upon one’s initial assumptions about the meaning and significance of autonomy.

Basically the Autonomy refers to a person’s self ability to think, feel and make decisions for his /her future. The term autonomy refers to an adolescents growing ability to think, feel, make decision. The development of the autonomy does not end after the teen years. Throughout adulthood, autonomy continues to develop whenever someone is challenged to act with a new level of self-reliance.

Autonomy has special meaning during the preteen and teen years because it signifies that an adolescent is a unique, capable, independent person who depends less on parents and other adults.

Why Autonomy is Important during adolescent age?

Adolescents develop their self autonomy through their relationships in their families and with people outside of their families in the society. Generally, during the preteen years and teen years they begin to have more opportunities to govern their own behavior. Many adolescents spend a great deal of time without of direct supervision by adults. As parents and communities struggle to meet the demands of work and family, it is critical for adolescents to develop healthy self-governance of their behavior. Three types of self-governance include:

- Decision-making
- Self-reliance
- Conformity

Decision making abilities improve as we get older. During adolescence we become able to think in the abstract, weigh options, and look ahead to see the possible consequences of our actions. We begin to recognize the value of advice from others. We also begin to realize that advice from others may be influenced by their personal opinions.

Feelings of self-reliance also generally increase with age. However, there is an interesting catch: youth often think they are acting on their own accord, but adults may believe that a youth’s decisions are being influenced by friends.

Conformity also is an important issue during the teen-age years. Conformity is sometimes thought of as “peer pressure.” It means following along with the behaviors or opinions of friends or others. Youth are most prone to peer conformity during the middle adolescent years—in about seventh and eighth grades. Younger adolescents are usually more influenced by parents. Peer pressure increases as teens grow older, but eventually most teens are less affected by peer pressure because they learn to make decisions independently of their peers.

Types of Autonomy → The autonomy has various types but the major types are as under:-

- Emotional Autonomy
- Behavioral Autonomy
- Value / Moral Autonomy

Emotional Autonomy – It is related to emotions, personal thinking and feelings, and how we relate to the people around us in our society. When problems arise emotionally autonomous teens are more able to look for their own solution. Emotional autonomy is usually achieved during the early adolescent age.

Behavioral Autonomy – It is related to behavior of adolescents. It refers to the ability to make decisions independently and to follow thought on these decisions with action. Behavioral Autonomy is usually achieved between the age of 15 to 18.

Value / Moral Autonomy – It is related to independent attitudes and belief regarding spiritually, politics and morals. Value autonomy involves developing a set of beliefs that will guide one's thinking and behavior about right and wrong. Increasingly, adolescent's beliefs become more abstract, more principled and more internal

Autonomy and family problems during adolescent:-

Development of autonomy helps prepare young people to make decisions and take care of themselves. Yet, attempts at autonomy are sometimes blamed for fighting that goes on between parents and adolescents. For many people, family turmoil and rebellion go hand in hand with adolescence.

For a long time, it was believed that detachment from parents was a normal part of growing up, and that family conflict was a normal part of the teenage years. However, research has found that most families stay close during the teenage years. Rather than a process of separation, most families experience a change, or transformation, in family relationships as adolescents develop a sense of autonomy.

During this time, teenagers begin to see their parents as human, and to take more and more responsibility for their own choices and actions. Often there are more quarrels at this time because adolescents want more independence and parents want more closeness and communication. Yet these arguments do not usually lead to lasting problems.

Parenting Style and its impact on Adolescent Autonomy / Nature of Children as per their Parents Styles:-

A Child's nature and development varies according to the nature of his/her parents' styles. The parenting styles directly affect the nature and development of the adolescents. As per parental styles delineated earlier we have four major categories of impact on children i.e.

Children of Authoritative Parents

Authoritative parents regularly communicate expectations and potential consequences, thereby raising a child in an environment that provides both security and confidence, which helps build his self-esteem. Because of the example parents set for a child, he/she learns valuable social skills and is able to have healthy relationships with others.

Children of Authoritarian Parents

The child of an authoritarian parent — a parent who offers too much structure and too little communication — often feels insecure, performs for approval, and connects approval with love. He may have low self-esteem and have difficulty in social relationships. Further, he may break out when away from mom and dad by misbehaving.

Children of Permissive Parents

A child who is raised without structure may have difficulty self-managing his behavior. Freedom without limits can be destructive to child development; without consequences, children don't have a sense of boundaries. As a result, the child from a permissive home will seek structure to help them feel valued, validated and secure. He may have problems with relationships, and lack the self-discipline necessary for social interaction with his peers. His school work may suffer from lack of organization and motivation. This child often lacks responsibility, has difficulty with boundaries and commitment, and is unaware of the importance of significant consequences.

Children of Uninvolved Parents

This kind of neglect can be very dangerous to a child because it affects his sense of self, self-esteem, and well-being. This impacts a child's ability to trust — not only relationships, but also adults. It also makes him take on responsibilities far too early, robbing him of his childhood. Children of uninvolved parents often have problems with intimacy and friendship with their peers.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY:

Adolescent development is characterized by biological, cognitive, and social changes and the development of Autonomy is characterized by the Emotional, Behavioral and Value/ Moral Autonomy. Social changes are particularly notable as adolescents become more autonomous from their parents, spend more time with peers, and begin exploring romantic relationships. Adjustment during adolescence is reflected in identity formation, which often involves a period of exploration followed by commitments to particular identities. Adolescence is characterized by risky behavior, which is made more likely by changes in the brain in which reward-processing centers develop more rapidly than cognitive control systems, making adolescents more sensitive to rewards than to possible negative consequences. Value autonomy means independent attitudes and beliefs regarding spiritually, politics, and morals. Despite these generalizations, factors such as country of residence, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation shape development in ways that lead to diversity of experiences across adolescence. Research findings demonstrate that an authoritative parenting style produces a number of positive developmental outcomes in adolescents. An authoritative parenting style that includes parental monitoring and supervision promotes teen's exposure to positive activities and reduces teen's opportunities for engaging in delinquent, risky behaviors (Wargo, 2007). A warm but firm approach to parenting allows teens to be independent within developmentally appropriate parental limits and boundaries.

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