

Influence of parenting styles on academic performance



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A Critical review:

Parental Warmth, Control, and Involvement in Schooling: Predicting Academic Achievement among Korean American Adolescents

A model published in the late 1960's by Baumrind (1968) stipulated that different types of parental style could influence the academic, social and psychological development of their children. The model has been revised over time, and now incorporates four parenting-style categories determined by the levels of warmth and control exerted by the parent to the child. The categories include authoritative (high warmth, firm control), authoritarian (low warmth, strict control), permissive (high warmth, low control) and rejecting/neglecting (low warmth, low control) types. Research investigating links between type and child achievement have consistently demonstrated a link between authoritative style and good achievement at school (Grade Point Average: GPA). The authors initiated the above study in order to contribute further to the existing research on parental style and child-achievement literature by investigating two predominant shortcomings they identified in the research. Firstly Kim & Rohner (2002) set out to evaluate the flexibility of the model in its application to different ethnic groups - in this particular instance Korean Americans. Its applicability to minorities appears particularly under-researched - the majority of existing research is on American Europeans, and where Asian groups have been sampled, the authors cite that socio-cultural diversity has been ignored with generally only Chinese and Japanese Asian samples included. A second shortfall within the research is stated as a lack of attention to each of the specific dimensions within each parenting style (warmth, control). From these two identified

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factors, the authors put forward four research questions to address: 1) extent to which academic achievement is associated with parental category 2) contribution of parental warmth versus parental control 3) extent to which parental involvement in schooling mediates between warmth / control and achievement 4) relative contribution of maternal style / paternal style to achievement. Direction of the hypotheses was not stated, and the authors can thus be seen to have been conducting a hypothesis generating exercise in regards to the general applicability of the Baumrind (1968) model to the Korean American population, and which aspects of the model best predict achievement.

The research was conducted on Korean American youths in junior and senior American high schools with Los Angeles, who had lived in America for at least 5 months. The authors state that 90% of the sample had lived in the country for over three years, and so it could be said that this may have been better to have been one of the initial screening requirements. The factor of time spent in the country may affect issues such as 'westernisation' of both child and parent and so theoretically this could affect parenting styles (Korean fathers are stated within the article as being typically strict and unaffectionate), and therefore specifically stating the requirement of amount of time living in America to have been greater than three years, may have meant the sample would have been more valid. It may also have been an interesting sample to specifically compare first or second generation Korean Americans to those Koreans who have been in the country a short amount of time (e. g. <6months) would therefore have been unlikely to have westernized in that time. The sample was otherwise well mixed, with roughly

equal amounts of children who spoke Korean versus English at home, and in the SES (socio-economic status) split between working-class and middle-class families. Testing was implemented across three locational setting which will mean that a good capture of the Korean population will have been possible (school, church and Korean Saturday schools.) Strength of the studies methodology can be seen in that Korean and English language questionnaires were provided and so this option would allow the most competent response that would have the least chance of being inaccurately answered due to language difficulties. Parental style was assessed via the Parental acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (PARQ/Control) with answers on a separate sheet for mother and father responses. Scoring on this decided the parental category for their parenting style. Parent involvement in schooling was determined via a 12-item scale through subscales of managerial involvement, encouragement for schooling, indirect involvement (based on Steinberg et al, 1992; and Chao, 1996) and lastly academic achievement through the child's GPA. Family demographics were also taken.

Results of the study were largely unexpected in regards to the fact that 75% of Korean mothers and 73% of Korean fathers were unclassifiable in regards to the boundaries set out in Baumrind's (1968) model, which the authors state due to the majority of Korean mothers and fathers falling within the moderate control on permissive-strictness dimension, which is not included as one of the categories. This in itself is an important finding as it raises the issue of whether the model is applicable to minority groups, possibly even to non-Americans in general. The other experimental hypotheses were

answered, with findings including no difference in GPA for those raised by authoritative or permissive fathers - Baumrind's model would have suggested better achievement for those with authoritative fathers, although authoritative and permissive fathers had better achieving offspring than those with authoritarian fathers. The analysis did however find a positive correlation between warmth of the mother and for the father to better GPA, in which maternal control also moderated. It was also found that parental schooling involvement mediated the relationship between father's warmth and child GPA. Such results must be treated with extreme caution due to the fact that these findings are based on only 26% of the sample due to the remainder not being classifiable within the models categories. It is therefore felt that the most important finding of the study is regarding the apparent bias the model holds in relation to ethnic groups, and that the model may as a result only be applicable to American and American European populations.

The study is as a result of the above statements found to be an important part of the literature on parenting style models based on Baumrind's (1968) classifications. Baumrind's cross-cultural applicability is found to be compromised in regards to some ethnic groups, in this case Korean Americans. Although some research has used Asian groups (predominantly Japanese and Chinese population samples) this piece of work demonstrates the need for more culturally founded categorization processes, due to the fact that around three-quarters of the study sample were not able to be classified. Further research in this area is therefore needed, and greater variety of enquiry into assessing parental styles could be incorporated in order to give a more accurate reflection of the parenting style. For example,

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this study used a single questionnaire (PARQ/Control) completed by the youth. The fact that consent was obtained from parents could have meant that children answered more favorably than they might have done if their parents had not been involved in the study. Also youth of extremely permissive parents may have been excluded from the sample if consent had not been able to be obtained from their parents. It is therefore proposed that a variety of assessment should have been used in order to ascertain parenting style - such as through interview with the parents themselves, or possibly through direct observation. From a generalisation perspective, despite good efforts from the authors to obtain a sample reflective of the Korean American population, the fact that the majority of the sample was unclassified and therefore most of the data from the sample was unusable, the remainder of the findings cannot be said to be reliable. Ethical considerations were sensitively tackled in this study - the questionnaire was available in Korean and English language options, and the sample completed the task in a variety of settings. In summary the study is found to have been well constructed from a methodological standpoint. It has been stated however that greater creativity in regards to measurement of parenting style could have been incorporated is therefore an option for future research. The authors have also picked up on a very important factor relating to the ethnic generalisability, and it may be an important start-point to understand which groups such models are actually applicable to. Due to the ever-increasing cultural-diversity of many countries, the division of a new scale is demonstrated as needed. Such work could be used constructively in schooling situations to identify pupils who may be suffering academically as a result of the parental styles they are experiencing at home. Identification

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may allow resolution of many problems (and subsequently may increase academic achievement) either through the school offering parenting classes, in order to show parents the effect of their behavior and how it can be translated into effects in the class room, or in cases where parents are unwilling to participate, or by offering mentoring systems to those who receive little warmth, control or direction.

Reference

Kim, K & Rohner, R (2002) ' Parental warmth, control and involvement in schooling: Predicting academic achievement among Korean American adolescents' *Journal of cross-cultural psychology* vol. 33, no. 2 pp127-140