The impact of parenting styles on human development essay sample

Every text has a context and the human life and psyche with manifest behaviors is no different. Parenting styles is but one factor in a myriad of facets impacting and influencing lifespan development. The nurturing relationship of maternal and paternal parenting styles influences creativity, self-concept, self-actualization, identity and future parenting style in the child of influence. Lamb (2004) found that fathers' positive involvement in childrearing was associated with healthy outcomes in the social, emotional, and cognitive functioning of children from infancy to adulthood. It is the responsive and influential nature of parenting style that creates a continuum for the child into adulthood. These are the views to be discussed and expounded upon in the course of this paper.

Factors affecting development and growth have been the focus of numerous studies behavioral and scientific fields. Morawska and Sanders (2007) pinpointed socio-economic status, child prematurity and temperament, adverse family history, and single-parent status as factors in the development of behavioral problems observed in children. Evidence linked socio-demographic disadvantages to dysfunctional parenting (Grant, Compas, Stuhlmacher, Thurm, McMahon, & Halpert, 2003) with economic pressure contributing to psychological stress for parents, resulting in increased dysfunctional parenting associated with negative developmental outcomes (Morawska & Sanders, 2007). It was observed that such factors are not easily modifiable thus, focus should be given to factors instead that could be influenced. Among the latter are parental self-efficacy and parenting practices (Kazdin, 1997). It is important however to understand

the factors that contribute to dysfunctional parenting in order to better come up with interventions fitted to actual situations.

Parental Characteristics Influencing Application of Parental Strategy

It should be noted that as important as parenting styles are in child and adolescent development, attention should be given to factors influencing the choice of styles employed by parents. Thus, characteristics of parents should be taken into consideration. Responsiveness for one has been found to be directly correlated to child-centered inclinations (Carlo, McGinley, Hayes, Batenhorst, & Wilkinson, 2007). Parents who are high in responsiveness are more child-centered and thus are more accepting of their children and have more intimate relationships with them. Whereas harsh and neglectful parents have been found to manifest aloof or hostile parenting styles (Carlo et al., 2007).

Parental confidence and parental efficacy are also seen as essential characteristics for parents to be able to implement appropriate parenting styles with children. These factors are noted as parents' knowledge regarding apt parenting strategies on child development. They are generally defined as a parent's perception of the ability to effectively manage parenting related tasks (Morawska & Sanders, 2007). The problem arises when parents are incapable of applying stored knowledge due to reasons such as lack of confidence (Gross & Rocissano, 1988). It is parental confidence which is viewed as relevant under conditions of environmental

stress (Halpern, 1993). With a lack of confidence, parents would easily succumb to the challenges families face.

The stress felt by parents are inevitably felt by their children resulting in faulty self-assessments and breeding insecurities and feelings of inadequacy. Mechanisms of coping displayed by parents are similarly significant as these mechanisms are imitated by children. Without self-efficacy and confidence, a parent would be rendered unable to execute appropriate parental techniques thus leaving situations unanswered. Accurate analysis of self-efficacy in performing parental techniques would also serve to facilitate parent-child relationships as parents are freed from the strain of stress and the illusion of a demand to be faultless as a parent. Thus it has been held that socio-demographic factors and child disruptive behavior were minimal predictors for the employment of coercive parenting. It was found that the best predictor of coercive parenting was a parent's overall sense of competence (Bor & Sanders, 2004).

Environmental and economic stressors are not the only factors affecting parenting styles. Koestner, Zuroff, & Powers (1991) focused on self-criticism and its role in causing critical, rejecting parents to display inconsistent love. The focus of parents on their own shortcomings causes irregularity in the manner and frequency of attention displayed to their children. The moments wherein there is displayed a lack of affection translates to children as a failure on their part. Children's assessment of self-images and desirability are thus put in question as parental self-criticisms are attributed to the self. The internalized experiences result in the formation of negative internal

working models which are applied to concepts of the self, concepts of others, and concepts of relationships with others (Amitay, Mongrain, & Fazaa, 2007). Thus, self-criticism in parents has been shown to affect future relationships of children.

Self-criticism in parents has also been shown to produce the same criticism in children. Insecurely attached, self-critical individuals have been found to be inclined to depressive bouts. Of particular interest has been the inclination of mothers to depression. Besser and Priel (2005) found that maternal depression caused daughters to display depressive tendencies as well as a result of an insecure daughter-mother attachment from which is derived self-criticism leading to depression. The particular study of mother-daughter relationships resulted from the observed behavior of self-critical mothers to become more controlling of adolescent daughters, causing more reliance to be built from their daughters, while providing more negative feedback to the latter fueling insecurities (Thompson & Zuroff, 1998). Besser and Priel, though not meaning to perhaps, displayed in such manner the process of passing on predispositions to self-criticism and depression. The cyclical pattern of self-perceived inadequacy as observed in families may thus be attributed to defective parenting styles.

Parenting Styles

Numerous parenting techniques, strategies, and styles have been established to help parents tackle the tremendous responsibility of raising children. The most popular categories of parenting styles would be

Baumrind's typologies as established in 1971. There were distinguished four alternative forms of parenting styles along the dimensions of " demandingness" and " parental warmth" or " responsiveness" (Leman, 2005). Responsiveness or support pertains to the degree of positive affection observable in parent-child relationships while demandingness or control is the degree of strictness and expressed behavioral standards imposed by parents on their children (Carlo et al., 2007). Baumrind (1991) defines responsiveness as the degree to which a child experiences warmth, acceptance, and nurturance. Responsiveness requires control of children through restriction while encouraging autonomy. These two dimensions are studied in determining development of social and moral behaviors. There thus results four typologies of parenting styles namely authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and recently neglectful was added to the typologies. Previous studies have found that the largest groups are those that practice authoritative or authoritarian styles of parenting. There has thus been much focus on differentiating and defining the two, particularly with the observed contrast in the effects of both.

Authoritarian

Authoritarian attitudes reflect beliefs in strict discipline and obedience and are characterized by an orientation towards discipline and the assertion of power and control over children (Gaertner, Spinrad, Eisenberg, & Greving, 2007). This parenting style is generally held to have negative effects on the development of children, both morally and socially (Gaertner et al., 2007). The inadequacies observed in children who grew up in authoritarian families

were reflected in relationships with peers, self-motivation and value-internalization. The discipline imposed on children is thus not limited to decision-making and household behaviors but this same rigid discipline leads to defective social adaptation in later life.

Authoritarian parents have been shown to be emotionally distant and expressing low availability to children. Gaertner and colleagues (2007) focused on the role of the father in the upbringing of children. It has been observed in multiple social contexts that fathers are less participative in the parenting process thus spending less time with their children. It is thus not surprising to note that most fathers are reported to be authoritarian in the manner of raising children.

Authoritarian views about how to raise children may be coupled with more traditional, gendered attitudes toward domestic work, including child care (Gaertner et al., 2007); that the same are the task of the wife and the husband would be emasculated if asked to perform such chores. Regardless of the debate concerning traditional gender roles, the more detached involvement of fathers in child-rearing practices is a well-documented and observed phenomenon. Admittedly, this is not an all encompassing view as there are exceptions to the rule. It still remains however that the detached attitude is a manifestation and clear indicator of the authoritarian parenting style. It has been shown that such attitudes consistent with authoritarian typologies wherein demands for obedience and behavioral control are distinctive reflect lasting negative effects beginning before parent-child conflicts and disciplining matters are concerned (Gaertner et al., 2007).

It should be noted however that an inconsistency is observed due to the fact that authoritarian parents demanding rule compliance from their children are still relatively unresponsive (Leman, 2005). Thus in this parenting style, there is no higher rule than the authority of the parent who permits children to perform or not to perform acts. Children who repot ha ving authoritarian parents reportedly do well with obedience and conformity to standards set by adults (Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter, & Keehn, 2007). With the high levels of control maintained over their lives and their decisions, self-efficacy would decrease thus leading to lower degrees of self-conception and self-confidence.

Authoritative

While authoritarian styles take disciplining to an extreme, authoritative styles tend to moderate the disciplining factor in child rearing in order to better encourage the openness in a parent-child relationship. Authoritarian styles are often compared with authoritative styles as the two are contrasting to the point of contradiction. Authoritative parenting styles are characterized by emotional support and responsiveness presented with moderate control (Gaertner et al., 2007); it is marked out by warmth, non-controlling discipline, and consistency in affection and attention displayed (Milevsky et al., 2007). Whereas authoritarian outcomes was generally negative for children, child outcomes is generally positive for authoritative parenting strategies. Some of positive effects of utilizing this strategy are manifest in children's academic achievement, inclination towards problem

externalization over internalization, and heightened social competence (Gaertner et al., 2007).

Like authoritarian parents, authoritative parents are also highly in demands. The point of difference is that authoritative parents are responsive. Blind obedience is not permitted here as parents ensure to base obligations imposed on children with justifications and explanations for rationales (Leman, 2005). The openness in communication provides for a more intimate relationship between parent and child thus secure attachments have been found to be fostered in authoritative parenting (Milevsky et al., 2007). The security in the relationship and the open lines of communication develop self-confidence in children. This results to greater evidence of self-efficacy and autonomy in children of authoritative parents as opposed to children of authoritarian parents. Lamborn and colleagues (1991) supported this with results obtained from children who reported having authoritative parents that reflected high levels of psychological competence and low levels of psychological and behavioral dysfunction, particularly so as compared to parents perceived as neglectful.

There are two possible explanations put forward to account for the effectiveness of authoritative parenting styles in promoting development. The first explanation deals with the discourse that occurs between parent and child when moral boundaries are provided (Leman, 2005). Because rationales or reasons are given for each moral rule imposed on the child there is greater security that the establishment of these same rules does not entail mistrust between parent and child. Also, the provision of reasons

grants the child to take confidence in the ability of his or her parent to formulate rules, both moral in nature and those dealing with other areas of focus. The second explanation tendered is that the reasons given by adults for the moral rules put in place, in effect, legitimized these rules (Leman, 2005). This second explanation reflects that it is not so much that the child is able to take hold of an understanding regarding the nature of rules set for him or her. Rather the actual justification mechanism is what children are trained to use when faced with moral-related questions. The same could be said for situations not dealing with morality. As children learn to successfully employ the perspective in analysis utilized by parents with regard to rules set for the child, there is successful development of cognition and problem-solving.

There are results however which reflect that authoritative parenting styles may not necessarily lead to such positive outcomes as previously highlighted by early studies. It is pointed out that parents mainly teach children to make connections between forms of justification and moral rules (Leman, 2005). In essence what is being contemplated is that no actual growth occurs but there is mere communication of reasoning from parent to child. However, subsequent studies have debunked this claim with the display of children's perception of authority justification due to a sense of equality in the parent-child relationship (Leman, 2005). It has also been shown that authoritative parenting styles are effective in teaching social behaviors to children. The reason for such effective acceptance of rules pertaining to social behavior does not result from the mere communication of the same from authority

figures. Rather it is the combination parental responsiveness and parental demand which produce positive pro-social behavior (Baumrind, 1991). Finally, unlike the punitive discipline espoused in the authoritarian parenting style, the inductive, child-centered discipline of the authoritative parenting styles have been found to display high levels of moral reasoning, markers of moral conscience and pro-social behavior in children (Carlo et al., 2007).

Permissive

Permissive parenting styles unlike both the previous parenting styles is characterised by low levels of demandingness and high levels of responsiveness (Leman, 2005). This parenting style is characterized by increased tolerance for child activities, warmth, and acceptance of child inputs with regard not only to conversation but even so with established rules. Authority was clearly held by parents in the first two parenting styles discussed and this same authority was exercised quite clearly in disciplining children. However, with regard to this parenting style, little to no authority is exercised by the parent to influence the behavior of the child.

One important difference that has been noted to be present in the permissive strategy is the utilization by children of other-person perspectives. Justifications for particular situations were made not only on the basis of how they were directly affected or based on how their parents had or would act if found in such a situation. Rather, children took the extra perspective of third persons involved in the situation as well (Selman, 1971). This was observed to result from parents' use of justifications based on the

effect of decisions on other persons. Such justifications are in actuality appeals for the child to consider perspectives and situations that relate with people other than those directly connected with the child. Selman (1971) called this skill as social perspective-taking. It is impressive that permissive parenting styles inculcate the same within its paradigm considering the sophistication and advanced cognitive level that the skill requires.

Social perspective-taking might be likened to an enhanced moral perspective on situations. However, permissive parenting styles are not considered as moralizing strategies (Leman, 2005). The lack of enforcement of moral rules detracts from the character of moral strategy which otherwise would be attributed to permissive parenting. The lack of enforcement leaves whatever moral rules learned by children as merely incidental with morality viewed mainly as diffuse and abstract (Leman, 2005). Overall, permissive parenting is potentially harmful for children. This parenting style fails to give children a sense of personal achievement (Milevsky et al., 2007) with all actions and decisions accepted by parents. There also being a lack of rule system, children are left without goals to meet in order to measure success or acceptability. It has been noted however that permissive parenting styles differ in effect dependent upon the gender of the parent employing the same. The playful nature of the relationship between father and child lends to greater acceptance of permissive fathers (Milevsky et al., 2007). In fact, permissive parenting styles may complement the role of the father in child-rearing and may encourage paternal involvement in the same.

Neglecting-Rejecting

Baumrind's original three parenting styles have been expanded by subsequent research. Nijhof and Engels (2007) expanded this by means of dividing the permissive strategy into two: permissive-indulgent and permissive-neglectful. The former has been shown to result in adolescents with a good grasp of self-confidence although with increased reports on misconduct and vice inclinations (Milevsky et al., 2007). The latter form of permissive parental style is of greater interest and thus has been categorized here, as in other researches, as a separate category. Neglecting parental styles are characterized by parents who are uncontrolling and unresponsive (Nijhof & Engels, 2007). There are thus low levels of demands placed on children but at the same time little support is given and warmth displayed. These parents have been shown to take little interest and make rare observations of their children's behavior (Leman, 2005).

Parenting Styles' Influence and Effects

As Extended to Stages of Adolescence and Adulthood

Having discussed the characteristics of the different parenting styles as defined by Baumrind, there is now the matter of considering the effect of parenting styles on persons in terms of long-term perspectives. It has been shown that children with authoritative parents show high self-reliance and high self-esteem increasing the likelihood that such children will develop to become more independent individuals capable of making own decisions (Nijhof & Engels, 2007).

In order to analyze the effect of parenting styles in terms of independence and autonomy, Nijhof and Engels (2007) studied groups of young adults living in dormitories as a result of enrollment in college universities. Three aspects of authoritative parenting were lauded by this study as effecting efficient buffers against loneliness and homesickness. The first aspect was the acceptance and involvement of parents as these were observed to have a positive influence on the capacity of the child for socialization. The open communication between parent and child serve to facilitate children's development of communication and social skills thus providing leverage in outside social situations that children inevitably find themselves in. The second aspect attributed was the support and limits parents placed on their child. These were seen to contribute to the competence and discipline observed in adolescents as the early training in respecting rules translated into future encounters with social limitations. Finally, the third aspect was the give-and-take feature of authoritative parenting which allowed the child to become more cognitively and socially competent. The fact that parents allowed children to contribute to the character of relationships effected into more mature perspectives and manners employed by children growing up and carrying the same over to adulthood.

The same sense of autonomy could not be said of children of authoritarian parents. The highly controlling and demanding nature of the parents employing authoritarian strategies don't allow room for the child to make own decisions (Nijhof & Engel, 2007). As the child grows up and encounters various situations outside the household, the character of dependence on

other persons more ready to assume leadership roles is maintained. With regard to the homesickness study conducted on college students, children of authoritarian parents displayed greater difficulty adjusting to the new environment as the relationship of dependence on their parents was placed under strain through the geographic distance between parent and child. Past college, these individuals will persist in dependence patterns seeking authorities willing to make decisions for them.

Children with permissive parents display poor social skills as they move towards adolescence and away from the same towards adulthood (Nijhof & Engels, 2007). The low control exhibited by parents during childhood is associated with negative emotions of unworthiness and lack of motivation to establish and achieve goals. Such conditions translate into later years into poor social skills with individuals display of self-centeredness, impulsiveness, and aggressiveness (Nijhof & Engels, 2007). In years of adolescence, the poor social skills leads to bouts of loneliness and inadequacy in fitting in with peers. The low control from parents sustains feelings of little to no expectations from parents which later on translate to low self-expectations leading to under-involvement. The lack of interaction with the parent causes children to internalize and self-attribute perceived faults and wrongs in childhood and adolescent situations (Nijhof & Engels, 2007). The lack of limitation also established diffuse boundaries for the self allowing for children of permissive parents to develop into individuals low in self-control. While children of authoritative and authoritarian parents have active coping mechanisms to draw from as a result of their interaction with their parents

and the limitations set by the same over them, children of permissive parents do not have the same luxury. It was thus observed that only passive coping mechanisms were exercised by children with permissive parents (Nijhof & Engels, 2007).

In Relation to Mental Health

Dr. Henry Cloud (2004) used the example of two preschool aged children who showed similar interests in building blocks, art and creative design to illustrate the dichotomy between nature and nurture as sources of greater influence for personality and behavior development. Cloud (2004) discusses the relationship of nature, which is akin to personality and temperament, and relates it to nurture which is the shaping of this nature. The two toddlers who had similar innate talents were noted to have natural attractions to engineering principles. One child " Susie" had parents who practiced permissive parenting styles which required the recognition of her talents and attractions. As a result, the parents worked to encourage and nurture the talents displayed by Suzie.

They supported her through praise, education and activities that nurtured her innate nature. The case study showed that Suzie later on became an engineer and architect involved in building construction. Conversely, the second toddler with the same talents and nature as Suzie was exposed to authoritarian parenting styles. The parents in the latter case viewed the toddler's interests as empty-headed and, over time, stifled and destroyed the child's interest in construction. As a result, she drifted into a life of

drudgery following familial patterns of making-ends-meet jobs which she considered as unfulfilling. Through the two case studies it was displayed that parenting styles and nurturing relationships have a direct impact on a child's nature and that those childhood developmental influences continue into adulthood and shape an individual emotively, cognitively and behaviorally.

Conclusion

It has been shown that the manner of nurturing the innate nature of children influences the development of talents and interests that children were deemed to have been born with. The manner of nurturing utilized by parents may be classified into the four typologies of Baumrind: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful. The authoritarian parental style is characterized by high levels of demands made on children with little intimacy and openness in the parent-child interaction. The authoritative parental style is characterized by a coexistence of demands and limiting rules imposed on children as well as an observation of openness and warmth in parent-child relations. The permissive parental style is characterized by low levels of demand and low reflections of warmth on the side of parents leading to negative emotions on the part of the child.

The neglectful parental style is characterized by a disregard for the needs of the child. Permissive and neglectful styles are similar in that there are low demands and low levels of intimacy displayed. However, the difference is found in that permissive parenting provides for open environment of communication wherein the child is viewed as an active contributor.

Whereas in neglectful parenting, the child is not only disqualified as a contributor but is sometimes discounted as an actual part. The relationship between these parenting styles is a predicator to personality constructs (McIntyre, McIntyre, & Hardaway, 2007). As such, mental health professionals must investigate parenting styles and upbringing as they relate to adolescent developmental issues and mental health disorders in clients.

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