

# The Effect of Parental Styles on Social Skills

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Parental educational styles have a significant effect in personal development. These styles (authoritative, democratic, permissive and neglectful) can be related to affects and social skills at the individual level. The results suggest that parenting styles are closely related to affects and social skills. It is also suggested that affects play a mediating role in the relationship between parenting styles and social skills.

Keywords: parenting styles ; affects ; social skills

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## 1. Introduction

Family plays a crucial role in the early acquisition of habits, skills and behaviours. Adults, in both families and the school, are essential in the education of children <sup>[1][2][3][4]</sup>. Individual and contextual factors also play a direct role in educational processes.

Complementing Baumrind's <sup>[5][6]</sup> pioneering research on parental styles and the effect of family socialisation on social skills in children and teenagers, MacCoby and Martin <sup>[7]</sup> developed a typology of four parental styles: authoritative, democratic, permissive and neglectful. These styles result from the combination of two variables: affects and control. As such, parenting styles can be defined as the behaviour of adults as children's models in terms of everyday choices, decision making, conflict resolution, expectation management and rulemaking. These will determine the children's behaviours and emotions throughout their lives <sup>[8][9]</sup>.

The socialisation strategies mobilised by parents for the social development and integration of their children can be characterised based on the following criteria: (1) communication levels (acceptance–rejection, warmth–coolness, proximity–distance); (2) the tone of the relationship (affection–hostility); (3) the tools used to channel behaviour (autonomy–control, flexibility–rigidness, permissiveness–restrictions). The combination of these variables results in different parenting styles which, in any case, are only general behavioural trends, because the parent–children relationship is bidirectional <sup>[10][11]</sup>. As such, although there is some consensus about the division of parenting styles into four broad styles (democratic, authoritative, permissive and neglectful), the norm is for these to mix and evolve according to developments in the family relationship.

### 1.1. Characteristics of Different Styles

The democratic style is characterised by open shows of parental affection, giving explanations, expressing concern for the needs of the children, promoting desirable behaviours, justifying reprimands and communicating openly. These households are dominated by a democratic environment and emotional warmth. As a result, the children tend to develop good social skills, self-control, initiative, motivation, self-esteem, good morale and realistic self-concept and are generally happy, spontaneous, reliable, committed (altruism, solidarity), sociable, both within and outside the household, prone to achieve and unlikely to cause parent–children conflicts <sup>[2][3][4][12]</sup>.

The authoritative style is characterised by detailed and rigid rules, prioritising punishment over praise, blaming children for mistakes, closed and unidirectional communication (no dialogue), frequent asserting of parental authority and an autocratic environment. As a result, children have little autonomy and self-confidence, poor social skills, low creativity, they are prone to aggression and impulsiveness and tend to adopt heteronomous moral standards (avoidance of punishment) and they are less happy and spontaneous <sup>[2][3][4][13][14][15]</sup>.

The permissive style is characterised by a lack of concern for the children's negative or positive behaviour, passiveness, the children's misbehaviour tends to go unpunished, all the children's impulses are tolerated and authority is insufficiently asserted, no restrictions are imposed and the wishes of children are easily granted. As a result, children tend to develop poor social skills, low self-esteem weak self-identity poor self-control and hetero-control, lack of emotional stability,

negative self-concept, poor self-concept and self-responsibility, insecurity, little regard for the rules and for others and academic underachievement [2][3][4][16][17].

The neglectful style is characterised by emotional indifference towards the children's issues, parental relinquishment of responsibility, lack of motivation, commitment and involvement and immaturity. As a result, children develop poor social skills, impulsivity and aggression and tend to lack motivation, commitment and maturity [2][3][4][18][19].

To some extent, these parenting styles, along with other household factors, such as the school environment, relation with peers and individual traits such as personality and social skills, determine the individual's behaviour [20][21][22][23][24][25][26].

On the other hand, affects are defined as a binary relationship between positive and negative emotions, which is grounded, according to Watson and Tellegen [27], on a hereditary base. According to this view, positive affects relate to pleasant emotions: motivation, affiliation, achievement and success. Negative affects, for their part, relate to unpleasant emotions: fear, inhibition, insecurity, frustration and failure [28][29][30]. In this way, a person dominated by positive affects generally harbours positive feelings such as satisfaction, enthusiasm, energy, friendship, attachment, affirmation and trust. They are, therefore, extroverted, optimistic and resilient. Conversely, a person dominated by negative affects tend to harbour negative feelings such as detachment, boredom, sadness, guilt, shame and envy. They are, therefore, prone to react to negative stimuli aggressively and to emotional lability, stress and negative views [31][32][33].

Finally, social skills can be defined as a set of abilities used in interpersonal relationships and interactions. They determine a person's ability to act in a way that leads to rewards and avoids punishment and social ostracism [34][35][36]. That is, they are a set of skills that expresses an individual's feelings, attitudes, wishes and opinions in an interpersonal setting. Good social skills tend to solve immediate interpersonal conflicts and minimise the chance for future confrontations [37][38]. These skills are chiefly acquired through training, observation, imitation, trial and information; that is, they are acquired traits. Nobody is born with a given repertoire of social skills; they are learned behaviours. There are two major types of social skills, basic and complex, and the former needs to be learned before the latter can be acquired. The learning process begins during childhood and develops largely during adolescence, when adult communicational and relational skills are acquired. Social skills are a necessary tool for positive social relations to lead to personal wellbeing [39][40].

## 1.2. Parenting Styles, Affects and Social Skills

Parenting styles, affects and social skills play a crucial role in personal development and in the way individuals handle themselves in social contexts.

Affects and social skills can act as risk or protection factors with regard to problematic behaviours during adolescence. Increasing personal autonomy, changes in family relationships, the transition from specific to formal thinking, shifting social relations, etc., are factors that shape the psychosocial development of the individual, in which the family plays a central role. Parenting styles and family relationships around adolescents are a key factor in their emotional, social and personal development [4][41]. These notions (parenting styles, affects and social skills) can be related, with the parenting styles having an effect on the other variables.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that parenting styles will have different effects on each individual, based on their personal traits. That is, there is no correct parenting style, which must instead adapt to the individual traits and environmental conditions, as pointed out by Aroca and Cánovas [42].

## 2. Current Insights of the Relationship between Parenting styles, Affects and Social Skills

Gender differences are among the most widely studied factors in these relationships [43][44]. Some studies suggest that fathers are more prone to authoritative parental styles and mothers to more inductive styles [45][46][47][48][49][50]. The results indicate that democratic parenting styles are adopted by a similar percentage of fathers and mothers. Meanwhile, permissive styles are more often applied to women and authoritative styles to men. Finally, neglectful parenting styles are somewhat more commonly applied to men. This could be the result of a greater percentage of men presenting behavioural problems, forcing parents to adopt disciplinary measures [51] and apply punishments [48][52]. The results indicate that affects and social skills are related to parenting styles. Previous studies have pointed out that parental affection is related to children's psychological wellbeing [18][53][54][55], and this was confirmed here. Higher scores in terms of negative affects were also attested among women, as also pointed out in previous studies [56] that yielded higher scores in the social-skills-related variable emotional support, emphasising the important role played by affect in social skills, as noted in the existing literature [57][58][59].

Permissive parenting styles, on the other hand, result in higher scores in terms of negative affects than the other parenting styles, and one out of five of the respondents educated under a permissive regime scored high in this variable. In addition, people educated under a permissive regime scored high in terms of emotional support, as suggested by some studies that argue that permissive parenting styles offer better chances of psychosocial fit to children than democratic styles [60][61][62]. Authoritative parenting styles lead to higher scores in either positive or negative affects than those yielded by democratic and permissive parenting styles. This agrees with the idea that authoritative parenting styles are related to such aspects as low self-esteem and self-concept and poor social skills [63][64]. Finally, neglectful parenting styles lead to low scores in positive affects and all variables related to social skills. These results suggest that neglectful parenting styles have a negative effect in the socialisation of children, wellbeing, self-esteem, autonomy and social skills [18][65].

Gender and age variables were taken into account and were found not to have a significant impact on the relationship between parenting styles and social skills. The results indicate that parenting styles have a mediating effect on positive and negative affects, strongly suggesting that parenting styles play a significant emotional role, in line with previous studies, which have related parenting styles to other variables such as subjective wellbeing [66][67].

### 3. Conclusions

It is suggested that parenting styles are related to affects and social skills. It is also indicated that affects play a mediating role in the relationship between parenting styles and social skills. Finally, owing to the implications of parenting styles not only for affects and social skills but for the overall psychological, social and personal development of children, it is concluded that these issues should be addressed jointly by families and schools.

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