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Adolescents' Self-esteem and Academic Achievement in Ghana: The Role of Parenting Styles and Sex Differences

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Authors NK and EKM conceived the study and design. Authors EKM and EAA collected data and data analysis was performed by authors NK and EAA. Author NK wrote the first draft of the manuscript and author EAA edited the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of parenting styles on adolescents' self-esteem and academic achievement in the Ho municipality of the Volta Region in Ghana. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) students from two schools were randomly selected. The cross-sectional survey method was used and the variables in the study were measured with The Parenting Style Scale, The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and End of Term examination records. The data was analyzed with the Two-way Analysis of Variance. The results showed that parenting styles had significant effects on adolescents' self-esteem and academic achievement. However, no significant sex differences were observed in self-esteem and academic achievement of the adolescents. The implication of these findings is that the type of parental upbringing has significant impacts on the psychosocial outcomes of adolescent and therefore, parents and caregivers should ensure the use of best practices in child upbringing.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In children's development as well as their general course of life, the kind of parental upbringing they receive have a major influence on them [1,2]. It has been noted that parenting styles significantly affect adolescents' social, psychological and physical wellbeing across the world. [3,4] spearheaded the development of research into the effects of parenting style on children and delineated a number of different child-rearing styles, namely; authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and rejecting–neglecting. The authoritative parenting style has been suggested as the most effective parenting style for promoting overall levels of adjustment [5,6].

Further, authoritative parents are viewed as demanding but responsive, and as exercising firm, negotiated, control in a warm and loving environment. These parents praise their child for recognized qualities and competencies and the children, in turn, show the highest levels of internalization of parental standards [5]. The other parenting styles are considered much less conducive to overall adjustment. For instance, the permissive parents believe that any form of control or discipline inhibits the child's natural tendencies and prospects of self-actualization and therefore, must be accorded the needed freedom to develop. Thus, Baumrind [4] concluded that 'the permissive parent sees him- or herself as a resource for the child to use as he wishes, but not as an active agent responsible for shaping and altering the child's on-going and future behavior'. In contrast, authoritarian parents are more likely to resort to punitive discipline styles to control the behavior of their children and they give their child little room for negotiation. In the Ghanaian culture, there seems to be no clear-cut distinction among the various parenting styles adopted in child-upbringing. In most cases two or more parenting styles may be employed depending on the circumstances.

Meanwhile, several psychological outcomes have been reported to be associated with parenting styles. Some of these variables include self-esteem, academic achievement, emotional adjustment and social competence [7-9]. In terms of the relationship between the parenting styles and adolescents' self-esteem, several outcomes have been reported. Self-esteem as defined by [10] is the "sense of contentment and self-acceptance that results from a person's appraisal

of his own worth, significance, attractiveness, competence, and ability to satisfy his aspirations". Also, self-esteem has been referred to as an overall evaluation of one's worth or value as a person [11]. In general, self-esteem concerns how people view themselves. That is, it tells us how valued and socially accepted we are in the eyes of others. Self-esteem is a construct involving a person's perception about his or her own worth, and it affects the manner in which he or she deals with the environment [12].

Self-esteem is reported to be one of the most important predictors of participation in young people [13] and for that matter, it is necessary to determine which of the parenting styles results in higher self-esteem among adolescents. For instance, the Canadian Council on Learning [14,15] showed that the authoritative parenting style is linked to greater social competence and children of this parenting style report better self-esteem. In a similar vein, [15] found a significant association between the authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles and levels of self-esteem and that, greater number of students from authoritative families have higher levels of self-esteem than authoritarian families.

Similarly, parenting styles may impact the academic achievement of adolescents. The academic performance and achievement of students have been of great concern to stakeholders in Ghana considering the falling standards of education in the country. The issues of academic performance and achievement have taken centre stage in almost every aspect of our social and political discussions. There has also been the outcry of the breakdown of discipline in the society which can all be linked to both the family background and the society as a whole. Observations of the difficulties that are confronting us as a nation or society seems to be underexplored in the face of harsh economic challenges where parents no more have enough time for their children but leave them in the hands of caretakers. As a result, when these adolescents have problems with their self-esteem many aspects of their lives will be in danger.

[16] emphasized the importance of environmental influence as a major factor in the development of students' academic performance. Likewise, [17] asserted that the family background of the student is the most important

factor that affects the student's academic performance. This therefore goes a long way to emphasize the importance of the kind of parental upbringing that parents give to their children in their overall psychosocial functioning. Furthermore, student achievement has been shown to be the result of learning, instruction, school environment, and family conditions, and the impact of student achievement on society can be staggering considering the ramifications for the next generation [18]. Thus, the need to explore the consequences of the types of parenting styles that are experienced by children in their upbringing on their self-esteem and academic achievement cannot be overemphasized.

The general aim of this study is to examine the influence of parenting styles on adolescents' self-esteem and academic achievement. It was therefore, hypothesized that 1) Authoritative parenting will result in higher self-esteem in adolescents than authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, 2) Authoritarian parenting will result in higher self-esteem than permissive parenting, 3) Authoritative parenting will result in better academic achievement in adolescents than authoritarian and permissive parenting styles and 4) Authoritarian parenting will result in better academic achievement than permissive parenting.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Population and Sample

The population of the study was all the basic school students in Ho Municipality of the Volta Region of Ghana. This population was made up of children with diverse demographic characteristics. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) students from the basic schools were randomly selected from two basic schools. The sample included 61 male representing 50.80% and 59 female students representing 49.20% of the total sample. The ages of the respondents ranged between ten (10) years to eighteen (18) years with a mean age of 15.74 years.

2.2 Measures

A set of questionnaires were used and the first part consisted of the biographical data which included the age, sex, and class of the respondents. The second part consisted of The Parenting Style Scale designed by [19]. The

scale has three dimensions, namely; Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive parenting styles. It has 32 items on the basis of the changes that were made in 2001 [20]. Each item of the scale is rated on a five 5-point likert scale described as, "never", "once in a while", "about half of the time", "very often" and "always". The scale has a reliability of $\alpha = 0.81$, 0.83 and 0.65 for the authoritative, authoritarian and permissive subscales respectively. It is scored by summing up the subscales to obtain a total score for each subscale.

The third part of the questionnaire consisted of the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale [21]. The scale is a 10-item scale answered on a 4-point Likert scale with the responses ranging from 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. Some examples of the items on the questionnaires include 'I am able to do things as well as most other people', 'I certainly feel useless at times', and 'At times, I think I am no good at all' among others. Several researchers have reported the reliability and validity of the test in different populations. The test has a Pearson r correlation coefficient of 0.67 with Kelly Repertory Test (Kelly, 1955) and 0.83 with Health Self-Image Questionnaire (Health, 1965).

The academic achievements of the students were measured by getting information from their teachers in an end of term exams results in English, Mathematics and Science. The averages were found for the three scores in percentages to get a single academic achievement score for each respondent.

2.3 Design and Procedure

The design for this study was a cross-sectional survey which involved the gathering of information from the respondents once. For the procedure of this study, a letter of introduction was sent to the various schools for approval and permission. The purpose of the study was explained to the authorities in order for them to make an informed decision. After the approval from the heads of the schools, an informed consent was sought from the teachers regarding the participation of the students as most of them were minors. The ethical guidelines stipulated by the APA code (2002) were strictly adhered to in terms of confidentiality, right to withdrawal, voluntary participation, and protection of dignity. After the consent, a date was fixed for the administration of the questionnaires. The respondents were gathered in four classrooms

and administered the questionnaires. The researchers were available to offer further explanations to any questions raised during the data collection. The completion of the questionnaires took between 20 and 30 minutes. The completed questionnaires were collected the same day after the administration for analysis.

3. RESULTS

Results from the analyses of data are presented in the Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 below;

To test the stated hypotheses, the two-way analysis of variance was done and the results show that the sex of respondents has no significant main effect on their level of self-esteem, [$F_{(1,114)}=.897, P = .35$] as well as their academic performance, [$F_{(1,114)}=.018, P = .90$]. Therefore, no significant sex differences exist between males and females in their levels of reported self-esteem as well as their academic achievement. The parenting styles of the respondents however, has a significant main effect on respondents' reported self-esteem, [$F_{(2,114)}=4.244, P =.02$] and also a significant main effect on respondents' level of academic achievement, [$F_{(1,114)}=4.017, P =.02$]. The interaction effect of the respondents' sex and

parenting style was not significant in their reported self-esteem, [$F_{(2,114)}=.701, P =.50$] as well as the respondents' academic achievement, [$F_{(2,114)}=.658, P =.52$]. Results are summarized in the Table 2 below;

Since the levels of the independent variable are more than two, a post-hoc analysis was done and the results which are summarised in the Tables 3 and 4 below showed that there was no significant difference in the self-esteem scores and academic achievement between respondents with authoritative parents and those with authoritarian parents.

On the other hand, the respondents with authoritative parents reported a significantly higher self-esteem and academic achievement than respondents with permissive parents. In addition, respondents with authoritarian parents also reported a higher self-esteem and academic achievement than those with permissive parents. This means that the least favourable parenting style for adolescents' self-esteem and academic achievement is the permissive parenting style, followed by the authoritarian parenting style while the most favourable parenting style is the authoritative parenting style.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of self-esteem and academic achievement

	Sex	Parenting styles	Mean	STD. dev.	N
Self-esteem	Male	Authoritative	23.41	4.23	34
		Authoritarian	24.55	5.79	20
		Permissive	21.14	3.34	7
		Total	23.52	4.75	61
	Female	Authoritative	23.62	5.56	37
		Authoritarian	24.56	5.77	18
		Permissive	17.25	6.34	4
		Total	23.47	5.84	59
	Total	Authoritative	23.52	4.94	71
		Authoritarian	24.55	5.70	38
		Permissive	19.73	4.76	11
		Total	23.50	5.29	120
ACAD. ACHIE.	Male	Authoritative	67.38	8.92	34
		Authoritarian	66.70	5.66	20
		Permissive	61.14	4.95	7
		Total	66.44	7.76	61
	Female	Authoritative	69.62	9.94	37
		Authoritarian	65.17	6.66	18
		Permissive	61.25	3.86	4
		Total	67.69	9.07	59
	Total	Authoritative	68.55	9.47	71
		Authoritarian	65.97	6.12	38
		Permissive	61.18	4.38	11
		Total	67.06	8.42	120

Table 2. Summary of ANOVA of parenting styles, self-esteem and academic achievement

Source	Dependent variables	SS	df	MS	F	p
Sex	Self-esteem	24.373	1	24.373	.897	.35
	Academic achievement	1.191	1	1.191	.018	.90
Parenting style	Self-esteem	230.532	2	115.266	4.244	.02
	Academic achievement	545.537	2	272.768	4.017	.02
Sex* parenting	Self-esteem	38.088	2	19.044	.701	.50
	Academic achievement	89.415	2	44.707	.658	.52
Error	Self-Esteem	3095.940	114	27.157		
	Academic achievement	7741.039	114	67.904		
Total	Self-esteem	3334.000	119			
	Academic achievement	8434.592	119			

Table 3. Summary of multiple comparisons of parenting styles and self-esteem

Parenting styles	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive
Authoritative -		1.036 ^{n.s}	4.230*
Authoritarian -		-	5.356*
Permissive -		-	-

*n.s. = not significant at .05 alpha level. * = significant at .05 alpha level*

Table 4. Summary of a multiple comparison of parenting styles and academic achievement

Parenting styles	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive
Authoritative -		2.569 ^{n.s}	7.306*
Authoritarian -		-	4.737*
Permissive -		-	-

*n.s. = not significant at .05 alpha level. * = significant at .05 alpha level*

4. DISCUSSION

The extent to which parenting styles influence the different aspects of adolescents' lives are much of concern to everyone in society. Several outcomes from previous research have reported diverse findings from different cultures and countries. Therefore, this study was aimed at investigating the influence of parenting styles on the self-esteem of adolescents as well as their academic achievement. Firstly, no statistically significant difference was observed between the self-esteem of authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles. This is inconsistent with previous findings which reported higher self-esteem for authoritative upbringing than authoritarian upbringing. For instance, [15] reported that greater numbers of students from authoritative families have high level of self-esteem than authoritarian families. Similarly, [6] in their study among adolescents found that perceived parental authoritativeness is related to

high hope whilst perceived parental authoritarianism was related to low self-esteem. Other authors have reported no difference or even higher self-esteem for authoritarian parenting style among adolescents. For instance, [22] explored the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem among Brazilian adolescents and their results suggest that Authoritative parenting is not associated with optimum self-esteem in Brazil. Thus, their finding is consistent with the finding in this current study.

The non-significant difference between authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles can be attributed to cultural differences that are peculiar to the Ghanaian setting, where punishment is seen as the normal way of bringing up a child and therefore, it is difficult to actually differentiate between authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles. Also, it is not rare for parents who mostly adopt the authoritative parenting style to shift to using some methods traditionally associated with the authoritarian parenting style as demanded by the situation. It is therefore difficult to categorize parents strictly into either authoritative or authoritarian parenting style in this culture.

Secondly, to determine whether the adolescents with authoritative parents have higher self-esteem than those with permissive parents, the mean self-esteem scores were compared and the result showed that respondents with authoritative parenting have higher self-esteem than those with permissive parenting. This finding is consistent with previous findings by [23] indicating that authoritative mothering is related to higher self-esteem and life-satisfaction and to lower depression. In the same vein, [24] found that both the indulgent and authoritative parenting styles were associated with better outcomes than authoritarian and neglectful parenting. Therefore, comparing the two types of parenting styles on adolescents' self-esteem the

authoritative parenting results in higher self-esteem than permissive parenting. As the Ghanaian culture is that which supports strict parental guidance, the adolescents with such permissive parents are likely to think that they are being neglected which could affect their self-esteem negatively compared to adolescents with authoritative parents.

Furthermore, it was found out that the adolescents from families with authoritarian parenting style also have higher self-esteem than those with permissive parenting style. This outcome is consistent with earlier study outcomes which demonstrated that authoritarian parenting style results in higher self-esteem than permissive parenting style. Some of these findings include those by [25] in a study that measured and compared mental health, self-esteem and quality of life of children with authoritative, permissive and authoritarian parents in Iran and found permissive parenting to result in lesser self-esteem among children than the authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles. The current finding is not surprising because within the Ghanaian cultural context, a parent who is strict is perceived to be caring and loving towards the child, this as a result is likely to give the children high belief in the "self" unlike the permissive parenting style which may be seen as lack of concern on the part of the parent.

The study also found out that even though adolescents with authoritative parenting seemed to have a better academic achievement than those with authoritarian parenting, the mean difference was not statistically significant. The finding can be attributed to the fact that differentiating between the two types of parenting styles is not clear cut in the Ghanaian context and should be looked at again in an exploratory manner. This finding is however inconsistent with previous studies by [26] who reported that students from a family displaying more involvement, higher levels of nurturance, and encouragement of more autonomy (i.e., the characteristics of authoritative parents) were more academically successful. Similarly, [27] also revealed that authoritative parenting positively and significantly predicted academic performance of college students, whereas permissive and authoritarian parenting styles did not have significant relationships with academic performance. On the contrary, the present finding is consistent with previous findings by [28] who did not find any significant difference between the parenting styles.

Conversely, a significant mean difference in academic achievement scores was obtained between respondents with authoritative parents and those with permissive parents. The respondents with authoritative parents reported a significantly higher academic achievement than respondents with permissive parents. Thus, it is not surprising that adolescents with permissive parents live life in their own way and may be less motivated to study or take their academic works seriously in the absence of proper parental guidance as in the authoritative parenting style. This finding is in line with earlier findings that authoritative parenting results in better academic achievement than permissive parenting.

For instance, [17] in a study among adolescents in Nigeria found that academic performance of students in the selected schools was significantly positively correlated with a good parenting style and that parental involvement at all grade levels can assist in the academic and behavioural performance of students. In the same vein, [27] also revealed that authoritative parenting positively and significantly predicted academic performance of college students, whereas permissive and authoritarian parenting styles did not have significant relationships with academic performance.

Moreover, a significant academic achievement mean difference score was obtained between respondents with authoritarian parenting and those with permissive parenting. Adolescents with authoritarian parents had higher academic achievement than those with permissive parents. This finding is not surprising as unconcerned parents (permissive) do not take keen interest in their children's school activities and the necessary guidance to study, take action in response to poor performance are always lacking in permissive homes. This could be accounting for the significant difference in the academic achievement between adolescents with authoritarian and permissive parents.

This finding is consistent with the conclusion drawn from a study by [17] that parental involvement at all grade levels can assist in the academic and behavioural performance of students. This is because when children are left alone to do things their way without parental control when needed, the outcomes can be very disastrous. However, the finding of this academic achievement difference is inconsistent with previous finding by [24] that both authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles result in low outcomes.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined adolescents' self-esteem and academic achievement in among selected students in Ghana by investigating the role of parenting styles and sex differences. The results indicated a significant effect of parenting styles on adolescents' self-esteem and academic achievement but no significant sex differences. It is concluded from these findings that parenting styles play significant role in influencing adolescents' outcomes and therefore, stakeholders need a consented effort to identify the most effective parenting style for the Ghanaian population to ensure better psychosocial outcomes of adolescents.

6. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The main limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size which makes it difficult for the results to be generalized to the larger population. Also, as a result of time and material constraints, academic achievement was measured by just taking the averages of the performances in just a term which may not be a true reflection of the abilities of the children since other factors could have affected academic performance in a term. Therefore, future research should make use of random sampling technique and a relatively larger sample size such that external validity of the result can be guaranteed. Also, future studies should explore the types of parenting styles unique to the Ghanaian culture as the typologies from the western world may not reflect what pertains in our setting.

COMPETING INTEREST

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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