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Parenting style, involvement of parents in school activities and adolescents' academic achievement

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Abstract

This paper deals with problems of correlations between a parenting style, involvement of parents in school activities and academic achievements of adolescents. The theoretical concepts of Baumrind (1991) and Epstein (2002) were used as theoretical framework. The research was conducted with the aim to determine a correlation between a parenting style, involvement of parents in school activities and success of adolescents in schools. There were 400 parents and 200 adolescents who were examined. A PSDQ questionnaire of parenting styles and dimensions was used (Parenting Styles & Dimensions Questionnaire, Robinson, Mandlco, Olsen, & Hart, 2001) for examining parenting styles. A scale was designed according to the Epstein concept for examining the involvement of parents. The results of the research showed that an authoritative parenting style was characteristic for mothers, which was correlated with a higher involvement in school activities and a greater success of adolescents. An authoritarian parenting style is dominant for fathers and it is correlated with a lack of time necessary for involvement in school activities. The given results indicate a problem concerning involvement of fathers in school activities of children and the indifference of school to establish a partner relationship with parents. School should offer relevant information about effects of various parenting styles on achievements of students within collaborating between school and a family and establishing a partnership between school and a family.

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1. Parenting styles and academic achievement of adolescents

In order to understand the competence of parental functioning, research concerning the correlation between a parenting style of a parent and school achievements of the adolescents are crucial. One of the first researches was organized by Baumrind (1968). Following the children longitudinally from preschool to adolescence, she established that the children of authoritative parents were more mature, socially more independent, more active and more successful than the children who had non-authoritative parents. She also established that the preschool children who had permissive parents showed a low level of self-esteem, self-control and competence. In order to establish whether these results were stable and firm, she reorganized a research in the period of adolescence and confirmed that the correlation between the parents' styles and school achievement was in accordance with the previous results. Compared within their age group, adolescents from authoritative families were cognitively motivated and object-oriented. Also, they had the highest scores on verbal and math tests. They were socially responsible, had high self-esteem and internal locus of control. According to Baumrind, the authoritative parenting style is characterized by parents who encourage verbal communication and a child's initiative and they also make conclusions together. Authoritative parents recognize their rights as older persons, but also a special interest of the child, they recognize current qualities of a child but also set standards for future behaviour. They use their common sense but also power in order to accomplish their goals. Their decisions are neither based on mutual agreement, nor solely on child's wishes, but they do not consider themselves as perfect or not subject to mistakes. Authoritative style is characterized by a relatively high but reasonable control combined with rationalism adequate for a child's age. Strategies of authoritative parents, according to Baumrind (Baumrind, Thompson, 2002) include: 1) scaffolding of children's competence, including children's social competence, through shared activity and conversations; 2) reliance on persuasion rather than on coercion; 3) monitoring of offspring and use of contingent reinforcement; 4) consistency with the "minimum sufficient principle" and when it is necessary to use pressure to gain the respect of children; 5) instantiation of the ethical principle of reciprocity and 6) involvement and engaged participation in a child's life.

Results of many studies have shown that the adolescents who came from authoritative families showed better school performance than other students of the same age. Steinberg and associates (Steinberg et al., 1992) mentioned various studies which suggested that the relationship between the authority and the school success was causal, evident in both young and older adolescents, powerful through many conceptualizations and operations of authority and that it was generalized through various ethnical, socio-economical and family structures.

Many studies conducted by Steinberg and associates showed that in adolescence there are three specific components of authority that contribute to a healthy psychological development and school success: parental acceptance or warmth, behavioural supervision, strictness and psychological granting of autonomy or democracy. In his study Steinberg established that authoritative parenting is in high correlation with students' academic performance, although there was an exception: for adolescents who came from African-American families where there was no correlation between the authoritative parenting and the students' academic performance, which implies that authority is not a good predictor of academic achievement in African-American families. These results imply that culture plays very important role between the parenting styles of the parents and the academic achievement of the adolescents. According to the results of the research by Matejevic (Matejevic & Stojkovic, 2012) it was stated that there is low, but statistically significant correlation between the democratic parenting style of a mother and a very good success of adolescents in school ($r=0.283$, $r<0.05$) and between the democratic parenting style of a mother and excellent school success of adolescents ($r=0.248$, $r<0.01$), which confirms that the authoritative parenting style is directly connected to better school performance. Taking into consideration that the given results refer only to the parenting style of a mother, it can be stated that probably the contribution of mothers in school achievements of adolescents are more adequate and more present.

The research of Lamborn and associates (Lamborn et al., 1991) showed that adolescents who come from authoritative families have a significantly greater academic competence, a significantly lower level of problematic behaviour and a higher level of psychosocial development than adolescents who come from authoritarian, permissive and neglecting families. In his research on adolescents' success at college, Turner and associates (Turner et al., 2009) argued that the results of his researches showed that the authoritative parenting style is a predictor of adolescents' success at college.

In their conceptualizations of a parenting style, Darling and Steinberg (Darling & Steinberg, 1993) claim that although parents can use various parental practices, parenting styles will continue to influence child's development and adaptation because they give emotional context which can easily change the meaning of many parental practices. They believe that parental practice and a parenting style support reaching parental goals and values. Parental practice has direct influence on development of a specific children's behaviour, starting with table manners and furthermore leading to academic achievements. In fact, parental practice is a mechanism through which parents are directly helping their children to achieve certain goals, whereas the effects of a parenting style are indirect and according to these authors parenting style changes effectiveness of parental practices. They mention previous studies where it was proven that the effect of the parents' involvement in school activities on the academic competence is higher for the authoritative parents than for the non-authoritative parents therefore the correlation between the parents' involvement and academic success of adolescents varies as a function of parental authoritativeness. It can be assumed that authoritative parents are more adequate for interaction with adolescents when it comes to school activities, a choice of certain course, or using explanations in various discussions and understanding adolescents' perspective on school problems, which can only help an adolescent to make smarter decisions. In that way parenting style can change effectiveness of a specific parental practice, making a better practice than it would have been in a different style context. Darling and Steinberg believe that authoritativeness can change effectiveness of parental practice through influencing child's openness for socialization, for example by increasing child's desire to make his parents proud in the domain which is in that moment important to them. Opposite to that, authoritarian parenting can raise adolescents' resistance to parental advice and that resistance can reduce other benefits of effects of parents' involvement in school activities.

Citing the results of numerous studies in his review paper, Spera (Spera, 2005) found that parental style has a significant impact on academic achievement. However, several studies showed a decline in parental involvement during high school, which had a detrimental impact on the achievement of adolescents, indicating that the development of adolescents' autonomy should not be too restricting on activities of parents concerning a cooperation with schools.

2. Involvement of parents in school activities of children

The construct of parents' involvement is multidimensional. Many different types of involvement of parents in school activities can be found in literature. A traditional orientation suggests a relationship in which parents give the responsibility for child education over to school and school supports that kind of attitude and therefore does not expect any type of involvement of parents. That kind of approach, in contrast to a partnership approach, means that goals are determined by school and that parents are occasionally informed about them. The role of school is emphasized: curriculum is organized by teachers where cultural differences are often neglected. Communication with parents is brought to minimum and it is oriented towards specific problems and it is mostly initiated by school.

Partnership orientation emphasizes the importance of parents-school cooperation in education and socialization of children, respecting cultural differences among children and families, the importance of different perspectives on creating a positive studying climate. In the partnership approach there is a clear and mutual cooperation between school and parents and a mutual contribution to children's achievements, frequent communication, creating a positive atmosphere in upbringing and mutual appreciation. The roles are clear and supportive, parenting goals are determined mutually, working plans are done together and the roles of every member are accepted. As one of the most represented ones it is definitely the concept by Epstein (Epstein & Sanders, 2002) in case of the following dimensions: (a) parenting as the primary responsibility of the family (assist families with parenting skills and support children as students at each age and grade level), (b) communicating as the primary responsibility of the school (establish effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication directed towards school programs and student progress), (c) parents' volunteering in school (organizing schedules to involve parents as volunteers to support school and students), (d) learning at home as part of the involvement in school activities (involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-related activities), (e) decision making as a type of participation and leading (include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives), (f) collaborating with a local community (organize resources and services in accordance with mutual needs of family, school and community).

Factors which determine orientation, quality and intensity of those relationships depend on the interaction between individual and contextual features. Contextual factors which determine the basis of this relationship are legal regulations on national and local level, size and a type of community where the school is centred and factors related to the school, such as school culture and climate, teachers' characteristics and the style of school leading. Individual factors include socio-demographic and psychosocial features of the parents (gender, family occasions, social status, ethnic and linguistic origin, education, expectations, perception of one self's role and school role, motivation for participation, parental self-efficiency) and child's features (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). In this study, our interests were directed towards researching the interaction between the family and school in the context of individual factors of the parents.

3. Methodological approach to the problem

The subject of our research referred to determining a correlation between the parenting style and the parents' involvement in school activities and adolescents' success. We started from the hypothesis that there is a statistically

	Cooperation and communication with school	Involvement in extracurricular activities	Expectation of school initiatives	Lack of time for involvement in school activities	Involvement in all school activities	Helping child in school obligations	Cooperation with teachers
<i>mother</i>	43.27	17.18	12.48	12.92	24.91	13.88	15.23
<i>father</i>	27.47	11.09	18.25	7.23	6.28		

significant correlation between an authoritative parenting style, parents' involvement in school activities and students' success. In collecting, processing and interpreting the data, the descriptive method was used. For determining a parenting style, the PSDQ questionnaire was used (Parenting Styles & Dimensions Questionnaire, Robinson, Mandlco, Olsen, & Hart, 2001) which was fulfilled by adolescents. For establishing parents' involvement a scale was constructed according to the dimensions defined by Epstein, which was fulfilled by parents. Based on the statistical analysis, it was determined that the instrument had a good reliability (Cronbach's alpha is 0,760 and 0,830). Subjects were parents of primary and high school students. There were 100 mothers and 100 fathers and 100 adolescents in a primary school, and 100 mothers, 100 fathers and 100 adolescents in a high school.

4. Results of the research and interpretation of the research results

Using factor analysis to measure parental involvement in school activities, we came to the data that there are differences between the involvement of mother and father involvement in children's school activities (for results see Fig. 1).

Fig.1. Mothers' and fathers' involvement in school activities



Most of the factors extracted from the factor analysis indicate a greater involvement of mothers. First factor (cooperation and communication with the school) indicates a higher percentage of involved mothers (43.27%) compared to fathers (27.47%). In the second factor (involvement in extracurricular activities) the percentage of involved mothers is also increased (17.18%), compared to fathers (11.09%). And for the third factor (expectations of school initiatives) percentage of fathers (18.25%) who expect the initiative from the side of the school is higher compared to percentage of mothers (12.48%). Also, it should be noted that the results of the research showed that

mothers' involvement in school activities of children is not determined by the level of their education, while fathers' involvement depends on the level of their education in most of the factors, and thus explains lower involvement of fathers, because most of fathers in our sample completed secondary education. The results show that the cooperation between home and school from the typology of Epstein (Epstein, 2002) is at the level of communication. Namely, the parents are informed of the success in school, the progress of children, but were not invited to be deeply involved in the school activities of children, schools are open to cooperation if the parents show initiative to engage in school activities of children.

The results of our research showed that there is a difference between mothers and fathers in relation to the parenting style that resembles to patriarchal upbringing, which could be interpreted as a part of a trans-generational transmission and perhaps as a reaction on overly changes that transition brings. The given results are shown in the Table 1.

Table1. Parenting style of the mother and father according to adolescents' assessment

	Authoritative (father)	Authoritarian (father)	Permissive (father)	Authoritative (mother)	Authoritarian (mother)	Permissive (mother)
AS	20.15	45.10	28.67	46.61	22.23	34.07
SD	6.50	9.77	5.44	14.06	7.51	6.53
Min	12.00	26.00	17.00	15.00	11.00	19.00
Max	42.00	63.00	38.00	64.00	44.00	44.00
n	100	100	100	100	100	100

The results show that the authoritative parenting style is characteristic for mothers whereas the authoritarian parenting style is characteristic for fathers, which shows the complementarity of parental roles and somehow traditional distribution of roles which can be problematic when it comes to fathers' interaction with adolescents considering their need for autonomy. Our results furthermore show differences which exist in parents' involvement in school activities compared to parenting styles. In case of fathers, we determined only statistically significant correlation between cooperation and communication with the school and the permissive parenting style ($r = 0.176$, $p < 0.05$). If we take into consideration that most of the examinees assessed their fathers as authoritarian, we can say that most of the examined fathers did not have enough time to involve themselves in the school life of their children. These kinds of results could be understood through the presence of patriarchal family relationships where fathers accomplished only instrumental function, whereas mothers were the ones who took care of their children upbringing and education. These results imply a problem of indifference of fathers to involve themselves in school life of their children which could negatively affect children's development.

Our hypothesis about a correlation between an authoritative parenting style and their involvement in school activities is confirmed by the results of mothers. The results of the research showed that there was a statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.558$, $p < 0.01$) between cooperation and communication with school and an authoritative parenting style of a mother, which was in compliance with the research by Darling and Steinberg (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The results of the research also showed that there was a statistically significant correlation between the authoritative parenting style of mothers and their involvement in school activities and an excellent success of adolescents ($r = 0.406$, $p < 0.01$). The results we got were in accordance with the results of Steinberg (Steinberg et al., 1992), Lamborn (Lamborn et al., 1991) and Baumrind (Baumrind, 1991), which confirmed that an authoritative parenting style was correlated with a better school performance, which showed that mothers' contribution of mothers to school achievements of adolescents is probably more adequate and present.

5. Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that cooperation between family and school is located at the level of communication, parents get the information about the success in school, the progress of children, but they were not invited to be deeply involved in the school activities of children, school is open to cooperation if the parents show initiative to engage in school activities of children. The results of the research showed that an authoritative parenting style is characteristic for mothers and correlated to higher involvement in school activities and a better success of adolescents. An authoritarian parenting style is characteristic for fathers and furthermore correlated with a lack of

time for involvement in school activities. Those differences between parents can be understood in the context of trans-generational transfer and acceptance of a role of a father as an authoritarian figure in a family. Fathers expect bigger initiative from school for involvement in school activities, opposite to mothers who show higher level of self-initiative for involvement in school activities. Considering the results of our research and the fact that previous research also showed that there was a significant correlation between a parenting style, parents' involvement in school activities and academic competence of adolescents, it would be strongly recommendable for a school to organize education for parents and point out effects of certain parenting styles on academic achievement of their children and to show in a more adequate way, an initiative for establishing partnership with the parents, in order to realize contemporary efforts that schools should function as an open system. The given results show that there is a problem with involvement of fathers in school activities of their children and with the indifference of a school to establish partner relationship with the parents. The results show that a school should do something to activate fathers to accept certain roles in order for their contribution to a child's development to be more adequate. Without any initiative of school on education of parents, family will be left alone to itself, to its own inconsistency and insecurity, without any support which is essential in establishing parenting function.

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