

The Impact of Parenting Styles and Family Factors on Children's Creativity: A Critical Review

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Abstract: This paper explores how children's creativity is connected to parenting styles and family factors. Based on a large body of literature, this study analyzes how different parenting styles and communication elements exert negative and positive impact on children's creative development, respectively. Creativity is negatively associated with authoritarian and permissive parenting, as well as over-protection and parental rejection. In contrast, children possessing greater creative skills usually have parents who encourage autonomy, providing support, and employ authoritative parenting style. Additionally, they exhibit personal security and confidence and are adept in balancing emotional support and respect for independence. Other family factors also play significant roles. Higher family SES and parental engagement in arts foster creativity, whereas excessive exposure to electronic media can hinder it. Children's resilience and self-esteem mediate the impact from parents. Self-esteem acts as a bridge between parenting styles and creative outcomes and self-esteem mainly impacts through children's subjective social-economic status. The paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the familial influences on creativity, offering insights for both academic research and practical applications. The study offers recommendations for nurturers, parents and educators to promote creativity in children, stressing the importance of emotional security, autonomy, and a supportive environment.

1 INTRODUCTION

The current era has unprecedentedly celebrated creativity as a vital skill for problem-solving, innovation, and personal growth. Shaped by a complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, creativity is influenced by various determinants such as cognitive abilities, personality traits, socio-cultural contexts, and access to resources. While these factors synergistically affect an individual's creative potential, the role of the family, arguably the earliest and most intimate social environment, remains underexplored. Existing research often focuses on isolated variables (e.g., parenting approaches) or narrow outcomes like academic performance, leaving gaps in understanding how family systems holistically foster or hinder creative development. By critically reviewing different perspectives, this essay aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the familial influences on creativity, with a focus on parenting styles and other family dynamics. First, key terminologies (e.g. creativity and parenting styles) and essay's research objective will be defined. Next, the paper will demonstrate how authoritarian,

authoritative, and permissive parenting styles differentially nurture or constrain creative thinking. Finally, it will examine structural factors such as family socioeconomic status, sibling relationships, and mediating variables like resilience and self-esteem, offering insights into how families collectively sculpt children's creative trajectories.

2 DEFINITION OF THE RESEARCH SUBJECT

2.1 Creativity

Creativity is the ability of individuals or groups to generate new and valuable ideas, or to think independently of tasks. Creativity is not only limited to the field of artistic creation, but also widely used in technology, business and daily life. The core of creativity lies in creation. Through the individual's unique way of thinking, the combination of conditions and knowledge will come up with unique solutions. It can be either a concrete product or an

abstract theory or concept. Creativity is inseparable from the individual's imagination, flexibility and divergent thinking of the brain, willing to actively think about problems from multiple angles, and able to break the conventional thinking mode. Intrinsic motivation, such as a passion for something, can greatly contribute to creativity. And an open, positive environment can help creativity flourish. And parents play an important role in the environment. Parents are the ones who educate children from an early age, and there is a significant relationship between different parenting styles and children's creativity.

2.2 Parenting Style

Among family studies, there is a significant amount of literature is pertaining to the concept and categorization of parenting styles. This essay adapts Baumrind's parenting style framework, based on the level of responsiveness and demandingness, broadly categorizing all parents into four kinds: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful (Baumrind, 1991). Authoritative parents are high on both responsiveness and demandingness. They combine clear expectations with reasoning and negotiation in enforcement. Instead of requiring absolute obedience, they provide emotional support and acknowledge the children's uniqueness and interests. Therefore, it is often linked to positive developmental outcomes. In contrast, authoritarian parenting is high on demandingness and low on responsiveness, marked by strict control and low warmth. They maintain high authority and reject challenges, strictly restricting children's behaviors. On the opposite side, permissive parents are low on demandingness but high on responsiveness, meaning they tend to prioritize their children's needs and place no or little control over children. Neglectful parents, however, are low in both demandingness and responsiveness. They show indifferent and unengaged attitudes in raising and nurturing the children.

2.3 Other Factors Related to Creativity

While the theory of parenting styles mainly captures various interaction models between parents and their children, the objective quantification and measurements of these elements are sometimes unattainable; they only represent parenting as a one-way traffic, overlooking other family contexts and children's mediating processes. Therefore, in this research, specific factors, such as rejection and emotional warmth, are used to indicate the specific degrees of parenting styles. Meanwhile, other family

factors, such as family size and socio-economic status, are being discussed in how they have impact creative development. More importantly, the effects of parenting styles and family contexts on creativity is mediated by children, with self-esteem identified as the most potential factor.

3 THE IMPACT OF PARENTING STYLES ON CREATIVITY

Certain parenting styles are believed to negatively correlate with children's creativity. Authoritarian parenting has been widely linked to lower creativity levels, as it emphasizes strict rules, obedience, and limited autonomy, which can stifle independent thinking and problem-solving skills. Fearon et al. examined Jamaican families, where authoritarian parenting is prevalent, and found a significant negative correlation between this parenting style and children's creative performance (Fearon et al., 2013). The study suggested that children raised in highly structured and rigid environments often lack the opportunity to engage in exploratory and divergent thinking, which are essential for creativity. Similarly, Wang conducted a large-scale study involving over 1,200 university students and discovered that parental rejection and overprotection were negatively associated with general creativity (Wang, 2023). However, interestingly, these negative parenting behaviors were positively correlated with malevolent creativity, which involves using creativity for antisocial or harmful purposes. This finding indicates that while authoritarian and overly controlling parenting may suppress constructive creative expression, they may inadvertently foster alternative, less socially desirable forms of creativity as a coping mechanism.

Further supporting these conclusions, Dong et al. conducted a study involving 329 Chinese parent-child pairs and found that negative parenting styles adversely affect both subjective and objective creativity (Dong et al., 2022). Their research highlighted that child raised in controlling, highly critical, or emotionally distant environments demonstrated lower creative capacities in both self-reported and performance-based assessments. This suggests that a lack of emotional warmth and autonomy support may hinder the development of intrinsic motivation, which is crucial for creative expression. Collectively, these studies underscore the detrimental effects of authoritarian and unsupportive parenting on creativity, reinforcing the idea that

parenting practices that discourage independent thought and emotional security may inhibit a child's ability to generate original ideas and solutions. These findings have significant implications for both parenting strategies and educational policies, emphasizing the necessity of fostering a supportive and autonomy-encouraging environment to nurture creativity in children.

Neglectful parenting has repeatedly been found to be the most harmful type for students to develop creativity. neglectful parenting was negatively associated with creative thinking and positively associated with conservative thinking (Fan & Zhang, 2014). Neglectful Parenting is a type of parenting that is negative, disengaged and lacking in emotional support and supervision. It also equally falls under one of Baumrind's four main parenting styles, often referred to as uninvolved parenting. neglectful parenting often neglectful of emotional support, estranged from their parents and lacking warmth or a sense of belonging (Lim & Smith, 2008). Parents often pay little attention to their children's development. They often neglect their children's basic needs, are indifferent to their children's emotional needs, and offer little love, encouragement, or recognition.

Conversely, certain parental traits and behaviors positively correlate with children's creativity.

Miller and Gerald identified that parents of creative children often possess a strong sense of personal security and competence, which enables them to cultivate an environment that prioritizes both respect and independence (Miller & Gerard, 1979). This sense of security allows parents to provide their children with the necessary space to explore ideas freely while also instilling confidence in their creative pursuits. By fostering an open and flexible home environment, these parents facilitate opportunities for children to engage in self-directed learning, experimentation, and independent problem-solving. Such an approach contrasts with parenting styles that emphasize conformity, which can restrict a child's ability to think divergently and explore innovative solutions.

Building on these perspectives, Robinson and Mehrinejad et al. demonstrated that authoritative parenting, which balances high expectations with emotional warmth and support, is particularly conducive to the development of creativity (Robinson et al., 2013; Mehrinejad et al., 2015). This parenting style is characterized by clear guidance, consistent encouragement, and the establishment of a structured yet nurturing atmosphere that allows children to develop critical thinking and creative confidence.

Unlike authoritarian parenting, which imposes rigid control, or permissive parenting, which lacks structure, authoritative parenting ensures that children benefit from both discipline and emotional reinforcement. The combination of these factors helps children develop resilience, intrinsic motivation, and the willingness to take intellectual risks—key attributes necessary for creative expression. Collectively, these findings suggest that parenting approaches that emphasize both structure and emotional support play a crucial role in fostering creativity, underscoring the importance of providing children with a balanced and enriching developmental environment.

4 OTHER FAMILY FACTORS AND MEDIATING VARIABLES

Mediating factors like resilience and self-esteem further shape the relationship between parenting and creativity.

Wang identified resilience as a crucial mediating factor in the development of creativity, enabling children to navigate challenges, overcome adversity, and sustain creative expression despite external pressures (Wang, 2023). Resilience allows children to persist in the face of failure, adapt to changing circumstances, and continue generating innovative ideas even when confronted with setbacks. This psychological strength is particularly important in environments where rigid expectations or limited parental support may otherwise suppress creative potential. Children with higher resilience are more likely to take intellectual risks, engage in problem-solving, and explore novel ideas without fear of criticism or failure, making it a key determinant of creative success.

In addition to resilience, Dong et al. emphasized the role of self-esteem, particularly as shaped by subjective socioeconomic status (SSS) (Dong, 2022). Their findings suggest that children who perceive themselves as having a higher social standing tend to develop greater self-esteem, which in turn fosters creativity, even when direct parental encouragement is lacking. This highlights how psychological and environmental factors interact in shaping creative potential. Together, resilience and self-esteem serve as essential mediators, demonstrating that beyond immediate parental influence, a child's ability to adapt, persevere, and maintain confidence plays a critical role in their creative development. The relation was also examined by other researchers (Barbot, 2020).

Self-esteem plays a vital psychological role in unlocking a child's creative potential. Self-esteem is defined as a person's opinion of themselves. The findings suggest that while authoritative and permissive parenting can better foster creativity in children compared to authoritarian and neglectful parenting, these parenting styles alone may not be sufficient for creativity to flourish. David Kelley, the founder of IDEO, emphasized that the barrier to creativity for many individuals is not a lack of creative potential but a lack of creative confidence, which closely aligns with the concept of self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to an individual's self-worth or valuation of themselves.

Social comparison, the second factor, involves individuals evaluating themselves relative to others. Children, particularly in their formative years, tend to compare themselves with family members and peers. Consequently, positive reinforcement and emotional validation from parents are crucial in fostering high self-esteem. This validation enables children to feel secure and capable of engaging in creative activities without fear of judgment or failure. High self-esteem contributes to creativity by promoting characteristics such as self-confidence, openness to new experiences, and a willingness to take risks.

5 DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

According to the above research performance, children's creativity is closely related to the parenting style of parents and family factors. Overall, authoritative parenting and a supportive home environment are particularly important. Parents who find a balance between emotional support and high expectations for their children can create a good environment for creativity. On the contrary, excessive dictatorship, pressure and criticism will have a serious negative impact on children's creativity and even affect children's character. Studies have also found that other factors can affect children's creativity, such as family socioeconomic status, resilience and self-esteem. By understanding these relationships, parents and educators can create an environment conducive to children's creative development.

To foster creativity, parents should strive to balance the demands they make on their children with the emotional support they give them. Encourage children to have their own thinking and take the initiative to think about problems. Schools and parents can provide special experiences to develop

children's thinking ability and integrate some creative activities into children's daily learning and life. For example, let the children participate in creative activities, let the children feel different things and learn diversified knowledge. Provide parents with an effective educational experience. Arts events can also be held to reduce the impact of socioeconomic status.

The author thinks future research should explore the long-term effects of parenting styles in different cultural backgrounds and ages on creativity. The influence of values in different cultural contexts on parenting and creativity can be investigated. Integrate modern technology into the home to gain insight into the multi-faceted nature and development of creativity.

6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, creativity emerges as a multidimensional phenomenon intricately shaped by the interplay of parenting practices, family ecosystems, and individual psychological mediators. Authoritarian or hyper-controlling parenting patterns may constrain creative development, whereas emotionally attuned, autonomy-supportive approaches serve as catalysts for imaginative growth. Furthermore, contextual elements such as socioeconomic conditions, personal resilience, and core self-perceptions critically moderate these dynamics. This knowledge equips caregivers and institutions with actionable insights to design psychologically enriched environments that systematically cultivate creative capacities—a vital investment in preparing future generations to navigate global complexities with innovation and adaptability. As technological and cultural landscapes undergo unprecedented transformation, prioritizing creative development through evidence-based familial strategies becomes not merely advantageous but imperative for societal progress and human flourishing.

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