



Theoretical article

PARENTING STYLES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: DYNAMICS OF INFLUENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This article examines the influence of parenting styles on students' academic achievement across different educational stages. Based on contemporary theoretical frameworks and empirical research, it is demonstrated that the authoritative parenting style is effective across all phases of school age, while the partnership-oriented style becomes particularly significant in the high school stage. The analysis highlights the links between cognitive, motivational, and social factors that interact in the learning process. In conclusion, the article emphasizes the necessity of an integrated approach that combines pedagogical support, the promotion of intrinsic motivation, and active parental involvement.

Key words: academic achievement, parenting style, learning motivation, educational stages, psychosocial development

Introduction

Academic achievement is one of the most significant dimensions of the educational process and is considered a complex, multi-layered construct, including cognitive, motivational and social factors. Among the external influences determining academic behavior, parental parenting style deserves special attention. Modern research shows that it acts both as a resource for support and as a regulatory mechanism, structuring the dynamics of motivation and self-regulation of students. It is important to study the specific effects of parental styles in the context of individual educational stages, since the psychosocial development of children goes through clearly distinct phases.

Parenting styles and academic achievement: empirical evidence

There are numerous studies dedicated to analyzing the influence of parenting style on a child's academic engagement, which provide evidence that parenting styles directly influence students' motivation to learn, self-regulation, and confidence. For example:

- In elementary school, the authoritative parenting style facilitates proper motivation.
- In middle school, the authoritative parenting style, combined with a more autonomous approach to communication, supports the processes of individualization.
- In high school, the partner parenting style, based on dialogue, open discussion of goals, empathetic leadership, and stimulation of intrinsic motivation, develops overall autonomy and self-reflection. And at this educational stage, the authoritative style continues to be effective, but with a focus on: supporting autonomy; freedom in making choices; affirming dignity.

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For example, a study by Castro et al. (2015) confirms the positive relationship between the authoritative style and academic success in 46 countries. Liu (2024) emphasizes that parental involvement is particularly important in the age range of 7–14, when academic self-discipline is being developed. Hassan et al. (2022) found that emotional support from parents leads to better grades and lower levels of school stress. Cross-cultural analyses show the universality of the effect of authoritative style, regardless of socioeconomic conditions. Empirical research confirms a significant relationship between parenting styles and academic achievement. Dornbusch et al. (1987) found that students with authoritative parents achieve higher grades and demonstrate greater self-discipline. Similarly, Steinberg et al. (1992) indicated that authoritative style is associated with better academic engagement, motivation, and fewer behavioral problems. Explanatory models are rooted in the idea that parenting style shapes the conditions for the development of intrinsic motivation, self-monitoring, and responsibility. According to Grolnick & Ryan (1989), parental behavior that promotes autonomy leads to increased intrinsic motivation in the child, which in turn increases academic performance. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systemic ecological model also emphasizes the influence of the family microenvironment on the development and academic functioning of the child. In this context, parental support, involvement, and communication form the basic resources for effective self-regulation and academic goal-setting. A more recent study by Castro et al. (2015), conducted in 16 countries, found that parental involvement is a strong predictor of academic success, regardless of cultural context. In particular, support for learning at home, expectations of success, and communication between parents and teachers increase academic motivation and performance.

The discussed scientific research on the impact of parenting styles undoubtedly argues that they not only create a framework for socialization and development, but also profoundly influence the cognitive and motivational side of academic behavior. In this case, however, it is particularly important to highlight the importance of the applied parenting style on academic success in the specific educational stages of the school age.

Academic achievement and psychosocial characteristics across educational stages

As is known, the psychosocial development of children goes through clearly defined phases, corresponding to the educational stages – primary, lower secondary and upper secondary. Each of these phases is characterized by specific cognitive, emotional and social needs that influence the way the student perceives, processes and reacts to educational information. For example:

- During the primary educational stage (7–10 years), dependence on parental and teacher support, the pursuit of security and routine activities dominate. The formation of learning motivation is established through the development of the cognitive ability for attention, behavioral skills for planning and goal setting. Learning is a motivational-externalized process, based primarily on external motivation. Research shows that interventions targeting emotional intelligence among teachers lead to significant increases in academic performance (Pozo Rico & Sandoval, 2020)

- During the lower secondary stage of education (11–14 years), students develop an academic self-concept and self-esteem. Connections with friends, identity, comparisons, and social standards emerge. A longitudinal study of 745–1420 students (grades 5–8) shows that

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mastery and achievement orientations decrease over time, but remain predictors of academic success. Additionally, autonomous motivation (mastery goals) appears to be more related to subject-specific behavior and evaluations, which is an expression of the dynamics of motivational engagement in the direction from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation (Chanal et al., 2020)

- Within the upper secondary education stage (15–19 years), which coincides in age with the need for identity formation, autonomy and orientation towards long-term life goals, research by Wu et al. (2022) links sustainable intrinsic motivation with the achieved level of mastery of characteristic skills (grit), as well as with the need for knowledge and growth mindset, especially with high performance in mathematics, science and English. In the unfolding transition to puberty (Torvik et al., 2021) early physical maturity is associated with higher test scores, but motivation remains a key mediator.

The cited studies emphasize the understanding that academic success in different educational levels is formed, on the one hand, under the influence of the dynamics from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, and on the other hand, is strongly influenced by factors such as parental support, school climate, and social interaction with peers and adults (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of academic success by educational level

Educational level	Psychosocial characteristics and dynamics	Academic needs	Appropriate Parenting Style
Primary education	Need for security and emotional support	Building basic learning motivation. (EI interventions)	Authoritative
Lower secondary education	Formation of self-esteem and belonging	Support for self-regulation and social adaptation in coping with social pressure	Authoritative, with increased autonomy
High school education degree	Development of personal autonomy and identity	Goal orientation, preparation for maturity	Partner, with an autonomous approach

In summary of the review of the formation and development of academic success, in the context of the three educational levels and the role of parenting style in supporting the child's academic behavior, the following expert positions are advocated with particular importance among researchers:

- 1) In the initial stage of education, the application of socio-emotional strategies (such as emotional intelligence) in teaching favors the early integration of students, increases academic achievement and motivational engagement, and optimizes the development of individual personal potential. (Pozo Rico & Sandoval, 2020)

- 2) In the junior high school stage of education, academic goals (performance/mastery) seem to have a more documentary nature, but it also remains related to the development of

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motivation from extrinsic to intrinsic, which increases students' academic performance (Scherrer et al., 2020)

3) In the high school stage of education, the integration of personality factors and growth mindset predicts academic behavior and achievement (Wu et al., 2022), and upon entering puberty, motivation plays a mediating role from biological maturity (Martin & Steinbeck, 2016) In this phase, students affirm their identity, orient themselves towards future life and professional goals. Autonomy, self-regulation and self-awareness increase (Scherrer et al., 2025) - the sustainability of academic habits becomes stable and predictable.

4) The influence of parenting style has its connections with the specifics of psychosocial development of students at different educational levels.

Parenting style and academic achievement: towards an integrative perspective

Academic achievement cannot be reduced solely to academic results or test scores, but should be interpreted in the context of the interaction between personal motivation, social support and educational environment. The dependencies highlighted for parenting style, in relation to the construct “academic achievement” serve to formulate the following key effects of parenting style on the child’s functional perspective on academic achievement:

1) Academic achievement should be conceptualized as a multidimensional phenomenon in which the student’s cognitive abilities are inextricably linked to personal qualities such as self-regulation, resilience, intrinsic motivation, as well as the social ecosystem in which the student is situated. This means that even in the presence of high cognitive resources, the lack of support from parents or the absence of an emotionally secure environment can hinder learning. Therefore, sustainable academic progress requires synchronization of internal psychological resources with external social influences, including parenting style.

2) Intrinsic motivation stands out as a key driver of sustained, deep learning and, because of this, is the strongest predictor of long-term engagement and satisfaction with learning. According to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), intrinsic motivation arises when the needs for autonomy, competence, and belonging are satisfied. Success is not a consequence of external pressure, but of an internally meaningful desire for development. Therefore, intrinsic motivation should be perceived as a goal of educational practice, not its side effect. The implementation of approaches that support autonomy, competence, and social belonging increase students' self-esteem, their engagement in learning activities, and hence their academic achievements.

3) Parenting style is a powerful regulatory factor that structures the dynamics in the family environment. The authoritative style, combining warmth and control, has a consistent positive relationship with academic performance across multiple cultural contexts (Steinberg et al., 1992; Castro et al., 2015). The use of the authoritative parenting style promotes high levels of academic motivation, self-control, responsibility, and child engagement in the learning process (Steinberg et al., 1992; Castro et al., 2015). This style creates a sense of security and predictability, while supporting the child’s autonomy. It is important that pedagogical interventions include strategies for engaging parents, building partnerships between school and family, and increasing parental reflection on the parenting style being practiced. Such initiatives can significantly increase the

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effectiveness of education, in the context of an individualized approach to developing the academic potential of each student.

4) The ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) emphasizes that student success is determined by a network of interacting factors – family, school, community. Therefore, strategies to improve academic achievement should be systemic and multi-level, including family support, school climate, and community resources. This highlights the need for educational support policies that are designed integratively with parent training programs, school climate, and psychosocial support.

5) Recent research has shown that interventions based on motivational theories (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Dweck, 2006) are effective in increasing achievement. Growth mindset programs emphasize the need for a supportive pedagogical environment that promotes learning not as an obligation but as an opportunity for development. Therefore, motivational interventions based on concepts such as growth mindset, intrinsic motivation, and effort as a path to achievement have a significant effect on student performance. Targeting these programs to different educational contexts would contribute to responding to the needs of children from different social groups.

Conclusion

This theoretical overview showed that parental style and learning motivation are interdependent factors that significantly affect the academic behavior and achievements of school-age children. Academic success is a multi-layered construct shaped by internal cognitive and motivational resources, as well as socio-environmental influences, with parental style playing a key regulatory role. Understanding its importance calls for an integrative approach that combines pedagogical support, motivational strategies, and parental involvement as a framework for both academic success and the holistic development of the student.

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