

## **The Effects of Culture and Economics on Parenting Style and Childhood Success**

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### **Abstract**

Children today live very different lives from those of children who lived fifty or even one hundred years ago. While that is due to an increase in technology and the changing society that we experience, it may also be a result of parenting styles and parental influence of our world in the present time. Some parents may be more traditional and choose an authoritarian parenting style to raise their children, while others may be more lax and evolve with the standards society sets, choosing more authoritative or permissive parenting styles. Regardless, each of these styles influence childhood development and success in adulthood in different ways. Yet, what is it exactly that makes a parent develop one of these parenting styles? It may evolve with the characteristics of the child and what form of discipline is most effective for the child. However, other factors may influence this decision simply through background. Economics and socioeconomic status, for example may present limited choices to parents and cause them to conform with one parenting style over another. Culture may also play a role, as different cultures have varying expectation for children in society, therefore yielding a more strict or more lax parenting style. Culture also encompasses how a parent was raised themselves and could influence how they parent their own children. One may have been raised in a strict household and wish to provide more freedom to their own children. In contrast, a parent may have had little guidance in their youth and wish to provide better guidance and control in their own children's lives. All of these aspects can influence how a parent chooses to raise their child. In this paper, how culture and economics influence parenting styles and therefore childhood success, will be explored.

## **Introduction**

### **Authoritarian Parenting**

Authoritarian parenting is perhaps the longest standing parenting style, and what many people may consider today, more traditional and strict parenting. In authoritarian parenting, “parents demand obedience and exercise strict control,” (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). These parents may embody a “do it because I say so” type of attitude, providing no reason or explanation to their child when opposition is shown. These parents believe that rules should not have to be agreed upon, but simply obeyed (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). These parents are also more prone to using corporal punishment, such as spanking (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). It is important to note that this parenting is not considered abusive. These parents generally mean well with punishment and are not looking to harm their child out of pure anger (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). While these parents are strict and demanding they can still be loving and affectionate when appropriate. For example, when a child has done something wrong, outward signs of love and affection may be withdrawn, and the parent will provide little consolation to the child. Despite what may seem like harsh treatment to some individuals, these parents truly only want the best for their children. However, their intentions are not aimed at immediate happiness, but rather long-term success (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). While this parenting may seem old fashioned, it is not uncommon in different cultures and economic groups today.

### **Permissive Parenting**

Permissive parenting can be considered the polar opposite of authoritarian parenting. These parents often let their children make their own choices, even with situations that a young child should not make. For example, they let the child decide what to eat for dinner, or whether or not to do their homework. Permissive parents believe that granting freedom to their children is

the best way to make them successful and independent (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). They let their children learn through their own experiences and independent decisions and do not force them to do anything that they do not like (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). It is important to note that this parenting is different from any form of neglect or abandonment (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). These parents are still present in their children's lives and maintain supervision for overall health and safety of their children. These parents simply, provide more freedom in decision making, while maintaining a loving and affectionate environment.

### **Authoritative Parenting**

Authoritative parenting style serves as a healthy middle ground between permissive and authoritarian parenting styles and is likely the most common form of parenting in modern society. Like authoritarian parenting, there are still rules that a child is expected to follow. The difference is, while authoritarian style parenting expects rules to be followed without question or opposition, authoritative parents direct their children's behavior by providing reasoning for rules (Hockenberry & Wilson, 2019). These parents respect their child as an individual and allow them to voice objection to rules (Hockenberry & Wilson, 2019).). They may work with their child to meet what both parties feel are fair and effective household rules as well as set expectations in order to, "achieve goals by reasoning and attempting to shape their children's values," (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). While there is still a level of control with these parents, it is firm, consistent and encouraging (Hockenberry & Wilson, 2019).). For example, when a child does something wrong, it is emphasized that the decision the child made is wrong or bad, not that the child themselves is bad. Once the problem is resolved, the parent moves on, no longer blaming the child for what they did. Overall, these parents provide a lax environment promoting independence in

their children while also maintaining healthy control and providing appropriate guidance towards proper decision.

### **Cultural Influence on Parenting Style**

Culture around the world has variations in many aspects including food, religion, appropriate fashion, role of men and women in society, work, importance of education, etc. Some cultures are considered to be much more conservative with dress and language, while others encourage expression of thoughts, feelings, and emotions through these aspects. In addition, some cultures may be more open to gender equality and sexual orientation, while others discourage individuals from varying preferences, and value a traditional lifestyle. All of these variations in culture can influence how a parent may raise their child either due to cultural norm, or for the overall protection of the child.

#### **Asian Culture**

Chinese culture is one division of Asian culture in which education is highly valued. The Chinese culture is highly structured based on social class. This Asian society puts an increased emphasis on education and believe that higher education leads to higher social status and leadership in society (Huang & Gove, 2015). The cycle continues as a more desired education experience comes with having more money, therefore yielding high social status and so on. Because of this importance on education for what the Chinese culture believes to yield success, authoritarian parenting is highly adopted among Chinese families. As a result of these, Chinese parents are, “highly demanding and exert high control over children’s academic performance,” (Huang & Gove, 2015). However, these parents also tend to view this as a combined effort and take their child’s academic success or failure as their own (Huang & Gove, 2015). Because of this, although pressure on children to do well is very high, these parents will also take much time

to support, motivate and take part on their child's education and success (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). While, the overall style is mainly authoritarian, characteristics of authoritative parenting can also be seen with this involvement in child's education.

Similarly, middle east and Arabic cultures also embody authoritarian parenting, although for different reasoning. In the middle east, gender equality is not common. Women tend to have less education, stay at home, and are expected to dress in a conservative manner. Therefore, parents may be more authoritarian in controlling the actions of females. Despite this, Arabic males tend to endure more physical punishment than do females (Dwairy et. al., 2006). This use of punishment in boys and strict control of daughters could largely be influenced by the Muslim religion that is prominent in this part of the world. Appropriate behavior is demanded in this religion and modesty is valued in women. In addition, with the presence of extremists in many middle eastern countries, fear for their children's lives in the circumstance that one is caught out of line, could be a motivating factor in maintaining strict control over their children.

In addition to cultural norms and beliefs in mainland Asia, effects of immigration on individuals of Asian descent may also influence parenting styles. A study was conducted on the effects of stress and social support on parenting styles in mainland Chinese individuals in comparison to that of Chinese Canadian immigrants. Although, both sub-groups were shown to embody more authoritarian parenting, Chinese Canadian immigrants demonstrated high levels of stress and less social support leading to decreased warmth and affection, as opposed to the soul influence of cultural expectations (Su & Hynie, 2011). This is because, immigrants often find low-paying jobs that require long hours, and often do not recognize their level of education (Su & Hynie, 2011). In addition, simply being in a foreign country with a drastically different culture, including language, food, and religion can contribute to the stress of a new immigrant.

Social support, which is proven to decrease stress, is also lacking among immigrants due to absence of extended family and cultural barriers (Su & Hynie, 2011). These stressors can relate to all immigrants regardless of cultural background, and therefore may contribute to authoritarian parenting.

### **North American and European Culture**

North American culture differs drastically in comparison to Asian culture and, therefore, yield's very different parenting styles. Asian parenting, particularly in China, emphasizes parental authority and familial priorities, such as education and respective social status (Su & Hynie, 2011). In contrast, North American parenting places more importance on, "individualism, independence, defiance of authority, self-esteem, self-reliance, and open emotional expression," (Su & Hynie, 2011). Similarly, the European culture typically encourages independence and overall freedom of expression. In addition, both of the environments in these cultures tend to be more liberal in regard to dress, sexual preference, religious beliefs, and occupation. Therefore, these parents may not be as likely to encourage the straight and narrow path of development and success. Because of these traits, parents of North American and European culture tend to embody a more authoritative parenting style.

### **Economics and Parenting**

#### **Lower Socioeconomic Status**

In society where socioeconomic status is low and economic equality is not prevalent, children may serve a different purpose. For example, children may present as a source of income for families or serve as a means of physical care for a parent with old age (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). This may in turn, alter the level of affection shown towards one's children, due to the reason behind having them. In addition, individuals may have not intended on having children,

but simply couldn't afford protective measures to prevent pregnancy. Therefore, these children may not be wanted, or could be seen as a financial burden to parents with less money.

On another note, related to discipline, parents with less money may resort to corporal punishment as a means of discipline, due to a lack of financial resources to provide supplemental reward for positive behaviors (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). These parents also might not be able to afford better schools, with higher expectations for positive behaviors, contributing to a lack of discipline outside of the household (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). Lastly, due to lack of finances, parents may have longer work hours in order to make ends meet, decreasing the amount of time left to spend with children (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). This would, in turn decrease the amount of time for them to make connections with their children, help them with schoolwork and extracurricular activities, and provide explanations for rules and expectations. Because of these factors, a parent of lower socioeconomic status may implement more authoritarian parenting over their children. This could be due to the lack of time they are either willing to spend with their children, or the lack of time these parents have in order to provide reasoning for rules and expectations. Authoritarian parenting may simply be easier to implement for parents with less time.

### **Middle socioeconomic class**

Parents of middle socioeconomic class with higher education have varying parenting styles, although authoritative is the most common. These parents tend to be more involved in children's activities inside and outside of school and are more aware of how they are doing in school. This is likely because these parents maintain sufficient financial income to provide and offer extracurricular opportunities, but also have available time to spend with their children. This

is because they do not need to work excessive hours to make ends meet, nor do they have a demanding profession in which their time is consumed with work.

On the other hand, these parents may also embody a permissive parenting style. This is largely due to the fact that these parents often live in middle-class neighborhoods where safety is less of a concern than it may be in a lower-class neighborhood (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). This can lead parents to be more lenient with their children and their whereabouts, as constant monitoring is not necessary as it would be if there were more immediate dangers. In addition, this type of parenting is common among blue-collar workers (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). These jobs are typically more manual labor in which getting dirty is part of the job and there is often some level of risk. For that reason, parents may be less concerned if their child gets their clothes dirty or scrapes their knee, because to them, this is a normal part of everyday life and childhood. In addition, many of these jobs do not require a college degree or higher education. For that reason, these parents may not enforce school, and allow the child to make their own choices about schoolwork, as in their experience, higher education is not always necessary to make a sufficient living.

### **Higher Socioeconomic Status**

There is little research pertaining to parenting style and higher socioeconomic status. However, it may be inferred that these parents could embody all types of parenting styles. For example, these parents may implement authoritarian parenting on their children because of their own success. They may pride themselves on their success and expect their children to work just as hard to be successful in their own lives and careers. In addition, these parents may have increased commitments to their professions allowing little time for their children and, therefore, implementing authoritarian discipline due to the little time that they may have for reasoning. On

the other hand, these parents may use the money that they have to provide everything for their children, never allowing them to want for anything and providing them with a free ride in life. This suggests a more permissive style of parenting. Somewhere in the middle, these parents may embody an authoritative method of parenting. With their high position in their profession, they may have extended time to spend with their children and use that to promote good behavior and hard work. These parents would also have the resources to provide their children with anything they want, but also realize the need to work hard for success, and therefore not spoil them with the money that they have.

### **Effects on Childhood Success**

#### **Defining Childhood Success**

Childhood success is a broad phrase that many individuals may define differently. This phrase can be looked at through various perspectives such as success in education, extracurricular activities, physical or social development etc. For the purpose of this paper, childhood success will be considered as a whole, incorporating all of these aspects into how a child will grow to become an adult. There are many different words to define childhood success. These may include confidence, self-esteem, well-being, education, future, college, career, joy, independence, respect, kindness, and many more. In this paper, childhood success is measured in the overall physical and mental well-being, including confidence and self-esteem, of the child as they enter into adulthood. It also involves their level of independence and ability to work as a functioning member of society through their education and choice of career path, whether that require a college education or not. Lastly, it incorporates how they treat others as an adult, with respect and kindness.

## **Authoritarian**

Authoritarian parenting clearly has a more strict, rigid and demanding nature than the other forms of parenting. Because of the strict nature of this parenting style, these children are more likely to have a falling out with their parents or go through a phase of rebellion, demonstrating that these children desire independence (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). On the other hand, children with authoritarian parents may also lack overall independence. This is because these parents may scare their children with cold treatment and corporal punishment, which in turn could cause them to be unable to take initiative (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). In addition, these children may be unable to make their own decisions, as their parents never offered them the choice to do this (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). However, these children can still have very positive outcomes. They are often better at staying focused on tasks in school and when exposed to difficult situations they are less likely to be passive and helpless, but rather stand up for themselves (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019).

There have been many studies done on the effects of stress on parents and how it influences parenting style. A specific study done on Chinese immigrant parents, whom, as discussed, encompass a more authoritarian parenting style due to lack of social support, economic stability and high levels of stress, talks about how that stress may have an effect on children. It was found that greater maternal emotional stress negatively influences children's social skills and initiative and can lead to increased behavioral problems (Su & Hynie, 2011). However, due to the Chinese cultures high value on academics and respect for the social hierarchy, it has been shown that these children are very successful academically and develop healthy self-discipline (Huang & Gove, 2015). In addition, these children tend to be very polite,

persistent, and calm (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). This shows the positive outcome of authoritarian parenting within Chinese culture.

### **Authoritative**

Effects on children who were raised by authoritative parents present slightly different from those raised by authoritarian parents. These children are less likely to indulge in risky behavior, likely because they are not held back by strict parents. Additionally, authoritative parents will explain to their children possible consequences of risky behaviors (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). Therefore, these children are more educated on smart choices to make when faced with these situations. Health is also shown to be higher in these children, likely because they were taught why it is important to eat fruits and vegetables, as well as exercise and not simply made to do these things (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). One thing that these children do have in common with those raised by authoritarian parents is that they tend to perform very well in school (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). Although these parents may be less strict, they tend to be very involved in their child's education and emphasize the importance of education for future success.

Authoritative parenting also has a very positive effect of children's mental health and well-being. It has been shown that these children often report high levels of self-esteem (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). This is likely due to the patience demonstrated by authoritative parents and their willingness to listen to their children's objections and explain reasoning behind rules. Authoritative parents also address bad behavior and then quickly move on from the situation, emphasizing that what the child did was wrong, and not the child themselves, which can contribute to the child's overall self-confidence and self-love. Because these children receive high levels of support, communication, autonomy and control by their parents, it has been shown

that levels of depression are significantly lower than those in children raised by authoritarian and permissive parents (Schoeps et al., 2020). Support from these types of parents also serves as a protective factor against stress (Schoeps et al., 2020). This reduces the risk for anxiety and can improve the child's overall performance in school, as well as enhance their social skills and independence.

### **Permissive**

Research on permissive parenting and its outcomes on children is limited in comparison to that on authoritative vs. authoritarian parenting. However, it has been shown that children raised by permissive parents have lower levels of depression, but higher levels of anxiety (Schoeps et al., 2020). Because of the love and freedom that these children receive from their parents, depression is likely decreased. However, anxiety may stem from the lack of guidance associated with this type of parenting, making it difficult for these children to make the best choices as adults. However, children raised in Hispanic or Southern European culture tend to benefit from permissive parenting as it enhances their social skill in that environment (Schoeps et al., 2020). In addition, because this parenting style emphasizes independence and provides freedom to their children, it is likely that these children may show higher levels of independence in adulthood.

### **Conclusion**

This paper seeks to explore how varying economic status and cultures influence parenting style and overall childhood success. It was found that differing cultures adopt specific parenting styles based on the environment of the culture and their desired expectations of children. For example, Chinese culture typically yields more authoritarian parenting due to the strict emphasis on academic achievement. Arabic and Middle Eastern culture also yield authoritarian parenting

due to a strict environment as well as high behavioral expectations in males and modesty expected in females. In contrast, North American and European cultures, which expect individualism among children, tend to yield permissive and authoritarian parenting.

Different economic status also has an impact on parenting style based mainly on parental availability and time to spend time with children. Because parents of lower socioeconomic status typically need to spend extended hours at work, they have less time to spend with their children, decreasing warmth and affection in parenting. In addition, they have less time to provide discipline and, therefore, may resort to corporal punishment, showing that this socioeconomic status typically adopts authoritarian parenting. In contrast, middle class parents are often authoritative or permissive in their parenting style, as they have increased availability to spend time with and discipline their children with explanation and compromise. Parents with a higher socioeconomic status show a mix of parenting styles as their job may require much of their time or very little of it, as well as the fact that they have finances to provide different resources for their children.

Each parenting style brings about varying outcomes in children. All provide positive outcomes in many ways. For example, children raised by authoritarian parents are more focused in school and are often polite and respectful. Children raised by permissive parents have low levels of depression and are better at socialization. However, out of the three parenting styles, authoritative parenting is shown to prevent negative outcomes more than authoritarian or permissive parenting. While authoritarian parenting often brings about rebellion and a lack of independence and permissive parenting yield high levels of anxiety, authoritative parenting brings up children who are less likely to indulge in risky behavior, have higher levels of self-esteem, and perform better in school. The warm and affectionate environment provided with

authoritative parenting decreases levels of depression and anxiety and improves children's confidence in school and social settings. Overall, authoritative parenting results in more positive childhood development than authoritarian and permissive parenting styles.

It is important to note that all children are different and may require varying levels of discipline and strictness during changing developmental stages in life. Differing cultures may adopt specific parenting styles based on what is necessary for success in their environment. Similarly, parents of varying economic status will use the parenting style that is efficient in their current situation. Every family creates their own life and does what works best for them under their present circumstances. Although there is evidence from research to conclude that middle class North American or European individuals generally yield the greatest outcomes for childhood success due to highest use of authoritative parenting, it should be noted that correlation does not imply causation. Therefore, this conclusion does not speak for every family situation.

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