



Revista Costarricense de Psicología

ISSN: 0257-1439

editorial@rcps-cr.org

Colegio Profesional de Psicólogos de

Costa Rica

Costa Rica

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Revista Costarricense de Psicología, vol. 28, núm. 41-42, 2009, pp. 75-84

Colegio Profesional de Psicólogos de Costa Rica

San José, Costa Rica

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## Parenting Style, Locus of Control and Self-efficacy: A Correlational Study

### Estilos de crianza, locus de control y autoeficacia percibida: Un estudio correlacional

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*(Received 3 September 2009; accepted 30 December 2009)*

#### Abstract

The present study examined the relationship between parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian or permissive), locus of control, and generalized self-efficacy (GSE) among senior school students. Three questionnaires were used, namely, the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), the Multidimensional-Multi-attribution Causality Scale (MMCS – including only the achievement subscale), and Generalized Self-efficacy Scale (GSE). The results of stepwise linear multiple regression, treating GSE as the dependent variable, revealed many unexpected findings. Contrary to expectations, overall parenting style and locus of control were relatively weak predictors of GSE, although many of the bivariate correlations were significant in the expected direction. Authoritative style and effort explained more variance than other variables. As hypothesized, significant positive correlations were found between (1) authoritative style and GSE, (2) total internality (combining ability and effort, as well as success and failure) and GSE, (3) permissive style and total externality (combining success and failure), and (4) authoritarian style and total externality (combining success and failure). Other significant correlations were also found between some parenting styles and some components of locus of control. Findings were interpreted in terms of the specific links between the core components of the three variables, such as parental supportiveness or punitiveness, contingent success, and efficacy expectancy.

**Keywords:** authoritative style, expectancy, externality, internality, multidimensional-multi-attribution causality

#### Resumen

El presente estudio examinó la relación entre el estilo de crianza (autoritativo, autoritario o permisivo), el locus de control, y la autoeficacia general (GSE, por sus siglas en inglés) entre estudiantes de los últimos años de colegio. Se utilizaron tres cuestionarios, a saber, el Cuestionario de Autoridad Parental (PAQ, por sus siglas en inglés), la Escala de Causalidad Multidimensional Multiatribucional (MMCS, por sus siglas en inglés) incluyendo sólo la subescala de Logro, y la Escala de Autoeficacia General (GSE, por sus siglas en inglés). Los resultados de la regresión lineal múltiple paso a paso, tratando la GSE como la variable dependiente, reveló varios resultados inesperados. Contrario a lo que se esperaba, el estilo de crianza y el locus de control fueron predictores relativamente débiles de GSE, si bien muchas de

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las correlaciones bivariadas fueron significativas en la dirección esperada. El estilo autoritativo y el esfuerzo explicaron más varianza que otras variables. Confirmando la hipótesis inicial, se encontraron correlaciones positivas significativas entre (1) el estilo autoritativo y la GSE, (2) la internalidad total (combinando habilidad y esfuerzo, así como éxito y fracaso) y GSE, (3) el estilo permisivo y la externalidad total (combinando éxito y fracaso), y (4) estilo autoritario y la externalidad total (combinando éxito y fracaso). Otras correlaciones significativas se encontraron entre el estilo de crianza y algunos componentes del locus de control. Los resultados se interpretaron en términos de la conexión entre los componentes básicos de las tres variables, tales como el apoyo o castigo parental, el éxito contingente y la expectativa de eficacia.

**Palabras clave:** estilo autoritativo, expectativa, externalidad, internalidad, causalidad multidimensional y multiatribucional

Self-efficacy is a key concept in Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Self-efficacy refers to how well one can execute the course of action required to deal with prospective stimulus (Bandura, 1982). Efficacy in dealing with one's environment is not a fixed act, or simply a matter of knowing what to do; it rather involves a generative capability in which a cognitive component, as well as social and behavioral skills must be organized into an integrated course of action. It is affected by past performance, such as by observing others, persuasion and by autonomic arousal, as well as by cognitive processing. Self-efficacy has three major dimensions:

1. Magnitude (relative difficulty of the task demand).
2. Generality (the relative degree of specific or pervasiveness of expected mastery).
3. Strength (resistance to a disconfirming experience).

Most of the research has focused on the magnitude and strength dimension, whereas generality has received less empirical attention. Bandura conceptualized self-efficacy as domain-specific and situation specific, but he also introduced the concept of generalizability of self-efficacy across situation. Generalized self-efficacy represents a judgment about how well one can perform across a variety of situations (Smith, 1989). It is gained from mastery in one situation generalized to other similar situation (Bandura, Adam, Hardy, & Howell, 1980). Moreover, gained appraisal of one's successfulness as a person should be related to self-esteem and locus of control (Judge, Erez, & Bono, 1998). Evidence showed that there is some relationship between parenting and self-esteem, and self-efficacy and self-esteem.

Parenting style has been found to have significant antecedents of several personality variables such as self-esteem and self-efficacy. Parenting refers to the attitudes and behaviors shown by parents towards their children as a way of bringing them up. Such attitude and behaviors become a "style" of parents. Baumrind (1971) proposed three distinct types of parenting styles: permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritative. She suggested that permissive parents make few demands, allow children to monitor their own activity as much as possible. Authoritative parents, on the other hand, direct their children's activities; they are confident in their ability to guide children, but they are firm in maintaining standards, and are willing to impose limited punishment. While authoritarian parents are highly demanding but not responsive; they are status oriented and expect children to obey their orders without asking for any explanation. These parenting styles were distinguished on the basis of two dimensions, namely, the degree of responsiveness, and demandingness from the



parents (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritative parenting involves a high level of responsiveness combined with high level of demandingness. Authoritarian parents indulge in combination of low responsiveness and high demandingness. Moreover, permissive parenting presents a combination of high responsiveness and low demandingness. Several studies exhibit a relationship between parenting style, on one hand, and various personality characteristics in the offspring, on the other hand. There are few studies that focused on the relationship between parenting style and locus of control, and parenting style and generalized self-efficacy.

Considering parenting as an antecedent factor of self-efficacy, it has been found that self-efficacy is determined by persuasion and by observing others during childhood. For example, perceived unfavorable parenting rearing style and “affectionless control” from the parents and family is related to low self-efficacy, low self-esteem and depression in offspring (Oliver & Paul, 1995). Further evidence suggests parental excessive control was significantly correlated with lack of self-efficacy, learned helplessness and depression (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). Moreover, a significant relationship was found between authoritarian parenting style and academic self-efficacy (Chandler, Turner, & Heffer, 2006). Authoritative parenting style and academic self-efficacy were significant predictors of academic performance (Chandler et al., 2006). Authoritative parenting style is most likely to encourage the nature of self-efficacy in the offspring (Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997; Gray & Steinberg, 1999). However, in general, existing literature focused on domain or situation-specific efficacy. The present study deals with parenting as an antecedent of generalized self-efficacy (GSE), and not as a particular one such as domain specific efficacy. Moreover, it is not clear which type of parenting style helped to develop self-efficacy in children, some studies treated self-efficacy, and self-esteem as a mediating variable between socialization in the family, on the one hand, and depression, on the other hand (Oliver & Paull, 1995). They found that self-efficacy and self-esteem were positively related to perceived socialization, namely perceived maternal and paternal acceptance and family cohesion. It was basically based on family environment and parenting practices. Parenting practices are the mechanisms with which parents directly help their child attain socialization goals. Furthermore, another study by Swenson and Prelow (2005) included ethnic identity, perceived efficacy and self-esteem as a mediator of supportive parenting to psychosocial outcome. They found that supportive parenting indirectly influences perceived efficacy through self-esteem for European Americans not for African Americans. Evidence indicates that authoritative parents encourage their adolescent offspring to succeed, and show a high degree of involvement in the latter’s school work (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992).

Other investigators have found that adolescents who perceive their parents as authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful are more likely to attribute their achievement outcome to external causes or their school failure to lack of ability, compared to authoritative parenting (Glasgow et al., 1997). Evidence also shows that more self-enhancing attributions and lower failure expectations are found among subjects reporting authoritative parenting. The absence of self-enhancing attribution, behavior irrelevant to the task, and higher failure expectations were found among subjects reporting neglectful parenting (Aunola, Stattin, & Nurmi, 2000). Similar findings have been reported by more investigators (Salazar, Schludermann, Schludermann, & Hyunch, 2000).

Parenting style also influences the locus of control. In other words, locus of control is related to parenting style, on the one hand, and self-efficacy, on the other hand. Attributions are classified along three underlying causal dimensions in Weiner’s model (Weiner, Frieze, Kukla,



Reed, Rest, & Rosenbaum, 1971). The stability dimension classifies perceived causes as either fixed or variable in time and determines the subjective probability of success on future tasks. The controllability dimension distinguishes whether causes are subject to personal control. The locus of control dimension identifies whether the observed outcome was caused by factors within the individual (internal) or the situation (external). In this study, we have taken a third causal dimension, that is, locus of control. Aspects attributing the control of events to themselves are referred to as internals, and those attributing the control to the external environmental factors are referred to as externals. Evidence showed that there is some link between parenting style and locus of control. Internal locus of control, high levels of internal personal trust, and an active coping style were positively related to the parents who exhibit high levels of warmth, acceptance, helpfulness and low levels of disapproval when interacting with their children (Mondell & Tyler, 1981). It was found that positive parental involvement has been implicated in the development of an internal locus of control in academic contexts (Grolnick & Ryan 1989).

The terms locus of control (LOC) (Rotter, 1966) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) are related to personal control expectancies; some degree of conceptual overlap with general self-efficacy is internal versus external locus of control (Rotter, 1966). The concept of internal locus of control explains why some people believe they are masters of their own fate, while external locus of control explains why some people believe that what happens to them in their lives is due to luck or chance. Bandura (1977) emphasizes on the importance of presenting training in a manner that encourages individuals to use self directed mastery to strengthen and generalize expectations of personal efficacy, increase self-efficacy and shift towards a more internal locus of control. In short, although parenting style may be acknowledged conceptually as a possible antecedent of children's generalized self-efficacy and locus of control, either directly, or through personality variables such as self-esteem, empirical studies clearly demonstrating this relationship still need to be carried out. The relationship between variables may have differed in the light of cultural differences in socialization, child-rearing practices, and family relations. Several instruments have been used to measure LOC. The present study moves to extensive measure of locus of control, that is, the Multidimensional-Multiattributonal Causality Scale (MMCS). The scale was designed to assess the locus of control for affiliation and achievement and was constructed from items representing each quadrant of Weiner's locus, and stability of causal attribution model. Thus, the purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian or permissive), locus of control, and generalized self-efficacy (GSE).

### Study Hypotheses

1. It was expected that authoritative parenting style would be positively and significantly correlated with generalized self-efficacy. However, authoritarian parenting style would be negative correlated with generalized self-efficacy and permissiveness parenting style would be moderately correlated with self-efficacy. This expectation was based on existing findings that supportive parenting is related to perceived efficacy (Juang & Silbereisen, 1999), and lack of self-efficacy seems clearly conceptually related to parental excessive control (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978).

2. Internal achievement motivation would be positively correlated with self-efficacy whereas external achievement motivation should be negatively correlated with self-efficacy. Some people may be more intrinsically motivated (internal locus of control) while others may be extrinsically



motivated (external locus of control). If individuals believe they have control over future events, then they will attempt to exert that control in order to achieve a positive outcome; therefore, locus of control has significant effects on self-efficacy. Those with an external locus of control believe that their own actions do not influence future outcomes. They are more likely to suffer from depression and other ailments because they believe their actions cannot improve their current position. Those with an internal locus of control see the world through a more adaptive perspective. They believe that hard work and personal abilities will lead to positive outcomes.

3. Authoritative parenting style and permissive parenting style would be positively correlated with success achievement, and negatively correlated with failure achievement. On the other hand, authoritarian style should be negatively correlated with success achievement, and positively correlated with failure achievement. Studies showed that authoritative parents direct their children activities; they are confident, and encourage guiding their children. Their children tend to be more confident, self-assertive, self-regulated and self-independent, and have a high self-esteem (Maccoby, 1980; Mussen, Conger, & Kagan, 1974). Besides, the effectiveness of parents' school involvement in facilitating adolescent academic achievement is greater among authoritative than non authoritative parents (Steinberg et al., 1992). In general, achievement is correlated with positive evaluation of parents (Cooper, 1960).

4. Authoritative parenting style influences internal attribution more likely as compared to authoritarian and permissive parenting style. The rationale of this expectation was based on existing evidence.

## Method

### *Participants*

The sample consisted of 86 school students enrolled in Classes XI and XII of schools in a North Indian city. The subjects ranged in age from 15 to 21 years (*mean age* = 17.31 years, *SD*=1.69), and belonged to the lower and middle sections of the middle socioeconomic class.

### *Study Design*

This study has a cross-sectional approach and it aims to evaluate linear relations among study variables. Specifically, correlations and multiple regression analyses were conducted involving scores on parenting style, locus of control (including internal achievement, external achievement score and separate achievement related ability, effort, context, and luck) as the independent variables and score on generalized self-efficacy as the dependent variable. The aim was to examine the relationship between these variables, the degree of association and what proportion of the total variance in generalized self-efficacy was explained by each of them.

### *Measures*

Hindi versions of *Multidimensional-Multiattributonal Causality Scale* (MMCS; Lefcourt, Von Baeyer, Ware, & Cox, 1979), *Parental Authority Questionnaire* (PAQ; Buri, 1991), and the *Generalized Self-efficacy Scale* (GSE; Hindi version by Sud, Schwarzer, & Jerusalem, 1998) were administered in the present study. Participants were instructed to choose appropriate responses provided before each item on a five-point scale or four-point scale respectively. There was no wrong or right answer; the investigator was looking for overall impression regarding each statement.



The *Parental Authority Scale* consists of 30 items, each to be rated on a 5-point scale (1 = very much disagree, through 3= neither agree nor disagree, to 5= very much agree). The scale measures three parenting styles, namely: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive, with 10 items pertaining to each style. The *Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale* also consists of 10 items, each to be rated on a 4-point scale similar to that of the Self-esteem Scale (the existing Hindi version was used).

The *Multidimensional-Multiattributonal Causality Scale* was designed to assess locus of control for affiliation and achievement, and was constructed from items representing Wiener's locus and stability of causal attribution model. Affiliation locus of control was related to recalling early life events that had previously been found to be related to more general measure of locus of control. It consists of 24 items Likert scale concerning achievement and 24 items for affiliation. 12-12 items for success and failure in each set. It contains 12 items and 6 stable internal items focusing upon abilities and skills, 6 unstable internal items involving efforts and motivation. 6 stable external items focusing upon contextual characteristics, and 6 unstable external items that focus largely on fortuitous events, the largest score total externality score and total internality score. The present study focused only on locus of control for achievement score.

## Results

A multiple regression analysis was carried out involving scores on parenting style and locus of control as the independent variables, and scores on generalized self-efficacy as the dependent variable. The parenting style has three subcategories: permissiveness, authoritarian and authoritative. Similarly, locus of control has eight subcategories: achievement ability, achievement effort, achievement context, achievement luck, internal achievement, external achievement, success achievement, failure achievement. All three scales showed acceptable *Cronbach's alpha* coefficient. The *Cronbach's alpha* for Parenting Authority Scale was .742, for generalized self-efficacy was .714, and for locus of control was .986, respectively.

Regression analysis indicated that achievement efforts (variable in locus of control) and authoritative parenting style emerged as significant predictors of generalized self-efficacy; however, they were very weak predictors. Achievement effort predicted 10.7% of variance in generalized self-efficacy scores [ $F(1, 83) = 4.323, p < .05, \beta = .30, p < .05$ ], and authoritative parenting style accounted for 16.1% of the variance in generalized self-efficacy [ $F(1, 84) = 5.429, p < .05, \beta = .218, p < .05$ ]. Moreover several bivariate correlations were found to be significant. An inspection of the significant correlations resulted in the following observations.

### *Parenting style and generalized self-efficacy (GSE)*

Authoritative parenting style was positively correlated with GSE ( $r = .25, p < .01$ ); this result confirmed the expectation. However, authoritarian and permissive parenting style were not associated with GSE.



### ***Parenting style and locus of control (LOC)***

Significant correlations were found between parenting styles and LOC as in expected direction, namely: (1) permissive style was positively correlated with ability ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ), context ( $r = .24, p < .01$ ), luck ( $r = .24, p < .01$ ) and total externality (combining success and failure) ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ); (2) significant correlations were also found between authoritative style and ability ( $r = .24, p < .01$ ). However, a negative significant correlation was found between authoritative style and success (combining ability success, effort success, context success and luck success) ( $r = -.21, p < .05$ ), which contradicted expectations; (3) authoritarian style was positively correlated with context ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ), luck ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ), total externality, (combining success and failure) ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ), and failure scores (combining ability failure, effort failure, context failure and luck failure) ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ).

### ***Locus of control and generalized self-efficacy (GSE)***

There was a significant correlation between (1) effort and GSE ( $r = .22, p < .05$ ), (2) total internality (combining ability and effort, as well as success and failure) and GSE ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ). However, a negative correlation was found between success scores (combining ability success, effort success, context success and luck success) and GSE ( $r = -.196, p < .05$ ). It was in the unexpected direction.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between GSE, parenting style and locus of control. Several important findings emerged. Overall parenting style and locus of control were relatively weak predictors of GSE. A possible explanation for this relationship is that variables such as self-esteem might mediate the relationship between parenting style and GSE, and between parenting and locus of control. Evidence from literature showed that parenting style influence on self-esteem, and that self-esteem is correlated with locus of control and self-efficacy. Research results also showed that self-esteem is positively correlated with internal locus of control, family income, and positive sense of self-attractiveness (Griffore, Kallen, Popovich, & Powell, 1990). It appears that self-esteem also serves as an antecedent of formation of self-efficacy (Brown & Mankowski, 1993; Campbell, 1990; Dodgson & Wood, 1998; Kernis, Brockner, & Frankel, 1989; Moreland & Sweeney, 1984).

Apart from this, a significant positive correlation was found between the authoritative style and generalized self-efficacy, but non significant relations emerged from analyses between authoritarian style, permissive style and generalized self-efficacy. These findings are partially in accordance with results reported by earlier researchers and are partially consistent with our expectations.

In the case of permissive and authoritarian style, they were significantly and weakly related to total externality (as well as context and luck). This finding was in accordance with the expectations; however, authoritative style was significantly related to achievement ability. Authoritative parents may give a sense of responsibility and independence to their children; thereby, they learn to take responsibility of their outcome and believe in self-enhancing attribution (Aunola, Statin, Nurmi, & 2000).

Authoritarian style was positively correlated with failure scores (across ability, effort, luck, and context failure) but the corresponding correlation in the case of success was not significant. These findings, consistent with the element of excessive control in authoritarian parenting style, have



been related to children lack of interest in school. Adolescents from authoritarian families reported more failure actions, higher passivity and task irrelevant behavior than those from authoritative families (Aunola, Stattin, & Nurmi, 2000).

In the current study, authoritative parenting style was negatively correlated with success, and success was negatively related to GSE. This finding was contradictory to the expectations and difficult to explain. The findings may explain that authoritative parents encourage their adolescent offspring to succeed, and may also show a high degree of involvement in latter school work (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). However, at least one study demonstrates that authoritative parenting may not necessarily have a positive effect on the self-esteem of the offspring (Wintre & Ben-Knaz, 2000). Success might not be related to generalized self-efficacy; it might be related to domain specific self-efficacy. Studies demonstrated that perceived performance as successful helps to raise self-efficacy, whereas perceived performance as unsuccessful is believed to decrease self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy questions are concerned with capabilities to execute specific tasks or courses of action. This does not mean that people can accomplish tasks beyond their capabilities simply by believing that they can do so. This is because competent functioning requires harmony between self-beliefs, on the one hand, and skills and knowledge, on the other hand. Research also confirmed that self-efficacy is related only to performance expectations and does not depend on the value placed on the task (Bandura, 1997).

In sum, results demonstrated that parenting style and locus of control were relatively weak predictors of GSE, although many of the bivariate correlations were significant in the expected direction. Authoritative style and effort explained more variance than the rest of variables. Findings were interpreted in terms of the specific links between the core components of the three variables, such as parental supportiveness or punitiveness, contingent success, and efficacy expectancy. Other variables such as self-esteem and history of success and failure may mediate the relationship between these variables; for example, achievement success is most intimately associated with self-esteem, competence, confidence, and pride is associated with internal attribution (ability, effort), (Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Redd, Rest, & Rosenbaum, 1971). Parental excessive control, punitiveness, lack of cohesion have show to result in low self-esteem and low self-confidence, uncertain about the self as well as lack of ability to successfully handle anxiety and stress. It has been also shown that a positive concept of a person's own ability can be a component of a success-oriented achievement motive, and a negative concept can be a component of a failure oriented achievement motive.

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