Your Mom *Is* Your Boss

Exploring the Relationship between Parenting Styles And Leadership Potential in Children

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Early childhood development is significantly affected by parenting style, which in turn affects how individuals develop into professional leaders. The following research investigates the relationship between parenting style and future leadership potential in children with the purpose of applying the information found within a professional context. First, the literature regarding leadership will be reviewed and contextualized, focusing on behavioral definitions rather than trait-based definitions, and will then be followed by a description of parenting styles and their outcomes. Predominantly Western sources will be used for the purposes of this study and terminology as a result will largely reflect Western social values. Once the foundational definitions to be adhered to have been established, the influence of parenting styles on children as current and future leaders will be discussed. Peer ratings, academic success, and potential career path outcomes will be used as measurement factors. The findings of this review will then be summarized and their implications regarding managers will be explored. Finally, considerations for further research and the applications of the findings within the context of professional development locally and globally will be provided. The literature presented was collected from Google Scholar and the Texas State University research database. Peer-reviewed articles and books by experts in the field were used as source material.

The earliest leaders children encounter are their parents. From birth, parents tell their children what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. Parents are effectively the first and most enduring example of leaders that children encounter. As a result, parenting style stands to play a significant role in the development of a child's own eventual leadership style. Therefore, it is useful to understand how different methods of parenting will affect a child's development as a functional professional leader. If managers understand how different parenting styles affect child development outcomes, they can apply that understanding to their own managerial style in the workplace. The following examination of parenting styles is intended to be a resource for managers to utilize when developing their managerial style and their employees' leadership competency, regardless of parental influence.

General Literature Review: Parenting Styles, Leadership Traits, and the Role of Transformative Leadership

Lewin, Lippitt, and White, in their 1939 study on leadership and its effects on group dynamics, identified three distinct leadership styles: democratic, authoritarian, and laissez-faire (Lewin, Lippitt, and White, 1939). Diana Baumrind, in 1978, expanded on these styles, reclassifying the democratic style as authoritative and splitting the laissez-faire style into two subcategories: indulgent permissive and neglectful permissive (Baumrind, 1978).

Based on the same principles as Lewin, Baumrind defined authoritarian parents as those who demand complete control and obedience from their children, have high expectations, and do not encourage discussion or self-expression. Authoritarian parents utilize unilateral decision-making and punishment and closely monitor the activities and behavior of their children (Summers, 1995). Children of authoritarian parents tend to be distrustful and are less socially responsible, believing only those in power get what they want, and that power is gained by aggression (Ferguson, 2006; Summers, 1995).

Permissive parents are the antithesis to authoritarians: they place little value on the control of their children and are non-demanding, either through neglect or over-indulgence. They allow their children maximum freedom to prevent limiting the child's self-regulation and expression. Neglectful permissive parents are more self-involved and do not take responsibility for child development, while indulgent permissive parents are overly involved and affirmative of the child's actions and impulses (Baumrind, 1978; Summers, 1995). Children of permissive parents tend to be immature and lack the self-confidence for

assertion, as they are not practiced in being held to any kind of expectation.

Authoritative parents lie in the middle of authoritarian and permissive parents: they provide structure and discipline to set a standard for behavior that is based on reason, which they are open to explaining to the child so that they may understand the expectations set for them (Baumrind, 1978). The authoritative parent encourages discussion and reasoning and allows the child to take part in age-appropriate decision-making (Baumrind, 1978). Independence is fostered through support and affirmation (Summers, 1995). Authoritative parents are generally warm and involved, but not overly indulgent.

In Baumrind's studies of school-age children, she found that authoritative parents produced the most "instrumentally competent" children. Instrumental competence is described by Baumrind as the ideal formed by the evolution of Western social standards, which juxtaposes altruism and rule-abiding qualities with personal agency and individualism (Baumrind, 1978). Children reared in the authoritative style tended to be the most mature, independent, energetic, and socially successful. These children took responsibility for their actions and sought out goals and solutions to problems of their own

volition (Baumrind, 1978). Baumrind asserted that these are the attributes most traditionally associated with success in Western societies.

It can be safely stated that children who have been raised under different parenting styles will have different internalized beliefs and behaviors regarding leadership. In Cecil Gibb's article "The Principles and Traits of Leadership," he argued that there was no singular formula for a good leader – no specific compilation of traits that would ensure success in a leadership position. He asserted that leadership was simply a function of the situation and depended entirely on the unique characteristics of the group, circumstance, and potential leader (Gibb, 1947). However, Gibb also stated that certain characteristics can enhance one's ability to be an effective leader in a broader range of situations. For example, high competence for social interaction, independence, and motivation are generally useful traits in any group scenario. Therefore, it can be inferred that those who possess this set of traits may have a greater capacity to be effective leaders in general.

The concept of situational leadership being enhanced by some general characteristics is also discussed in *Bass and Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership* (1974). In it, the author asserts that while leadership is likely to be a combination of situational factors and advantageous personality

traits, some traits can generally be found in good leaders. Examples of such traits include "determination, persistence, self-confidence, and ego strength" (Bass, 1974, p. 87) as well as motivation, initiative, adaptiveness, communication, and responsibility.

Leadership methods, like the characterization of leaders themselves, are not exempt from dissection. An oft-mentioned theory is Burns' transformational leadership, which he introduced in his book *Leadership* in 1978. In *Leadership*, Burns' states that the most effective kind of leadership is transformational leadership, in which the leader does not simply instruct followers to perform tasks, but engages with them in a way that intrinsically motivates them and elevates their confidence and competency, allowing them to achieve higher-order goals with a greater level of independence (Burns, 1978). Leaders accomplish this by connecting with others to understand their needs and motives, which when fulfilled will allow them to aspire to higher levels of achievement. This type of leadership is highly dynamic and requires leaders who are very socially competent.

Focused Literature Review: Evidence of a Direct Relationship Between Parenting Style and Leadership Success in Children

In Morton's (2010) study of the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent health behaviors, Morton asserts that transformational leadership theory is directly applicable to children (Morton, et al., 2010). In the study, Morton described childhood and adolescence as parallel to the workplace, in that both employees and children are required to adhere to a structure and perform tasks that have been decided by an authority, restricting their autonomy. The parent's role is analogous to a manager's: parents set the rules and expectations for the child. In raising a child, the parent's role is one of a transformational leader, as they are focused on their relationship, encouraging the child's development, and facilitating their achievement of more advanced goals until the child is capable of functioning independently (Burns, 1978).

There is evidence that parents who display behaviors that align with transformational leadership have children who display the same leadership qualities in environments with their peers. In a study of high school students who participated in sports teams, Zacharatos (2016) found that students from households that had similar values to transformational leadership were rated as "more effective, satisfying, and effort-evoking leaders" by themselves, their teammates, and their coaches (Zacharatos, et al., 2016). This finding supports a direct correlation between the

behavior the students have seen modeled at home and their perceived capability as a leader.

It has been similarly determined that an authoritative style (firm and reassuring) is directly and positively correlated to both academic success and career trajectory. In a study in which parents and children were surveyed about the parenting style used at home, researchers discovered that as parents scored higher authoritatively, students› GPAs and scores on career path tests increased (Zahedani et. al, 2016). Conversely, parents scoring higher in authoritarian styles were directly and negatively related to student GPA scores on career path tests. This implies that children of authoritarians tend to achieve lower levels of success academically and professionally. Permissive parents did not result in any significant correlations between parenting style and GPA or career path scores.

Cultural differences are a major source of external environment variation for developing children and could be assumed to affect the outcomes of different parenting styles. However, a study conducted on high school students in Pakistan had the same results as similar studies in the United States: authoritative styles positively correlated with leadership skill scores, while authoritarian styles were negatively correlated (Ghazal & Riaz, 2020). Most students had authoritarian parents and, as a result, most students had low leadership skill scores.

Ghazal and Riaz's study have interesting implications regarding the cross-cultural applicability of the findings discussed in this paper. The authors note that Pakistani culture is somewhat limiting of women to their gender roles, yet female students scored slightly higher than male students. Though there is a cultural bias towards authoritarian male leadership, females raised by authoritative parents still had the highest leadership outcomes. It is important to note that despite a difference in cultural values from those typically held in Western societies, the same parenting styles were found to be most effective in Pakistan. As the culture in Pakistan doesn't place as much value on female leadership and authoritarian styles are the norm, the study concluded that the current generation of Pakistani parents are effectively producing more followers than leaders. However, we can conclude that despite different societal standards, authoritarian parenting styles are still the most conducive to raising children who are competent leaders.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

In summation, there are many ways to be a parent and many ways to be a leader. Parenting can be classified into three general categories: authoritarian, which is highly demanding but

unresponsive to the child's needs, permissive, which is responsive but undemanding, and authoritative, which is both responsive and demanding (Baumrind, 1966). Authoritarian parents are more likely to have children who are distrustful of authority and not able to operate creatively on their own, as they have only performed under specific demands and have not been encouraged to be expressive as individuals. Children of permissive parents are likely to lack competence and direction, as they have either not been held to a standard at all or have not had to reach the standards on their own. The sweet spot is the authoritative style, in which children are held to standards for reasons that they understand, are allowed to be a part of the family discourse and decision making and are encouraged to achieve age-appropriate goals independently.

Authoritative parenting styles share values with the transformational form of leadership, in which the leader aims to foster competence and independence in their followers by meeting their needs and understanding their motives. Parents and transformative leaders alike aim to enhance the connections between groups to aid in the achievement of a common goal, such as developing a child into a competent and functional young adult capable of success as a leader.

Based on the findings of this review, it can be concluded that parents employing an authoritative style are more likely to instill good leadership qualities in their children compared to parents utilizing authoritarian or permissive styles. It is recommended that the goal of parents should be to emulate transformative leaders– leaders who know how to foster leadership in their followers.

Applications and Future Research Questions

There is much value that can be gained from the study of early childhood and manifestations of leadership in young people. There is, of course, value for parents who are seeking guidance in raising future leaders. There is also value for young adults who want to foster their self-awareness concerning their inherent strengths, weaknesses, and biases. However, the following applications will focus on the impact these findings have on current managers who are seeking out potential leaders for or within their organizations.

Understanding how early influences affect future leaders can be a useful tool for examining our abilities as managers. Beyond being self-aware, how can this information be utilized to inform managers how to teach and model leadership skills within their organizations? Lessons from parenting books may be useful in providing examples of how managers can

take advantage of learning opportunities in the workplace as adults. For example, imagine that a parent is teaching their child how to manage their time in the mornings so that they don't have to be constantly monitored. An authoritarian may delineate a timeline for the child to be ready in the morning without otherwise discussing the change. The child may not understand why they are suddenly expected to function independently or why they must follow such a specific routine. An authoritative parent, however, may explain to the child that they are ready to learn how to get themselves ready in the morning. They may set a time frame and then ask the child how they would like to accomplish their morning tasks. The parent and child may come up with a morning routine together, and then the child may be allowed the space to accomplish the task on their own, with the parent nearby for guidance if they need it.

The authoritarian parent's actions are like micromanaging that can occur in a professional setting; the employees are given strict guidelines without explanation or the opportunity to reorganize their time in a way that may be more effective for them. There is limited communication from the employee to the manager and little trust between them, preventing the employee's expression of ideas that may improve their conditions or the work

itself. The authoritative parent, however, models a more communicative method of management. If a manager adhered to a similar method, it would allow mutual understanding of what needed to be accomplished, while allowing the employee the freedom to decide how they would accomplish it best within the parameters provided. The employee would feel trusted and respected as well as practice their time-management, prioritization, and delegation skills. The manager would have a better understanding of the employee's needs and be able to guide the employee's performance more effectively.

Research has shown that authoritative styles are more likely to produce independent and competent children than authoritarian styles; the previous situation is one example in which a manager may apply their understanding of this concept to their own performance. The authoritative style may be a better method to use for adults as well as children, to foster employees who are confident enough to make decisions while still trusting their superiors enough to ask for clarification or help if needed.

It is important to note that many of these studies are focused on children in Western societies. Other cultures, however, may value different traits and therefore prefer to foster or respond better to alternative characteristics in

their leaders. The Pakistani study referenced in this paper, while having valuable cross-cultural implications, is not representative of all possible differences in culture. When reviewing the literature, it is important to consider whether we are utilizing practices that create leaders at the local or global level. In the future, it is necessary to broaden the horizons of early childhood development research in terms of management so that we may better understand how growing up in one country may affect our success as leaders in other countries as well.

Finally, it should be considered that the research is focused on society as it operates currently. While it is likely that many similar characteristics have been present in effective leaders for centuries, even generational differences can cause friction between managers and employees. It is valuable to reflect on whether practices that are deemed useful for producing leaders in our current society will be as effective in a future climate. How can we predict workplace changes in the next generation? For example, the COVID-19 pandemic led many businesses to shift their operations to work-from-home-based models. Do managers who work from home need to have different or specialized leadership skills to maintain their effectiveness at a distance? If that model becomes the future of the workplace, will children need to be taught additionally or differently to create managers more suited to that environment?

One consideration to bear in mind is that the studies mentioned in this paper collected data by surveying parents, children, educators, or some combination of the three. This may be because the period before separation from the home is when parents are still actively parenting, and children are still consistently being parented. It may be difficult for older adults to accurately recall the parenting styles they experienced as children, which in turn may result in unreliable data. However, data collected from children and new adults can only reflect information about their potential for success in the workplace, rather than realized success. For future research, it would be useful to survey children longitudinally at different stages of their development and in their career field for data that is both consistent and reflective of actualized potential.

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