The Mediating Role of Parental Home Involvement

Kingsley Nyarko

University of Ghana
Psychology Department. P.O.Box LG 84. Legon, Ghana

Abstract
The study was conducted in Ghana to find out the attenuating effect of parental practices on the relationship between parental authoritativeness and adolescents’ academic achievement. The result shows that parenting practices (both mothers & fathers’ home involvement) attenuated the effect of their authoritativeness on the academic achievement of the students. The implications of the results are discussed.

Keywords: parental home involvement, parental authoritativeness, academic achievement, educational success, mothers’ authoritativeness, fathers’ authoritativeness

INTRODUCTION
Baumrind’s (1971) work on the categorization of parenting styles has been instrumental in influencing research on parenting and its impact on children and adolescents. She identified three types of parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Authoritative parenting which is made up of parenting attributes that consist of emotional support, high standards, appropriate autonomy granting, and unequivocal, bidirectional communication has been proven to assist children and adolescents develop an instrumental competence distinguished by the balancing of societal and personal needs and responsibilities. Some of the marks of instrumental competence include responsible independence, cooperation with adults and peers, psychological maturity, and educational success (Baumrind, 1989, 1991a; cited in Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

In reference to Baumrind’s typology of parenting styles, it has been documented that authoritative parenting style is the unsurpassed parenting style in connection to children’s outcomes. Park and Bauer (2002) reported that a positive association exists between authoritative parenting style and academic achievement among Caucasians. Darling and Steinberg (1993) developed an integrative model—parenting style as a context which conceptualized parenting style as a context that moderates the influence of specific parenting practices on the child. They argued that in order to fathom the processes through which parents influence their children’s development, researchers must maintain a distinction between parenting style and parenting practice. They defined parenting practices as behaviors defined by specific content and socialization goals. These include attending school functions and spanking a child. On the other hand, they defined parenting style as a constellation of attitudes towards the child that are communicated to the child and provide an emotional climate in which the parent expresses their behavior.

According to the authors, global parenting style is manifested partly via parenting practices, because these are some of the behaviors from which children make inferences about the emotional attitudes of their parents. In the model, both parenting practices and parenting styles are seen as resulting in part from the goals and values parents hold but then each of these parenting attributes affects the development of the child through different processes. Parenting practices have a direct impact on the development of specific child behaviors (e.g., academic performance) and characteristics (e.g., high self-esteem). Thus, parenting practices are the mechanisms through which parents directly assist their children to achieve their socialization goals. On the flipside, the primary processes through which parenting style affects the development of the child are indirect. Parenting style changes the faculty of the parent to socialize their children by altering the effectiveness of their parenting practices. From this view point, parenting style could best be seen as a contextual variable that moderates the relationship between particular parenting practices and specific development outcomes.

The purpose of the study was to find out the mediating role of parenting practices (parental home involvement) between their authoritativeness and the academic achievement of the adolescent children. Based upon the foregoing, it was hypothesized that parental practices (parental home involvement) will mediate the relationship between parental style (authoritative parenting style) and adolescents’ academic achievement. The present study extends prior studies on the relationship between parental authoritativeness and adolescents’ educational success by examining the attenuating effects of parental involvement in relation to their authoritativeness and the educational achievement of their children and also introduces a cultural dimension (study conducted in Ghana) in the study.
METHOD

Sample
The sample for the present study was drawn from three senior high schools in the central region of Ghana. Only second year and third year (final year) students were used in the study. The schools are: University Practice Secondary School, Ghana National College and Assin Manso Secondary School all located in the central region of Ghana. Out of a sample of 239 adolescents, 45.2% were males and 54.8% were females. The participants belonged to different family structures. 72.3% of the students lived in nuclear families, 9.7% lived with single mothers, 3.9% resided with single fathers, 6.8% lived with stepmothers, and 7.3% resided with step fathers.

Procedure
To begin the data gathering process, a written permission was sent to each of the headmasters of the National College and Assin Manso Secondary School. After the headmasters had consented to the request, they communicated my mission to the teachers of their schools and some of them voluntarily agreed and took part in the study. The teachers then informed the students of their respective schools about the study, and those who consented to be involved in it, were randomly selected to participate.

Measures
Of interest in the current study are the measures of authoritative parenting, parental home involvement, and educational achievement.

Authoritative Parenting
The authoritative parenting scale was developed to measure the degree of Authoritativeness of the parents (Steinberg et al., 1991). It has three major components or dimensions: acceptance/involvement, firm control, and psychological autonomy granting. The original scale has a total of 36 items representing the 3 dimensions of the variable. The first dimension, acceptance/involvement has a total of 15 items with an alpha coefficient of 0.72. The second dimension which assesses parental monitoring and control has a total of 9 items with an alpha coefficient of 0.76. The third dimension, psychological autonomy granting which assesses the degree to which parents use noncoercive, democratic discipline and encourage the adolescent to express individuality within the family has a total of 12 items with an alpha coefficient of 0.72. In the present study, 9 out of the original 36 items were used to measure the extent of parental Authoritativeness. That is 3 items of each of the dimensions of acceptance/involvement, firm control, and psychological autonomy granting were taken and adapted to measure parental Authoritativeness. The items were measured on a five-point likert scale ranging from 1-never to 5-always. Due to the nature of the study, the Authoritativeness of two parental figures was measured or assessed. These were mothers and fathers’ Authoritativeness. The overall alpha coefficient of the Authoritativeness mothers’ scale is 0.61 (N=183), while that of the fathers’ has an alpha coefficient of 0.70 (N=170). Listed below are some of the items of the three subscales:

- Acceptance/Involvement- Example, “How often do you count on your parents to help you if you have some kind of a problem?”
- Firm control- Example, “How much do your parents try to know where you go at night?”
- Psychological autonomy granting- Example, “How often do your parents tell you that their ideas are correct and that you should not question them?”

Parental Home Involvement
This scale was developed by Nyarko (2008) to measure the extent of parental home school-related activities of the participants. It measures parental actions such as encouragement of their children to succeed, monitoring of their homework, going on outings with the kids (e.g., zoo, library, etc.). The scale was measured on a five-point likert scale ranging from 1-almost never to 5-very often. Some of the items on the scale are “My parents discuss my school progress with me”, “My parents go on outings with me.” In all, seven items were measured on this scale. The alpha coefficients are: Mother=0.82 (N=184) and father=0.80 (N=171).

Educational Achievement
The academic grades of the students for one academic year in four core subjects were aggregated and the average score was used to delineate their educational or academic achievement. These subjects are English, math, general science, and social studies. Because the students were in the second and third (final) year of their education, I decided to use their second year test scores in those four subject areas in the study.

Statistical Treatment of the Data
The data collected from the surveys were analyzed by using diverse statistical methods. Descriptive statistics was utilized to present an overall picture of the responses provided by the students. Furthermore, correlational analyses were used to test for linear relationships among the variables. Students’ ratings of parental home involvement and their connections to school grades as well as the relationship between parental Authoritativeness and the school grades of the students were analyzed by using bivariate correlation.

Finally, multiple regression analysis was employed to address the issue of mediation. It was used to establish whether parental home involvement performed a mediating role between their Authoritativeness and the school achievement of their
adolescent children. In order to achieve this end, a correlation analysis was performed on the three variables to see if they were significantly correlated. Once the correlations among them were found to be significant, multiple regressions were then conducted to determine whether there was a mediating effect. The mediation approach directly descended from the work of Judd, Baron, and Kenny and has most often been employed by psychologists. Using this approach, the criteria for establishing mediation, which are nicely summarized by Howell (2006), are, based on my hypothesis:

1. Parental authoritativeness must be correlated with academic achievement (School grades).
2. Parental authoritativeness must be correlated with parental involvement.
3. Parental involvement must be correlated with academic achievement, holding constant any direct effect of parental authoritativeness on academic achievement.
4. When the effect of parental involvement on academic achievement is removed, parental authoritativeness is no longer correlated with academic achievement (complete mediation) or the correlation between parental authoritativeness and academic achievement is reduced (partial mediation).

After this, the Sobel test calculator was also used to find out whether the mediating variable produced a significant effect (www.danielsoper.com).

RESULTS
Relationship between Authoritative Parenting and Adolescents’ Educational Achievement
The statistical analysis conducted (table 1) revealed a positive and significant relationship between mothers’ authoritativeness and their children’s school grades (Academic achievement). Mothers’ authoritativeness in relation to their children’s school grades was significant ($r=0.160$, $p<0.05$). Also, fathers’ authoritativeness was found to be positively and significantly correlated with the school grades of the children ($r=0.204$, $p<0.01$).

The above results, in summary, inform us that in all, the authoritativeness of parents in relation to the academic performance of their adolescent children was positively and significant related.

Table 1: Relationships between Parental Authoritativeness and Adolescents’ Academic Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student's School Grades</th>
<th>Mother's Authoritativeness</th>
<th>Father's Authoritativeness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Authoritativeness</td>
<td>.160**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=183</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Authoritativeness</td>
<td>.204**</td>
<td>.846**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=170</td>
<td>N=148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05   **p<.01

The Mediating Role of Parental Involvement
Multiple regressions were used to ascertain whether the positive effect of authoritative parenting style on the educational achievement of the students was mediated by mothers and fathers’ home involvement.

Mothers’ Home Involvement as a Mediator
The multiple regressions conducted (table 2) revealed that the zero-order unstandardized regression coefficient for predicting the mediator (mothers’ home involvement) from the independent variable (mothers’ authoritativeness) was 0.035 and the standard error was 0.016. The partial unstandardized regression coefficient for predicting the dependent variable (students’ school grades) from the mediator (mothers’ home involvement) holding constant the independent variable (mothers’ authoritativeness) was 0.081 and the standard error was 0.015.

The results showed that complete mediation had occurred since the correlation between the independent variable (mothers’ authoritativeness) and the dependent variable (students’ school grades) was not significantly different from zero ($p>0.05$). After the Sobel test calculator had been used to test for the significance of mediation by imputing the values stated above, it was shown that mothers’ home involvement mediated between their style of parenting (authoritative parenting) and the students’ school grades. This is because the results showed a significant Sobel test statistic (Sobel test statistic=2.02746, $P=0.02$, one-tailed).

This result proves an occurrence of complete mediation. The results, thus, provide strong support for the mediation hypothesis as regards the mediation role of mothers’ home involvement. Hence, mothers’ home involvement performs a mediating role between their authoritativeness and the educational achievement of the students.

Table 2 Mothers’ Home Involvement as a Mediator between Their Authoritativeness and the Students’ Academic Achievement (N=183)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother's Authoritativeness</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>2.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.119</td>
<td>.471</td>
<td>4.499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother's Authoritativeness</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>-.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mothers’ Home Involvement</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.411</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Students’ School Grades

Fathers’ Home Involvement as a Mediator
The results of the multiple regressions conducted (table 3) revealed that the zero-order unstandardized
regression coefficient for predicting the mediator (fathers’ home involvement) from the independent variable (fathers’ authoritativeness) was 0.041 and the standard error was 0.015. The partial unstandardized regression coefficient for predicting the dependent variable (students’ school grades) from the mediator (fathers’ home involvement) holding constant the independent variable (fathers’ authoritativeness) was 0.088 and the standard error was 0.017. The results established the occurrence of complete mediation since the correlation between the independent variable (fathers’ authoritativeness) and the dependent variable (students’ school grades) was not significantly different from zero p>0.05.

After the Sobel test calculator had been used to test for the significance of mediation by imputing the values stated above, it was revealed that fathers’ home involvement mediated between their style of parenting (authoritative parenting) and the school grades of the students. This is because the results showed a significant Sobel test statistic (Sobel test statistics=2.41707, P=0.008, one-tailed). The results; thus, provide strong support for the mediation hypothesis with regard to fathers’ home involvement serving as a mediator. Hence, fathers’ home involvement serves as a mediator between their authoritativeness and the educational achievement of the students.

Table 3. Fathers’ Home Involvement as a Mediator between their Authoritativeness and the Students’ Academic Achievement (N=170)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Father's Authoritativeness</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.007</td>
<td>.433</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father's Authoritativeness</td>
<td>-.005</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>-.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fathers’ Home Involvement</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.425</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Students’ School Grades

DISCUSSION

The result of the study showed the mediating role of parenting practices (parental home involvement). The hypothesis which was to find out about the mediation role of parental (mothers and fathers) home involvement was supported. The direct effect of mothers and fathers’ authoritativeness on the educational achievement of the students was not significant once their home involvement was taken into account. This finding is consistent with the findings of Paulson (1994) and Deslandes (1996) who concluded that parental involvement dimensions predicted achievement above and beyond parenting style dimensions. Also Darling and Steinberg (1993) have indicated in their model that parenting style performs a moderating role on the effect of parenting practices (parental involvement) on school achievement.

The fact that parental involvement at home (mothers & fathers) was able to eliminate the impact of mothers and fathers’ authoritativeness on the educational achievement of the students is an indication of the importance of parental involvement in the school achievement of their children. This evidence therefore calls for the need to emphasize the need for parental involvement in their children’s learning process. Bogenschneider (1990) has shown that authoritative parents are more likely to be involved in school and more likely to encourage the educational achievement of their children. Steinberg and associates (1992) also indicated in their study that the impact of authoritative parenting on adolescent school success was due to the greater propensity of authoritative parents to be involved in the school activities of their adolescent children. They stated that these parents affect their children’s achievement through their direct involvement in school activities, such as helping with homework or course selection or attending parent-teacher meetings, and through the specific encouragement of school success, both explicitly and implicitly, by setting and maintaining high performance standards. Although, parenting styles, especially authoritative parenting style is useful in promoting academic achievement among adolescent students, parents should be encouraged and motivated to take a leading role in participating in their children learning activities in the home. As they supervise their homework, monitor how they use their time at home, attend educational programs with them over the weekends or during vacations, they are instilling in them the importance of education which will eventually lead to their academic success.

Again, teachers and other stakeholders in the educational sector should organize sensitization programs to create awareness among parents about the crucial place they occupy in the educational success of their children.

Finally, since this is the first study conducted on the soil of Ghana, I suggest that it be replicated by using different subjects maybe from other regions. Other researchers could also look at the study from the point of view of children, especially preadolescentsThe fact that the study was conducted in only one out of the 10 regions in the country might represent an obvious limitation so replicating it in other regions has the faculty of addressing this defect in the study. However, since in Ghana students could attend any school of their choice regardless of distance, it is assumed that the students sampled for the study represents almost the various ethnic groupings in the country.
REFERENCES


