The Relationship between Parenting Style and Preschool Children's Social-Emotional Development

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Abstract  Parents or primary caregivers play a vital role in fostering children's healthy development. Parenting style is one of the foremost thought of approaches to grasp the impact of parents on children's development. Children perceive how their parents exhibit emotions and interact with others in a family context. They make a replica of what their parents do to control emotions. By displaying different emotions, moderately expressive parents give children information about the type of emotional state they express and are likely to cause more personal conditions and causes. Therefore, parenting styles are valuable for knowing complex attitudes and behaviors associated with children's outcomes. The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between parenting styles and preschool children’s social-emotional development. The data were collected from 340 randomly selected private and government preschool children using the parenting dimensions questionnaire (PSDQ) and the social-emotional teacher rating questionnaire. The data analysis was carried out with the help of descriptive and inferential statistical methods. In particular, Two-way ANOVA was used. The results revealed that preschool children who belonged to the authoritative parents and the intact family were better in social-emotional development than their counterparts. Moreover, the results indicated that private preschool children achieved better results in social-emotional than government preschool children. However, there were no statistically significant differences between male and female participants in social-emotional development. It is therefore plausible to conclude that authoritative parenting style and intact family contributed positively to children’s social-emotional competence. The current researcher can conclude that children of authoritative and intact families are sociable, emotionally competent and can play with their peers and manage emotions effectively. Moreover, it can be concluded that private preschool children have more social-emotional skills such as managing emotions, playing skills, communication skills, understanding others' feelings and managing emotions appropriately. Finally, early childhood development has not yet been thoroughly examined and this study has contributed, particularly in the Ethiopian context, to the literature on parenting style in relation to family structure on children's social-emotional competence.

Keywords  Preschool, Parenting Style, Family Structure, Social-Emotional Development

1. Introduction

Early childhood is a remarkable period characterized by rapid changes in the development of physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional. It indicates a time window for the development of the entire life of an individual [1]. In the initial stage of the child's
development, the child's brain progresses at a higher rate than in any other stages of life [2]. The foundations of brain architecture and the potential for long-term and healthy development are laid in the early stages of a child [3].

The period of two to six years is important to succeed in promoting healthy self-picture, creating and maintaining social relationships, and setting the foundations for academic success on the path to further development [4]. The development of mental, physical, personal, social-emotional, moral skills and the solution to problems that occur in the first years of life is crucial, unlike any other moment in a child's life [5] and negative early experiences can impair children's mental health and affect their cognitive, behavioural, and social emotional development [6].

2. Parenting Style and Children's Social-Emotional Development

In order to develop children’s social, emotional competence and cognitive skills and also balanced relationship, parents are the key individuals [7]. The parents play an essential role in the overall progress of the child, and the parents have become "architects" of the child's development [8]. The way children are brought up is seen as crucial to the development of the growing child. Therefore, parents or primary caregivers play an important part in supporting the healthy development of children [12].

Parenting style is one of the most studied approaches to understanding the parenting impact on human development [10]. Baumrind found that preschool children raised by parents with various parenting styles differed by two dimensions in the degree of social-emotional capacity: responsiveness and demandingness. Based on these dimensions, Baumrind classified parenting styles as an authoritative style that has high responsiveness and high demand; an authoritarian style with low responsiveness and high demand; permissive style is characterized by high responsiveness and low demand [11].

Parenting responsiveness refers to the level of support, warmth, and affection that parents show their children. Parents who are receptive and available show a certain degree of unconditional acceptance of their children. While parents who are less receptive and less emotionally available to their children are likely to criticize, punish, or ignore their children. Receptive parents are most often associated with positive results of the child's development. For example, they have good emotional bonds, relationships, safe and well with others, and have high self-esteem [12].

Parental demandingness to the claims that parents make about integrating the children into the whole family, their supervision, discipline, the requirements of maturity, and willingness to deal with the child, the disobedience. Parenting responsiveness refers to parents' needs for their children to be responsible and mature, and to the rules and limits that parents set for their children [10].

Authoritarian parents provide an absolute set of Standards for well-organized and structured environments. On the contrary, permissive parents are more accommodating than demanding, and prefer to give the same independence the child wants without requiring any sort of compliance, as long as physical protection of the child is not compromized. The permissive type of parenting is generally associated with lower participation of the parents. If the child triggers a shock over something, the permissive parents give in to the child's demands, and the parents threaten claim disciplining the child without punishment. They find it hard to teach the child, and therefore they find it difficult to teach the child and as a result, they spoil the child [13].

On the other hand, an authoritative parent respects both the autonomy of the child, and open communication with the child. Authoritative parents are demanding and responsive. They monitor and provide clear standards for the behaviour of their children. They want their children to have confidence in themselves, that they are socially responsible and self-regulating, that they are in solidarity, and that their disciplinary methods are in solidarity instead of punishable [10].

Thus, effective parents ensure the physical well-being of their children, promote socially acceptable behaviour, motivate the intellectual development of the child, provide emotional security and give a spiritual and moral direction at the initial stage of the child's development [14]. In addition, [15] acknowledged that practice and effective parenting actions such as positive thinking and acceptance of warmth and appropriate control were often considered to be associated with behaviour and cognitive abilities in children.

Many parents are not aware of the impact of certain parenting styles on their children's development. Because it is important that all young children are healthy in every way, it is essential to examine the causes of the social and emotional development that is unsuitable for the future of our young people and our society. When children have a lack of social skills and behaviour regulation, academic and peer success can be difficult [16].

Thus, social emotional development in early childhood stage is particularly important; children must establish a secure connection with their primary caregivers [20]. Parents or primary caregivers should support and motivate their children at this point [21].

Early Childhood development has not been widely studied in Ethiopia. In particular, as revealed through inquiry, very few researches have been studied (Girma, 2014). There was no research on preschool children's social-emotional development in relation to parenting style.
For parents to better realize the development of their child in the light of their parenting styles and recognize the effect of these practices on the social-emotional of their children. It is important to conduct research. Therefore, the result of this study will have a high potential value for parents or primary caregivers, consultants, educators, and other bodies interested in many aspects.

3. Research Questions

This study was mainly initiated to better recognize the relationship between parenting styles and preschool children’s social-emotional development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and aims to answer the following basic research questions:
(1) Are there significant differences in the social-emotional competence of the preschool children across parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive) and family structure (intact and non-intact)?
(2) Is there a significant difference in children’s social-emotional scores across the type of preschool (private & government) and sex of the child?

4. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between parenting style and preschool children’s social-emotional development. This study employed a quantitative research approach and correlational research design.

The target group of this study was preschool children and their parents (primary caregivers) who are found in the city administration of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

To carry out the study, participants were selected through multi stage sampling techniques. Primarily, from the ten sub-cities found in Addis Ababa City Administration, the Yeka sub-city was randomly identified for the study. In order to facilitate the management of the samples for the study, four districts in the Yeka Sub-City were selected: districts 11, 12, 13, and 14 in the convenient sampling technique. Subsequently, 18 preschools in the four selected districts were stratified according to the type of preschools (public and private). In order to select children from each preschool, the children were divided into two groups (males and females). Thus, to select the participating children, the researcher used stratified samples again. Finally, participants in each shift were selected on the basis of a simple random technique (using the lottery method).

With regard to tools of data collection, the overall parenting style was assessed using the parenting style and dimensions questionnaire (PSDQ), developed by Robinson (2001). It is a self-reporting tool which consists of 32 statements of various parents’ reactions to children’s behaviour.

In the current study, the reliability of the parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire was tested by using Cronbach alphas and the outcomes were presented below:
- Authoritative reliability scale was $r = .74$
- Authoritarian reliability scale was $r = .79$
- Permissive reliability scale was $r = .76$

The parenting style and dimensions questionnaire (PSDQ) score was based on a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 indicate that the parent "always displays" the declared behaviour with the child and 1 indicates that the parent "never displays "the declared behaviour with the child. Parents should answer on the 5-point scale like 1 = never to 5 = Always. There are no negative elements. The marks for each parent were in use separately, and the sum of the marks for every parent was in use for a total mark of an item.

The researcher adopted and used the social-emotional development instrument used in the Ethiopian context to measure the social-emotional competence of preschool children by Girma (2014). The social-emotional competence questionnaire (emotional awareness, play skill, emotion regulation, and communication skill) of the preschool child was given to classroom teachers in each preschool to rate the target child’s behaviour using a 1-3 Likert-type measure, where 1 = doesn’t apply, 2 = applies sometimes, and 3 = certainly applies across items representing for social-emotional domains (emotional awareness, play skill, emotion regulation, and communication skill).

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Results

5.1.1. Participant’s Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics (i.e., expressed by frequencies and percentages) of the sample study are presented in tables and figures.

| Table 1. Participant children’s background |
|-------------------------------------------|
| Children’s Background | Frequency | %  | Valid % | Cumulative % |
|------------------------|------------|----|---------|--------------|
| Sex                    |            |    |         |              |
| Female                 | 170        | 50.0| 50.0    | 50.0         |
| Male                   | 170        | 50.0| 50.0    | 100.0        |
| Total                  | 340        | 100.0| 100.0   |              |
| Type                   |            |    |         |              |
| Private                | 182        | 53.5| 53.5    | 53.5         |
| Gov’t                  | 158        | 46.5| 46.5    | 100.0        |
| Total                  | 340        | 100.0| 100.0   |              |
| Level                  |            |    |         |              |
| Nursery                | 111        | 32.6| 32.6    | 32.6         |
| LKG                    | 116        | 34.1| 34.1    | 66.8         |
| UKG                    | 113        | 33.2| 33.2    | 100.0        |
| Total                  | 340        | 100.0| 100.0   |              |
As can be seen from table 1 above, 340 preschool children participated in the study, boys and girls respondents were equal in number each comprising 170 (50%) of the study sample. The table also shows, from the total 340 participant preschool children, 182 (53.5%) children from private and 158 (46.5%) from government preschools were participated in the study. Moreover, from the total 340 participant preschool children, 111 (32.6%) were nursery, 116 (34.1%) lower preschools (LKG) and 113 (33.2%) were upper preschools (UKG).

As table 2 shows above, the majority of parents 225 (66.2%) were intact family and 115 (33.8%) were non intact family from the total of 340 parents. Moreover, the table shows that an authoritative parenting style is the most commonly practiced parenting style of preschool children’s parent 141 (41.6%), were authoritative, 120 (35.2%) of parents were authoritarian and 79 (23.2%) of parents from the total of 340 were permissive parents.

5.1.2. Univariate Analysis of Social-emotional Development by Parenting Style and Family Structure

The first objective of this study was to investigate the difference in social-emotional competence across parenting styles (Authoritative, Authoritarian, and permissive) and family structure (intact and non-intact). To see the significant differences between the social-emotional development by parenting style and family structure the mean scores were checked by means of descriptive statistical and ANOVA and the result is presented in Table 3 and 4.

As can be observed in Table 3, there was a mean difference in social-emotional scores between children who belonged to intact and non-intact families. Their score was 107.88 and 106.37 respectively. There is also a mean score difference on social-emotional across children coming from the three-parenting styles: Authoritative, (107.61), permissive (107.58), and authoritarian (106.94). To see the significant differences between social-emotional competence by parenting style and family structure the mean scores were checked by means of ANOVA and the outcome is presented in Table 4.
As shown in Table 4 above, the difference in parenting style main effect and family structure main effect found to be significant $f(2,334) = 61.202$, $p < 0.05$, and $f(1,334) = 151.235$, $p < 0.05$ respectively. This indicates that there was a significant difference between parenting style (authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive) and preschool children’s social-emotional competence and family structure.

To answer which parenting style and which family structure obtained higher cognitive development scores post hoc pairwise comparison of means were computed and the results revealed that preschool children who belonged to authoritative family scored higher social-emotional competence score than other parenting styles (authoritarian and permissive). Moreover, Post Hoc pairwise comparisons revealed that, preschool children who belonged to intact families scored higher social-emotional competence mean score than non-intact counterparts.

On the other hand, table 3 showed the result that, parenting style- by- sex interaction effect found to be not significant F(2,334) = 218.978, $p > 0.05$.

5.1.3. Univariate Analysis of Social-emotional Competence by Type and Sex

The other objective of this study was to see the difference in social-emotional competence of preschool children by type of preschool (private and government) and sex of the child. In order to achieve this objective Two way – ANOVA was employed and the result is and is presented in Table 5 and 6.

| Source of variation | Sum of squares | Df | Mean squares | f | Sig. |
|---------------------|---------------|----|--------------|---|-----|
| Corrected Model     | 640.689a      | 5  | 128.138      | 4.672 | .000 |
| Intercept           | 3176480.05    | 1  | 3176480.056 | 115819.13 | .000 |
| PS                  | 122.405       | 2  | 61.202       | 2.232 | .030 |
| Structure           | 151.235       | 1  | 151.235      | 5.514 | .019 |
| PS * structure      | 437.957       | 2  | 218.978      | 7.984 | .060 |
| Error               | 9160.355      | 334| 27.426       |      |     |
| Total               | 3929257.00    | 340|              |      |     |
| Corrected Total     | 9801.044      | 339|              |      |     |

$p<0.05$

| Types of preschool | sex of the child | Mean | Std. Deviation | N  |
|--------------------|------------------|------|----------------|----|
| Private            | Female           | 106.75 | 5.234       | 101|
|                    | Male             | 109.87 | 5.679       | 81 |
|                    | Total            | 108.51 | 5.687       | 182|
| government         | Female           | 105.91 | 4.205       | 69 |
|                    | Male             | 106.96 | 5.616       | 89 |
|                    | Total            | 106.38 | 4.897       | 158|
| Total              | Female           | 106.25 | 4.654       | 170|
|                    | Male             | 108.48 | 5.817       | 170|
|                    | Total            | 107.37 | 5.377       | 340|

As Table 5 shows, there is a mean difference in social-emotional ability scores between children who belonged to private and government preschools. Private preschool children scored a mean score of 108.51 and children from government scored 106.38 on social-emotional measures. Moreover, there was a mean score difference between boys and girls on social-emotional competence scores. Boys from both types of preschool (private and government) scored 108.48 and girls scored 106.25 on social-emotional competence measures.

To see the significant differences between the mean of social-emotional competence by type of preschool and sex, the result were verified by means of ANOVA, and is presented in Table 6.
## Table 6. Summary of Two - Way ANOVA tests for significant differences

| Source of variation | Sum of squares | Df | Mean squares | \( f \) | Sig. |
|---------------------|---------------|----|--------------|--------|------|
| Corrected Model     | 808.764*      | 3  | 269.588      | 10.073 | .000 |
| Intercept           | 3844970.92    | 1  | 3844970.92   | 143668.80 | .000 |
| Type                | 292.328       | 1  | 292.328      | 10.923 | .001 |
| Sex                 | 361.346       | 1  | 361.346      | 13.502 | .110 |
| type * sex          | 88.408        | 1  | 88.408       | 3.303  | .070 |
| Error               | 8992.281      | 336| 26.763       |        |      |
| Total               | 3929257.00    | 339|              |        |      |
| Corrected Total     | 9801.044      | 339|              |        |      |

\( p < 0.05 \)

As shown in Table 4 above, there was a statistically significant difference in social-emotional competence score by type of preschool main effect \( F, (1,334) =292.32, P<0.05 \).

To answer which type of preschool obtained higher social-emotional scores, post hoc pairwise comparison of means was calculated and the results showed that private preschool children scored higher social-emotional competence mean score than government preschool children.

However, difference in sex main effect and preschool type-sex interaction effect found to be not significant \( F (1,334) =361.346, P>0.05 \), and \( F (1,334) =88.408, P>0.05 \) respectively.

### 5.2. Discussion

The first objective of this study was to see the difference between social-emotional skills and parenting style and family structure. To do this, the univariate analysis of ANOVA was calculated. The analysis showed that children in the authoritative parenting model demonstrated greater mean social-emotional competence than other parenting styles (authoritarian and permissive). The findings also indicate that preschool children from intact families had a higher mean social-emotional competence than non-intact counterparts. However, because of the interaction effect, there was no significant difference in mean score in terms of social-emotional competence.

Similar findings have been shown in previous studies on the relationship between parenting style and social-emotional competence with preschool children. A research by [16] explored the relationship between preschool children's social-emotional growth and the three styles of parenting to be identified: authoritarian, hierarchical, and permissive, and the results showed that children whose parents were using authoritative parenting had the highest score in the test for selecting social ability screening. Similarly, [17] explored the impact of children's parenting styles on the cognitive and social growth capacities of children aged 5-6 olds, and the result found that the authoritative style of parenting influences positively and significantly on the social skills of the child, while the style of parenting overprotective affects negatively and in a significant way.

In addition, [14] investigated the relationship between the parenting styles of the preschool child's parents, and the child's social behaviour and special attention were given to the three major parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative and permissive and the result shows that the authoritative parenting style was the most commonly used type of parenting by parents of the five-year old group. [21], which also revealed that children whose parents exhibit more pro-social actions than children whose parents practicing an authoritative parenting style show more pro-social behaviour than other parenting styles. [22], also stated parenting style with children's behaviour.

The result showed that children from authoritative parenting of fathers and mothers is correlated with well adapted behaviour.

With respect to the disparity in children’s social-emotional development by family structure [17] revealed that social-emotional competence of children varied by family structure and reported that favouring children in intact families against children in all other family structures. In preschool settings children from single families were found to be especially at risk. The findings also showed potential positive outcomes for divorced-family children. We will establish resilience in the uncertainty and breakdown of their family relationship to difficulties which can contribute to improved social-emotional competence.

The other objective of the present study was to investigate the disparity between sex and type of preschool in social-emotional competencies. To do this, univariate analysis of ANOVA was computed and the analysis of two-way ANOVA revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between private and government preschool children. Children from private preschool scored higher in social emotional competence measures. On the other hand, there was no significant difference in preschool children's social-emotional competence by sex main effect and sex by preschool type.
– interaction effect. These findings agree with the results of [23], analysis that found there were no statistically significant gaps in social-emotional scores between men and women. Similarly, studies conducted by [21], showed no significant sex specific differences in social-emotional competence.

6. Conclusions

The following concluding notes were drawn up, depending on the basic research questions and the findings of the study:

1. Children from the authoritative parenting style and those of intact families had a higher mean score of social-emotional competence than other parenting styles (authoritarian and permissive) and non-intact families. This implies that the authoritative parenting style and the intact family contributed positively to the social-emotional competence of the children. Thus, the current researcher can conclude that the children of authoritative and intact families are sociable, transmissible, and emotionally competent and can play with their peers appropriately.

2. It was clearly seen in this study that there was a statistically significant difference in scores of social-emotional competence by types of preschool. Private preschool children scored higher mean scores on measures of social-emotional competence than government counterparts. It is therefore plausible to conclude that private preschools have more social-emotional skills such as managing emotions, playing skills, communication skills, understanding others feelings and emotions appropriately than government counterparts. However, there is no significant mean score difference in the social-emotional competence between boys and girls of the preschool child.

7. Recommendations

The following suggestions are forwarded to address the gaps noted in the research:

1. Parent-child relations are the basis of the social-emotional development of the child, so it is necessary for parents / primary caregivers to provide a supportive environment in their home. In addition, parents may need to be aware of the impact of their parenting styles and family structure on their children's social-emotional competence and future academic progress. It is therefore recommended that psychologists, social workers, and consultants be able to raise awareness.

2. Educational intervention programs for parents and children should be designed and organized in such a way that children of preschool age can better perceive the social-emotional competence of the government. So children can be nurtured socially and emotionally from government preschools. This could be done by education administrators, decision-makers, school leaders and teachers as well as other concerned bodies.

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