Familial barriers in the development of creativity in preschoolers

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Abstract

Creativity, a matter of contemporary importance, represents one of the issues approached by the social and human sciences due to its ability to permeate various fields, transcending the borders of psychology. The article aims to report the results of this study, whose main objective is the study of the development of creativity in preschoolers, in the context of the family. The specific objectives are: validating an instrument to measure parenting style, identifying a correlation between the creativity index and the parents' attitude towards children, and highlighting the influence of the parenting style on children's creativity levels.

1. Introduction

Creativity is a fascinating theme through its ability to break through into various scientific sectors. This beneficial permeation of creativity has multiple meanings and creates the prerequisites for approaching it from a comprehensive perspective, capturing increasingly more facets.

Analyzing the context of creativity is particularly important for the social sciences, education sciences, and psychology. The impact of education on creativity is important and current research focuses on how to create favourable environments for creative performance, without neglecting the correlation between motivational orientations (intrinsic and extrinsic) and creative personality traits.

Given the multitude of factors that influence creativity, a holistic approach, from different perspectives, to the concept of creativity is required.

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2. Definition of terms

Over time, interest that focused only on the individual and on intellectual factors of creativity has shifted to the environment and the interaction with decisive factors in the formation and development of creativity. In order to have a complete and complex image of the phenomenon, it is necessary to analyze both the barriers that block creativity and the supporting factors that stimulate creativity (Stenberg, 2005). A barrier in the path of creativity prevents the development of creative abilities to their full potential that is possible under optimal conditions.

There are family settings where the children are offered a high level of autonomy, enabling them to experiment with new things, as well as family settings in which their personality is curtailed by the rigidity of the rules (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The parenting style is not only the educational climate, taking into account the relationship between parents and children, but also represents an important contribution towards the children's personal development, helping them understand their environment, understand themselves and be capable of establishing goals.

A demanding educational style, represented by the authoritative parenting style ("Just Right"), despite the high standards being imposed, if it is backed by a high level of understanding and affection from the parents, has a positive effect on the children's creativity. A serious barrier to creativity is the authoritarian parenting style ("Too Hard"), characterized by a high level of control, which inhibits any initiative from the child. The indulgent, permissive parenting style ("Too Soft"), is characterized by a lack of constancy in education: long periods of non-involvement of parents are interrupted by actions "in force" to re-establish things. Neglectful parenting does not provide the necessary framework for an optimal development; most of the time, the parents expect that inappropriate behaviour correct itself.

For a harmonious development, and in order to manifest their imagination and fantasy, children need a safe and peaceful climate of involvement and guidance from the parents.

3. Methodology

3.1. Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this research is to study the development of creativity in preschoolers in a family context.

The specific objectives are to:
- Validate an instrument that measures parenting style;
- Identify correlations between the children's creativity index and the parents' attitude towards children;
- Emphasize the influence of parenting style on preschoolers' level of creativity

3.2. Research hypotheses

Based on the established objectives the following hypotheses were formulated:
- It is assumed that there is a statistically significant correlation between the creativity index and the attitude of parents towards children;
- It is assumed that there is a statistically significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and low creativity;
- It is assumed that there is a statistically significant association between the authoritative parenting style and high levels of creativity.

3.3. Study participants

To achieve the objectives and test the hypotheses, 64 children from 2 kindergartens and 2 schools (preparatory class) and their parents were included in the study.

The children are aged between 5 and 6, and the gender distribution is shown in the following association table. 32 children are 5 years old and 32 children are 6 years old.
Table 1. Gender/age association table

| Count | Male | Female | Total |
|-------|-----|--------|-------|
| age 5 | 16  | 16     | 32    |
| age 6 | 23  | 9      | 32    |
| Total | 39  | 25     | 64    |

3.4. Instruments used

Three instruments were used:

1. Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking—Figural test, form A. The standardized batteries include three tests, each designed to highlight somewhat different aspects of the creative function: picture construction—consists of a curved shape that the subject must include in a drawing, picture completion—consists of 10 incomplete images that the subject must include in their drawings, building "stories" and putting them titles, lines—consists of three pages with sets of parallel lines—on which the subject must draw as many new images as they can.

2. The test measuring parents’ attitudes towards children (N. Mitrofan's Romanian-language-adaptation of "Barnett Liking of Children Scale").

3. The parenting test, of our own design, with 28 items grouped into four parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, indulgent and neglectful.

In designing the questionnaire, Diana Braumrid's parenting styles theory, which combines the 2 aspects of the parenting style, demandingness and responsiveness, was taken into account.

For the Cronbach’s $\alpha$ coefficient of internal consistency and the Pearson test-retest correlation coefficient across the 4 dimensions of the questionnaire, the following values were obtained:

Table 2. Cronbach’s $\alpha$ and Pearson coefficients

| Parenting style | Cronbach’s $\alpha$ | Pearson |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------|
| Authoritarian   | 0.804               | 0.927   |
| Authoritative   | 0.789               | 0.969   |
| Indulgent       | 0.803               | 0.886   |
| Neglectful      | 0.795               | 0.935   |

Following our statistical approaches we can conclude that the 4 scales of the parenting style questionnaire meet the criteria for fidelity, confirmed by the results obtained by the two methods applied: test-retest and internal consistency.

3.5. Results obtained following the application of the Torrance test on the group of children regarding creativity levels and the application of the parenting style questionnaire

After statistical processing and the conversion of raw creativity index scores to national-level percentiles in the corresponding age groups, the following distribution was obtained:
3.6. Testing the hypotheses

To test Hypothesis 1, where a significant correlation between the creativity index and the parents’ attitude towards children is presumed, the following steps were made:

Checking the normality of the distribution of the 2 sets of scores—the creativity index and parents’ attitudes:

| Parent attitudes | Creativity index |
|------------------|------------------|
| 0.767            | 1.438            |

Both results have values greater than 0.05—the distribution is normal and therefore we can calculate the Pearson correlation coefficient.

| Creat. idx. | Creativity index | Parents’ attitude |
|-------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1           | 0.889*           | 0.000             |
| N           | 64               | 64                |

| Parents’ Attitude | Creativity index | N |
|-------------------|------------------|---|
| Authoritarian     | 0.889*           | 64|
| N                 | 64               |   |

The correlation is statistically significant (Pearson is 0.889), therefore Hypothesis 1 is verified.

To verify hypothesis 2, where it is assumed that there is a link between the authoritarian parenting style and low levels of creativity, the authoritarian parenting style was separated and the other parenting styles were aggregated under "other styles of parenting"; likewise, all creativity levels apart from poor and below average creativity were aggregated in a single category.

| Authoritarian style | Poor & Below avg | Other Levels | Total |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------|-------|
| Authoritarian       | 15               | 2            | 17    |
| Other styles        | 4                | 43           | 47    |
| Total               | 19               | 45           | 64    |
By applying the chi-square test the following data were obtained:

Table 6. Hypothesis 2 Chi-square test

|          | Value   | df | Asymp. Sig (2-sided) |
|----------|---------|----|---------------------|
| Chi-square | 38.014  | 1  | 0.000               |

Comparing the minimum expected count (5.05) with the critical count (5.00) we see that the value calculated from the test is greater than the critical count, confirming the hypothesis that there is a link between authoritarian parenting and low creativity.

The verification process of Hypothesis 3, where a statistically significant relationship between authoritative parenting and high creativity is presumed, is the same as that used to confirm Hypothesis 2.

Table 7. High and very high creativity vs. authoritative style

|          | Hi&Very Hi. | Other lvs. | Total |
|----------|-------------|------------|-------|
| Authoritative | 20          | 4          | 24    |
| Other styles  | 8           | 32         | 40    |
| Total       | 28          | 36         | 64    |

By applying the Chi-square test the following data were obtained:

Table 8. Hypothesis 3 Chi-square test

|          | Value | df  | Asymp. Sig (2-sided) |
|----------|-------|-----|---------------------|
| Chi-square | 24.449| 1   | 0.000               |

The minimum expected count—10.50—is greater than the critical expected count of 5.0, confirming that there is an association between the authoritative parenting style and high and very high levels of creativity.

4. Conclusions

The main conclusion drawn from this study is that the research met its proposed objectives and the hypotheses were confirmed.

Children whose parents have a favourable attitude towards them have a high creativity index.

Regarding the influence of parenting styles, research has revealed, on the one hand, a high degree of association between authoritarian parenting and low levels of creativity, and on the other hand, a high degree of association between authoritative parenting and high and very high levels of creativity.

We conclude that for a harmonious development, children need a stimulating environment without strict rules—a climate of calm and confidence.

The limitations of the study are related to the vastness and complexity of the approached field, creativity in the context of the family can be analyzed from multiple perspectives. In future studies may be taken into consideration other variables - ethnicity, social background and even personality traits of teachers or parents. Further research may reveal, among other things, how creativity is influenced by the subjects' leisure activities.

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