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## Procrastination and Parenting Styles in Retrospective Evaluation of Adolescents

### Abstract

We examined a retrospective assessment of their parenting style and its relation to procrastination. Most studies focus on parents' reports; therefore, we sought to determine how children see it. The association between parenting style and the behaviour of their offspring seems obvious. Nevertheless, reports on associations between parenting styles and procrastination raise questions. All the more so because procrastination results in academic and work failures, the disruption of family life, and mental and health problems. The target group encompassed 130 Polish high school students (92 girls and 38 boys), all aged 17, and came from middle-class families. We used two tests: the Parental Authority Questionnaire and the Pure Procrastination Scale. The correlation analysis did not confirm the relationship between procrastination and gender or the number of siblings. The study showed that parenting style is essential for children's well-being, self-regulation, and academic achievements, which are closely linked to procrastination behaviours. The coupled parenting styles of both parents have a greater impact on children's well-being, self-regulation, and academic achievements than the mother's and father's styles considered separately. It shows a need to offer parents support in the raising of their children, which should be taken into consideration by educators and policy-makers.

**Keywords:** *adolescence, procrastination, parenting style, gender, number of siblings*

## **Introduction**

Procrastination means delaying starting important tasks, which often results in failure to accomplish them. The chronic retardment of obligations leads to overload, reducing work efficiency and causing a growing sense of overload and fatigue (Frakes & Wasserman, 2020). The tendency to procrastinate is most frequent among students (Markiewicz et al., 2019; Rosário et al., 2009; Schouwenburg, 2004; Wang, 2022). Many studies suggest links between procrastination and parenting styles (Batool, 2020; Chen & Chang, 2016; Esmaeili & Monadi, 2016; Ferrari & Olivette, 1994; Gonzalez et al., 2002; Javady & Mahmoudi, 2015; Soysa & Wiess, 2014). As a rule, these reports used the Baumrind typology that distinguishes three different models of parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The authoritarian style is high in demandingness but low responsiveness. It is based on control and the expectation of total obedience. The opposite is the permissive style, which is low in demandingness and responsiveness. Parents are friendly but set few boundaries and are inconsistent in enforcing them. These two styles are considered ineffective in contrast to an authoritative style based upon flexible control and clearly defined rules. Authoritative parents are both demanding and responsive.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Background**

The reports on associations between parenting styles and procrastination raise questions. Darling and Steinberg (1993) found a permissive style to foster a tendency to procrastinate. On the other hand, Pychyl et al. (2002) reported a significant negative relationship between procrastination and the authoritative parenting of mothers, and for fathers, it depended upon the child's gender. The correlation was negative for daughters, and there was no relationship between the fathers' authoritative style and procrastination in sons. In contrast, Rosário et al. (2009) report mothers' positive effect on their daughters' ability to overcome a tendency to procrastinate.

### **Sample**

The survey comprised 130 high school students aged 17, 92 females and 38 males. They all were Polish from middle-class families. Most participants (84.6%) came

from a conjugal family, 27.7% were single children, 41.5% had one sibling, and 30.8% came from large families. In terms of the variable *number of siblings*, the differences between groups are not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 4.123, p = 0.127$ ). The study was approved by the Bioethics Committee of the authors' University. Participation was anonymous and voluntary, and the consent of class tutors and parents was obtained.

## Instruments and Procedures

We used the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ & Buri, 1991; Polish adaptation of Oleszkowicz & Siwek, 2012), allowing a retrospective evaluation of parenting styles. The questionnaire comprises 10 authoritarian, 10 permissive, and 10 authoritative items presented separately to the mother and father, allowing for an independent assessment of their parenting styles.

Research on the Polish adaptation (Bąk, 2017; Oleszkowicz & Siwek, 2012) revealed the following reliability parameters: authoritative style – mother  $\alpha = 0.81$ ; authoritarian style – mother  $\alpha = 0.76$ ; permissive style – mother  $\alpha = 0.54$ ; authoritative style – father  $\alpha = 0.86$ , authoritarian style – father  $\alpha = 0.80$ , permissive style – father  $\alpha = 0.70$ .

The Pure Procrastination Scale questionnaire was used to measure the level of procrastination (PPS & Steel, 2010, Polish adaptation of Stępień & Topolewska, 2014). The scale allows for calculating the overall score, and the sum of the obtained results is between 12 and 60 points.

The tool's reliability coefficient is  $\alpha=0.89$  (Stępień & Topolewska, 2014).

Both tools are commonly used in Poland in studies comprising a heterogeneous population, and their validity was verified with the factor analysis, intergroup comparisons, and correlations with other tools. Moreover, the Polish Psychological Society recommends them as reliable measures of parenting styles and procrastination behaviours. We also asked subjects to provide data on birth year, gender, place of residence, family structure of origin, and siblings to get a broader picture of factors that might affect procrastination. Statistical analyses were performed in the SPSS PS IMAGO PRO 5.1.

## Data Analysis

After considering the described data, we put the following hypotheses:

1. The tendency to procrastinate is related to gender and the number of siblings

2. The interaction of authoritarian and permissive styles of parents will increase procrastination behaviours.
3. The authoritative style of parents will result in a decrease in procrastination behaviours.

## **Results**

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov's test analysis confirmed the distributions close to normal for the variables procrastination and authoritative style and the normal distributions for the authoritative style of the mother and the authoritative and permissive style of the father. The tolerance criterion and the *VIF* test indicate a lack of predictor correlations, as confirmed by the Durbin-Watson test (2.027). It means the requirements for applying multivariate regression analysis were met (Field, 2009). The next step was to establish descriptive statistics for the analysed variables.

Due to the significant difference in the numbers of females and males, the average ranks and the Mann-Whitney *U* test were used to determine the differences between the groups. The only significant difference between females and males was an assessment of the authoritative style of mothers, which was higher in females ( $M = 70.27$ ) than in males ( $M = 53.95$ ) ( $U = 1309.00$ ,  $p = 0.024$ ). It means that adolescent daughters assessed mothers' parenting style as authoritative more often than sons. The values of the other variables were similar for females and males.

## **Correlation analysis**

To verify the assumption that the tendency to procrastinate is related to gender and the number of siblings, correlations between these variables were analysed. At the same time, the possibility that the perception of parenting style is linked to the tendency to procrastinate was tested. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** One-sided r-Pearson's correlations between procrastination and retrospective assessment of parenting styles

	gender	number of siblings	Mother authoritative	Mother authoritarian	Mother permissive	Father authoritative	Father authoritarian	Father permissive	
PPS	<i>r</i>	-0.084	0.116	-.115	.055	-.104	-.335	.206	-.186
	<i>p</i>	0.171	0.094	.096	.266	.120	<.001	.009	.017

The correlation analysis did not confirm the relationships between gender and the number of siblings with procrastination. Yet a correlation between adolescent procrastination and assessment of parenting styles was observed. The strongest negative correlation was noted for the authoritative style of the father, and it was much weaker with the permissive style. On the other hand, the relationship with the authoritarian style is positive. No correlations were observed with the mothers' parenting styles.

### Multivariate analysis

We assumed that both parents' authoritarian and permissive styles could be positive predictors of procrastination. The interaction of both parents' authoritarian or permissive styles may intensify the child's procrastination tendencies, while the interaction of authoritative styles should weaken them. A multiple-factor regression analysis was conducted using a stepwise data entry method to verify these hypotheses (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Multivariate regression analysis assessing the parenting style of mothers and fathers and procrastination

	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>F</i> _changes	<i>p</i>
M_authoritative	0.112	0.016	0.178	0.859	14.179	0.001
F_authoritative		-0.341	-3.766	0.001		
M_authoritative	0.051	-0.092	-1.061	0.291	5.046	0.026
F_authoritaian		0.196	2.246	0.026		
M_authoritative	0.047	-0.113	-1.301	0.196	4.520	0.035
F_permissive		-0.184	-2.126	0.035		
M_authoritarian	0.112	-0.007	-0.083	0.934	15.617	0.001
F_authoritative		0.336	-3.952	0.001		

	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>F</i> _changes	<i>p</i>
M_authoritarian	0.043	-0.031	-0.330	0.742	5.359	0.022
F_authoritative		0.219	2.315	0.022		
M_authoritarian	0.035	0.022	0.249	0.804	4.202	0.042
F_permissive		-0.182	-2.050	0.042		
M_permissive	0.121	-0.096	-1.154	0.251	15.993	0.001
F_authoritative		-0.333	-3.999	0.001		
M_permissive	0.045	-0.048	-0.526	0.600	4.510	0.036
F_authoritarian		0.193	2.124	0.036		
M_permissive	0.035	-0.032	-0.338	0.736	3.242	0.074
F_permissive		0.172	-1.801	0.074		

Note: M – mother; F – father

Table 2 shows that the tendency to procrastinate was not related to motherly parenting but correlates with each paternal style. The interaction of the parenting styles of both parents changes the strength of interrelations but does not affect their essence. The relationship between adolescents' procrastination and fathers' authoritarian style is positive, which suggests that this style promotes the tendency to procrastinate. Moreover, the greatest strength of the relationship between the tendency to procrastinate and the evaluation of parental styles was noted in the case of the mother's authoritarian style.

The assessment of the authoritative style of fathers as the predictor of procrastination in adolescents is differentiated. Coupled with the authoritative and permissive styles of mothers, the authoritative style of fathers reaches moderate negative values. However, when linked with the authoritarian style of mothers, it gets positive values. Accordingly, the authoritative style of fathers explained the procrastination tendency from 11% (in combination with the authoritative and authoritative parenting of the mothers) to 12% (in combination with the permissive style of the mothers).

Similar results were obtained in the case of the permissive style. In interaction with the authoritative or authoritarian style of mothers, its value is negative, while in interaction with the permissive style, the value is positive. Nevertheless, fathers' permissive style combined with mothers' different parenting styles explained only 3 to 5% of the variance of procrastination. It suggests that mothers' parenting style does not directly influence procrastination but modifies the impact of fathers' styles. In the case of the permissive style, the relationship between the procrastination tendency of young people and their retrospective assessment of fathers' parenting styles is statistically significant but very weak.

## **Discussion**

Many studies found authoritarian and permissive parental styles to provoke procrastination in contrast to the authoritative style, which is reported to reduce procrastination in the offspring (Esmaeili & Monadi, 2016; Mahanesh et al., 2016; Soysa & Weiss, 2014; Wang, 2022; Woo & Yeo, 2019). To the best of our knowledge, there are only two reports on the difference in the impact of fathers' and mothers' styles on procrastination. Ferrari & Olivette (1994) found fathers' authoritarian style to raise procrastination behaviours in their daughters, while authoritarian mothers' influence appeared nonsignificant. They did not include sons. At the same time, Pychyl et al. (2002) highlighted links between procrastination and self-concept and self-worth, especially in the case of maternal parenting styles. They observed that fathers' authoritarian style had a direct effect on procrastination tendency, which is in agreement with our findings. Yet we considered the differences in the significance of these effects in combining the father's and mother's styles.

We found the father's authoritarian style, in combination with any of the mother's parenting styles, to increase the likelihood of procrastination. Also, authoritarian parenting weakens children's decision-making ability and limits their interests (Gonzalez et al., 2002; Soysa & Weiss, 2014). Children become withdrawn, impulsive, and incapable of refraining from immediate rewards (Gamst-Klaussen et al., 2019; Kauffman et al., 2000). Interestingly, the permissive parenting style of the father revealed the lowest but statistically significant parameters in our research. Indulgent parents do not support their children. Lack of stimulation weakens the child's motivation and results in a lack of social skills (Chen & Chang, 2016; Esmaeili & Monadi, 2016; Hong et al., 2015; Schouwenburg, 2004). The negative value of this style is strengthened in interaction with the authoritative and authoritarian parenting of mothers. It suggests that limiting the tendency to procrastinate requires the patient support of at least one of the parents. The most robust relationships were noted for the authoritative attitude of fathers. However, variations depending on the interaction with the mother's style could also be observed. The tendency to procrastinate is markedly decreased by combining the authoritative style of the father with the authoritarian and even permissive style of the mother. The strongest predictor of reducing procrastination is both parents' combined use of authoritative styles. Authoritative parents create a safe, predictable, rule-based educational environment. By placing reasonable demands on the child, they develop motivation and make coping with failures and difficulties easier in academic and real-life settings. The authoritative style of parenthood also

positively impacts the emotions linked to achievements (joy, hope, and pride) and promotes learning (Yip & Leung, 2016). Consequently, it decreases the tendency to delay, stop, or prolong tasks (Chen & Chang, 2016; Woo & Yeo, 2019).

The current study did not confirm gender differences in procrastination behaviours, which is in line with the reports of Steel & Ferrari (2013) and Wypych et al. (2018) but discrepant with the results of Ferrari and Pychyl (2012) and Schouwenburg (2004). Also, we did not note associations between the number of siblings and procrastination, which confirms Lu et al. (2022) findings but contradicts Rosário et al. (2009) report.

## **Conclusions**

The results suggest a relationship between the tendency to procrastinate and parenting styles. The father's authoritarian style was most disastrous, while authoritative parenting seems to reduce a tendency to procrastinate. The coupled parenting styles of both parents have a greater impact on children's well-being, self-regulation, and academic achievements than the mother's and father's styles considered separately. Parenting style is essential for children's well-being, self-regulation, and academic achievements, closely linked to procrastination behaviours. Our findings signal a need to offer parents support in the upbringing of their children, which should be taken into consideration by educators and policymakers. All the more so as procrastination is not only a severe educational problem but also leads to difficulties in coping with family and professional life challenges. It would be worth performing further studies that include a larger sample size and socially diverse families.

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