



Parenting styles and career decision-making among French and Korean adolescents[☆]



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ABSTRACT

This study compared the relationship of parenting styles to the career decision-making of adolescents from a Western and an Eastern context. Specifically, 575 French high school students and 613 South Korean high school students completed a questionnaire assessing perceived parenting style, career decision-making difficulties, and career decision self-efficacy. The Korean adolescents had lower career decision self-efficacy beliefs and higher career decision-making difficulties than the French adolescents. The authoritarian parenting style was associated with higher scores on career decision self-efficacy and lower scores on a measure of career decision-making difficulties in the Korean sample while the authoritative parenting style was associated with higher scores on career decision self-efficacy and lower scores on a measure of career decision-making difficulties in the French sample. Results showed significant effects for gender and parenting style on the career decision-making outcomes of both samples.

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1. Introduction

Accumulated research demonstrates the influence of parenting style on multiple realms of psychosocial development. More recently, scholars have begun to examine how parenting style may impact career development variables such as career decision-making. For example, parenting styles that are characterized by greater levels of warmth, acceptance, and autonomy-granting, and moderate levels of strictness/control have been associated with greater career self-efficacy (Guay, Senecal, Gauthier, & Fernet, 2003), career exploratory behaviors (Vignoli, Croity-Belz, Chapeland, De Fillipis, & Garcia, 2005), and vocational maturity (Tracey, Lent, Brown, Soresi, & Nauta, 2006). However, findings are inconsistent with respect to cultural and gender differences. Moreover, there are issues with the traditional categorical measurement of parenting styles. This study explored the relationship between parenting style and career decision-making in adolescents. It addressed limitations and inconsistencies found in previous studies.

1.1. Adolescent career decision-making

Toward the end of their high school years, young people face numerous personal decisions that can have wide-ranging and long-lasting effects on their lives (Mann, Harmoni, & Power, 1989). Some of these decisions are career-related: joining the military, finding a job, obtaining an apprenticeship, going to college, choosing a major, or gaining skills through volunteer service. While some students make these early career decisions with relative ease, others struggle. Albion and Fogarty (2002) found that over 70% of high school students in their sample were “slightly” to “very undecided” about their career choice. At the same time,

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84.3% were “moderately” to “highly satisfied” with their level of decidedness, indicating that those who were not decided were not necessarily worried about their indecision. In another sample of adolescents, 40% did not know where to go for help with decision-making and 38% thought they had to seek information from too many different sources (Julien, 1999). Difficulties before or during this early career decision-making process may result in stress, avoidance, delayed decisions, or a lack of perceived ownership and may result in someone else making the decision (Gati & Saka, 2001). Conversely, successful career preparation and identity development are associated with personal and social adjustment, happiness, self-esteem, well-being, and career satisfaction (Creed, Muller, & Patton, 2003; Kunnen, Sappa, van Geert, & Bonica, 2008; Skorikov, 2007).

Making educational and vocational decisions based on a clear, organized, and realistic self-concept informed by structures and opportunities in the world of work can be a complex process that is difficult to manage (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996; Mallet, 1999). Numerous factors may hinder career development. Fortunately, adolescents are not alone in their career decision-making. In the secondary school system, parents or legal guardians are invited to participate in formal educational and career planning for their child. Given that most adolescents still live at home, they may have significant informal influences from their family-of-origin as well.

1.2. Parental influences on career decisions

Empirical work has identified specific aspects of parenting that influence adolescent career development. For example, Fouad et al. (2010) confirmed that families influence career and work choices through the provision of information, emotional support and financial support, and by promoting career expectations that are consistent with the individual's gender, religion, or culture. These activities are consistent with findings from qualitative studies examining parental intentions (Young & Friesen, 1992; Young, Friesen, & Pearson, 1988). Additionally, the anticipation of parental support for specific careers was related to middle school students' self-efficacy for those specific careers (Turner & Lapan, 2002) and the degree to which students valued these careers (Lapan, Hinkelman, Adams, & Turner, 1999). In math and science domains, encouragement from parents influenced learning experiences which in turn influenced self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations (Ferry, Fouad, & Smith, 2000). Although one may consider the influence of parental characteristics such as socioeconomic status, education, occupation, and sex role orientation on the transmission of work values from parent to child, Mannheim and Seger (1993) found no relationship between these demographic variables in mothers and the work values of their male or female children.

Keller and Whiston (2008) suggest that relational factors between parents and their child are influential in the development of adolescents' interests, values, and vocational identity. Young et al. (1999) examined these relational interactions and found that career conversations between parents and adolescents were more effective when there was open communication, shared goals, identified methods for achieving goals, leadership from parents, and individuation between the adolescent and the parent.

O'Brien (1996) found that adolescent girls' career related goals were significantly influenced by their attachment to their mother and movement toward individuation from their mother. Attachment and individuation were further associated with female high school students' career confidence, realistic career choices, achievement orientation, and the degree to which they valued their career orientation (O'Brien, 1996). Individuation can be thought of as emotional autonomy, an ability to separate one's feelings and express disagreement in this case, with parents. Li and Kerpelman (2007) suggest that as adolescents struggle to achieve an identity and make decisions impacting their future, a healthy level of emotional autonomy will prevent over-dependence on parents and can help the child explore their possible selves. Emotional autonomy can be facilitated by family cohesion, maternal warmth, and parental control (Fuhrman & Holmbeck, 1995).

1.3. Parenting styles

Parental warmth and control represent two dimensions of parental behavior that influence development. Baumrind (1971, 1991) described four parenting styles that correspond to high and low scores on an index of parental warmth and an index of parental control. Parental warmth is the degree of acceptance and responsiveness parents display; parental control is the degree to which parents manage their child's behavior – from being very strict to setting few rules or demands. Thus, the four parenting styles are: authoritarian (high control and low warmth), authoritative (high control and high warmth), indulgent permissive (low control and high warmth), and neglectful permissive (low control and low warmth). Authoritative parents are warm, but firm. They provide emotional support, have high standards, grant autonomy appropriately, maintain limits and controls, and provide clear bi-directional communication. Authoritarian parents also have high standards, but are more directive and less emotionally supportive. They are strict disciplinarians and do not debate family rules. Indulgent permissive parents are warm, supportive, trusting, and democratic, but undemanding. They do not like to say “no” to the child or disappoint them; hence, they often give in to the child's demands. Neglectful permissive parents are not warm and do not place any demands on the child – they are disengaged from the responsibilities of child rearing.

There is consistent evidence that the authoritative parenting style is related to positive developmental outcomes in children such as competence, achievement, social development, self-esteem, and mental health (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). For example, in a sample of over 4000 ethnically diverse adolescents, the authoritative parenting style corresponded to higher mean scores on measures of academic competence, self-reliance, and work orientation, and lower mean scores on measures of delinquency and school misconduct as compared to adolescents from authoritarian, indulgent permissive, or neglectful permissive homes (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). Further results demonstrate that adolescents reared in authoritarian homes had the lowest self-reported drug use and the least amount of somatic complaints but also endorsed the least amount of self-reliance and social competence. Adolescents from neglectful permissive homes had the lowest GPA, lowest academic

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