

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL STYLE, PARENTAL COMPETENCE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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**Abstract:** *Over the past few years, there has been an increase in concern for studying the relationship between parents and children in order to improve it. Clarifying and understanding the concepts of parental style, parental competence and parents' emotional intelligence and how they intertwine in raising and educating children is essential for improving the way parents educate their children. This research investigates the relationship between these three concepts and the results highlight the fact that both the parental style adopted by the parent and the high level of parental competence positively correlate with emotional intelligence.*

**Key words:** *parental style, parental competence, emotional intelligence, unconditional parenting.*

## 1. Introduction

Bonchiş (2011) argues that adopting an effective parenting style involves focusing on the child, the permanent presence in their life, accepting them unconditionally, encouraging and offering affection, adapting to their needs, learning constantly, changing and reviewing educational concepts. In Băran-Pescaru (2004), parenting styles are the way in which parents express their beliefs about what it means to be a good parent or to be a bad parent. The author has identified five parenting styles that correspond to a link between love and limitations, as follows:

(1) The *authoritarian* parenting style involves moderate love and high limits. It is adopted by parents, who set limits and allow the child to explore the world independently, but supervised, gently controlled and helped in solving problems. This educational style allows young people to feel loved and accepted by their parents, to discover, to accept to make mistakes, but also to strictly follow the rules established by adults. Children of authoritarian parents are obedient and competent but have low self-esteem.

(2) The *permissive* parenting style involves high love and low limits. It is especially developed by parents for whom the satisfaction of the child's needs is a priority. They are not able to set their own limits, do not value themselves and have great difficulties in establishing firm limits for the little ones, being inconsistent. Most of the time, they use

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the negotiation to get the child's consent, and the latter learns to gradually manipulate their parents to be allowed to do whatever he wants, thus acquiring a sense of control over the adults. The permissive parenting style is the basis for developing creativity and decision-making abilities, but the child's school performance is low. It is necessary for the permissive parents to learn to hold ground, otherwise they will continue their abusive verbal behaviour or the manifestation of anger in relation to the little one.

(3) The *democratic* or balanced parenting style requires high love and high limits, is based on equality, trust, responsibility and helps the child to feel important and loved. Parents who adopt this style value their children, help them make their own decisions, encourage them to engage in new activities and solve problems. They always observe the child's rights without omitting to set rules to be consistently followed by all family members (except the moments when this is impossible). The child is encouraged to be independent through respecting his / her personal interests and the others', to take into account the others' opinions, to accept observations, yet to have the courage to express their own point of view. This independence will help them to identify their own attitudes and fulfil their own dreams, not the adults' ones. Parents with this style educate their child to be happy and to be able to succeed.

(4) The *rejecting/ neglecting* parental style involves low both love and limitations. Parents who fall in this parental style neglect the child, are not concerned with his accomplishments and do not show emotional feelings towards him. They try to control the child's behaviour by inefficient methods, so they can end up using verbal violence and threats. The child ignores the parent and the conflicts can degenerate even into physical abuse. This parental style has the most negative effects: the child does not feel valued, his opinion does not matter, he is discouraged in affirming his own beliefs and thoughts, he can develop a very low self-esteem because he does not receive encouragement from his parents. He will only rely on his own experiences and as an adult he will not have a model to raise his own child. He is also poorly trained in all areas of life, tends to be weak, irresponsible and not professionally competent. The rejecting/neglecting parental style has one advantage: negligence and lack of affection makes the child tougher and more resilient, and therefore has a chance to overcome more easily the difficult moments of life.

(5) The *dictatorial* parenting style involves high limits and low love because it focuses on discipline, strict adherence to rules. In this case, parents value obedience and respect, do not develop a close relationship with their own children, do not negotiate the rules, and set clear boundaries, using the beating to impose themselves. Thus, the child becomes orderly and disciplined, perfectionist, distrustful in his own forces, anxious, dependent on others and their appreciation. Parents tend to adopt a style and move easily and quickly to another (they become dictatorial when they are nervous and frustrated, they become permissive when they are tired and try to compensate through democratic approaches), which negatively affects the psychological development of children and adolescents. Parental styles are closely related to the parent's personality, his internalized educational model, but also with other factors such as the environment, culture, customs, traditions, family structure, economic situation, etc. (Çalık-Var, Kılıç, & Kumandas, 2015). Pânişoară (2011) believes it is desirable for the parent to balance the child's psychological needs and his personal needs. To set limits for the child is among the most difficult parental roles to accomplish, especially because of different periods of child's development and personality manifestation. In educating children, it has been proven that

imposing gentle, but firm limits will lead to the formation of a strong personality that understands the rules, but also knows what love means. The purpose of educating a child is for him to become an independent and autonomous person who can manage on his own, without being dependent on someone or something. There are studies that reveal that parenting style influences the young adults' emotional abilities. Kilic, Calik-Var, & Kumandas (2015) argue that parents adopting a democratic style positively influence young adults' emotional management abilities, whereas those who show hyperprotection attitudes adversely affect their adaptation to emotional experiences.

Parental competence, according to Glăveanu & Creangă (2009), represents "systems of knowledge, skills, capacities, and abilities supported by specific personality traits that allow parents to successfully fulfil their parental responsibilities, prevent and overcome the crisis situations in favour of child development and thus to achieve the objectives of educational activities". The factorial model proposed by the author involves the following five factors:

(1) The *Knowledge* factor refers to the parent's ability to know, to explain to himself the child's reactions and to adapt their behaviour to the child's level of psychosocial development (characteristics of thinking, understanding, emotional, motivational, temperamental traits).

(2) The *Disciplinary* factor reflects the parent's ability to communicate assertively and effectively through means adapted to the child's age and development, fostering learning and acquiring social rules and morality. This dimension aims to give rewards and punishments in line with child's development.

(3) The *Time management* factor refers to the quality-quantity ratio of time spent with the child, the organization of the child's time observing the periods of activity and the pause the young one needs, the supervision of lessons, the creation of contexts suitable for socialization in the family and outside of it.

(4) The *Affective support* factor implies the parent's ability to know and use prevention and coping with stress in the family. It assumes the management of stressful situations both with the child and between spouses, creating a quiet family environment, lacking professional and / or financial stress, providing support and understanding to the little ones, empathy, helping children in managing negative emotions as all these create the framework for growth and development of the child's personality.

(5) The *Crisis management* factor refers to the parent's ability to find solutions to the child's problems together with him, focusing on overcoming possible crisis situations such as: school difficulties, peer-to-peer issues or personal problems, particular situations in the group of friends, appearance of superiority or inferiority complexes, self-image disorders, etc. Applied effectively, this ability determines the child's ability to develop critical thinking, creativity, and perseverance in problem solving.

Through education, the competent parent offers an environment conducive to the formation and development of an autonomous, original, spontaneous child with rich imagination and high aspirations, eager to self-refine, with concentration and affirmation. Thus, Glăveanu (2012) argues that there is a positive correlation between parental competence and parents' emotional intelligence. The development of emotional intelligence is essential to the life and health of the person and his/her family, helps establish and maintain lasting and harmonious interpersonal relationships, but especially guarantees professional success (Segal, 1999). Emotional intelligence requires a set of abilities on the basis of which a person can discriminate and monitor their own emotions

and others', as well as have the ability to use the information thus obtained to guide their own thinking and behaviour in order to achieve their goals (Ştefan & Kallay, 2010). Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts (2001) argue that the current controversy over this construct refers to the fact that: it cannot yet be determined whether emotional intelligence is a cognitive or non-cognitive ability, whether it involves explicit or implicit emotional knowledge and whether it is an ability or outcome of a specific social and cultural context. It is certain that successful adaptation to the challenges of reality is impossible without fundamental acquisitions in cognitive, social and decision-making fields, acquisitions that are subordinated to the emotional domain. In Damasio and Yang's vision (2007), successful learning in academia or real life is primarily based on socio-emotional processes correlated with cognitive ones. The variety of models of emotional intelligence has led to their classification. Thus, Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) distinguished between: the model of abilities, - the model developed by them that interprets emotional intelligence as a cognitive ability, and mixed models - models that address emotional intelligence as a combination of cognitive abilities and personality traits. Mayer and Salovey (1997) defined emotional intelligence as a person's ability to perceive, evaluate and express emotions, to access and generate feelings when they facilitate thinking, to understand emotion and emotional information, and to regulate feelings for affective and intellectual development. The mentioned authors' theory states that emotional intelligence operates both within the cognitive and the emotional system. Mostly, it functions in a unitary manner, but it still is subdivided into four branches, as follows:

(1) Perception and identification of emotions refers to the ability to accurately perceive and express emotions and involves: (a) their correct decoding in facial expressions, in the tone of voice and in artistic expressions; (b) further processing of emotional information with reference to problem solving.

(2) Emotional thinking facilitates the use of emotions to improve cognitive processes. This ability focuses on how emotions enter the cognitive system and function in harmony with reasoning (transforming knowledge to help thinking). It also changes the person's perspective by allowing them to look at the world in a different way and to understand what others feel. Examples: using emotions to divert attention to important events, generating emotions to ease decision-making, using mood swings as a means of assessing different points of view, using emotions to encourage different solutions to solve problems (using the state of happiness to generate new ideas or to activate creativity).

(3) Understanding emotions involves the cognitive processing of emotions and includes the ability to: (a) understand complex feelings and how emotions evolve from one stage to the next; (b) recognize the causes of different emotions and understand the relationships between them; (c) translate emotions into an accessible language.

(4) Managing emotions aims at emotional self-regulation and management of the others' emotions. It assumes that when experiencing a feeling, a person lives the feeling and instead of suppressing it, he uses the emotion to make the most appropriate decision. More specifically, the emotionally intelligent person has the ability to work with emotions in a logical, reasoned manner rather than being in the habit of leaving themselves at their will and acting according to them, without thinking about the results. As a result of various popularizations, but also as a consequence of the society's pressure for emotional regulation, emotional intelligence is often identified primarily with this ability (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2011; Caruso & Salovey, 2012).

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research Objectives and Hypotheses

This research investigates the relationships among parenting style, parental competence and parents' emotional intelligence. Starting from the study of the specialty literature, we formulated three general hypotheses, and for each of them we noted five specific hypotheses. Thus, the hypotheses of the study are:

(1) Parental style is associated with emotional intelligence. (1a) The Authoritarian parental style negatively correlates with emotional intelligence. (1b) The Permissive parental style positively correlates with emotional intelligence. (1c) The Democratic parenting style positively correlates with emotional intelligence. (1d) The Rejecting/neglecting parental style negatively correlates with emotional intelligence. (1e) The Dictatorial parental style negatively correlates with emotional intelligence.

(2) Parental competence is associated with emotional intelligence. (2a) Knowledge positively correlates with emotional intelligence. (2b) Discipline positively correlates with emotional intelligence. (2c) Time management positively correlates with emotional intelligence. (2d) Affective support positively correlates with emotional intelligence. (2e) Crisis management positively correlates with emotional intelligence.

(3) Parental competence is associated with the parental style. (3a) There is a negative association between the authoritarian parenting style and parental competence. (3b) There is a positive association between the permissive parenting style and parental competence. (3c) There is a positive association between the democratic parenting style and parental competence. (3d) There is a negative association between the rejecting/neglecting parenting style and parental competence. (3e) There is a negative association between the dictatorial parenting style and parental competence.

### 2.2. Participants and Procedure

There were 140 parents, 129 women and 11 men involved. To comply with the rules of professional conduct, the participants gave an informed consent to participate in the research. The questionnaires were filled in online, were anonymous and no compensation was provided. The results are confidential and are used only in the present study.

### 2.3. Measure

The participants were invited to individually complete the following three psychological samples:

(1) *Questionnaire for finding out the parental style* – QPS has been designed on the basis of the model proposed by Băran-Pescaru (2004) and has five dimensions, each of which refers to a parental style (authoritarian, permissive, democratic, rejecting/neglecting and dictatorial). Initially QPS was composed of 35 items, with 7 items for each parental style and was validated on a sample of 46 parents. The results thus obtained led to the creation of a variant containing 30 items (6 for each of the five parenting styles). The answer to each item is given on a Likert scale, where 1 represents total disagreement, 2 represents disagreement, 3 represents partial agreement, 4 represents agreement and 5 represents total agreement. As for the internal consistency of QPS, high values of Cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained for all five dimensions:  $\alpha = .82$  for

authoritarian parental style,  $\alpha = .90$  for the permissive parental style,  $\alpha = .84$  for the democratic parental style,  $\alpha = .90$  for the rejecting/ neglecting parental style and  $\alpha = .90$  for the dictatorial parental style (Năstasă & Sala, 2012). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient values are very low, only two indicating a weak internal consistency ( $\alpha = .51$  for the authoritarian parental style and  $\alpha = .56$  dictatorial parental style).

(2) *Parental competence investigation questionnaire* – PCQ was based on empirical, qualitative studies and attempts to achieve a plenary vision of the parental model. PCQ has 81 items (17 for knowledge, 19 for disciplinary issues, 14 for time management, 17 for affective support, and 14 for crisis management). Parents are asked to answer to what extent they are characterized by the behaviours presented: 1 to a very small extent, 2 - to a small extent, 3 - moderately, 4 - to a large extent, 5 - to a very large extent. There are items reversely scored and the score is calculated both globally and on dimensions. As concerning the internal consistency of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient has statistically good values: the smallest, .71, for the knowledge dimension and the highest, .82, for discipline, with .74 for affective support, .77 for time management and .77 for crisis management (Glăveanu, 2012). As for the internal consistency of the five dimensions in this study, it varies from a high level ( $\alpha = .78$  for knowledge,  $\alpha = .75$  for affective support and time management and  $\alpha = .71$  for crisis management) to an acceptable level ( $\alpha = .61$  for disciplinary issues).

(3) *Emotional Intelligence Scale* – EIS aims to assess emotional intelligence from the aptitude perspective, based on the original model proposed by Salovey and Mayer, through a self-administered questionnaire. It consists of 33 items, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .90 and the retest test fidelity coefficient is .78 (Schutte et al., 1998). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale is  $\alpha = .88$ , which indicates a good internal consistency.

### 3. Results and Discussion

To verify the first general hypothesis, *the parental style is associated with emotional intelligence* and the five specific hypotheses, the results are presented in Table 1.

*Correlations between emotional intelligence and parenting styles* Table 1

Parental styles – QPS	EIS
Authoritarian parental style	-.02
Permissive parental style	.16
Democratic parental style	<b>.25**</b>
Rejecting/neglecting parental style	-.09
Dictatorial parental style	-.01

\*\*  $p < .01$

The democratic parental style correlates positively, statistically significant, with emotional intelligence. The value of the determination coefficient ( $r^2 = .065$ ) indicates a small effect size, thus 6.5% of the variability of the democratic parental style is explained by the level of emotional intelligence development. Parents who adopt a parental style based on the principles of equality, trust and responsibility, that value the children, help them make their own decisions, encourage them to engage in new activities and to be independent, who do not use punishment for discipline, but use strategies to guide them

without control, are able to decode emotional information, use it to redirect attention to significant events, understand complex feelings, and use emotions to make the most appropriate decision.

The results obtained for the second general hypothesis, *parental competence is associated with emotional intelligence*, are presented in Table 2.

*Correlations between emotional intelligence and parental competence* Table 2

<b>Parental competence – PCQ</b>	<b>EIS</b>
Parental competence	<b>.47***</b>
Knowledge	<b>.38***</b>
Discipline	<b>.38***</b>
Time management	<b>.44***</b>
Affective support	<b>.37***</b>
Crisis management	<b>.32***</b>

\*\*\* p < .001

Emotional intelligence positively correlates with parental competence, as well as with all five factors of the model proposed by Glăveanu & Creangă (2009): knowledge, discipline, time management, affective support and crisis management. Parents who are able to perceive, evaluate and express emotions, to understand emotion and emotional information, and to manage emotions for optimal affective and intellectual development, tend to use a system of knowledge, skills and capacities supported by personality traits which helps them successfully fulfil their parental responsibilities, overcome crisis situations and achieve the objectives of educational activities. Also, emotionally mature parents are able to adapt their behaviour to the child's psychosocial development level, to communicate with them assertively, to organize their time effectively, to help their own child in managing negative emotions, as well as in discovering solutions to child's problems along with them, focusing on overcoming crisis situations.

To verify the third general hypothesis, *parental competence is associated with the parental style* and the five specific styles, we have carried out the correlational analysis and the results are presented in Table 3.

*Correlations between parental competence and parenting styles* Table 3

<b>Parental styles – QPS</b>	<b>Parental competence – PCQ</b>
Authoritarian parental style	-.16
Permissive parental style	<b>.27***</b>
Democratic parental style	<b>.60***</b>
Rejecting/neglecting parental style	-.12
Dictatorial parental style	-.15

\*\*\* p < .001

Parental competence correlates positively, statistically significant, both with the permissive parental style and with the democratic parenting style. The value of the determination coefficient ( $r^2 = .366$ ) indicates a large effect size, therefore 36.6% of the variability of parental competence is explained by the adoption of the democratic parenting style. Regarding the permissive parental style, the determination coefficient ( $r^2 = .075$ ) shows a small effect size, as a result only 7.5% of the variability of parental

competence can be explained by the adoption of this style. Parents displaying a high level of parental competence adopt a parental style in relation to their own child which involves high love, priority in meeting the child's needs, low limits and negotiation to obtain the child's agreement, but especially a parental style based on equality principles, trust and responsibility centred on valorising the little one, avoiding the use of punishment to discipline them and using strategies to guide them without feeling controlled.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Today, the parent-child interaction, generically called parenting, is a constantly changing area and an important subject of debate, public policy, legislative decisions, and international scientific meetings. Being a complex field, there is no unanimously accepted view on raising and educating children or an ideal personality profile of the parent. This research has highlighted the fact that emotional intelligence is an important factor in how parents interact with their own children, in the way they manage to understand them, provide them with the support they need to grow harmoniously, support them in making decisions, and gently and firmly set limits. The statistical analysis of data reveals that there is a positive association between democratic parenting and emotional intelligence. Parents who adopt a parental style based on equality, trust and responsibility that values the little ones help them make their own decisions, encourage them to engage in new activities and to be independent, who do not use punishment to discipline them, but rather to guide them, who are able to perceive their own or their child's emotions, access them and generate them in such a way as to support thinking, to understand emotions and their significance and to manage them effectively. Also, adults using a system of knowledge, skills, and abilities supported by specific personality traits that help them successfully fulfil their parental responsibilities, prevent and overcome crisis situations and achieve the objectives of educational activities are able to perceive, evaluate and express emotions, understand emotions and emotional information, and manage emotions for an optimal affective and intellectual development of their child. Emotionally mature parents are able: (1) to adapt their behaviour to the child's level psychosocial development; (2) to assertively and effectively communicate with them in order to achieve social rules and morality; (3) to organize the child's time by observing the periods of activity and the breaks the young one needs; (4) to help their own child in managing negative emotions and create a family climate conducive to the harmonious development of all family members; (5) to discover, together with their own child, solutions to his problems, focusing on overcoming the crisis situations and cultivating the child's perseverance. At the same time, these adults displaying a high level of parental competence adopt a parental style which involves priority in the satisfaction of the younger's needs, high love, the use of negotiation to obtain the child's consent, the development of creativity and the ability to make decisions, but above all equality, trust, responsibility, valorisation of the child and encouraging them to engage in new activities and solving their own problems, focusing on the rights of the child, without omitting to set rules, which are consistently respected by others family members, too. Thus, the child is encouraged to be independent by respecting his or her personal interests and to respect and listen to the others' opinions, to accept observations, having the courage to express their own point of view. This independence will help them identify personal resources and vulnerabilities, fulfil their

own dreams, not the adults' ones. All these conclusions are supported by other research on parental competence that revealed the existence of a positive association with the parents' emotional intelligence (Glăveanu, 2012) and that it mediates both the relationship between the child's consciousness and perceived parental warmth, reactivity and psychological control (Egberts, Prinzie, Dekovic, Haan, & van den Akker, 2015), as well as the relationship between the parent's self-efficacy and their success in parenting (Jones & Prinz, 2005). Sallés & Ger (2015) state that one of the fundamental child rights is to meet their needs for a harmonious development, and this responsibility lies not only with parents but with all those who care for children, especially those who establish social protection laws.

We emphasize that it is not very important in which category of parental style the parent falls, because they intertwine, the parent not necessarily corresponding totally to one of them, but it is much more important to be present in the child's life, to listen to them, to play freely with them, to show them how much they love them and to value them. These are part of a new concept, called by Kohn (2013) unconditional parenting, in which praise is replaced by unconditional support and love, necessary for the child to become a healthy, affectionate and responsible person. In Bonchiș's vision (2011), it is paramount that the parent prepare the child for autonomy and adaptability to social requirements, not for compliance. The results obtained support adult counselling in parenting courses, help specialists to design psychological interventions centred on the development of parents' emotional intelligence aimed at children's emotional development and challenge parents to understand what attitude is preferable to adopt with their own children so that the relationship between them be a trustworthy and affective support. The present study may be a scientific source necessary for educational psychologists, but also for carers (foster parents, teachers, and social workers). It can be continued by analysing the parenting style, parental competence and emotional intelligence for both parents to see how they interact as a family. It is also possible to study the way the child perceives the parental style, as well as how the father perceives the mother's parental style and vice versa, which would considerably improve parental education within the family.

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