

Original Article

The Impact of Parental Educational Styles on the Social Skills of Boys and Girls in the Early Childhood Education StageESMERALDA GUILLÉN TORTAJADA¹ <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5758-9966>¹Universidad Complutense de Madrid, España
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This study examines how different parenting styles influence the development of social skills in preschool children. A literature review was conducted using academic sources, followed by analysis of 13 recent articles from national and international databases, including Dialnet Plus and ERIC. Findings indicate that parenting style significantly affects children's socioemotional growth. Dysfunctional or authoritarian approaches can hinder social competence, while democratic and supportive styles promote healthier development. These results underscore the importance of family environment in early childhood education and suggest the potential value of psychoeducational programs to assist parents in fostering positive interactions and enhancing their children's social and emotional learning. The study also highlights avenues for future research on effective parenting strategies and child development.

Introduction

The concept of family is widely acknowledged, though difficult to define due to its evolving and multifaceted nature (Martín, 2020; Mazo et al., 2019). Despite structural diversity, the family is the primary educational and socializing agent, playing a critical role in the emotional, cognitive, and social development of individuals (Arcentales & Campodónico, 2024; Villalobos, 2015). Parental involvement in children's education is crucial (Caballero et al., 2019), as early social interactions in the home influence behavior in later contexts such as school and peer relationships (Mazo et al., 2019). At the same time, parenting styles—also known as parental educational styles—regulate child behavior and are influenced by daily interactions and conflict resolution strategies (Gao et al., 2025; Jódar, 2019). Understanding these styles helps analyze their effect on social development during early childhood (Ávila-Toscano et al., 2021). Contemporary challenges like technological distractions and family instability due to divorce (Sánchez, 2021) underscore the need for cooperation between family and school to support child development (Pérez, 2019; Plazarte et al., 2022).

Defining “family” varies by academic discipline, from sociology to psychology (Ordóñez et al., 2020). Martín (2022) frames it as a group united by a shared life project, fostering emotional bonds and identity formation. Family relationships form the basis for interactions across social settings and have long-term developmental effects (Moon-Seo et al., 2021). That is why, healthy development depends on environments of affection and support (Mazo et al., 2019). Families are expected to meet basic needs, transmit cultural values, and prepare children for societal integration (Plazarte et al., 2022). Developmental psychology identifies two parenting dimensions: discipline (control) and affection (emotional support) (Cobos, 2019).

Considering the four resultant styles are: authoritarian, permissive, negligent, and democratic (Sánchez, 2019; Moon-Seo et al., 2021), authoritarian parents enforce obedience with limited emotional warmth (Cobos, 2019), while permissive parents provide warmth but little guidance (Moon-Seo et al., 2021). Negligent parents show minimal involvement and affection (Guzmán, 2021; Matos, 2019). Democratic parenting balances warmth with clear expectations, fostering autonomy and responsibility (Matos, 2019; Martín et al., 2022). The link between the parenting model and the social skills acquired, are key for effective interpersonal relationships.

Though varied in terminology, they encompass empathy, communication, emotional intelligence, assertiveness, self-concept, and decision-making (Grasso, 2021; Villanueva et al., 2020). These skills, learned through modeling and shaped by context, are essential for positive social outcomes (Rivera, 2020; Rangel, 2023). For example empathy is the ability to understand others’ emotions (Tortosa, 2018); communication includes both verbal and nonverbal channels (Calua et al., 2021; Pereiro, 2019) and emotional intelligence entails recognizing and managing emotions (Gutiérrez et al., 2021), while self-concept and self-esteem influence confidence and social adaptability (Buitrago & Sáenz, 2021; Villanueva et al., 2020), when assertiveness involves expressing oneself respectfully and confidently (Tortosa, 2018; Calua, 2021).

From birth, children learn through interaction with their environment (Bautista et al., 2020), and early childhood is a critical window for developing social skills (Rangel, 2023). These can be categorized into basic, conversational, emotional, problem-solving, and adult-oriented interaction skills (Pacheco & Osorno, 2021). This research aims to explore how parenting styles affect social skills in early childhood, with the objective of informing educational strategies and psychoeducational programs for families, thus contributing to the holistic development of children.

Methods and Materials

In order to carry out this study, the Google Scholar database is used to investigate in depth the concepts of: “family”, “parental educational styles” and “social skills”. Subsequently, in order to verify the influence between the two main variables, a search for information is carried out in the databases of DIALNET PLUS, at the national level, as well as ERIC, at the international level.

Regarding the search strategy, on the one hand, in DIALNET PLUS, the following formula was used: ("parental educational styles" OR "parenting styles") AND social*, and a total of 146 articles were found. On the other hand, in ERIC, we searched by adding: "parenting style" AND social*, resulting in 1321 bibliographic references. After performing the search, a total of 146 articles were obtained in DIALNET PLUS and 1321 in ERIC. For their selection, the following inclusion criteria are established: (1) belonging to the last 5 years (2018-2022), (2) related to the Early Childhood Education stage, (3) related to the variables of the study: parental educational styles and social competencies or skills, (4) written in Spanish or English, (5) research or journal article.

On the one hand, applying the filters mentioned in the DIALNET PLUS search, a total of 146 articles appeared. After reviewing the abstracts, 115 articles that did not meet the established criteria were eliminated. And, after a complete reading of these articles, 21 are eliminated, in which 4 refer to another type of population, 12 are not related to the topic raised, 2 are not available, 2 are books, and 1 coincides with one of the ERIC articles, therefore, we eliminate this article in Spanish and select the ERIC article, which is in English. Finally, 10 articles are selected for an in-depth review. Finally, in the ERIC search, a total of 1321 articles appear with the proposed search strategy. Subsequent to the abstract review, a total of 1302 articles that do not meet the criteria are eliminated. Meanwhile, after reading the full texts, 16 were eliminated, among which 8 correspond to another type of population, 2 texts refer to the primary stage, 4 are not related to the variables proposed, and 1 is not available, thus obtaining a total of 3 articles for review.

The procedure is explained below through two flow charts:

Figure 1: DIALNET article selection process

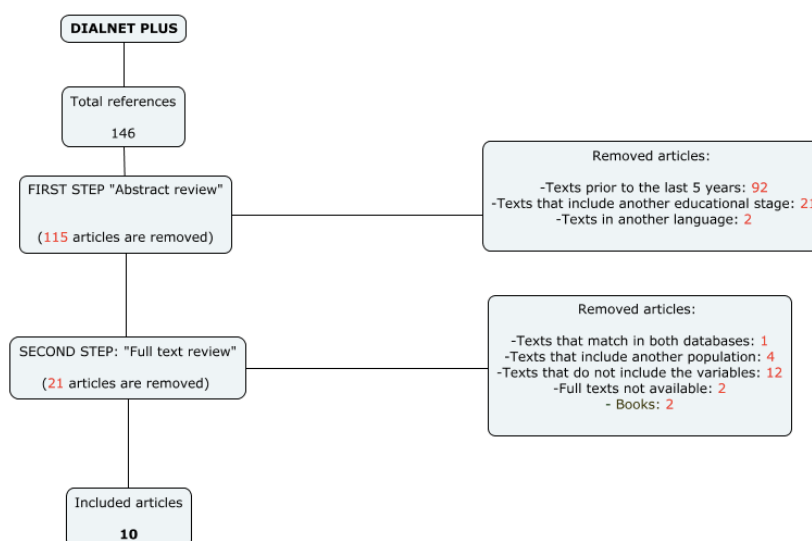
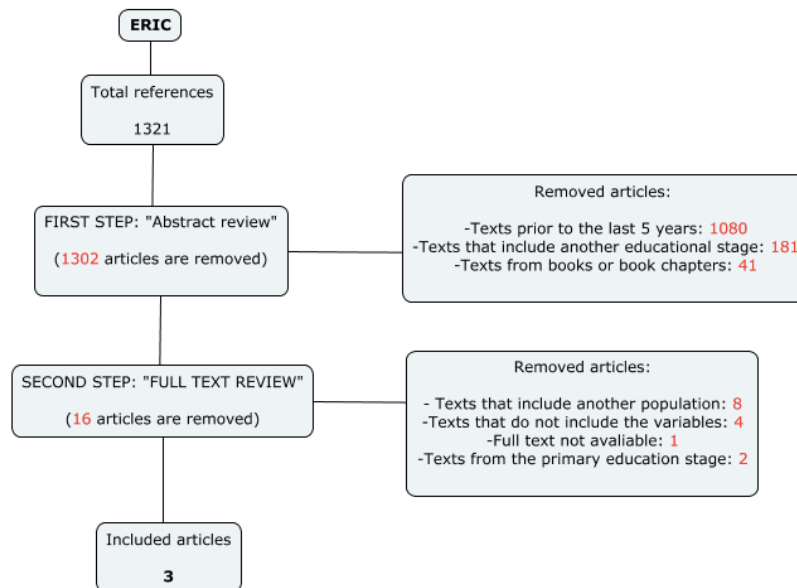


Figure 2. ERIC article selection process



Results

To obtain the relationship between these two constructs, a literature review of the following articles is performed:

Table 1: Selected articles

Author/s	Title	Year	Language	Data base	Objectives of the study
Rodríguez and Amaya	Parenting styles, parental self-efficacy and children's behavioral problems in three municipalities of Santander	2019	Spanish	DIALNET PLUS	To describe parenting styles, parental self-efficacy and the perception of child behavioral problems by parents and caregivers of children, exploring also their differences by sex and area

Matángolo	Violence in the family institution: parenting styles, discipline and child maltreatment	2019	English	DIALNET PLUS	Reviewing the problem of child maltreatment and the development of psychiatric disorders
Pinta, Pozo, Yépez, Cabascango and Pillajo	Early childhood: relational study of parenting styles and development of emotional competencies	2019	Spanish	DIALNET PLUS	Relating parenting styles and the development of emotional competencies in 5-year-old children.
Saneleuterio, Alonso and García	Educating through play and dialogue. Children's rights, intentionality, family and language.	2019	Spanish	DIALNET PLUS	Reviewing the key elements that contribute to the achievement of a happy life from childhood in relation to family education.
Campos and Moreno	The family and its influence on children's creativity	2020	English	DIALNET PLUS	Analyzing the role of parenting in child development and the influences of parenting styles on creativity
Villavicencio, Armijos and Castro	Childhood disruptive behaviors and parenting styles	2020	English	DIALNET PLUS	To study the relationship between parenting styles and the emergence and maintenance of disruptive behaviors in schoolchildren.
Sánchez	Influence of family climate and structure on the social and affective behavior of early childhood education students	2021	Spanish	DIALNET PLUS	To know the changes in today's society and their influence on families, taking into account their structures and parenting styles used in relation to the social and affective competence of children in the Early Childhood Education stage.

Pacheco and Osorno	Incidence of parental competencies in the development of social skills in only children	2021	Spanish	DIALNET PLUS	To test the incidence of parental competencies in the development of social skills in only children aged 3 to 5 years old.
Martín, Cueli, Cañamero and González	What do we know about parental educational styles and disorders in childhood and adolescence?	2022	English	DIALNET PLUS	To review the most important contributions regarding parental educational styles and disorders in childhood and adolescence.
Lara and Quintana	Strengthening parental competencies and attachment: proposal of a psychoeducational program for parents in Ciudad Juárez	2022	Spanish	DIALNET PLUS	To develop a proposal for a psychoeducational program aimed at parents with difficulties in parental competencies, to strengthen them and help them establish positive bonds with their children.
Diemer, Treviño and Gerstein	Contextualizing the role of intrusive parenting in toddler behavior problems and emotion regulation: is more always worse?	2021	English	ERIC	Examining the relationship between intrusive parenting and early childhood behavior problems and emotion regulation
Sanchez and Romero	Relationship of the family environment with social competence and behavioral problems in Early Childhood Education	2021	English	ERIC	To know the relationship between the family social climate and the involvement in joint family activities, with the social competence of the sons and daughters of the Early Childhood Education stage.
Tomkins and Villaruel	Parent discipline and pre-schoolers' social skills	2020	English	ERIC	Assessing parental discipline as a predictor of preschoolers' social skills.

The study of the family involves great difficulty, since its characteristics are very varied. No two families are alike. This is also due to political, economic, social and cultural phenomena over time, which have produced changes in family phenomena (Campos and Moreno, 2020). The family is recognized as the ideal environment for the development of children, it is an environment in which one learns, through giving, openness to the other, and forgiveness (Saneleuterio et al., 2019). Such a system is very relevant in the life of every human being, as it fulfills functions such as, for example, ensuring survival, providing a context for learning and development of one's own identity, acquisition of skills. And, last but not least, it provides relationships that will later be the reflection of the interactions that subjects have in other contexts such as school or peers (Campos and Moreno, 2020).

Most studies determine that there is a direct relationship between parenting styles and the development of social competencies or skills of children in early childhood education (Sánchez and Romero, 2021; Pinta et al., 2019; Martín et al., 2022; Lara and Quintana, 2022). Moreover, these influences do not only occur at this stage, but can last throughout the entire life cycle of individuals (Campos and Moreno, 2020).

It is shown that this correlation lies in the parenting style, or, in other words, in the attitudes and behaviors adopted to educate their children, these being determining factors in the development of the infants' behavior (Martín et al., 2022; Pacheco and Osorno, 2021; Rodríguez and Amaya, 2019). Although, it is also considered that it can happen the other way around, i.e., that the behavior of the children determines the parental educational style. Therefore, as Rodríguez and Amaya, (2019) expose, there is some controversy and lack of information regarding this issue.

Likewise, importance is also given to the school environment, which should go hand in hand with the family in the process of educating their children, which will enhance good results in their development. These are considered two fundamental pillars, being the agents most involved in the socialization of infants (Caballero-García et al., 2019; Campos and Moreno, 2020; Cruz et al., 2023).

There are several factors that may unconsciously influence parents' use of a particular parental style, such as what they observed in childhood, or even the behavior of their own children (Rodríguez and Amaya, 2019; Matángolo, 2019). It has also been found that gender or age have no impact on this (Pacheco and Osorno, 2021).

On the one hand, dysfunctional styles, can lead to introversion, depression, anxiety, self-esteem problems, aggressiveness, poor emotional control, impulsivity, dependence, antisocial behaviors, rebelliousness, and difficulties to perform at school, among others (Rodríguez and Amaya, 2019; Villavicencio et al., 2020). Similarly, disruptive behaviors may appear on the part of infants, such as, for example, tantrums, confrontations, conflictive behavior, constant attention seeking,

restlessness, disobedience, and decreased emotional regulation skills (Villavicencio et al., 2020; Diemer et al., 2021; Sánchez and Romero, 2021). They can even lead to the appearance of minor disorders in childhood and adolescence, such as anxiety, depression, emotional disturbances or even attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), as Martín et al., (2022) state.

Authoritarian parenting, in particular, is treated as intrusive parenting, characterized by overly directive and controlling actions by parents (Diemer et al., 2021). It is also known for the excessive use of punishment, as a consequence of non-compliance with imposed rules, which generally produces the negative effects mentioned above (Villavicencio et al., 2020). Time-out is a type of negative punishment widely used with preschool children. Specifically, in early childhood education, parents can use time-out to reduce momentary misbehaviors. However, this type of punishment does not allow children to acquire the necessary skills to interact positively with the environment. Therefore, it is advisable to combine these with an explanation of the inappropriate behavior, which allows the child to understand it, in order to obtain results in the child's social development (Tompkins and Villaruel, 2020). The permissive style, can produce problems of self-efficacy, lack of persistence, poor emotional control, impulsivity, dependence and depression and antisocial behaviors in the child and adult stage (Rodríguez and Amaya, 2019).

Thus, dysfunctional parenting styles cause negative effects on children's mental health, and may even transcend into adulthood (Rodríguez and Amaya, 2019). And, of course, it is negatively related to the social skills of children in the Early Childhood Education stage, especially to the authoritarian style, which promotes aggressiveness (Tomkins and Villaruel, 2020; Sánchez and Romero, 2021).

On the other hand, the style that is most linked to positive parenting is the democratic style. This is characterized by providing affection, responsibility in meeting needs, reasonable discipline, and open communication, among other things. It is the most recommended, since it contributes to the development of a mature personality (Campos and Moreno, 2020; Martín et al., 2022). It promotes emotional and social awareness, altruism, solidarity, and self-control (Pinta et al., 2019). Likewise, they foster self-esteem, empathy, critical and creative capacity, general attitude, problem-solving skills, and cognitive development in memory functions, and concentration (Tompkins and Villaruel, 2020; Campos and Moreno, 2020; Lara and Quintana, 2022). These aspects are not only developed by the quality of parental relationships, but also by the parents' own image of their children's abilities (Campos and Moreno, 2020).

Discussion

It has been shown that children from families in which there is cohesion, expressiveness, as well as low levels of conflict, i.e., that maintain a good family climate, score higher in social skills (Villavicencio et al., 2020; Sánchez, 2021). Therefore, inductive discipline can be positively correlated with the development of social skills in children at early ages (Sánchez and Romero, 2021). It is observed that the fact that parents spend time with their children positively influences their children's social skills. If they pay attention and talk about school, talk about emotions and feelings, and share leisure activities and free time, the children obtain higher scores in terms of their ability to adapt to different social situations, as well as greater social skills to establish

relationships (Sánchez, 2021). Similarly, play is mentioned as a key element in democratic parenting, as it is fundamental for the construction of children's identity. Through this, imitation, communicative intentionality, openness to the other, failure, defeat, rivalry, etc., are developed (Saneleuterio et al., 2019).

According to various authors saw in their research, it is necessary to generate strategies so that parents and caregivers can develop skills that allow them to parent in a more positive way (Lara and Quintana, 2022; Rodríguez and Amaya, 2019). Parent training programs, among other things, are useful tools to obtain better results in terms of children's socioemotional competence in early childhood (Sanchez, 2021; Sanchez and Morales, 2021). Specifically, the application of humanistic psychoeducational programs in which the ultimate goal is to strengthen parental competencies, allows us to be able to avoid inadequate parenting styles, since, as has been seen, these have very negative effects on the cognitive, psychological and social development of children in the infant stage, and can even last into adolescence (Lara and Quintana, 2022).

Finally, it is crucial to consider certain limitations discussed by various authors in the academic literature. It is imperative to carry out an exhaustive characterization of the context in which the study takes place, which implies taking into account variables such as the socioeconomic level of the families and their cultural context, among other factors, in order to obtain more accurate results (Sánchez, 2021). In line with this premise, one of the studies highlights that the negative repercussions derived from dysfunctional educational styles can vary significantly depending on the family environment, as well as on the ethnicity or race of the individuals involved (Diemer et al., 2021). It has also been observed that unfavorable living conditions can have an adverse impact on such outcomes. Poverty, for example, brings with it uncertainty, negative emotions and depression, as well as circumstances that can have a negative impact on the development of cognitive, social and emotional competencies in children in early childhood education (Pacheco and Osorno, 2021). Finally, it is worth mentioning that some researchers suggest that there is possible subjectivity on the part of parents when evaluating and providing information about their children in the context of Early Childhood Education, which could translate into responses that are not completely accurate (Sánchez, 2021; Pacheco and Osorno, 2021).

Conclusions

There is currently great difficulty in defining the term "family", due to the changes undergone in its structure over the years, and in accordance with the modifications in the social, personal, economic, educational and values of the society of the 21st century (Sánchez, 2021). Therefore, it is considered that current family education is going through a process of adaptation to these changes (Pacheco and Osorno, 2021). However, studies agree that this plays a fundamental role in the cognitive, affective, social and personal development of children, as it is their first socializing context (Álvarez and Martínez-González, 2017; Lara and Quintana, 2022; Pacheco and Osorno, 2021). Through socialization, individuals incorporate norms, roles, values, attitudes and beliefs (Lara and Quintana, 2022), however, the school environment should not be forgotten, which is not oblivious to these events, and is also an important agent in the socialization process of children in the Early Childhood Education stage. For this reason, the involvement between school and family becomes very necessary (Pérez, 2019).

Regarding the parental-filial relationship, four parental educational styles or parenting styles are distinguished. First, the authoritarian, in which control and unquestioning obedience predominate (Moon-Seo et al., 2021). Then, the permissive, in which children are allowed to make their own decisions, with little control over them and little discipline (Cobos, 2019). Third, the negligent, in which families are not involved in the education of their children, and neither of the two dimensions are contemplated (Guzmán, 2021). And, finally, the democratic, in which there is inductive discipline, there being clear limits and adapted demands, but also communication between parents and children and reasoning together (Jorge and González, 2017).

According to the different studies, it can be confirmed that there is an impact of parental educational styles on the social competencies or skills of children in the short and long term. No however, depending on the parental style implemented, the effects will be different, being able to be positive or negative in terms of the socialization of infants (Pinta et al., 2019; Sánchez, 2021). On the one hand, dysfunctional parenting styles, such as authoritarian, permissive or negligent, produce mostly negative effects in children, such as introversion, impulsivity, dependence, antisocial behaviors and even anxiety disorders or depression (Rodríguez and Amaya, 2019; Matángolo, 2019; Lara and Quintana, 2022). Especially, the authoritarian style, can promote aggressiveness in children in Early Childhood Education, being little recommended (Tompkins and Villaruel, 2020). On the other hand, democratic families, in which there is cohesion, expressiveness and good family climate, there is a better development of social skills in children at early ages, and can last over time (Sánchez, 2021; Tomkins and Villaruel, 2020). Likewise, using the tool of play, or dedicating time to children and dialoguing with them regarding school, emotions, feelings and leisure activities has very positive effects on the sociability of infants (Sánchez, 2021; Pacheco and Osorno, 2021).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the present work can be the starting point to be able to elaborate different psychoeducational programs that help families towards a more positive upbringing regarding their children. This is so, thanks to the scientific evidence provided by the study on the impact of different parenting styles on the social skills of children in the infant stage. Preventive programs promoting positive parenting styles could be developed, as well as intervention programs for those families that apply dysfunctional educational styles and, consequently, have problems in relation to their children's behavior.

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