

Relations between the Parenting Styles and Identity Status of Teenagers in Albanian Context

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Abstract

This paperwork aims to realize the assessment of special components of parenting inclusion that mediate the relations between parenting models and status of identity of teenagers. The goal of this paperwork is to reveal how the parenting styles influence on identity status of teenagers within the Albanian context and how the relations change between such variables in our context as well. The objectives of this scientific work are: Which parenting styles do the parents follow? Which identity status have teenagers created so far? Are there and if yes which are the gender and age differences in the identity status of participating teenagers? Participants (N=129) where 65 are parents and 64 teenagers of age 14-18, filled two questionnaires in order to find, respectively, which parenting style they follow and which identity style they have at the moment of survey, in order to assess later the relation between these variables. The instruments used are the Questionnaire of Parenting Authority¹ and the Questionnaire of Ego-Identity process². The results showed a moderated relation between the liberal parenting style and the confused status of identity, but did not show a relation between the authoritarian parenting style and imposed status of identity and did not show any relation between the authoritarian style and the matured status or moratorium at all like it was expected. The results also show that, according to the expectancies, the majority of girls resulted to have an imposed status of identity but different from we expected to be the majority of boys resulted to have such status. The findings were discussed even through interpretation seeing the authoritarian parenting style as protective for confused identity status, moratorium and relieving in the process of identity formation.

Keywords: parenting style, identity status, teenager, gender difference, age difference.

1. Introduction

Parents have a significant role on teenagers' way looking for their identity and independence. The successful parents feed their children with such a security feeling that encourage them to be autonomous going towards their independence. Ideally saying, teenage is a life period when a person starts to be more oriented inside instead of being psychologically depended from family, and ideally saying parents wish to help their teenager develop his identity and let him try new ideas and behavior. In this context the formation of identity and independence are not individual processes but a common and interdependent process where the teenager and his parent take part. The objectives of this study are to find and define if the parenting style determines the type of identity status in teenage and at what level it affects on it. If yes, the study of gender differences and the differences between two different ages within adolescence in identity formation depending on sort of parenting style. Parents work together to take care and show discipline to their children, so that no parent is excluded from the relationship. From these relationships the teenager becomes capable to distinguish his personal ideas and to express them, he becomes able to listen and respect the ideas of the others, to be conscious for his thoughts and his responsibility about them. If the relationship parent-child is qualitative, then the teenager will be socially competent, confident to himself, and socially responsible, which he will test among his age. Otherwise, a non-qualitative relationship will deprive him from all of these, and will bring negative effects to the formation of his identity and independence, therefore will not reach to a matured adult.

2. Relations Parent-Child

Today all the families have problems with their teenagers as much as all the other families in the past of all times. So, this conflict is not so negative and serious conflicts happen only to 15-25% of families. It serves to the need the teenagers feel to separate themselves from their parents and it relieves this process, because parents are different from them in "main things" (according to teenager) like their taste for clothes and music. If parents would try to be very similar

¹ Baumrind, D. *Authoritarian vs. authoritative parental control. Adolescence, 3, (1968). 255-272.*

² Balistreri, E., Busch-Rossnagel, N.A., & Geisinger, K.F. *Development and preliminary validation of the ego-identity process questionnaire. Journal of Adolescence, 18, (1995). 179-192.*

with teenagers and would try to be friends with their children, then they did not fulfill their mission as parents: helping child to grow up, to reach their identity and independence. Whereas the conflict may happened for such cases like home chores, hours passed outside, dates, grades, personal look and eating habits; for very important vital issues like, choice of profession or personal important choices for the future, teenagers communicate and consult with their parents. Keeping parent-child communication and separation of ideas helps the teenager at the moment he has to make the important choices.

3. Parenting Styles

The identity development includes an active exploration and an engagement relatively stable of moral and specific individual viewpoints and inspirations in life³. Parents can help or impede this process by their behavior with their children⁴. The researcher Diana Baumrind described various parenting ways which have resulted to be useful in understanding the influence of parent's behavior on development of children. Focusing on general climate inside house, including aspects of control and quality of parent-child relations, of warmth and parental care, she conceived 3 parenting typologies, calling them parenting styles.⁵ She determined three parenting styles: authoritarian parenting styles, liberal parenting style and authoritative parenting style.

She defined them basing on relation of two dimensions: support, warmth, care (responsiveness) and the grade with which parents keep their expectancies for their children and supervise and control them (demandingness).

From the relation of two dimensions result two parenting style types:

	Support	Not support
Control	Authoritative	Authoritarian
Non control	Liberal	Negligent

Authoritarian parents are distinguished from being invocatory and leading, controller but not sensitive. They tend to be hostile and controllers, resulting to be aggressive children or confined inside. The authoritarian style is a restricting and punitive one which settles fixed limits and control of the child. The teenagers grown up by authoritarian parents can be dependant and anxious or ignorers and contradictious. Parents with this style are punitive, rejectors and objurgatory as they do not take into consideration the opinions of child.

Liberal parent is the one who combines his warmth and support of child with absence of control. This parent is sensitive, ready to support his child, but he does not have control and does settle any rule or norm for his child's behavior. He even does not give him any certain direction or controls his child at all, so he does not have any authority on him. A liberal parent rarely gives to his child any expectancy for his conduct and advices about behavior; he does not lead him, he does not direct him, letting his child decide himself mostly. The child forms his opinions and convictions having his parent mainly inexistent. The parent of liberal style is irresponsible and with his characteristics: not punitive, not demanding, not controller, he allows his child be responsible for his acts and decisions. The autonomy of child is considered more important than conviction.

Authoritative parents, this is the most optimal parenting style, which produces the most normal and healthy behavior to the child, a style that combines reason and conviction. The authoritative parents are distinguished from being demanding and responsible, tend to be emotionally warm and supporting keeping at the same time a moderated control level Baumrind⁶. Their methods of discipline showing tend to be supportive more than punitive. They accept and support their children, but they use a stable control, while they separate their reasoning from their disciplinary acts. The later researches using these parenting styles, have demonstrated that authoritative parenting is optimal, comparing to the other two styles, authoritarian and liberal.

From the relation of two dimensions, control and parenting psychological support it results even a fourth parenting style, *the negligent or indifferent style*. These indifferent and unengaged parents with problems of child are distinguished from being not demanding and not sensitive as well. They are not ready and disposable to their child, but at the same time they are irresponsible, they do not overlook and do not control their child. These parents tend not to show any

³ Erikson, E. H. *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton. (1968).

⁴ Adams, G.R., Dyk, P., & Bennion, L. D. . *Parent-adolescent relationships and identity formation*. In B.K.Barber & B.C.Rollins (Eds.), *Parent-adolescent relationships* (1990). (f. 1-16). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

⁵ Baumrind, D. *Authoritarian vs. authoritative parental control*. *Adolescence*, 3, (1968).200-215

⁶ Baumrind, D. *Current patterns of parental authority*. *Developmental Psychology*, 4, (1971). 1-53.

interest and no support; they can act refusing or neglecting. The neglecting parents do not accompany their child emotionally. This parenting style is not in the focus research. This research is focused on three styles mentioned above: authoritarian parenting style, liberal parenting style and authoritative parenting style⁷.

4. Theoretical Identity Structure and Its Status

Freud, A describes the teenage as a period of dramatic total change of emotions and behaviors though the level of conflict and emotional distance with parent grows, but not up to rebellion and rejection⁽⁸⁾. Many theoreticians agree that the main two things that teenagers have to overcome are:

1. To become autonomous and independent from their parents (autonomy is the feeling that an individual takes part actively and with a control level at making decisions for himself and interacting with the others).
2. To establish an integrated self-identity combining elements of personality.

The formation of identity has many components: physical, moral, sexual, professional, ideological and psychological features⁸. This process starts before teenage and it often extends post teenage when grown up. Is the identity something freely built up or is it a result of choices we make and of premises where we grow up? A psychoanalyst Rangell, believes that the identity can be "determined by our parents, then selected unconsciously and later elaborated from himself".

What joins all the identity definitions is the fact that it is always the same, regardless the changes, because the individual moves in life along an indefinite reflection and transformation process. The main ideologist in the psychosocial development field is Eric Ericson, who has made a theory of identity development. According to him, identity is a long and complex process of self-determination which fees the continuity between the past, the present and the future and gives the sense, the meaning and goal to life (1968). Ego-identity, by Erikson, is a component of personality which submits a period of special climbing during the teen years⁹. Marcia offered a model that explains the ways through which the individual is engaged (or not) on duty of identity formation¹⁰. In his model Meeus describes 4 identity status clearly differentiated, basing on quantity of exploration and engagement that a teenager has experimented or experiments. He defines the ego-identity as an ego-leader –an interior self-construct and a dynamic organization of aspirations, skills, confidences and personal history¹¹. According to Marcia the identity development is a function of exploration and engagement and to have a matured identity the individual must have passed a crisis and must have been devoted to that ideology. Marcia determined 4 main identity statuses: the confused identity status, the imposed identity status, the moratorium and reached identity status. His theory underlines that the formation of identity is a specific sphere, this because the teenager should have a definite identity status in 4 subissues: personal choices, sexual role, political ideology and religious belief where he should explore first and then be finally engaged in them¹².

The status of confused identity. The individuals who have less explored and have been less engaged are in the status of confused identity. They are characterized of a very little wish to explore various alternatives and very low desire to be devoted to what they do best. They avoid challenges and refuse to undertake something. These individuals, confused teenagers are weak and can be subjects of negative influences or are risked to be isolated from society.

Status of imposed identity. This is the status of those individuals who have undertaken an engagement or are devoted to something without passing first an identity crisis, without exploring. Such persons have taken an engagement without passing through a decision taking process.

This decision is taken by others, so they feel anxious and are very sensitive to the influence of the others. These teenagers avoid the crisis and they give up to the plans their parents have made for their lives. In other cases it happen that these imposed devotions (forced ones) are based on identification with parental figures or with other authoritarian figures, or are based on personal exploration, but often in adoption with values obtained by parents or by other important persons.

Status of moratorium. The individuals with moratorium status are included in a constant crisis, searching actively

⁷ Baumrind, D. Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology*, 4, (1971). 53-103.

⁸ Rice, D. L. The transparent self as a key to health. In A. Richards (Ed.) *Invitation to Dialogue: The Legacy of Sidney Jourard*. Dubuque, Iowa. Kendall-Hunt Publishing Company. (1999). f.325-340

⁹ Erikson, E. H. *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton. (1968).

¹⁰ Marcia, J.E. Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3(5), (1966) 551-558.

¹¹ Meeus, W. *Identity Development, Parental and Peer Support in Adolescence: Results of a National Dutch Survey*(1966) .

¹² Marcia, J.E. *Identity in adolescence*. In Adelson, J. (Ed.). *Handbook of adolescent psychology* New York: John Wiley & Sons. (1980). (f. 159-187).

for a possible alternative among various options, but they have not made any stable devotion. They are trying to distinguish their goals through including themselves to an extended exploration. According to Marcia the status of moratorium is the real identity crisis: without engagement to values and intentions, but the individual is continuously exploring the alternatives. The constant crisis they live make them feel anxious and rebellious, as they repeat the challenges without devoting to one of alternatives. The moratorium is not indispensably an unhealthy status because the teenage lasts for as long as society allows so the researches must continue the same¹³.

Status of reached identity. The individuals with the status of reached identity have experienced a crisis, have solved it and then have decided for a certain solution. They have devoted themselves to a career, to an ideology, to an interpersonal style, after a period of a period of relatively intensive exploration. This individual has not avoided the challenges but has faced them successfully and has passed to decision taking, to a decision and devotion in those alternatives that best suit to him. He devotes to the alternative as highly motivated. Once the identity is reached, the individual demonstrates to be highly stable in his profession, in his religious, ideological convictions etc.¹⁴

5. Parenting and Identity

Inside the family the teenager wins social skills and competences which he expresses in his relations with the group of the same age. The positive influence of family is important in this process, but the teenage must be involved in it individually. This process asks for many experiments, especially in professional and personal roles¹⁵. This identity formed during the teenage helps him to be adapted and to contribute to the society, to keep a heavy weight; though even later, during life, he is refined, reassessed and undertakes other things. During the years, many researchers have thrown hypothesis and have made many scientific researches regarding the two variables, parenting styles and statuses of identity or special identity planes. Santrock found that the parenting styles influence on achievements of identity in teenage. The successful identity is the development through acception of traditional values and expressing them at the same time; so teenagers need the influence of their parents for traditional values and the influence of friends to be expressed with at the same time. Nevertheless, a very great influence from parents and/or coevals may interfere with personal teenager engagement.

So, the parenting styles influence on reaching the identity in teenage. According to Santrock, a parenting style that underlines high standards and high communication encourages the exploration of teenager, as a supportive environmental factor¹⁶.

6. Actually Research

The parenting styles according to the literature operate as a context through which children learn how to behave, how to take decisions, how to form an ethic code and a system of values. Many studies base the parenting styles on identity development. The parenting types according to Diana Baumrind consist in:

- The liberal style: we allow children to do what they want
- Authoritarian style: we have full authority on them
- Authoritative style: we lead children, but we trust them to take their decisions

Erikson elaborated one of key theories on identity formation, which followed by James Marcia presents us 4 models of identity statuses, depending of presence or absence of exploration (crisis) and devotion (engagement) of individual.

- Confused identity: confused individual and often defeated from the duty to reach the identity and do very little for this (without crisis, with no devotion)
- Imposed identity: individuals, whose identity is mostly defined by the adults, instead of being formed by personal exploration of alternatives (without crisis, with devotion)
- Moratorium: individuals who are still examining various alternatives and still have not found a satisfactory identity (in crisis, without devotion).

¹³ Marcia, J. E. *The status of the statuses: Research review.* In J. E. Marcia, A. S. Waterman, D. R. Matteson, S. L. Archer, & J. L. Orlofsky, *Ego identity: A handbook for psychosocial research* New York: Springer-Verlag. (1993). (f. 22-41).

¹⁴ Meeus, W. *Studies on identity development in adolescence: An overview of research and some new data.* *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 25, (1996) 569-598.

¹⁵ Santrock, John. W. *A Topical Approach to Lifespan Development* (2007) University of Texas on Dallas.

¹⁶ Santrock, John. W. *Psychology, updated seventh edition, spy7fmpgi_xxv 3/30/2004, University of Texas on Dallas.*

- Reached identity: individuals who have explored alternatives and have chosen by themselves and willful a specific identity (crisis and devotion)

The objectives of this study are to find and define if the parenting style determines the type of identity status in teenage and at what level it affects on it. If yes, the study of gender differences and the differences between two different ages within adolescence in identity formation depending on sort of parenting style. The research question: which parenting styles follow the parents, which identity statuses have their teenagers created, and are there and if yes which are the gender and age differences in identity statuses of participating teenagers, is there any (incongruity) compliance between the provisions of this study and its results, and the possible reasons for them.

7. Methodology

7.1 Sampling

Participants in this research were 64 teenagers and 65 parents or their parent couple. 65 parent subjects filled the questionnaires, but they did not show their age. 64 teenage subjects were 31 subjects who study in IX grade of 9 years school, where 14 were boys and 17 girls; while 33 teenagers from the last year of high school were grouped in 14 boys and 19 girls. The ages of participants of 9 years school varied from 14-15 years old, with average age 14.5 years old. The ages of high school individuals varied from 17 to 18 years old, with average age 17.8 years old. Subjects 14-15 years old constitute 48% of sampling, while subjects of 17-18 years old constitute about 52% of teenagers sampling.

Sampling was all occasional, in 7 different grades, in 4 courses of ninth year and in 3 courses of high school. The dimensions of sampling The participants in this research were 64 teenagers, 28 males or 43% and 36 females or 57% of age from 14 to 18 years old; and 65 parents or their parent couples.

7.2 Instruments

In this research are used 2 questionnaires one to be filled by the teenagers themselves and one to be filled by both parents together at home.

In order to learn about parenting styles and to learn more about relations they have established with their teenagers it was used **Parental Authority Questionnaire, Baumrind** (1968). Parents follow 3 parenting styles, liberal authoritarian and authoritative, which can be determined by the Parental Authority Questionnaire used by Baumrind. For each parenting style type are chosen to be used 5 states in this research questionnaire.

The authoritarian style is defined in questions 1, 2, 5, 9 and 13; the authoritative style is determined in questions 3, 4, 7, 11 and 14; while the liberal style is determined in questions 6, 8, 10, 12 and 15. For each issue the parents chose from four scales Likert: 0 = never; 1 = sometimes; 2 = often; 3 = always). The Parental Authority Questionnaire, Baumrind (1968) is proved to be high evaluated and with great credibility.

The variables of identity development of teenagers, the exploration and devotion were measured using the **Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ, Balistreri; Busch-Rossnagel and Geisinger, 1995)**. EIPQ contains 32 questions, half of which reflects the engagement to certain decisions (for instance: I have definitely decided the job I want to do), while the other half reflects exploration (for instance: I have participated to several discussions regarding intimate relations; or I have tried to learn about various jobs, to find the best one for me). 11 issues are formulated in negative way (for instance: I do not expect to change my politic ideals – this shows engagement; I am not sure which sort of intimate relationships is the best one for me- this demonstrates exploration). The participants ordered the scale in which they agree with the issue, in a scale with 5 points Likert. The issues got points from 1 = none agreed to 5 = totally agreed. The categories of identity status were assessed on basis of the following average categories:

- When: Engagement and exploration is high → Matured identity
- High exploration and low engagement → Moratorium identity
- Low exploration and high engagement → Imposed identity
- Both low exploration and engagement → Confused identity

7.3 Results

In order to define the parenting style followed by the participating parents in this research the data were processed, as gathered from the modified version of Parental Authority Questionnaire, Baumrind, filled by them personally. The

questions were grouped in three blocks with 5 questions each, which belonged to a curtailed parenting style. The points were gathered for each block of questions, and they were compared with each other. The block of questions which gathered more points determined the parenting style exercised by the corresponding parent. The result of this study from data processing is shown in table 1 for 65 participating parents.

Table 1. Results of parenting style.

Parenting styles	Number of parents	
	In absolute value	In percentage
Authoritarian parenting style	15	23
Authoritarian parenting style	37	57
Liberal parenting style	13	20
Total	65	100

In processing the data gathered with questionnaire EIPO – Ego Identity Process Questionnaire to assess the identity statuses it was used the technique of average division. Two blocks of questions with 16 questions each were used to measure the level of exploration and the level of engagement of students. An average value calculated from the points gathered if the subject would be neutral for this issued, this average value is 50 points. For each, the exploration or engagement, the results above the average were classified as a high level, while the surplus as a low level.

From 31 participants, 14 – 15 years old individuals resulted with identity status of table 2:

Table 2. Results of identity statuses for 31 participants of 14 – 15 years old.

Gender	Identity							
	Confused		Imposed		Moratorium		Matured	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Boys	5	36	5	36	3	21	1	7
Girls	4	24	9	52	4	24	0	0
Total	9	29	14	45	7	23	1	3

From 33 participants 17-18 years old resulted with identity statuses as in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of identity status for 33 participants 17 – 18 years old.

Gender	Identity							
	Confused		Imposed		Moratorium		Matured	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Boys	5	36	6	43	0	0	3	21
Girls	6	32	10	53	3	15	0	0
Total	11	33	16	49	3	9	3	9

It is also the fact that the majority of boys and girls have imposed identity status, so there is no noticeable gender difference between the two genders for this status (the imposed). The most evident gender difference is on achieved identity status. While no girl in both groups of ages 14 and 18 results to have this status; boys have a raise from 7% with this status to 9-years old in 21% with this status between the students boys of last year of high school. Another gender difference is noticed in the moratorium status at students of last year of high school, while as the most little age have an approximate percentage in this status, the girls of the last year of high school explore more, 15% of them, while the students of last year of high school boys have no one with such identity status.

8. Conclusions

Whereas the exact mechanisms that determine the relation parent-child are numerous, the results of study completed with Albanian parents and teenagers, in Albanian context, demonstrate that there is very much to do left by parents, because though they may think that they do the best parenting style possible, their children conceive such thing all

differently, a duty, guarding, and/or stimulation to devote to something never explored before. The very strong relation they establish with their parents is very positive, but it should not impede teenagers make questions about values, ideals and parental plans and see beyond them. Based on the objectives of this study are to find and define if the parenting style determines the type of identity status in teenage and at what level it affects on it. If yes, the study of gender differences and the differences between two different ages within adolescence in identity formation depending on sort of parenting style. Albanian teenagers, deprived from full and wide exploration, have to explore personally but within the narrow limits or submit their parental plans choosing to devote to their personal choices far from their real goals, interests or skills, in bona fide of their parents' choice and convinced that this choice is the best one in Albanian context. So, well aware of or not, they remain obliged to make an imposed choice for a personal engagement. In the end, there is a much more limitation called "cultural context" in which frames everyone, parents and teenagers, feel imposed to live and act according to certain rules. Finally, a higher authority stays on parents as well, which is the society, which "forces" the parent to impose the teenager make its choices within the rules and norms of such society, because a successful individual expresses his values, his convictions, his personal and professional choices, makes friendships, creates his family and is accepted from the society where he lives.

9. Limitations of Study

This study has several limitations:

At first, in this research were included only the teenagers of urban area and it did not extend to the rural areas. Maybe for this reason even the parents resulted to be more authoritative. The results of study could change in favor of authoritarian styles and of other status of teenagers' identity or the same results of this research could be deepened. This implies the need for future researches in order to explore how parenting styles affect on statuses of identity of teenagers of rural and urban areas and the differences between them.

Secondly, in order to determine the parenting style, a questionnaire was filled by parents themselves, so it is difficult to understand if their judgment is based on most recent events or the most past ones, in negative or positive events. Maybe parents have manipulated with selection of best possible answers or they really follow a certain parenting style, but maybe children conceive this differently.

Thirdly, another limitation is raised from the fact of absence of a parenting style test or identity statuses test. The questionnaires filled give only subjective data, self reporting ones, but these data are not based on observation of their behavior, if they really follow this parenting style or identity status. These objective measures would give a higher credibility of data.

Fourth This research determined a dominant parenting style for each couple of parents participating to this survey. But parents can use more than one parenting style as they educate their teenager.

Finally, in this survey it was not treated the possibility that one parent can follow one style and the other another parenting style. It is interesting the idea of combination in practice of two different parenting styles and the indication of this combination to identity statuses.

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