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Tiger versus Panda Parenting in raising self-esteem

Non Scholae sed vitae discimus

During the history of mankind the focus of existence varied according to epoch and mindset spread. However, the main tool for surviving, obtaining and maintaining happiness has been a clear mind and body.

Education is all-encompassing means which stands on two main pillars- educational institutions and parents.

The consensus among many is that the upbringing of children holds immense importance for their growth. Essentially, education revolves around the combination of school and home environments. While there may be divergent views on the approaches utilized, there's a shared recognition that the educational techniques employed in schools significantly shape the prospects of children.

To grasp the essence of childhood in contemporary times, it's essential to comprehend the dynamics of parenting in the 21st century. Parents and caregivers play a pivotal role in shaping the lives and daily encounters of children, thereby exerting a significant influence on their cognitive, academic, and socio-emotional growth, especially on their self-esteem (Bornstein, 2019). They also have a major impact on children's health and well-being.

Parenting, both historically and presently, remains a complex and arduous endeavor. The evolution of family dynamics over time has introduced novel hurdles for parents, prompting contemplation on whether approaches to child-rearing should also evolve. Burns and Gottschalk (2019) highlight this in their research. Presently, there exists an array of support services and parenting resources, accessible through offline avenues as well as digital platforms such as blogs, campaigns, parenting programs, and other services.

Over the past fifty years, the world has undergone profound transformations, reshaping the expectations and experiences surrounding parental roles. During this period, there has been a decline in fertility and marriage rates, coupled with an increase in divorce rates and the prevalence of single-parent households (OECD, 2011). Furthermore, the legalization of same-sex marriage has gained momentum across OECD countries (OECD, 2016), leading to a diversification of family structures and living arrangements, including unmarried or divorced families, single parents, and same-sex parents.

With diminishing family stability, many children now encounter varying living situations throughout their formative years, often transitioning between households due to shared custody agreements. Additionally, contemporary parents tend to be older, better educated, and have fewer children (Bongaarts, Mensch, & Blanc, 2017). The landscape of parenting has further evolved with an increasing number of mothers balancing work and child-rearing responsibilities (Miho & Thévenon, 2020).

In this paper I will look at different categories and dimensions of parenting and discuss which parent category tiger or panda provides child's self-esteem and well-being better.

"The Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother" (Chua, 2011) is a book authored by Amy Chua, a Chinese woman, which ignited nationwide discussions about the merits and drawbacks of child-rearing practices. Rather than a parenting guide, the book serves as a memoir, yet it prompted widespread reactions, prompting reflection on whether adopting a "Tiger Mom" approach is the optimal method for raising children.

Chua vividly portrays her children's structured after-school routines, including rigorous piano and violin practice, and an insistence on achieving only the highest grades, namely an A. Employing stern language, candidness, strict regulations, and lofty expectations, Chua navigates the cultural clash while bringing up her two daughters in America. As a firm adherent of traditional Chinese parenting values, she endeavors to instill in her daughters the same discipline and work ethic she was raised with, contrasting with the more lenient approach prevalent in American culture. Chua criticizes what she perceives as the tendency in American parenting styles to produce "soft" and "entitled" children (Schulte, 2012).

While Chua's eldest child thrives under these demanding conditions, her younger daughter rebels, prompting some to question whether this authoritarian approach truly constitutes the best way to nurture a child.

Adding to this ongoing debate is the emergence of the Panda Dad. Alan Paul, a journalist and father, takes center stage as the advocate for an alternative approach to parenting. Unlike the Tiger Mom, Paul is a Westerner raising his three children in China. He vocally opposes the Tiger Mom philosophy and gained prominence through his article "Tiger Mom meet Panda Dad" published in the online Wall Street Journal (Paul, 2011). Paul advocates for unstructured play, emphasizing the importance of love, affection, and fostering independence in children.

These contrasting examples of somewhat extreme parenting styles merely scratch the surface of the myriad approaches to raising children.

Both ways of childrearing could lead to upbringing a successful child. But the concept of success is not simple. The main part of success and happiness is self-esteem as the perception of the surrounding world is individual and correct self-esteem helps us in this process.

The concept of parenting styles was first delineated by Diana Baumrind in the 1970s. Parenting style pertains to the behaviors and approaches employed by parents to regulate and socialize their children (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009). In her seminal study conducted in 1971, Baumrind utilized interviews and observations with parents and children to identify three distinct parenting styles based on levels of demandingness (control, supervision, maturity demands) and responsiveness (warmth, acceptance, involvement).

These parenting styles were categorized as authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Authoritarian parenting is characterized by a rigid, black-and-white approach where adherence to rules is non-negotiable, often enforced with consequences. Parents exhibiting this style tend to be strict

and demanding, lacking in warmth and responsiveness towards their children. The Tiger Mom serves as a prime example of a parent embodying this authoritarian parenting style.

Indeed, the authoritative parenting style also emphasizes the establishment of rules and expectations, but it differs from authoritarian parenting in its approach to enforcement. While authoritative parents expect adherence to rules, they are more open to discussing the rationale behind those rules and consider their children's perspectives. Unlike authoritarian parents who may simply enforce punishment, authoritative parents engage in supportive dialogue with their children when addressing issues. This style of parenting fosters a more communicative and collaborative relationship between parents and children, where discussions and explanations are valued alongside discipline.

Permissive parenting is characterized by a high level of responsiveness from parents and low demands placed on children. In contrast to authoritarian and authoritative styles, permissive parents are more lenient and indulgent, often avoiding regular discipline. They prioritize open communication and nurturing relationships with their children.

The Panda Dad exemplifies this permissive parenting style through his emphasis on unstructured play, affection, and fostering independence in children. By adopting a more relaxed approach to discipline and rules, permissive parents aim to encourage autonomy and self-expression in their children.

In 1983, researchers Maccoby and Martin conducted a reassessment of the three parenting styles identified by Baumrind, incorporating demandingness and responsiveness as key measures. Their findings suggested the presence of additional parenting styles beyond those initially described. Specifically, Maccoby and Martin divided the permissive style into two distinct approaches based on observed levels of demandingness and responsiveness. As a result, they introduced the permissive and neglectful labels to categorize these variations in parenting.

Subsequently, the widely acknowledged framework expanded to encompass four distinct parenting styles: authoritative (high on demandingness and responsiveness), authoritarian (high on demandingness but low on responsiveness), permissive (low on demandingness but high on responsiveness), and neglectful (low on both demandingness and responsiveness) (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). This classification provides a comprehensive understanding of the various approaches to parenting and their impact on child development.

Research conducted later by Steinberg et al. (1994) provided further support for the four-dimensional typology of parenting styles established by Maccoby and Martin. Additionally, their study delved into the potential effects of these parenting styles on children's development.

Steinberg and colleagues discovered that children raised by authoritative parents tended to exhibit greater competence across social, emotional, and academic domains compared to children from families with other parenting styles. Conversely, children with authoritarian parents demonstrated lower levels of well-being, while those with indulgent parents showed high levels of well-being but lower academic achievement. Moreover, the research revealed that children with neglectful parents displayed the lowest levels of competence across all areas assessed.

These findings highlight a significant correlation between parenting styles and the personal qualities exhibited by children, emphasizing the critical role that parenting approaches play in shaping children's development and well-being.

Many researchers have looked for connections between parenting styles and personal traits. For example, previous studies have explored the link between self-esteem and parenting styles. Most studies show there is indeed a connection between the two. There appears to be a correlation between

certain parenting styles and higher or lower levels of global self-esteem in children (Hosogi et al., 2012). This leads us to the question of what self-esteem means in this context.

Self-esteem is indeed an extensively researched topic, encompassing various facets of self-perception. At its core, self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of their own worth and value (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009). This broad definition encapsulates what can be termed as global self-esteem, taking into account both internal and external factors that contribute to one's sense of self-worth.

Internal factors influencing self-esteem include emotions, genetic predispositions, and personality traits, all of which shape an individual's perception of themselves. External factors, on the other hand, encompass specific life events, family dynamics, career achievements, and other external circumstances that can impact one's self-esteem. Together, these internal and external factors interact to form an individual's overall assessment of their own value and worthiness.

Indeed, the concept of self-esteem encompasses several distinct types, each with its own characteristics and influences. Trait self-esteem refers to the enduring level of regard an individual has for themselves over time (Gilovich, Keltner & Nisbett, 2006). This aspect of self-esteem tends to remain relatively stable throughout one's lifetime, akin to a personality trait (Block & Robins, 1993).

In contrast, state self-esteem is more fluid and susceptible to fluctuations based on immediate feelings and situational factors (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). This type of self-esteem reflects how an individual feels about themselves at a particular moment in time and can vary in response to changing circumstances.

Additionally, there are more specific types of self-esteem, such as academic self-esteem, which pertains to an individual's sense of self-worth based on their academic performance (Valizadeh, 2012). In this case, one's feelings of self-esteem may be contingent upon their achievements or failures in the academic domain. These various types of self-esteem provide a nuanced understanding of how individuals perceive and evaluate themselves in different contexts and situations.

Self-esteem can be cultivated through various means, as Branden (1969) suggests, primarily through individuals' beliefs and their awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and actions. Its significance lies in its contribution to healthy human development. Abraham Maslow identified self-esteem as a fundamental human motivation, placing it high in his hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow's framework, after fulfilling physiological, safety, social, and esteem needs, individuals can strive for self-actualization to realize their full potential (Maslow, 1987). This hierarchy underscores the importance of self-esteem, which can serve as a gauge for parenting effectiveness and overall success. It's evident that self-esteem can be viewed from various perspectives and within diverse contexts.

A study done by Hosogi et al. in 2012 focusing on children showed that the environment where children are raised contributes deeply to the development of their self-esteem. This means that everything from school and family dynamics to socioeconomic status and parenting styles affect children greatly. Additionally another past study suggests more precisely that nurturing and supportive parenting styles could improve children's self-esteem (Yang & Liang, 2008)

Martínez and García in 2007 found that children of indulgent (panda)parents had the highest levels of self-esteem while children of authoritarian (tiger)parents had the lowest. Another study done later by Martínez and García (2008) found that adolescents with indulgent panda parents had equal or higher levels of self-esteem than adolescents with authoritative (tiger) parents. The research additionally showed that adolescents with authoritarian(tiger) and neglectful parents had the lowest

levels of self-esteem. Alternatively, Garcia and Gracia (2009) found that both the children of indulgent parenting style as well as the authoritative parenting styles had the highest levels of self-esteem. It was also concluded in 2007 that the authoritative and indulgent parents' children scored highest on levels of self-esteem. Based on these results it is somewhat unclear which of the parenting styles can be labeled most successful on the basis of the child's self-esteem, therefore more research is needed.

While considering the effects of these traits on self-esteem it is important to look at the potential changes in self-esteem over time. Self-esteem changes due to different factors such as age, career, retirement, health issues. One's self-esteem over time has been studied a multitude of times with varying outcomes. The most popular finding is that self-esteem increases throughout adolescence to middle adulthood where it begins to decrease as one enters old age (Orth, Robins & Widaman, 2012). It is important to consider potential confounding variables within these results, such as success in one's career or family life or decrease in health. It is possible that the results partly reflect accomplishment of age specific challenges such as completing levels of school, marriage, children, physical complications, retirement, or sickness.

Another study arrived at the same conclusion of an increase in self-esteem throughout adolescence, and additionally notes that gender did not make a difference in the expected trajectories (Erol & Orth, 2011). When looking simply at the adolescent stage, results mostly show a general increase in self-esteem throughout adolescence (Orth, Robins & Widaman, 2012). Similarly, it is essential to look at possible confounding variables affecting this increase in self-esteem during adolescence. One variable that was found to have an important effect is education level. It was found that as education level increases so does level of self-esteem (Hallsten, Rudman, & Gustavsson, 2012).

When considering the factors influencing fluctuations in self-esteem and its developmental trajectory, it's pertinent to acknowledge the potential evolution of parenting styles over time. This recognition is crucial because different parenting approaches may exert varying impacts on a child's self-esteem throughout their growth and maturation process.

It is widely accepted that an individual's needs evolve as they progress through development, and it follows logically that parenting styles would likewise adapt. Surprisingly, this possibility was not fully considered when establishing the four primary parenting styles. Why wouldn't a parent shift from one style to another as their child matures? A study conducted by Wentzel (1994) delves into the significance of parenting styles across time. Wentzel's findings indicate that the importance of parenting style initially intensifies during the period from infancy to preschool. As the child progresses to elementary school, the significance of parenting style can vary depending on the parent's focal point. It might heighten if the emphasis is on discipline or education, diminish if attention is directed towards responsiveness or sensitivity, or remain consistent with the preschool stage if the primary focus is on overall welfare or protection. Eventually, as the child enters late adolescence and early adulthood, the significance of parenting styles and techniques diminishes (Wentzel, 1994). These findings suggest that parenting styles should adapt to meet the evolving needs of the child at different stages of development.

According to categories mentioned above, I happened to use authoritative, and panda parenting. I also think that I was on the edge of tiger parenting upbringing my first child. Due to experience gained and oversensitivity and sense of empathy of my second child, I used panda parenting style. I firmly state that it has raised her self-esteem and confidence. Thus, improved her well-being and success at school.

In conclusion, considering the modern life requirements, rat-race, socio-emotional conditions of human beings and main goal of our existence- self-esteem and well-being, from above mentioned

categories of parenting (authoritative, authoritarian- or tiger parenting, permissive- panda parenting, neglecting) panda parenting contributes much more.

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