

## The role of parental socialization styles in school engagement and academic performance

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Many variables have been analyzed in relation to school adjustment. However, only a few studies have explored the relationship between this construct and parental socialization styles, particularly in Spain. This work aims to examine the role played by maternal and paternal socialization styles in school engagement and academic performance. Participants were 737 secondary school students from the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, aged between 11 and 18. All students completed the Affect Scale (EA-H) and the Rules and Demands Scale (ENE-H), as well as the School Engagement Measure (SEM), and performance was calculated on the basis of their average grades in mathematics and Spanish. The results indicate that, in the case of academic performance, a permissive style by both parents has the most positive effect on the grades obtained, while in the case of school engagement, it was both the permissive and democratic styles by both parents (with small variations between maternal and paternal styles in accordance with the dimension analyzed) that were most closely associated with a higher level of engagement. The educational implications of these results are discussed.

**Keywords:** Parental socialization styles, school engagement, academic performance, secondary education.

*El rol de los estilos de socialización parental sobre la implicación escolar y el rendimiento académico.* Son muchas las variables analizadas en relación al ajuste escolar. Sin embargo, la cantidad de trabajos que analizan la relación entre los estilos de socialización parental y el ajuste escolar son escasos, especialmente en nuestro país. El presente trabajo pretende examinar el rol de tales estilos de socialización parental, diferenciando el del padre y el de la madre, sobre la implicación escolar y el rendimiento académico. Participaron 737 estudiantes de Secundaria del País Vasco de entre 11 y 18 años. Rellenaron la Escala de Afecto (EA-H) y Escala de Normas y Exigencias (ENE-H), el Cuestionario de Implicación Escolar (SEM) y el rendimiento se calculó a partir de la nota media en matemáticas y lenguaje. Los resultados indican que en el caso del rendimiento académico es el estilo permisivo de ambos progenitores el que influye de manera más positiva en la obtención de unas mejores calificaciones, mientras que en el caso de la implicación escolar son tanto el permisivo como el democrático del padre y de la madre (con pequeñas variaciones según la dimensión analizada) los que se asocian a una mayor implicación escolar. Se discuten las implicaciones educativas que estos resultados pueden presentar.

**Palabras clave español:** Estilos de socialización parental, implicación escolar, rendimiento académico, Educación Secundaria.

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The ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) highlights the influence of contextual factors on human behavior. Relationships and, in general, contexts close to the subject (microsystems) foster competence (King & Ganotice, 2014) and motivate school engagement (Perdue, Manzeske, & Estell, 2009; Veiga et al., 2012), providing they guarantee positive, affective support (Hughes & Chen, 2011; Mercer & DeRosier, 2008). According to interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory, infants' psychological adjustment and behavioral disposition are affected by the acceptance or rejection they perceive from the most significant people in their lives or their attachment figures (Ali, Khaleque, & Rohner, 2015; Rohner & Khaleque, 2010).

Traditionally, three microsystems (family, circle of friends and school environment) have been considered to have the greatest impact on adjustment among school children (Ou, 2005; Ramos-Díaz, Rodríguez-Fernández, Revuelta & Axpe, 2016; Sinclair, Christenson, Lehr, & Reschly-Anderson, 2003), with family being seen as the predominant one, even more so than school environment (Alves, Assis, Martins, & da Silva, 2017; Brunner & Elacqua, 2003; Felizardo, Cantarinha, Alves, Ribeiro, & Amante, 2016). However, more recent findings suggest that it is in fact teachers' support that has the greatest influence on school engagement, followed by family, while peers appear to have no effect at all (at least not directly) on this construct (Fernández-Zabala, Goñi, Camino, & Zulaika, 2016; Ramos et al., 2008; Rodríguez-Fernández, Fernández-Zabala, & Zuazagoitia, 2016). Whatever the case, it seems clear that family has an influence on students' level of engagement with their school, although certain aspects of this influence have yet to be clarified.

In this sense, many different family characteristics have been studied to date, grouped mainly into two principal categories (García, Bernardo, Tuero, Cerezo, & Nuñez, 2016; García & Rosel, 1999; Ruiz de Miguel, 2001) structural variables (i.e. economic level, sociocultural status, family structure, parents' education level, cultural resources, etc.), which have an indirect effect; and dynamic variables (childrearing environment, parenting skills, shared time, expectations and attributions, disciplinary style, family support, parental involvement in their child's education, etc.), which have a more direct influence and seem to be more important than structural ones for explaining the differences observed in school adjustment.

Affection, support and positive communication between parents and children have been found to foster social acceptance and school adjustment during adolescence (Gaylord, Kitzmann, & Lockwood, 2003). Parental support is an indicator of the quality of the parent-child relationship, a resource that plays a key role in school adjustment (Rodríguez-Fernández, Drogue, & Revuelta, 2012; Rodríguez-Fernández et al., 2016), fostering a greater development of other psychological and social resources, such as adolescents' ability to establish positive social relations (Alonso & Román, 2005). When relations between parents and their adolescent children are characterized by affection,

support and positive communication, this fosters children's social acceptance and school adjustment (Gaylord et al., 2003).

One variable which unites both affect, communication and support is parental socialization style, which has been found to be one of the principal predictors of academic achievement, both directly and through its influence on other variables such as perceived competence and intrinsic motivation (Ishak, Fin-Low, & Li-Lau, 2012; Masud, Thurasamy, & Ahmad, 2015). However, no research has been carried out to date on the role played by the second component of parenting style, i.e. the way in which parents establish and enforce family rules and demands, in academic achievement, in terms of both academic performance and school engagement.

According to the majority of studies conducted in the English-speaking world, academic achievement is much more closely associated with the authoritative style (rigid adherence to rules and high affect-communication) than with other styles such as the permissive one (Im-Bolter, Zadeh, & Ling, 2013; Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005), in which rigidity is lower, although communication and affect remain high.

Indeed, the association between this style and academic achievement has either remained unconfirmed (Ruzina & Marnizam, 2004) or has been found to be negative (Elham, Siti, Rumaya, & Mansor, 2012; Tiller, Garrison, Block, Cramer, & Tiller, 2003). Children of parents with a negligent style (low scores in both parenting components) are at a clear disadvantage, achieving the worst academic results of all three groups (Garg, Levin, Urajnik, & Kauppi, 2005; Im-Bolter et al., 2013; Klein & Ballantine, 2001).

Nevertheless, research conducted in other European cultures and countries have found that children from indulgent (permissive) and authoritative (democratic) families perform better academically than those from authoritarian and negligent ones (Calafat, García, Juan, Becoña, & Fernández-Hermida, 2014; Erden & Uredi, 2008). In Spain, the few studies that have been carried out in this field suggest that the indulgent or permissive style is the one which offers the best results in diverse variables of school adjustment, or at least leads to results which are just as positive as those achieved by the authoritative style (Fuentes, García, Gracia, & Alarcón, 2015; García, Cerezo, de la Torre, Carpio, & Casanova, 2011; Pelegrina, Linares, & Casanova, 2002).

As regards the relationship between the authoritative style and school engagement, studies conducted in Europe have found that parental involvement, affectivity, supervision and support (typical of the authoritative style) positively predict school engagement at all educational levels (Englund, Egeland, & Collins, 2008; Murray, 2009; Wang & Eccles, 2012), and also protect adolescents from problematic peer relations (Simons-Morton & Chen, 2009) and school dropout. Moreover, these variables have been found to foster school engagement not just in cases of difficult students, but also among those with good academic performance (Englund et al., 2008).

However, only a very few studies have focused on the dimensions which make up parental socialization styles and the way in which they are associated with different aspects of children's adjustment (Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Prevatt, 2003), and none have explored their connection with school engagement.

This study therefore has a three-fold aim: (a) to analyze the role of different parenting styles on both the school engagement and academic performance of students in compulsory secondary education and higher education (Spanish baccalaureate); (b) to determine whether it is the maternal or paternal parenting style which has a greater explanatory power for these variables; and (c) to examine which of the two dimensions which make up the parental socialization style has a greater impact on academic performance and school engagement.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

The sample group comprised 737 students aged between 11 and 18 ( $M=14.76$ ;  $SD=1.75$ ) living in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country in Spain. Of these, 411 (55.8%) attended public, state-funded schools, and 326 (44.2%) attended semi-private schools (i.e. private schools which receive some state funding). All participants were in one of the four years of compulsory secondary education or one of the two years of higher, pre-university education (Spanish baccalaureate) (16.6% in year 1, 20.6% in year 2; 19.3% in year 3 and 19.8% in year 4; and 11.7% in year 1 and 12.1% in year 2 of the Spanish baccalaureate). As regards gender, 372 (50.5%) were boys and 360 (48.8%) were girls. The schools were all located in towns and neighborhoods with a medium socioeconomic level. The vast majority of the sample, 94.3%, had been born in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, 1.8% had been born in another region of Spain and 3.9% had been born abroad. Participants were randomly selected from the three Basque Provinces, ensuring an adequate balance as regards type of school (public/semi-private), province and gender.

### *Instruments*

The children's version of two questionnaires were used to measure parenting styles, with participants responding to items in accordance with their perception of the style employed by both their mother and their father. Firstly, the Affect Scale (EA-H; Fuentes, Motrico, & Bersabé, 1999) was used to evaluate parents' affection for and communication with their children. It comprises 20 items which are evenly distributed across two dimensions: affect-communication and criticism-rejection. The internal consistency indexes (Cronbach's alpha) for this study were .88 and .85 for the affect dimension (for fathers and mothers, respectively). Secondly, the way in which parents

establish and enforce rules and demands was measured using the Rules and Demands Scale (ENE-H; Fuentes, Motrico, & Bersabé, 1999). This questionnaire contains 3 dimensions, each corresponding to one possible way of establishing rules and demands: inductive style (10 items), rigid style (10 items) and indulgent style (8 items). In both questionnaires, respondents answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=never to 5=always), with higher scores indicating higher levels in all dimensions. Parental socialization styles (democratic, authoritarian, permissive and negligent) were calculated on the basis of a combination of values above and below the median (50<sup>th</sup> percentile) for each dimension, with separate results being recorded for mothers and fathers (de la Torre et al., 2015).

School engagement was evaluated using the version of the School Engagement Measure (SEM; Fredericks, Blumenfeld, Friedel, & Paris, 2005) validated for Spanish-speaking respondents (Ramos-Díaz, Rodríguez-Fernández, & Revuelta, 2016). This measure has 19 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, which are grouped into three factors: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement and cognitive engagement. The validation of the scale in Spanish was found to have good psychometric indexes and the confirmatory factor analysis corroborated the three-dimensional structure ( $\chi^2_{(149)}=1,203.96$ ;  $p<.001$ ; RMSEA=.075). The total compound reliability was .94, with values ranging between .83 and .86 for the different dimensions.

Academic performance was calculated on the basis of the mean grade obtained by students in two core subjects (Spanish and mathematics) during the most recent evaluation.

### *Procedure*

Schools were contacted by means of a letter explaining the proposed research project. After a few days, they were contacted by telephone and those that agreed to participate were sent an informed consent form (approved by the ethics committee at the University of the Basque Country) to be completed by the parents or legal guardians of all students wishing to take part in the project. The consent form contained information regarding the aims of the research project, the battery of questionnaires to be administered and the voluntary nature of the participation. It also provided assurances regarding confidentiality and respondents' right to withdraw their data from the process at any time.

The authors themselves visited the schools in order to administer the questionnaires in ordinary classrooms (paper version) or the IT room (digital version) to all students from whom a signed consent form had been received. Prior to administering the questionnaires, respondents were assured of the anonymous nature of the instruments

and were reminded that their participation was strictly voluntary. The questionnaires were completed in a single session lasting between 30 and 40 minutes.

#### *Data analysis*

In accordance with previous research (de la Torre et al., 2011), socialization styles were calculated separately for each parent based on the median obtained for the affect-communication and rigid discipline dimensions. For fathers, these values were 38.5 for the median in affect-communication, and 26 for rigid discipline, while for mothers, they were slightly lower: 36 in affect-communication and 25 in rigid discipline.

The negligent style is that derived from lower-than-the-median scores in both dimensions; the authoritarian style is reflected in a higher-than-the-median score for rigid discipline and a lower-than-the-median score for affect-communication; the permissive style is reflected in a higher-than-the-median score for affect-communication and a lower-than-the-median score for rigid discipline; and finally, the democratic style is reflected in higher-than-the-median scores in both dimensions.

To calculate the possible correlation between both maternal and paternal parenting styles and academic performance and school engagement, a Spearman Rho correlation was conducted. This option was chosen because at least one categorical variable (paternal parenting style and maternal parenting style) was related to one or more quantitative variables (academic performance and school engagement, both overall and for the different dimensions).

Differences in academic performance and general, cognitive, affective and behavioral engagement were analyzed in accordance with paternal and maternal parenting styles using analyses of variance (ANOVA), with post-hoc contrasts by means of Tukey's test (since all the Levene tests for homogeneity of variance revealed values of  $p > .05$ ), with the aim of avoiding Type I errors (false positives).

Finally, with the aim of determining the statistical predictive power of parenting style (paternal or maternal) on school engagement and academic performance, linear regressions were carried out to determine both the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), in order to calculate the proportion of variance of the DV which is explained by the IV, and the  $\beta_1$ , coefficient, to calculate the mean change which occurs in school engagement and academic performance. The analysis was conducted using the variable enter method.

All statistical analyses were carried out with a confidence level of 95%, using version 23.0 of the SPSS program for Windows.

## RESULTS

The first focus of analysis was the possible relationship between parenting style and academic performance and overall, cognitive, emotional and behavioral school engagement. The data resulting from the Spearman Rho procedure are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Correlations between parenting style, academic performance and school engagement

		PPS	MPS	PCM	BE	AE	CE	OE
PPS	Rho	1						
MPS	Rho	.320**	1					
PCM	Rho	.207**	.156**	1.000				
BE	Rho	.187**	.135**	.342**	1.000			
AE	Rho	.266**	.192**	.249**	.385**	1.000		
CE	Rho	.237**	.171**	.171**	.427**	.320**	1.000	
OE	Rho	.310**	.216**	.313**	.731**	.709**	.809**	1.000

Note. PPS=Paternal parenting style; EEM=Maternal parenting style; PCM=Performance as core mean; BE=Behavioral engagement; AE=Affective engagement; CE=Cognitive engagement; OE=Overall engagement. \*\* $p<.001$ ; \* $p<.05$ .

All correlations analyzed between maternal and paternal parenting styles and the academic performance and school engagement variables were significant, with values being higher for paternal than for maternal parenting style. The closest associations were always found between parenting style and overall school engagement ( $Rho_{EEP}=.310$   $p<.001$ ;  $Rho_{EEM}=.216$   $p<.001$ ), and were higher in all cases than those found between parenting style and either academic performance ( $Rho_{EEP}=.207$   $p<.001$ ;  $Rho_{EEM}=.156$   $p<.001$ ) or behavioral engagement, for which the lowest correlation was observed ( $Rho_{EEP}=.187$   $p<.001$ ;  $Rho_{EEM}=.135$   $p<.001$ ).

Having established the existence of a correlation between parenting style and the other study variables, the next step was to determine which (paternal and maternal) style is associated with better academic performance and greater school engagement. The results of this analysis are presented in tables 2 (paternal parenting style) and 3 (maternal parenting style).

As shown in table 2, significant differences were observed in all the variables analyzed (academic performance and school engagement) in accordance with paternal parenting style. The significance level in all cases was  $p<.001$ . In academic performance, the differences found were related to the permissive style, which scored higher ( $M=7.37$ ;  $F=6.67$ ;  $p<.001$ ) than the other three styles (among which no statistically significant differences were observed). However, in all measures of school engagement, it was both the permissive and the democratic style which scored highest for behavioral ( $F=14.83$ ;  $p<.001$ ), affective ( $F=23.44$ ;  $p<.001$ ), cognitive ( $F=21.21$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and overall engagement ( $F=33.58$ ;  $p<.001$ ), with no significant differences being observed between either the democratic and permissive styles themselves, or between the authoritarian and negligent styles.

Table 2. Differences in academic performance and school engagement in accordance with paternal parenting style

	PPS	N	M	SD	F	p	Post-hoc
PCM	Authoritarian	222	6.82	1.28	6.67	.000***	(p-a***)
	Negligent	130	6.98	1.35			(p-n*)
	Permissive	172	7.37	1.13			(p-d*)
	Democratic	213	6.99	1.27			
BE	Authoritarian	222	3.21	.482	14.83	.000***	(d-a***)
	Negligent	130	3.27	.427			(d-n*)
	Permissive	172	3.48	.469			(p-a***)
	Democratic	213	3.42	.491			(p-n***)
AE	Authoritarian	222	3.37	.569	23.44	.000***	(d-a***)
	Negligent	130	3.51	.502			(d-n***)
	Permissive	172	3.70	.527			(p-a***)
	Democratic	213	3.73	.512			(p-n***)
CE	Authoritarian	222	2.58	.652	21.21	.000***	(d-a***)
	Negligent	130	2.58	.695			(d-n***)
	Permissive	172	2.89	.681			(p-a***)
	Democratic	213	3.01	.754			(p-n***)
OE	Authoritarian	222	3.05	.421	33.58	.000***	(d-a***)
	Negligent	130	3.12	.398			(d-n***)
	Permissive	172	3.36	.404			(p-a***)
	Democratic	213	3.39	.465			(p-n***)

Note: PPS=Paternal parenting style; PCM=Performance as core mean; BE=Behavioral engagement; AE=Affective engagement; CE=Cognitive engagement; OE=Overall engagement. \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

Table 3. Differences in academic performance and school engagement in accordance with maternal parenting style

	MPS	N	M	SD	F	p	Post-hoc
PCM	Authoritarian	179	6.71	1.28	7.07	.000	(p-a**)
	Negligent	171	7.07	1.32			(p-d*)
	Permissive	173	7.30	1.16			(n-a*)
	Democratic	214	6.97	1.27			
BE	Authoritarian	179	3.19	.454	22.03	.000	(p-a***)
	Negligent	171	3.29	.418			(p-d***)
	Permissive	173	3.56	.440			(p-n***)
	Democratic	214	3.31	.519			(d-a*)
AE	Authoritarian	179	3.35	.589	17.34	.000	(a-n**)
	Negligent	171	3.57	.481			(a-p***)
	Permissive	173	3.73	.536			(a-d***)
	Democratic	214	3.64	.550			(n-p*)
CE	Authoritarian	179	2.64	.644	10.88	.000	(d-a***)
	Negligent	171	2.60	.664			(d-n***)
	Permissive	173	2.88	.719			(p-a**)
	Democratic	214	2.91	.774			(p-n**)
OE	Authoritarian	179	3.06	.407	22.10	.000	(d-a***)
	Negligent	171	3.15	.381			(d-n**)
	Permissive	173	3.39	.417			(p-a***)
	Democratic	214	3.29	.501			(p-n***)

Note. MPS=Maternal parenting style; PCM=Performance as core mean; BE=Behavioral engagement; AE=Affective engagement; CE=Cognitive engagement; OE=Overall engagement. \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

In the case of academic performance, it is the permissive maternal style that is associated with the highest grades ( $F=7.07$ ;  $p < .001$ ), more so than both the authoritarian



and democratic styles, between which no differences were observed. In relation to school engagement, in both overall and cognitive engagement the same pattern is repeated for all parenting styles, with the democratic and permissive styles resulting in significantly greater engagement than the authoritarian and negligent ones, thus indicating that the former two are both adequate styles for fostering a good level of school engagement. For behavioral engagement, however, the permissive style is clearly associated with higher values ( $F=22.03$ ;  $p<.001$ ), while for affective engagement ( $F=17.34$ ;  $p<.001$ ), the authoritarian style is linked to poorer results, with no significant differences being observed between the other three.

Finally, to determine which parent's style (mother's or father's) has a greater influence on academic performance and school engagement, and to analyze which of the two determinants of parenting style (affect-communication or rigid imposition of rules and demands) has a greater impact on these same variables, linear regressions were carried out. The results of these analyses are presented in tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. Explanatory power of the components of parenting style on academic performance

	Model		ANOVA		STD Beta coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	
	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>				
PCM	.227	.052	27.97	.000		27.55	.000	Cons
					.158	5.21	.000	PA
					-.158	-5.20	.000	PRD
	.255	.065	36.16	.000		31.59	.000	Cons
					.171	5.69	.000	MA
					-.197	-6.57	.000	MRD

Note. PCM=Performance as core mean; PA=Paternal affect-communication; PRD=Paternal rigid discipline; Cons=Constant; MA=Maternal affect-communication; MRD=Maternal rigid discipline.

The results presented in table 4 reveal that maternal parenting style plays a more important role in explaining academic performance than paternal style, with an explanatory power of 6.5% as opposed to 5.2%. However, while in the paternal parenting style both affect-communication and rigid discipline were found to have the same explanatory power, but in different directions [affect-communication fostered academic performance ( $\beta=.158$ ;  $t=5.21$ ;  $p<.001$ ) while rigid discipline hampered it ( $\beta=-.158$ ;  $t=-5.20$ ;  $p<.001$ )], in the case of maternal style, rigid discipline had a greater explanatory power than affect-communication, as well as a negative impact ( $\beta=-.197$ ;  $t=-6.57$ ;  $p<.001$ ). In other words, the harm of maternal rigidity when establishing and enforcing rules outweighs the benefits of maternal affect-communication. Moreover, if we compare these findings with the results pertaining to paternal style, we see that maternal rigidity is also more harmful to academic performance than paternal rigidity, although maternal affect-communication also has a greater positive impact on students' performance than its paternal counterpart.

Table 5. Explanatory power of the components of parenting style on school engagement

	Model		ANOVA				
	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>STD Beta coefficient</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
BE	.297	.088	52.47	.000		31.62	.000***
							Cons
					.288	9.93	.000***
	.295	.087	52.18	.000		-2.15	.031*
					-.062	37.63	.000***
							Cons
AE	.300	.090	53.66	.000		9.61	.000***
					.277	3.99	.000***
					-.115	28.26	.000***
	.215	.046	26.61	.000		10.33	.000***
					.299	-0.36	.716
					-.011	36.58	.000***
CE	.278	.077	45.44	.000		6.47	.000***
					.191	-3.73	.000***
					-.110	12.11	.000***
	.248	.062	36.17	.000		8.79	.000***
					.256	3.97	.000***
					.116	15.80	.000***
OE	.359	.129	80.26	.000		7.76	.000***
					.227	3.02	.003**
					.088	29.75	.000***
	.296	.087	52.55	.000		12.64	.000***
					.358	1.17	.241
					.033	36.95	.000***
							Cons
							PA
							PRD
							Cons
							MA
							MRD

Note. BE=Behavioral engagement; AE=Affective engagement; CE=Cognitive engagement; OE=Overall engagement; PA=Paternal affect-communication; PRD=Paternal rigid discipline; Cons=Constant; MA=Maternal affect-communication; MRD=Maternal rigid discipline.\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

As regards school engagement, the data presented in table 5 reveal that paternal parenting style has a greater explanatory power than maternal style for overall engagement (12.9%;  $F=80.26$ ;  $p < .001$  vs. 8.7%;  $F=52.22$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and for the affective (9%;  $F=53.66$ ;  $p < .001$  vs. 4.6%;  $F=26.61$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and cognitive (7.79%,  $F=45.44$ ;  $p < .001$  vs. 6.2%;  $F=36.17$ ;  $p < .001$ ) dimensions.

Also, in relation to paternal parenting style, while affect has a strong explanatory power for school engagement ( $\beta=.358$ ;  $p < .00$ ) and its dimensions (behavioral:  $\beta=.288$ ;  $p < .001$ ; affective:  $\beta=.299$ ;  $p < .001$ ; and cognitive:  $\beta=.256$ ;  $p < .001$ ), the explanatory power of rigid discipline is either very low (behavioral:  $\beta=-.062$ ;  $p < .05$ ) or not significant at all (affective:  $\beta=-.011$ ;  $p > .05$ ; overall engagement:  $\beta=.033$ ;  $p > .06$ ). Whatever the case, paternal affect is clearly more statistically important for school engagement than the rigid establishment and enforcement of rules and demands.

Things are somewhat different in the case of maternal style, in which both affect-communication and rigid discipline have a significant explanatory power for school engagement, with the exception of overall engagement, for which rigid discipline does not seem to have any explanatory power whatsoever ( $\beta=-.040$ ;  $p > .05$ ). In all other

cases, the role of affect-communication is much more important (almost twice as much) for explaining engagement than the rigid enforcement of discipline.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Over recent years authors have started to recommend that children's perceptions of their mother's and father's parenting styles be analyzed separately (Torrente & Vazsonyi, 2008), mainly due to findings which suggest that children clearly perceive the differences between maternal and paternal styles (García et al., 2011), especially during adolescence (Brand & Klimes-Dugan, 2010). Thus, although in this present study both maternal and paternal parenting styles seem to be more closely associated with overall, affective and cognitive school engagement than with children's school behavior, understood as both academic performance and behavioral engagement, this association is stronger in the case of paternal style, a finding which coincides with those reported by previous studies which identify the father's socio-educational style as being more important than the mother's one (Bastais, Ponnet, & Mortelmans, 2012).

Nevertheless, not all parenting styles are associated with these variables to the same extent. While in the case of academic performance the most appropriate paternal and maternal style seems to be the permissive one, since it is associated with higher academic grades, in the case of engagement, slight differences were observed. Among fathers, the democratic and permissive styles are those linked to higher levels of overall, behavioral, affective and cognitive engagement, whereas among mothers, these same two styles are more appropriate for fostering overall and cognitive engagement, but not for fostering affective (in which there seems to be no difference between the permissive, democratic and negligent styles) or behavioral engagement (in which the permissive style is clearly more effective).

In any case, previous studies in this field have traditionally associated these two parenting styles (permissive and democratic) with better adjustment among adolescents in Latin American cultures (Cenkseven-Önder, 2012; García & Gracia, 2010), in comparison with the authoritarian and negligent styles, which are habitually linked to poorer adjustment and a more problematic adolescence (Chan & Koo, 2011; Milevsky, Schlechter, & Netter, 2007; Rinaldi & Howe, 2012), as well as to poorer academic outcomes (Garg et al., 2005; Im-Bolter et al., 2013). No significant differences were found between these two styles (authoritarian and negligent) in our study.

If we analyze the role played by the two components of parenting styles (affect-communication and rigid discipline or control) in academic performance, the data obtained in this study clearly suggest that it is the level of affection and warmth and the quality of parent/child communication that is most closely associated with gaining good

grades at school, while the perception of rigid control by parents gives rise to poorer grades. This finding is consistent with those reported by previous studies that highlight the importance of affection, support and positive communication for good school adjustment (Gaylord et al., 2003; Rodríguez-Fernández et al., 2012). Moreover, since rigid discipline has a negative explanatory power for academic performance that is equal to (in the case of paternal style) or greater than (in the case of maternal style) that of affect-communication, high levels of the former component may cancel out the benefits of the latter. This may be why the democratic style, which is characterized by high levels of control, was found to be a worse statistical predictor of academic performance (in the case of both fathers and mothers) than the permissive style, which is characterized by high levels of affect-communication and low levels of rigid control or discipline.

Nevertheless, the causal direction of this negative association between rigid control and academic performance is worth exploring, and future research may wish to try and clarify whether it is in fact due to a reactive behavior by children to the perception of a high degree of rigid parental control, or rather to the fact that when children achieve poorer academic grades, their parents tend to exercise stricter control over their behavior.

As regards the explanation of school engagement, the roles played by paternal and maternal parenting styles seem to be different. In the case of paternal style, affect-communication has a greater explanatory power for both overall school engagement and its various dimensions than the establishment and enforcement of rigid rules, which either has no significant explanatory power at all or only a very weak one. Hence, with fathers, it is both the democratic and the permissive styles (both characterized by high levels of affection and communication) that are the most effective for fostering school engagement.

The situation is slightly different with maternal style, in which both affect-communication and rigid discipline have a similar significant explanatory power for school engagement, with the exception of overall engagement for which the pattern is the same as for paternal style. One possible explanation for the fact that affect-communication is more decisive among fathers, while among mothers it is both affect-communication and the establishment of rules, may be that traditionally, fathers have spent less time engaged in childrearing tasks, and have been less involved in establishing rules, adopting instead a more affectionate and less regulatory behavior than mothers, who are often left with the job of ensuring compliance (Huver, Otten, De Vries, & Engels, 2010).

However, it may also be that the results found here are affected by the conceptualization of parenting styles, since although the structure of Maccoby and Martin's four parenting style model (1983) was followed, dimensions such as parental criticism and rejection or inductive and indulgent discipline were not taken into account,

as they have been in other studies (Bersabé, Fuentes, & Motrico, 2011). Future research should strive to overcome this limitation in order to determine the role played by these dimensions in relation to academic performance, school engagement and other psychosocial adjustment variables among adolescents.

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