

THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF SELF-ESTEEM AND LEARNING ATTITUDE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEIVED PARENTING STYLE AND SCHOOL LIFE ADJUSTMENT

Soo Youn, Lee

Ph. D. Candidate, Seoul National University, Korea

The Mediating Effects of Self-Esteem and Learning Attitude on the Relationship between Middle School Students' perceived Parenting Style and School Life Adjustment

E-mail: sylph7@snu.ac.kr

—Abstract —

This study examined the effect of middle school students' perceived parenting style on their school life adjustment focusing on the mediation effect of self-esteem and learning attitude. The author carried out analysis of covariance structure using the 1st wave(2010) data of Korean Children and Youth Panel Survey(KCYPS) conducted by the National Youth Policy Institute and consists of 2,351 first year middle school students and their parents.

The results indicated that when middle school students perceived their parents' parenting style positively, the level of their self-esteem and self-directed learning attitude were high, and this, in turn, had positive effects on their school life adjustment. Especially, self-esteem and learning attitude mediated the effect of middle school students' perceived parenting style on school life adjustment. These results demonstrate that the mothers' affectionate, monitory and rational parenting style will contribute greatly to the successful students' school life with a sense of self-esteem and self-directed learning attitude.

Key Words: *Middle School Students' Perceived Parenting Style, Self Esteem, Learning Attitude, School Life Adjustment, Mediation Effect*

JEL Classification: I20 - Education and Research Institutions: General, I30 – Welfare and Poverty: General

1. INTRODUCTION

Students spend most of their time at school in adolescent period. Thus, school is important growth environment that contributes to intellectual, social and

emotional development of adolescents. Considering that the extent to which students adjust well to school not only has significant effect on development and adaptation in adolescence but also continually influences accomplishment and adjustment in adulthood, the school life adjustment is very important(Cho, 2012; 278). Among some factors that influence school life adjustment, parenting style is an important factor because it influences initial relationship between parents and children, and it has, in turn, crucial effect on children's psychosocial development, namely personality and emotion as well as self-concept, attitude, value, and performance ability(So, Song & Kim, 2010;2). Based on many previous studies (Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008; Ha & Lee, 2009), it is argued that parental style influences school life adjustment, indicating that those who perceived their parental style to be democratic adjust well to school life. Furthermore, parental style influences the self-esteem of children. A high level of self-esteem consequently acts on emotional stability and the formation of personal relations (Lee, 2003;23) and finally makes school life adjustment stable. Meanwhile, parenting style is closely associated with learning attitude (or study habit). Awujo(2006;169) suggested that democratic child rearing pattern was significantly associated with students' learning attitude, especially self-directed learning attitude(Park, et al., 2010;120). Finally this learning attitude has a meaningful effect on school life adjustment (Lee, 2010;386). And according to Cho(2012)'s research, household income and mother's and father's job also have significant effect on school life adjustment.

From previous studies, adolescents' self-esteem and learning attitude can be understood as mediate variables, affecting the relationship of parenting style and school life adjustment. Nonetheless, previous studies had some limitations for analyzing these structural relations holistically.

Therefore, in the present study, the relations among parenting style, self-esteem, learning attitude and school life adjustment were examined using a sample of middle school students in Korea. The hypotheses are as follow: (a) parenting style, self-esteem and learning attitude will be significant predictors of school life adjustment, (b) self-esteem and learning attitude will mediate the effect of parenting style on school life adjustment.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Participants

The data used in this research was the first wave data of ‘Korean Children and Youth Panel Survey (KCYPS)’ collected by the National Youth Policy Institute(NYPI). The survey was conducted in 2010 for 2,351 matched pairs of 1st year middle school students and their parents in Korea. Participants in this study were recruited using a stratified multi-stage cluster sampling from the 12 regions (Seoul Metropolitan City and 11 metropolitan cities and provinces) in Korea. Data used for analysis in this study is however, a sub-sample of the original data. First, among all the respondents, only those who answered to all the items of main scales were included. Second, to exclude the effect of other family members such as grandparents and to estimate the effect of parents’ child-rearing attitude, only those who live with two biological parents were included. The total number of the middle school students fitting into these descriptions was 1,692. The portion of male (49.7%) and female (50.3%) participants were quite similar. About 59.0% and 44.0% of their mother and father had high school education or less and the rest had college or higher educational background. As for their parents employment status, a large portion of their father (97.6%) reported of being the state of employment, while 59.5% of their mother are employed.

2.2. Measurement

Independent Variable : Parenting Style. The original Parenting Behavior Inventory assessing Korean adolescents’ perceived parenting style consists of 21 items on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much) and it has five subscales assessing: (a) monitoring, (b) discipline through reasoning, (c) affection, (d) inconsistency, (e) over-expectation, and (f) over-intrusiveness. However in this present research focusing on the democratic parenting style, the final parenting behavior inventory consisted of 3 items for monitoring, 3 items for affection and 4 items for discipline through reasoning. The internal reliability of the scales for this research is Cronbach’s $\alpha = .732$, indicating a good level of internal consistency. The higher score indicates a stronger monitory, affectionate and reasonable parenting style.

Mediate Variable : Self-Esttem. Self-esteem was measured by Self-Esteem Scale(SES) developed by Rosenberg(1965). The survey consisted of 10 items on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The

higher score indicates the higher level of self-esteem. Cronbach's α of the scale was .860.

Mediate Variable : Learning Attitude. To measure self-directed learning attitude, Self-Regulated Learning scale(SRL), developed by Yang(2000) and modified by Kim(2006), was used. The scale consists of 18 items on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) and the four subscales assess: (a) achievement value, (b) mastery goal orientation, (c) action control, and (d) academic time-management. The higher score indicates a stronger self-directed learning attitude. Cronbach's α was also adequate, $\alpha = .897$.

Dependent Variable : School Life Adjustment. The School Life Adjustment scale(SLA) developed by Min(1991, cited in Jeong, 2009) for Korean elementary school students was used to measure the level of school life adjustment of middle school students. The scale consists of 18 items on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much) and the four subscales assess: (a) learning activities, (b) school rule, (c) relationship with teacher, and (d) relationship with friends. The higher score indicates the higher level of adaptability to school life. Cronbach's α of the scale was .844.

Control variable : Demographics. As control variables, the yearly household income, maternal employment status and paternal employment status were included. 'Maternal and paternal employment' are dummy variables(employment=1, unemployment=0). 'Income' was log-transformed to limit the effect of the extremely large values.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data analyses were conducted by two steps using SPSS 19.0 and AMOS 18.0 software. First, analysis of covariance structure was used to examine the multiple mediation model and investigate the causal relations between the main variables. Second, bootstrapping procedures were implemented to obtain estimates of the indirect effects and to test their significance by using confidence intervals. If a zero is not included in the 95% confidence interval of the estimate, it means that the indirect effect is statistically significant. The bootstrapping method is recommended to overcome potential problems caused by unmet assumptions.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Analysis of Research Model

Before analyzing the structural model, the goodness of measurement model fit was tested to examine how well the model fits the data. Fit indices such as GFI, CFI, RMSEA and SRMR were used to examine the goodness of model fit. According to cutoff criteria for fit indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999), goodness of model fit was acceptable. Table 1 summarizes the result of goodness of fit for measurement and structural model.

Table 1: Goodness of Model Fit

Model	Goodness of Model Fit
Measurement Model	$\chi^2=783.068(df=98, p<.001)$, GFI= .943, CFI= .936, RMSEA= .064, SRMR= .056
Structural Model	$\chi^2=958.794(df=141, p<.001)$, GFI= .942, CFI= .924, RMSEA= .059, SRMR= .066

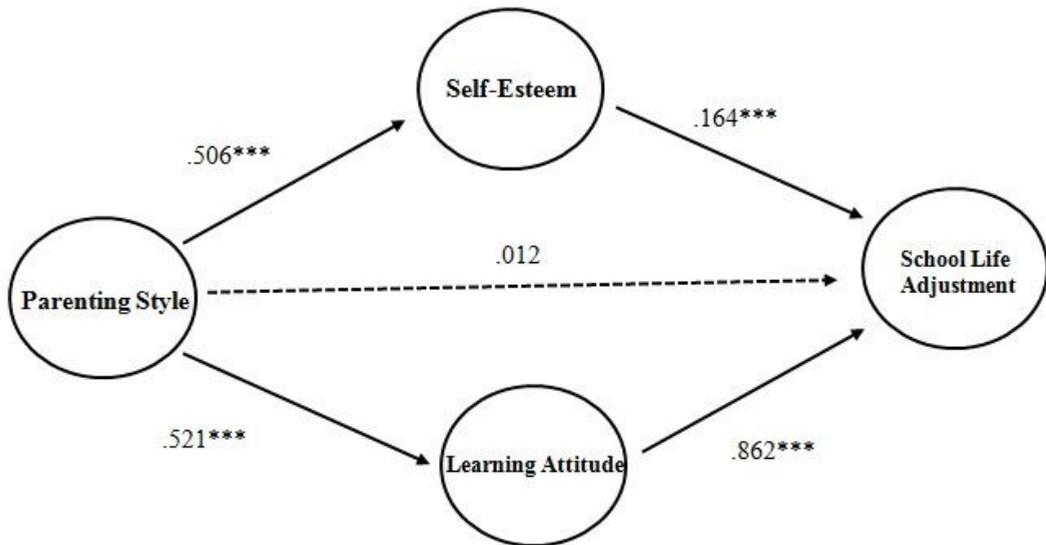
Note: GFI=goodness of fit index, CFI=comparative fit index, RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation, SRMR=standardized root mean square residual

3.2 The Total Indirect Effect

Figure 1 shows the significant paths with standardized regression coefficients of multiple mediation model.

First, the path between parenting style and self-esteem was significant ($\beta = .506$, $p < .001$), indicating that those who perceived their parents' child-rearing style to be affectionate, monitory and reasonable have a higher level of self-esteem. Second, there was a significant effect of self-esteem on school life adjustment ($\beta = .459$, $p < .001$) which suggested that the students with a higher level of self-esteem are likely to adjust well to the school life. Third, parenting style had positive causal relation with learning attitude ($\beta = .409$, $p < .001$). This result shows that students with parents whose child-rearing style is affectionate, monitory and reasonable tend to have a higher level of self-directed learning ability. Fourth, the effect of learning attitude on school life adjustment was statistically significant ($\beta = .065$, $p < .001$), indicating that the higher the level of self-directed learning attitude, the higher the level of school life adjustment. However, there was no significant direct effect of parenting style on school life adjustment.

Figure-1 : Multiple Mediation Model with Standardized Regression Coefficients



Goodness of Model Fit : $\chi^2 = 958.794$ (df= 141, $p < .001$), GFI=.942, CFI=.924, RMSEA=.059, SRMR=.066
 Note: Household Income, Maternal Employment Status, and Paternal Employment Status are included as control variable and covariance between independent variable and control variables exists.

Given these significant associations, income, maternal and paternal employment status were controlled for in all subsequent analyses. As can be seen in Table 2, among control variables, Income ($\beta = .028$, $p < .001$) and Maternal Employment ($\beta = -.024$, $p < .05$) were found to be significant predictors of school life adjustment. These results suggest that students from families of higher annual income are more likely to adjust well to the school life, and those whose mothers are working (maternal employment=1) have difficulties to adjust to school than those whose mothers are not working (maternal employment=0).

To examine the total indirect effect of parenting style on school life adjustment through self-esteem and learning attitude, the bootstrapped estimate was implemented from the main analysis. As a result, the total indirect effect was statistically significant, as the confidence intervals didn't contain a zero.

Table 2: Path Coefficients of Multiple Mediation Model

		Coefficient	S.E.	Std. Coefficient	Bootstrapping	
					BC 95% CI lower	BC 95% CI upper
Parenting Style	→ Self-Esteem	.529***	.030	.506	.464	.601
Self-Esteem	→ School Life Adjustment	.065***	.011	.164	.040	.092
Parenting Style	→ Learning Attitude	.409***	.026	.521	.349	.476
Learning Attitude	→ School Life Adjustment	.459***	.029	.862	.403	.528
Ln_income	→ School Life Adjustment	.028***	.008	.073	.012	.044
Maternal Employment	→ School Life Adjustment	-.024*	.009	-.051	-.044	-.006
Paternal Employment	→ School Life Adjustment	-.050	.030	-.033	-.122	.015
Parenting Style	→ School Life Adjustment (Total Effect)	.227***	.021	.544	.187	.270
Parenting Style	→ School Life Adjustment (Direct Effect)	.005	.016	.012	-.028	.035
Parenting Style	→ School Life Adjustment (Indirect Effect)	.222***	.021	.532	.183	.264

Note: Based on 2,000 bootstrap samples ; BC= Bias Corrected; CI= Confidence Interval

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

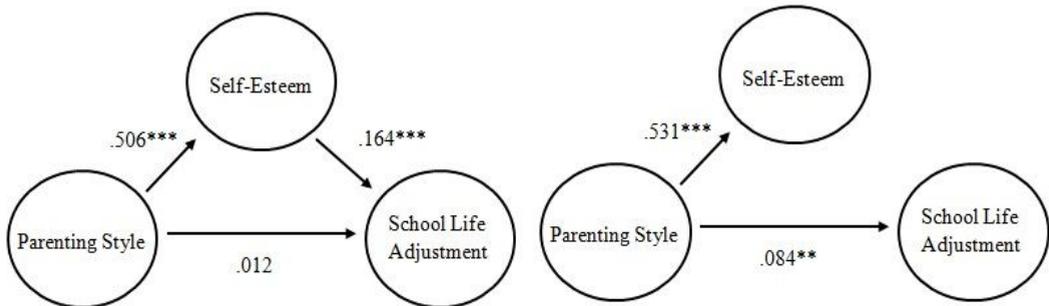
3.3 The Specific Indirect Effect

The following indirect effects were tested: (a) the indirect effect of parenting style on school life adjustment through self-esteem, controlling for the indirect effect of learning attitude, and (b) the indirect effect of parenting style on school life adjustment through learning attitude, controlling for the indirect effect of self-esteem. For both indirect effects, household income, maternal employment and paternal employment were entered as control variables.

3.3.1 Mediator: Self-Esteem

The test of the specific indirect effect of parenting style on school life adjustment through self-esteem is presented in Figure 2.

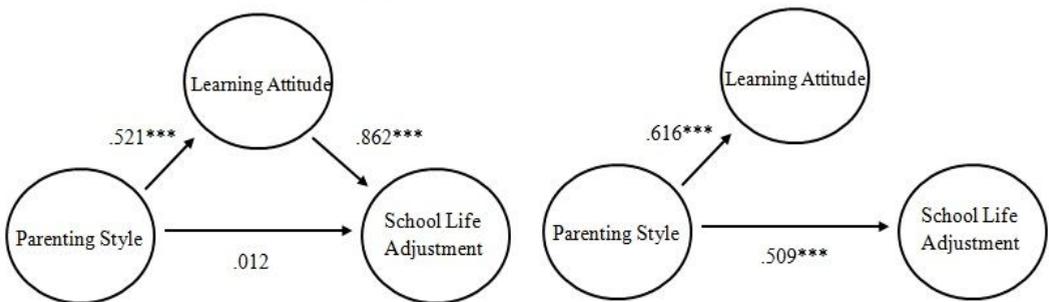
Figure-2 : Test of Indirect Effect of Self-Esteem



When self-esteem, the mediator, was constrained, the effect of parenting style on school life adjustment was statistically significant ($\beta = .084, p < .01$). That is, self-esteem fully mediated the relationship between parenting style and school life adjustment. However, as a result of testing the significance of the specific indirect effect of parenting style on school life adjustment through self-esteem, it was not statistically significant, as its confidence interval contained a zero (see Table 3).

3.3.2 Mediator: Learning Attitude

Figure-3 : Test of Indirect Effect of Learning Attitude



As shown in Figure 3, the test of specific indirect effect of parenting style on school life adjustment through learning attitude demonstrated that learning attitude also fully mediated the relationship between parenting style and school life adjustment. In addition, the specific indirect effect of parenting style on school life adjustment through learning attitude was statistically significant, as its confidence interval did not contain a zero (see Table 3). That is, stronger democratic parenting style was positively associated with self-directed learning attitude and it was also related to a higher level of school life adjustment.

Table 3: Indirect Effects of Self-Esteem and Learning Attitude

Mediator	Estimate	S.E.	Std. Estimate	Bootstrapping	
				BC 95% CI lower	BC 95% CI upper
Self-Esteem (Specific Indirect Effect①)	.070	.029	.143	-.009	.100
Learning Attitude (Specific Indirect Effect②)	.192***	.019	.462	.157	.230
Parenting Style → School Life Adjustment (Total Indirect Effect)	.222***	.020	.532	.186	.264

Note: Based on 2,000 bootstrap samples ; BC = Bias Corrected; CI= Confidence Interval
 *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

4. CONCLUSION

The present study tested a multiple mediation model in which self-esteem and learning attitude served as mediate variables in the relationship between parenting style and school life adjustment. The findings demonstrated that all the paths of the multiple mediation model were significant except the path between parenting style and school life adjustment. These results were consistent with the previous studies. As for each indirect effect of self-esteem and learning attitude, only learning attitude was a significant mediator. However, as for the total indirect effect, self-esteem and learning attitude were both found to have multiple mediating effects. That is, middle school students who were brought up without affection, monitoring and rational discipline from their parents were likely to have a low level of self-esteem and self-directed learning ability and it may lead to difficulties in adjustment of school life.

These results imply that there are multiple factors that influence school life adjustment of adolescents, and that omitting other important factors can produce an error when analyses are limited to examining just one factor. Therefore, broadening the previous studies and examining adolescents' perceived parenting style, self-esteem, learning attitude and school life adjustment simultaneously can contribute to the areas of social welfare practice and education settings.

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