An Analysis of how Contemporary African Child-Rearing Practices affect a Child's Self-Concept and Learning

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Abstract
This paper endeavors to highlight how contemporary African child-rearing practices affect a child's self-concept and learning. It also observes that child-rearing practice is a prominent challenge for many parents including ones in sub-Saharan Africa. By observing and scrutinizing the common child-rearing practices in Zimbabwe, the researchers noted that some contemporary African child-rearing practices might either enhance a positive self-concept leading to enhancement in learning or the opposite where some practices actually instill a negative self-concept that eventually deters learning. It, therefore, provides clear-cut roles, obligations, rights, expectations and sanctions within the common authoritative, permissive and autocratic parenting styles which seem to be a dilution of traditional African child-rearing practices due to the influence of other diverse cultures, religion and the development of technology. Some parents today, seem to be a reflection of not only one parenting style, but a chameleon representation of what they consider the best parenting option for each situation. Arguing mainly from a Humanistic point of view, this paper prescribes specific implications for parenting and teaching where a strong commitment to child-care by every parent or caregiver is highly recommended. Any good parenting style should enhance a child's positive self-concept and provide ideal learning experiences and guidance for all young people within their phenomenal fields.
Keywords: child-rearing, self-concept, learning, authoritative, authoritarian and permissive

Introduction

Child-rearing patterns and the relationship between parent and child are vital aspects of the education and socialization of a child. Before the introduction of formal education in various parts of Africa, there existed traditional ways of child-rearing patterns. Clear-cut roles, obligations, rights, expectations and sanctions were prescribed (Durojaiye, 1996 in Mwamwenda, 2010). With the advent of formal education and the influence of different cultures, the traditional parent-child relationships and child-rearing practices have been altered. Few traditional African communities still retain certain aspects of the rearing patterns intact, but many have been diluted by the Western culture.

Siyakwazi and Siyakwazi (2014) further affirms that evidence from some African countries shows that there are no clear-cut child-rearing patterns but rather a combination of both African and Western styles. Perhaps this is due to changes in parental roles, for example, mothers are now getting employed outside the home, and in most cases, housemaids take the mother's roles. Whose values and norms are likely to be instilled in the child as she/he develops? Baumrind (1991) cited in Santrock (2012) identified three parenting styles namely authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. The assumption is that these major child-rearing practices are also common rearing patterns observed in Africa today. How far does each parenting style affect the child's self-concept and learning? In concurrence with Baumrind, Coopersmith (1967, cited in Sailor, 2004) also found that the three parenting styles are related to a child's self-concept and learning.

The phrase "African children" contextually refers to black children of ages 0 – 18 and are born of black parents in Africa. The "rearing – patterns" are ways in which the children are brought up whether Shona, Zulu, Ndebele, Ndau, Xhosa, etc. Though Nyandiya – Bundy et al. (2000) country-side survey in Zimbabwe contends that most parents in Zimbabwe are authoritarian types, our observations reflect that there seem to be no fixed styles for individuals. Instead, parents advance from one parenting style to the other depending on the situation at hand, hence the term chameleon representation of parenting styles countrywide.

Researchers concur with Nyandiya Bandy (2000) that there seems to be a preferential treatment still being given to the boy child whilst the girl child is looked down upon as most of the home chores observed were rather gender stereotyped. It seems many Africans still think that the place of the girl child should be motherly and remain in the home whilst the boy-child is exposed to the adventurous external environment. As educational psychologists, we see this set up as seemingly militating against the optional development of the child. There seems to be some developmental differentiation in children's intellectual, emotional, social, physical and even pro-social development.

On a positive note, some researchers have, however, observed some positive points in the manner parents' rear children in a contemporary African society. Siyakwazi and Siyakwazi (2014) mention the use of riddles, aphorisms, proverbs and traditional games as augmenting the socialization process within rural Zimbabwe families. We have also observed an increase in socialization agents in the form of local and international television programs in some rural and peri-urban sections of Zimbabwe. Therefore, childrearing seems to be taking a multi-faceted approach where the used-to-be traditional parenting styles are being diluted and harmonized by some westernized parenting styles both operating on a continuum. Durojaiye (1990) cited in Chinyoka (2014) states that the African child-rearing practices are of educational value, given the attitude with which a child is received when born and the way the child is brought up in the early years. He asserts that;

> **A child is born into a warm, affectionate and welcoming culture where he is completely accepted regardless of economic or domestic strains in the family at the time of this arrival. In the early months of life, the child receives the constant attention of his mother, grandmother and other members of the extended family (1990:22).**

Experience has shown that it is these tender times that an African child receives the greatest attention. As the child grows older, the three distinct child-rearing practices mentioned earlier on begin to show and a child has to show compliance depending on which parenting style is being emphasized. Mwamwenda (2010) advises teachers to select positive aspects to be emphasized and negative ones to de-emphasize when a child comes to school. This discourse highlights the characteristics of some contemporary African child-rearing patterns showing how each affects a child's self-concept and learning, as was observed in some Zimbabwean communities in Chipinge, Manicaland within the past half decade.

Theoretical Framework

The term "self-concept" is a person's way of perceiving themselves (Zindi, Peresu, and Mpofu, 2008). This could be *negative* or *positive* depending on an individual's experiences from childhood through adulthood and how they perceive such experiences in their daily interactions with the environment. The theory of how self-concept develops in human beings has been an area of interest and much debate. The chief proponent of this theory is the humanist, Carl Rogers (Pervin and John, 2012). Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson (psychoanalysts) also held interest on the self-concept issues. Their views may appear different, but it is quite apparent that the self-concept is not innate but learned.

Taking views of humanists such as Carl Rogers, for instance, one is able to understand another's personality through the use of one's eye, meaning the way one views himself/herself. Like adults children also have self-determination and a potential set of them. They also have the free will to curve their own destinies, though parental intervention during rearing practices may curve a child's own destiny to that desired by the parent or caregiver. Hence the free will that most humanists would crave for becomes evident in some African children's lives. Rogers thought that human motivation is geared towards fulfilling one's own capabilities and potentials. Each one of the children is striving towards self-actualisation though the desire to do so is often thwarted by an existing self-concept that is narrow and sometimes restricting (Rogers, 1971 in Boeree, 2006).

As children grow, they are usually conscious of the fact that they need to obtain some *regard* from others. As such, they tend to act in ways that may distort whom they really are, all in an effort to gain acceptance from parents, peers, and others. In certain child-rearing practices, love and praise are sometimes withheld up until

the child conforms to parental or social standards, leading the child to become a victim of conditional positive regard. Children then begin to incorporate in themselves *conditions of worth* that may enable them to gain positive regard from significant others.

Generally, the researchers have observed that when there are fewer conditions of worth set during parenting, children grow up to be much more flexible and independent. They even become much more open, cooperative and creative, self-determining and are confident. In restrictive and too prohibitive situations, one's self-determination and the will to self-actualise are militated upon. Instead, the children observed in such circumstances were found to be quite anxious, stressed and not really free. Any child requires unconditional positive regard if they are to develop their various potentials in life fully.   This is usually observed in situations of love, empathy, worth and acceptance in the manner they are reared whether in the home or institutions. It is vital for parents and educators to be informed that the anti-social urges in children, aggressiveness, and destructive instincts. can be avoided if at all they implement a child-rearing practice that promotes cultural values but at the same time boosts children's self-concept and self-esteem.

Above all, if parents were to remain, models of the kindness and love they preach, children would imitate as espoused by Bandura's observational learning theory. If humans are able to break free from beliefs and feelings hampering their personal growth like Rogers said, then children can be nurtured to pick up the best in parenting whilst at the same time discarding that which does not promote a positive self-image.

For Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalytic followers, the issue of the self-concept is imbedded in the *'unconscious' mind* which is a reservoir for all instinctual drives thoughts and wishes from the '*conscious' (Mwamwenda, 2010 and Hayes 2008). They* saw the unconscious as the major motivating force behind all human behavior, even in children. They concur that what humans say and do is an effort to find socially acceptable ways of expressing unconscious impulses and/or feelings.

The self-concept according to Freud (Santrock, 2012) is made up of three strong psychological forces of the mind namely the *Id, Ego,* and *Superego*. The three are always in constant interaction. The Id is concerned mainly with some biological drives arising from basic physiological needs such as food, water, warmth and avoidance of pain. It is said to be operating at the pleasure-principle without reasoning or logic. Younger children's self-image is flooded with the activities of the Id. It is the Ego that most parents would want to cultivate in the child for it is said to be apparent at about six months after birth. The Ego is the mediator between the child's Id and reality because it is conscious. It allows in the desires of the Id without causing any harm. It operates on the reality principle. According to Freud, it is the Ego that helps the mind to develop and refine one's cognitive capacities, perceptions, memories, problem-solving decision-making, and future planning.

The superego is regarded as a fraction of the mind that is equivalent to 'conscience.' Its function is to prohibit any ideas or thoughts and actions that directly express one's instinctual feelings. It is the part that represents moral standards of society as conceived by one's parents and society (Cole and Cole, 2010).

Therefore, there is a constant interaction and sometimes a psychic conflict between the three forces leading to a particular self-concept. To cope with times of stress and anxiety during nurturing, children engage the use of defence mechanisms that resultantly seem to indicate a positive self-concept in most of our African children, yet in reality, the actions may not be true reflection of one's desires. The challenge to the parent then is that one may not notice the disguised feelings (defences) and thoughts that are embedded in the child's inner psychic structure unless one finds time to probe. Some of the defence mechanisms that alter a child's self-concept can be denial, repression, regression, reaction formation, displacement, and sublimation (Sprinthall, Sprinthall, and Oja, 2006).

Papalia and Olds (2004) define self-concept as a sense of self, which guides one in deciding what to do in the future. Trawick-Smith (1997) in Chinyoka (2013) sees it as an individual person's theory of the 'self.' One's self-concept includes all self-perceptions of one's own competence and characteristics including ethnic and gender identity. School children are also described as either having academic or non-academic self-concepts. Therefore, the notion of learning is closely related to one's self-concept. In fact, one's self-concept is seen as a concept that is hierarchically multifaceted and should not be regarded as a single entity (*Barlow, 2005* and Bee, 2007). Children can have a high or low self-concept depending on life situations or circumstances.

 A pupil can have a low self-concept in their academic abilities and have a high one in physical abilities and peer relationships. The core of human nature is essentially positive, and all humans are directed towards self-actualisation (Chinyoka, 2013 and Ganga 2013). It is the congruence between the 'self' and experience, accompanied by positive regard that contributes a lot to the success of self-actualisation. From Roger's studies of the Freudian psychoanalysis, it is noted that humans have an id in the unconscious that manifests itself in some experiences, which may be irrational, unsocialised and destructive to the self and others (Mangal, 2006; Mwamwenda, 2010). Individuals engage in unacceptable ways because they want to survive in their environment or phenomenological fields. As such, children too are dependent and sometimes self-centered as they receive various forms of nurturing within their phenomenogical fields.

Mwamwenda (2010) acknowledges that it is one's phenomenological field, seen by the individual as the "self" 'me' or 'I,' that develops into one's self-concept. Rogers cited by Mwamwenda maintains that the self-concept operates on the basis of conscious experiences and its objective is to actualize the goals and abilities of the self. Baumrind's (1996) ideas on child-rearing practices also show how self-concept development is in children for it assists the child to perceive itself as a separate and distinct entity. It is, therefore, vital for the self and individual experiences to be in harmony in order to be congruent to each other. Lack of congruence as a child grows accompanied by anxiety, discomfort, and tenseness in human personality's natural tendency to grow.

The term '*learning'* is regarded by many as a relatively permanent change in performance potential that results from an individual's interactions with the environment (Wortman and Loftus, 2008; Woolfolk, 2004; Mwamwenda, 2010 and Santrock, 2012). In this context, the environment of the child are the parents, family members, teachers, etc., from whom he/she learns everyday. The size of a family can either limit it or enhance it. The school is also a learning environment that auguments the family in influencing the child's self-concept. How one learns depends on a number of variables.

Parenting of any format is meant to make a child learn something. How the child ends up learning becomes an issue when a child's concept of the self is altered. There are various forms of learning but how one learns depends mainly on what is available in the environment for learning (Ganga, 2013). Psychologists explain that children learn by getting habituated to some environmental stimuli because children observe and learn from them. For instance, children in families learn to associate and store what their parents' desire most through the daily family interactions. Whether they appreciate all that they learn, one needs to interrogate further and establish the truth. The researchers observed that culture calls for most African children to comply with what their parents desire most.

Having been conditioned to a particular parenting style, most children begin to get involved in cognitive learning that involves the formation of schemes and concepts. For instance, after having been exposed to a complete laissez faire type of parenting for too long, a child may begin to think that life is meant to rear him/her to be care-free and deal with it in their best way possible, regardless of what society might prescribe. What then a child decides on as 'thought process' eventually is seen as their portrayed behaviour. Both the child 's learning process and the child's self-concept are affected by the manner in which the child receives

nurturing from parents, siblings, peers, caregivers, teachers and the rest of the society. This discourse regards Baumrinds (1996) classes of parenting styles namely *authoritative, permissive* and *autocratic* as the basis for the noted parenting options in a contemporary African Society such as Zimbabwe.

Discussion
The Authoritative Parenting style on a child's self-concept and learning
According to Papalia and Olds (2004), the authoritative parenting style is where parents direct their children's activities by establishing firm rules and standards but is willing to discuss reasons for their rules. It is regarded as a democratic parenting style in which a compromise is shown between two other parenting styles namely the Laissez-faire styles and authoritarian styles. The authoritative style takes cognisance of the children's rights but without exaggerating the child's freedom. For instance, the writers have observed that in most contemporary African families children are consulted in planning family holidays, what to purchase and various other privileges not enjoyed by unliberated children. The children are regarded as distinct individuals.

Authoritative parents are loving, caring, consistent, and respectful of children's independent decisions. The children are self-reliant explorative and contented. The disadvantage could simply occur where a child is overwhelmed with his/her rights and ends up making a wrong decision in which consequences could be later regretted, for example, a child goes on to take prestigious school subjects where she/he is not so capable. Results could be disastrous, yet it is one characteristic of this parenting style that the parents have higher expectations of their children's performances.

Papal and Olds (2004) reiterate that democratic parents control their children by explaining their rules or decisions and by reasoning with them. Parents employ punishments and rewards. For instance, misbehaviour could be punished by barring a child from what he/she wants most, whilst the major reason is fully explained. In a way, this enables the children to control behaviour. However, more emphasis is placed on rewards other than punishment and parents combine control with encouragement.

How then does this style affect self-concept and learning? Firstly, parents are the first and most significant others in the life of a child and formation of the self-image. Cole and Cole (2010) reviewed research findings on how parenting styles contribute to the development of either a negative or positive self-concept and how it eventually affects school performance. Numerous research studies on the influence of parenting styles on positive self-concept have been reported. Some of these studies were carried out by Coopersmith (in Sailor, 2004) and Baumrind (1996). Cole and Cole report that self-concept has been linked to patterns of child-rearing. Coopersmith found that parents of boys with a high self-concept employed a style of parenting similar to the authoritative pattern. It has also emerged in studies reviewed that he authoritative parents promote a positive self-concept in their children by allowing them to explore the world around them. Parents do have confidence in their ability to guide their children, and they respect their children's interest, opinions, and unique personalities.

Numerous research studies link a positive self-concept to a higher academic achievement in subjects such as Mathematics and Languages. Such research studies have been carried out in Africa and elsewhere (Marsh, 1990; Omizo, 1980; Watkin Akande and Mpofu, 1995 all cited in Mwamwenda, 2010). The studies showed that the high correlation between positive self-concept and achievement in particular school subjects seem to be that students who enjoy a given subject are likely to spend more time and energy gaining mastery of the subject. Achievement becomes the greatest reinforcer. Greater interests can be stimulated by a parenting style that conveys interest and positive attitudes in a child's work. Experience has also shown that school Consultation Days help to instill a positive self-concept within the learner through dialogue between parent, teacher and the child.

Research on Zimbabwean children in primary schools has shown that an academic self-concept is related to achievement in Grade 7 national examinations (Kufakunesu, Chinyoka and Ganga 2012). The three attributed this finding to blacks trying to get a way of making up for socio-economic disadvantages that blacks suffered during the colonial era. Experience has also shown that higher academic self-concept can also be attributed to a parenting style where parents play positive role-models for their children. Children tend to want to imitate their parents. Mwamwenda (2010) cites an example of a girl who expressed great love for her own figure because it resembled her mother's. She had heard her father telling her mother that she had a good figure. Her physical self-concept was then built upon what she wanted to model; her mother. It is, therefore, evident in these findings that a person can perceive herself/himself as worthy, significant or acceptable in the eyes of others as a result of parental comments. Ultimately, either a positive self-concept or negative one will contribute to a child's functioning as a learner. The researchers have observed that a student with a positive self-concept stands a better chance of performing academically well than one with a negative self-concept.

The Permissive Parenting Style on a Child's Self Concept and Learning
Cole and Cole (2010) describe permissive parents as those who exercise less control over their children's behavior and make relatively few demands on them. They give their children a lot of freedom to determine their own schedules, activities and rarely consult them about family policies. In concurrence Papalia and Olds (2004) also confirm that such parents make very few demands and allow the children to regulate their own activities as much as possible. They do not consider themselves as ideal role models for their own children. Very few family rules are explained to children and them hardly ever punish their children. The parents are further described as uncontrolling, non-demanding, relatively warm and their children tend to be immature and the least exploratory (Biehler and Snowman, 2012).

The parenting style has been observed by the researchers in some Zimbabwean families where both parents are alcoholics. They have no time for dialogue with their children. Children are free to say whatever language, even vulgar. Chaos reigns in the home especially when there is a conflict of choices. In school, it has been observed that the children from the permissive, also known as Laissez-Faire parenting style, face conflicts between the home and the school culture. The school demands conformity, routine and discipline when home exposes children to excessive freedom. As classroom practitioners, the writers have observed that such children may rebel if discipline is imposed on them. Place one in a group, and you may find them failing to conform to the regulations. Classes may be disrupted, thereby disturbing other learners. Such children may demand too much attention from the teacher at the expense of others. An informal interviewee from such families expressed the feeling that they are neglected persons.

Neglected children usually develop a negative self-concept as they feel that they are not valued. Their feelings tend to oppose one another. Brooks (2008) declares that if a child has ideas or feelings or perceptions, which oppose one another, they can experience a degree of stress related to cognitive dissonance. A person in a state of dissonance tends to seek a state of compatibility amongst related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as a way of reducing psychological stress, and this may be a great hindrance in learning.

In Dembo (1994), De Baryshe and Ramsey (1989) constructed a development model that emphasizes the role of faulty parenting styles as a basis for anti-social behavior. Children in such a predicament tend to seek out a deviant peer group with which to identify. In Zimbabwe, many have turned to street kids. If no early intervention is ejected, individual may end up becoming adolescent delinquents and adult offenders, besides being very poor academic achievers. Zindi et al. (2008) also affirm that parents, as well as teachers who are not competent, are likely to infect their children with similar feelings of dislike and cognitive incompetence.

The Autocratic Parenting Style on a Child's Self-Concept and Learning

Among the three parenting styles discovered by Baumrind (1991) is the autocratic [authoritarian] style, a situation where parents attempt to control their children's behavior and attitudes to conform to strict rules of conduct. Such parents value obedience to authority and favor punitive measures when their children attempt to behave contrary to their expectations. They do not discuss standards with their children. They are more detached, more controlling, less warm than other parents and children are more discontented, withdrawn and distrustful (Dembo, 1994). Parents also try to shape and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of their children according to set standards. Basing on the writers' childhood experiences, the African traditional child-rearing practices have such characteristics. As the children grow older, compliance becomes a more complicated task. A child has to have a clear concept of the exact outcome the parents' wish.

Children are expected to behave like adults although there is a clearly defined family hierarchy where authority is totally enforced by either father or mother. Children are denied the chance to interact with other children and parents demand unquestionable obedience, where neither warmth nor affection is reflected. Parents' authority is exercised with little explanation and little involvement of children. Authoritarians fear that children may be hurt if they experimented and disobedience is met with severe corporal punishment. Experience has again reflected that very strict parenting styles can either have a prosocial, obedient, well-mannered child or a pure antisocial product that ends up becoming a social deviant. Research also indicates that parents of antisocial children use harsh, inconsistent discipline and have very little positive interaction with their children (Loeber and Dishion, 1983; McCord and Howard 1963 cited in Dembo, 1994). The researchers go on to reveal that authoritarians allow their children to be aggressive with their family members and as a result, children learn to control their environment through coercive means and may fail to display appropriate prosocial behaviors acceptable by society. Child-rearing practices do influence a child's behavior (Zindi et al., 2008).

According to Dembo (1994), authoritarian parenting styles have attributed to lower one's self-concept, and a child tends to lack self-confidence. A child looks at herself/himself as a worthless, empty individual and is often confused when it comes to decision-making because their ideas are mostly in conflict with the adult's view. Dembo goes on to comment that activities are rather other directed instead of being inner-directed.

Using the afore-mentioned characteristic in a brief checklist, the writers have observed that a number of children attending Gaza Secondary School in Chipinge (Zimbabwe) live with authoritarians. It is at the school where they show signs and symptoms of effects of an autocratic parent leadership. Children display many characteristics of a negative self-concept. The children are socially withdrawn, and it takes the time to encourage them to participate in social activities within the curriculum, for example, sport. They shy away for fear of criticism and punishment (Mwamwenda, 2010).

Restrictions at home make the child uncreative at school. Given some tasks to tackle in the class, they always wish if the teacher could appoint someone else to lead discussions. However, the writers have observed that much brighter children from less strict authoritarians can be responsible, aggressive and sadistic prefects in a school where they are given a chance to act out behaviors of their parents as their role-models. However, they can display bulliness as they are fond of deriving pleasure from inflicting pain on other pupils. The slower learners from the authoritarians may have a lower academic self-concept to the extent that they fail to ask questions during lessons, cannot criticize and prefer taking orders without asking questions.

Success or failure partly depends on self-concept. This is illustrated by Mwamwenda (2010)'s example of a college girl who, during childhood, was constantly referred to as 'ugly 'by her parents. Due to her negative self-concept, she even went to the extent of refusing a suitor's marriage proposal as she perceived herself to be too ugly. Chinyoka (2013) affirms that a student with a positive self-concept stands a better chance of performing academically well than one with a negative one. Researches have shown that there is a high correlation between academic achievement and a positive self-concept. Teachers of most African children should understand that

these children enter school with a predisposition towards success or failure preset by parental interests during nurture. Zindi et al. (2008) advise teachers that a child who comes to school with a negative self-concept has to be retaught a new view of themselves that include competence, worth and belonging. He also criticizes schools for intensifying negative self-concepts by emphasizing academic materials and giving a little encouragement for a child to learn about oneself. Brooks (2008) echoes these sentiments by criticizing parents and teachers negative attitudes towards a pupil's academic ability. The reactions of the teacher and parents towards the child with a low self-concept will contribute to a self-evaluation and self-perception of failure. Dembo (1994) also affirms that a negative self-image can be self-perpetuating and it can have a negative effect on academic achievement.

Implications for Parenting and Teaching

- Parent education courses may assist contemporary family set-ups as early intervention especially at the pre-adolescent stage of a child's development stages (Kazdin, 1987). The idea may facilitate proper identity formation (Erikson`s theory concerning identity formation), which emphasizes the provision of parental support in an effort to develop a child's identity, just before they get into the psychosocial crisis of Identity versus Role confusion.
- Parents and teachers should teach children academic and prosocial skills as early intervention. Talk of sympathy, empathy, etc. because such characteristics are vital in developing a positive self-concept, which may facilitate learning.
- Discipline at school can be enhanced by home based contingencies i.e. a behavior change intervention strategy to allow pupil's classroom behavior to earn reinforcers provided by parents.
- Parents and teachers should model and enforce appropriate behaviors. The environment at home and at school, if conducive enough, can allow the African child to learn because they need to learn (Mwamwenda, 2004).

The following are some of the guidelines parents can utilize in building a child's self-concept.
- Encourage creativity by raising children for trying, using their imagination intelligence and playfulness.
- Encourage children to talk about their feelings and ideas even if they are different from ours.
- Make children feel special by spending time doing things with them and reminding them that they are special.
- Help children to feel wanted by showing them love such as in hugging.
- Make them feel important by sharing your feelings and ideas with them. Discuss family and community events with them.
- Give them tasks to do at home so that they feel important as part of the family. Involve them in planning family activities and outings.
- Give them chances to make choices and assist them to understand what happens when they make choices.
- Discuss your beliefs with them so that they also understand what they believe.
- Help them to set goals and discuss what they want out of life.
- Be consistent and try to discuss any change of a family rule with them.
  (Action Pals, 2004:9)

Conclusion

Finally, it is evident from this manuscript that parenting styles do affect a child's self-concept either positively or negatively. Dembo (1994), Mwamwenda (2010), Zindi et al. (2008) and other researchers cited in this write-up have confirmed that poor parenting styles do not only lower a child's self-concept and academic achievement but can also pave the way to anti-social behaviors. On a more positive note, good parenting styles

provide a child with prosocial behaviors mostly appreciated by society. It is the duty of every parent to provide the child with the best care, guidance, and support in order to boost their morale and help them learn and attain a positive self-concept.

Children tend to engage in a self-evaluative part of one's self-concept when they make a judgment about their overall worth (self-esteem). This is based on children's growing cognitive ability to describe and define themselves. Our observations confirmed that not many children in our African homes could articulate a concept of self-worth until they begin school. When self-esteem is high, a child is motivated to achieve. Children with a high self-esteem tend to attribute failure or disappointment to factors outside themselves or the need to try harder.

The plight of children still being nurtured under extreme authoritarian or too permissive parenting styles remains a great dilemma for the writers and other well-wishers for children. Perhaps the ideal situation would be to take an eclectic approach to parenting.

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