

## The Effect of Parenting on Teenagers' Decision to Drop out of School

### Ergenlerin Okul Bırakma Kararı Üzerinde Ebeveynlik Özelliklerinin Etkisi

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**Abstract.** Previous research has indicated the gravity of both parenting and parental bond on a child's successful upbringing. In this, four main styles of parenting have been identified, known as authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and neglectful. While recent research addressed the role of parenting on academic success; additional factors include self-esteem, behavioural inhibition and behavioural activation; whereas the main types of parental bond include affectionate constraint, affectionless control, optimal parenting and neglectful parenting. The current study takes the aforementioned research one step further by examining if self-esteem, strength of goal orientation, parental bond and their parent's child rearing method has an effect on a teenagers' decision to drop out of school. Results indicated that the permissive parenting style and affectionate constraint were the best predictors of student's decision to remain in education. Additionally, participants who had decided to drop out of school displayed lower levels of self-esteem, behavioural inhibition and behavioural activation.

**Keywords:** Parenting styles, parental bond, behavioural inhibition, behavioural activation, school dropout.

**Öz.** Literatüre göre ebeveyn bağı ve ebeveynlik stilleri başarılı bir çocuk büyüme sürecinde oldukça etkilidir. Buna bağlı olarak otoriter, demokratik, izin verici ve reddedici olmak üzere dört ebeveynlik stili tanımlanmaktadır. Güncel çalışmalar ebeveynlik stillerinin akademik başarı üzerindeki etkilerine odaklanırken, öz güven, davranışsal ketlenme ve davranışsal etkinlik gibi kavramların yanı sıra, ebeveynin çocukla kurduğu bağa bağlı olarak asiri koruyucu, ihmalkâr, ideal ve reddedici ebeveyn tutumlarını da incelemiştir. Bu çalışmayla birlikte literatürdeki bulgular bir adım daha ileri taşınarak, öz güven, güçlü hedef belirleme, aile tutumu ve çocuk büyüme stillerinin ergenlerdeki okul bırakma kararı üzerindeki etkileri incelenmiştir. Elde edilen bulgulara göre, izin verici ebeveynlik stili ile aşırı koruyucu olmanın, öğrencilerin okula devam süreci üzerinde en etkin yordayıcılardan olduğu görülmüştür. Ayrıca okuldan ayrılma kararı veren çocukların öz güven düzeyleriyle davranışsal ketlenme ve davranışsal etkinlik düzeylerinin diğer katılımcılara göre daha düşük olduğu görülmüştür.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ebeveynlik stili, ebeveyn bağı, davranışsal ketlenme, davranışsal etkinlik, okulu bırakma.

#### Public Interest Statement.

This study aims to analyse the main effect of parenting on teenagers' decision to drop out of school. Results indicated that, the permissive parenting style and affectionate constraint were the crucial effective factors on student's decision to remain in education

#### Toplumsal Mesaj.

Bu çalışmanın amacı ebeveynlik stili ve ebeveyn tutumlarının, ergenlerin okul bırakma kararı üzerindeki olası etkilerini incelemektir. Araştırma bulguları incelendiğinde; izin verici ebeveynlik stili ve asiri koruyucu ebeveyn tutumunun, ergenlerin okula devam etme kararı üzerinde en etkili faktörler olduğu görülmüştür.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. The effect of parenting styles and parental bond on teenagers

It is arguable that the positive or negative upbringing of any child is dependent on numerous factors, such as socioeconomic status, level of self-esteem and the environment in which it was raised in (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2001; Walker et al., 2007). However, it is undeniable that one of the key aspects which contribute to any successful upbringing in a child and adolescents life, are the influence of parents'; in particular the parenting styles used, and parental bond apparent during a child's upbringing (Bornstein & Zlotnik, 2008). As a result, parenting styles and the type of parental bond may have a major impact especially on the important decisions that adolescents make in their life. In turn, it can also be argued that this may affect their quality of life (with regard to self-esteem and motivation) in future years. More specifically, parents' actions and behaviours towards their children may contribute to their children's decision to drop out of school in adolescent period, as recent research has indicated the importance of parenting styles on academic achievement (Turner, Chandler & Heffer, 2009). Consequently, this can also be linked to differences in self-esteem, behavioural inhibition and behavioural activation between individuals in school and school dropouts; as previous finding have identified such differences with regard to academic achievement (Rahmani, 2011; Turner & Turner, 2011). Therefore, this work directly focused on the adolescent period and attempt to find out whether parenting styles and parental bond has an effect on a teenagers' decision to drop out of school.

### 1.2. The Prevalence of Teenagers Dropping Out of School

In 2009, dropout rates and figures regarding the number of young people 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET; BBC, 2009; Loveys, 2011) in England were found to have reached levels of high concern. Specifically, in accordance with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, individuals between the ages of 18 to 24, not in full time education or training showed an increase of more than one hundred thousand in a single year (2008-2009) (BBC, 2009). Figures indicated that in total, 835,000 18 to 24 year-olds were considered NEETs in 2009, which showed a surge from 730,000 for the same quarter of the previous year. However, matters become more alarming in light of even younger age groups.

Figures from the second quarter of 2009 presented a significant increase in the number of NEETs between the ages of 16 to 18 (BBC, 2009). NEETs in this age group had reached a total of 233,000, which was thirteen thousand more; in comparison to the first quarter of the same year; when the figure stood at 220,000. Additionally, six months prior to this, there were 209,000 16 to 18 year-olds considered NEETs, which was 24,000 fewer than the same quarter of 2009. However, more recent figures from the Office of National Statistics in 2011 reported nearly one million 16 to 24 year-olds in the UK are regarded as NEETs (Loveys, 2011).

As a result of the aforementioned figures, it has been stated that Britain has some of the worst education dropout rates in the developed world, as more 15 to 19 year-olds in the UK are considered NEET per capita than most other developed nations (Loveys, 2011). As a result, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has stressed renewed fears that a 'lost generation' will find themselves without jobs or qualifications (Loveys, 2011). In this, there is clear evidence that stresses the gravity of the problem, with regard to the completion of education in the UK.

#### 1.2.1 Intra-familial Dynamics that Influence Education

Multiple studies have suggested that there is an established link between an individual's family background and their schooling decisions (Hanushek, 1992; Manski, Sandefur, Lanahan, & Powers, 1992; Sander & Krautmann, 1995; Neal, 1997). In this, more recent literature by Eckstein and Wolpin (1999) and Payne (2001) has proposed that students face a higher chance of dropping out of school if their parents have fewer qualifications or are less educated, in comparison to parents

who have completed higher education. This probability increased even further when factors such as low family income, large number of siblings and living with a single parent (or alone) were existent (Eckstein & Wolpin, 1999).

With regard to parenting itself, researchers have repeatedly stressed the importance of parental rearing methods, as a child's development is significantly affected by the type of parenting style that a parent exhibits (Bornstein & Zlotnik, 2008). Prominent work in the field of parenting is presented by Baumrind (1966), who addressed the importance of parental control on child behaviour and proposed three main models known as permissive/indulgent, authoritarian and authoritative.

The permissive parent "attempts to behave in a nonpunitive, acceptant and affirmative manner towards the child's impulses, desires, and actions. She consults with him about policy decisions and gives explanations for family rules. She makes few demands for household responsibility and orderly behavior" (Baumrind, 1966, p. 889). In addition, the parent portrays herself to the child as a form of "resource" for him to use as he chooses, as opposed to a role model for him to look up to, or an individual that is responsible for shaping his future behavior. As such, the parent allows the child to regulate his own activities for as long as he pleases, thus eliminating the element of control and failing to encourage him to obey the simple demands that are expected of him.

Alternatively, the authoritarian parent aims to "shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard, theologically motivated and formulated by a higher authority. She values obedience as a virtue and favors punitive, forceful measures to curb self-will" (Baumrind, 1966, p. 890). The parent also favors in the notion of "keeping the child in his place", by restricting his independence and assigning in household responsibilities, in order to instill a sense of respect for work. In this, the preservation of order and maintaining a status of authority are regarded as a highly valued end in itself, whilst verbal give and take or reaching a mutual agreement is not encouraged.

Finally, the authoritative parent tends to direct the child with more sensible means, such as focusing on the components of a problem and its possible solutions (Baumrind, 1966). Additionally, she applies her own perspective as an adult, but at the same time takes into account the child's individual interests and ways. Unlike authoritarian parents, authoritative parents "attempt to direct the child's activities in a rational issue-oriented manner. He or she encourages verbal give and take, shares with the child the reasoning behind parental policy, and solicits the child's objections" (Baumrind, 1978, p. 245). As such, children of authoritative parents commonly demonstrated positive behaviors such as independence, achievement orientation and social responsibility (i.e. friendliness, cooperation) (Pellerin, 2005). However, although the parent may not overwhelm the child with restrictions, she still adopts a firm control in times of parent-child disagreement (Baumrind, 1967).

After Baumrind's (1967) initial introduction of the aforementioned parenting styles, subsequent research by Maccoby and Martin (1983) expanded this theory; by including a fourth style known as neglectful parenting. The neglectful style is seen in parents who are neither responsive nor demanding in their methods (Maccoby & Martin,

1983). Unlike any of the previous styles, neglectful parents are generally uninvolved in the life of their child, they do not set limits, are undemanding and disengaged. Although the parent will commit to providing the basic needs of the child (such as food, housing and money to cover basic living expenses), they are dismissive towards the child's opinions and emotions, whilst also demonstrate a clear lack of emotional support.

Although Maccoby and Martin (1983) purported to introduce four novel parenting styles, the first three were in essence a re-introduction of Baumrind's (1967) original three styles, as they were based on the same theoretical descriptions. The main difference lay in the terminology, as the

permissive style was referred to as the indulgent style, the authoritarian was named totalitarian and the authoritative was labeled propagative.

### **1.2.2 The Effect of Parenting on Home/School Activities**

Parenting as a whole can be seen as a milestone that plays a vital role in molding a child's attitudes towards various activities (i.e. domestic) and school adherence alike. Research by Valcke, Bonte, DeWever and Rots (2010) found that parenting styles affect children in relation to specific activities, such as internet use. The most important contributing factors in the child's use of the internet were linked to the parent's own internet attitudes, internet usage and internet experience, whilst higher levels of child internet consumption were also observed in parents who adopted a permissive parenting style, as opposed to an authoritarian style. Additionally, positive behaviour patterns have also been noticed in authoritative parenting, as children are found to be more socialized, willful and independent (Baumrind, 1966); while children of neglectful parents are more likely to show patterns of truancy and delinquency (Santrock, 2011).

With regard to schooling and adolescents' achievement strategies in particular, research by Aunola, Stattin and Nurmi (2000) aimed to identify the relationship between the four parenting styles and factors of adolescents' achievement strategies such as failure expectations, task-irrelevant behaviour (when trying to avoid a task), passivity, and the use of self-enhancing attributions. Results indicated that adolescents of authoritative parents took advantage of most adaptive, task-oriented strategies in achievement situations. More specifically, they reported low levels of failure expectations, task-irrelevant behaviour and passivity; whilst also showed a frequent use of self-enhancing attributions (Aunola, Stattin & Nurmi, 2000). Alternatively, adolescents from neglectful backgrounds were found to display the highest levels of maladaptive task avoidant strategy, as they presented both high levels of passivity and task-irrelevant behaviour. Authoritarian parenting also seemed to be related to the use of maladaptive strategies, mainly passive behaviour and a lack in the use of self-enhancing attributions; while adolescents from permissive families did not present any significant differences from those of authoritarian families (Aunola, Stattin, & Nurmi, 2000).

Interestingly, while parenting evidently has a major impact on an adolescent's upbringing, the perceived parenting style described by the parent and their child respectively tends to differ significantly. This is patent in research by Smetana (2008), who found that parents defined themselves as more authoritative than their child described, whereas the adolescent's opinion of the parent was of a more permissive and authoritarian nature. While all three studies provide substantial evidence for the importance of parenting, it still remains unclear as to how much of a role parental control plays in an individual's quality of life later on.

### **1.2.3 The Impact of Parental Bonding on Major Decisions**

Similar to the four main parenting styles mentioned above, the level of parental bonding that a parent shares with their child can also be separated into four sub-categories known as: affectionate constraint, affectionless control, optimal parenting and neglectful parenting (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979). As each parenting style is defined by the different levels of warmth/involvement and strictness/supervision that a parent exhibits (Baumrind, 1966), levels of parental bonding are measured in a similar fashion by comparing levels of care and overprotection (Klein & Pierce, 2009). For example, high care and high protection are defined as affectionate constraint, whereas low care and low protection are defined as neglectful parenting (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979). As such, if the parental bonding categories were to be compared to the four main parenting styles, then it could be argued that affectionate constraint is equal to authoritative parenting, affectionless control is equal to authoritarian parenting and optimal parenting is equal to permissive/indulgent parenting (neglectful parenting is termed the same in both cases).

In relation to these four types, recent research found that successful adjustment to university and academic success was associated with a high level of parental bonding (Klein & Pierce, 2009). In addition, with regard to parental bonding and adolescent males' runaway behaviour, results proposed that affectionless control by either parent, significantly predicted an individuals' decision to run away from home (McGarvey, Keller, Brown, DeLonga, Miller, Runge, & Koopman, 2010). Consequently, the findings of the previous research provide significant evidence for the importance of parental bonding in a child's upbringing and indicate that it is a contributing factor regarding major decisions that are made in an adolescent's life.

#### **1.2.4 Motivation (Behavioural Activation/Bahavioural Inhibition) and Its Importance for Students**

Research by Turner, Chandler and Herrer (2009) addressed the role of the aforementioned parenting styles on their children's self-efficacy and academic performance. Specifically, results of the study indicated that authoritative parenting has a significant influence on the academic success and intrinsic motivation of college students, which are both important factors in predicting academic success (Turner, Chandler & Herrer, 2009). In this, motivation has commonly been measured through the observation of behavioural activation and behavioural inhibition (Bjornebekk & Diseth, 2010). Behavioural activation (BAS) focuses primarily on the will to keep pursuing ("to continue approaching"), according to the different reinforcing signals that are received from a specific stimulus (i.e. the determination to complete school). Although it mainly functions as a reward system, in more recent years it is believed to mediate responses to all appetitive stimuli, as opposed to just conditioned stimuli. In other words, the BAS can be defined as a natural desire to pursue, as opposed to a desire that has been learned through past experiences (Bjornebekk & Diseth, 2010).

Behavioural inhibition (BIS) of adolescents has played an equally significant part in parenting, as is evident in research by Turner and Turner (2011) who examined the relation of behavioural inhibition and perceived parenting on maladaptive perfectionism, in a sample of college students. In this, parenting was defined by autonomy granting, warmth, and supervision; in which the researchers based on Baumrind's authoritative parenting style. Additionally, autonomy granting was characterized by the extent to which parents employed a non-coercive discipline; and allowed individual expression and personal decision making. Results indicated that parental autonomy granting was found to be a significant predictor of maladaptive perfectionism in individuals who reported high scores on behavioural inhibition. Further support for the role of behavioural inhibition in parenting is also evident in prominent work by Chen, Hastings, Rubin, Chen, Cen and Stewart (1998). The study showed that children's inhibition was associated positively with mothers' warm and accepting attitudes, in a Chinese sample; whereas in a Canadian sample, inhibition was associated positively with mothers' punishment orientation.

#### **1.2.5 Self-Esteem on Academic Achievement**

The importance of self-esteem in understanding behavior and human development altogether is evident in the plethora of research that is covered in various areas of psychology (Rosenberg, 1989). In this, academic achievement is no exception, as self-esteem and achievement goal orientation were found to be the most important factors that affect academic achievement among students (Rahmani, 2011). Findings indicated that self-esteem and goal orientation (approach performance and avoidance performance) were significantly correlated with academic achievement, while significant differences were also reported between male and female students in scores of self-esteem and achievement goals orientation. This is also in support of previous research, stating that self-esteem is a strong and accurate predictor of school achievement (Pullmann & Allik, 2008).

### 1.3 Scope

Although numerous studies have investigated whether parenting has an effect on academic achievement and its predictors towards academic success (e.g., Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997; Abar, Carter, & Winsler, 2009; Besharat, Azizi, & Poursharifi, 2011), a major limitation in the literature consists of the fact that research regarding the failure to complete education altogether is limited. Specifically, it remains unclear whether the decision to drop out of school is influenced by a particular type of parenting and/or parental bond, as well as specific levels of self-esteem and the tendency for behavioural inhibition/activation.

By investigating levels of parental bonding, self-reported self-esteem, tendency for behavioural inhibition and experienced parenting styles of teenagers, the current study will indicate the main patterns in teenagers who have decided to drop out of education, whilst provide a deeper understanding of the underlying causes that contribute toward their decision. Therefore, on the basis of previous research, it was hypothesized that the decision to drop out of or remain in school would be predicted by a specific type of parental bond and a particular parenting style background (as described by Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Additionally, it was also hypothesized that teenagers (from the ages of 16 years or older) who have dropped out of school demonstrate lower levels of self-reported self-esteem and/or have a lower tendency for behavioural inhibition/behavioural activation

## 2. METHOD

The current study consists of a between subjects and correlational design. The between subjects' independent variable is school attendance which included two levels: remained in education and dropped out of education. The first dependent variable (DV1) was the self-reported levels of self-esteem; DV2 was the levels behavioral inhibition/activation; DV3 was the levels of parental bonding and; DV4 was the levels of parental warmth and parental supervision. Finally, in order to assess whether a classification in one of the four parenting styles and four forms of parental bonding significantly predicted an individual's decision to stay in school, Logistic Regression analyses were conducted.

### 2.1 Participants

Participants from the main (school drop-out) group were randomly recruited from youth support centres and facilities across England. A total of N = 34 participants were recruited, consisting of 21 males and 13 females. Certain individuals with continuous offensive behaviour and a high rate of expulsion were also included in the study. This was due to the fact that certain individuals with such behaviour purposely act in ways that would result in their expulsion from school.

Participants from the control (still attending school) group were randomly recruited from Hill's Road College, Cambridge. A total of N = 50 participants were recruited, consisting of 9 males and 41 females. Any teenagers that had, or were currently attending private schools were excluded, in order to control for any potential differences in socioeconomic status between the groups. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the mean age (and standard deviation) of males and females in the two groups.

**Table 1.** Means and Standard Deviations of Male and Female Subjects in Dropout and Remained in School

Groups	Males		Females	
	M	SD	M	SD
Dropped out of School	19.81	(4.95)	21.85	(7.22)
Remained in School	17.33	(0.50)	17.39	(0.70)

## 2.2 Materials

### 2.2.1 Demographic information.

General demographic information was solicited, with participants reporting their age, gender, primary language (e.g. English or Other), ethnicity (i.e. Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic) and time lived in the UK. Two questions were directed specifically at the school dropout sample, inquiring the age that they stopped school and highest grade that was completed before leaving school (i.e. Sixth form).

### 2.2.2 Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)

The RSES is a widely used scale that was developed to measure an individual's self-reported self-esteem (e.g. I certainly feel useless at times). The RSES is a psychometrically sound scale that has displayed good construct validity and reliability ( $\alpha = .77$ ) (Rosenberg, 1965; Pullmann & Allik, 2000). The scale consists of 10 questions and uses a 4 point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Strongly Disagree). Scores range from 10 - 40 with higher scores demonstrating greater levels of self-esteem.

### 2.2.3 Behavioral Inhibition, Behavioral Activation Scales (BIS/BAS; Carver & White, 1994)

The BIS/BAS was used to measure motivation levels of the participants through the use of the approach (BAS) and avoidance (BIS) systems. The BAS included questions such as: "I crave excitement and new sensations."; whereas the BIS consisted of questions such as: "I worry about making mistakes". The BIS/BAS is also a psychometrically sound scale, displaying good construct validity and reliability ( $\alpha = .74$  for BIS;  $\alpha = .73$  for BAS Reward Responsiveness;  $\alpha = .76$  for BAS Drive;  $\alpha = .66$  for BAS Fun Seeking) (Carver & White, 1994; Kasch, Rottenberg, Arnow & Gotlib, 2002). It includes 24 questions and uses a 4 point Likert scale (1 = Very True for Me; 4 = Very False for Me). Scores for BAS range from 13 - 52 with higher scores demonstrating greater levels of Behavioural Activation, whereas scores for BIS range from 7 - 28 with higher scores demonstrating greater levels of Behavioural Inhibition.

### 2.2.4 Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI; Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979)

The PBI measures fundamental parental styles as perceived by the child, based on two sub-scales termed 'care' (e.g. Was affectionate to me) and 'overprotection' (e.g. Invaded my privacy). Again, the PBI demonstrates good construct validity and reliability ( $\alpha = .88$  for the care scale;  $\alpha = .74$  for the overprotection scale) (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979; Parker, 1983). It uses a 4 point Likert scale (1 = Very Like; 4 = Very Unlike); consisting of 12 'care' items and 13 'overprotection' items. Scores for PBI Care range from 12 - 48, whereas scores for Overprotection range from 13 - 52. Scores on total care and overprotection place each participant into one of four categories: affectionate constraint, affectionless control, optimal parenting or neglectful parenting. For example, high care and high protection is equal to affectionate constraint, whereas low care and low protection is equal to neglectful parenting. While the questionnaire is to be filled in twice (once for the subject's father and once for the mother), in the current study it was filled in once (accounting for both legal guardians). This is due to the fact that the current study used the questionnaire as a composite measure for identifying parental bond, as opposed to a measure for each parent independently.

### 2.2.5 Scale for Identifying Parenting Style (PS; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991)

The PS utilizes the conceptual framework of Baumrind (1966) and Maccoby and Martin (1983) by classifying a subject's family into one of four groups (authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent/permissive or neglectful). Like the PBI, this is achieved on the basis of adolescents' rating of their parents on two dimensions: Warmth/Involvement (e.g. She/He keeps pushing me to think independently.) and Strictness/Supervision (e.g. My parents know exactly where I am most afternoons after school). The PS is a psychometrically sound scale that has displayed good construct validity and reliability ( $\alpha = .72$ , for warmth/involvement;  $\alpha = .76$  for

strictness/supervision). Different Likert scales are used throughout the questionnaire, including 2 points (1 = Usually True; 2 = Usually False), 3 points (1 = Never; 3 = Usually) and 9 points (1 = Not Allowed; 9 = As Late as I Want). The warmth/involvement scale consists of 15 questions (5 directed to the mother and 5 directed to the father), whereas the strictness/supervision scale comprises of 9 questions. Scores for PS warmth/involvement range from 15 - 37, whereas scores for PS strictness/supervision range from 9 - 36. Similar to the previous questionnaire, scores on total warmth/involvement and strictness/supervision place each participant in one of the four aforementioned categories. For example, high care and high protection is equal to authoritative parenting, low care and low protection is equal to neglectful parenting.

### **2.3 Procedure**

Ethical approval for the current study was granted by the Faculty of Science and Technology Research Ethics Panel at Anglia Ruskin University. Subsequently, various youth support centres around England were contacted in attempt to administer the questionnaire to a sample of the youth population that was currently attending. This was followed by contacting sixth form colleges in Cambridgeshire, in attempt to gather participants for the control group. Additionally, copies of the questionnaire were provided to centres that requested further information.

The centres agreed to take part in the study under the condition that the questionnaires would be administered by the members of staff, to ensure anonymity of the participants. After a letter of approval (via email) was provided by each centre, verifying permission to conduct the research, the questionnaires were then either brought to the centre by the researcher himself or sent via post in more distant locations. The centres that the researcher visited in person established a meeting (approximately forty-five minutes) with the members of staff, which demonstrated the way in which the questionnaire, consent form and other relevant documents were to be presented to the participants. This was essential in the correct administration of the study, as the researcher was not permitted to be present at the time of distribution. In the case where the questionnaires were sent by post, an additional document was addressed to the members of staff, including a detailed account of how the forms should be correctly distributed. The completed questionnaires were placed in a sealed envelope that was initially provided with the rest of the documents and sent back to the researcher's address.

With regard to the participants in the control group, after the letter of approval was provided by Hills Road College, Cambridge, a meeting was established with the head of the psychology department. In this, the researcher was given the opportunity to attend three separate lectures, whereby each lecturer allocated time for the distribution of the questionnaires to the students. In each lecture, the researcher gave the students a brief overview of what the study was about; followed by a more in-depth account, by debriefing them after the questionnaires were successfully filled in. Subsequent to their completion, the questionnaires were placed into a sealed envelope.

### **2.4. Data Analysis**

In an effort to assess to what extent perceived parental bonding (i.e., affectionate constraint, affectionless control, optimal parenting or neglectful parenting) and parental styles were predictive of participant's decision to either drop out of or complete full time education (Hypothesis 1), a series of Binary Logistic Regression analyses were conducted. In this, the criterion variable was school attendance, with two levels: 1) remained in school and 2) dropped out of school. The predictor variables were: 1) parenting style with four levels (Authoritative, Permissive, Authoritarian, Neglectful parenting) and; 2) parental bonding with four levels (affectionate constraint, optimal parenting, affectionless control, neglectful parenting). Due to the overall low sample size separate logistic regressions were completed for each predictor as the total sample was below the recommended cut off for multiple predictor analyses (McDermott & Blair, 2012).

### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Descriptive Analyses

The overall means between the two groups was found to be lower for the participants that had dropped out of school. This was evident for all variables, except for overprotection in the PBI and Warmth/Involvement in PS in the male sample. However, within each group the same did not apply between the two genders, as males scored higher in some variables, whereas females scored higher in others.

**Table 2.** Means and Standard Deviations of Male and Female Subjects in and out of School

Variable	In School		Dropped Out	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Self-Esteem	30.56 (4.50)	29.51 (4.61)	27.29 (5.64)	25.54 (5.85)
Behavioural Inhibition	19.33 (3.57)	22.61 (3.10)	16.76 (3.60)	19.31 (2.59)
Behavioural Activation	37.89 (4.86)	37.93 (4.19)	34.67 (5.19)	33.08 (5.87)
PBI Care	25.56 (5.29)	27.93 (5.85)	19.81 (5.61)	18.15 (6.74)
PBI Overprotection	15.22 (2.77)	14.95 (4.05)	16.90 (4.84)	19.46 (6.16)
PS Warmth / Involvement	17.11 (1.58)	18.68 (1.19)	17.88 (2.01)	18.08 (1.48)
PS Strictness / Supervision	28.11 (2.89)	28.73 (3.12)	23.10 (7.02)	22.46 (4.99)

#### 3.2 Predictive and Correlational Analyses

Initially, the relationship between school attendance and parenting style was examined. According to the results, before the variables were included into equation, the overall prediction success was 59% (100% for subjects who remained in school and 0% for subjects who dropped out of school). However, after the variables were included into model, prediction success increased to 68% (94% for remained in school and 31% of the dropped out of school group) and results also indicated that the model was significant (chi square = 15.47,  $p < .01$ ,  $df = 4$ ). However, according to Nagelkerke's  $R^2$  score only 22% of school attendance was predicted by the parenting styles ( $R^2 = .22$ ). Moreover, the Wald criterion demonstrated that category 1 (authoritative) ( $p < .02$ ), category 2 (permissive) ( $p < .01$ ) and category 4 (neglectful) ( $p < .04$ ) of the parenting style made significant contributions to the prediction. However, category 3 (authoritarian) was not a significant predictor on the model ( $p = .21$ ).

**Table 2.** Frequencies of each Parenting Style that the Participants Experienced

Parenting Styles	In School	Dropped Out
Unclassified	28	18
Authoritative	11	1
Authoritarian	5	2
Permissive/Indulgent	3	3
Neglectful	3	11
Total	50	35

Subsequently, a further logistic regression analysis was carried in order to determine whether parental bonding predicts the decision to drop out of school. In this, the criterion variable was school attendance, with the two aforementioned levels. The independent variable was parental

bonding with four levels (affectionate constraint, optimal parenting, affectionless control, neglectful parenting). According to the results, before the variables were included into equation, the overall prediction success was 59% (100% for subjects who remained in school and 0% of subjects who dropped out of school). However, after the variables were included into model, prediction success increased to 74% (68% for remained in school and 83% of the dropped out of school group) and results also indicated that the model was significant (chi square = 23.68,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 3$ ). However, according to Nagelkerke's  $R^2$  score only 33% of school attendance was predicted by the parental bonding styles ( $R^2 = .33$ ). It was clear that although parental bonding was a better predictor of school attendance than the parenting styles, there was not a considerably strong relationship. Moreover, the Wald criterion also demonstrated that only category 1 (affectionate constraint) of parental bonding made a significant contribution to a student's decision to remain in school ( $p < .02$ ). Alternatively, category 2 (optimal parenting) ( $p = .07$ ) and category 3 (affectionless control) ( $p = .65$ ) were not found to be significant predictors of the current model.

**Table 3.** Frequencies of each Parental Bonding Style that the Participants Experienced

Parenting Styles	In School	Dropped Out
Affectionate Constraint	23	3
Affectionless Control	15	26
Optimal Parenting	11	3
Neglectful Parenting	1	3
Total	50	35

**Table 4.** Correlations between Scales (RSE, BIS, BAS, PBI Care, PBI Overprotection, PS Warmth/Involvement, PS Strictness/Supervision)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. RSE Total	-	-.15	.51**	.49**	-.51**	.12	.30**
2. BIS Total		-	.07	.23*	.09	.29**	.33**
3. BAS Total			-	.33**	-.26*	.04	.42**
4. PBI Care				-	-.53**	.35**	.41**
5. PBI Overprotection					-	-.10	-.25*
6. PS						-	.25*
7. PS Strictness/Supervision							-

Note: \* indicates a significant relationship at the  $p < .05$  level, \*\* indicates a significant relationship at the  $p < .001$  level

Further investigation examined the correlations between the scales. The highest correlation was between the PBI Care and PBI Overprotection; however, this was a significant negative correlation, demonstrating that higher PBI Care indicated lower PBI Overprotection. Subsequently, a significant negative correlation was found between RSE and PBI Overprotection; and a significant positive correlation between RSE and BAS. This was followed by a significant positive correlation between RSE and PBI Care, BAS and PS Strictness/Supervision, PBI Care and PS Strictness/Supervision, PBI Care and PS Warmth/Involvement, BIS and PS Strictness/Supervision, BAS and PBI Care, RSE and PS Strictness/Supervision, BIS and PS Warmth/Involvement respectively. Additionally, a significant negative correlation was found between BAS and PBI Overprotection. Finally, the lowest correlations were between PS Warmth/Involvement and PS Strictness/Supervision, PBI Overprotection and PS Strictness/Supervision (displaying a negative correlation) and BIS and PBI Care. No other significant results were apparent.

## 4. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

### 4.1 Conclusion

The overall theme of the findings contained within the current research exemplifies the gravity of parenting on a student's decision to give up on education. Overall, while the permissive parenting style introduced by Baumrind (1966) and affectionate constraint described in the Parental Bonding Instrument highly predicted the decision to complete school, additional factors included high levels of self-esteem, behavioural inhibition and behavioural activation. For the dropout sample, it is evident that in addition to parenting, low self-esteem, the lack of motivation and a lack of determination were contributing factors in failing to complete school.

While researchers may continue their aim to fully understand the impact and effects of parenting on school and other areas of human experience, much work is needed to be done to accomplish such goals and contend with pending issues; such as school dropout. However, one does not have to be shown research and evidence to comprehend the importance and necessity of schooling in a child's life, as it undeniably provides him with the tools to sculpt a better future; a future that both him and his parents can be proud of. As such, regardless of the aforementioned findings, it can only be hoped that the current study acts as a form of inspiration and motivation for researchers who strive to increase the quality of children's life and provide them with a brighter future.

### 4.2 Discussion

The aim of the current study was twofold: the main aim was to identify if the decision to drop out of or remain in school would be predicted by a specific type of parental bond and a particular parenting style background (as described by Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The second aim was to identify if teenagers who have dropped out of school demonstrate lower levels of self-esteem and/or have lower tendencies for behavioural inhibition/activation. Although the prime focus of the study is the effect of parenting on school drop-out, this does not imply that parenting itself is the sole or main factor for the student's decision, the study set to identify if parenting was one of the contributing causes, amongst others; such as individual personality traits and the conditions of schooling (National Research Council, 2001; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002).

With regard to results on parenting styles, it was found that a particular style of parenting can significantly predict an individual's decision to remain in or drop out of school, out of all four styles, authoritative, permissive and neglectful demonstrated a significant effect on the decision to remain in education. Specifically, permissive parenting was found to be the strongest predictor, followed by authoritative and neglectful respectively. As mentioned previously, permissive parents present themselves as a form of "resource" for the child to use as he chooses, as opposed to an ideal for him to look up to (Baumrind, 1966). Therefore, this could imply that the child is encouraged to make decisions on his own, as opposed to being guided to do what is best for his future. However, it is important to note that although students of permissive parenting display more chances of remaining in school, it can be argued that this decision derives solely from the child (rather than the demands of the parent), as permissive parents fails to use control/power over the child where necessary. This supports and expands previous findings by Turner, Chandler and Herrer (2009) and Klein and Pierce (2009), by indicating that the effect of parenting is not solely limited to the academic success of college and university students.

Similarly, results regarding parental bonding also predicted the decision to remain or drop out of school. While parental bonding was found to be a better predictor of school attendance in comparison to Baumrind's (1966) parenting styles, there was not a strong relationship between the two. In this, out of the four parenting styles proposed by the PBI, affectionate constraint (the PBI equivalent of the authoritative parenting style) was found to be the only category that displayed significance. However, it is important to point out that optimal parenting (equivalent to permissive parenting) was trending towards significance ( $p = .07$ ), which in turn could suggest a similar pattern

to that proposed by the aforementioned parenting style. As previously mentioned, affectionate constraint is defined by high levels of care and overprotection, which are similar to the main patterns of authoritative parenting (high levels warmth/involvement and strictness/supervision). As such, authoritative parents tend to apply their own perspective as adults, but concurrently consider the child's individual interests and ways (Baumrind, 1966).

This would indicate that students of affectionate constraint may remain in education due to positive behaviours and traits that they have acquired (independence, achievement orientation, social responsibility), as a result of the parenting (Pellerin, 2005). Additionally, in the event of a parent-child disagreement in completing compulsory education, the parent employs a sense of control over the child's decision, whilst clarifying the reasons behind her actions (Baumrind, 1978). Subsequent results also provided an indication of a significant difference between the PBI care scores and gender. In this, females reported higher levels of care from their parents in comparison to males, which in turn could suggest that males are more susceptible to patterns of indifference from their parents. While these demonstrate initial findings, they also extend the research of McGarvey (2010), by indicating the importance of parental bond on the completion of compulsory education.

The current findings on both parental bond and parenting styles supported the initial hypothesis of the present study. From a parental bonding point of view, it is important that parents employ affectionate constraint by reasoning with the child in a rational and supportive manner, as mentioned above. Alternatively, with regard to parenting styles, it is essential that parents adopt a perspective that will provide their child with the means to strive for a better future, whilst giving them the freedom to make decisions autonomously.

Pertaining to the results of self-esteem, behavioural inhibition and behavioural activation; significant differences were found between participant's self-reported self-esteem and school attendance. Specifically, individuals that remained in education reported higher levels of self-esteem, compared to school drop-outs. Consequently, this emphasises the importance of dropping out, as withdrawal from education may significantly reduce an individual's self-esteem. Additionally, it can also be argued that the continuation of school may contribute to an increase in self-esteem, which would support the findings of Rahmani (2011), in that self-esteem is correlated with academic achievement, and extend it through indication that school attendees altogether display higher scores of self-esteem.

With respect to behavioural inhibition, a significant difference was found between school attendance and the reported BIS scores, whereas significant differences were also apparent between gender and the total BIS scores. In this, individuals who remained in education displayed higher levels of behavioural inhibition in relation to school drop-outs, whilst these differences were more prominent in females; who displayed higher. As predicted, students who remain in school exhibit more motivation than the students who give up; while females who both remained in and dropped out of school were found to be more motivated than males. As such, this provides initial evidence that lower levels of motivation play a significant role in the ability to complete school, which ultimately contributes to the decision to drop out.

Similarly, significant differences were also noted for school attendance and behavioural activation. Participants who had remained in school reported higher scores in behavioural activation, with respect to school drop-outs. These findings are best explained in conjunction with work by Bjornebekk and Diseth (2010); who suggested that behavioural activation primarily focuses on the will to keep pursuing, according to the different reinforcing signals that are received from a specific stimulus. In this case, behavioural activation would be regarded as a student's determination to complete school. This would indicate that school drop-outs made their decision due to a lack of determination (combined with the lack of motivation mentioned above).

Consistent with the second prediction of the current study, school drop-outs demonstrated lower levels of self-esteem, and lower tendencies for behavioural inhibition and activation. As such,

while the parental bond and exhibited parenting style are important factors in themselves, it is also evident that self-esteem, behavioural inhibition and activation significantly contribute to the students' final decision to drop out. Therefore, in order to decrease the chances of students' withdrawal from school, it is essential that parents take these factors into consideration by making a constant effort to increase self-esteem, motivation and determination.

While the current findings may be of extreme importance to parents and the best interest of their children, they are also being of significant relevance to governing bodies in charge of the education system. In this, it can be argued that these results could account for a significant decrease in school dropout rates, if the government implemented school activities that would increase the students' self-esteem, motivation and determination.

### **4.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research**

With regard to the difficulties that were encountered in the current study, the biggest limitation consisted of the distribution of the questionnaire to the main sample. Despite detailed instructions that were provided to the centres, it is unclear how the questionnaires were distributed, as well as whether or not they were distributed in a way that would not affect the answers of the participants. Additionally, it is also unclear how and where the participants were tested. For example, if the participants were tested in the same room, as a group; supervision would be essential if the influence between participants was to be controlled for. However, this limitation could not have been avoided, as the centres agreed to distribute the questionnaires under the condition that individuals outside the centre were not present. As such, future research should recommend the directors of the centres to appoint questionnaire distribution to staff that have relevant experience in research (or data gathering), to ensure that all aspects of the procedure are carried out correctly.

Further limitations include demographic differences, as the control sample consisted solely of students from Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge. In addition to this gender disparity were also apparent in the control group, due to a higher prevalence of female participants. For this reason, it is suggested that future research attempts to gather participants from various colleges in a number of different cities, which in turn, may serve in obtaining an equal number of males and females; due to wider ranges of acquired participants.

Similarly, limitations regarding the school drop-out sample involve self-selection bias. This refers to the possible dropouts that the centres were unable to recruit, as well as the numerous centres that refused to take part in the current research. Indeed, since only two centres agreed to take part in the study (out of the initial twenty-eight that were contacted), it can be argued that the participation of additional centres may have significantly contributed to further findings (regarding parenting methods of school dropouts). Therefore, additional studies could broaden their search by targeting centres in areas such as Wales and Scotland, while focusing on the centres that have accepted similar research in the past.

Finally, possible future avenues that the current research could follow include a replication of the study at a cross-cultural level. Already, it is evident that differences in behavioural inhibition towards parental attitudes occur between Chinese and Canadian children (Chen, 1998); therefore, promising results can be expected from replications of the current study by using samples from eastern and western cultures. However, due to a lack of research examining both parental bonding and parenting styles, researchers exploring the effects of parenting are urged to encompass both factors through the combined use of the PBI and the PS scale proposed by Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg and Dornbusch (1991).

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