

Cultural Influences of the Child

Children in all parts of the world develop in cultural contexts (home, school, neighbourhoods, etc).

These contexts have a big impact on how children are brought up (breast fed or not, who goes to school, gender roles, how the family is structured, child-discipline measures, children's play etc).

Parents generally raise their children to become responsible adults.

What this responsible adult means may differ from one culture to another.

Is it defined by happiness?

Is it defined by financial success?

Is it defined by helping the family and/or the community??

Is it defined by being a God-fearing person??

These values of desired outcomes for children are passed down through the family.

It can be hard to understand just how significant an impact culture has on child-rearing because those norms are so embedded in what parents consider to be "normal" or "right" behavior.

A child develops in a cultural context engaging in everyday routines, activities and practices that shape the development of that child in adaptive ways in that cultural context.

Child Development Worldwide: A Cultural Approach

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QImi3IKAgbl>

Cultural Influences in Children's Play

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IANWHxKtfc>

Cultural worldview of cosmology (universe), ontology (being), epistemology (knowledge) and axiology (values) shape cultural routines & practices

Cross-cultural scholars posit that a general framework of western and non-western cultural frameworks can be inferred from a Western/non-western view of the universe, knowledge claims and values.

Notable Cultural Differences in Parenting:

The Individual vs. the Collective

One of the most widely debated issues in parenting is whether and to what extent a child's individuality should be nurtured.

In Collectivist cultures, child-rearing framework is reported in the literature to focus on relational behaviours such as obedience, family loyalty, harmonious relationship with close others, respect to elders and authority figures, prioritizing common over personal goals, emphasize social roles and character development and social responsibility. In individualist cultures, child-rearing emphasizes on nurturing a child's autonomy and independence, distinctive personal attitudes and opinions and personal success

However, it should be noted that these frameworks act as a guide and cannot be generalized across populations. Factors such as modernity impact on these cultural models and therefore child-rearing practices of non-western cultural groups can in some cases, particularly in urban areas have elements of western cultural groups.

To promote obedience and compliance and/or conformity, authoritarian parenting style is mainly exercised in non-western cultural groups (See Baumrind, 1971 classification below).

Baumrind's Parenting Styles

Parenting Styles	Description	Typical Children's Characteristics
Authoritarian	Demanding & Controlling Favor punitive methods over reasoning Stress obedience over independence	Other directed Lack social competence Lack curiosity withdrawn
Authoritative	Demanding but reciprocal relationship Favor reasoning over physical punishment Encourages independence	Self-reliance Self-control Display curiosity content
Permissive	Undemanding and little control exercised Allow children to learn through experience as a result of indulgence or neglect Neither independence nor obedience stressed	Dependent on others Poor impulse control Relative immature

The literature has argued that the meaning associated with authoritarian or authoritative parenting is culturally bound and that, within an authoritarian culture, it may have only minor negative effects or perhaps even positive effects on the developing child (Dwairy & Menshar, 2006).

Research has shown that mental health problems are associated with authoritative rather than authoritarian parenting in Egyptian adolescents (Dwairy & Menshar, 2006) and that authoritarian parenting is associated with higher academic achievement among Chinese children (Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998) and African – American single-parent families of low socio-economic status living in dangerous neighbourhoods (Baldwin, Baldwin, & Cole, 1990).

Maynard and Harding (2010) studies in the U.K. Has documented differences in parenting between ethnic groups. In their sample of 4349 pupils (11-13 years), it was found that Authoritarian parenting was more common for ethnic minority than white U.K adolescents but was not detrimental to the mental wellbeing of ethnic minorities (contrary to traditional developmental models).

Darling and Steinberg (1993) have differentiated between parenting *practices* (content) and parenting *style* (context). Practices refer to specific parenting behaviours and goals for socialisation (such as slapping a child, requiring children to do their homework, taking an interest in children's activities). Style, on the other hand, refers to the emotional climate in which parenting practices take place (such as tone of voice, bursts of anger, and displays of empathy).

In Baumrind classification, **high control** is accompanied by **low responsiveness or warmth** but in the African child-rearing framework, authoritarian parenting is in the context of **warm relationships** (Nyasani, 2010). (**meaning that traditional models of parenting styles are not a good fit with non-western parenting styles**).

Thus, for example within the non-western cultural groups' family value system where parenting practices (such as strict monitoring of children's activities) is in the context of a warm family environment, these parental practices may play a positive role on the psychosocial functioning of children.

Immigrant parents bring with them on their journey from their original cultural context their child-rearing ways including Authoritarian parenting style. The literature on non-western cultural groups settling in western settings report challenges faced by these families acculturating in Western settings perceived to be unsupportive of their parental practices and styles (Ochocka & Jansen, 2008; Renzaho & Vignjevic, 2011). Migrant families have also been reported to perceive the laws in these western settings as restricting their ability to control their children; and encouraging children to seek independence from their families while they were still too young.

These cultural differences in child-rearing may result in misunderstandings between migrant parents and front line service providers such as teachers, social workers, community health workers as well as other parents. They may feel misunderstood and judged for their cultural practices (which were acceptable in their own countries).

Migrant parents also go through loss of child-rearing support networks following migration. Moreover, peers and schools exert major socializing influences on children and youth, and this can result in distancing them culturally from their parents. This might cause conflicts between children/youth and their parents who

might still hold on to their cultural practices while their children might wish to conform to cultural practices of their country of resident so as to be accepted by their peers. As a result, they may feel inadequate when negotiating new environments for themselves and their children – for example when negotiating an unfamiliar educational, health or social system or even unfamiliar language. It therefore becomes very difficult for these parents to support their developing child in negotiating these aspects that impact on their development and wellbeing.

For some of migrant parents they are parenting transnationally with special challenges associated with attachment difficulties. Once children are re-united with their parents, they miss their caregivers which leaves their parents disappointed. Sometimes it is difficult to re-establish relationships with authority over children.

Vulnerabilities associated with cultural (cultural misunderstandings), structural (migration policies and practices), migration processes (pre-migrating-post migration including psychological stress and stripped support networks) and racial positions are a key feature of migrant families.

In Ireland, there is disproportionate high number of Black African children being taken into state care by the Irish Child and Family services agency (Tusla') in comparison with children from other ethnic groups in the State.

- ✚ Children in Care from Black African families are 20 times more likely than children from other ethnic groups in the state (Coulter's report, 2013 - [https://www.childlawproject.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/CCLRP- Full-final-report_FINAL2.pdf](https://www.childlawproject.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/CCLRP-Full-final-report_FINAL2.pdf)).

- ✚ Irish Times: May 29, 2017, Serious child protection failings detected in study of Garda audit of the emergency removal of children from their families by gardaí.

The audit found Nigerian children, or Irish children born of Nigerian parents, and Romanian children, were over-represented among those removed from their families. This could be attributed to different cultural norms around discipline or to higher levels of policing of these communities, though there was no evidence of that, it said.

✚ [Irish Times: Mon, Nov 30, 2015.](#)

About 30% of children in care cases come from minorities

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/about-30-of-children-in-care-cases-come-from-minorities-1.2448115>

A published Research by immigrant council of Ireland (2016) highlights the need for social workers to understand their role in assisting children in state care to regularise their migration status prior to turning 18 and the legal implications for children if this is not done

<http://immigrantcouncil.ie/files/publications/9675c-child-migration-matters.pdf>

There is a problem that needs addressing by incorporating basic considerations related to migrant families' positions (migrant, cultural, racial and structural in regard to migration policies and practices) into any responses to these families.

Culturally Sensitive Parenting Programs views parenting through a cultural lens – for example, facilitating migrant parents to re-evaluate their child-rearing ways in view of what is adaptive and maladaptive in their new country of residence and encouraging them to retain adaptive practices.

Also understanding that not all the behaviours by parents can be explained through a cultural lens. It is not always about **'this is how they do things or this is how they respond to their children'**.

The behaviour might be caused by

- ❖ *all the migration (pre-migration, migration and post migration) stress.*
- ❖ *It may be caused by vulnerabilities associated with stripped child support networks. It might be caused by unfamiliarity with the education/health/social well-fare etc.*
- ❖ *It might be caused by their inaccessibility to resources due to their migration status.*
- ❖ *It might be caused by the stress resulting from transnational parenting*

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