Parenting Styles in Mizo Society: A Study of Ramthar Community

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Abstract

Parenting is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. It refers to the activity of raising a child. Parenting has never been an easy assignment and good parenting is often responsible for rearing children to become responsible adults. Parenting requires time, patience, love, work and coping with several challenges that children face, however, many parents are ineffective in up-bringing their children (Lalhmingmawii, 2011). Parenting style developed by Diana Baumrind highlights that three parenting styles could be identified viz., authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. However, clear identification of parenting style in a tribal society is still very rare especially in north east India. The study highlights that the parenting style of the Mizo as observed in the present study is more of an authoritative parenting style which is with a combination of authoritarian parenting style. As modernization pursues the Mizo culture and lifestylehave changed and the lack of awareness and knowledge of the importance of parenting style on the psychology and behavioral development of children led the parents in Mizo society to be illiterate in parenting style. So, there is a need for a more indepth study to cover all the sections of Mizo society to conceptualize the parenting style of the tribal.

Keywords: *parenting style, communication, Mizo society, children.*

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I. Introduction

Parenting is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. It refers to the activity of raising a child. Usually, parental figures provide for a child's physical needs, protect them from harm, and impart in them skills and cultural values until they reach legal adulthood, usually after adolescence. Parenting has never been an easy assignment and good parenting is often responsible for rearing children to become responsible adults. Both children and parents face great emotional stress and parenting has become an even more important task. Parenting requires time, patience, love, work and coping with several challenges that children face, however, many parents are ineffective in up-bringing their children (Lalhmingmawii,2011).

Parenting styleis a psychological construct representing standard strategies parents use in raising their children. One of the best known theories of parenting style was developed by Diana Baumrind who believes that parents should be neither punitive nor aloof. Rather, they should develop rules for their children and be affectionate with them. In her research, she has identified three main parenting styles in early child development: *authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Permissive*parents allow the child to regulate his or her own activitiesas much as possible and to avoid the exercise of control. *Authoritarian* parent attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the behaviorand attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct. Parent values obedienceand favors punitive, forceful measures to curb the child's self-will and does not encourage verbal give and take, and believesthat the child should accept the parent's word for what is right.The *authoritative* parent encourages verbal give and take and shares with the child the reasoning behind the policy. This parent enforces his or her own perspective as an adult, but recognizes the child's individual interests and special ways (Baumrind, 1966).

Mizoram, which is in the North-Eastern part of India, is a state which enjoys the second highest literacy rate in India (Census 2011). However, the geographical location being surrounded by two international borders of Bangladesh and Myanmar and other inter-state border with Assam, Manipur, and Tripura highlight it as a close proximity to the known drug route in India and the population encounters diverse problems in the field of adolescent wellbeing. State Government has implemented various programmes and services which are meant for the welfare of all children. However, weak parenting, inadequate care and attention on the part of parenting and issues such as negligence create tremendous problems in the youth (Hauhnar, 2007).

There are copious literatures on parenting styles especial at international level. There are studies on Types of parenting styles(Okorodudu, 2010), Parenting styles and adolescent delinquency (Dudley and Wisbey2000; Okorodudu2010; Ennett, et.al. 2001), Parenting styles and Family Communication Patterns (Shamir et.al. 2001; Lenciauskieneand Zaborskis2002; Nollerand Bagi1985; Miller et.al. 1998), interpersonal communication satisfaction and parenting style (Carter, 2008), Parenting style of single Parent (Lambornand Nguyen2003), kinship support and parenting practices (Lambornand Nguyen2003; Blumet.al. in 2000; Yuet.al. 2006), Religious socialization and Parenting style (Hoge, Petrillo, and Smith 1982; Donell, 2010), Parenting style and mental health (Hockenberry, Timmons et.al., 2009; Yuet.al., 2006; Garnefskiand Diekstra, 1995; Tarisand Bok,1997).

However, studies on parenting style of tribals, especially among the Mizo society is not adequate. Few studies could be observed viz., the effects of *Perceived Parental Rearing Style on drug addiction amongst Mizo male and female adolescents* (Rai,2008), study on stress and coping styles among school

children in Mizoram, family communication and parenting style (Hauhnar, 2007), substance abuse and parenting style (Elizabeth,2004).

There is a dearth of research studies on parenting styles in Mizoram. however, there is much evidence to state that there is a growing young population with reference to drug use (IDU), suicide rates, HIV/AIDS, early and often broken marriages, divorce, domestic violence as well as poor family stability. Therefore, research in the area is required to understand the relationship between parents and their children. The present study also attempts to fill one of those wide gaps.

II. Methodology

The present studyis descriptive research design and the universe of the study comprises all the students of high school and higher secondary within the community of Ramthar between the age group of 13 and20 years and their parents.Quota sampling method is used to select30 respondents for samples. Samples are taken from different schools within the community viz., Government Ramthar High School, Silver Mount School and L.T. English School and parents of selected samples. Pre-tested structured Questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from the respondents. The collected quantitative data are processed with MS Excel and analyzed using simple percentages and averages.To understand the field setting Participatory Rural AppraisalMethod and Key informants interview were also used. Under PRA method different tools such as Social Map, Seasonal Diagram, Resource map and Time line. Key informant interview also helps in identifying available resources andto understand the community interrelationship.

III. Field Setting

Ramtharcommunity is in southern part of Lunglei town. Presently, Ramthar community is consisting of 712 households.

There are three NGOs existing within the community namely, YMA, MHIP and MUP, Theare are also seven schools and four anganwadi centres. There are two Wineshops and twelve different religious denominations.

The community of Ramthar is established in the year 1961. In 1910 RahsiRodala stayed there and it was called RodalaVeng. Later on,RahsiTaia stayed there and it came to be called TaiaVeng. During the II World War, the Matu people (immigrants from Burma) who carried some material for 'Chin Levi' used to stay in the community and the community was called MatuVeng. After a while, the name was changed as 'Melkhat' which means '1 mile' as it was just one mile from the post office, but the area was more popular as MatuVeng (See Figure 3). Many people from different places who migrated to Lunglei mostly settled in the area. They later onfelt the need to change the name of the area, and so, in 1961, the name of the locality was permanently named asRamthar.

Most of the resources utilized by the community was from outside of the community mainly in northern side viz., Serkawn Hospital, Civil hospital, Police station, State Bank, SSA office etc. while most of the resource inside the community is in southern part of the community like southern gas, PHE water tank, Petrol pump, Anganwadi centres, pawn etc.(See figure 1).

IV. Structural bases of Respondents

4.1. Structural bases of children respondents

The indicators taken to highlight demography of respondents in the present study are gender, age and marital status (See table No.1). In terms of gender distribution,majority belong to male (57%) and the rest are female (43%). The age of respondents are categorized into the age between 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, and 19-20. The average/Mean age of the respondents is

16belong to teenage group as samples are taken among the High School and Higher Secondary students. The patternshows that the age group among the children categorization 15-16 is the largest (47%) which is followed by age group of 13-14 which consist of 30%.Other age group 17-18 consists of 17% and age group 19-20 consists of 7% and 42-44 is the largest (27%). Since all the respondents from the children are teenagers, they are all unmarried.

The indicators taken to highlight social demographic profile of respondents in the present study are Tribe, Clan, Religion and Religious Denomination (See Table 2). Majority (97%) of the respondents belongs to Mizo and the rest are non-Mizo. Among the MizosLusei (47%) constitute the largest followed by Lai (33) and Hmar (3%). All the respondents belong to Christian where Baptist denomination (77%) constituted thelargest, followed by Presbyterian (10%) and UPC Mizoram (10%). Baptist denomination constitutes the largest as Lunglei is a district where Baptist church formed the majority.

4.2 Structural bases of parent respondents

This variable is very important as the present study aims at finding information on perceived parenting styles by adolescents as well as parents themselves. So, it is necessary to understand the family background of parent respondents. Marital status is categorized as: unmarried, married, divorced, and remarried and death of spouse(See Table 4).The findings show that majority of the parents in the present study is married (80%)while there are little percentage of divorced (7%) and spouse died(13%). It is evident that marital conflict and failure in marriage are fairly common among Mizo families. A study conducted by Shamir, Schudlich and Cummings (2001) shows that negative marital conflict strategies predicted more negative representations of parent-child (mother-child, father-child) as well as marital and

triadic family systems. Therefore, it is important to understand the marital status of parent respondents as it has a happy marital relationship in order to have a positive parent-child relationship.

Information on parents' educational qualification was collected in order to identify the educational background of both the parents.(See Table no.4).This is also another important variable as it shows the intellectual progress of an individual from childhood with reference to education. Majority of the parents (47%) studied up to class XII which is followed by matriculation (23%), graduate (17%) and under matriculation (13%). The enrollment of respondents in the present study is lower in the secondary section. This may be because majority of the parents in the present study are giving importance up to High-School and Higher Secondary education.

4.3 Family particulars

The indicator to highlight family particularsin the present study are number of memberof family, number of siblings, types of family and forms of family. Information on family particulars was collected in order to identify the family background of the respondents (See table 3).

Family is an important agency of socialization and it can be regarded as among the most interesting and influential human system. A child completely depends on parents and families duringtheir first few years. As such, his behavior and other development are largely affected by the family in which he is born and brought up. In this study, family type includes nuclear and joint.The results show a higher percentage of nuclear familywhere almost three-fourth (73%) of the respondents belong to nuclear families, while a lesser number i.e. one-fourth (27%) of the respondents belongs to joint family. This, however, could be possibly because Mizoram isaffected tremendously by the increasing trend of urbanization where situations like remarriage

and divorce occur more commonly. When situations like this occur, children are left to live with their grand-parents or aunts and uncles thus causing them to form a joint family.

This is considered an important variable as it can help in predicting the nature of the child and the family to a great extent. Form of family is categorized into three parts: *stable, broken and reconstituted.*Findings of the study show that majority (93%) belongs to *stable* family, a few (27%) belong to *broken* family.

Size of family is another important variable as it could have multiple effects on the child's overall development. The present study also took into consideration the size of family and categorized it as: (i) *Small* (1 to 3), (ii) *Medium* (4-6), (iii) *Large* (7& and above). Findings reveal half (50%) belong to medium families, less than a third (37%) falls under the category of large family and a few (13%) belong to small families.

Socio-economic status of the family includes particulars, such as, occupation of father and mother, monthly household income and socio-economic category (see table 5. Income is another important variable in this study as it has a great impact on the functioning of the family. For the present study, monthly household income is categorized as: (i) Below 10,000 (ii) 10,001 to 20,000, (iii) 20,001 to 30,000, (iv) 30,001 to 40000, (v)40,001 to 50,000 and (vi) 50,001 to 60,000. From the table 4(a), we could see that half (50%) of the family has an income below than 10,000 and only one family(3%) has a monthly income above 60,000 while majority of the respondents engaged in labour work.

Socio-economic category is another important variable to identify the status of a family in a society. In the present study, the families are classified as: (i) Above Poverty Line (APL), (ii) Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY). Most of the families belong to Above Poverty Line (APL) and consist of 17 (57%) respondents followed by Below Poverty Line (BPL) consist of 12 (40%) respondents and the smallest socio-

economic status is the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) consisting 1 (3%).Information on occupation of the respondent's family was collected as it helps in determining the socio-economic status of the family.

As the job taken up by majority of the membersof the community is manual labor, there are a large number of unemployed and, it is still economically backward comparing to other localities of Lunglei Town. The rate of income was also not too high but majority of the family belongs to Above Poverty Line (APL).

V.   Parenting style and level of communication

Parenting styleis a psychological construct, representing standard strategies parents use in raising their children. In the present study, three parenting styles namely *authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive* identified by Diana Baumrind (1966) was used to identify parenting styles in Mizoram. To understand Parenting style in the present study the perception of parenting style by children (13 to 20 years) as well as their parents was taken using fifteen items for the parents and sixteen items for the children, which was set in a close-ended answer type of "yes" or "no"and certain statement were given to parents to rate them using four point scale as "strongly disagree", disagree", "strongly agree" and "agree"(see table no 6 & 7).

5.1 Parenting style and family communication from perspective of children

In the present study, different question were framed for the children respondents to rate them as yes or no to understand parenting style in Mizo community. (See Table no. 6).

The study shows that the parenting style in Ramthar community is mainly authoritarian. Majority of the children respondents declare that their parents do not expect them to

regulate themselves and set a clear standard. Their parents are rather very restrictive and usually told the work to be done and the children have to follow their directions. Punishmentis used as a threat towards the children which is always with proper explanation of the motives.

The study also confirms that the parenting style in Ramthar community is partly authoritative as majority of the parentstake the wishes of their children when they asked them to do something and all the parents in the present study gives advice without demands and even encourage them to freely speak their mind even if they disagree with them where majority of the respondents feels that this helps them to be independent. Majority (90%) of the respondents declare that they use to have fun time with their parents.

Permissive parenting style is not observed in the present study. The parenting style is more of coexistence of authoritarian parenting style which is mixed with authoritative parenting style.May be because of this coexistence half of the children respondents declare that they have discouragement towards their parents.

Results on perception of parenting style by adolescents reveals *"Authoritative Parenting"* as the most predominant style in the area. Research has generally shown that authoritative parents are likely to raise children who are self-reliant, self-controlled, explorative, and content. Although results vary, data suggest that the authoritative parenting style is associated with the most favorable child outcomes (Dudleyand Wisbey2000). A study conducted by Okorodudu (2010) identify the relationship between adolescents' delinquency and the parenting styles reveal that authoritative parents who are positively oriented in their styles (authoritative) will make their adolescents socially competent and goal-directed. Parents who exerted control and

monitored adolescent activities and promoted self-autonomy were found to have the most positive effects on adolescents' behavior.

Findings on adolescent's perception of family communication pattern reveals that the communication of the parents and the children are quite good as all of the children revels that they were given advice by the parents and 90% were having a family dine out or fun time with the parents and 93% were told clearly the work to be done by the parents. Majority of the children revels that they have a good time with the parents and it shows that they have a good communication with the parents.

5.2 Parenting style and family communication from perspective of parents

To understand the parenting style from the perspective of parents, certain statement weregiven to rate using a four point scale viz.,strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree (See table 7). The parenting style from the perspective of parents is mainly authoritative in nature where parent respondents declare that they have good relations with their children and could spend more time with them. Sufficient attention is given towards their children and some authority is also given to their children accepting their ideas. The children have freedom to ask their needs and even could share their love life with parents. But every demand made by the children are not provided as the parents felt that it is destructive and unnecessary for their children.

Perception of parenting style by parent shows "*Authoritative Parenting*" as the most predominant style in Ramthar community. Research has generally shown that authoritative parents are likely to raise children who are self-reliant, self-controlled, explorative, and content. Although results vary, data suggest that the authoritative parenting style is associated with the most favorable

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VI. Conclusion

The present study attempts to identify parenting styles and level of communication in Mizo society through the perception of children and their parents.

Qualitative method like Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was used to understand the field setting. Questionnaire was also used to collect quantitative data.Majority of the children respondents are between the age of 13 to 20 years attending High school and Higher Secondary school.The family background is also studied where two-thirds of the respondents belong to nuclear family while the remaining third belonged to joint family. Majority of the respondents belongs to *stable* family and results also show higher percentages of stable family which clearly shows that the findings of this study is genuinely significant to represent parenting style of the Mizo community.

Parenting style of the Mizo observed in the present study is more of anauthoritative parenting style which is with a combination of authoritarian parenting style. Although a clear differentiationof parenting style is observed in other societies almost all of them are having a background which is not a tribal background.The traditional Mizo society experience extreme authoritarian parenting style combined with a strong social control in the past where the children have to follow exactly

what the parents and the elders in the community told them. But as modernization pursues the Mizo culture and lifestyle have changed which in turn shaped societal control and even parenting style as the society is exposed to western lifestylethat supports a different parenting style which is more of authoritative in nature.The lack of awareness and knowledge of the importance of parenting style on the psychology and behavioral development of children led the parents in Mizo society to be illiterate in parenting style. Children in families are brought up based on conveniences and experiences which results delinquencies and substance abuse (Hauhnar, 2007).The present study highlights that the parenting style of Mizo moves from authoritarian parenting style towards authoritative parenting style. Results of an observation also indicate that parents with higher educational background have supported more of authoritative parenting style where their children show more self-reliance, work orientation, educational expectations, and teacher reports of school values comparing with others and a similar finding is made by Lamborn, S.D.and Nguyen, D.T., (2003).

Since communication pattern in family between children and parents is closely associated with parenting style the present study is also extended to observelevel of communication between parents and children.A strong communicationbetween parents and children help the children in avoiding stress or depression as compared to that of the children with a poor communication with the parents. As authoritative parenting style give authority to the children in the family and they also feel free to share the feelings and the problems which provide room for parents or the care taker to help solving the children's problems. For example, when the children or Adolescence have a problem in regards to their relationship with friends or boyfriend/girlfriend which is almost like a taboo to share it to the parents in the past, they feel free to relate to the parents or the care taker and help them in solving the problem through their experiences.

In the light of the findings, the following suggestions are being made. The study suggests that a study covering a wider population covering rural and urban areas and different sections should be conducted to understand parenting style of Mizo and its connection with current social problems among the children and adolescent. It is believed that behavioral problems are closely associated with parenting style and there is a need to involve parents and children on a common platform through workshops, sensitization programmesand awarenesscan be conducted at community or church levelssince importance is given to any effort that is made by the church.

Figure 1. Social Map

Figure 2. Resource Map

Figure.3.Timeline

Figure.4.Seasonal Diagram

Table No 1. Demographic Profile of children Respondents

SI.NO	Particular	No of Respondents (N=30)	Percentage
I	Gender		
	Female	13	43
	Male	17	57
II	Age		
	13-14	9	30
	15-16	14	47
	17-18	5	17
	19-20	2	7
III	Marital status		
	Unmarried	30	100
IV	Educational qualification		
	Class-IX	15	50
	Class-X	10	33
	Class-XI	2	7
	Class-XII	3	10

Source: Computed

Table No 2. Social Demographic Profile of children Respondents

SI.NO	Particular	No of Respondents N=30	Percentage
I	Tribe		
	Mizo	29	97
	Non-mizo	1	3
II	Clans		
	Lusei	14	47

	Lai	10	33
	Hmar	1	3
	Others	5	17
III	Religion		
	Christian	30	100
IV	Denomination		
	BCM	23	77
	Presbyterian	3	10
	UPC (M)	3	10
	Kohhran thianghlim	1	3

Source: Computed

Table no.3 Family Particular

SI.NO	Particular	No of Respondents (N=30)	Percentage
I	No. of family		
	Small(1-3)	4	13
	Medium(4-6)	15	50
	Large(7 and above)	11	37
II	No. of sibling		
	Small(1-3)	17	57
	Medium(4-6)	10	33
	Large(7 and above)	3	10
III	Types of Family		
	Nuclear	22	73
	Joint	8	27
IV	Forms of Family		
	Stable	28	93
	Broken	2	7

Source: Computed

Table no.4. Educational Qualification of Parents Respondents

SI.NO	Particular	No of Respondents N=30	Percentage
1	Educational qualification		
	Under matriculate	4	13
	Matriculate	7	23
	CL-XII	14	47
	Graduate	5	17

Source: Computed

Table 5 Socio-Economic Status

SI.NO	Particular	No of Respondents N=30	Percentage
I	Socio-Economic Status		
	APL	17	57
	BPL	12	40
	AAY	1	3
II	Occupation		
	Manual Labor	15	50
	Govt. servant	6	20
	Business	4	13
	Private	5	17
III	Annual Income		
	Less than 10,000	15	50
	10,001 to 20,000	11	37
	20,001 to 30,000	Nil	Nil
	30,001 to 40,000	2	7
	40,001 to 50,000	1	3
	50,001 to 60,000	1	3
	Mean annual income		

Source: Computed

Table No.6 Perception of Children:

Sl. No	Statement	Yes	No
1	My parents take my wishes into consideration before they ask me to do something	21	9
		70%	30%
2	My parents are very restrictive and I have to follow their directions	20	10
		67%	33%
3	They expect me to do things without explanation	8	22
		27%	73%
4	My parents set clear standard for me	6	24
		20%	80%
5	My parents told me clearly the work to be done	28	2
		93%	7%
6	My parents have few demands or control on me	9	21
		30%	70%
7	My parents do not expect me to regulate myself or behave appropriately	4	26
		13%	87%
8	Instead of demanding they give advice for my learning	30	0
		100%	0%
9	My parents encourage me to be independent	29	1
		97%	3%
10	My parents encourage me to freely speak my mind even if I disagree with them	21	9
		70%	30%
11	My parents often say that I am difficult to discipline	16	14
		53%	47%

12	My parents use threats as a form of punishment	8	22
		27%	73%
13	My parents rarely punish me even if I did something wrong	16	14
		53%	47%
14	My parents always explain their motives when they punish me	29	1
		97%	3%
15	Do you have discouragement between you and your parents?	15	15
		50%	50%
16	Do you use to have dine out or fun time with your parents?	27	3
		90%	10%

Source: Computed

Table No.7 Perception of Parents:

Sl. No	Particular	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree
1	I listen to my children words	4	8	8	10
		13	27	27	33
2	I give attention to my children words	0	3	12	15
		0	10	40	50
3	I will do anything my children request me to do	8	15	0	7
		27	50	0	23
4	My husband is the head of the family	0	0	16	14
		0	0	53	47
5	My wife is the head of the family	0	0	0	0
		0	0	0	0
6	We have a good relation with my children	0	7	12	11
		0	23	40	37

7	My children feel free to asked me every of their needs	5	8	11	6
		17	27	37	20
8	They relate their problem to me	0	2	15	13
		0	7	50	43
9	I give everything they want	10	15	0	5
		33	50	0	17
10	I give some authority to my children	0	0	13	17
		0	0	43	57
11	I accept their idea/thought	0	0	11	19
		0	0	37	63
12	They relate their love relation with me	4	5	11	10
		13	17	37	33
13	We have a close relation with my children	0	3	12	15
		0	10	40	50
14	I spend lots of time with my children	3	5	9	13
		10	17	30	43
15	I have a good relation with my children	0	0	10	20
		0	0	33	67

Source: Computed

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