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International note: Maternal warmth, behavioral control, and psychological control: Relations to adjustment of Ghanaian early adolescents



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A B S T R A C T

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This investigation addressed the relation between maternal warmth, behavioral control, psychological control, and psychological adjustment in a sample of 119 Ghanaian adolescents (42% boys) living in an urban area (mean age = 14.19). Adolescents in the sample reported clinically elevated levels of depression and anxiety. Significant associations were found between warmth, behavioral control, and psychological control and adolescents' anxiety, physical aggression, relational aggression, positive friendship quality, and conflict with friends. Warmth moderated the effect of behavioral control on anxiety, physical aggression, and relational aggression such that higher levels of warmth in combination with higher levels of behavioral control were related to more positive adjustment. Higher levels of warmth in conjunction with higher psychological control were related to higher levels of anxiety. Boys who reported lower levels of warmth in combination with higher behavioral control reported higher levels of physical aggression. For boys reporting higher levels of warmth, higher behavioral control was associated with lower physical aggression. © 2016 The Foundation for Professionals in Services for Adolescents. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

About 14% of children and adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa exhibit psychopathology (Cortina, Sodha, Fazel, & Ramchandani, 2012). Ghana, in Sub-Saharan West Africa, has received limited research attention. The World Health Organization (WHO) initiated the Global School-Based Student Health Survey (GSHS) in Ghana using single item measures. Seventeen percent of adolescents reported attempted suicide, 16% had no close friends, 27% engaged in physical fights, and 54% were bullied (Owusu, 2008). Little information was collected on parenting and its relation to healthy functioning.

Parental warmth, behavioral control, and psychological control are associated with a variety of adolescent outcomes in Western samples. There are consistent, strong positive associations between warmth, behavioral control, and positive psychological adjustment (Bean, Barber, & Crane, 2006; Bean, Bush, McKenry, & Wilson, 2003; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989; Yap, Pilkington, Ryan, & Jorm, 2014). Psychological control is linked to less optimal functioning (Barber, 1996; Garber, Robinson, & Valentiner, 1997; McShane & Hastings, 2009). Similar findings have been reported cross-culturally, particularly in collectivistic cultures (Barber, Stolz, Olsen, Collins, & Burchinal, 2005). Socialization theory suggests that the combination of warmth in conjunction with other dimensions of parenting is important in predicting adolescent outcomes (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, &

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Table 1
Means and standard deviations of the major variables.

Variables	M	SD
Warmth	2.37	0.37
Behavioral control	2.29	0.37
Psychological control	2.12	0.34
Depression	21.84	11.44
Anxiety	51.77	16.53
Physical aggression	6.96	2.86
Relational aggression	12.40	4.73
Positive friendship quality	2.78	0.71
Friendship conflict	1.33	0.83

Table 2
Intercorrelations among the major variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	–										
2. Sex	–0.07	–									
3. Warmth	–0.11	0.04	–								
4. Behavioral control	–0.20*	0.08	0.08	–							
5. Psychological control	0.01	–0.15	0.07	–0.02	–						
6. Depression	0.15	0.14	0.07	–0.09	0.10	–					
7. Anxiety	0.07	0.13	0.02	–0.19*	0.20*	0.51**	–				
8. Physical aggression	0.18*	–0.20*	0.02	–0.24**	0.19*	0.16	0.32**	–			
9. Relational aggression	0.16	–0.15	–0.06	–0.25**	0.17	0.25**	0.39**	0.65**	–		
10. Positive friendship quality	0.11	0.10	0.20*	–0.09	–0.03	0.17	–0.02	0.07	–0.05	–	
11. Friendship conflict	–0.04	–0.01	0.06	–0.25**	0.07	0.23*	0.36**	0.32**	0.41**	0.11	–

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Note: Boys = 0, Girls = 1.

Table 3
Hierarchical regression analyses predicting early adolescents' adjustment from behavior control maternal warmth.

Variables	Depression			Anxiety			Physical aggression		
	β	SE	ΔR^2	B	SE	ΔR^2	B	SE	ΔR^2
Step 1			0.02			0.00			0.03
Age	0.15	1.10		0.07	1.60		0.18 ⁺	0.27	
Step 2			0.03			0.04			0.10
Bcontrol	–0.08	3.05		–0.21*	3.41		–0.22*	0.73	
Warmth	0.07	2.92		0.04	4.23		0.10	0.70	
Sex	0.15	2.17		0.14	3.13		–0.19*	0.52	
Step 3			0.04			0.05			0.05
Bcontrol \times Warmth	–0.17	7.17		–0.19*	10.48		–0.22*	1.73	
Bcontrol \times Sex	–0.12	5.89		–0.16	8.64		0.02	1.40	
Warmth \times Sex	0.28 ⁺	5.93		0.11	8.66		0.13	1.43	
Step 4			0.01			0.00			0.03
Bcontrol \times Warmth \times Sex	–0.13	14.58		–0.07	21.36		0.27*	3.46	
R²			0.10			0.09			0.20
Variables	Relational aggression			Positive friendship quality			Friendship conflict		
	β	SE	ΔR^2	B	SE	ΔR^2	B	SE	ΔR^2
Step 1			0.03			0.01			0.00
Age	0.16 ⁺	0.45		0.11	0.07		–0.04	0.08	
Step 2			0.06			0.06			0.06
Bcontrol	–0.20*	1.00		–0.09	0.19		–0.25*	0.22	
Warmth	0.04	1.17		0.21*	0.18		0.09	0.21	
Sex	–0.15 ⁺	0.87		0.12	0.13		–0.01	0.16	
Step 3			0.04			0.03			0.03
Bcontrol \times Warmth	–0.21*	2.89		0.08	0.45		–0.06	0.53	
Bcontrol \times Sex	0.06	2.39		–0.19	0.35		0.22	0.42	
Warmth \times Sex	0.04	2.37		0.15	0.37		–0.01	0.44	
Step 4			0.03			0.00			0.02
Bcontrol \times Warmth \times Sex	0.26 ⁺	5.82		–0.09	0.91		0.24 ⁺	1.07	
R²			0.15			0.11			0.12

* $p < 0.05$; + $p < 0.10$.

Note. Bcontrol = Behavioral control; Boys = 0, girls = 1.

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