

PERMISSIVE PARENTING STYLE OF PARENTS PREDICTING PSYCHOPATHOLOGY IN THEIR CHILDREN

ALIA ASMAT¹, UZMA ALI², SAID FAROOQ SHAH³

^{1,2}Institute of Clinical Psychology University of Karachi

³Department of Statistics Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad

CORRESPONDENCE: ALIA ASMAT, E-mail: aliarandhawa@gmail.com

Submitted: April 13, 2016

Accepted: February 23, 2017

ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE

To observe association between permissive parenting style and childhood psychopathology (externalizing and internalizing).

STUDY DESIGN

Correlation study.

PLACE AND DURATION OF STUDY

Data was collected from different areas of Karachi through purposive sampling strategy from June 2013 to September 2014.

SUBJECTS AND METHOD

Sample comprised of 75 fathers and 75 mothers. The age range of the children in the sample was 5-12 years old. Along with Socio-Demographics Sheet, Parenting Styles & Dimensions Questionnaire and Devereux Scales of Mental Disorders were administered.

RESULTS

Correlation and regression analysis (backward selection method) were used to analyze the results. Analysis revealed that mother and father permissive style is significantly correlated with ($p < .01$) externalizing behavioral problems among their children.

CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded on the basis of the findings that permissive parenting is responsible for the externalizing behavior of the children.

KEY WORDS

Parenting Styles, Psychopathology, Internalizing/Externalizing.

INTRODUCTION

The birth of a child marks the beginning of the parental responsibilities for the parents. The way parents interact with their children is dependent upon the way they see their responsibility as a parent. If they consider that it is the right thing to do to bring up the children in a strict environment, they will try their best to discipline their child using their authority. In other cases if a parent feels that children thrive well when allowed the freedom to make their own choices, their parenting style will be dominated by a great degree of flexibility¹. Sometimes the parenting style adopted by mothers and fathers are not in accordance to the positive development of the child. As a result the children are likely to experience various behavioral issues². The quality of interaction between parents and children lays the foundation of the child's personality and behavior³. Researchers have seen that the way parents interact with their children by maintaining and exerting control on their behavior has a strong effect on the behavior of their children⁴. The third typology is permissive parents which constitute non punitive and acceptant⁵.

Immense evidences were found in the western and eastern literature that process of socialization starts with birth of the child; Family is the basic unit of child's socialization where parent's way of dealing with the child plays a significant role to become successful member of the society. This requires the learning of skills, behavior patterns, ideas needed for adequate functioning in the society where child is growing up⁶. This view support the idea that children are assumed to enter in the world that contains preexisting meanings, rules and values and expectations with role of parents being to teach or transmit knowledge to children. Hence, permissive parents are emotionally warm yet reluctant to enforce rules and standards of conduct consequently children of these parents are less disciplined and helpless to manage their mood and execute their plans. Children having permissive parenting showed less discipline, feel insecure due to lack of boundaries which may cause anger in them, eventually they starts acting out as Reimuller et al⁷ 2011 has observed that permissive parenting can cause alcoholic behaviors in their children.

It is also documented that parenting practices sometimes play their role in developing psychological and behavioral problems among children when they put high demands, low level of responsiveness or allow the children to engage in any behavior they wish without maintaining adequate level of supervision.^{8,9,10}

The term childhood psychopathology encompasses the internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems of children and psychological disturbances among them⁸. Some of the contributory factors of childhood psychopathology are known while some remain

Table 1
Frequencies and Percentages of Demographics (N=150)

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Socioeconomic Status | Middle Lower | 46 | 30.7 |
| | Middle/Middle | 73 | 48.7 |
| | Middle Upper | 31 | 20.7 |
| Mother Education level | Intermediate | 73 | 48.7 |
| | Graduation | 29 | 19.3 |
| | Master | 32 | 21.3 |
| | Post master | 16 | 10.7 |
| Family System | Joint | 62 | 41.3 |
| | Nuclear | 88 | 58.7 |
| Mother Working Status | House Wife | 111 | 74.0 |
| | Working | 39 | 26.0 |
| Psychological Problem in Family | Yes | 18 | 12.0 |
| | No | 132 | 88.0 |

Table 2
Correlations between Permissive Parenting Styles and Externalizing and Internalizing Behavioral Problems (N=150)

| Variables | Externalizing Behaviors | | Internalizing Behaviors | |
|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | Conduct | Attention delinquency | Depression | Anxiety |
| Mother | .34* | .32* | .01 | .01 |
| Father | .30* | .27* | .01 | -.10 |

Table 3
Effects of Permissive mother's Parenting Style on Externalizing and Internalizing Behavioral Problems

| Conduct is dependent | B | S.E | t-value | p-value |
|--------------------------------|------|------|---------|---------|
| (Constant) | .18 | .11 | 1.63 | .10 |
| Permissive mother | .36 | .11 | 3.12 | .00* |
| Depression is dependent | | | | |
| (Constant) | -.17 | .13 | -1.32 | .18 |
| Permissive mother | 0.11 | 0.15 | 0.77 | .44 |
| Anxiety is dependent | | | | |
| (Constant) | -.03 | .14 | -.27 | .78 |
| Permissive mother | .01 | .16 | .11 | .90 |
| Attention is dependent | | | | |
| (Constant) | .07 | .11 | .89 | .62 |
| Mother Permissive | -.33 | .11 | -2.92 | .00* |

B= Beta, S.E= Standard Error

Table 4
Effects of Permissive Father Parenting Style on Externalizing and Internalizing Behavioral Problems

| Conduct is dependent | B | S.E | t-value | p-value |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|---------|---------|
| (Constant) | .18 | .10 | 1.8 | .07 |
| Permissive father | .28 | .10 | 2.7 | .00* |
| Depression is dependent | | | | |
| (Constant) | -0.07 | 0.13 | -0.56 | 0.57 |
| Permissive father | -0.17 | 0.16 | -1.03 | 0.30 |
| Anxiety is dependent | | | | |
| (Constant) | 0.06 | 0.13 | 0.47 | 0.63 |
| Permissive father | -0.18 | 0.18 | -0.99 | 0.32 |
| Attention is dependent | | | | |
| (Constant) | -.07 | .10 | -.530 | .58* |
| Permissive father | .25 | .10 | 2.40 | .01* |

B= Beta, S.E= Standard Error

DISCUSSION

Parents have a strong influence on the way children learn to see the world and learn to deal with the day to day life. Present study aimed to evaluate the permissive style of parenting and its consequence in our sample. Researcher observed in this study, when fathers used permissive parenting style, it was associated with externalizing behavior issues such as inattention and conduct problems. Permissive fathers show high level of leniency in their behavior towards their children. The children are given a great deal of freedom which leads to lack of development of clear boundaries and children are at risk of behaving impulsively. Bronte-Tinkew, Moore and Carrano¹⁶ have presented the conclusion that permissive fathers who are able to maintain a positive relationship with their children are able to help their children in avoiding risk taking activities. In an earlier study Shumow, Vandell and Posner¹⁷ have reported that when parents used firm behavior with the children it helped their children in developing a sense of responsibility. Therefore they are less likely to be a part of negative behaviors included in conduct disorders. On the other hand, permissive parents fail to establish a firm guideline for the children, laying the foundation of development of conduct disorder. The use of permissive style by fathers in the present study was not strongly associated with depression and anxiety.

Permissive style of parenting from mothers has been seen associated with externalizing problems of the children. Permissive mothers hold close to the belief of raising their children with warmth and caring attitude which is also shared by the authoritative parenting style. However, problem arises when the permissive parents don't stop their children from following behavior that are damaging to their own selves or are considered as socially unsuitable¹⁸. Moreover, permissive parents don't try to engage their children in socially responsible behaviors which lay the foundation of dysfunctional behavior sets among the children. One of the primary factors responsible for conduct disorders is that the mothers are not able to guide their children about the right and wrong behaviors and let the

unknown. There are various disorders which are connected to the genetic make-up of a child; however there are some problems which are attributed to the psychological factors rather than physical abnormalities¹¹. The use of permissive parenting style and authoritarian parenting style has been linked with the development of a wide range of problems among the children as they have difficulty in finding their own ground with authoritarian parents, while permissive parents fail to establish a clear sense of boundaries for them^{12,13}. The purpose of the present study is to find out the link between permissive parenting and childhood behavioral issues in our culture.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Description of Measures

The following instruments have been used in this research:

Self Developed Socio-Demographic Form:

This form was built with reference to previous literature and expert's opinion. It consisted of participant's age, gender, education, family structure, socioeconomic status, job status, and number of siblings. In this demographic sheet there were some questions regarding early milestones which were used to screen out the children for exclusion criteria.

Devereux Scales of Mental Disorders¹⁴

DSMD is consisted of 101 items and it is a parent rating scale of children aged 5-12. For taking response on these 101 items there are five options ranging from Never to Very frequently for the behaviors that occurred in the past four weeks. This scale has three main categories to assess the disorders in children. Externalizing (conduct and attention delinquency scales) measures behaviors that involve conflicts between an individual and his or her environment. Internalizing (Depression and Anxiety scales) measure behaviors that reflect individual's state of psychological wellbeing. In Critical pathology (autism and acute problems scales) children manifest severe disturbance in behavior critical pathology domain is not included in the study. The Cronbach alpha of the scales for the current study is Conduct 0.952, Depression 0.861, Anxiety 0.685, and Attention Problem 0.795.

Parenting Styles & Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ Short Version)¹⁵

Parenting styles and dimensions scale, an abbreviated form consisted of 32 items was administered for self and spouse reported practices for parents of children age 5-12 years. It has a likert type five point rating scale anchored by 1=Never to 5=Always. PSDQ short version consisted on three main domains; Authoritative, Authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. The authoritative subscale 15 items, authoritarian subscale (12 items) and permissive subscale (5 items). Scores were computed for each subscale by calculating the mean of all items in a subscale. The current study used the permissive parenting scores only; the internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) of permissive scale for mother was .186 while for Father it was .796 on 150 Pakistani parents.

Procedure

The approval of the study was obtained from the Board of Advanced

Studies and Research (BASR), University of Karachi, Karachi. Afterward, Devereux Behavior Scales of Mental Disorders was purchased from one of Pearson's Franchise in India. Moreover, permission was taken from the author of parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire. After taking these initial steps, researcher took permission from the authorities of the residential colonies. The researcher went door to door and inquired about the child age and also the availability of both parents in house for the completion of forms. Those who showed willingness to give information about their child to researcher were introduced on the topic and the purpose of the research, and how it would be helpful in the future for the parents and their children in our culture. The predetermined criterion for inclusion and exclusion was also considered while taking consent and other information. Participants were informed about the requirement of their consent and were also explained about the confidentiality of their responses. They were also told about the right to withdraw from the research at any point and time. Afterwards, forms were administered; volunteering cooperation of participants was acknowledged and appreciated.

Statistical Analysis

Data analysis were performed using descriptive (frequency, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Correlation and simple linear regression analysis). The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was employed as the correlation measure in this study, with a significance level of .05 or lower. The simple linear regressions were used to investigate the contribution of explanatory variables (parenting styles) on the criteria variables externalizing and internalizing behavior problems.

RESULTS

Participants were the psychologically healthy children and their parents of Karachi, Pakistan. Most of the respondents (48.7%) were from the socioeconomic middle-middle class. Most of the parent's maximum qualification was graduation mothers 21% and father 38%. The children who have psychological problem in their family members are very few (12%), and those who responded "NO" are mostly male (88%) see table 1.

Permissive father and mother parenting are significantly and positively correlated with externalized behavioral problems of the children (see table 2). Simple linear regression models were used to predict Conduct, Depression, Anxiety and Attention based on the Permissive Mother. According to the calculated results (Table 3); Permissive Mother predict Conduct ($B=0.36$, $p\text{-value}<0.001$), and Attention ($B=0.33$, $p\text{-value}<0.001$) but to do not explain much variations in Depression and Anxiety. Further from the results ($B=0.36$, and $B=0.33$) it is observed that as the permissive mother's score increases it will increase conduct and attention scores too.

As earlier, simple linear regression models were used to predict Conduct, Depression, Anxiety and Attention based on the Permissive Fathers. According to the calculated results (Table 4); Permissive father predict Conduct ($B=0.28$, $p\text{-value}<0.001$), and Attention ($B=0.25$, $p\text{-value}=0.01$) but to do not explain much variations in Depression and Anxiety.

children behave in whatever ways they want. This lack of guidance develops an unclear sense of socially responsible behavior among the children. As a result they often engage in behaviors which fall under the category of conduct issues¹⁹. Vorsah²⁰ (2015) has further added that when permissive mothers want the children to follow their instructions, they may try to obtain obedience by using manipulative tactics, thus making the parent-child interaction negative.

REFERENCES

1. Shaffer D, Kipp K. Developmental psychology: Childhood and adolescence. Cengage Learning.2013.
2. Kawabata Y, Alink L. R. A, Tseng W.L, Van I, Jzendoorn M. H, Crick N.R. Maternal and paternal parenting styles associated with relational aggression in children and adolescents: A conceptual analysis and meta-analytic review. *Developmental Review*.2011;31:240-278. doi: 10.1016/j.dr.2011.08.001
3. Wang Q, Pomerantz E M, Chen H. The role of parents' control in early adolescents' psychological functioning: A longitudinal investigation in the United States and China. *Child development* 2007;78(5):1592-1610.
4. Aunola K, Nurmi JE. The role of parenting styles in children's problem behavior. *Child development*. 2005;76(6):1144-1159.
5. Baumrind D. Patterns of parental authority and adolescent autonomy. *New Directions For Child and Adolescent Development*.2005;(108):61-69 doi: 10.1002/cd.128
6. Musavi A. Functional Family Therapy (Al-Zahra University Publications) Tehran.2004
7. Reimuller A, Shadur J, Hussong AM. Parental Social Support as a Moderator of Self-Medication in Adolescents. *Addictive Behaviors*. 2011; (36)3: 203-208 doi:10.1016/j.addbeh.2010.10.006
8. Caron A, Weiss B, Harris V, Catron T. Parenting behavior dimensions and child psychopathology: Specificity, task dependency, and interactive relations. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*. 2006;35(1):34-45.
9. Paulussen-Hoogeboom MC, Stams GJJ, Hermanns J, Peetsma TT. Child negative emotionality and parenting from infancy to preschool: A meta-analytic review. *Developmental Psychology*. 2007;43(2):438.
10. Vieno A, Nation M, Pastore M, Santinello M. Parenting and antisocial behavior: a model of the relationship between adolescent self-disclosure, parental closeness, parental control, and adolescent antisocial behavior. *Developmental Psychology*.2009;45(6):1509. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19899910>
11. Mash E, Wolfe D. *Abnormal child psychology*. Cengage Learning. 2012
12. Rinaldi CM, Howe N. Mothers' and fathers' parenting styles and associations With toddlers' externalizing, internalizing, and adaptive behaviors. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 2012;27(2):266-273.
13. Zarra - Nezhad M, Kiuru N, Aunola K, Zarra - Nezhad M, Ahonen T, Poikkeus AM, Nurmi JE. Social withdrawal in children moderates the association between parenting styles and the children's own socioemotional development. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. 2014;55(11):1260-1269.
14. Naglieri JA, LeBuffe PA, Pfeiffer SI. *Devereux scales of mental disorders manual*. The Psychological Corporation: Harcourt Brace & Company San Antonio. 1994;45-55.
15. Robinson CC, Mandleco B, Olsen FS, Hart CH. The parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire (PSDQ). In B. F. Perlmutter, J. Touliatos, & G. W. Holden (Eds.), *Handbook of family measurement techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 2001;2:90
16. Bronte-Tinkew J, Moore KA, Carrano J. The father-child relationship, parenting styles, and adolescent risk behaviors in intact families. *Journal of Family Issues*. 2006; 27(6): 850-881. doi:10.1177/0192513X05285296
17. Shumow L, Vandell DL, Posner JK. Harsh, Firm, and Permissive Parenting in Low-Income Families Relations to Children's Academic Achievement and Behavioral Adjustment. *Journal of Family Issues*. 1998; 19(5): 483-507. doi: 10.1177/019251398019005001
18. Querido JG, Warner TD, Eyberg SM. Parenting styles and child behavior in African American families of preschool children. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*. 2002; 31(2): 272-277.
19. Jewell JD, Stark KD. Comparing the family environments of adolescents with conduct disorder or depression. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*. 2003; 12(1): 77-89.
20. Vorsah RA. *Early childhood education*. UK: Xlibris. 2015.