

The Effects of Parenting Styles and Parental Conflict on Child Development

Cloud Chang, Department of Psychology, The College of Wooster

Advisor: Dr. Susan Clayton

Introduction

The current study examines the effects of parenting style and parental conflict on child development with regard to their mental health, personality, and belonging. Four types of parenting styles (Baumrind 1967, 1978) were investigated: authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting, permissive parenting, and uninvolved parenting.

Authoritative parenting

- High in both warmth and control.
- Having reasonable demands and are supportive and responsive.

Authoritarian parenting

- High in control and low in warmth.
- Having high standards and require children to obey without question.

Permissive parenting

- Low in control and moderate in warmth.
- Let children do anything they want.

Uninvolved parenting

- Low in both warmth and control.
- Neglectful, and offer few or no care or support to children.

Method

78 participants were recruited from the College of Wooster and other universities (34.6% male, 59% female, and 6.4% non-binary or third gender) to complete an online survey asking about their experiences of parenting, parental conflict, and current state of mind. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 26 years old. 25.6% of the participants identified themselves as Chinese. 33.3% of the participants identified themselves as American. The rest of the participants came from a variety of countries. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to describe either a positive or negative experience with their parents.

Results

Significant positive relationships were found between authoritarian parenting style and various factors such as students' levels of anxiety, neuroticism, and being afraid of punishment. A significant positive connection was discovered between authoritative parenting and a sense of belonging and life satisfaction. Both permissive and uninvolved parental styles were discovered to be negatively correlated with belonging and life satisfaction. A positive relation was also found between permissive parenting and anxiety. Parental conflict was found to be significantly related to the majority of the variables including depression, anxiety, neuroticism, being afraid of parents and punishments, belonging, and life satisfaction

Table 2: Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1-Authoritative											
2-Authoritarian	-.45**										
3-Permissive	-.12	-.15									
4-Uninvolved	-.09	-.04	.25*								
5-Conflict	-.28*	.22	.20	.27*							
6-Belonging	.39**	-.17	-.11	-.28*	-.36**						
7-Anxiety	-.29**	.25*	.25*	-.05	.43**	-.46**					
8-Depression	-.30**	.10	.20	.16	.36**	-.55**	.59**				
9-Neuroticism	-.34**	.24*	.32**	.03	.41**	-.60**	.66**	.70**			
10-Afraid of parents	-.40**	-.58**	.07	.19	.42**	-.40**	.26*	.24*	.42**		
11-Life satisfaction	.32**	-.14	-.10	-.27*	-.23*	.60**	-.50**	-.42**	-.39**	-.19	

N = 78

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Analysis of American and Chinese Participants

	Nationality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	p
Authoritative	Chinese	20	7.05	1.88	.16	44	.87
	American	26	6.96	1.80			
Authoritarian	Chinese	20	6.00	1.89	-1.77	44	.08
	American	26	7.00	1.90			
Permissive	Chinese	20	5.25	1.37	2.3	44	.03
	American	26	4.31	1.38			
Uninvolved	Chinese	20	4.90	1.29	3.1	44	.00
	American	26	3.69	1.32			

There was a significant difference between Chinese and American students in permissive and uninvolved parenting styles (see Table 3). There were no significant differences between Chinese and American students in authoritative and authoritarian parental styles, though American students reported more authoritarian parenting than Chinese students.

Discussion

The results of the current study showed the connection between parental styles and a variety of outcomes. Authoritative parenting was mainly related to positive results and outcomes, while the other three types were related to negative consequences.

A few findings worth noticing:

- Uninvolved parenting had the worst effect
- Not much difference was found between Chinese and American students
- Parental conflicts were related to several variables including anxiety, depression, and neuroticism, belonging, and life satisfaction.
- Parental conflict was the only factor that was significantly related to memory recall. People who reported negative memories of their families reported higher levels of parental conflict.
- Sense of belonging was correlated with a number of factors such as authoritative and uninvolved parenting styles, mental health, personality, and life satisfaction.

Conclusion

It is important for parents to learn about and utilize authoritative parenting when fostering children, which involves creating a supportive and responsive space for children to live in.

It is also vital for parents to provide more care and attention to children in order to help children feel more assured and satisfied about their identity and life, which will in turn increase children's sense of belonging and life fulfillment.