

THE ROLE OF PARENTING STYLES ON AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS

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The aim of this research was to investigate the extremely different roles of both fathers' and mothers' parenting styles on aggressive behaviour of primary school students. The research focused on the aspects of parents' role, perception, implications and problems related to parenting styles, and to investigate how the role of parenting styles could manage the aggressive behaviour of students in primary schools. This research used quantitative approach and data was analysed using SPSS software. For the purposes of predicting which party would suffer the most consequences as a result of increased aggressive behaviour, a survey method (questionnaire) was employed. The questionnaires were distributed to 162 respondents from three primary schools located in Johor Bahru, a southern state in Malaysia. Results indicated that both internal and external problem behaviours among students increased their aggressive behaviours.

Keywords : Parents' Role, Aggressive Behaviour, Parenting Styles, Primary Schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to (Fogany *et al.*, 1997; Loeber and Hay, 1997), aggressive behaviour is a serious social issue, especially among adolescents. It was ascertained that adolescents often turn to aggressive behaviours and have many ways of inflicting pain and damage on their victims through fighting, arguing, backbiting or intriguing. It was implied by the Malaysian media that over the last five years, the number of violent cases relating to bullying in schools have escalated (Yaakub, Haron and Goh, 2010). Typically, students, who resort to aggressive behaviours, appear to have a need to feel formidable and controlling. Previous research have shown that aggressiveness often originate from families, in which methods of physical retribution are used in situations of low level of self-control. In such circumstances, children learn to react in physical ways when faced with problems. This is especially true in families lacking parental involvement and warmth. In addition, individuals may be more motivated to resort to aggressive behaviors if they have poor peer relationships. Also, Brezina (1998) found that the dearth of parents-children bonding was related to both maltreatment and delinquency. It was also ascertained that the risk factors increased in individuals from broken homes and single parent families (Aguilar *et al.*, 2000).

Parenting styles play a significant role in controlling children's behaviour in each family. Accordingly, a warmth environment is an important determinant of the effects of aggressive behaviour. On the contrary, children may perceive that

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their parents are exerting control, autonomy and power in the parents-children relationship when parents demonstrate high parental control in situations where the emotional climate is poor. As such, children's adjustment does not only concern the additive and distinctive arrangements of specific parenting features (Cummings *et al.*, 2000). Instead, it also includes their experience with various patterns or profiles of parenting features. For instance, both internalised and externalised behaviour disorders can develop as a result of marital struggles. In addition, many authors have argued that both scarcity of parental involvement in their children's activities and insufficient monitoring are strongly linked with externalised behaviour disorders (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Patterson *et al.*, 1998).

Many researchers have carried out both prevention and intervention programs to prevent the emergence of aggressive behaviour in childhood. Nevertheless, the problem persists, and thus the said phenomenon is not a new issue. The lack of parents' involvement in activities organised by schools and their negative attitudes towards teaching staff are also closely associated with behaviour disorders in children (Fortin and Mercier, 1994). Despite the complexity of the problem, it is very possible to determine the trajectories of students, who exhibit aggressive behaviour, at a very early stage. Accordingly, various factors should be considered such as the parents-children association, which has an essential role to play in the understanding of the children's behaviour (*i.e.*, children may perhaps need more attention, time, focus and love from their parents). Furthermore, according to Cummings *et al.* (2000), parental upbringing can be passably described by two aspects, namely (a) care and (b) control.

Nonetheless, presently, it is possible that many different aspects of parenting styles and family experiences are also linked to bullying/victimization behaviours. Relatedly, communication between both parents and children are crucial in the latter's development. In the past, scholars have found that aggressiveness is more prevalent in families in which both the parental roles and child-rearing methods are authoritarian, which can be described by austerity. Indeed, it was ascertained that students from pluralistic (*i.e.*, nurturing and supportive) homes would continue to trust and depend on their parents, in contrast to their counterparts, who hail from laissez-faire (*i.e.*, neglecting and unhelpful) or protective (*i.e.*, strict) homes (Moore and Moschis, 1978). The authors added that laissez-faire families are also inclined to focus less devotion to their children on the whole, while protective families often restrict their children's freedom. In addition, there are other research that aimed at investigating both high and low concepts as well as techniques relating to socio-oriented communication (Bakir *et al.*, 2005).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENTS

Although Malaysia's economic is improving, the country's education and efforts towards preventing issues revolving aggressive behaviour remain poor. As such,

today, problems related to aggressive behaviours in schools have escalated, and are indeed an extremely serious issue. The said problems continue to persist in the country despite the turn of the 21st century. Many previous studies have focused on the gap and possible solutions for the said issue. Nevertheless, the problems continue to grow. In relation to Malaysia's economic transformation, high technology has emerged as a high priority. Indeed, the initiative has resulted in problems relating to the use of internet, and thus the Malaysian Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) was initiated.

Many cases of students demonstrating aggressive behaviours have gone viral on the internet these days. Hazler (1996) argued that both aggressive and victimisation behaviours are strongly correlated with both parenting and family environment. The author also added that the effects may linger for several generations of aggression and hostility. Students learn from their environments, and as such, the role of parenting styles is extremely important in shaping their attitudes. Hence, this present research developed a framework to ascertain the role of parenting styles towards the aggressive behaviours of primary school students (see Figure 1). Given that, this current study contributed to the related body of literature (*i.e.*, in regards to both parenting and aggression among adolescents).

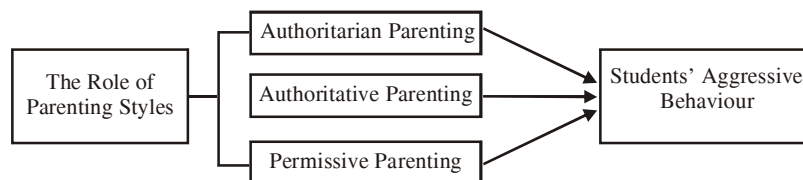


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3. OBJECTIVES

This current research was set up to ascertain the function of parenting styles on the aggressive behaviours of primary school students. Particularly, it was consisted of four objectives, including:

- (i) The gender of primary school students, who demonstrate aggressive behaviours.
- (ii) The effective role of parenting styles on aggressive behaviours of primary school students.
- (iii) The different roles of both fathers' and mothers' parenting styles on aggressive behaviours of primary school students.
- (iv) How the role of parenting styles can manage the aggressive behaviours of primary school students.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Baumrind (1971) first used the term ‘control’ as a dimension to characterise three major types of parenting. According to Baumrind (1991), both demandingness and responsiveness are ‘measuring’ tools to identify the three parenting styles (see Figure 2), which are authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. Relatedly, the meaning of responsiveness in this present study was how receptive parents are to their children’s needs and whims. On the other hand, demandingness was related to control, and the term can be depicted on a continuum, in which one can assess the amount of control parents apply on their children. This is based on the parents’ expectations of ‘matured’ behaviours. In Figure 2, Baumrind’s two factor continuums is shown (*e.g.* high demandingness versus low demandingness and high responsiveness versus low responsiveness).

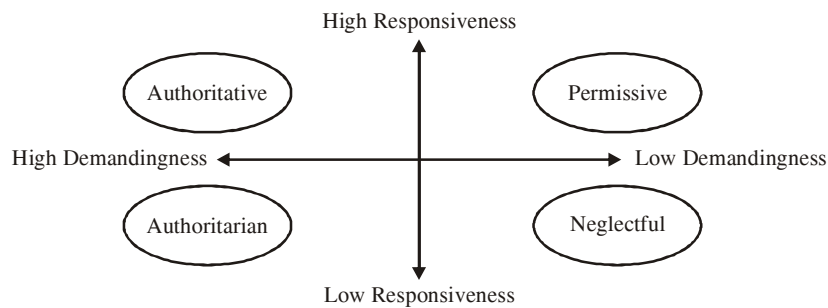


Figure 2: Baumrind’s (1991) Three Parenting Styles Model.

According to previous studies, children with authoritative parents do well in school and grow up to be happy, confident, responsible and respectful adults. Authoritative parents not keeping their children as soft as of preventive of aggressive behaviour. On the contrary, most parents under this category monitor their children and regulate their attitudes, while providing them warmth and love. As such, authoritative parents can be considered as perfect parents for all children as they pay attention to their children’s needs and give them autonomy in life while setting standard rules to ensure they do not stray too far off.

Conversely, authoritarian parents are judgemental and view the world as good or bad or right or wrong. Therefore, the said parenting style revolves around both judgment and evaluation (*i.e.*, a child is either good or bad or well-behaved or mischievous). Research has found that children with authoritarian parents do not grow up to be as socially skillful in comparison to their counterparts with authoritative and permissive parents. Moreover, they do not react to frustration well (*i.e.*, girls are inclined to giving up when faced with challenges while boys have the tendency to retort with aggressiveness). Children with authoritarian parents are also more susceptible to low self-esteem, anxiety and depression.

Finally, permissive parents believe in equality and autonomy of the individual. As a result, they reach to their children's needs in a tolerant and affective way. Believing in equality, permissive parents include their children in decision making processes. In addition, children are urged to communicate, discuss and express themselves, as oppose to simply obeying.

Referring back to authoritarian method of parenting, Baumrind (1991) added that this category of parents often demonstrate unfriendly behaviour towards their children, and strictly demand that they follow erected rules and decisions. Simultaneously, authoritarian parents train their children's minds to believe that they would be accepted should they do well and that they would be punished if they fail. As such, children of authoritarian parents will have to constantly satisfy their parents' goals, behave well, do well in their studies and secure good jobs.

Fung and Tsang (2006) indicated that aggressive behaviours among young children has since emerged as a critical issue in both Hong Kong and China. Given that, the need to investigate the role of parenting styles towards aggressive behaviours is significant to prevent further escalation of the said issue. Studies could focus on the effects of nurturance and warmth behaviours, or consider both indirect and direct aggression.

5. METHODOLOGY

Respondents of this study were 12 year old students from primary schools in Johor Bahru, Malaysia. Specifically, three Chinese Primary Schools (SJK(C)) in Skudai were selected, and the target population was 280 students. The sample size for the population was 162 students (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). All participants were volunteers, who were selected using the random sampling method. They were notified of their rights to not partake in the study. The respondents were also told that withdrawal from the study was possible at any stage of the study, and that no reprimands would be handed for their withdrawal. Participants were instructed to complete the given questionnaire accordingly.

The instrument used in this study consisted of several sections, namely a demographic segment, Aggressive Questionnaire (AQ) and Children's Report of Parenting Behaviours Inventory (CRPBI). Demographic data were collected with the purpose of identifying students' gender and race as well as their parents' academic qualifications. This was to enable a descriptive analysis on the participants' family background. On the other hand, CRPBI was included to collect data relating to children's perception of their parents' role of parenting styles or their parents' behaviours. The said inventory was developed by Schaefer (1965) and was translated into a Chinese language version in 1987 by Kaillaam (as cited in Ruslina, 2001). The scales used to measure the research variables were developed according to previous studies (*e.g.*, Chung and Asher, 1996; Erdley and Asher, 1996, 1999; Rabiner and Gordon, 1992; Rose and Asher, 1999).

Finally, AQ consisted of 30 questions, which were designed to assess the children's perceptions about bullying others (Olweus, as cited in Losey, 2009). There were ten questions for each parenting style (*i.e.*, authoritarianism, authoritativeness and permissiveness). Participants were asked to respond to each question according to how important it is to them based on a five-point adjective rating scale (*i.e.*, between 1 – strong disagree and 5 – strong agree).

Prior to the real study, a sample of 30 Standard Six students (12 years old) participated in a pilot study. Results from the pilot study confirmed the reliability of the instruments (Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 for CRPBI and 0.86 for AQ).

6. FINDINGS

The collected data were analysed based on the objectives of this study. Demographic data provided details relating to the respondents' gender and race as well as their parents' education level. Referring to Table 1, there were equal number of male and female respondents (50.0% or 81 participants). According to Table 2, there were 14 Malay respondents (8.6%). As many as 142 respondents (87.7%) identified themselves as Chinese, while the remaining 6 participants (3.7%) were of other races.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY GENDER

<i>Frequency</i>		<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>	
Valid	Male	81	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Female	81	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total		162	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY RACE

<i>Frequency</i>		<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>	
Valid	Malay	14	8.6	8.6	8.6
	Chinese	142	87.7	87.7	96.3
	Others	6	3.7	3.7	100.0
Total		162	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 illustrates the respondents' father's education level. A majority of them indicated primary school level (67.9% or 110 respondents). 30 participants (18.5%) indicated secondary school level, while 22 participants (13.7%) stated college/university level. In Table 4, the respondents' mother's education level are shown. Accordingly, 119 respondents (73.5%) denoted primary school level, while 37 (22.8%) and 6 (3.7%) participants indicated secondary and college/university levels respectively.

TABLE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' FATHER'S EDUCATION LEVEL

<i>Frequency</i>		<i>Percent Valid Percent Cumulative Percent</i>			
Valid	Primary	110	67.9	67.9	67.9
	Secondary	30	18.5	18.5	86.4
	College/University	22	13.6	13.6	100.0
Total		162	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' MOTHER'S EDUCATION LEVEL

<i>Frequency</i>		<i>Percent Valid Percent Cumulative Percent</i>			
Valid	Primary	119	73.5	73.5	73.5
	Secondary	37	22.8	22.8	96.3
	College/University	6	3.7	3.7	100.0
Total		162	100.0	100.0	

In Table 5, the respondents' parents' parenting styles are illustrated. As can be seen, a majority of the parents were found to prefer the authoritarian parenting style (54.9% or 89 respondents). This is followed by the permissive parenting style at 32.7% (53 respondents) and authoritative at 12.4% (20 respondents).

TABLE 5: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF RESPONDENTS' PARENT'S PARENTING STYLES

<i>Frequency</i>		<i>Percent Valid Percent Cumulative Percent</i>			
Valid	Authoritativeness	20	12.4	12.4	12.4
	Authoritarianism	89	54.9	54.9	87.6
	Permissiveness	53	32.7	32.7	100.0
Total		162	100.0	100.0	

7. DISCUSSION

The results indicated that participants perceived that both parents treated them somewhat similarly (Rinaldi and Howe, 2012; Winsler *et al.*, 2005). To summarise, it was observable that the authoritarian parenting style is linked to poor levels of implicit self-esteem, while children with authoritative and permissive parents demonstrated similar levels of self-esteem. There are several previous research that have merged both maternal and paternal parenting styles as an integrated technique (Forehand and Nousiainen, 1993; Hickman, Bartholomae and McKenry, 2000; Hoeve, *et al.*, 2011; Milevsky, Schlechter, Klem and Kehl, 2008) because in line with the family system perspective, these styles are theorised as interdependent units, and as such they are able to contribute significantly towards their children's functioning and development (Lindsey and Mize, 2001).

Based on previous literature, it was assumed that the role of parenting style information occurs through socialisation, and the traits could be a learning effect from modelling parental characteristics. Given the results of the present study,

respondents rated their parents' authoritarian parenting style significantly higher than other two parenting styles. It was reported that parents with authoritative parenting style may be more inclined to raising androgynous children. In addition, according to Georgiou (2009), maternal depressiveness and peer aggression are positively associated, and the two are linked with both child bullying and victimisation experiences in school. Furthermore, establishing boundaries with the aim of thwarting a child's behaviour at home is not always easy, and this was found to be related to peer aggression in school. However, one technique of curbing aggressive behaviours depend on the impacts of both authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles (Laor *et al.*, 1997; Punamaki, Oouta and El-Sarraj, 2001).

In general, parents, whose children are engaged in aggressiveness, will be more inclined to develop issues relating to poor family functioning and parent-child relationship. Moreover, Patterson (1986) noted that a numerous research have demonstrated that within a social influence framework, children learn to be aggressive towards those who are powerless, as a result of witnessing how their family members interact and communicate with one another. In addition, it was argued that children, who bully at school, are most likely copying the acts of their parents at home. Therefore, it could be concluded that parenting styles that include punitive and unpredictable reprimand lead aggressive behaviours in children. In addition, parents are more likely to have an authoritarian relationship with their sons, which includes having firm rules as well as demanding teaching for their sons than daughters (Shek, 1998). Indeed, Talib, Mohamad and Mamat (2011) indicated that Malaysian parents employed more authoritarian and permissive parenting styles to their sons, as compared to their daughters.

The findings of this study found no specific link between parenting styles and students' gender. In addition, it is vital to note that it was ascertained that the authoritarian parenting style, combined with insufficient indications or directions as well as increased parental involvement, will result in adverse impacts. Parents with such parenting styles should therefore be the focus of future research. In addition, future studies should also investigate the implications of how the findings of this study associate with the mental health of the aggressive children. To conclude, the results indicate that parenting styles are critical in primary school students' development. Also, when assessing the impacts of skills on aggressive behaviours, it was found that aggressive skills were the strongest factor.

Most of the parents in this study were perceived to have authoritative parenting style, which was significantly associated with their children. It is therefore implied that parents will need to be more receptive towards their children so as to better develop their children's behaviours. Lastly, a final question for future studies relates to a suitable framework that can be proposed to overcome the issue of authoritarian parenting style and its association with aggressive behaviour, especially among primary school students, in this era of globalisation.

Finally, this study had several limitations. One of which relates to the theoretical development of the roles of parenting styles, which is needed to prevent aggressive behaviours. As such, it was proposed that future research should include family patterns as well. Nonetheless, despite the limitations, this present study was still able to significantly contribute towards relevant body of literature.

8. CONCLUSION

To summarise, the findings of this present study contributed to both school and family education. In addition, this study also provided recent information about aggressive behaviour of Malaysian children and the parenting styles of Malaysian parents. It has illustrated the importance of understanding the roles of both parents' parenting styles. Analysed results concurred the significant and vital roles of parenting styles, and that parents should include some values of authoritative parenting to allow and support a positive upbringing and development of their children. This comes as recent issues of aggressiveness in the country have called for increased attention towards the issue as the said social problem can be fatal. Therefore, parents are encouraged to adopt an adequate parenting style, as was suggested by Baumrind (1991), which is the authoritative parenting style. Furthermore, the new generation of this country needs to and must develop well in terms of morality and character for the future of the country. Thus, it is hoped that the findings of this study would also be useful for teachers, schools and related parties to assist them in creating awareness in relation to the role of parenting style in the development of children.

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