

Effects of Parenting Style on Self-Control among Children and Adolescents

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Abstract:

The family is a crucial place for individual socialization. It is the earliest and lifelong environment closely connected to a person. Among various family factors, parenting style is the most significant factor influencing the development of individual self-control ability. Self-control, as a concentrated manifestation of human consciousness and subjective initiative, is essential for individuals to complete tasks, coordinate relationships, and successfully adapt to society. A child's self-control ability is crucial for their life and future development. Through parenting style, children learn how to manage emotions, control impulses, set goals, and persevere, all essential components of self-control. Therefore, choosing the right parenting style to cultivate a child's good self-control ability is an important research direction. This paper aims to explore the relationship between parenting style and self-control ability, revealing the correct parenting style that can shape good self-control abilities. Additionally, with the widespread use and development of technology, children's smartphone dependency has become a perplexing issue for most parents. Hence, this study also investigates the role of self-control as a mediator between parenting style and smartphone dependency. To achieve the research goals, this study employs interdisciplinary research methods such as psychology and education for co-analysis. The study finds that different parenting styles have different shaping effects on self-control abilities. Self-control plays a significant mediating role between parenting style and problematic behaviors.

Keywords: Parenting style; self-control; mediating role

1. Introduction

Parenting style refers to the guidance and nurturing behaviors of parents that can influence a child's development [1]. Self-control develops alongside individual self-awareness, self-evaluation, and self-experience, representing an important aspect of individual socialization and a crucial function of self-system development. Parental parenting style is the most important factor influencing the development of individual self-control abilities, continuously playing a role throughout a person's life.

Delving into the relationship between parenting style and children's self-control, as well as the mediating role of self-control between parenting style and children's behaviors, is a significant importance for understanding the impact of the family environment on children's behavioral development. This not only enhances the effectiveness of family education but also provides theoretical support for intervening in and preventing problematic behaviors in children.

By reviewing relevant studies, this paper explores the concepts and relationships between parental parenting

style and self-control. Subsequently, it analyzes the impact of parenting style on children's problematic behaviors and explores the mechanisms through which self-control operates within them. This paper aims to thoroughly investigate the relationship between parenting style and children's self-control. It also seeks to uncover the mechanisms through which self-control operates between parenting style and children's behaviors. The aims of this paper are to provide theoretical guidance for family education practices. Additionally, the paper aims to promote healthy growth and behavioral development in children. Through this study, we hope to fill the existing research gaps and offer new research perspectives and insights in relevant fields.

2. Instruction to the Research Objects

2.1 Introduction to the Concept of Family Parenting Style

The composition of parenting attitudes and behaviors are called parenting style. Parenting style is stable in different situations. Among all the environmental factors that influ-

ence young children's social development, parenting style is one of the most influential and direct factors [2].

Parenting style's top famous classification method is made by Baumrind. He defined parenting style as teaching and nurturing behaviors that can influence children's development. Baumrind divided parenting style into authoritative, authoritarian and permissive based on the way parents discipline their children [1]. Authoritative parents have appropriate demands on their children. But they also care children's thoughts and respect their independence. Authoritarian parents are strict with children and ask children to obey them. Permissive parents do not have clear requirements for their children. They prefer making children's personal wishes as a priority.

Building on the Baumrind's theory, Maccoby and Martin divided permissive parenting into indulgent and neglecting [3]. Based on Chinese culture background, Chinese scholars also have classified parenting style in different ways.

Different scholars classified parenting style in different ways. But all of these categories can be divided into two aspects: positive and negative parenting styles. In positive parenting style, the relationship between parent and child is warm and trusting. Negative parenting style mainly contains the punishing, denying and overprotective relationship between parents and children.

This paper will focus on the Baumrind's theory as well as positive and negative styles of family parenting.

2.2 Definition of Self-Control

Self-control is one of the core characteristics that distinguishes humans from other species. It promotes significantly to all aspects of human life. Self-control is an ability that an individual can control emotional impulses and behaviors when facing external temptations.

Different scholars held different understandings of self-control. Definitions of self-control can be divided into two categories according to focus. One category emphasizes self-control initiatives. Another group of scholars argued self-control as an ability. Although there are many research perspectives on the definition of self-control, the essence of the definitions is consistent. They all reveal the subjective inhibition of negative behavior.

3. Review of Relevant Literature

3.1 Studies on Family Parenting Style

During children's growth, parents influence them a lot by their behaviors. Parenting style has been discussed in the international literature as important predictors of many aspects in childhood and adolescence.

3.1.1 Parenting Style and Children's School Achieve-

ment

It has been suggested that factors affecting children's academic performance include motivation, self-efficacy, parenting style, teacher-student relationships, and peer relationships. Among all these factors, parenting style is the most important one. Based on this view, educators and psychologists have been interested in the relationship between parenting style and academic achievement for a long time.

Ye Sun et al. sampled 4,411 students, of whom 351 were middle school students, 1,547 were high school students, and 2,513 were more highly educated. Students' school achievement is measured by the average of the student's grades in the three main subjects in the final exam [4]. Junior and senior high school students used grades from language, math, and English courses, while other students chose grades from three specialized courses. The study found that positive parenting style positively predicted the academic achievement of high school middle school students. Indulgent parenting style negatively predicted the academic achievement of middle and high school students [4]. However, college life means living without parents. Academic achievement is not the main element in evaluating students in a diverse college life. Thus these students' academic performance is not as affected by parenting style as middle and high school students [4]. The research population for this study can include a younger group of students. This would help visualize more changes in the impact of parenting style on children's academic performance during their formative years.

3.1.2 Parenting Style and Children's Mental Health

There are two main factors that influence the mental health, one being external environmental factors and the other being internal factors. As an important part of the external environment factor, parenting style shapes children's psychological behaviors by parenting attitudes and behaviors during children's development.

XiangYi Li et al. 's study based on 638 college students, including 181 freshmen, 139 sophomores, 112 juniors, and 182 seniors and above. The Family Parenting Style Scale (EMBU), the Self-Concept Scale (WCSC), and the Self-Reporting Mental [5]. Health Measurement Scale (SRHMS) are used for investigate, and the data were statistically analyzed using SPSS 26.0. The results of the study show that there is a positive correlation between positive parenting style and college students' mental health and a negative correlation between negative parenting style and college students' mental health. Self-concept only plays a complete mediating role between the father's positive parenting style and the college students' mental health [5]. It partially mediated the relationship between

the mother's positive parenting style, the parents' negative parenting style and the mental health of college students [5].

3.1.3 Parenting Style and Children's Adjustment

Parenting style is associated with a range of child development outcomes. Different parenting style has different impacts on children's socialization and independence, leading to different adjustment.

Kaufmann et al. administered the child-rearing practices report (CRPR) questionnaire to mothers in grades one through five at 14 elementary schools in central Florida [6]. These questionnaires used to obtain information about their children's parenting styles. The Child Health Survey (CHS) and the AML Behavior Rating Scale-Revised (AML-R) are two scales used to show children's adjustment to society and school. The Child Health Survey (CHS) is scored by parents as indicators of behavioral and emotional problems as well as factors likely to interfere with school performance. The AML Behavior Rating Scale-Revised (AML-R) that is designed to assess acting-out behaviors, moodiness and learning difficulties is scored by teachers. Teachers evaluate each item using a five-point scale to describe the frequency of the behavior from 1 (never) to 5 (all the time), reflecting the period since the start of the school year. Results indicated that authoritative parenting style had a negative correlation with teacher-rated maladaptive behavior, while having a positive correlation with indicators of healthy adjustment [6]. There was little or no significant correlation between authoritarian parenting and children's adjustment [6]. But the research is missing the categorization of children's adaptations, such as adaptation to the environment, adaptation to knowledge, and so on.

3.2 Studies on the Effects of Self-Control

Self-control has been studied widely. This section mainly focuses on affecting levels of self-control.

Factors that influencing self-control include physiological factors, internal factors, and external environmental factors. Cognitive neuroscience research suggests found that effective self-control relies on top-down control from the prefrontal cortex over subcortical regions involved in reward and emotion [7]. The findings support the balance model of self-regulation, which states that self-regulation fails whenever balance is tipped in favor of subcortical areas, either due to particularly strong impulses or when prefrontal function itself is impaired.

Emotional state, as an intra-individual factor, has some effects on self-control. Compared with neutral emotions, happy and proud emotions can compensate for the resources consumed by self-defeat and thus promote

self-control [8]. Sadness and shame have no effect on self-control [8].

Family structure plays a significant role in shaping self-control. Disruption or changes in family structure can change parents' attitudes towards parenting and lead to inconsistencies in disciplinary practices [9]. This ultimately impacting the self-control of young individuals.

4. Effect of Family Parenting Style on Self-Control

4.1 Research by Age Group

Research on self-control is categorized by age, focusing on two main groups: young children and adolescents. Young children's self-control ability is a crucial feature of their socialization. As a group newly integrated into society, the influence that social factors put on them are not remarkable. Parents serve as the first teachers in a child's growth journey, and the parenting methods they employ directly influence the child's development.

In the study conducted by Xueling Gao, 300 young children from two kindergartens were invited. This group included 116 children in the senior class, 107 in the middle class, and 57 in the junior class, with a total of 600 questionnaires distributed. Among these, 300 parenting questionnaires were used for parents to determine the categories of parenting style, including dimensions such as indulgence, democracy, permissiveness, authoritarianism, and inconsistency [10]. Another 300 questionnaires focused on children's self-control abilities were distributed to teachers to evaluate children's self-control across dimensions like conscientiousness, perseverance, self-discipline, and delayed gratification [10]. The study revealed a negative correlation between indulgent parenting style and children's self-control abilities [10]. Indulgent parenting is not good for children to control short-term desires. The parents are unwilling to expose children to challenging situations, so they offer help to children positively. Additionally, authoritarian parenting style were also negatively correlated with children's self-control [10]. The more parents tend to favor authoritarian parenting style, the more it impedes a child's development of self-control, as authoritarian education deprives children of opportunities to manage and control themselves. The study also found that inconsistencies in parenting style made it more challenging for children to develop self-control, because conflicting parental thoughts and behaviors prevent children from forming a cohesive self-concept [10].

Moreover, Xueling Gao's study considered various factors such as parents' educational levels, occupations, the impact of age on parenting style, as well as the influence of children's gender, age, parents' ages, and parents' educa-

tional levels on children's self-control. For instance, girls shown higher levels of conscientiousness, self-discipline, and delayed gratification compared to boys. The best development of children's self-control abilities was observed when parents were aged between 31-40. The stability of parents' work also benefits the cultivation of children's self-control abilities. The study actively identified multiple variables that affect levels of self-control. However, it focused solely on how factors like gender, age, parents' ages, and parents' educational levels influence parenting style or self-control, without exploring how these variables impact the relationship between parenting style and self-control. It is lacking strong relevance to the main research direction of the article.

Middle school students are typical representatives of adolescents. The middle school stage is a transitional period from childhood to early adulthood, accompanied by significant physiological and psychological changes. During this stage, the relationship between parents and children becomes more sensitive, and the impact of parenting style on children is magnified.

Xiu Jiang's study randomly selected 520 students from nine classes in a certain middle school as participants. The study used questionnaires on self-control abilities for middle school students and the Parental Rearing Behavior Scale (EMBU) to assess parenting style [11]. The questionnaire for middle school students' self-control abilities used a 5-point scale ranging from "completely inconsistent" to "completely consistent" to evaluate their self-control. Higher scores indicated better self-control abilities. The Parental Rearing Behavior Scale (EMBU) employed a 4-point scale ranging from "never" to "always" to categorize parenting style. The study found a significant positive correlation between positive parenting style characterized by warmth and understanding and middle school students' self-control abilities [11]. Conversely, negative parenting style (harsh punishment, excessive interference, rejection, denial, and overprotection) were significantly negatively correlated with middle school students' self-control abilities [11]. Additionally, Jiang Xiu proposed that middle school students' self-control abilities partially mediate the relationship between parenting style and problematic behaviors [11]. Parenting style can directly influence the problematic behaviors of middle school students or indirectly impact them by affecting self-control abilities.

This study provides a comprehensive examination of parenting style, self-control abilities, and problematic behaviors. However, it faces problems such as a single research sample and a single source of survey questionnaires. Both questionnaires on self-control abilities and parenting style were filled out by students, leading to lower reliability. If both parents and children could each complete two ques-

tionnaires, providing a comprehensive assessment, the study would be more credible.

4.2 Mediating Role of Self-Control

Research on parenting style and self-control rarely focuses solely on their relationship. Most of studies introduce a new variable while exploring their connection. Self-control acts as a mediator between parenting style and another variable, transmitting and explaining the influence. As an intermediary variable, self-control reveals the mechanisms and processes between parenting style and the other variable. Problematic behaviors are common among children and adolescents, negatively impacting individual development and social adaptation. Smartphone dependency among teenagers serves as a typical representation of problematic behavior. This paper primarily discusses the mediating role of self-control between parenting style and smartphone dependency.

Guang Xu's study targeted middle school students, distributing 389 questionnaires to grades seven, eight, and nine. Parenting styles were assessed using the Parenting Styles Evaluation Scale compiled by the medical team from Umea University in Sweden and revised by Chinese scholars like Dongmei Yue [12]. This scale separated parents' parenting style into factors such as emotional warmth and understanding, punishment and strictness, and excessive interference and overprotection. The middle school students' Self-evaluation Control Scale included factors like thought control, emotional stability, and behavioral execution. The middle school students' Smartphone Dependency Scale included factors like loss of control, withdrawal symptoms, and avoidance. All three questionnaires were filled out by the middle school students. The study results revealed a significant negative correlation between parenting style and self-control [12]. There was a significant negative correlation between parenting style and smartphone dependency. Self-control showed a significant negative correlation with smartphone dependency. Self-control had a very clear negative predictive effect on smartphone dependency, and parenting style had a negative predictive effect on smartphone dependency. Middle school students' self-control played a mediating role in the relationship between middle school parenting style and smartphone dependency. The study used self-assessment to examine the behavior of the participants. Middle school students' self-judgment may not be entirely clear. Surveys targeting parents and teachers could be used to reduce measurement errors.

Fuwen Li et al. used Parenting Style Questionnaire, Smartphone Dependency Index Scales, and Self-control Scale to survey 426 college students to explore the relationship between parenting style, college students' smart-

phone dependency, and the mediating role of self-control [13]. The parenting style questionnaire utilized the revised Brief Parenting Style Questionnaire by Jiang Jiang et al. , with 21 identical questions in the father and mother versions, covering dimensions like rejection, emotional warmth, and overprotection. The smartphone dependency index scale included factors like loss of control, withdrawal symptoms, avoidance, and inefficiency. The self-control scale comprised factors like impulse control, work or study performance, healthy habits, resisting temptation, and moderate entertainment. The results showed that self-control partially mediated the relationship between parenting style and college students' smartphone dependency [13]. Parental rejection and overprotection were detrimental to the development of children's self-control. The former made children feel their control was thwarted, while the latter might deprive children of opportunities to exercise self-control, leading to a lack of inhibitory control over smartphone use. Parental emotional warmth met children's emotional needs, reduced smartphone dependency behavior, provided opportunities for children's self-control development, and thereby controlled smartphone dependency. The study was limited by the questionnaire method and cross-sectional design, making it unable to establish exact causal relationships. Future research could employ longitudinal studies to investigate the impact of parenting style on children's smartphone dependency.

5. Discussion and Suggestion

5.1 Summaries

Through reviewing relevant studies, this study found that positive parenting style are positively correlated with self-control abilities in both children and adolescents, while negative parenting style show the opposite relationship. Furthermore, self-control plays a mediating role between parenting style and problematic behaviors, meaning that parents' parenting style influence their children's problematic behaviors through affecting their self-control abilities. The research not only reveals the impact of parenting style on self-control but also highlights the crucial role of self-control in the process of family upbringing, providing theoretical support for improving parenting practices, preventing, and intervening in children's problematic behaviors.

5.2 Suggestions and Prospects

This study advocates maintaining warm and understanding positive parenting style in family education. Authoritarian elements in parenting style should be reduced. Parents should cultivate their children's self-control abilities

through appropriate parenting style. Children with strong self-control can better manage impulses, delay gratification, plan, and achieve goals, thus making it easier to avoid problematic behaviors.

Although research on parenting style and self-control is abundant, most studies do not differentiate between fathers and mothers. Many papers only focus on positive and negative parenting style, lacking diverse categorizations of parenting style. For instance, studying the relationships between authoritative, authoritarian, permissive parenting style and self-control separately. This may require a large sample size to ensure comprehensive understanding of different parenting style.

Future research directions on parenting style and self-control could explore the absolute impact of parenting style on self-control from the perspectives of families with different cultural backgrounds and varied family compositions.

6. Conclusion

The relationship between parenting style and self-control is the main focus of this study. The research shows that, for both children and adolescents, positive parenting style is positively correlated with self-control abilities, while negative parenting style is negatively correlated with self-control. Additionally, self-control plays a mediating role between parenting style and problematic behaviors. This study provides theoretical guidance for educating children on self-control, promoting healthy growth and behavioral development in children and adolescents.

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