

Do Parenting Styles Affect Levels of Self-Esteem?

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Purpose and Background

Purpose

Alfred Adler, the founder of Individual Psychology, placed strong emphasis on the importance of family, especially parents, in the development of a child's well-being and sense of happiness (Gfroerer, Kern & Curlette, 2004). Positive parenting styles are believed to produce positive qualities in children, such as higher levels of self-esteem, responsibility, motivation for goal achievement and friendships (Furnham & Cheng, 2000)

Background

There has been a lot of previous research on the relationship between both actual and perceived parenting styles and an individual's level of self-esteem. Diana Baumrind has spent over 30 years conducting longitudinal research to examine parenting styles in relation to social and psychological adjustment, academic success, and general well-being of children and adolescents, and developed parental authority prototypes: Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive (Baumrind, 1966). Authoritarian style parents are abiding by strict rules and guidelines, with discouragement of verbal feedback, and is not warm or nurturing. Authoritative style parents are strict with expectation of appropriate conduct, yet willing to explain reasoning behind rules, and are warm and nurturing towards the child. Permissive style parents are non-disciplinary and child-centered, where few demands are placed on children and they have almost full control of their own lives. In 1991, John Buri created the Parental Authority Questionnaire for the purpose of measuring Baumrind's prototypes (Buri, 1991). More recently, Furnham and Cheng (2000), used Buri's Parental Authority Questionnaire to conduct a study focusing on the relationship between self-esteem and parenting styles. They found that Authoritative parenting is believed to be the "ideal" parenting style for child development, and it leads to children being independent, friendly, intellectually successful and have a higher level of self-esteem than the other two parenting styles. In this case, self-esteem is described as "global feelings of self-liking, self-worth, respect and acceptance" (Gregg, 2003).

The present research intends to replicate aspects of Furnham and Cheng's (2000) study by comparing perceived parenting styles and self-esteem, but by looking at both state self-esteem and overall self-esteem. The first hypothesis is that participants who perceive their parents' parenting style as Authoritative will have higher self-esteem than participants who perceive their parents' parenting styles as Authoritarian, as Permissive. It will also investigate if there is any difference according to gender.

Methods

Participants

The participants for this study were 120 students from a mid-sized state university in East Texas who volunteered to participate. The age range was 18-46, with the majority of the participants falling in the 18-23 range. There were 60 males and 60 females, however 7 participants' data were omitted because they did not clearly fall into a parenting style category, leaving 113 participants of 54 females and 59 males.

Design

The quasi-independent variables were perceived parenting styles and gender, and the dependent variable was self-esteem (operationalized with 2 measures, the Rosenberg overall self-esteem scale and the Current Thoughts state self-esteem scale).

Materials & Procedure

Participants were given a consent form to read, and once they gave their assent to participate, they were given a stapled packet with a fixed order of questionnaires to complete. The order of the questionnaires in the packet was: a demographics evaluation questionnaire, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Current Thoughts Questionnaire, and the Parental Authority Questionnaire. The demographics questionnaire asked for participants' age and gender.

Age was investigated as a possible covariate.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale consists of 10 questions that aimed to measure overall self-esteem level. The Current Thoughts Questionnaire is a self-esteem scale that measures state self-esteem level and consists of 20 statements designed to measure what the participant was thinking at the present moment.

The Parental Authority Questionnaire is a 30 question survey which has three sets of ten questions/statements. Each set is geared toward one of the three parenting styles. I slightly revised the PAQ by changing the word "mother" to "parents" on all questions in order to measure perceived parenting style for both parents.

There was not any counterbalancing in the order of the surveys. All questionnaires were scored on a Likert-type scale which ranged from either 0 to 3 or 1 to 5, with the lowest number meaning "strongly disagree" and the highest number meaning "strongly agree" in all cases.

When they finished all of the forms, participants were given a debriefing form to take with them as they left. It generally took participants no more than 15 minutes to complete all of the questionnaires.

Results

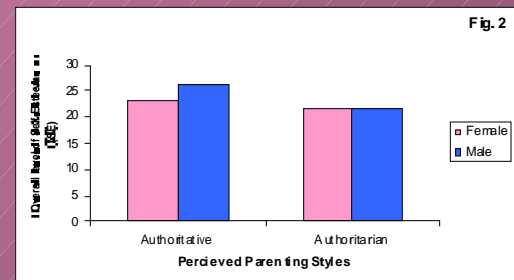
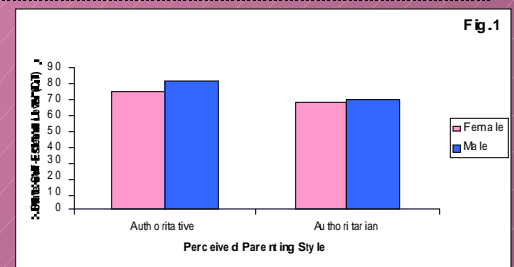
Correlations between scores of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Current Thoughts Self-Esteem Scale were significant with $r = .788$, $p < .05$. Age was looked at as a possible covariate for both self-esteem scales, and it showed significance with the Rosenberg scale, $r = .194$, $p < .05$, so it was included as a covariate for that measure.

After the participants were separated according to gender and parenting styles, it turned out that there was an extremely small number of participants who fell into the Permissive category (7 Males, 3 Females), therefore the Permissive category was dropped for the main analyses. However, the Permissive category was included in a 1X3 ANOVA for the Current Thoughts scale, and a 1X3 ANCOVA for the Rosenberg scale collapsing across gender for both.

The 1X3 (parenting styles: permissive, authoritarian, authoritative) for the CT scale showed significance, $F(2,112) = 9.83$, $p < .05$. The Tukey HSD test showed that there was significance between the means for Authoritative ($M = 78.42$) and Authoritarian parenting styles ($M = 68.72$), and also between Permissive ($M = 82.3$) and Authoritarian parenting styles ($M = 68.71$). This showed that participants with perceived Authoritative and Permissive parenting styles had significantly higher levels of self-esteem than those with Authoritarian styles. In the 1X3 (parenting styles: permissive, authoritarian, authoritative) ANCOVA showed significance with $F(2,111) = 11.09$, $p < .05$, showing that Authoritative and Permissive had higher self-esteem levels than Authoritarian.

The 2 (gender) X 2 (parenting style) ANOVA for the CT scale there was a main effect for gender, $F(1,102) = 4.68$, $p < .05$, so that males ($M = 76.48$) had higher self-esteem than females ($M = 71.25$). There was also a main effect for perceived parenting style, $F(1,102) = 16.07$, $p < .05$, so that Authoritative ($M = 78.42$) had higher self-esteem than Authoritarian ($M = 68.71$). There was no significant interaction effect. See Fig. 1.

For the 2 (gender) X 2 (parenting style) ANCOVA for the Rosenberg (SE) scale there was a main effect for perceived parenting styles, $F(1,98) = 0.19$, $p < 0.5$, so that Authoritative ($M = 24.76$) showed higher self-esteem than Authoritarian ($M = 21.54$). There was no main effect for gender and no significant interaction effect. See Fig. 1.



Discussion

The first hypothesis was supported because participants with perceived parenting style as Authoritative had a higher self-esteem levels for both state ($M = 76.48$) and overall self-esteem ($M = 24.76$) than participants with perceived Authoritarian parenting styles. Gender did have an impact on state self-esteem, with males ($M = 76.48$) having higher self-esteem than females ($M = 71.25$).

The second hypothesis of participants with perceived Permissive parenting styles having higher self-esteem than those with perceived Authoritarian parenting styles was partially supported with the mean for Permissive being higher than the mean for Authoritarian parenting styles when collapsed across gender in the 1X3 ANCOVA.

For future research, I think that having more participants in the Permissive category will make the comparisons more interesting to look at the difference in self-esteem levels for all categories with gender as variable. Also, I think future researchers should think about looking at the age that children are exposed to certain parenting styles. For example, some parents may begin raising their child using one particular parenting style, but as the child grows the parent may revert to a different type of parenting style. I also would like to see future research investigate if birth order has an effect on both parenting styles and self-esteem levels. But for now, we can conclude that Furnham and Cheng (2000) were right in saying that the Authoritative parenting style does seem to lead to higher levels of self-esteem.

References

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