

The Effects of Parent-child Attachment Style and Parenting Style on Children's Emotional Competence

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Abstract. Emotional competence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions. It has a significant impact on an individual's adaptability, overall well-being, social connectivity, and career success. The emotional competence of children is largely influenced by the environment in which children are raised, family dynamics and parental upbringing. The present study aims to explore the effects of parent-child attachment style and parenting style on children's emotional competence. Through a systematic review of studies involving different age groups and experimental methods, the results consistently show that children's emotional competence is positively correlated with secure parent-child attachment and authoritative parenting style. The practical significance of the present study is to promote a greater awareness of children's emotional competence within families and society. By enhancing parental understanding of the impact of parent-child attachment relationship and parenting style on children's emotional competence, this research aims to facilitate the adoption of more effective and reasonable family education methods.

Keywords: Children and parents, attachment, parenting style, emotional competence.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the development of children's emotional competence (EC) has attracted increasing attention and has become a widely discussed topic in academia and society. Studies have shown that it has a certain predictive effect on individual adaptation to the environment, survival and adaptability in society, as well as physical and mental health, social relations, and career success [1]. Improving children's emotional competence (EC) is a major concern for families. Previous studies have analyzed the effects of the family factors on children's EC from many aspects, such as parent-child attachment patterns, parenting styles, parents' own emotional competence, and family atmosphere.

This paper will discuss two significant aspects: the effects of attachment patterns and parenting styles on emotional competence of children. This paper systematically analyzes a number of studies, selecting literature that focused on different populations, cultural backgrounds, age stages, and experimental methods for research.

By analyzing the experimental results of different research subjects and methods, this paper aims to explore how different attachment patterns and parenting styles have affected children's emotional competence, promoting the concern of both families and society and utilizing more effective family education methods, give more attention to children's emotions, and improve children's emotional competence.

2. Instruction to the Research Objects

2.1. Emotional Competence

Emotional competence (EC) is a broad term that encompasses various skills related to emotions. In 1990, Saarni gave a definition on EC as "the demonstration of self-efficacy in the context of emotion-eliciting social transactions" [2]. Subsequently, Saarni proposed a developmental model, identifying eight core emotional abilities: self-awareness, recognition of others' emotions, the capacity to utilize emotional language, empathy and sympathy, distinguish between internal and external emotions, and develop adaptive coping strategies, understanding emotions' impact on interpersonal relationships, and emotional self-efficacy [3]. In general, emotional competence refers

to individuals' differences in emotion recognition, understanding, and regulation abilities. It plays a crucial role in individuals' adaptation to their environment, predicting their overall well-being, mental and physical health, human relations in society, and career achievement [1].

2.2. Attachment Theory and Parent-Child Attachment Style

Attachment is the primary bond formed between infants and their caregivers, usually their parents. Infants strive to stay close to their primary attachment figures. They would feel anxious when separated from their parents. Attachment gives infants with a sense of security, enabling them to explore their environment and establish a foundation for their relationships.

Attachment theory offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending social and emotional development. According to Bowlby's study in 1969, the quality of the relationship between parents and children laid the foundation for later developing of personality, where secure attachments contribute to healthy adaptations, and insecure attachments predict the risk of later dysfunctions and potential clinical symptoms [4].

In 1980, Ainsworth et al. categorizes children's attachment behavior into three types in the Strange Situation Procedure [5].

I. Secure attachment style

The secure attachment style indicates a stable and close bond between parents and children, characterized by mutual support. Parents show positive responses to their children's needs, providing security and emotional care. In this attachment style, children feel accepted and understood, which encourages them to explore the world while relying on their parents for support.

II. Insecure - avoidant attachment style

Parents may neglect or are unresponsive to their child's emotional needs, resulting in the child feeling neglected or undervalued. Children with this attachment style may exhibit behaviors that intentionally avoid their parents.

III. Insecure - anxious attachment style

Parents may provide an unpredictable emotional experience for their children, leading to anxiety and uncertainty about their parents' availability and attention. Children with this attachment style may display overly dependent, insecure, and emotionally unstable behaviors.

2.3. Parenting Style

Over 50 years ago, the concept "parenting style" (PS) was introduced in developmental psychology to describe how parents control and discipline their children (Baumrind, 1966) [6]. Baumrind (1966) proposed three classifications of parenting styles, which were as follows: permissive parenting style (PS), where there are no rules and total indulgence; authoritarian PS, where children are obeyed or punished; and authoritative PS, where there is emotional support and rules are set up. This framework is now expanded to include a wider range of parental behaviors. Currently, PS is often characterized by two main factors: the number of demands parents make on their children and the nature of parental support. These factors are commonly known as demanding and responsiveness. Additionally, a fourth style named "uninvolved" has been included in the extended typology.

I. Authoritative Parenting Style

Parents set clear rules and expectations, emphasizing discipline and order, as well as responsibility and self-discipline. They establish a warm and welcoming family environment where children feel secure, supported, and respected.

II. Authoritarian Parenting Style

Authoritarian Parenting is characterized by strict control over children's lives and behavior, often relying on punishment and threats to achieve desired outcomes. This style, which emphasizes obedience and discipline, may result in low self-confidence, diminished self-esteem, or even resentment and resistance.

III. Permissive Parenting Style

Permissive parenting involves minimal intervention and restrictions on a child's behavior and decision-making, allowing for unfettered personal development. However, it may lead to a lack of discipline and responsibility.

IV. Uninvolved Parenting Style

Uninvolved parenting refers to parents who show little attention or responsiveness to their children's demands and emotions, neglecting their growth and development. This negligent parenting style can generate feelings of loneliness, helplessness, and an overall lack of security and self-esteem.

3. Parent–Child Attachment and Emotion Competence

3.1. Evidence from Empirical Studies

Previous experiments have demonstrated the relationship between parent-child attachment and EC in many ways. In this chapter, the present study will first explore several typical experiments.

The first experiment showed a positive correlation between children's EC and the secure attachment relationship between mother and child, and this study tested the attachment relationship in several ways.

The study involved 52 children in a primary school, aged between 9 and 11 years old, all located in the same area.

The study tested attachment in three ways. During the laboratory interviews, the children completed the Security Scale, which was a self-report questionnaire assessing their feelings of security in their attachment to their mothers. Another measurement used was the Attachment Doll Story Completion Task. This task included four stories and scored the interview using two different methods. In addition, to assess how much mothers were willing to act as a secure base for their children, Child Parenting Practices Report Questionnaire was used.

Three dimensions were used in the experiment to gauge children's emotional competence. Mood Scales were completed by the children to provide their mood report. Mothers were asked to fill out the Children's Constructive Coping Scale, which was used to assess the coping mechanisms employed by the children when disturbed or facing a challenge. Additionally, the teachers' assessments of the children's frustration tolerance were used to evaluate emotional regulation.

The results showed that securely attached parent-child relation and secure support from mothers were associated with a greater level of positive emotions, better constructive emotional coping strategies (as reported by mothers), and better tolerance of classroom frustration (as reported by teachers). Disorganized attached children or ambivalent attached children showed the most negative emotions [7]. The study showed that children who are securely attached have better EC.

The second study by Fernandes et al. focused on studying the impact of attachment styles, both on mother-child attachment security (MS) and father-child attachment security (FS) on children's emotional regulation (ER), specifically in preschool children aged 3-6 years old from Portuguese nuclear families. The researchers assessed attachment security (AS) using the Q-Set of attachment behaviors when the children were at the age of 3. They observed and assessed emotional regulation (ER) in the children's preschool classes using the Q-Scale of Emotional Regulation derived from the California Q-Classification of Children when the children were at the age of 5.

The correlation and average difference between MS and FS were then examined using the Pearson correlation coefficient and paired T-test. To analyze the correlation between attachment security (AS) and emotional control, Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed. Regression analysis was further employed to determine the impact of MS and FS on children's ability to regulate their emotions. Additionally, the study investigated the interaction between the MS and FS and how this interaction affected children's emotional regulation. The study employed the PROCESS macro version 3.5 for SPSS to examine the significance of the interaction term.

The results showed a significant positive correlation between MS and FS. FS had a significant effect ($B = .27$, $t = 2.02$, $p = .05$), while MS had no significant effect ($B = .17$, $t = 1.24$, $p = .22$). Furthermore, the researchers found that the interaction terms were significant predictors of emotional

regulation and increased the explained variance by 12%. These results indicate that the combined effects of attachment on both parents had a stronger predictive value for children's emotional regulation in preschool, as compared to the effects of either parent alone [8].

Another study examined 122 children aged 7 throughout their middle childhood to explore the correlation between attachment styles and EC. To assess two components of emotional competence, emotion recognition and ER strategies, a new set of tasks was created. The findings indicated a link between attachment style and the selection of emotion regulation techniques in hypothetical situations. Securely attached children were found to employ cognitively engaged strategies, such as reappraisal, more frequently, while disorganized children displayed these strategies less often. Insecure children showed a lower affinity for behavioral diversion strategies [9].

3.2. Analysis of the above Empirical Studies

The first experiment utilized various validation methods to investigate attachment relationships based on attachment theory. In order to ensure the validity of these methods, both questionnaire and story stem techniques were employed to assess attachment relationships. Three dimensions were used to evaluate children's emotional abilities, including children's own assessment, mothers' assessment of children's emotional strategies, and teachers' feedback on children's frustration tolerance. The experimental results revealed a positive correlation between children's emotional competence (including positive emotions, emotional coping strategies, and frustration tolerance) and the secure attachment between mother and child. Additionally, according to the experiment, mothers who reported more secure attachments to their children were more willing to act as a base of security for their children.

However, it should be noted that cultural differences should be taken into consideration. Children from different cultures may react differently to the story stem technique, as cultural values and norms shape individuals' emotional development. Furthermore, it is crucial to explore the impact of father-child attachment on children's EC, as the first study primarily focused on mother-child attachment and did not examine the potential effects of father-child attachment.

The second study examined the combined effects of both MS and FS on children's ER. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, MS was not significantly associated with ER. However, the study demonstrated that there was a significant positive correlation between FS and children's ER. The concept and measurement of ER in this study may have contributed to this. More importantly, their findings suggested that the combined influence of both parents provides a stronger predictor of preschoolers' emotional regulation behavior compared to the influence of a single parent alone.

The third study added more complex emotions like shame, anxiety, and pride to the typical basic emotions like happiness, anger, fear, and sadness. Because the study suggests that there is a significant increase in social and emotional complexity during the transition from early to middle childhood. Unlike the first two experiments, the third showed an overall advantage for women in all emotional tasks. However, it should be considered that this experiment and the previous two experiments can only cover part of the emotional competence dimension.

Other studies may cover attachment and overall emotion regulation. For example, Spangler & Zimmermann's study (2014) showed that children who were securely attached used strategies to regulate social emotions, such as expressing negative emotions directly to the mother during an interaction with a challenging task [10].

Over the past two decades, measurements of attachment and emotional regulation have expanded considerably. Using multiple methods to measure attachment will give us a deeper understanding of the link between attachment and emotional competence.

The overall experiment shows that in both tough and normal environment, secure attachment children conduct useful affective strategies. The secure attachment pattern between parents and children is positively correlated with children's emotional competence.

4. Impact of Parenting Styles on Emotional Competence

4.1. Evidence from Empirical Studies

Numerous studies have demonstrated the relation between PS and children's EC. In the first study, 150 mothers from Palestinian and their 3 to 4 year-old children participated. To evaluate PS, the study used a questionnaire created by Abu Taleb in 2013 called the Mothers' Self-Report Instrument. The questionnaire's content was thoroughly examined by a panel of specialists to ensure its quality. The children's ability of ER was also evaluated using a questionnaire by Shield and Cicchetti (2001), which consists of 24 items and is filled out by parents.

The study's findings revealed statistically significant links between emotion regulation and various parenting styles. Emotional regulation had a specifically positive correlation with permissive PS authoritative PS, and had a negatively association with uninvolved PS and authoritarian PS. A stepwise regression analysis was conducted to further examine the study hypotheses, and the findings are demonstrated in Table 1. The study's findings showed a significant positive correlation between an authoritative PS and ER.

Table 1. Analyzing Predictors of Emotional Regulation

Parenting style	B	β	SE	ΔR^2
Permissive	-.009	-.008	.10	
Uninvolved	-.13	-.103	.11	
Authoritative	.35	.32***	.10	.25
Authoritarian	-.20	-.20**	.10	

p<.05. *p<.001

This study not only verified the positive correlation between the authoritative PS and children's emotional regulating ability, but also confirmed the positive correlation between ER and secure attachment. In addition, the study also showed the relationship between PS and secure attachment pattern. Authoritarian PS and uninvolved PS were remarkably negatively correlated with secure attachment, while the authoritative PS was notably positively correlated with secure attachment pattern [11].

In the second study on PS and EC, the researchers used the Emotional Competence Questionnaire (EKF) and the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) of German version. The study explored the associations between authoritative PS, authoritarian PS, permissive PS and various dimensions of EC. The aspects examined included perception of one's own and others' emotions, emotional expression, ER for one's own and others.

The correlation analysis showed that only authoritative PS had a significant correlation with EC, while authoritarian PS and permissive PS were not significantly correlated. Hence, according to this study, authoritative PS had a significant impact on emotional development.

This study not only included the relationship between parents' PS and children's EC, but also included a multidimensional correlation analysis of parents' EC, AS and children's EC. Examining these aspects will allow us to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact between the relationship of parents and children and EC. The results of the study indicated a significant correlation between authoritative PS and parents' regulation/perception of others' emotions. From the children's perspective, authoritative parenting were positively associated with mothers' perceptions of others' emotions and perceptions of fathers. Authoritative parenting, also from the children's perspective, had a significant correlation with father's ER and the perception of others' emotion. These findings suggested a positive relationship between parental emotional support for children and emotional regulation, highlighting the significance of parental support for improving children's EC [12].

4.2. Implications of the Conclusions for Practice

Studies from previous research have shown that authoritative parenting has a positive impact on emotional competence. This positive effect can be explained by the fact that authoritative parents are

perceived as warm and firm, paying attention to their child's emotions and providing emotional support. This helps the children understand and regulate their own emotions. At the same time, authoritative parents do not indulge their children. They set rules and enforce them firmly, making their responsibilities clear. This positive interaction helps children develop self-control and the ability to regulate their emotions, as well as fostering better interpersonal relationships. In contrast, authoritarian parents forcefully suppress their children's emotions, leading the child to believe that having emotions is wrong. This is detrimental to the child's perception and understanding of emotions. Uninvolved parents, on the other hand, fail to pay attention to their children's emotions, depriving them of the opportunity to understand their own emotions and those of others. Permissive parents may pay attention to the emotions and needs from the children, but they simply satisfy their demands whatever they are, without considering the consequences, causing the children to rely on external measures to control their emotions.

Although these two experiments have limitations in terms of the subject group and the reliance on parental reports, they still provide valuable insights into parenting styles. Additionally, these studies indicate that PS are related to the formation of attachment styles, as well as the emotional competence of the parents themselves. Authoritative parenting has a positive correlation with secure attachment between parents and children. Furthermore, emotionally competent parents are more likely to be authoritative parents who provide love and guidance. Future longitudinal studies should focus on changes over time rather than simple associations.

Importantly, these studies raise the awareness of parents to recognize and understand the emotions, and to manage them in a more rational way, rather than denying them, covering them up, or ignoring them. Warm, responsible, and empathetic parenting plays a crucial role in a child's emotional development. Parenting styles characterized by control, intrusion, and overprotection predict emotional dysregulation in children and adolescents.

5. Conclusion

Emotional competence has a great impact on children's social adaptation, physical and mental health, and social skills. Therefore, every family should prioritize its importance. Research shows that children's emotional competence is positively related to secure parent-child attachment and authoritative parenting style. This implies that secure attachment and authoritative parenting are associated with enhancing children's emotional competence.

There are several explanations for this. Securely attached children receive more support and love within the family, which allows them to better understand their own and others' emotions, develop interests in the outside world, and build trust and rapport with others. Moreover, securely attached children exhibit more positive emotions and respond constructively to difficulties and challenges, which contribute to the development of their emotional competence. Similarly, authoritative parents who are warm and assertive focus on their child's emotions, providing ample love and encouragement. This promotes emotional awareness and cognition in children. Additionally, the firm establishment and adherence to rules by authoritative parents give children the opportunity to improve their self-control and emotional regulation. On the contrary, authoritarian parents suppress children's emotions, hindering their perception and understanding of emotions. Uninvolved parents fail to pay attention to their children's emotions, depriving them of the opportunity to understand and manage their own emotions. Permissive parents, blindly cater to their children's demands, leading to an imbalance in emotional control.

Therefore, it is crucial for parents to pay attention to their own emotions as well as their children's, create a warm and loving home environment, provide emotional support, and establish rules. These parental supports will help children develop better emotional competence, achieve physical and mental well-being, adapt to society, and build positive social relationships.

Future research could explore more on the influence of other factors on children's emotional competence, such as parents' marital quality, family atmosphere, parents' attachment patterns, and

their cognition and ability to raise children. Additionally, the interaction between these factors could be examined. Furthermore, future study could also strengthen research on factors such as cultural background and education level to investigate their impact on parent-child attachment patterns, parenting styles, and children's emotional competence.

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