

Influence of Parenting Styles on Children's Prosocial behavior

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Abstract. At present, family parenting style is the earliest and most fruitful research topic in the field of the parent-child relationship, which has attracted the attention of psychological and educational researchers. Prosocial behavior is a common social phenomenon, which refers to the behavior and tendency of a person to help or intend to help others, to do things that are beneficial to others, and it is an important topic that researchers and educators pay attention to when they study the socialization of children. Researchers have conducted much research on it and obtained valuable research results. After analyzing and summarizing the previous studies using the literature reviewing method, it could be found that the authoritarian parenting style can positively affect the prosocial behavior of children, facilitate the parents to adjust the parenting style in the process of parenting timely, promote the development of children's prosocial behavior, will help children better adapt to the society, and lay a solid foundation for their lifelong development.

Keywords: Parenting styles; socialization; prosocial behavior.

1. Introduction

A family is an important place for the formation of everyone's social behaviors, and parents are children's first contacts. In daily parenting and education activities, parents pass on social values, behavior patterns, attitude systems and social-moral norms to children through different behaviors and attitudes. And this constitutes the specific content and goal of children's socialization, so there is a saying - that children are the mirror of their parents, but also the "work" of their parents. Prosocial behavior is formed in the process of children's socialization and is an important part of individuals' development. In short, it is a positive social behavior that enables people to form and maintain good relationships with others.

In the development of children, they will show less prosocial behavior when parents fail to adopt appropriate parenting approaches promptly. Therefore, many scholars have invested a lot of research on family education. This paper summarizes and discusses the previous studies on the influence of children's prosocial behavior under different parenting styles to provide parents with a scientific basis to cultivate their children's prosocial behavior.

2. Parenting Styles

2.1 Definition of Parenting Styles

Parenting styles refer to the process of educating and raising children, the interaction between parents and children are carried out through the attitude, behavior and emotion expressed by the parents, and the summary of various behavioral characteristics of the parents in this parent-child relationship. This experience allows the youth to enhance their knowledge and cultivate values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to make productive contributions to society or themselves [1].

Early researchers used different dimensions to describe how parents raised their children. An American psychologist, Symonds first studied and distinguished parental parenting behaviors from two dimensions: accept-rejection and dominance and obedience. According to Symonds, he found that children accepted by their parents generally displayed behaviors required by society. Such as emotional stability, broad interests, and compassion. Rejected by the parents of the children are mostly unstable, cold, stubborn and rebellious. Children who are dominated by their parents are more

passive and obedient, less confident and more dependent. Getting parents to obey their children is very aggressive [2].

2.2 Measurements of Parenting Styles

In the current research on parenting styles, there are a variety of measurement methods, including Parenting Style Evaluation Scale (EMBU), Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR) and Parenting Style and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ). In 1980, Carlo and his colleagues developed the Parenting Style Evaluation Scale [3]. In 1993, Yue and coworkers revised the Chinese version of this scale. It included six father dimensions: father's emotional warmth, understanding, punishment, harshness, excessive interference, preference for subjects, rejection, denial, and overprotection. And five mother dimensions: mother's emotional warmth, understanding, overprotection, excessive interference, rejection, denial, punishment, harsh, and favouring subjects [4]. Subsequently, CRPR compiled by American scholar Block included six dimensions - acceptance, refusal, induction, achievement encouragement, punishment orientation and authority [5]. Moreover, PSDQ was compiled by American scholars Robinson et al. [6]. All of these scales are used by scholars for research.

2.3 Classification of Parenting Styles

The classic research in the identification of the type of child rearing styles was put forward by American psychologist Baumrind in 1967 and has been widely used in subsequent studies [7]. Baumrind has classified parenting styles into three major types: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive [7]. Then, Maccoby and Martin divided parenting into two dimensions: acceptance versus rejection and demand and control versus tolerance and proposed that permissive parenting can best be thought of as two distinct types: indulgent and neglectful [8]. Hence, parenting styles have now evolved into four types: authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful.

Authoritative parenting typically reflects positively and passionately on their children's attitudes, demands, desires, and behaviors, consciously respects their children's opinions and opinions, and encourages them to express their ideas and participate in discussions. Authoritative parenting typically sets explicit demands on their children and demand enforcement. If the child has bad behavior, they will express unhappiness, and good behavior performance support and affirmation [9, 10]. The relevant dimensions of EMBU scale include emotion, warm understanding and excessive interference. The relevant dimensions of CRPR scale include encouraging achievement, authority, acceptance and induction.

Authoritarian parenting is typically characterized by unambiguous demands on the child while ignoring the needs and desires of the child, usually by rejection and disregard of the child. They often ask children to unconditionally follow their own arrangements and follow the relevant rules, but lack of explanation of the rules, they often express anger for children's violations of the rules and even take severe measures to punish them [9, 11]. The relevant dimensions of EMBU scale include punishment, harshness, rejection, denial and excessive interference. The relevant dimensions in CRPR scale are punishment orientation, authority and rejection.

Indulgent parenting typically presents a caring and positive attitude towards the child, with no requirement for the child and no control over the child's development. Indulgent parenting also takes an attitude of unlimited tolerance and acceptance for the child's behavior that violates the requirement and rarely gets angry or reprimands the child for correcting it [8, 9]. The relevant dimensions of EMBU scale include emotion, warm understanding, subject preference and overprotection. The relevant dimensions of CRPR scale are acceptance and encouragement achievement.

Neglectful parenting typically manifests as a neglectful lack of response to any demands or behavior of the child [8, 9]. The relevant dimensions of EMBU scale include rejection and denial. The relevant dimension in CRPR scale is rejection.

3. Prosocial Behavior

3.1 Definition of Prosocial Behavior

Prosocial behavior refers to all behaviors that are beneficial to others and society. It refers to the behavior and tendency of a person to help or intend to help others, to do things that are beneficial to others. These behaviors include altruistic behavior without expecting anything in return and also include helping others.

Social behavior has an important influence on the development of society. Prosocial behavior began to be studied because of the “Kitty incident”, in which people turned a blind eye to or looked away from situations in which others suffered or harmed their interests. Social psychologists Latane and Darley [12] were inspired to study prosocial behavior. However, the concept of prosocial behavior was first proposed by American scholar Weisberg, and has been widely used ever since.

3.2 Categories of Prosocial Behavior

For the study of children’s prosocial behavior, scholars usually adopt the method of situational questionnaires or direct observation of children. While helping behavior, sharing behavior, cooperative behavior, and comforting behavior are the main forms of children’s prosocial behavior [13].

These prosocial behaviors have different forms of expression. Helping behavior refers to helping behavior that occurs in daily activities without time and energy and other non-emergency situations, and also includes helping behavior that occurs in immediate and dangerous emergency situations. Cooperative behavior refers to behavior of two or more individuals to achieve a common goal, coordinate with each other, and jointly complete a certain task. Sharing behavior refers to the behavior in which individuals take out their own goods for others to share so as to benefit others. Comfort behavior refers to the prosocial behavior in which an individual is aware of the negative emotional states of others, such as worry and crying, and tries to make others eliminate the negative emotional states and become happy through words or actions [14].

This review does not classify and analyze the influence degree of different types of prosocial behaviors, but makes a unified analysis.

4. Parenting Styles and Prosocial Behavior of Children

Different parenting styles will promote or curb the development of prosocial behavior in children. The following will summarize the results of the influence of different parenting styles on the performance of prosocial behavior.

Authoritative parenting influences and educates children through emotional support and coupled with daily behavior. Authoritative parenting also has authoritative expectations and demands on children and respects their choices, which will continue to influence their prosocial behavior in adulthood. Lamborn’s study of more than 4,000 teenagers found that adolescents with authoritative parental authority had greater social competence and fewer psychological and behavioral problems than those with authoritative, submissive or neglectful parents [15]. Padilla-Walker found that adopting an authoritative parenting style helped children to develop resilience in a 2012 study [16]. Ding et al. conducted a questionnaire survey among 590 Chinese college students, and they found that caring and encouraging autonomy in mothers’ parenting styles were significantly positively correlated with prosocial behavior and positively predicted prosocial behavior, which was consistent with previous studies [17]. At the same time, Ngai et al. demonstrated that nurturing behaviors characterized by caring, autonomy, and overprotection have positive effects on open, affective, submissive, anonymous and altruistic prosocial behaviors to varying degrees [18].

Authoritarian parenting is highly manipulative, imposing its own demands and restrictions on its children and demanding unconditional obedience, and refusing to accept their children’s sense of autonomy and choices. When children do not comply, there is a corresponding punishment. As the

old saying goes, “no rules, no square”. After analyzing the results of a questionnaire of 349 primary and secondary school students and their parents, Li found that authoritarian parents who punish excessively weaken children’s prosocial behavior [19]. Later, Zong and Li observed 66 pairs of children and mothers in the laboratory for one hour and found differences in parenting styles between parents in the helping situation [20]. Authoritarian mothers can reduce children’s prosocial behaviors through punishment and authority. However, as children get older, this type of parent, in a strictly undemocratic way, can instead promote the development of prosocial behavior. In contrast, Bi et al. found that helpfulness and prosocial sharing in children aged 3 to 5 were positively correlated with parental autocratic behavior. For example, the more autocratic, the more prosocial the behavior [21]. In a questionnaire conducted on 266 high school students, Zhang and Sang found that authoritarian parenting also positively affected prosocial behavior in high school, a finding that is consistent with that of Bi et al. [22]. Liu et al. found a significant positive correlation between denial and prosocial behavior in mothers parenting styles, which also confirmed this point [23].

With its high level of attention at a young age, indulgent parenting is often overly involved and takes care of all the children’s problems, which stifles the development of prosocial behavior. Zong and Li also found that affectionate fathers do not cultivate prosocial behaviors such as helping others and sharing with their children through encouragement and achievement [18]. However, as children get older, parental protection will help children to cultivate prosocial behavior. Pan and Zhu found that the positive effects of paternal encouragement and parenting styles on adolescent prosocial behavior were greater than those of punitive parenting styles [24]. Jiang’s survey of more than 4,000 middle and high school students found that parental emotional warmth education and father-protective education can positively predict adolescents’ prosocial behavior [25]. Cong found that when parents treat their children in a gentle and loving manner, individuals are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors [26]. Meanwhile, Yin and Xu investigated private college students and found that the more fathers protect their children, the more likely their children are to exhibit prosocial behavior [27].

Neglectful parenting would allow children to grow up freely, leaving unrestrained children unable to develop well in social performance and behavior. This can be verified by Zong and Li’s research. They also found that children’s sharing prosocial behaviors could not be well developed by neglectful parenting [18].

5. Conclusion

The existing research shows that the more respect, understanding, and emotional warmth parents give their children, the better their prosocial behavior development. However, the negative parenting style of severe punishment and denial will make the children become indifferent and show less prosocial behavior. At different stages, appropriate adjustment of parenting style can help children to develop social adaptation and prosocial behavior, so that they will gradually form their own personal abilities in daily life and achieve better social standards. Therefore, when individuals need to respond to specific social needs at various growth stages, parents need to adjust the focus of their parenting style to influence and cultivate their children’s prosocial behavior.

In previous studies, questionnaires were mainly used, and interview and observation methods can be expanded in future. Prosocial behavior is not only influenced by parenting styles, but also by family relationships, peer relationships and campus environments. In previous studies, the subjects were selected from different ages and regions, and the samples were not tested again with the growth of age. Therefore, it is not clear whether the parenting style has different dimensions to affect the development of prosocial behavior of children. Moreover, the different influence of fathers and mothers in different types of prosocial behavior also suggests again that, when investigating the influencing factors of prosocial behavior, it is necessary to pay attention to the role of fathers and mothers at the same time, which may provide a deeper perspective for understanding the influencing

mechanism of different types of prosocial behavior, and it needs to be verified and analyzed by more studies in the future.

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