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## Interrelationships between Parenting Styles and Teachers Involvement: From Children's Emotion Regulation Competence Perspective

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to identify the effects of different parenting styles and teachers' strategies in classroom interaction for emotion regulation development in preschool children. The quantitative approach employed instruments to measure parenting style and emotion regulation scores. The qualitative approach involved classroom observations and interviews with the teachers. The data revealed to implement an authoritative parenting style. In addition, there is a significant difference in the emotion regulation scores. The results indicated that teachers' act strategies in classroom interactions widely affected children's emotion regulation. The study suggested both professional development programs and workshops should be applied to develop a consistent approach to classroom interaction.

**Key words:** Parenting styles, teachers' act strategies, emotion regulation competence

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### INTRODUCTION

Children with poor social competence tend to have difficulties in becoming academically successful. An enormous amount of evidence showed that young children who have grown up without appropriate early interventions in social, emotional and behavioral problems, such as aggression and negative behavior were at high risk of being labeled as trouble kids. Trouble kids might experience academic problems, repeat grades, drop out of school early and exhibit antisocial behavior later on (Pagani *et al.*, 2003; Timpano *et al.*, 2010; Webster-Stratton *et al.*, 2001). Children who experienced difficult situations, when it came to concepts of compliance and independence were observed to have poor emotion regulation skills (Sidera *et al.*, 2013; Ormaghi and Grazzani, 2013). They were also observed to lack associated components of emotion regulation, such as language skills and behavioral control. When preschoolers failed to develop these skills, the lack of emotional development would affect these children. This problem was specifically evident for children with risk factors, such as impulsivity and social skills deficits, as well as for those that came from socio-economically disadvantaged and stressful family environments (Khalid *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, it was not only in the interest of psychologists and in the interest of educators working with children but also the parents of young

children to strive for the understanding of what these components were and how these components might impact on the children's development (Davis *et al.*, 2011; Ribordy *et al.*, 2013). There were several components which appeared to have implications for differences in emotional/social competence and behavior of young children. These included parenting styles, parent-child interaction, child temperament, gender, preschool experiences and ethnicity.

Furthermore, research results from Driessen (2003) illustrated that adolescents reared in democratic homes tend to show higher emotional/social competence than those living in authoritarian homes. It was implied that parent-child interaction was reciprocal and that parenting styles had an impact on the development of young children's emotional/social competence and behavior. The quality of the child's development was highly influenced by the environment by which they grow up in. Family background and culture, parent and child-caregiver relationships, peer interaction, as well as parent-child interaction and welfare reform policies could impact young children's development (Gokhan *et al.*, 2012; La Valley and Guerrero, 2012). Thus, these factors could significantly impact the early emotional development of a child. As the environment of a child influences his or her emotional and social development, stakeholders such as parents, peers, teachers, neighbors, church members, community members and other elements, such as social

welfare policy could determine the characteristics of the child's environment. Therefore, the influence and importance of parent-child interactions and relationships must be identified, as the learning process begins even in the early phases of the child's life.

This study would focus on two countries, wherein a cross-cultural analysis of the parenting styles, teacher's act strategies for classroom interaction and the preschool emotional regulation would be compared. Taiwan was described as a newly industrialized society which underwent rapid demographic, economic and social changes over the half of the previous century. According to Lin *et al.* (2003), the total fertility rate in the country decreased by five births but the parents had an increased life expectancy for babies since they intended to have fewer children or just one child.

The purpose of this study was to recognize the effects of parenting styles and teachers' strategies in classroom interaction on the development of emotion regulation competence in preschool children. Empirical studies supported the importance of examining emotion regulation competence in children, as well as the power of parents and teachers in child development and performance. Findings of this study would provide evidence for the direct relationship of parenting style and teachers' strategies in classroom interaction with emotional regulation competence, in order to construct research-based practices for the development of preschool children. The quantitative and qualitative findings for the present study were based on the following research purposes:

- To investigate the correlation between the parenting style and preschoolers' emotion regulation competence
- To observe and to depict preschool teachers' act strategies and approaches in classroom interactions in order to present another critical that could influence preschoolers' emotion regulation. The inclusion of the teachers' role represented the recognition of their impact of the top influences in a preschooler child's life

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES**

**Preschoolers' emotion regulation:** Emotion regulation needed to be taught and learned; this process might be long and progress might be slow. However, emotion regulation was positively related to social development in children who could regulate their frustrations or anger during peer provocation. Children with higher reactivity

tend to display difficulty developing emotion regulation skills either physiologically or behaviorally and as a result, might maintain higher levels of aggressive behavior throughout childhood. Additionally, opportunities for learning to solve social problems constructively were presented when children show the ability to regulate their anger or frustration in exasperating situations.

When children become more familiar with regulation, arousal was reduced and other positive social skills could be acquired with appropriate direction from adults. During their preschool years, children experienced and expressed emotion in increasingly complex ways which at the same time facilitate cognitive sophistication and the development of self-awareness (McAlister and Cornwell, 2012; Hustyi *et al.*, 2012). Many studies had shown that preschoolers' capacity to self-regulate their emotions was predictive of their current and later adjustment which was indicative of children's overall social and emotional competence (Luecken *et al.*, 2013; Eisenberg *et al.*, 2001; Saarni, 1999; Saarni and Buckley, 2002). Intonation and/or control of one's own emotional experiences and expression were broadly referred to, as the self-regulation of emotion or Emotion Regulation (ER). Preschoolers who were better able to self-regulate the expression of emotions in mature ways, including delayed gratification and the use of cognitive strategies to monitor their emotions and subsequent reactions, tend to be more socially competent and welcomed by their peers as well as being better adjusted (Lim and Lim, 2003). In contrast, empirical studies had indicated that children, who were incapable of regulating their experiences and expression of negative emotions, such as sadness or anger were rated as having a heightened risk of early onset developmental psychopathology (Miller *et al.*, 2006).

Existing research reported evidence of developmental outcomes correlated with children's emotional regulatory processes. Admittedly, minimal information had been presented in empirical investigations of ER about the types of factors that affect children's development of ER, especially during the preschool years (Fox and Calkin, 2003; McDowell *et al.*, 2002). Until now, the next step in research was to examine specific variables that might promote and/or impede preschoolers' development of ER. Parental care-giving strategies were yet to receive ample attention in research but shows in increasing our understanding of ER development during the preschool-age years. Eisenberg *et al.* (2001) investigated specific socialization processes and indicated that emotion-oriented characteristics, such as emotional tones and behaviors carried by mothers during their interactions with their children particularly influence children's development of the capacity to regulate emotions. The

techniques that parents used to help their children recognize rules and standards with relation to socially appropriate expressions of emotion were types of socialization. Children's abilities to regulate emotions were linked to prior experiences of social-regulation, especially within mother to child interactions. It was important to note that the above statement did not eliminate the strength of father-child interactions but results from the limited number of studies examining the role of fathers in preschoolers' ER development. Previous research by McDowell *et al.* (2002) explored fathers' care-giving approaches and their association with 4th grade or older children's ER development; however, none of the literature reviewed for the current study had examined fathers and preschool-age children.

**Parenting styles and children's performance:** Emotion regulation in young children had been reported to lead to their academic success. According to research findings by Raver (2002) and Sanson *et al.* (2004), emotion regulation which included attention regulation and planning skills involved in attention management, contributes directly to children's school readiness. Chang *et al.* (2003) conducted a study that analyzed harsh parenting models and how it had an indirect and direct effect on child aggression in schools, through a mediating process of child emotion regulation, in the context of Chinese children and their parents. Martial conflict and parental depression served as important factors in this model. The studies examined how harsh parenting and child aggression were associated. Hastings *et al.* (2005) authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles were associated with children's behavioral inhibition. Research discovered that shy and withdrawn preschoolers grew up with authoritarian parents. On the other hand, socially competent preschoolers had authoritative parents (Hastings *et al.*, 2005). The behavioral control of the parents affected the inhibited characteristics that children displayed. When parents were over-controlling, children's autonomy would be affected. Thus, even when children should be able to manage their lives independently, parents still directed their children's lives and encouraged this dependence (Hastings *et al.*, 2005).

Additionally, Eisenberg and her colleagues, as well as many researchers had revealed that emotion regulation ability was related to children's social skill level, popularity among peers and school adjustment (Eisenberg *et al.*, 2005; Friedlmeier and Trommsdorff, 1999). Children's emotion regulation ability, social skills and constituents of popularity or well-adjustment, in turn might be related to their academic competence through their effect on children's relationships at school which

also appear to be influential to learning motivation and school performance. Accordingly, if children's social competence was related to or influenced by emotion regulation, it was presumed that emotion regulation proficiency matters to academic skills, since school liking and participation were reported, as positively related to a child's classroom engagement, academic progress and achievement.

The research team of Hoover-Dempsey *et al.* (1987) reported the relationship that existed between parent-initiated involvement in school, such as open nights, parent-teacher conferences and children school performance in elementary school. The reported emphasized on the importance of parental involvement and led to the recognition of the impact of parenting style and academic performance. The authoritative parental style had been studied for its association with positive school outcomes. Durkin (1995) had suggested that authoritative parents provided a high level of emotional security, allowing for greater comfort and independence. Authoritative parents were also thought to provide children with explanations for their actions, increasing awareness and a sense of values, morals and goals which equips children with tools for school success. Additionally, authoritative parents engage in two-way communication with their children which develop interpersonal relationship skills and helps children's adjustment and popularity. Durkin suggests that these skills help children excel socially and academically.

Nevertheless, research revealed that the correlation between authoritative parenting and school performance was not proven to be consistent across all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds which raised a significant gap in the impact of cultural groups in how parenting style affects the well-being of a child. According to this study, African Americans, Hispanics and Asians revealed different outcomes. Steinberg *et al.* (1992) noted on the important correlation between authoritative parenting style and adolescent academic performance in terms of their GPA scores, except for African Americans. However, Hispanic adolescents were observed to have had a high correlation with adolescent engagement, instead of high GPA scores. However, academic performance in terms of GPA scores were look for both cultural groups. On this basis it is hypothesized that:

**H1:** There was a significant correlation between the parenting styles and the preschoolers' emotion regulation competence

**Teacher-child interaction:** These researches provided evidence on how these difficult behaviors could impede

children's learning when children enter schools or any other similar settings. The value of social competence, self-regulation and persistence become key features of their capacity to benefit from opportunities to learn. Due to the importance of negative effect of difficulty behaviors to school performance, it was essential to better understand how the developmental processes responsible for the externalizing behaviors and processes in key contexts, such as preschool setting, could either minimize or aggravate its further presentation. The relationship between teachers and students had been strongly correlated by sizable literatures (Birch and Ladd, 1997; Crosnoe *et al.*, 2004). Teacher-child relationship had been found as the basis for successful adaptation to social and academic environment. It was when children enter school settings for the first day when they were especially reliant on teachers to provide understanding and support that would allow them to get the most out of their daily interactions in the classroom. Encouraging and constructive relationship with teachers were viewed, as a secured base for young students. Children felt they were able to play on their own because they know if they experience something difficult or if experience offenses, they could turn to their teachers to recognize their needs and to respond to their perplexities.

Study by Brophy (1985) suggested that the way teachers interacted with students determine how their relationship with students develops. For example, teachers who perceive themselves, as instructors or socializers demonstrated different strategies, in the way they interact with students. Instructors had the propensity to respond more negatively to students who were underachievers, unmotivated or disruptive during learning tasks. On the other hand, instructors also displayed more negative responses were displayed toward students with hostile, aggressive or interpersonal disconnection, in comparison to teachers who view themselves as socializers. The way teachers interacted with their students contains teacher's expectation for the students, the words and tones of speaking and expressions which might bring out different reactions from individuals. Positive activity included smile, laugh, vocalize and showing motor activity in school contexts. Negative activity, in contrast, referred to distress, inhibition or withdrawal in response to novelty, or signal of punishment which had been found closely linked to the development of externalizing behaviors in early childhood period (Richardson *et al.*, 2009; Rothbart *et al.*, 1994). On this basis it is hypothesized that:

**H2:** Teachers' act strategies in classroom interactions widely affected the preschoolers' emotion regulation competence

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Quantitative data collection

**Participants:** The managers and team leaders in the early childhood centers were contacted in order to determine the feasibility of having the teachers, children and parents participate in the study. After obtaining official permission, introduction letters with questionnaires were sent to the center, teachers and parents of 3-5 years old preschoolers to collect data for the study, who participated in this study were recruited from randomly selected childcare centers and preschools in different areas of Taiwan in order to obtain a heterogeneous sample.

### Measuring tools

**Assessment of parenting styles:** The Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) was invented from initial 133-item questionnaire to its current 32-item version (Cameron, 2003). This questionnaire pertained to three specific parenting styles: Authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. It was used to assess the parents' child-rearing practices and parenting styles. Parents were instructed to number each statement from 1-5 to reflect the frequency with which she/him exhibits the target behavior. (1) Never, (2) Once in a while, (3) About half the time, (4) Very often and (5) Always. Scores for each subfactor were obtained by summing the scores for the items in each group (four to five items in each group). Overall scores for each dimension (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) were obtained by summing the mean scores for each subfactor. In a study that was conducted to measure the effect of parenting style on the prevalence of overweight and obesity among children in Taiwan, this instrument was used to measure parenting styles.

**Assessment of emotion regulation competence:** The Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC) (Miller *et al.*, 2006) was distributed to parents for rating their understanding of the child's emotion regulation competency. The ERC consisted with 24 items Likert-scale measure comprising two factors: Emotion regulation ability and lability/negativity. The Emotion Regulation subscale ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ) assesses empathy, emotional displays in various situations and self-awareness of emotion. The Emotion Lability/Negativity subscale ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ) measures dysregulated negative emotions, mood lability and inflexibility.

**Reliability and validity:** There were items under each of the three dimensions, authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values for the three sub-scales

were 0.88, 0.76 and 0.70, respectively and the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for the whole scale was 0.81. All of the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values indicated that individual dimensions of Scale PSDQ had acceptable reliability. In addition, the PSDQ and the ERC were used in empirical studies already. Therefore, the confirmatory factor analysis approach was adopted to examine the fitness between the factor structures and the originally designed dimensions of the scales. Scale PSDQ comprised three sub-scales to mean three different constructs. Scale ERC included two sub-scales to represent two different constructs. The software AMOS 17.0 performed the confirmatory factor analysis. By means of parameter approximation through maximum likelihood, the factorial validity of the scales was confirmed.

**Fitness indicators of individual measurement models of PSDQ scale:** The model fitness analysis results of Scale PSDQ were  $\chi^2 = 731.8$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $df = 434$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.69$ , RMSEA = 0.08, GFI = 0.76, CFI = 0.78, TLI = 0.75, indicating that the theoretical model fit better with the observed score.

**Fitness indicators of individual measurement models of ERC:** The model fitness analysis results of ER Scale were  $\chi^2 = 465.4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $df = 189$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.46$ , RMSEA = 0.10, GFI = 0.78, CFI = 0.72, TLI = 0.74, indicating that the theoretical model fit better with the observed score.

**Qualitative data collection:** Qualitative data collection included classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with preschool teachers in order to reveal teachers' act strategies for classroom interactions. Classroom observations were conducted for up to 16 h to ensure the validity of the study and prevent observer bias. The observations were carried out in three different classrooms from two early childhood education settings in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. The data collection sessions each lasted about 2-3 h through different days of the week, for four weeks. Each classroom was observed for 8-16 h in total. The observations were most frequently done during the morning session as permitted by the early childhood education centers.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Quantitative data analysis:** There were 300 invitation letters sent out to the parents of 3-5 years old children of the participating preschools. Subjects were invited from 10 randomly selected childcare centers and preschools in different areas of South region of Taiwan. Of the

300 potential families, 253 responded and 236 were qualified. The majority of the students were boys, with about 54% and they were aged 5 to 6 years old.

**Parenting styles and children's performance:** According to the findings of this Pearson correlation, there was a significant correlation between the parenting styles and emotion regulation scores in Taiwan. Based on the Table 1, there was a strong positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and emotion regulation scores at 0.57 ( $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). This finding revealed that the emotion regulation could increase with the increase of the authoritative parenting style. There was also a small negative correlation between the authoritarian and emotion regulation scores, wherein emotion regulation increased as the authoritarian parenting style increased with -0.29 ( $p = 0.001 < 0.01$ ). A small negative correlation between ER and permissive parenting styles was also found, at -0.20 ( $p = 0.005 < 0.01$ ), wherein as the permissive parenting style decreased, the emotion regulation would increase. When it came to the lability scores, the increase in the authoritative parenting style would decrease the lability score which was statistically correlated at -0.43 ( $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). The authoritarian parenting style was positively correlated with lability scores at 0.40 at the medium level, wherein the increase in the authoritarian parenting style would increase the score. The permissive parenting style also had small positive correlation with lability in that the permissive parenting style could increase the lability score.

The square roots of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are given on the diagonal. The correlation coefficients of constructs are given under the diagonal.

**Qualitative data analysis:** The qualitative methods applied in this study included classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with preschool teachers in order to reveal teachers' act strategies for classroom interactions.

**Teacher's act strategies in classroom interactions:** Based on a general observation of the teacher's act strategies, teaching young children should first focus on

Table 1: Correlation matrix and discriminant validity analysis of PSDQ and ERC Scores

Constructs	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Authoritative	3.32	0.55	0.87				
Authoritarian	3.42	0.40	-0.30**	0.84			
Permissive	3.43	0.42	-0.10	0.56**	0.81		
Emotion regulation	3.43	0.48	0.57**	-0.29**	-0.20**	0.85	
Negative/lability	3.76	0.53	-0.43**	0.40**	0.28**	-0.45**	0.79

M: Means, SD: Standard deviations, \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ ,  $n = 236$

the natural inclinations of the children, e.g., the activities they like and teachers should give young children as many opportunities as possible. Pay attention to young children's health. The activity time for each piece of materials shall reflect the age, intelligence and physical energy of the young children. Activities beyond the children's capability shall be avoided. Pay attention to individual differences among young children in learning, e.g., intellectual maturity, physical strength, gender and age differences, to adapt to their learning process. Take advantage of individual characteristics of young children in learning, e.g., the active nature, imitation, substantiality and egoism of young children. Efforts should be made to develop good learning characteristics of young children and provided them with activity opportunities. The motives for natural inclinations, like competition, jealousy and pride, among other behaviors, should be guarded against and corrected with adequate counseling.

#### **CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study was a mixed methodology research that implemented qualitative and quantitative research methods to address one research problem which was the gap in the literature for the impact of parenting styles and teachers' act strategies in classroom interaction for fostering emotion regulation competence. The parenting styles of Taiwan were predominantly authoritative. However, statistical analysis revealed that there was a significant difference in the parenting styles, as Taiwanese parents had a higher tendency to implement this, despite the assumption that it would have had an authoritarian parenting style. The teachers' act strategies in classroom interaction were gathered through qualitative data collection by means of classroom observations. Findings revealed how Taiwan was more focused on academic excellence. Recommendations for this study included the fostering of authoritative parenting style. Moreover, an emotion-centered curriculum should be critically considered for preschool education, given the high stakes for the inability to develop emotion regulation. Teachers and parents could implement modeling, induction, assigning tasks and numerous techniques to foster ERC development.

Future research involved a more descriptive and qualitative analysis of parenting styles. One of the significant areas for future research included a more descriptive understanding of parenting styles in Taiwan. The parenting styles were determined solely by the PSDQ. There was a need for qualitative data to support this finding for parenting styles through possible interviews and focus group discussions in order to understand described why there was a significant difference between

the authoritative parenting styles. Further, qualitative studies could establish the point of variance. In addition, a culturally appropriate early childhood education curriculum with emotionally promoted principle was urgently needed to be implemented for children and teachers in Taiwan. This would require future researches that deeply re-assess the changing social structure, expectations and demands among the citizens of the country to better prepare the next generations for the changing and challenging world.

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