



Association between parenting style and child's behavior in dental environment - A pilot study

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Abstract

The aim of this pilot study is to find if the parenting style of the parents affects the child's ability to cooperate in the dental office. Subjects and Methods: In this study, 50 children accompanied by their mothers to the Dental Outpatient Department were given a questionnaire regarding parental behaviour toward children, and their responses were recorded. The parents were categorized based on their children's questionnaire responses. The child's behaviour was graded using Frankl's behaviour rating scale, and its relationship to parental questionnaire responses was assessed using Chi-square test. Among the 50 children who participated, 52% had authoritative parents, while the remaining 48% were evenly shared by authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parents, with 16% in each group. There was a very significant association between the type of parenting and behavior exhibited by the child. Parents and parenting type have a major influence on the child's outlook towards the world. Understanding the type of parental influence on children's behaviour allows dentists to successfully plan behavioral guidance techniques during dental treatment.

Keywords: Behavior, Parenting style, Baumrind, Frankl behavioral rating scale

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1. Introduction

The most influential factor affecting the outcome of the treatment in pediatric dentistry is the behavior of the child during the treatment [1]. This behavior of the child is guided by various factors such as parental attitudes, peer influence, and environmental factors. Kochanska found that children who are raised with inhibitions or given punishments have low assertive skills. To avoid threatening stimuli, they would avoid incorrect behavior [2]. Fearful children take longer to explore, play with others, or with new toys. Uninhibited children exhibit more assertion, explore and approach readily a new situation [3,4]. Conscience development occurs with socialization, parental responsiveness, and a secure relationship between mother and child [5]. Parents using milder punishment develop a positive conscience in children [5,6]. Parenting attitude and child's behavior are bidirectional; which forms the basis of a child's development [7]. This study aimed to find out, how the parenting style of the parents affects the child's ability to cooperate in the dental office. The objectives of the study were to assess the behavior of the child on the first dental visit and to determine the type of parenting experienced by the child. To find the association between the child's behavior and the type of parenting.

2. Materials and Methods

The pilot questionnaire study was conducted to compare the behavior of the child inside a dental setup with the type of parenting experienced by the child. The convenience sample size was calculated using the sample size formula $Z^2 1-\alpha/2^2 * p(1-p)/d^2$ to be 50 by setting an acceptable margin of error to be 0.1, a Z value of 1.96 for a two-tailed type 1 error of 5%, and assuming at least 15% of prevalence of each parenting style in the population. The questionnaire was given to the children between the age of 8 -12 years who visited the dental outpatient department for the first time along with their mothers. The questionnaire contained a set of 20 questions about their mother's parenting style. The child was asked to indicate the correct response on a five-point scale. The scale ranged from 0 (not applicable) to 4 (totally applicable). The questionnaire was given to the child before the commencement of the dental procedure. Based on the responses, the parenting type was classified into: authoritative, authoritarian, uninvolved (neglectful), and permissive, given by Diana Baumrind. After the commencement of the dental procedure, the behavior of the child was recorded using Frankl's behavior rating scale. The definitely positive and positive behavior rating were categorized under one group as positive behavior. Similarly, definitely negative and negative behavior of children were grouped under negative behavior. The association between parenting style and responses of the children were correlated with the behavior of the children during dental treatment. The data collected were statistically analyzed using the Chi-square test.

3. Results

The present study included 50 mothers and their children aged 8 to 12 years. According to the findings, authoritative parenting is the most frequently exhibited parenting style among the mothers who participated in the study. Table 1 shows there were 8 (16%), 26 (52%), 8 (16%) and 8 (16%) children who had authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and neglectful mothers respectively. (Table 1). In this study, 5 children of Authoritarian parents showed positive and 3 showed negative behaviors; 22 children of Authoritative parents showed positive and 4 showed negative behaviors; 3 children of Permissive parents showed positive and 5 showed negative behaviors; 8 Children of neglectful parenting showed all negative behavior. The chi square test revealed a significant relationship between parenting style and child behaviour. (Table 2, Graph 1).

4. Discussion

Inside a dental operatory, many factors affect the child's behavior. But still, the attitude of the parents towards the child's needs and towards dentistry plays a major role in the management of the child during dental treatment. The immediate family environment seems to have the greatest impact on the child's personality, development, and behavior [8]. Diana Baumrind categorized parenting styles into 3 types [9]. It was Maccoby and Martin who expanded the parenting styles into the present model [10]. Authoritarian parents are unresponsive to the needs of their children and have high expectations of them. The child may have low self-esteem and poor social skills. 62.5% of children had positive behavior with authoritarian parenting. It needs tender, love, and care to deal with these children. The children could be taught coping skills, guided imagery and positively reinforced to enhance a positive behavior. Authoritative parents are warm and responsive. They encourage conversation, instills both autonomy and discipline in the child. The parent exerts firm control when the young child disobeys. The authoritative parent enforces the adult perspective in a child while recognizing the child's interests [9]. In the present study majority of the child exhibited positive behavior with authoritative parenting. For establishing good communication with the child, being responsive to the child, and setting clear rules would elicit positive behavior from a child raised in an authoritative parenting style. Permissive parents are warm and responsive but are lenient and indulgent with children. The children may show negative behavior in the form of a temper tantrum, refusing to open mouth, and may scream. It's difficult to lay the rules of dental operatory to the children. But if the dentist makes the child understand that the treatment is carried out in the best interest of the child, there can be a change in the behavior of the child. Systemic desensitization, modeling and aversive conditioning are some of the behavior management techniques which can be used effectively. Neglectful parents are indifferent, unresponsive. The child doesn't have an emotional attachment with parents. The parents don't set rules on expected behavior. This can lead to a lack of self-esteem in the children. This might be reflected as dental neglect, wherein parents do not approach for treatment even in presence of an obvious problem. In the study sample, based on children's responses, there were eight children with neglectful parenting. The behavior of all the children was negative during dental examination/treatment. The children of the authoritative parents showed more desirable behavior during treatment. The results are consistent with the other studies [11]. Parents rewarding desirable actions, punishing undesirable actions are due to direct interaction of parent and child [12]. Children believing that some of the attributes of their parents are present in them, helps them in emotional bonding with the parent [12,13]. Permissive parenting makes children take their own decisions [14]. A child can consume a lot of unbalanced cariogenic food, not perform oral hygiene procedures which subsequently lead to the formation of dental caries. Educational background also influences the parenting style. Higher educated parents are seen more with authoritative parenting style, lower educated parents are associated with permissive parenting [15]. Antisocial activities in children are associated with neglectful parenting [16]. High levels of parenting stress have been associated with unfavorable outcomes in children [17,18,19]. Stressful parenting can lead to abuse and neglect [17]. A stressful situation like having a special, immunocompromised/systemically compromised child, being a single parent, low levels of social support can lead to neglect in parental care. When a parent is stressed out, they can become withdrawn or can overreact to a situation. Parenting styles have undergone a great change in the Indian environment. The change in the family system from joint to nuclear model has made parental role in modulating the personality and behavior of the child in a prime way. The child when born is like

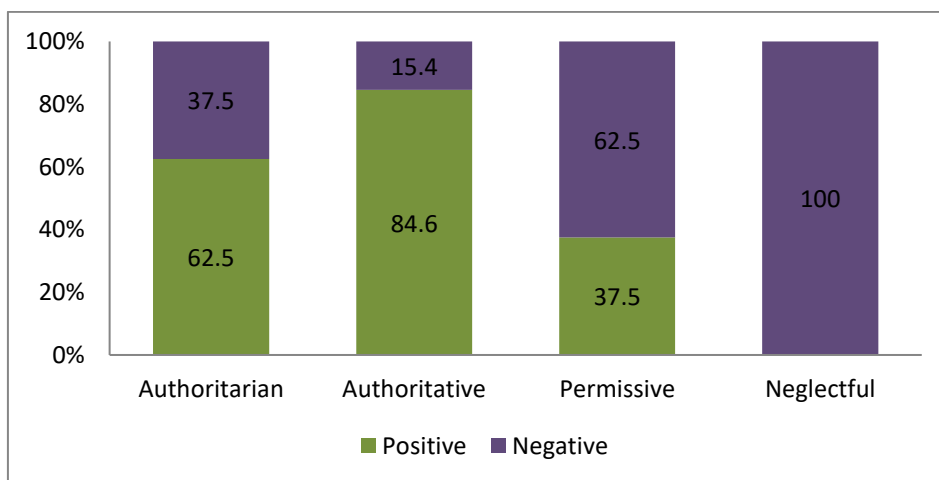
a blank slate. Parenting changes the behavior of children [20]. A child raised in a sensitive setting with responsive parenting would have a long-term benefit in terms of the personality of the child.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of parenting style

Parenting Style	Frequency	Percentage
Authoritarian	8	16%
Authoritative	26	52%
Permissive	8	16%
Neglectful	8	16%

Table 2: Association of parenting style and child’s dental behavior

Parenting style	Child’s behavior		Total	p-value
	Positive	Negative		
Authoritarian	5	3	8	0.000*
Authoritative	22	4	26	
Permissive	3	5	8	
Neglectful	0	8	8	
Total	30	20	50	
	(60%)	(40%)	(100%)	



Graph 1: Representation of parenting style with behavior

If the child's emotional needs are fulfilled with adequate support and encouragement, it provides a strong foundation for an uninhibited, optimistic personality. This greatly helps in dealing with a child patient in a dental setting.

5. Conclusions

Parenting style was found to be substantially linked with child behaviour in the dental setting. Authoritative parenting was associated with positive behavior, neglectful parenting was associated with negative behavior in the dental clinic. Parenting style thus affects the behavior of a child in the dental clinic.

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