



Narrative Review:

Parental attitudes and parenting styles in paediatric dentistry: A review of the current literature

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Abstract

Dental anxiety plays a crucial role in managing the children in the dental setup. Anxiety can occur due to various factors; multiple studies have stated that parenting styles affect children's dental anxiety and behaviour. These parenting styles can also influence the child's personality, psychological and social development. Hence, the present review is intended to summarize various parenting styles and attitudes that could affect the paediatric patient behaviour in the dental office. Furthermore, a wide range of new parenting styles which are not yet reported in the literature is also discussed.

Keywords: Dental anxiety, Parenting styles, parental attitudes, maternal anxiety, personality development.

Introduction

Fear and anxiety associated with dental procedures appear to be a significant cause in neglecting oral health. ^[1] For young children, the dental environment is unknown, and sometimes it is a novel experience. Anxiety levels and behaviour characteristics often influence dental treatment choices. For instance, dental treatment is carried out under local anaesthesia for cooperative children and general anaesthesia for uncooperative children. ^[2] Several factors are responsible for a child's negative behaviour during dental treatment, and one such factor is the parent's emotional behaviour during the dental procedure. ^[3] Knowing and eliminating the factors that cause negative dental behaviour in children may affect dental treatment positively. ^[4,5] Several authors stated that negative child behaviour could be associated with parental personality traits and maternal anxiety. This could be considered a significant factor affecting dental interventions. ^[6,7] Aminabadi and Farahani reported a significant relationship between parenting styles and children's behaviour during dental treatment. ^[8] Parenting style refers to beliefs, attitudes, emotional atmosphere, and behaviours that parents nurture their children. Tough, intergenerational differences in parenting style may be related to

children's problematic behaviour in the dental office. ^[9] Studies in the literature have reported that parenting style can affect children's dental anxiety and behaviour. ^[10, 11] According to a developmental psychologist, Jerome Kagan, parenting is defined as implementing a series of decisions about the socialization of children. According to the Ecological Model of Human Development, the socialization contexts are affected by parenting, and parents sometimes find these decisions are overwhelming. ^[12]

Observational learning theory suggests parents are the role models for attaining proper behaviour. ^[13] The word parenting is confusing because it is bidirectional and dynamic. An adult's behavior toward a child is often related to the child's temperament and behavior. For example, using rewards and punishments as emotional restraints for behavior shaping. ^[14, 15] It has been suggested that cognitive development in children correlates with parenting style. Hence, maternal anxiety and parental attitudes play a significant role in influencing children's behavior and cognitive development. In this literature review, various types of parental attitudes and parenting styles are discussed [Figure1].

Parenting style	Parent behaviour	Resulting Child Behaviour	Relationship
Authoritarian	Parent centred, non-supportive, rigid type which sets strict standards and expects very much from the child (example: "if you don't finish your homework, I will not allow you to play for good")	Unsociable, withdrawn, unfriendly	The relationship is about control; differing perspectives are not allowed, meaningful communication generally flows one way.
Permissive	Child-centred approach with undemanding and supportive approach. (example: "it might be good to finish your homework")	Moody, immature, low self-control, dependent.	Relationship indulges the child, entitlement, little control exercised
Authoritative	Child-centred approach with more expectations from the child and encourages independence and sets limits as well as goals (example: "you can play after you finish your homework")	Independent, good social skills, self-reliant.	The relationship is about building mutual trust and respect, both perspectives honoured, communication flows both ways.
Uninvolved	Non-supportive parent centred approach which is emotionally detached (example: "I don't care if you have unfinished homework")	Undisciplined, rejecting behaviour, Indifferent.	The relationship is non-existent, no communication, no parenting.

Figure 1. Relation among the parenting style, parenting behavior and child behavior

Parental Attitudes

Overprotection: It is the exaggeration of love and affection. This can be due to miscarriages, a long delay in conception, and the death of another sibling. A severe illness or handicapping situation may also warrant overprotection. The mother gives extreme care and constantly gets involved in the child's daily activities. The overprotective mother retards the normal psychological maturation of the child, and the child's behaviour further depends on whether the maternal overprotection is coupled with 'dominance' or with 'overindulgence.' The dominant overprotective mother is associated with a submissive child, exhibiting extreme shyness and anxiety. The submissive child will usually be very cooperative in the dental office, although establishing a rapport or casual communication may be difficult. The overindulgent overprotective mother is associated with an aggressive and demanding child who expects constant attention and service. Denying their wishes results in temper tantrums or physical assault. However, they may expect or demand the dentist's attention. [16, 17]

Under affection: It may vary from mild detachment to indifference, to neglect. It may begin during pregnancy or later in childhood. A mother becomes less emotionally supportive of her child due to employment or other interests. Children experiencing maternal under affection are usually well behaved and outwardly appear to be well adjusted. However, they tend to be unsure about their decision-making capacities. The dentist may find that these children are timid, cry easily, and cannot cooperate, but can respond to the dentist if provided enough emotional support and affection. [17]

Rejection: The child may be rejected due to an unstable, unhappy marriage, or the child's presence may interfere with the mother's career or ambitions. It is characterized by child neglect, severe punishment, ragging, and resistance to spending time/money on the child. The child may show extreme anxiety, overactive, disobedient, aggressive behaviour. When maternal rejection is high, the child usually lacks a feeling of belonging or worthiness. If the rejection is extreme, this kind of attitude can lead to Battered child syndrome. [17, 18]

Over anxiety: Parents are characterized by an undue concern for the child, usually due to a previous tragedy. It can be associated with overprotection, overindulgence. Children of over-anxious parents may be shy, timid, and fearful. They are generally good dental patients, but the difficulty in overcoming their fears may be encountered. [17, 19]

Over-identification: This attitude occurs in parents who try to relive their own lives in their children. These categories of parents expect the child to fulfil their goals. If the child fails to respond favourably, they get disappointed, displaying it to the child. [17, 20]

Baumrind's parenting styles: [21] Baumrind explained the behaviour of parents into three specific parenting styles based on two dimensions (responsiveness/unresponsiveness) and two aspects (demanding/undemanding) they are:

Authoritarian: The authoritarian (high control, low warmth) parenting style is defined by harsh parenting practices, including physical punishment, yelling, and commands. Children in authoritarian homes are often withdrawn and distrustful.

Authoritative: The authoritative (high warmth, high control) parent exhibits firm limit-setting yet shows compassion and warmth and these households have bidirectional communication.

Permissive: The permissive (high warmth, low control) parent provides few to no commands or limits to behaviour and often spoils and cuddles the child. Children in a permissive household are "co-owners" of the house as far as rules go but have no responsibility.

Later Maccoby and Martin worked on Baumrind's parenting styles and added the fourth parenting style as Neglectful/ Uninvolved. [22] The neglectful style is defined by low warmth and low control and describes emotionally detached parents. These parents are typically not responsive and are uninvolved in their children's lives.

Other parenting styles:

In addition to the above four classic parenting styles, modern psychologists have defined the following new styles:

1. Tiger parenting is a culturally dependent: Unique parenting style most commonly seen in Chinese mothers. Tiger parents display a psychologically controlling and authoritarian type of behaviour. This type of parenting is associated with academic pressure, and they are not worried about the children's self-esteem. Usually, this parenting style is shown by mothers during the early adolescence period. As the child enters into late adolescence and adulthood, the father occupies the mother's role in disciplining the child. Indeed, the accurate definition and meaning of tiger parenting are still controversial. Children with this parenting profile display depression, lower GPA, and educational completion with more academic

pressure and a greater sense of alienation. Unlike the tiger mothers, panda fathers were highly responsive to their children's needs and gave autonomy support to their children. Panda Dad's pattern might be that fathers have less time with their children and tend to demand less of the child.^[23-25]

2. Helicopter parent: In this type of parenting style, parents demonstrate inappropriate involvement in improving their child's personal and academic success. Helicopter parents experience extreme separation anxiety and often do not detach from their children. Instead, they do over parenting by managing their children's lives. This over-involvement begins at a very young age, and it continues throughout life. This parenting approach is dysfunctional and will eventually have negative consequences. The parents are more inclined to step in and solve any problems that their children may face, making them overly dependent on others.

Children with this type of parenting do not achieve independence and cannot solve their problems during task-oriented challenges. Depression, anxiety, poor self-esteem, lower general self-efficacy, lower peer communication, more peer alienation, and decreased peer trust are seen among these children. Furthermore, these children face difficulty developing independence, maturation, social competency, and coping skills while dealing with negative consequences or failure.^[26-28]

3. Snowplough parents: It is also known as lawnmower parenting. It simply means that the parent tries to remove all the obstacles and problems in the child's way. In this parenting style, parents jump in to help and save their kids from almost every situation that comes in their daily lives. As it is evident by the term, snowplow clears all the snow from the road. Similarly, the parents keep clearing, covering, removing, and justifying their children's mistakes, obstacles, and life problems. Parent's intention is not harmful, but they want to give all the advantages to their kids to move quickly ahead in all aspects of life. They do not want to see their child struggling with issues of life in general. These children will feel as if he is not competent when he cannot try things by himself. They become entirely dependent and cannot learn to be self-dependent and self-sufficient. Children will tend to look for support in every difficult situation of life. Along with these, the child develops trouble dealing with frustration, has poor problem-solving skills, lacks self-efficacy, and has increased anxiety.^[29-31]

4. Free-range parenting: It is a less protective approach in parenting style and mourns the loss of

freedom for children. When parents protect their children from danger, they always subject that child to another one. Children raised with this parenting style spend additional time indoors on sedentary activities, increased screen time which leads to childhood obesity, and a range of other developmental issues. Also, children lose a sense of discovery and exploration when they are kept home and under constant adult supervision. However, they are deprived of the opportunity to develop self-sufficiency and learn to take responsibility for themselves. The free-range children will be self-sufficient and in a position to deal with unanticipated difficulties in life and can navigate themselves without parental hand-holding.^[32-34]

5. Attachment parents: They are relaxed but set limits in line with their needs and character. It is related through the authoritative typology. Here, parents try to balance high expectations with empathy, which is associated with the best outcomes. The advantage of this parenting style is that it provides a haven of love and respect to the child, which encourages a child to build a positive relationship with the world safely. However, this style's disadvantage is that it can be misinterpreted as a permissive parenting style, and it is also associated with over-parenting. Some have defended this style as anti-feminist. However, several authors disagree with this statement.^[35, 36]

6. Lighthouse parenting: It is a balance between free-range and helicopter parenting, in which children are given autonomy at a very young age to do things on their own. It includes a sense of balance between independence and dependence. Parents using this approach offer guidance and more structure, while free-range parenting is entirely hands-off, and helicopter parenting is entirely hands-on. Two main principles of lighthouse parenting are giving unconditional love and letting children fail.

Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg, a developmental psychologist, stated that parents as a lighthouse provide a gentle, attentive light for their child's journey and guide their child back to safe harbour/shore for support, help, or comfort when needed. Lighthouse parents display love and warmth to their children and monitor them closely with clear rules and boundaries. Children raised by these parents are more psychologically well-adjusted, intrinsically motivated, self-reliant, and display self-confidence.^[37,38]

7. Spiritual parenting: It is about respecting a child's individuality and creating the space for the child to develop their own beliefs based on their unique personality and individual potentials. It is not about

teaching children something external, like a specific belief system or dogma. It is about helping children to stay centred within themselves and helping them to realize by themselves. Religious and spiritual struggles are related to mental health in various ways, including increased depressive symptoms, generalized anxiety, state anger, loneliness, increased psychological distress, poor physical health, and lower self-esteem. Children whose parents were emotionally responsive will have a less overall religious struggle. Therefore, warm and caring parental behaviours predicted strong religious commitment of children into adulthood. [39,40]

8. Toxic parenting: It is a type of destructive parenting style that exhibits guilty, humiliation, and low motivational levels that can obstruct a child's performance throughout life. It ranges from neglecting children's needs to direct physical, emotional, and sometimes even sexual abuse. The existential and long-term effect of toxic parenting may be devastating as it may entail a complete disruption of the child's self-image and sense of worth. Children who suffer from toxic parenting struggle with severe guilt complexes and an insufficient level of self-esteem. The behaviour of toxic parents may range from physical abuse such as corporal punishments to sometimes sexual assault, emotional unavailability, or love withdrawal. This type of practice fails to nurture the psychological and emotive necessities, impacting the children's survival skills. [41,42]

9. Crunchy Mom: A "crunchy mom" is a woman searching for more information by doing extensive research and proceeds with her own decisions. A Crunchy mom is environmental, healthy, and socially conscious. These mothers usually support natural options such as homebirth, encourages breastfeeding until the child weans by themselves, anti-vaccination, and prefer natural/ holistic medicines to minimize the exposure of chemicals and toxins. They tend to be vegetarian and prepare all-organic foods. They can alter or adjust their lifestyle for environmental reasons. Opposite to this parenting style is known as silky parents. [43,44]

10. Silky parents: It is also termed the western parenting style. A modern mother prefers medicated hospital birth, bottle feeding/part-time breastfeeding, disposable diapers, etc. This type of parent follows the advice of established medical authorities. Silky moms often tend to be moms who use sleep training methods like "CIO" (cry it out) & rely on modern products for convenience. A combination of both silky and crunchy parenting styles is termed scrunchy parents. [45,46]

11.

Narcissistic parents: It is also a pervasive pattern of grandiosity characterized by Intra and interpersonal strategies to protect self-esteem. As the term implies, parents are represented by arrogant behavior and lack of empathy. The pace their children to excel as they have come to identify with the accomplishments of their children. Narcissistic parents thirst for external recognition and unconsciously use their children as a means to live out dreams. Children with this parenting style are left with very little space to discovering their interests and potentials. Narcissism parents are moreover associated with low levels of anxiety and depression. Finally, this type of parent will be excessively involved with the child and does not allow them to establish their own individual standards for success. [47,48]

Conclusion

Maternal personality traits are claimed to play a vital role in affecting children's behavior and coping styles. Literature also suggested that the dental and oral health of the children will be influenced by parental oral health knowledge, attitudes, and dental anxiety. However, the maternal personality traits and behavioral profiles will positively contribute to the children's psychosocial development and affect the treatment approaches used. Hence, proper attention should be paid to identifying the parenting style for correct behavioral management techniques to work efficiently in the dental setting.

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