

The relationship between mother-child relationship, parenting style and preschool children's problem behavior

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Abstract: *The mother-child relationship and parenting style are the two most important aspects of early childhood development and play an important role in children's problem behaviors. Study in Beijing? Preschool children and their mothers were selected as subjects, and questionnaires were used to investigate mother-child relationship, parenting style and preschool children's problem behaviors. The results showed that there was no difference in the performance of children's problem behaviors in different grades, but there were significant differences between boys and girls, and the problem behaviors of boys were higher than that of girls. The mother-child relationship and parenting style are related to the problem behavior of preschool children, and the mother-child conflict significantly positively predicts the child's problem behavior. The higher the mother-child relationship conflict, the more serious the child's problem behavior.*

Keywords: *preschool children; mother-child relationship; parenting style; problem behavior*

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the development of society, the problem behavior of school-age children is on the rise. According to foreign reports, the detection rate of school-age children reached 5%-15% in the 1970s; after the 1980s, it was as high as 10%-20%. Problem behavior at home is also on the rise. Chinese scholars Wang Yufeng and others conducted a survey on children's problem behaviors in Beijing urban areas and found that the detection rate of children's problem behaviors in 1985 was 8.3%, which increased to 10.9% in 1993. [1] It can be seen that the problem behavior of preschool children is not optimistic. The family is an important place for the development of preschool children, and the mother-child relationship and parent-child parenting style will have an impact on children's problem behaviors. At present, the most research on children's problem behavior in China is the influence of early emotion and parental psychological control on children's problem behavior. There are also some scholars who study other issues, such as Liu Yapeng, Deng Huihua, etc. [2], who study the influence of parenting pressure on children's problem behaviors. Ye Zhi et al. [3] studied the relationship between maternal depression and children's problem behaviors. In previous studies, more attention was paid to problem behaviors, and less researches on problem behaviors as a whole were conducted, and the influence of mother-child relationship and parenting style on children's problem behaviors has not yet been known. Therefore, understanding the relationship between mother-child relationship and parenting style and preschool children's problem behavior is helpful to take measures in education to promote the healthy growth of children. This study focuses on the relationship between mother-child relationship and parenting style on preschool children's aggressive problem behavior, fearful problem behavior, and distraction problem behavior. Highlight the importance of child problem behaviors.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were the mothers, fathers, and homeroom teachers of 472 children (251 boys) from 27 preschools in an urban district in Beijing, China. The 27 preschools had similar daily activity schedules and no boarding programs (i.e., 24-hr care). The children were aged from 25 to 74 months (Mean=48.00 months, SD=10.34); 84.1% of them were children without siblings. All the children's mothers were participated in this study.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Parent-child Relationships

Mothers and fathers independently rated their relationships with their child using the Chinese version of Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS; Pianta, 1992) [4], which was modified by Chinese researchers and has demonstrated high reliability and validity (X. Zhang & Chen, 2020). Thus, this study used the Closeness (9 items) and Conflict (12 items) subscales. The Closeness subscale assesses the parent's feelings of warmth and open communication toward his or her child (e.g., I share an affectionate, warm relationship with my child). The Conflict subscale assesses the parent's feelings of negativity and conflict toward the child (e.g., My child and I always seem to be struggling with each other). Mothers and fathers rated their relationship with their child during the previous 3 months on the Closeness subscale indicated a closer parent-child relationship. Cronbach's α coefficients were, respectively, 0.73 and 0.80 for the mothers' and fathers' reported closeness, and 0.79 and 0.81 for the mothers' and fathers' reported conflict.

2.2.2. Parenting style

The Parenting Behavior Questionnaire (PBQ) is an effective tool for measuring the parenting style of parents, and has been widely used in Chinese subjects and has shown good reliability and validity (Chen, 2002; Chen et al., 2000). The tool includes the authoritative and authoritarian subscales (Robinson et al., 1995), where the authoritative subscale includes three dimensions: (1) Warmth, a total of 7 items (eg, "I encourage my child to talk about his/her troubles"); (2) Democratic Participation, a total of 4 items (eg, "I allow my children to participate in the formulation of family rules"); (3) Reasoning, 5 items (eg, "My child and I explain why certain rules must be obeyed"). The authoritarian subscale consists of three dimensions: (1) corporal punishment, 4 items (eg, "When the child is disobedient, I hit him/her"); (2) verbal aggression, 3 items (eg, "I and Children quarrel"); (3) Unreasonable, a total of 2 topics (eg, "I punish my children by depriving them of their rights, with almost no explanation."). The questionnaire was scored on a 5-point scale (from "1-never" to "5-always").

2.3. Procedures

The mothers of the children who participated in the study were organized by the teachers of the children's class to fill in the questionnaires. The content of the questionnaires involved family background information, mother-child relationship, parenting styles, and assessment of children's problem behaviors. Recruitment and data collection procedures were approved by the Beijing Normal University Institutional Review Board.

2.4. Data analysis

Eliminate invalid data and duplicate samples, and use SPSS26.0 program to organize, count and analyze data on preschool children's problem behavior, mother-child relationship, and family parenting style.

3. Results

The result analysis of this study consists of the following three parts: (1) Descriptive statistical analysis: analysis of preschool children's gender, grade, and children's hostile-aggressive problem behavior, anxiety-phobic problem behavior, hyperactivity-distraction problem behavior. The mean and standard deviation were used for statistics; (2) Correlation analysis: The correlation between variables was analyzed to reveal the pairwise correlation between the mother-child relationship and parenting style and the variables of preschool children's problem behavior; (3) Multi-layered Regression analysis: To examine the predictive effects of mother-child relationship and parenting style on children's problem behaviors.

3.1. Problem behavior of children in different grades and genders

Two-way analysis of variance was used to study the influence of grade and gender on children's problem behaviors. It can be seen from Table 1 that gender showed significant ($F=19.455$, $p<0.05$), indicating that the main effect exists, and children of different genders. There are differences in problem

behavior. Grade did not show significant ($F=0.364, p=0.695>0.05$), indicating that grade does not have a differential relationship with children's problem sexual behavior. The interaction term of grade and gender was not significant ($F=0.914, p=0.402>0.05$).

Table 1: ANOVA test of gender and grade effects on preschool children's problem behaviors

	sum of square	df	mean square	F	p
Gender	1.314	1	1.314	19.455	0.000***
Grade	0.049	2	0.025	0.364	0.695
Gender*Grade	0.123	2	0.062	0.914	0.402

The independent sample test was used to further investigate the differences in problem behaviors of children of different genders. The comparison of gender differences in problem behaviors of preschool children is shown in Table 2. The independent sample t-test results found that there is a significant gender difference in the aggressive problem behavior of preschool children, $t(467.769) = 5.678, p = 0.000 < 0.01$, the specific comparison shows that the average value of boys (0.4972) is significantly higher than that of girls. Average (0.3455). There was no significant gender difference in fearful problem behavior, $t(468)=1.776, p=0.76>0.05$. There are gender differences in distraction problem behavior, $t(469) = 2.576, p = 0.010 < 0.05$. The specific difference shows that the average of boys (0.9100) is significantly higher than the average of girls (0.8114).

Table 2: Comparison of gender differences in preschool children's problem behaviors

	M ±SD		t	p
	boy (n=251)	girl (n=220)		
Hostility-aggressive dimension	0.498±0.316	0.346±0.263	5.678	0.000***
Anxiety-phobia dimension	0.479±0.283	0.432±0.298	1.776	0.076
Hyperactivity-distraction dimension	0.910±0.426	0.811±0.402	2.576	0.010*

3.2. Correlation analysis of mother-child relationship, parenting style and behavior of preschool children

Table 3: The relationship between mother-child relationship, parenting style and problem behavior

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.Hostility	-											
2.Anxiety	0.58**	-										
3.Hyperactivity	0.50**	0.43**	-									
4.mother-child intimacy	-0.26**	-0.19**	-0.16**	-								
5.mother-son conflict	0.39**	0.39**	0.30**	-0.18**	-							
6.Authority - Warmth	-0.19**	-0.16**	-0.12*	0.55**	-0.22**	-						
7.Authority-reasoning	-0.17**	-0.09	-0.07	0.42*	-0.10*	0.64**	-					
8.Authority-Democracy	-0.23**	-0.16**	-0.17**	0.45**	-0.15**	0.63**	0.62**	-				
9.Authoritative-easygoing	-0.30**	-0.25**	-0.24**	0.45**	-0.28**	0.59**	0.66**	0.60**	-			
10.Despotism-command	0.23**	0.25**	0.17**	-0.00	0.41**	0.03	0.07	-0.04	-0.14**	-		
11.Autocracy - Corporal Punishment	0.32**	0.25**	0.24**	-0.11*	0.39**	-0.20**	-0.18**	-0.23**	-0.31**	0.58**	-	
12.Autocracy-unreasonable	0.23**	0.28**	0.18**	-0.08	0.48**	-0.13**	-0.05	-0.10*	-0.17**	0.58**	0.51**	-
13.Autocracy - Verbal Attack	0.32**	0.26**	0.26**	-0.14**	0.44**	-0.16**	-0.21**	-0.17**	-0.41**	0.54**	0.56**	0.48**

Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between mother-child relationship and

parenting style and preschool children's problem behaviors. The relevant results are shown in Table 4. In the mother-child relationship, the close parent-child relationship was significantly negatively correlated with the problem behaviors of preschool children. The closer the mother-child relationship, the less conflict between them. Conflict parent-child relationship was significantly positively correlated with preschool problem behaviors, and the more rigid the mother-child relationship, the more conflict between them. Intimate parent-child relationship is significantly positively correlated with authoritative parenting style. Conflict parent-child relationship was significantly negatively correlated with authoritative parenting style, and significantly positively correlated with authoritarian parenting style.

Among the parenting styles, aggressive problem behaviors were significantly negatively correlated with authoritative parenting styles, indicating that the more authoritative the parenting style, the more aggressive problem behaviors in children. The authoritarian family parenting style has a significant positive correlation with children's problem behaviors, indicating that the more authoritarian family parenting style, the more children's problem behaviors.

3.3. Regression analysis of mother-child relationship, parenting style and preschool children's problem behavior

Table 4: Regression analysis of mother-child relationship, parenting style and preschool children's problem behavior

	Model1				Model2				Model3			
	β	T	p	R ²	β	T	p	R ²	β	T	p	R ²
Gender ^a	-0.127	-5.234	0.000***		-0.031	-1.264	0.207		-0.072	-1.988	0.047*	
Grade	-0.013	-0.902	0.368		-0.042	-2.812	0.005		-0.009	-0.396	0.693	
Mother-child intimacy	-0.087	-2.64	0.009**		-0.042	-1.274	0.203		-0.064	-1.306	0.192	
Mother-son conflict	0.155	5.747	0.000***		0.147	5.42	0.000***		0.156	3.894	0.000***	
Authority - Warmth	0.053	0.066	0.948		-0.753	-0.929	0.353		-1.779	-1.48	0.139	
Authority-reasoning	0.025	0.031	0.975		-0.711	-0.878	0.38		-1.721	-1.433	0.153	
Authority-Democracy	-0.036	-0.078	0.938		-0.459	-1.002	0.317		-1.113	-1.64	0.102	
Authoritative - easygoing	-0.062	-0.135	0.893	0.280	-0.537	-1.152	0.25	0.216	-1.193	-1.726	0.085	0.163
Despotism-command	-0.011	-0.025	0.98		-0.191	-0.413	0.68		-0.292	-0.427	0.67	
Autocracy - Corporal Punishment	0.05	0.11	0.912		-0.201	-0.442	0.658		-0.19	-0.282	0.778	
Autocracy - unreasonable	-0.036	-0.052	0.959		-0.294	-0.427	0.67		-0.392	-0.383	0.702	
Autocracy - Verbal Attack	0.021	0.045	0.964		-0.221	-0.478	0.633		-0.195	-0.285	0.776	

Note: a 1=boy, 2=girl; * means $p < 0.05$, ** means $p < 0.01$; *** means $p < 0.001$

Regression analysis was used to investigate the predictive effect of mother-child relationship and parenting style on children's anxiety. After controlling for children's gender and grade, linear regression analysis was conducted with mother-child relationship and parenting style as independent variables and preschool children's problem behavior as dependent variables. Model 1 examines the predictive effect on children's aggressive problem behavior, Model 2 examines the predictive effect on children's fearful problem behavior, and Model 3 examines the predictive effect on children's distraction problem behavior. After controlling for the gender and grade of the children, the regression analysis results are shown in Table 4. The results of Model1 show that the R-square value of the model is 0.280, which means that the mother-child relationship and parenting style can explain 28% of the changes in children's aggressive problem behavior. The regression coefficient of mother-child conflict is 0.155 ($t=5.747$, $p=0.000 < 0.01$), which means that mother-child conflict can significantly and positively predict children's aggressive problem behaviors. The results of Model2 show that the R-square value of the model is 0.216, which means that the mother-child relationship and parenting style can explain 21.6% of the changes in children's fearful problem behaviors. The regression coefficient of mother-child conflict is 0.147 ($t=5.742$, $p=0.000 < 0.01$), which means that mother-child conflict can significantly and positively predict children's fearful problem behaviors. The results of Model3 show that the R-square value of the model is 0.163, which means that the mother-child relationship and parenting style can explain 16.3% of the changes in children's attention-distracting behavior. The regression coefficient of mother-child conflict is 0.156 ($t=3.894$, $p=0.000 < 0.01$), which means that mother-child conflict can significantly and positively predict children's distraction problem behaviors. To sum up, mother-child conflict can significantly and positively predict children's problem behavior, indicating that the more conflict between mother and child, the more serious children's problem behavior.

4. Discussion

4.1. Problem behavior of preschool children

4.1.1. Gender difference in child problem behaviors

The results of the study showed that there was a significant gender difference in the problem behavior of preschool children, and the problem behavior of men was higher than that of women. First, biologically speaking, boys may be more 'inherently' aggressive and risk-taking than girls (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Parke & Slaby, 1983)[5][6], thus exhibiting more Behaviors that are difficult to nurture; and secondly, from a sociocultural perspective, in the context of Chinese culture, parents have different expectations for boys and girls. Boys are often expected to take on more family and social responsibilities in adulthood than girls. Therefore, parents treat men and women differently in the way they raise their families, leading to differences in preschool problem behaviors. Parents should treat the problem behaviors of preschool children of different genders equally and scientifically.

4.1.2. Mother-child relationship and child problem behavior

Studies have shown that the mother-child relationship is significantly related to the problem behaviors of preschool children. The closer the mother-child relationship is, the less problem behaviors. By improving the mother-child relationship, the occurrence of problem behaviors in young children can be reduced.

4.1.3. Parenting styles and children's problem behaviors

Family parenting styles have a significant impact on children's problem behaviors. In comparison, authoritarian parenting styles are not conducive to children's behavioral development. An overly repressive environment will lead to children's rebellious psychology. Children feel loved and lack support and guidance, which is not conducive to children's behavioral development.

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