

The Roles of Parenting Style towards Mental Health of Early Childhood

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Abstract

Mental health of early childhood cannot be separated from parents' parenting. Mental health is strongly influenced by social-emotional conditions. Children's social development includes the child's ability to establish and form healthy relationships with others. Emotional development includes the ability to control and adjust one's feelings to others. The form of treatment and attitudes of parents greatly determine the social-emotional development of early childhood. When the social-emotional development of early childhood is impaired, it will indirectly have an impact on their mental health. For this reason, parents must determine the appropriate parenting style so that children's mental health develops well. Explorative qualitative method was used in this research. The researchers attempted to understand and examined the relationship between parenting style and early childhood mental health by understanding and analyzing the findings of previously published research. The results of this research indicated that parenting style has a very important role in the mental health of early childhood. Authoritative parents have a positive impact on children's mental health, whereas authoritarian parents have a negative impact on children's mental health. Authoritative care is characterized by warm treatment from parents and always concerned about the needs and development of children. Meanwhile, the authoritarian parenting is characterized by abuse by parents and being unresponsive to children.

Keywords: *parenting style, mental health, authoritative, authoritarian, social emotional, early childhood.*

Introduction

Studies of children's mental health are very important to discuss. Mental health is a problem that continues to develop in the community. Children's mental health problems continue to receive attention and to be studied in various countries. There are many ways to overcome mental health problems. For example, the development of early childhood's mental health consultation models in the United Kingdom⁽¹⁾. Development of a mental health service system in Korea⁽²⁾. And psychological support and various access to mental health services in Cambodia⁽³⁾. All of them indicate that mental health problems are a shared challenge that must be addressed since early childhood.

Mental health problems can occur from an early age. Throughout the prenatal period and into the first years of life, the child's brain and body develop rapidly, making the child very vulnerable to external influences⁽⁴⁾. Early

childhood is considered a very wide range of mental health disorders. The results show that the number of children diagnosed with mental health problems has increased significantly over the past three decades⁽⁵⁾. One of the factors in a child's mental health problem is the parenting style that is not in accordance with the child's development stage. If parenting is not done properly, it can disrupt the mental health of the child. The Iowa Association for Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health explains that the first years of life provide a foundation for children's mental health and social-emotional development⁽⁶⁾. The condition of young children who are still very young needs care from their parents and their nearest environment. Parenting during infancy and early life is very important for healthy physical, psychological and social development⁽⁴⁾. Proper care can provide positive experiences that are beneficial to children's social emotional development and mental health. Social experiences and opportunities

for young children to explore the world depend on the love and care they receive⁽⁶⁾.

Mental health problems in early childhood are mostly influenced by parenting styles. Various studies explain that parenting has a significant relationship to the mental health of children⁽⁵⁾. Parental interactions and treatment of children play an important role in children's mental health. This is because parents are the closest environment to the child. Whatever parents do and give will affect the child's development. When babies and toddlers are treated with kindness and encouragement, they develop a sense of security and emotional security⁽⁶⁾. Conversely, if a child is treated with bad things and threats, it can bring fear and pressure to the child so that it has a negative impact on the child's mental health. For this reason, parenting and the treatment of parents play an important role in the mental health of early childhood.

Method

Qualitative explorative method was used in this research. The researchers tried to understand and examine the relations between parenting style and early childhood mental health. Exploration method aimed to reveal new knowledge about forms of parenting style and their impacts on social emotional development and mental health of early childhood. Jacobsen explains that exploratory research questions aim to reveal new knowledge about a phenomenon that occurs⁽⁷⁾.

This research is based on various related literature that reveals the mental health of early childhood and various factors that influence it and studies related to parenting style, especially in relation to mental health of early childhood. The literatures used as a reference are books and reliable scientific articles, both published in journals and online media. They were then understood, studied and analyzed to obtain findings and conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Problems with mental health of early childhood can occur because of the attitudes and treatment of parents. Parents who are insensitive and care about the conditions of a child's emotional social development can have a negative impact on a child's mental health. In addition, parents who have mental health problems also influence children's mental health. For example, the results of a survey in Scotland in 2010 of more than 3000 mothers showed that children whose mothers

were emotionally good had better social, behavioral and emotional development than mothers who had mental health problems⁽⁸⁾. Thus, the behavior and conditions of parents have an important role in the mental health of their children.

Overview of Early Childhood Mental Health:

Early childhood is a child who is in the age range of birth to eight years⁽⁹⁾. It can also be interpreted as the age of birth to age 3 years, birth to 5 years, or birth to 8 years, or even including the prenatal period⁽¹⁰⁾. During these times, the child has tremendous growth and development where the development of children is strongly influenced by the environment and those around them⁽⁹⁾. Not to mention the mental health of early childhood.

Mental health plays an important role in the well-being of everyone, even for infants and young children⁽⁶⁾. Mental health of early childhood is an illustration of social-emotional abilities in everyday life⁽¹⁰⁾. Scientists define children's mental health as the development of social emotional competence and self-regulation and practically no psychological and pathological disorders⁽⁵⁾. Mental health is a term that refers to an individual's emotional, psychological and social well-being⁽¹¹⁾.

It must be understood that mental health with mental illness has different meanings. Mental health problems are not as severe as mental illness, but they can develop into mental illness if not handled effectively. Children's health and mental illness are shaped by complex interactions between individual children, biological characteristics, caregiver characteristics, a more general family environment and a broader socio-cultural and environmental context.

The concept of mental health according to WHO includes welfare, self-efficacy, autonomy, competence and the ability to realize one's intellectual and emotional potential⁽¹²⁾. Early childhood mental health is related to the development capacity of children from birth to three to experience, arrange and express emotions, form close and safe interpersonal relationships, both in the context of family, community and culture⁽¹⁰⁾. From this explanation, it can be illustrated that emotional social development is strongly related to the mental health of early childhood. The terms mental health and social-emotional development are used interchangeably⁽¹¹⁾. Any behavior that the child shows in his interactions with other people and his environment can illustrate

his mental health. One of the mentally healthy children can be identified through the ability and development of children psychologically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually⁽¹³⁾. Anxious, tense and fearful feelings experienced by children make their mental health disturbed. Conversely, feeling happy, safe and comfortable makes children's mental health well developed.

The Role of Parenting Style for Mental Health:

Early Childhood Parents have a close relationship to social emotional development and mental health of early childhood. The parents' style of parenting greatly determines the future of the child. The attitude and treatment of parents is the basis for developing children's mental health. The experiences gained during parenting greatly affect the next mental health of the child. Positive experiences of early childhood enhance strong emotional health, whereas negative experiences can adversely affect brain development⁽¹⁴⁾. When the emotional development of early childhood deteriorates, their mental health experiences problems.

The style of parents' parenting has a very important role in the mental health of early childhood. Parenting style is defined as a form of parental control of children's behavior⁽¹⁵⁾. Children become responsible and contribute to community members⁽¹⁶⁾. Parenting is closely related to the process of action and interaction between parents and children⁽¹⁷⁾. Another opinion states that parenting styles can be described as specific behaviors that include the demands and responses of parents that are used to control and socialize children⁽¹⁸⁾. The form of demands and parents' responses to children's emotional development will determine their mental health.

As caregivers, parents play a role in maintaining, interpreting, educating and providing positive experiences for the development of children's abilities. The results showed that infants involved with caregivers who are responsive, consistent, care and live in a safe and comfortable environment are more likely to have strong emotional health⁽¹⁴⁾. This means that children's mental health can develop well. Social experiences and opportunities for young children to explore the world depend on the love and care they receive⁽⁶⁾. Relationships with parents and their environment are central to the mental health of early childhood.

Healthy emotional social development is very important for the life and future of the child. The

development of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-regulation are important features of social-emotional development⁽⁶⁾. The initial stage of social emotional development occurs in the family. Therefore, forming a family and caring for children is an important part of life⁽⁸⁾. Good relations between parents and children play an important role in the next development of the child.

Parenting Style that Supports and Inhibits Mental Health of Early Childhood:

The mental health of early childhood depends very much on the parenting style of their parents. There are times when parenting styles can support children's mental health, but there are also parenting styles that have a negative impact on children's mental health. Baumrind classifies parenting styles into three, namely: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive^(15,19,20). This classification is based on the form of demands and responses of parents to children's behavior. The demands refer to claims made by parents on children to be integrated into society through regulation of behavior, direct confrontation and demands for maturity and supervision of children's activities, whereas responses refer to the extent to which parents grow individuality and self-affirmation by supporting and approve child requests⁽²⁰⁾.

Two out of the three parenting styles raised by Baumrind, becoming the focus of this research are authoritative and authoritarian. Both of these parenting styles have relevance and the opposite effect on the mental health of early childhood. This is based on the characteristics of each of these parenting styles.

Authoritative is a parenting style that has high demands and high responses⁽²¹⁾. Authoritative parents give very strict control and provide leeway for children to make their own decisions⁽¹⁹⁾. Parents with this type play a role in directing and facilitating various behaviors and desires of children. Parents are very warm and accept communication of children⁽²²⁾. With this parenting style, children can grow up to be independent, confident and able to explore their world with pleasure and satisfaction. This condition is very positive for the mental health of early childhood. This is based on the results of a research that states that infants or children involved with caregivers who are responsive, consistent, care and live in a safe and comfortable environment are more likely to have strong emotional health⁽¹⁴⁾. This explanation can be seen through Figure 1.

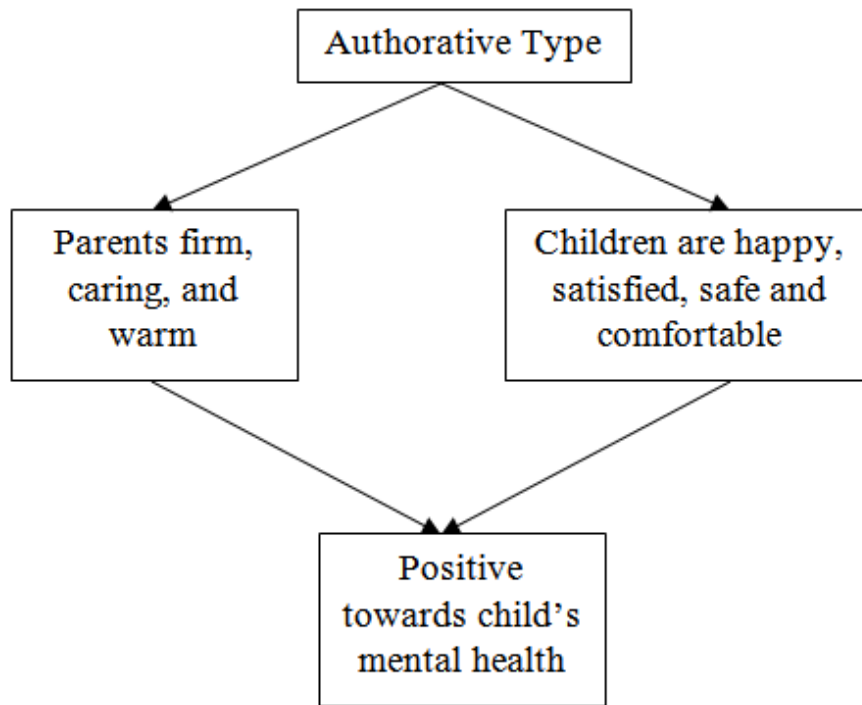


Figure 1: The Relation between Authoritative Types and Mental Health in Early Childhood

Responsive and warm parents are very good for children's social emotional development, because it can help children develop their abilities optimally. Children can show feelings of being happy, satisfied, safe and

comfortable. Such conditions are very supportive for the mental health of children and influence the subsequent development of children.

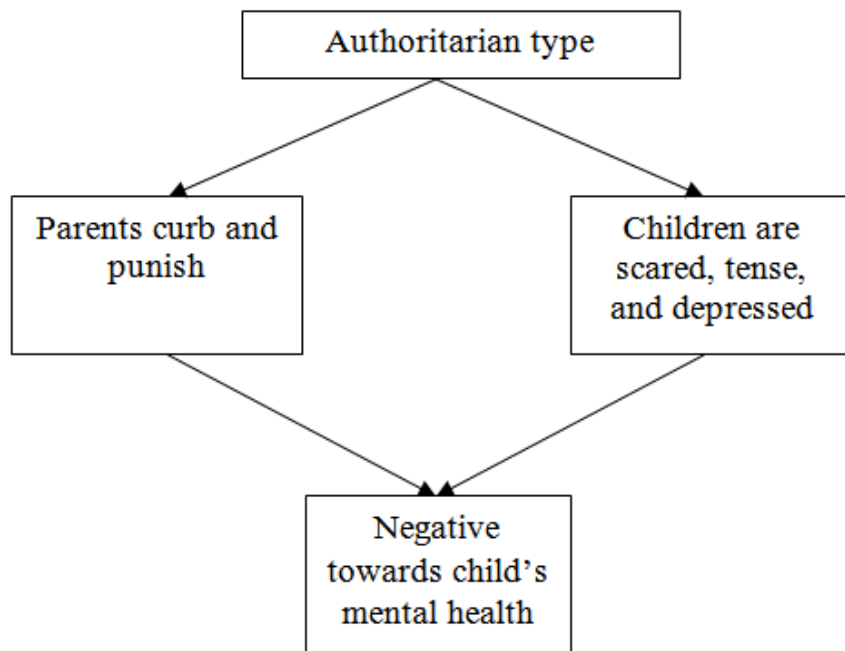


Figure 2: The relations of the authoritarian type to the mental health of early childhood

Authoritarian is a parenting style that has high demands but is not responsive⁽²¹⁾. Parents want and demand that their children obey, prefer punishment and much curb and limit children's behavior. Authoritarian parents control children's behavior arbitrarily and are accustomed to give severe physical punishment to their children⁽²³⁾. This style of parenting can interfere with children's development, especially regarding its social emotional. Children who are cared for authoritatively when dealing with other people, become unhappy, withdrawn, shy and unreliable⁽¹⁷⁾. Children become depressed, forced, scared and suspicious⁽¹⁶⁾. This situation greatly affects the emotional development of children. When the child always gets treatment and arbitrary punishment from parents, it can lead to a negative impact on his mental health. This explanation can be seen through Figure 2.

Severe punishments, unfair, not punctual and given by parents who do not love are very dangerous and ineffective in controlling children's behavior. Arbitrary actions from parents make children afraid and feel insecure. The child's emotions are disrupted and in a certain period of time can have a negative impact on the child's mental health. Thus, it can be understood that authoritarian attitudes from parents have harmful side effects for emotions and mental health of early childhood. In addition, authoritarian behavior is an ineffective way to control children's behavior and is very disturbing to the next child's development.

Conclusions

Parenting style and mental health of early childhood are connected one another. Parents' demands and responses to children's behavior give rise to various effects on children's social emotional development. This development is very influential on the mental health of early childhood. Good relations between parents and children in daily life are very positive for children's mental health. Conversely, bad relations between parents and children are very bad for children's mental health. Authoritative as an assertive style of parenting, caring and emphasizing warmth can encourage children to be independent, creative and confident. This parenting style makes children happy, satisfied, safe and comfortable so it is very good for their mental health. Authoritarian is a parenting style that is unresponsive, restrains and punishes children arbitrarily. This parenting style makes children afraid, tense, suspicious and depressed so that it has a negative impact on children's mental health.

Additional Informations:

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