The Influence of Parenting Styles on Attachment Styles and Parental Influence on Children’s Cognitive Development

Haiwuo Wang1,*

1Tianjin xinhua high school, Tianjin, 300000, China

Abstract. As people’s attachment styles have aroused the attention of whole society, researchers have done many studies for exploring the determination of their attachment styles. However, the causal relationship between parenting styles and formation of attachment styles still needs a specific explanation. Therefore, in this study, by summarizing the previous experiments and researches, detailed explanation will be illustrated. And through the investigation of parenting styles, a new question about how parents influence their children’s cognitive development, especially their communicating ways has been addressed, so this question will also be illustrated by referencing several studies. This research has found that the extent of the influence of parenting styles on attachment styles is mainly based on the responsiveness of parents, and all the insecure attachment styles would be attributed to insecure parenting styles. In this way, parents’ communicating ways with their children would have some effects on their cognitive development. So, the parent influence comprehensively influences children in many aspects, and parents should learn to behave securely in order to provide their children a safe future.

1 Introduction

As people’s attachment styles have aroused the attention of whole society, researchers have done many studies for exploring the determination of their attachment styles. However, the causal relationship between parenting styles and formation of attachment styles still needs a specific explanation. Therefore, in this study, by summarizing the previous experiments and researches, detailed explanation will be illustrated. And through the investigation of parenting styles, a new question about how parents influence their children’s cognitive development, especially their communicating ways has been addressed, so this question will also be illustrated by referencing several studies. This research has found that the extent of the influence of parenting styles on attachment styles is mainly based on the responsiveness of parents, and all the insecure attachment styles would be attributed to insecure parenting styles. In this way, parents’ communicating ways with their children would have some effects on their cognitive development. So, the parent influence comprehensively influences children in many aspects, and parents should learn to behave securely in order to provide their children a safe future.

2 Literature review

2.1 Parenting styles

Researchers have recognized that there is a strong relationship between children’s temperament and parents’ behavior as they influence each other to yield a series of outcomes, such as the attachment styles. Just as collins said: As much as parents change their children, children change their parents [1]. Therefore, some researchers have located four types of parenting styles, which is the manner rearing their children, according to two dimensions which are demandingness and responsiveness. Demandingness means that how parents restrict and control their children’s behavior, while responsiveness means how parents can offer supports in response to children’s emotional and developmental needs. According to these two scales, parenting styles have been described to four types, including authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent and neglecting [2].

Firstly, the authoritative parents are attempting to demand and control children’s activities in a rational manner [3]. This means that authoritative parents have good management in both the demandingness and responsiveness as their child-centered parenting styles not only involve highly demand and control for their children, but also show accepting and child-centered pattern for them (see Fig. 1.). As baumrind said, authoritative parents affirm their child’s current qualities and happiness, but also guarantee their future development. Therefore, authoritative parenting style effectively balances demandingness and responsiveness within children’s development, which is seen as the most effective parenting styles.
Regarding uninvolved or neglecting parenting styles, these parents behave in a low level of both demandingness and responsiveness. These parents are described as both rejecting-neglecting and neglectful. As they might did not offer proper response emotionally and physically, and they did not require specific demand and control in their kids.

### 2.2 Attachment style

Attachment styles is a key factor influencing people’s whole life span which is also a basic principle of attachment theory.

This is the attachment model of Bartholomew, he described four-category attachment styles, including secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful attachment style [7]. It also involves two dimensions with the purpose of differentiating the attachment style according to the extent of dependence combining with avoidance.

If a person shows low level in both dependence and avoidance, this type of person is usually described as secure attachment style, which means that these persons are in the sense of worthiness as they can bravely show their love and assume that others are mostly accepting and responsive to their love (see Fig. 2.)[7]. As a result, they are able to successfully deal with intimate relationships, and they are securely attached, which is said to be the healthiest attachment.

However, if a person shows low level of avoidance but higher level of relying on others, they are attributed to preoccupied styles, which is on the opposite side of secure attachment in terms of the perspectives of others, indicating that they are unworthiness or unlovable [7]. The people who are in preoccupied attachment style usually show low level of self-acceptance but gaining acceptance of themselves from others evaluation.

In terms of fearful attachment style, people within this attachment are always avoiding involvement of others and they are sacred to face an intimate relationship, meaning that they are in both unworthiness and untrustworthy, and it is the worst attached.

![Fig. 1. Four parenting styles [4].](image1)

![Fig. 2. Four types of attachment style [7].](image2)
As mentioned in 2.1, authoritative parents are characterized as highly reciprocal and parents have formed a mutual-understanding relationship with their kids, and they pay much importance on the bidirectional communication with children. According to zenali a., they have hypothesized that parenting style is linked to attachment style [8]. Authoritative and permissive parenting styles have been thought to be associated with secure attachment because both of these two parents are in well responsiveness, which is a necessary factor in attachment. In this experiment, participants were asked to finish four questionnaires, among which the parental authority questionnaire (paq) and the attachment style questionnaire are used to determine their parenting styles and attachment styles in this study. The paq was developed by buri, which is a 30-item questionnaire by using 5-point scale to assess parents’ authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting style. As they have no items to test the fourth parenting style, zenali et al. Add 5 more questions from parenting-style orientation scale(p-sos) [8].

It is shown that an authoritative parenting style has a significant relationship with secure attachment, (r=0.45). And they found that authoritative mother has more influence on the behavior of their children. Similarly, permissive parents also have positive relationship with their secure attachment, but relatively smaller compared to authoritative parents,(r=0.15). According to their results, it is found that authoritative parenting style is more likely to contribute to the development of secure attachment. This is because secure attachment style allows people calmly deal with threats and challenges and allows them to develop confidence. So all children’s behaviors might be affected by parents warmth, sensitivity, acceptance and emotional stability.

However, compared to the permissive parents, even though responsiveness is the key factor of attachment style, demandingness is also a vital factor in determining children’s attachment style. This is because lacking parents’ control and demand, most of kids would developed in a discursive way without regulation and objectives. So, these kids under no control environment would show less tendency for being secure attachment within intimate relationship.

2.3.2 The influence of uninvolved parents on the attachment styles

Regarding the uninvolved and authoritarian parenting styles, these parents usually offer less response and emotional support to their children, just because these limitations, their kids may more likely to form a series of insecure attachment without emotion pivot or comfort.

In their results, authoritarian parenting have a strong positive relationship with insecure attachment, with 0.41 correlations. Specifically, they have correlational figure of 0.74 with preoccupied attachment, 0.22 correlations with fearful attachment and 0.19 correlations with dismissing attachment. In this case, authoritarian fathers have more impact on their children’s insecure attachment compared to authoritarian mother, with 0.83 and 0.56 correlational values respectively.

Similarly, fearful parenting styles also have strong positive relationship with insecure attachment, even higher than authoritarian parents(r=0.61). Among all the insecure attachment, children who grow up in the neglectful environment are more likely to be preoccupied in their attachment style with 0.47 correlations. And both dismissing and fearful attachment are relatively less explained by neglectful parenting styles, with both 0.22 correlations.

In conclude, the findings reveal that both uninvolved and authoritarian parents would lead to an insecure attachment style to their children. And a large number of children would be more tenable to be preoccupied within an intimate relationship, but this is set up in front of possibility measure without real data collected. This might because parents’ low level of warm and inconsistent care supported, coupled with rejection and punitive parental beliefs would be associated with the insecure attachment styles,as uninvolved and authoritarian parents apply low level of responsiveness, they need emotional support from others, so they are likely to form a series of psychological dependence and reliance on their intimacy, such as their couple and friends. If this dependent relationship has been cultivated, they are more likely be harmed from a relationship. In general, the children who grew in the authoritarian environment are more tenable to show preoccupied relationship compared to the uninvolved parents. This can be explained on the sides of demandingness as this is the different dimensions between these two sets of parenting style,so these people are differentiated according to their level of avoidance towards their intimate relationship. It can be hypothesised that the people who were lack of demandingness would show more avoidance in their intimate relationship. In general, authoritarian parents are more associated with insecure attachment according to zenali’s correlational values, but uninvolved children are more likely to be dismissing parents [8].

2.4 The parents’ influence on their children’s cognitive development

As cognitive development in childhood experience is a holistic study, there are various factors would influence their cognitive development as well as their cognitive ability.a question has been generated from this parenting and attachment styles study,which is whether parenting styles have an influence on children’s cognitive development. For studying this part, this paper would first go overview of the whole cognitive development of children and the parental influence in these period.

2.4.1 Children’s cognitive development

Jean piaget, as the pioneer of cognitive development in childhood, developed new theories about the ways children consider, reason and tackle their problem [9-11]. According to his theory, he divided the children’s cognitive development into four stages orderly, which is sensorimotor stage, preoperational stage, concrete operations stage and formal operations stage.
Sensorimotor stage begins at birth to 2 years old. Children begin their life based on inborn skills, such as sucking, looking and breathing.

Preoperational stage (2-7 years) is the period for children to develop their symbolic thoughts as children’s thoughts are characterized by egocentrism and centration. They are able to improve their abstract ability but cannot understand the perspectives of others and their attention can only be focused on one aspect of a situation.

Concrete operations are between 7 years and 11 years old. Children are capable of thinking logically, such as mental operations and actions performed in the mind and they can replace physical action with mental action. And they can reason with respect to concrete, physical object.

The last stage happens after 11 years old, during which children develop ability in abstract thinking and hypothetical reasoning.

2.4.2 The parental influence on their children’s cognitive development

Huntpointed out that if the manner within the school for developing intellectual interest and capacity, it might be possible to increase the average level of intelligence within the population substantially [12]. As parents are considered as children’s first teacher and they have the primary influence in children’s development, parental influences are certainly an area of legitimate concern.

Parents’ communicating and interacting performance with their children are the critical factors in influencing children’s cognitive ability and development [13]. In his experiment, utilizing observational situation, hess conducted studies within preschool children in which involving the mother-interaction in a problem-solving and cognitive environment. The results indicate that if the mother present a smaller choice for action and restrictive range of thought, children’s cognitive development would also be relatively diminished. Thus, it is shown that parents’ practice in the manner or style of communicating information to the child would influence the children’s cognitive development largely.

3 Discussion

By reviewing papers of previous scholars, this study found that there is a strongly causal relationship between types of parenting styles and children’s attachment style. It is shown that the authoritative and permissive attachment styles, which have both highly responsive parents, are more likely lead a secure attachment style among children. While, authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles, which are the two types with low responsiveness parents, lead an insecure attachment style, including preoccupied, dismissing and fearful attachment. The responsiveness of parents has transferred into the ability of the thought of themselves in an intimate relationship, so the responsiveness, including the parents’ acceptance and sensory to the children’s emotion and development, is attached more valuation between these two dimensions.

The direct effect of parenting styles is quite obvious. As the first derive on the emotional source, family environment is a detrimental key that influence people in all their life. The loving care which people lacks in their origin family would absolutely contribute to affective defect within a period of relationship, thus gradually forming a series of insecure behaviors, such as doubt, squabble, and even physical harm. This is mainly because they have not found a leakage hole for outputting bad affects or sharing happy emotions, always facing rigid and ruthless emotion from their parents. When it lasts long, they will find it hard to digest emotions. Therefore, if they would encounter a new relationship with abundant emotions, such as friendship and romantic relationship, they will behave in three insecure patterns.

Firstly, they are in high possibilities for depending on their partners too much, thus resulting in a highly possible for being preoccupied with this relationship and increasing the possibility for being harm or cheated. Secondly, they have the tendency for being avoidant for any relationships, because the redundant and helpless emotion status making them lack trust for any attachment, thus giving rise to dismissing of any intimacy and counter-dependent style. Thirdly, it involves high levels of both avoidance and dependence, which can be attributed to the worst types of relationship, so these people are not only fearful of any intimacy bonds, but also socially avoidant and isolated. Even though demandingness from parents is not the key for developing an attachment style, it also involves in the determination of specific attachment style as it decides the dependency and possibility for being a certain type of attachment style.

Parental effects would not only occur in their children’s emotion development, but also have influence on their intelligent and cognitive development. So, the involvement of parents in their study and life would lead to better development in cognitive development. As the study have reviewed, parents who had restrictive manner in rearing practice would draw a negative effect in children’s cognitive development. Thus, it can be deduce that the healthier the parenting style, the faster the cognition develop within children. In this way, children who grow up with authoritative parents might have better development in cognition.

However, all my research is based on reviewing previous articles, so it still lacks powerful proof, and it is just make sense theoretically. In terms of the suggestions for further research, the author thinks scholars can concentrate on the effects of being certain attachment style, such as the relationship of insecure attachment and the possibility for suffering mental health. Or they can treat attachment style as a mediator for investigating the influence of parenting styles on other variables, such as the criminal rate of adolescents, and the addiction behaviors.

4 Conclusion

In this study, the author has concluded a strong causal relationship within these two variables. The parental styles within a family would absolutely influence children’s attachment styles in both their adolescent period and adulthood. Specifically, parents influence their dependence on their intimacy as the different extent of responsiveness
given to children, and further influence the parental influence on children’s cognitive development.

However, the four types of parenting styles are not one-to-one correspondence to the four types of attachment styles, meaning that the two dimensions are not influenced by each other. But it is more determined by the level and quality of responsiveness provided by their parents. For example, the two levels of highly responsive parenting styles, including authoritative and permissive styles, are more likely to contribute a secure attachment, and those two types with low level of responsiveness would lead to an insecure attachment, which are authoritarian and uninvolved parents. Demandingness involves slightly in the determination of insecure attachment style, but not obvious.

The parenting styles not only influence the emotion statue of life quality of a child, but also influence on children’s intelligence and cognitive development, thus giving rise to the development both psychologically and physically in children’s whole life.

References