

Exploring the Effects of an Authoritarian Child-Rearing Style

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Have you ever thought about how much influence leaders have over a country, company, or even an organization? Just like any other leader, parents play a major role in the upbringing of their children. There are four main groups of child-rearing styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved. Each of these groups has both positive and negative effects that are passed on to children. The authoritarian child-rearing style has long-term negative effects on child development.

A child-rearing style is how a parent or guardian chooses to raise their children. The authoritarian style is the strictest out of the four main groups. As described by Laura Berk (2019), the author of *Exploring Child Development*, “the authoritarian child-rearing style is low in acceptance and involvement, high in coercive control, and low in autonomy granting” (p. 271). A lot of times, parents display harsh punishment for minor mistakes instead of providing guidance and nurturing. As a result, this style of parenting leads one to the conclusion that many negative effects will be present in children who have parents that use the authoritarian approach. By exploring the ways that parents speak to and behave towards their children, one is able to draw conclusions to the negative effects on child development.

There are many psychological long-term negative effects that have an influence on child development. One lasting effect is low self-esteem and self-reliance. This comes from parents exerting too much control over their children. Berk (2019) explains that decision-making can become overwhelming due to their dependence on their parents. Due to the overdependence, it naturally hinders the child's ability to make decisions for themselves. Not only do children refrain from making decisions, but they also lack the confidence in making choices for themselves in fear of criticism from their parents.

Another psychological effect that occurs from authoritarian parenting is a higher rate of depression. According to the article “Authoritarian parenting: What happens to the kids?” by Dr. Gwen Dewar (2017), research has shown that this parenting style is linked to major depressive disorder later in life. This is likely due to the conditional love that is shown by parents who use the authoritarian child-bearing style. With this, children begin to think that they are only loved if they live up to the standards placed on them by their parents (Berk, 2019). As a result, they again struggle with their self-esteem which leads to depression.

Stress and anxiety are a few more long-term psychological effects that are a result of authoritarian parenting style. In an article published by Michigan State University (2017), the authors state “authoritarian parents are not very emotional or affectionate” (para. 4). This statement can provide insight into how one might feel the added amount of stress and anxiousness if their parents do not display any sort of emotion or affection. Berk (2019) discusses that many times parents of this style use psychological control which is very manipulative to the child's words, personality, and dependence. When parents display this type of manipulation, it is usually used to “put down the child’s ideas, decisions, and choice of friends” (Berk, 2019, p. 271). When children are put down time and time again, it leads them to feel suppressed and anxious to share these parts of their life with their parents. As a result of lack of affection and use of psychological control, children will develop an unhealthy amount of stress and anxiety that will be present most times when communicating with their parents.

Along with the aforementioned psychological effects, there are also emotional regulation issues that are present due to the authoritarian child-rearing style. Parents with this style resolve issues by yelling, criticizing, and demanding (Berk, 2019). This is to show that they have control over their children. This becomes a problem for children, not only because it is oppressive, but

because the children internalize it and do the same thing to their peers. Many times children will lack the emotional regulation and respond to problems with aggression and hostility as their parents have shown them (Berk, 2019). Because parents have not shown a level of emotional regulation, their children do not learn how to properly deal with their emotions or solve problems.

Along with the lack of emotional regulation, there becomes an increase in behavioral problems in children who have authoritarian parents. Parents who use this style believe that exerting control and having extremely high expectations will lead to children who are always compliant. In reality, the opposite tends to happen. The authors from Michigan State University (2017) write that “strong punishment leads to more misbehavior, rebellion and results in constant power struggles” (para. 5). Because the children model what they see at home, when they are with their peers, they display the behavior that they see from their parents. Dewar (2017), explains the term “externalizing behavior” as disruptive, defiant, and aggressive. When children are exposed to authoritarian parenting styles, they tend to develop this externalizing behavior that leads them to bullying and misbehaving.

Although one may think that academic achievement is higher with this parenting style due to such high expectations, that isn't always the case. Students may be more committed to achieving more, however, many studies have shown the opposite effect. Dewar (2017) references to a study that was completed in San Francisco that linked poorer school grades to the authoritarian child-rearing style. Berk (2019) also references a study that shows poorer academic achievement which is correlated to the authoritarian style of parenting. While one may have thought differently, multiple studies have shown poorer academic achievement linked to this parenting style.

After examining the authoritarian parenting style in-depth, it is clear that there are mainly negative effects on child development. Whereas some parents may think that this parenting style is the best because they believe it will keep their kids behaving and in line, they are actually suppressing their child's ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Ultimately, this leads to higher rates of depression, anxiety, stress, lack of emotional regulation, behavioral problems, and lower academic achievement.

References

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