



Harsh Parenting in Relation to Child Emotion Regulation and Aggression

Chang, L., Schwartz, D., Dodge, K.A. & McBride-Chang, C. (2003). Harsh parenting in relation to child emotion regulation and aggression. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 17, 598-606. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.17.4.598.



325 Chinese kindergartners participated in a study examining the effect of harsh parenting on child behavior. Mothers' harsh parenting affected child emotion regulation more strongly than did fathers. However, harsh parenting emanating from fathers had a stronger effect on child aggression. Fathers' harsh parenting also affected sons more than daughters, but there was no gender differential effect for mothers.

Key Findings:

- Harsh parenting was associated with more child aggression and difficulty in emotion regulation.
- Boys scored significantly higher on aggression and emotion dysregulation than did girls.
- Fathers' self-reported use of harsh parenting was significantly higher for sons than daughters. However, there was no difference for mothers' harsh parenting.
- Harsh parenting from both mothers and fathers affected child emotion regulation which, in turn, led to school aggression.
- Fathers' harsh parenting had a stronger effect on child aggression than did that of mothers, but mothers had a stronger effect on child emotion regulation than fathers.

Implications for Programs:

- Programs could collaborate with schools to identify children having behavioral problems and provide referrals for additional support services.
- Programs could offer supportive parenting classes for parents, offering them skills in managing child aggression.

Implications for Policies:

- Policies could recommend making education for parents readily available about effective parenting strategies and the adverse outcomes associated with harsh and physical parenting.
- Policies could recommend professional development for family program workers to teach them effective parenting techniques that they could then share with parents.

Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research could attempt to replicate these results in other samples of children, including children of different ages and from different demographic backgrounds.
- Additional studies could use non-self-report measures of harsh parenting.



Background Information

Methodology:

- Children from two kindergartens in a southern Chinese city were enrolled (no parental permission is required).
- Parents completed a set of questionnaires regarding harsh parenting and child emotion regulation.
- Six months later, three teachers completed a behavioral checklist on the children, including an assessment of child aggression.
- Correlations examined the relationships among variables. Individual items were combined into parcels and structural equation modeling was used to test the effect of harsh parenting on child aggression.

Participants:

- 325 Chinese kindergartners participated (55% male).
- Average child age = 4.60 years (SD=1.00 years, range = 3-6 years).
- Average age of fathers = 34.60 years (SD=4.00 years), average age of mothers = 32.00 years (SD=3.30 years).
- Percentage of parents with college education: 60% fathers and 50% mothers.

Limitations:

- As the sample was Chinese, it is unknown how these results may generalize to a U.S. population.
- The data are cross-sectional, and causal conclusions are inappropriate.
- The measure of harsh parenting was self-report, and results may be biased.
- Specific components of harsh parenting were not differentiated, and it is possible that different components have differential effects.

Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample					Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★ ☆
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)		
The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Research Methods					Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★ ☆
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)		
The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Limitations					Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★ ☆
	Excellent Minor Limitations (★★★★)	Appropriate Few Limitations (★★★)	Limited Several Limitations (★★★)	Questionable Many/Severe Limitations (★★★)		
The limitations of this study are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Implications					Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★ ☆
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)		
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications						
Overall Quality Rating						★ ★ ★ ☆