

Testing the Influence of Parenting Styles on a Child's Level of Physical Activity

Name

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been an upsurge of research targeting the link between parenting styles and a child's level of physical activity. The result of such research has been indistinguishable; there is a direct or indirect effect of parenting styles on a child's level of physical activity. The purpose of this research study was to identify this link: whether parenting styles have a negative or positive effect on a child's level of physical activity with regard to the gender of each child. In this research, questionnaires were issued to parents and the parents expected to report on their parenting styles. In addition, a cross-sectional survey of a hundred children between the age brackets of 8- to 12- year old was conducted in New Orleans (USA). An instrument used to assess the children's level of physical activity (accelerometer) was used, and the mean minutes of their moderate and vigorous physical activity, denoted by mean MVPA, and their mean counts per minute, denoted by mean CPM recorded. In the results obtained, children with permissive parents showed a higher mean MVPA as compared to children from an authoritative parenting background. Focusing on gender, permissive parenting girls recorded a higher mean MVPA while boys a higher mean CPM. The conclusions of the research showed that permissive parenting style resulted in greater levels of PA while authoritative parenting resulted in lower levels of physical activity. This goes on to show that parenting styles have a direct influence on a child's level of physical activity with a variation being observed on each gender.

Developmental psychologists hold a pivotal role with regard to understanding a child's development. It is very important to understand a child development so that a child development can be monitored and shaped according to the best way possible. For a child to be able to fit in the society, he or she should be wired in a particular direction. To be development refers to the quantitative changes occurring simultaneously with the qualitative changes of growth. Researching on a child's development helps psychologists pinpoint the reason for behavior noticed when a child becomes of age. Therefore, developmental psychologists are capable of explaining instances of children being socially inactive, rude, having temper tantrums, and exhibiting weird behavior. The numerous researches conducted by developmental psychologists show a variation in the area of research.

Hennessey, Hughes et.al conducted a research on interactions between parent to child interactions alongside child physical activity. Their main area of concern was on parent-child interactions, that is, how the parent interacts with the child. The way a parent interacts with a child is very important as it forms the basis of that child entire life. The parent-child interactions they studied was a general term for parenting practice s and the parenting style. Good parenting should be adopted so that the child will be better adapted in the future which requires good life skills. Their argument was that parents have a direct effect on children's behavior resulting from their parenting practices, and an indirect effect on children's behavior due to their parenting style (Hennessey, Hughes et.al, 2010). As observed, they noted that parenting practices and style were two different things that had varying results on the child. The practices they noted were logistical and emotional support, which has a positive outcome on the child's physical activity levels while the parenting styles were authoritative, permissive, uninvolved, and authoritarian.

Bentley, Goodred et.al researched on parent's perspectives on child physical activity and their inference on parenting interventions. This research rather than dwelling on the relationship between the levels of child physical activity and the parenting style singled out the methods of intervening on a child's physical activity with an aim of improving it. The researchers engaged parents in telephone interviews. From the telephone interviews, they were able to note from the parent's perspective, the PA level of their child and the factors inhibiting higher PA levels. This research brought to light the notion that children's PA levels were indirectly related to the parenting style used by the parents. According to the parents, environmental factors such as unfavorable weather, financial, and time constraints were accountable for the child's PA levels (Bentley, Goodred et.al, 2012).

Jago, Davidson et.al researched on parenting styles, practices, and PA in 10-11 year olds. Their method of the study was a cross-sectional survey, and with the results, they observed that permissive parenting resulted in a higher mean MVPA amongst the girls and greater mean CPM among boys, this in comparison with children from authoritative parents who scored lower in both MVPA and CPM. On parenting practices, maternal logistic support accounted for lower mean CPM for girls while paternal logistic support accounted for a higher mean CPM for boys. The results were conclusive and indicated maternal permissive parenting to be associated with higher PA levels than authoritative parenting. The associations also indicated a differentiation with regard to gender and form of physical activity. In addition, on parenting practices, maternal logistic support was linked with the girls' physical activity while the paternal logistic support was related with boys' physical activity (Jago, Davidson et.al, 2011).

. Healthy behaviors witnessed among children were highly influenced by the parenting style adopted by the parents.. The researchers noted that appropriate parenting style resulted into

children's eating habits and enough physical activity thus such children were physically fit. In addition, appropriate disciplining styles resulted into healthier eating. On gender, daughters of authoritarian parents engaged in unhealthier eating than did the sons (Arredondo, Elder et.al, 2006, p. 1).

Scaglioni, Salvioni, and Galimbeti studied the influence of parental attitudes on the development of children eating behavior. The researchers were mostly concerned with children's' eating behavior and parental attitudes. The researchers noted that two types of parental attitudes are evident: pressure and restriction. While pressure parental attitude urges children to eat healthy foods, restrictive parental attitude restricts children's total access to junk foods and the total amount of food consumed. Of the two attitudes, pressure was more successful in maintaining children's healthy eating though on the long-term. The resultant effect of such parental attitudes was a negative effect on children eating habits (Scaglioni, Salvioni et.al, 2008, p. 3).

The above research brings to light five aspects that are related to a child's level of physical activity. The aspects are parenting style, parenting practices, parental attitudes, environmental factors, and eating habits. The research suggests that these five aspects are interrelated and have an influence on the child's PA levels regardless of the aspect. However, all the aspects narrow down to the parenting style used. Though trying to be diverse in their research, the researchers failed to understand that parenting style affects parenting practices, attitudes, environmental factors and the eating habits. The parenting style used whether authoritarian, permissive, or authoritative influence the child's physical behavior and resultant health.

Method

Participants

A hundred (100) parents were randomly selected in shopping malls and on the streets. The shopping malls and streets were favorite spots to gather information for the study as the participants encountered were from varying socio-economic background, race, and gender. In the questionnaire handed to the parents, their children's names were written down together with the information of their schools. This information was strictly followed. It acted as a guide while selecting the second participants. The second participants, children, were chosen based on the information left by the parents. They were also one hundred coinciding with the number of parents.

The equipment used in conducting the study was an accelerometer. The parents randomly selected were initially given a questionnaire. The questionnaire had slots where the participants were supposed to fill in their information including the name and address and information of their children, indicating gender, age and school. In addition, they were also to fill information indicating the type of parenting style they used. The questionnaires were then reserved and used for the second part of the study.

In the second part of the study, the children were followed up to their school and called forth to engage in the study. One hundred children were each taken through the procedure of trying to come up with their exact level of physical activity using accelerometers. The participants were each taken through the procedure while considering their gender specifics. A conclusive research included 3 days of accelerometer data each 500 min of data daily for both gender. They were to be used in providing a hint of the volume and greatness of the children's physical activity. Height and weight were also measured and the body mass index calculated.

During analysis, the variance tests were used in examining if PA differed depending on the style of parenting. Linear regression models proved vital when examining if the parenting styles influenced physical activity.

The results obtained from children with permissive parents showed girls to have a mean MVPA of +5.0 min per day, $p < 0.001$ while the boys a mean CPM of +78.6 accelerometer counts per min, $p = 0.014$. They also had a higher CPM average, 589.2, than girls did. Girls having permissive mothers scored higher MVPA than the girls having authoritative mothers did. Boys having permissive mothers performed more physical activity compared to those with authoritative mothers.

Conclusion

From the study, children's level of physical activity differed with regard to maternal parenting style. Permissive parenting resulted in higher levels of PA. The connection between permissive parenting and the child's levels of physical activity is unlike the previous research conducted that suggests a relation with eating habits. Permissive parenting is linked with higher PA levels among children. Researching on a child's development helps psychologists pinpoint the reason for behavior noticed when a child becomes of age. Therefore, developmental psychologists are capable of explaining instances of children being socially inactive, rude, having temper tantrums, and exhibiting weird behavior. The numerous researches conducted by developmental psychologists show a variation in the area of research.

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