

Social and Separation Anxiety Disorder: Relationship with Authoritarian Parenting on Children

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ABSTRACT

Background: Authoritarian parenting has been a predictor of social and separation anxiety. **Objective:** This study aimed to evaluate the level of prevalence of separation anxiety disorder and social anxiety disorder in children and its relationship with authoritarian parenting. **Methods:** An experimental research design was carried out in this study to identify how authoritarian parenting influences separation anxiety and social anxiety among children in the age of 12-14 years. Eighty- five children (53 girls and 32 boys) were chosen for this study. Interview has been done to know the level of authoritarian parenting and Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders-R (Dimensions: Social Anxiety and Separation Anxiety) by Birmaher et al., (1997) was administered to the sample for identifying the levels of Social anxiety and separation anxiety. **Results:** The results revealed that 56.5% of the total samples were growing in authoritarian parenting style and 90.58% were at the high risk of developing separation anxiety disorder and 60 % were at the high risk of developing social anxiety disorder. Findings also suggested that there is a relatively high significant relationship between authoritarian parenting & social anxiety and authoritarian parenting & separation anxiety among children. **Conclusion:** Authoritarian parenting is associated with future prevalence of separation anxiety disorder and social anxiety disorder. **Unique contribution:** This study may help the children to identify the level of child anxiety so that they can find better ways for reducing it and to live a better life in future.

Keywords: Authoritarian Parenting, Social Anxiety, Separation Anxiety

Parenting style decides how the child grows in the society. It is the one which helps the child to develop social skills, interpersonal relationships, good mental health, moral and emotional needs of the child and so on. The way parents approach the child determines the future of the child. Every parents' parenting style usually differs based on the style of discipline, approach of communication, level of nurturance and expectations. As Diana Baumrind (1991) ^[4] mentioned, there are four major types of parenting styles: Authoritative, Authoritarian,

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Permissive and Indulgent. Picture (1) explains the four major parenting styles and its' characteristics.

Authoritarian Parenting	Authoritative Parenting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses strict discipline style • Scolding and Punishing the children is common • Communication: one way (From parent to child) • Rules and restrictions were common but are not explained. • High expectations on children • Less nurturing • Decisions should be done by the parents. • Comparison is common. • Trusting and appreciating less 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules are clear and reasons are explained. • Communication: Frequent and appropriate to child's level of understanding. • Highly nurturing • High Expectations on children • Expectations are stated clearly to the children. • Decisions are jointly made by parents and children • High level of trust and appreciation
Permissive Parenting	Uninvolved Parenting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have limited or no rules • Letting children face their own problems. • Expectations are minimal • Open communication. • Warm and Nurturing • Decisions are solely made by the children yet supportive by parents. • Less or no scolding or punishments over doing any wrong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little warmth and nurturing • Communication is limited • No discipline style is utilized • Lack of care over the child • No expectations of children • Let their children do what he/she wants. • No rules were formulated for the children.

Figure 1. Characteristics of parenting styles of Diana Baumrind (1991)

Parenting usually forms based on the combination of any two styles or even all the styles altogether. But authoritative parenting is considered as the best style because of high expectations as well as high warmth to the children. Usually fathers tend to use an authoritative parenting towards their daughter, and they may switch to authoritarian parenting for sons (Ashley et al., 2014) ^[24].

Authoritarian parenting is the style in which there will be high expectation but low warmth to the children. Their way of communication is always one-way (from parent to child). In short, authoritarian parenting tries to enforces good behavior and discipline in the form of threats, shaming, comparing and so on and associated with less parental warmth and low responsiveness (Baumrind 1991) ^[4]. But the impact it creates on the child is different. It may have a significant effect on the child in psychological and psychosocial well-being. The effects of authoritarian parenting on child are being unhappy, over dependent, showing hostile and aggressive behavior, overly shy, fearing about others, lacks social skills and self-esteem, are less resilient, may be worse at their academics, more likely to develop anxiety and depression, and they're more likely to engage in substance abuse. Previous research about authoritarian parenting supports all the effects of children on authoritarian parenting.

[Darling et al., (1993) ^[1]; Dornbusch et al., (1987) ^[3]; Donath et al., (2009) ^[5]; Jackson et al., (1998) ^[6]; Newman et al., (2008) ^[7]; Walfradt et al., (2003) ^[18] & Kim et al., (2000) ^[9]]

When children misbehave for anything, authoritarian parents tend to scold them, punish them so that they believe the child will not do any kind of misbehavior. But on the contrary, children may be worsening the misbehavior and tends to behave too worse. According to Pinquart (2017) ^[17], Punishing the child for doing any wrong thing may worsen the behavior of the child over a period of time. Some children, under authoritarian parenting, may be obedient at home but shows aggressive behavior outside the home. Darling et al., (1993) ^[1] stated that the children of authoritarian parenting tends to be highly compliant and obedient but gets aggressive under pressure. Williams et al., (2009) ^[2] also stated that the children show aggressive behavior such as bullying, either as perpetrator (Georgiou et al., 2012) ^[11] (Gomez et al., 2016) ^[12] or as victims (Luk et al., 2016) ^[15].

Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety in children is a condition where they struggle to separate from their caregivers (especially parents and siblings). The child may experience extreme anxious feeling unusual to their age and which are inappropriate when they're getting separated from their parents.

Symptoms of separation anxiety may include frequent thoughts of negative things happen to either to the caregiver or to the child if they both got separated, school refusal, monophobia (Fear of being alone), temper tantrums, physical complaints during school time, frequent absenteeism to school, shadowing their parents and having nightmares about the separation or danger of any of their parent and so on.

Those with separation anxiety tends to do measures to avoid separation from their parents so they avoid to go to picnics or school tours. And along with authoritarian parenting, it may make the child less resourceful and they are likely to have low social competence than children with other parenting styles (Gracia et al., 2009) (Martinez et al., 2007) ^[16] (Tukel et al., 2008) ^[21]

Social Anxiety

Social anxiety in children is usually categorized by an intense fear of social situation in which the child might be judged. In America, approximately 15 million people are suffering from social anxiety and the onset of social anxiety disorder is from the age of 7 to the age of 13. The child with social anxiety tends to experience intense anxious feelings while speaking in front of others, reading loud, in front of evaluation process, and even starting a new conversation with unfamiliar person. They tend to worry a lot about themselves in various situations like in school, sports team, enrichment classes, family reunions and so on. This condition may usually have negative impact on the child by creating distress in interpersonal relationships, confidence level, academic performance, competing with the society.

Authoritarian parenting, indeed, is one of the predictors of social anxiety in children. Due to authoritarian parenting, the child may lack to develop self-esteem and social skills. They are least likely to be accepted by their peer children. They were actually rated less self-reliant and they have low social competence comparing to other parenting styles. (Martinez et al., 2007) ^[16] (Gracia et al., 2009) (Steinberg et al., 1992 & 1994)

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As authoritarian parenting links with high level of punishment and expectations, children nowadays tends to have low social competency; shy behavior; may develop depression or anxiety; may be more likely to develop substance abuse; have trouble in regulating their emotion; develop low self-esteem, to identify the level of authoritarian parenting the children are experiencing so that to help children with high levels of authoritarian parenting to its comorbidities like social and separation anxiety. Therefore, when the children become aware of the authoritarian style of their parents, it would help them to cope with the comorbidities of anxiety (Separation anxiety and Social anxiety). Figure 2 explains the characteristics of authoritarian parenting and its effects on children- association with social and separation anxiety.

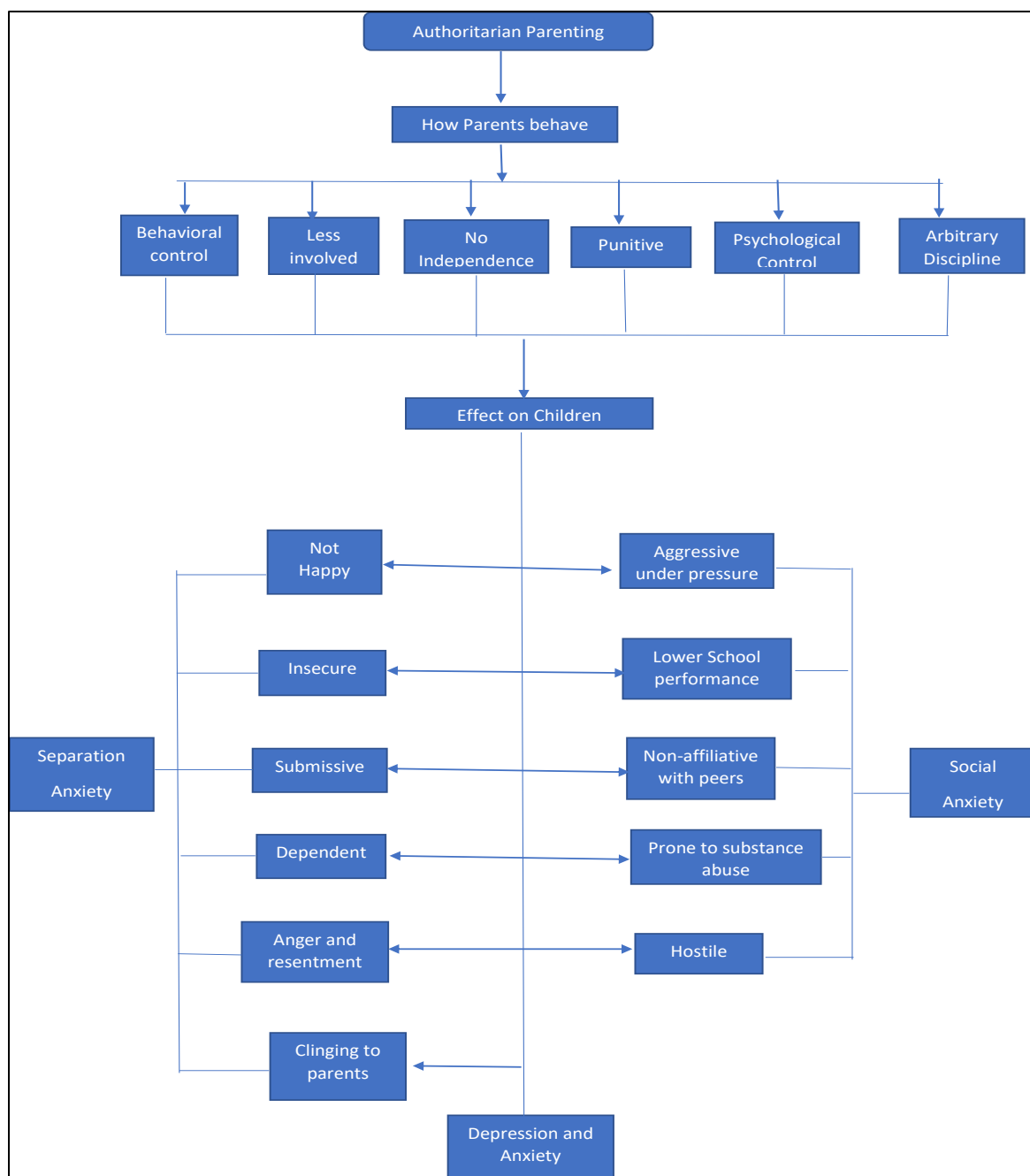


Figure 2, Authoritarian parenting style and its effects on children- Association with Separation Anxiety and Social Anxiety.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To identify the level of authoritarian parenting children were experiencing and its' impact on Separation Anxiety Disorder and Social Anxiety Disorder.

Objective

1. To study the level of authoritarian parenting children were experiencing.
2. To examine whether the children have separation anxiety.
3. To evaluate whether the children have social anxiety.
4. To compare whether children experiencing authoritarian parenting were suffering from Separation anxiety
5. To compare whether children experiencing authoritarian parenting were suffering from social anxiety.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no gender difference in authoritarian parenting of children.
2. There will be no significant difference between children with authoritarian parenting and children without authoritarian parenting on separation anxiety.
3. There will be no significance difference between children with authoritarian parenting and children without authoritarian parenting on social anxiety.
4. There will be no significance difference between children with high level of authoritarian parenting and children with low level of authoritarian parenting on lower academic performance.

Sample

An experimental research design has been used to study cause-and-effect relationship. Stratified sampling method was employed on eighty-five (85) children (53 girls and 32 boys) who belongs to the age range of 12-14 (Mean age=13.8).

Questionnaires Used

Authoritarian Parenting

For Authoritarian Parenting identification, the questions were developed based on the characteristics of authoritarian parenting. It was a 10-item questionnaire which describes the following characteristics:

1. Scolding the children for doing wrong
2. Punishing the children for doing wrong
3. Setting rules to their children
4. Restricting the children for no reason
5. Appreciating the children less
6. Trusting the children less
7. Setting the children parent's favorite goals
8. Making the children fear more
9. Asking children's favorite things less
10. Comparing the children.

The questions were assessed based on 4-point Likert scale (Always, Often, Sometimes and Never) and the lowest possible score is four (4) & the highest possible score is forty (40). Scores more than 20 indicate higher level of authoritarian parenting.

Separation Anxiety and Social Anxiety

For assessing Separation anxiety and Social anxiety, The Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED) was used. The 41-item questionnaire developed by Birmaher B et al. 1997, the SCARED was used to identify Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder, Separation Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder and Significant School Avoidance.

For this study, Social Anxiety and Separation Anxiety Dimensions had been used as we specifically planned to analyze Social and Separation Anxiety on Children. The reliability of SCARED was .86(test-retest reliability)

Procedure

The Self-developed authoritarian parenting questions along with SCARED (Dimensions: Separation Anxiety and Social Anxiety) were given to the children to identify Authoritarian Parenting and Separation & Social Anxiety respectively after getting appropriate consent from two (2) different schools. The responses from the questionnaire were collected from the samples and scoring for Separation & Social Anxiety were done based on SCARED scoring key to assess the level of separation and social anxiety.

Descriptive analysis was done to describe the children's level of authoritarian parenting, separation and social anxiety. Gender difference were explored in order to identify which gender has been experiencing more level of Authoritarian Parenting and were suffering from Separation and Social Anxiety.

Independent t-test was done to compare Children experiencing Authoritarian Parenting & Children doesn't experiencing Authoritarian Parenting on Separation anxiety, Children experiencing Authoritarian Parenting & Children doesn't experiencing Authoritarian Parenting on Social Anxiety and Children experiencing Authoritarian Parenting & Children doesn't experiencing Authoritarian Parenting on low academic performance.

RESULTS

Table 1

Percentage of children under Authoritarian Parenting and having Separation and Social Anxiety

	Girls (53)	Boys (32)	Overall (85)
Authoritarian Parenting			
Average	33	4	37
%	62.2%	12.5%	43.52%
High	19	27	46
%	35.84%	84.3%	54.11%
Very High	1	1	2
%	1.88%	3.125%	2.352%
Separation Anxiety			
Yes	51	26	77
%	96.22%	81.25%	90.5%
No	2	6	8
%	3.77%	18.75%	9.411%
Social Anxiety			
Yes	35	16	51

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%	66.03%	50%	60%
No	18	16	34
%	33.96%	50%	40%

Results suggested that boys (87%) are more likely to grow in authoritarian parenting than girls (37%). This indicates that there's a huge gender difference. Hence, hypothesis (1) is rejected.

Table 2

Children with authoritarian parenting and children without authoritarian parenting on separation anxiety

	Group	Mean	SD	t- value	p value
Separation Anxiety	Children with authoritarian parenting	13.41	.68	7.93*	.00001
	Children without authoritarian parenting	13.27	.69		

* Significant at .01 level

There was a highly significant difference in the scores of high levels of authoritarian parenting (M= 13.41, SD= .68) and low level of authoritarian parenting (M= 13.27, SD= .69) on separation anxiety: $t(83) = 7.93$, $p < .00001$.

Hence hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Table 3

Children with authoritarian parenting and children without authoritarian parenting on social anxiety

	Group	Mean	SD	t- value	p value
Social Anxiety	Children with authoritarian parenting	13.41	.68	8.54*	.00001
	Children without authoritarian parenting	13.27	.69		

* Significant at .01 level

There was a highly significant difference in the scores of high levels of authoritarian parenting (M= 13.41, SD= .68) and low level of authoritarian parenting (M= 13.27, SD= .69) on social anxiety: $t(83) = 8.54$, $p < .00001$

Hence hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Table 4

Children with authoritarian parenting and children without authoritarian parenting on low academic performance

	Group	Mean	SD	t- value	p value
Low	High level of	13.49	.53		

academic performance	authoritarian parenting			29.08*	.00001
	Low level of authoritarian parenting	13.61	.56		

* Significant at .01 level

There was a highly significant difference in the scores of high levels of authoritarian parenting ($M= 13.41$, $SD= .68$) and low level of authoritarian parenting ($M= 13.27$, $SD= .69$) on low academic performance; $t(83) = 29.08$, $p < .00001$. Hence hypothesis 4 is rejected.

DISCUSSION

Authoritarian parenting and Academic performance

In the attempt to study the difference between high level of authoritarian parenting with low level of authoritarian parenting on low academic performance, the results indicate that there's a significant difference between these two groups on low academic performance. This indicates that if the level of authority increases in parenting style, it may make the child to perform low in their academics and sometimes it may even make it worse (Chang et al., 1998)^[8]. They were rated as less socially competent than other parenting styles and are less resourceful, less helpful (Tukel et al., 2008) (Dekovic et al., 1992)^[10].

Authoritarian Parenting and social anxiety

The results revealed that children with authoritarian parenting have a high significant difference than children without authoritarian parenting on social anxiety. As authoritarian parenting involves high standards of obedience and discipline, the child may usually grow in a way that they may not help others, show low level of maturity in cognitive reasoning about moral issues (Dekovic et al., 1992)^[10] (Jannsons et al., 1997)^[13]. They show less advancement in self-regulation (Wang et al., 2006)^[23] and moral reasoning and are most likely to engage in activities that are against the society. These kids will develop low self-esteem later on in their life and may even develop depression (Lipps et al., 2012)^[14] (Martinez et al., 2007 & 2008)^[16].

Authoritarian parenting and separation anxiety

This study revealed that children growing under high level of authoritarian parenting tends to develop separation anxiety. Children with authoritarian parenting tends to be shy and have more fear of separation of their parent(s) as they are grown up in a way that they lack social skills (Dornbusch et al., 1987)^[3]. Some may try to overcome it by doing activities that may not be accepted by the society. So, they're least likely to feel accepted by others and may often look as less self-reliant (Lamborn et al., 1991)^[22] (Steinberg et al., 1992 & 1994)^{[19][20]}.

Authoritarian parenting

Results suggested that boys are more likely to grow in authoritarian parenting than girls. The children growing under authoritarian parenting tends to develop substance abuse either in the form of alcohol or in the form of drugs. National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) in their research study (2019) suggested that men are more likely to develop substance abuse. They tend to develop trouble in regulating their own emotions and are more likely to suffer from a psychiatric disorder. And they are more likely to develop depression later on in their life.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed the gender difference between boys and girls on authoritarian parenting. The fear of separation can make a child dysfunctional from its society, which may create a negative behavior on the child (aggressive behavior). Most of the children were under the level of high authoritarian parenting. And the results suggested that there was a significant difference between children with authoritarian parenting and children without authoritarian parenting on separation anxiety, social anxiety and low academic performance.

Implications of The Study

1. For children, to understand the level of authoritarian parenting they're experiencing.
2. For parents, to identify the level of social and separation anxiety.
3. For teachers, to explore the actual reason for the child's low academic performance and to help them overcome it.
4. Children with high level of authoritarian parenting are more likely to develop social and separation anxiety in future. Adequate measures have to be taken in order to reduce it.

Limitations

1. Wide geographical area could be used for the study.
2. Questionnaire can be translated to the mother tongue of the children to collect more data.
3. The study can be conducted to various group of children to find more significant differences.
4. Intervention can be done in order to make the children find ways to increase social competency.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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