

## Intellectual Disability and the Effects of Parenting Styles

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to understand and dive deeper into learning about whether parenting styles affect the life of a child with intellectual disability. The paper explains what intellectual disability is, its symptoms and proceeded to investigate what parenting styles are and how they affect the up bringing of a child. This investigation was done via a therapeutic alliance formed between the case presented in the paper along with secondary research on the same topic. Upon in depth research, it was found that parenting styles in fact do affect the lifestyle of a child with ID. It was seen midst the research that children with ID can easily follow the path of an unhealthy lifestyle and thus it is important for parents to impose some rules and regulations.

**Keywords:** *Intellectual Disability, Parenting Styles*

*“We can say with assurance that, although children may be victims of fate, they will not be the victims of our neglect.”- John F. Kennedy*

### What is this term “intellectual disability”?

Intellectual disability formerly known as mental retardation is a spectrum-based condition.

### What is a spectrum?

This is a term we often use to classify something which lies on a scale between two extremes.

Now, when we talk about intellectual disability, we say it's on a spectrum because the condition does not just have a fixed layout of symptoms, individuals with intellectual disability may look different based on external factors such as parenting styles or cultural differences or even internal factors such as which part of the spectrum they may be on based on the development of their brain.

These factors affect the mental abilities of an individual like, intelligence, learning, and everyday life skills.

Intellectual disability when spoken about leads us to a common concern with its connection with IQ/ Intelligence Quotient, but an IQ test and low IQ is just one piece of information. Like we discussed previously, ID lies on a spectrum, the individual may have an average IQ

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but has no difficulty with everyday life chores but on the other hand one with high IQ may face difficulties with the most basic chore.

So, what does a child with ID look like?

The symptoms of ID often go around difficulties in different skill sets, such as academics, social skills and even domestics.

### **Symptoms related to intelligence look like:**

- Slow or delayed learning
- Reading speed is slow
- Reasoning and logic giving is difficult
- Issues with judgment and critical thinking
- Problem solving skills and planning abilities are hampered
- Easily distracted

### **Symptoms related to adaptive behaviors:**

- Difficulty or slow learning of toilet training or self-care activities
- Slow social development
- No or very little apprehension of new people
- Difficulty in performing easy or simple chores
- Difficulty with management of time and money
- Difficulty in understanding social interactions

While we discussed about the symptoms of ID, it brings us to the next point of discussion,

### ***Do parenting styles affect the upbringing of a child with ID?***

When we talk about parenting styles, we come across 4 of them:

1. Authoritarian
2. Authoritative
3. Permissive
4. Uninvolved

#### ***Authoritarian parenting style***

This parenting engages in a one-way mode of communication, here the parents establish strict rules, and the child is expected to follow them with no questions or negotiations attached. The rules are not always explained, and children are just supposed to meet them, failure to which leads to punishment.

Children brought up by this style are often seen to have good behavior due to the consequences, however this leads to severe aggression or being shy, socially incompetent and inability in decision making skills. Most often, they struggle with self-esteem issues and end up being rebels against authority figures as they grow.

#### ***Authoritative parenting style***

This type of parenting is a close nurturing relationship between parents and children, the parents set their expectations in front of the children and explain the reasons behind it too. Instead of punishment here supportive tools are used and children are also encouraged to have their own inputs.

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The outcome of this type of parenting is generally the healthiest for the child but it requires a lot of patience and effort from both parties. This fosters responsibility, confidence and self-regulation in children, with this, children manage negative emotions more effectively which further leads to improved emotional wellbeing and social outcomes.

### *Permissive parenting*

This kind of parenting usually involves a typically warm and nurturing style, holding very minimal expectations for the child. There are minimal rules and often we see open communication encouraging independence in a child. This lacking expectation usually takes a direct path to infrequent discipline-based actions as these parents often take a friendly role than the traditional one.

This lack of rules can lead the child to form unhealthy actions such as unhealthy eating habits often leading to obesity and other health related issues, the outcome of this parenting leads to children having too much freedom about decision making. Such freedom can foster negative habits as there is little to no guidance and moderation.

### *Uninvolved parenting*

This kind of parenting involves high degree of freedom in children wherein parents take a hands-off approach. The parents may fulfill basic needs, but they tend to stay detached on an emotional level. They have limited communication and provide minimal nurturing.

Children that are produced with this kind of parenting are resilient and may or may not be self-sufficient. They may even struggle with emotion regulation and have less effective coping strategies.

A child's parenting style can deeply influence the behavior of the child and actions as they grow up. However, other factors such as therapy, cultural aspects, employment type, and their social circle can help shape or alter the conduct.

Like the case of Vikram (Fictitious name),

Presenting below the case of Vikram, a child with ID and parenting styles being **Authoritarian combined with Permissive parenting.**

## **CASE HISTORY OF VIKRAM**

### *Socio Demographic Data*

**NAME:** Vikram Sharma

**SEX:** Male

**DOMICILE:** Urban

**EDUCATION:** Any other

**OCCUPATION:** Student

**CURRENT EMPLOYMENT:** Not employed

**MARITAL STATUS:** Not married

**RELIGION:** Hindu

**MONTHLY INCOME OF PATIENT:** -

**MONTHLY INCOME OF FAMILY:** -

**IDENTIFICATION MARKS:** -

**FATHER'S NAME:** Mr. M Sharma

**ADDRESS:** -

**PROVISIONAL DIAGNOSIS:** Intellectual Disability

## INFORMANTS

**NAME:** Mrs. Brinjal Sharma

**RELATIONSHIP WITH PATIENT:** Mother

## HISTORY OF PRESENT ILLNESS

**ONSET:** Acute

**COURSE:** Continuous

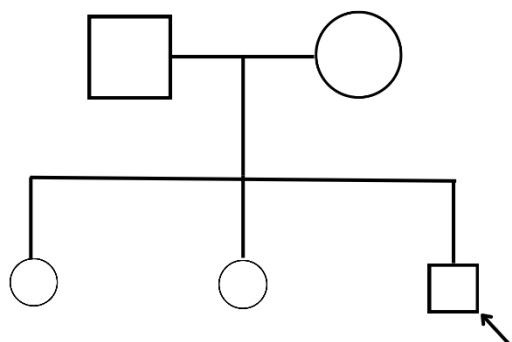
**PRECIPITATING FACTOR:** Absent

## Spontaneous Narrative Account of the Illness along with Treatment Taken and Its Response

Vikram is a 22-year-old boy with ID and his mental age is about 5 years, he has major difficulty with everyday chores, he needs external support from his caregivers in performing basic daily tasks like bathing, eating and other activities, however Vikram in therapy is a very intelligent child, he excels in performing basic math activities and fully enjoys them. Therapy with him involves basic psychotherapy along with occupational therapy to which he responds with development of skills and wants to learn more.

## Family History

### Family Tree:



**FAMILY TYPE:** Joint family

In this paper, a clear link has been formulated between ID and parenting styles. What is the reason?

Let's study this with the example of Vikram.

Vikram has been brought up with an authoritarian approach combined with a permissive approach, along the years, Vikram has been a child who has been pampered and taken care of constantly which brought in the permissive approach.

Did this spoil him?

- The simple answer to the question is, yes, understanding that he is on the spectrum, Vikram has been given extra freedom which somewhere may have been misused by him.
- Vikram has also seen punishment that has come from the authoritarian side of the parenting which has led to deeply engrained trauma.

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Punishment for Vikram was a result of not grooming himself properly and post punishment he now fears and constantly avoids grooming and when spoken about he refuses to take the conversation any further.

Due to this punishment and taking in account the difficulties in daily life chores an individual with ID suffers, it has now become close to impossible to help Vikram with grooming related concerns even after multiple attempts of therapy and occupational learning.

Our next question is does parenting style really affect a child with ID?  
Let's learn with some research-based evidence.

### REVIEWS OF LITERATURE

Yazdani, S., & Daryei, G. (2016) worked on understanding psychosocial adjustment of gifted children and normal ones based on their parenting styles. The sample included about 118 gifted individuals (38 of which were females and 77 males), and 115 normal children (36 of which were males and 77 were females). The instruments used in this study were 'parenting authority questionnaire', 'child attitude towards parents', a test to measure self-esteem- 'Rosenberg's self-esteem scale', and DASS. The result obtained showed that the permissive and the authoritative parenting styles among the children with giftedness were higher than the normal ones, whereas authoritarian was higher in normal children. This led to the direct conclusion that positive attitudes and unconditional positive regards of the caregivers of children with ID leads to better adjustment and encourages adjustment.

Barak-Levy, Y., & Atzaba-Poria, N. A. (2020), studied mediation model of parenting, parental stress and risk factors in families with children having ID. The sample included 156 nuclear families with two parents out of which 75 were with children having mild intellectual disability and 81 having typically developed children. The parents completed a few questionnaires and the interactions between parents and children were recorded. It was seen amongst the result that maternal stress for both groups were higher. The conclusion stated that the stress directly influences the interaction between both parties which in turn affects risk levels surrounding the interaction.

Moreno Méndez, J. H., Espada Sánchez, J. P., & Gómez Becerra, M. I. (2020), pondered upon parenting styles and its role on internalising and externalising adjustment problems. Participants of the study included 422 parents along with children. Several tests were administered on them including the 'Parental education styles questionnaire', the 'child behaviour checklist', and two more. The results directly stated that the family dynamics and the practices or parenting styles greatly effects on internalising and externalising maladjustment problems. To conclude it was seen that the four parenting styles play a major role on the adjustment of the child.

Aminian, M., Sadegh, M. K., Ameri, H., & Salmani, M. (2022), evaluated conversational skills in children with ID and their mothers parenting styles. The sample size was about 21 children with ID which were selected via purposeful sampling method. The method of study included multiple tests like language tests, conversational skills rating scale, and testing the interaction between the mother and child. The result stated that most children were developmentally below their age pertaining to conversational skills. It was thus highlighted

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that the most common parenting style was authoritarian but no definite conclusion for these two variables being interdependent can be established.

Sun, Y., Supriya, R., Gao, Y., Yu, S., Wang, A., Ou, X., ... & Baker, J. S. (2022), evaluated the relationship between a child's health related behaviours and their relation between parenting practices among children with ID. The sample included 440 participants who actively engaged in the study. The procedure included collection of variables with multiple questionnaires and the body weight was measured. The result and the conclusion of the study stated that children with stricter parents were less likely to develop unhealthy eating habits and vice-versa and it has been considered that children with ID are more vulnerable to unhealthy behaviours.

We come back to the same question when we finish reading the researches, does parenting style affect a child with ID?

Over the researches that have been studied we see that a child with ID can develop unhealthy practices and habits very easily, if rules are not set for the child it is easy for them to not adjust and interact with their environment properly.

What can this maladjustment look like?

Often, we see, temper tantrums, self-esteem issues, issues with basic conversational skills etc.

### CONCLUSION

Many studies have highlighted that authoritarian and permissive parenting styles act as crucial factors but as a combination they are ill suited for a child with intellectual disability. It can thus be said that a child with ID needs a form of authority and rules and regulations along with love and care to help them understand the complex interactions in their environment.

To understand this better, let's look at the case also presented in the paper, Vikram, based on the therapeutic alliance that was formed with Vikram, he tends to show his temper across sessions, his mother is constantly trying to help groom him and become a healthy boy but due to his past record of punishment and rigorous rule setting he tends to disobey his parents and tries to find escape mechanisms from any therapy session that may revolve around personal hygiene or grooming. It is now important to understand, clear agendas for Vikram can be set along with a reward system. This is an approach that can be explored and slowly turn to authoritative parenting, as concluded by studies that this may be an ideal situation for a child with intellectual disability.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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