

“MOMMY IS BAD!” Lax and over-reactive parenting styles have different effects on a child’s
behaviour

Melanie B. Young

Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador

Abstract

There are a number of studies reviewed in this paper that describes how important parenting styles are in a child's development. Parenting styles have an enormous impact on a child's develop. This paper focuses on lax and over-reactive parenting styles which relate to two of the four parenting styles. Later, behaviour problems that a child may develop from lax and over-reactive parenting styles are discussed. The paper distinguishes if there are different behaviours associated with lax and over-reactive parenting, and if parenting styles affects a child's behaviour.

LAX AND OVER-REACTIVE PARENTING

“MOMMY IS BAD!” Lax and over-reactive parenting styles have different effects on a child’s behaviour

Raising a child is hard work; it requires a lot of time and dedication from the parent. Being a parent is not an easy task. A parent is someone who loves and cares for their child and prepares that child for life as productive adults. According to Baumrind (1971) to be a good parent, a person needs to express warm and loving behaviours, be engaged and responsive to their child. Parenting is different for everyone because not everyone has the same resources. If the parent was raised with certain resources, they may raise their children with the same resources they had. Some parents may raise their child how they were raised themselves. Some parents may struggle because they do not have the financial resources. Every parent has a choice to respond to their children in a positive way. When a parent is frustrated with their child, and stress is high, the parent can react with a negative response or can respond in a positive way to help the situation from occurring again (Schofield, Conger & Neppel, 2014). Every parent may have a different idea of how to raise his or her children which creates parenting styles. Children are the reflection of one’s parenting style.

Parenting styles are considered to be the representation of how a parent reacts to behaviours that are presented by their child. The type of parenting a child receives influences a child’s behaviour. Children that are raised with harsh parenting styles may develop problematic behaviours as adults (Dowling, Slep & O’Leary, 2009). Children that are raised with relaxed parenting styles may also develop problematic behaviours later in life (Lorber, 2012). There are two different parenting styles that this paper will focus on. Lax and over-reactive parenting styles are different regard to the behaviours that a child develops after being raised in each style (Dowling, Slep & O’Leary, 2009). This paper will define lax and over-reactive parenting and it

LAX AND OVER-REACTIVE PARENTING

will discuss how the styles affect a child's behaviour. This paper will also discuss the behaviours that are associated with lax and over-reactive parenting styles. There are different behaviours associated with lax and over-reactive parenting. Both lax and over-reactive parenting styles are not considered to be ideal parenting styles.

Parenting Styles

The type of parenting style a parent chooses to use greatly influences their child. The discipline a parent uses to discipline their child affects the child's choices and behaviours when they reach adulthood. When parents choose a type of discipline that engages them with the child it results in better child behaviour. However, parenting practices where parents are not engaged with their children it results to the child developing behavioural problems. Parenting styles often show different behaviours and different outcomes because parents do not always agree on the same parenting style. The mother and the father may choose to discipline their child with different parenting styles. Therefore, a child may develop different behaviours (Tramonte, Gauthier & Willms, 2015). According to Baumrind (1966), there are three main parenting styles. These three parenting styles are permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. Later, Maccoby and Martin (1983) described the fourth parenting style which was the uninvolved parenting. The four parenting styles are described below.

Permissive. Permissive parents do not express concern for their child. Parents that use a permissive parenting style rarely discipline their child; these parents have relatively low expectations of their own self-control. Within this parenting style the parents do not express control, the child choosing to do what they want. The parent is seen as a friend rather than the one that is in control. A permissive parent is considered to be more responsive than demanding; the parent is more of a friend to the child than a parent. A parent would reason with his or her

LAX AND OVER-REACTIVE PARENTING

child, but does not express any power to discipline that child in a situation (Baumrind, 1966, 1967). A child that is raised with a permissive parenting style may develop problems such as acting out and become aggressive. They may also become demanding and go against authority because they are used to having no rules (Baumrind, 1966, 1967, 2013).

Authoritarian. A parenting style that requires a child to follow rules that are developed by the parents is considered to be an authoritarian parenting style. This parenting style is considered to be strict and enforces discipline. Often within an authoritarian parenting style the parent enforces obedience but fails to respond to the child with a reason why they are enforcing obedience. Authoritarian parents often use statements such as, “Because I said so,” instead of explaining to the child what he or she has done wrong (Baumrind, 1971). The parent enforces rules, and if the child does not obey the rules, he or she will suffer the consequence and get punished. Parents that use this parenting style believe that children need to be taught the responsibilities for work and aspects of life that they will have to face when the child becomes an adult (Baumrind, 1966, 1967). Children that are raised with an authoritarian parenting style tend to be socially withdrawn, have a tendency to act out, and often have low self-esteem (Baumrind, 1966, 1967, 2013).

Authoritative. This parenting style consists of rules that are established by the parents, but these parents are willing to explain the situation to their child. The parents that use this style enforce rules but they are also responsive. According to Baumrind (1991), these parents show support for their children because even though they discipline their children, they want their children to know the reason why they have been punished. Parents who use this type of parenting style makes their children understand why they are being punished. These parents take more of an assertive approach rather than intrusive and restrictive. These parents want their children to be

LAX AND OVER-REACTIVE PARENTING

responsible, and cooperative. An authoritative parent teaches his or her child that there are consequences but makes sure the child knows the reason why. An authoritative parent uses reasoning, control and shaping. When a parent shows his or her child the reason why they are being punished helps the child develop better behaviour towards the parents, and better understanding of rules and consequences (Baumrind, 2013). Children that are raised with an authoritative parenting style tend to be social, they are emotionally stable, and good at building positive relationships (Baumrind, 1966, 1967, 2013).

Uninvolved. This parenting style consists of a child not getting punishment or response from his or her parent. Often parents that use an uninvolved style have no connection with their child, they are completely detached from their child. This parenting style leads to children being neglected. The parent is not engaged in the child's life and is emotionally detached. Often children that are raised with an uninvolved parenting style are usually lonely, have low self-esteem and are prone to have anxiety disorders (Maccoby & Martin, (1983). An example of an uninvolved parent is a parent that is physically out of the child's life and does not have any contact with the child.

Lax Parenting

Lax parenting and permissive parenting are much the same. A child is being raised with a lax parenting style when the child is indicated to be independent. When parents do not correct their child for misbehaving this is considered to be lax discipline. Lax parenting also involves parents pleading with their children, trying to get their children to participate in a task, but the child is not cooperative. Lax parents often become the child's friend rather than the parent (Dowling, Slep & O'Leary, 2009). Often a mother with a lax parenting style will adapt the same feeling as her child, if her child is happy then she is happy. A lax parent prioritizes to reduce

LAX AND OVER-REACTIVE PARENTING

negative aspects for his or her child such as discipline. A lax parent would rather give his or her child, their own way instead of dealing with the actions the child may express if the child is punished (Lorber, 2012). Lax parenting involves permissive behaviours such as not following through with a threat because a child was misbehaving (Passini, Pihet, Favez & Schoebi, 2013). For instance, a mother is trying to get her child to participate in household chores. The child is watching television in the family room. As the mother is speaking to the child the child is ignoring her. Therefore, the mother threatens the child that she is going to take away television privileges. The mother waits for the child to respond, but the child does not. Instead of the mother turning the television off, and speaking directly to the child, the mother leaves the child alone and does the household chores herself. The mother did not follow through with her threat, and the child did not do his or her household chores. This is considered to be lax parenting, because the child is using the parent as a resource; the mother did what the child was supposed to do and the child did not have to pay any consequences. The child gained control over the parent. The child did not receive any consequences for not listening; now the child may have the impression that if he or she ignores the parent, the parent will do the household chore themselves. Another example of lax parenting is when a child is drawing pictures with his or her crayons, and decides to draw on the walls instead. A parent witnesses their child drawing on the wall, instead of stopping the child and explaining to the child that marking on the wall is wrong, the parent just waits until the child is finished and cleans the markings off the wall. In this scenario the parent is being tolerant, giving the child an impression that drawing on the wall is the right thing to do.

Behaviours associated with lax parenting. Children raised with a lax parenting style adapt arrogant attitudes (Schaffer, Clark & Jeglic, 2009). They choose not to listen if they do not

LAX AND OVER-REACTIVE PARENTING

want to if someone is speaking. Often these children believe that they can do what they want because their parents let them have their own way. Children that are raised with a lax parenting style tend to develop problematic behaviours. One of the behaviours a child may develop from a lax parenting style is aggression. These children express behaviours such as hitting, or acting out if they do not get their own way. These children develop aggression socially towards peers around the time they start preschool (Ehrenreich, Beron, Brinkley & Underwood, 2014).

Aggression is often found in children that are raised with lax parenting because these children are used to getting their own way. When these children are at the age to go to school, they are not used to having rules. In result, they act out in an aggressive way because things did not go their way. Lax parenting may result in children becoming anti-social or delinquent because they may sense that their parents do not care for them. A lax parent does not supervise his or her child; these children are used to doing things their own way. For example, these children cannot be told, they consider themselves to be always right. Children that are raised with lax or permissive parenting often turn to crime. These children may turn to crime when they reach adulthood because they feel like they can do anything and get away with it. These children may develop into adults and have an arrogant attitude, and have episodes of sulkiness because things did not go the way they wanted them too (Schaffer, Clark & Jeglic, 2009). These children grew up with no boundaries; therefore they feel like they can treat other people as they treated their parents (Haapasalo & Pokela, 1999).

Over-reactive Parenting

Over-reactive parenting is much the same as authoritarian parenting. Over-reactive parenting is when the parent takes an aggressive approach to disciplining his or her child. Over-reactive discipline patterns are harsh. These patterns may include spanking and yelling. Parents

LAX AND OVER-REACTIVE PARENTING

that choose this parenting style often set rules for their children, and enforce obedience. If the children choose not to participate in the rules that the parent have set for them, the parent reacts with a harsh consequence such as spanking. Children that are raised with over-reactive parenting styles are often considered to be abused (Rodriquez, 2010). According to MacKenzie et al. (2015) harsh treatment by parents leads to aggressive behaviour in children in a later age because they model their parents. For instance, a child misbehaves by throwing food while eating dinner. Instead of the parent talking to the child and telling them what they did wrong, the parent yells at the child. Then, the parent grabs the child and smacks his or her fingers. This is considered to be over-reactive parenting because they did not explain to the child what he or she did wrong. An over-reactive parent is not responsive verbally; they react in an aggressive manner. Another example of over-reactive parenting is considered to be when a child does not get to explain themselves. For example, a child spills his or her drink on the floor while he or she is taking his or her glass back to the sink. Instead of asking the child how this happened, so the child can explain that is slipped out of his or her hands. The parent reacts in a harsh manner. Parents that participate in an over-reactive parenting style do not give their child a chance to explain or verbally communicate with them (MacKenzie et al. 2015). For instance, a child is preparing a lunch for himself and accidentally drops his food on the floor. Before he has a chance to explain himself, the father is yelling at him to move out of the way. He grabs the child and moves him out of the way. The child did not do anything wrong. It was an accident. This is also considered to be an over-reactive parenting style. An over-reactive parenting style lacks communication between the parent and the child. It leaves the child feeling doubtful. Over-reactive parenting styles include parents that want control and gain control of their children (MacKenzie et al. 2015).

Behaviour associated with over-reactive parenting. Over-reactive parenting can result in two behavioural problems. These children may feel alone and afraid, or it can result in the children acting out and expressing aggression just like the parents (Hartman et al. 2015). Therefore, children that experience an over-reactive parenting style can develop behavioural problems. Some of these problems may be delinquency, substance abuse such as drinking, and they may become aggressive by modelling after their parents. Often children that have over-reactive parents develop problems with alcoholism. These children turn to alcohol use to help with depression (Hartman et al. 2015). Being anti-social is another behaviour problem that children with over-reactive parenting often develop in adulthood. Children are often afraid of what trouble they are going to get into with their parents, than they refrain from the social world or become delinquent (Schaffer, Clark & Jeglic, 2009). As parents they may relate back to how they were raised and may have an over-reactive parenting style with their own children (Haapasalo & Pokela, 1999).

Limitations

There are some limitations within the studies that are about parenting styles. Often behaviours that are associated with lax parenting are also associated with over-reactive parenting. Also the studies that were used in this paper, discuss similar problematic behaviours that are associated with lax and over-reactive parenting but it does not cover much material on the different behaviours that are associated with each parenting style. Haapasalo and Pokela (1999) discussed that there is confusion with punishment and abusive parenting styles throughout some studies. In this paper the behaviours that are encountered are discussed, but there are not many studies discussing the children that are associated with each parenting style did not develop any problematic behaviour in adulthood.

Conclusion

There are problematic behaviours associated with each and every parenting style. There are different problematic behaviours that are associated with lax and over-reactive parenting, much of the problematic behaviours are the same for both (Haapasalo & Pokela, 1999). Parenting styles influence how children develop, and distinguish who they may become as an adult. There are different problematic behaviours that are associated with lax and over-reactive parenting, but some problematic behaviors can be developed with both parenting styles. Both lax and over-reactive parenting can lead to some aggression, and can lead to anti-social behaviours (Dowling, Slep & O'Leary, 2009). One of the main behaviours that did not apply to children that are raised with a lax parenting style was substance abuse, such as alcoholism. There is no perfect way to raise a child, but there are options that a parent should not choose to use. The common things that is useful when raising a child is to be caring, responsive and have discipline that includes consequences instead of abuse. An authoritative parenting style is considered to be an ideal parenting because it consists of all the things listed above. It was ideal to discuss all four different types of parenting because lax and over-reactive are similar to the permissive and authoritarian parenting style. A child is the reflection that is directed back to the parenting style a parent chooses to use.

References

- Baumrind, D. (2013). Authoritative parenting revisited: History and current status. Authoritative parenting: Synthesizing nurturance and discipline for optimal child development (pp. 11-34). *American Psychological Association*. doi:10.1037/13948-002
- Baumrind, D. (1991). The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 11*, 56–95. doi:10.1177/02724316911111004
- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology, 4*, 1–103. doi:10.1037/h0030372
- Baumrind, D. (1967). Child care practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior. *Genetic Psychology Monographs, 75*, 43-88.
- Baumrind, D. (1966). Effects of authoritative parental control on child behavior, *Child Development, 37*(4), 887-907.
- Dowling, C. B., Slep, A. S., & O’Leary, S. G. (2009). Understanding pre-emptive parenting: Relations with toddlers’ misbehaviour, overreactive and lax discipline, and praise. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 38*(6), 850-857. doi:10.1080/15374410903258983
- Ehrenreich, S. E., Beron, K. J., Brinkley, D. Y., & Underwood, M. K. (2014). Family predictors of continuity and change in social and physical aggression from ages 9 to 18. *Aggressive Behavior, 40*(5), 421-439. doi:10.1002/ab.21535

LAX AND OVER-REACTIVE PARENTING

Haapasalo, J., & Pokela, E. (1999). Child-rearing and child abuse antecedents of criminality.

Aggression and Violent Behavior, 4(1), 107-127. doi:10.1016/S1359-1789(97)00027-X

Hartman, J. D., Patock-Peckham, J. A., Corbin, W. R., Gates, J. R., Leeman, R. F., Luk, J.

W., & King, K. M. (2015). Direct and indirect links between parenting styles, self-

concealment (secrets), impaired control over drinking and alcohol related outcomes.

Addictive Behaviours, 40, 102-108.

Lorber, M. F. (2012) The role of maternal emotion regulation in over-reactive and lax discipline.

Journal of Family Psychology, 26(4), 642-647. doi: 10.1037/a0029109

Maccoby, E. & Martin, J. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child

interaction. *Handbook of child psychology: Socialization, personality, and social*

development. Vol. 4

MacKenzie, M. J., Nicklas, E., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Waldfogel, J. (2015). Spanking and

children's externalizing behavior across the first decade of life: Evidence for

transactional processes. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 44*(3), 658-669.

doi:10.1007/s10964-014-0114-y

Passini, C. M., Pihet, S., Favez, N., & Schoebi, D. (2013). Assessment of parental discipline in

daily life. *Journal of Family Psychology, 27*(2), 324-329. doi:10.1037/a0031504

Rodriguez, C. M. (2010). Parent-child aggression: Association with child abuse potential and

LAX AND OVER-REACTIVE PARENTING

parenting styles. *Violence and Victims*, 25(6), 728-741. doi:10.1891/0886-6708.25.6.728

Schaffer, M., Clark, S., & Jeglic, E. L. (2009). The role of empathy and parenting style in the development of antisocial behaviors. *Crime and Delinquency*, 55(4), 586-599.
doi:10.1177/0011128708321359

Schofield, T. J., Conger, R. D., & Neppl, T. K. (2014). Positive parenting, beliefs about parental efficacy, and active coping: Three sources of intergenerational resilience. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 28(6), 973-978. doi:10.1037/fam0000024

Tramonte, L., Gauthier, A. H., & Willms, J. D. (2015). Engagement and guidance: The effects of maternal parenting practices on children's development. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(3), 396-420. doi:10.1177/0192513X13489959