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Gender differences in parenting style: Implications for boys and girls emotions regulation abilities

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Introduction

This study focuses on two main variables as they relate to children's homework: emotion regulation and parenting style. Emotion regulation is an ability that develops during childhood, involves the processes responsible for controlling and modifying emotional output in order to accomplish goals (Thompson, 1994, p. 27-28). The second variable, parenting style, is the method that parents use to interact with, discipline and otherwise take care of their children. In this study, the focus is on two particular styles of parenting as they relate to homework: supportive and controlling. Parental support is characterized by warmth and nurturance, where parental control uses pressure and distance to modify the behaviour of the child.

There have been a number of studies conducted to examine the relationship between emotion regulation and parenting style. Though there are a number of ideas of how this relationship works, there is one model that has a great deal of support and evidence. This model states that the parenting style has a direct impact on the child's ability to regulate their own emotions (Fox and Calkins, 2003, p. 18). This model can be applied to understanding how parental involvement in homework can also impact children's ability to regulate their emotions in the academic context. The goal of this study is to establish this relationship in order to better understand how parenting impacts children's emotion regulation.

Methodology

The data for this study was collected from 825 Montreal school children, with ages ranging from 13-14 years old. They were administered questionnaires, such as the Difficulty in Emotion Regulation scale (DERS) and the Perception of Parents scale (POPS). The DERS was used to measure the children's emotion regulation, and used a Likert scale that ranged from 1 ("never") to 5 ("always"). The DERS evaluated children on factors such as impulsivity, awareness, and clarity, and also provided a total score for each child. The POPS was used to measure children's perceived involvement of their parents in homework, and used a Likert scale where 1 corresponded to "very little" and 5 corresponded to "very much." The POPS had children rate their mothers and fathers as controlling or supportive, and provided a total score for both parents as well as individual scores for each parent. These two measures were then compared in a correlational study to examine the relationship between the two variables.

References

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Control

	Mothers	Fathers	Steiger's Z
Girls	R = 0.35** 0.000 N = 349	R = 0.382** 0.000 N = 345	Z = -0.48 p: 0.31
Boys	R = 0.291** 0.000 N = 286	R = 0.38** 0.000 N = 279	Z = -1.18 p: 0.12
Steiger's Z	Z = 0.78 p: 0.22	Z = 0.03 p: 0.49	

Support

	Mothers	Fathers	Steiger's Z
Girls	R = -0.291** 0.000 N = 364	R = -0.321** 0.000 N = 359	Z = 0.44 p: 0.33
Boys	R = -0.308** 0.000 N = 311	R = -0.268** 0.000 N = 303	Z = -0.53 p: 0.30
Steiger's Z	Z = 0.23 p: 0.41	Z = -0.71 p: 0.24	

Results

The data analyzed in this study is suggestive of a significant relationship between the style that parents use to help their children with homework and the children's ability to regulate their own emotions. Parental control is shown to have a significant positive correlation with DERS results, indicating that children with controlling parents have impaired emotion regulation abilities. We also tested whether there were any significant differences between the correlations of interest, using Steiger's Z test. Although there were no significant differences, there does appear to be a trend towards significance (p=0.12) when comparing the correlation between emotion regulation and parental control in boys, such that fathers appear to have a bigger impact on their sons than mothers when using a controlling parenting style. Parental support, on the other hand, had a significant negative correlation with DERS results; children with parents who support them during homework have superior emotion regulation abilities. The correlation between fathers' support and DERS results is R = -0.321 in girls, and R = -0.268 in boys. Mothers' support also has significant negative correlations with DERS measures; R = -0.291 in girls and R = -0.268 in boys.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the parenting style that mothers and fathers use in helping their children with homework has a great impact on children's ability to regulate their own emotions. Parental control is shown to inhibit self-regulatory abilities, which is indicated by a significant positive correlation between the two variables. Parental support is shown to encourage these abilities, which is indicated by a significant negative correlation between the two variables. The data is suggestive of a trend that fathers control has a bigger influence on children than mother's control, and that fathers may have a bigger impact on their daughters overall than mothers do. Although the correlations between emotion regulation and parenting style were significant, the correlations did not prove to be significantly different. Future research should address these relationships and use a larger sample to investigate these trends further.



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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Maria Rogers for allowing me to work in the ADHD and Development Lab, and Julia Boggia for helping me throughout the entire process. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program and the University of Ottawa for this enriching opportunity.



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