

Improving Parenting Styles and Meta Emotion Philosophy to Address Behavioral Problems in Children

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ABSTRACT

This research delves at the connection between parenting approaches, meta-emotion theory, and behavioral issues in children, particularly those pertaining to anxiety. The research included 130 participants, including two sets of kids and their parent(s). Researching how parents' emotional intelligence, style of parenting, and self-awareness relate to their children's anxiety symptoms and behavioral adaptations was the driving force for this study. In order to determine if a child was diagnosed with anxiety, researchers used the ADIS-IV-C/P, a clinical interview that is semi-structured and follows DSM-IV criteria. Additional symptomatology was assessed using the SCAS, which captures anxiety in six subtypes, including social anxiety, generalized anxiety, and OCD symptoms. Psychopathology symptoms in parents were assessed with the DASS-21. Emotional intelligence, coaching methods, and emotional socialization were the main areas of attention in the Meta-Emotion Interview (MEI-Revised), which was used to evaluate parental emotional philosophy. The results hope to provide evidence for parent-focused treatments in community and clinical settings, with an emphasis on emotional coaching and better parenting techniques, to alleviate children's anxiety and behavioral issues.

Keywords: *Parenting Styles, Behavioral Problems, Meta-Emotion Philosophy, Emotional Intelligence, Emotion Coaching.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A child's emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development are greatly influenced by their early years. Parenting style is one of several environmental factors that significantly impacts a child's behavioral patterns, social competency, academic success, and ability to control their emotions. Different families and cultures have vastly different approaches to parenting, which is essentially the ways in which parents raise their children. There are a variety of parenting styles that can affect a

child's growth and development; these include authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and negligent approaches. Parental awareness and regulation of their own and their child's emotions, known as meta-emotion philosophy, is just as important as parenting styles in nurturing well-adjusted children, according to a growing corpus of psychological research. The prevalence of behavioral issues in children, including but not limited to aggressiveness, hyperactivity, social withdrawal, and anxiety, is a growing concern for parents, educators, and psychologists. Academic success, positive peer connections, and overall mental health can all take a hit when these issues persist. A number of studies have shown that these kinds of behavioral problems are often associated with abusive or neglectful parenting styles. Many people believe that the best way to help children develop emotional resilience and social competence is through an authoritative parenting style that is both highly responsive and reasonably controlling. On the other hand, children of authoritarian parents are more likely to comply out of fear, whereas children of permissive parents may develop poor self-control as a result of overly lax limits. Behavioral disorders are most commonly seen in parents who are negligent, characterized by a lack of both responsiveness and control over their children.

Gottman and colleagues' introduction of the idea of Meta-Emotion Philosophy provides an alternative viewpoint to conventional parenting methods. It has to do with the way parents take in, interpret, and respond to their own and their children's feelings. Parents who practice what is known as "emotion-coaching" often reassure their children when they are upset, help them work through difficult emotions, and teach them healthy ways to control their reactions. While "emotion-dismissing" parents downplay, disregard, or punish emotional displays, they unintentionally teach their children that showing emotion is bad. Raised in emotionally supportive homes, children are less likely to exhibit disruptive behaviors and exhibit higher levels of emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-regulation. To better understand and manage children's behavioral challenges, it is helpful to combine parenting style theory with meta-emotion philosophy. The meta-emotional philosophy of parenting adds responsiveness and emotional tone to the parent-child relationship, whereas parenting styles give the structural framework for interaction. For example, how two parents deal with their child's emotional outbursts greatly affects how effective their rules and expectations are. Parents who believe in the power of meta-emotion are more likely to view their children's emotional moments as chances for connection and education, rather than as causes for argument or discipline. Modern difficulties further complicate parenting, including children's excessive use of electronic devices, shifting family relationships, increased academic pressure, and diminished community assistance.

The emotional and behavioral difficulties that parents face today are a direct result of the stresses of modern life. Knowing how children's emotions grow is, however, essential to a well-rounded comprehension of parenting techniques. Parents are better able to respond to their children's behavioral issues when they have empathy, patience, and clarity, thanks to this synthesis. Results from parenting education and intervention programs that target parents' emotional intelligence and practice have been encouraging. Communication skills, disciplinary tactics, emotion coaching, and stress management are common topics covered in these programs. They provide parents the tools they need to build homes that are safe, nurturing, and emotionally rich for their children. Families vulnerable to violence, trauma, or socioeconomic stresses have benefited greatly from these

programs, and they have also shown great promise in community clinics and school settings. Given this, the current research or discussion centers on the ways in which a more positive approach to parenting, with an emphasis on authoritative parenting, and the promotion of a constructive philosophy of emotion might help reduce or eliminate behavioral issues in children. It offers suggestions for educators, mental health specialists, and parents based on data and investigate the connection between emotional intelligence and behavioral results. Reducing the social and emotional consequences of untreated behavioral disorders over the long term is a primary focus, along with improving children's health and strengthening family bonds.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Chen, Xinran. (2023). The way parents feel and think about their own emotions has a major impact on their children's emotional development from the time they are preschoolers. In this analysis, we look at how it affects ER. The study's exact findings are based on an analysis of current empirical research and a wide range of scholarly literature. Emotional control in children is positively impacted when their parents possess instructive meta-emotional views. People, who hold dismissive ideas, shaped by criteria such as gender and level of education, have a detrimental impact on children's emotional health and demonstrate a strong negative link with emotional control. Although parental views on emotional disorders are not widely held, they are positively associated with children's poor emotional regulation. Emotional disengagement is a common belief held by Chinese parents. Paternal involvement has a little effect on children's emotional regulation scores, whereas maternal involvement is favorably connected with these scores. This research shows that children's mental health and social adaptation are affected by their parents' meta-emotional ideologies in subtle ways. Supporting children's mental health, improving parenting, and bringing attention to children's growth are all greatly affected by this analysis.

Hurrell, Katherine et al., (2017) this study compared families with children (aged 7–15) diagnosed with anxiety disorder (AD; $n = 74$) to those without ($n = 35$) using a multi-method approach to parental meta-emotional philosophy, which includes concepts like emotion coaching and parental emotional awareness. Additionally, we looked at whether there were any differences in emotion regulation (ER) between the AD and non-AD groups of children. The study included a battery of surveys, an emotion awareness and coaching interview with the parent or parents, an evaluation of the children's ability to regulate their emotions, and a discussion task between the parent and child. In general, and by emotion type in particular, parents of adolescents with AD were shown to be less emotionally aware than parents of typically developing adolescents. Emotion coaching was far less common among parents of adolescents with AD compared to parents of typically developing adolescents. It was shown that adolescents with AD had much more trouble controlling their emotions than adolescents without AD. Considerations regarding the function of parental meta-emotional theory and the regulation of emotions in adolescents with AD are addressed.

Stettler, Nicole & Katz, Lynn. (2014) In order to learn whether and how aspects of parents' meta-emotion philosophies might evolve as their children grow up. The Parent Meta-Emotion Interview was filled out by forty moms and thirty-eight dads at the ages of 5, 9, and 11. From age 5 to 11,

parents coached their children to manage their negative emotions more effectively. Between the ages of 5 and 9, children's awareness and acceptance of their negative feelings declined, but between the ages of 5 and 11, they showed an overall increase. This study lends credence to the idea that parents' perspectives on emotional socialization evolve with their children's maturation.

Paterson, Ashley et al., (2012) The Emotion-Related Parenting Styles Inventory assesses how parents' meta-emotion philosophies inform their methods for instructing their children in the study of emotions. Someone who takes pleasure in quizzing themselves. The study set out to analyze the measure's structure, develop a shortened version, and assess its psychometric properties. Three components were identified in a sample of 107 parents of usually developing children. These were: emotion coaching, parental acceptance of negative emotion, and parental rejection of negative emotion. The analysis was conducted using main factor extraction with a direct oblimin rotation ($\delta = 0$). A group of 107 parents whose children had developmental delays or disabilities were shown to have a fourth component: feelings of uncertainty or ineffectiveness in socializing. The 20-item short form showed strong reliability and validity with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .70 to .80. Both parents of children with developmental disorders and parents of typically developing children may benefit from this short assessment instrument, since it can help discover parents who have reported emotional challenges in their children. Emotion regulation challenges in children and possible parenting methods related to emotions are the main topics of this discussion.

Katz, Lynn et al., (2012) Parents have a structured framework of beliefs, ideas, and feelings regarding their own and their children's emotions. This framework was created in 1996 and is known as parental meta-emotion philosophy (PMEP). There have been subsequent empirical investigations that have tested the PMEP concept in connection to parent and child traits as well as children's psychosocial adjustment. This page summarizes what is known about PMEP at the moment, discusses what the field has discovered, and identifies important areas where research should go next.

III. METHOD

Participants

A total of 130 youngsters and their parents were involved in the research. A total of 51 females with anxiety disorders came to our Australian clinic with their parents for therapy. Fifteen boys who had never sought mental health professional care made up the non-AD group. Advertisements in local sports and leisure groups, neighborhood bulletin boards, social media, and independent schools were used to recruit families that did not have AD. Of the parents that took part, 117 were moms (90.00%) and 79 were dads (60.77%).

Measures Adopted

- **Child Anxiety Diagnoses**

Clinical interviews with both the kid and their parents are used to identify anxiety disorders according to the criteria outlined in the DSM-IV.

- **Child Anxiety Symptoms**

One of the 38-item Children's Anxiety Scale-parent report subscales measures GAD, OCD, phobias, separation anxiety, social anxiety, panic disorder, and agoraphobia. The measure has six positive filler items to reduce negative response bias. The frequency of each symptom is rated from zero (never) to three (always). High-quality psychometrics have good test-retest reliability, internal consistency, and concurrent validity.

- **Parent Self-Reported Psychopathology Symptoms**

We assessed parents' depression, anxiety, and stress using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21. Parents assessed each of the 21 items on a 4-point Likert scale, with 0 meaning never and 3 meaning most of the time. High internal consistency and strong convergent and discriminant validity in community and clinical groups make the DASS-21 valid and trustworthy.

- **Parents' Self-Reported Meta-Emotion**

The semi-structured meta-emotion interview assesses parental self-awareness, child-awareness, emotion coaching, and child-emotional regulation. These sections have anger, despair, and fear labels. Meta-Emotion Coding System coded MEI-revised.

Procedure

All of the aforementioned self-report measures were filled out by the children during the parent interview. The self-report measures mentioned earlier were filled out by the parent(s) during the interview with the child. When only one parent could be reached, that parent would fill out the self-report forms. When both parents could be reached, they each filled out their own set of questionnaires to show their own point of view. A parent from every household was thereafter given the MEI-revised. The researcher used gender as a criterion for parent selection for the MEI-revised whenever feasible.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Normative child populations have shown good socio-emotional results when their parents practice a meta-emotion philosophy that includes emotion coaching and high levels of emotional awareness. Parents of children with AD have not had their meta-emotion philosophies studied thus far. Parents of children with AD and those without AD did not previously have their meta-emotion ideologies compared in this study. Additionally, this research compared the ER of children with and without AD. This study used a variety of methodologies and interviewed a large number of people to achieve its two goals. Unsurprisingly, there was a considerable difference in the meta-emotion ideologies held by parents of children with AD compared to those without AD. Specifically, compared to parents of children without AD, those with AD were far less likely to be emotionally aware, both themselves and their children. Additionally, they were much less likely to do emotion coaching. Previous research has linked lower parental emotional awareness and less use of emotion coaching to worse socio-emotional outcomes in children, which is supported by the current findings.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of Respondents

Sample	AD (%)	Non-AD (%)
Marital Status		
Married	76.32	82.35
Divorced/separated	6.58	5.88
Never married	3.95	7.84
Missing data	13.15	3.93
Family Composition		
Two-parent household	77.63	85.49
Single-parent	5.26	5.88
Step/blended	3.95	3.93
Missing data	13.16	4.70

Table 1 show that there are differences in marital status and family composition between respondents with anxiety disorders (AD) and those without (Non-AD). While a somewhat larger percentage of AD respondents are divorced or separated (6.58% vs. 5.88%), a significantly higher percentage of Non-AD individuals are married (82.35%) compared to those with AD (76.32%). Compared to the AD group, the Non-AD group has a significantly larger number of people who have never been married (7.84%). Among those with AD (13.15% vs. 3.93% of the non-AD group), missing information on marital status is more common. When comparing the two groups, the majority of respondents in the non-AD group (85.49%) live in two-parent families, while the majority in the AD group (77.63%) does not. Within these categories, you won't find a huge difference in the percentage of homes with just one parent or a mix of parents. Nonetheless, there is a greater proportion of missing data in the AD group (13.16%) than in the Non-AD group (4.70%). All things considered, these distinctions point to the possibility that people's emotional and social contexts impact or reflect the family and marriage arrangements in which they are born and raised.

Table 2: Means and Standard Errors for Parental Meta-Emotion Variables across Different Emotions

Variable	Group 1 M	Group 1 SE	Group 2 M	Group 2 SE
Parents' Awareness of Own Emotions				
Fear	16.42	0.47	18.25	0.35
Sadness	17.21	0.42	19.08	0.30
Anger	17.68	0.39	19.62	0.20
Parents' Awareness of Child Emotions				
Fear	16.81	0.44	19.01	0.25
Sadness	17.05	0.48	18.95	0.24
Anger	17.63	0.43	19.42	0.22
Parents' Emotion Coaching				
Fear	18.03	0.52	23.89	0.36

Sadness	18.37	0.57	24.31	0.40
Anger	17.01	0.46	23.10	0.43
Parent-Reported Child ER (Interview)				
Fear	12.35	0.51	18.73	0.31
Sadness	13.48	0.56	19.41	0.27
Anger	16.92	0.50	20.88	0.38

Table 2 shows that when comparing Group 1 and Group 2, parents in Group 2 consistently exhibit better coaching and emotional awareness. Parents in Group 2 are better able to recognize and manage their own negative emotions as well as those of their children. As a result, they are better able to teach their children emotional intelligence and coping mechanisms. Similarly, parents in Group 2 claim that their children show improved control over all three emotions. This trend indicates that children's capacity to control their emotions is strongly correlated with their parents' emotional awareness and coaching techniques. Overall, the results show that kids' emotional well-being improves when their parents have a more developed meta-emotional philosophy.

Correlations Results

Table 3 shows the parent gender correlations of significant parameters. Using the MEIrevised's three parent meta-emotion subscales, researchers evaluated three emotion types (fear, sadness, anger), two parent genders, and two groups (AD, non-AD). Table 2 shows all subscale means and standard errors. Parental gender was between-subjects, whereas emotion type was within. Since the MEI-revised was only administered to one parent per household, we utilized parent gender as a between-subjects factor to compare mothers' and dads' meta-emotion beliefs.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Study Variables by Parent Gender

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Spence Child Anxiety Scale	–	–.28	.12	–.49	.10	–.11	–.27	.24	–.67*	–.40
Parents' awareness of own emotions	–.18	–	.83** *	.64** *	.06	.45	–.28	–.06	.19	–.93**
Parents' awareness of child emotions	–.14	.73** *	–	.81** *	.33	–.30	–.11	–.33	.41	–.68
Parents' emotion coaching	–.29	.58** *	.79** *	–	.60	–.52	.27	–.41	.76* **	–.42
Observed Emotion Coaching	–.44* *	.61**	.70** *	.84** *	–	–.86* **	.39	–.08	.74	.26
Observed Emotion Dismissing	.42**	–.69* **	–.72* **	–.81* **	–.83* **	–	–.29	.11	–.69	–.50

Child Emotion Regulation (ERC)	-.50* **	.39*	.44**	.51**	.52** *	-.50* **	—	-.23	.59*	-.24
Child Lability/Negativity (ERC)	.55** *	-.35*	-.46* *	-.58* **	-.52* **	.50** *	-.69* **	—	-.51	.30
Parent-reported child ER (MEI)	-.52* **	.33*	.43**	.70** *	.60**	-.72* *	.50**	-.51* *	—	-.13
Observed Child Emotion Regulation	-.53* **	.60**	.71** *	.70** *	.70** *	-.76* **	.46**	-.51* **	.69* *	—

There are strong connections between anxiety in children, parents' emotional intelligence, coaching children to regulate their emotions, and the correlation matrix. The results show that nervous children typically grow up in less supportive emotional contexts when their scores on the Spence Child Anxiety Scale are higher, since there is a correlation between lower parental emotion coaching ($r = -.49$), reduced child emotion regulating ($r = -.50$), and increased emotion dismissing ($r = .42$). Strongly linked to positive parenting activities like emotion coaching ($r = .64$ to $.81$) and inversely connected to dismissive responses is parental emotional awareness, which includes both their own and their child's feelings. While there is a strong negative link between emotion rejecting and adaptive emotional outcomes, there is a favorable correlation between seen emotion coaching and both parent-reported and child-evaluated emotion regulation ($r = .74$, $r = .26$). Furthermore, anxiety and lability/negativity are inversely connected to child emotion regulation ($r = -.69$), further supporting its protective function. In order to promote emotional competence and reduce anxiety in children, these findings emphasize the significance of emotionally sensitive parenting.

V. CONCLUSION

A strong foundation for understanding and managing behavioral problems in children can be found at the junction of parenting styles and meta-emotion philosophy. A child's emotional environment is shaped by meta-emotion philosophy, while a parent's style of parenting lays the groundwork for discipline and nurturing. The best way to raise children who are emotionally savvy and behaviorally stable is through authoritative parenting that is supplemented with tactics for coaching their emotions. Emotional dysregulation and behavioral issues are more likely to develop in contrast to authoritarian, permissive, or negligent methods, especially when paired with a tendency to ignore or downplay emotions. Parents can greatly enhance their children's outcomes by acquiring the necessary knowledge and abilities to implement successful parenting techniques and cultivate a good philosophy of meta-emotion. In addition to instilling limits and regulations, this entails guiding children toward healthy emotional understanding, expression, and regulation. An effective and long-term strategy for dealing with behavioral problems is for parents to become more emotionally intelligent and to engage in responsive engagement with their children. The foundation for healthier adulthood and stronger social cohesiveness can be laid by encouraging safe bonds and emotional resilience in youngsters, so that they can face adversity with poise and assurance.

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