

## **Examiner's commentary**

This Extended Essay on the negative effects of authoritarian parenting exemplifies a contemporary problem of interest to students and reflects an international mindedness outlook. The research cited is from investigations conducted in different parts of the world: Pakistan, the UK, Singapore, the US, India, and Cyprus. The student reports that when facing the scarcity of research to support a "to what extent" type of question, the student redirected their question to a more realistic although somewhat narrower topic. The student is aware of the bidirectional ambiguity factor in the nuanced discussion of various issues. The reflection portrays the pathway followed from an originally wide scope to a more focused one. The reflections also indicate appropriate supervision when the supervisor apparently guides the student to choose a specific parenting style and ONE aspect of development. The student's international mindedness is also portrayed in the conscious effort to include a range of cultures in their research instead of focusing on the more traditional "Westerns" versus "expected Asian set" studies or individualism versus collectivism. Critical thinking is focused on targeted methodological questioning of the research's validity given the sampling and the shortcomings of the research instruments such as questionnaires/interviews. The limitations of correlational research are mentioned but it could have been further highlighted. Overall, the essay reflects genuine interest, curiosity, and skill development.

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Affect the Social Behavior of a Child?

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## Introduction

Parenting styles were first researched in the 1930s specifically amongst migrant European middle-class families in the United States of America. At the time, researchers classified parenting into two basic extremes – one of tolerance and support and one of authority and dominance. However, later in the 1960s, Diane Baumrind established three types of parenting styles after comparing parent-child interactions: permissive, authoritative and authoritarian. The latter refers to a style traditionally accompanied with “*low responsiveness and high demandingness*”. Exemplified, this can mean that parents expect high academic and extracurricular performance and are controlling of their activities, but do not engage themselves in emotional or social issues their children might have (Power, 2013). Research into this area of psychology is an ongoing endeavor and holds high interest for psychologists, as it can be the basis for the development of certain behaviors and thus, hold very relevant conclusions. For instance, through extensive studies, authoritarian parenting has been known to be linked to several negative social behaviors such as aggression and bullying. Therefore, pinpointing a trigger for these can be beneficial to coping methods and remedies. Furthermore, parenting is an ever-present enigma battled across all cultures. Hence, it is a contemporary field of research as it is constantly being investigated to find the ‘perfect’ parenting style. Moreover, a parenting style is one of the most influential factors in shaping an individual and their behavior which allows psychologists to consider another element when deconstructing human behavior. However, research into parenting styles can prove to be difficult in several facets. Firstly, it can be difficult to categorize an individual’s parenting style as it could be an amalgamation of more than

one style. For instance, a parent can have certain attributes of an authoritarian parent, but might have an inkling of a permissive style towards other matters. Secondly, parenting styles differ among both parents – therefore, the social development of an individual might be resultant of a combination of authoritarian parenting and another parenting style, making it difficult to identify which plays the larger, more dominant role. Thirdly, a parenting style is highly likely to change in a manner that is complementary to the development of a child's maturity. Thus, the social development of a child will be affected by all stages of their parents' parenting styles. Furthermore, a parent might have a different parenting style depending on the child. For instance, if a child had one or more siblings, their behavior might be shaped by vicariously absorbing elements of the parenting style their parent had towards another child of the family. Moreover, the factors that affect parenting style and the social behavior of a child do not consist of an exhaustive list and are specific to each family. Therefore, the overall research into this area of psychology is hard to generalize since each parent, child and parent-child relationship is individual and distinctive. Authoritarian parenting can negatively affect the social development of a child through manifestation of adversarial behavior, bullying and victimization and affecting relationships.

## Chapter 1: Adversarial Behavior

Adversarial behavior is a form of negative social behavior that can be manifested in children. For instance, refusing to follow instructions from authority figures and being uncooperative with other children qualify as examples. Along with this, adversarial behavior can also mean having stronger qualities of a short-temper than other children of the same age.

A possible effect of authoritarian parenting is the manifestation of adversarial and uncooperative behavior in children in a classroom setting. This could be because authoritarian parenting restricts children from clearly expressing emotional or social issues to their parents and receiving support for them. Consequently, the child could eventually turn to a classroom in order to communicate these restricted feelings. In 2013, Sheraz and Najam conducted a study in a Pakistani school, investigating boys between the ages of 8 and 15. Eight teachers completed questionnaires regarding behavioral aspects of children who were repeatedly disruptive in lessons, including their social interaction with other students. Parents reported on their parenting style and their children's interactions with family members. The researchers discovered that those who expressed adversarial behavior in school – defying instructions from authority figures and having more anomalous temperamental issues in comparison to other students their age – were children of reportedly authoritarian parents (Sheraz & Najam, 2013). Although the study did not explore much of the reasoning for its results, I believe this may have been owing to the fact that the children experienced a sense of restriction when addressing their parents and were therefore forced to harbor these feelings when

directly addressing them; they subconsciously chose the option of releasing these feelings onto other individuals involved in their everyday life.

However, this study has high gender bias: because all the participants are boys, it cannot be certain that the adversarial behavior is resultant of authoritarian parenting or of the high levels of testosterone in males that have supported links to aggression. Therefore, there is some ambiguity regarding the origins of the disruptive behavior; declaring authoritarian parenting as the primary cause can be a hasty conclusion. Furthermore, the sample of participants in this study was not representative of the collective: the boys selected were those who had shown repeated signs of adversarial behavior. There may have been other boys who hadn't shown signs of disruptive behavior yet had parents who practiced authoritarian parenting. Therefore, the results concluded from the study on this specific sample are not generalizable to all boys with authoritarian parents, as others may not have displayed hindrances in their social development. Parenting style changes as children mature – the parents were probably forced to adopt an authoritarian role as their sons were in preadolescent and adolescent years to establish hierarchy and authority within the parent-child relationship. Therefore, as parenting style is likely to evolve, the results of this study are subject to probable temporary authoritarianism thus calling into question whether the effects on social development are long-lasting. Nonetheless, based on the sample size used in this experiment, positive correlations exist between authoritarian parenting and adversarial behavior, suggesting that authoritarian parenting can affect the social development of

boys through the development of antagonistic behavior and issues with authority figures.

Thompson, Hollis and Richards conducted a study in the U.K. also supporting the notion that authoritarian parenting can cause adversarial behavior. Investigating those born in April of 1970, they ran a longitudinal study, returning to study the majority of the children at the ages of 5 and 10. The children's mothers completed three questionnaires three times (at the start of the experiment, after 5 years and after 10 years): the first measured parenting style and the level of authoritarianism, the second determined the social class of the family and the third was a questionnaire regarding the child's social behavior. This was investigated as conduct problems, an example of which was taking others' belongings without asking. The results revealed that the lower the social class of the family, the more traces of authoritarianism present in the mothers' parenting styles. In turn, this authoritarianism resulted in the reported manifestation of adversarial behavior by the children at the age of 5. Moreover, after 10 years, the researchers discovered that there was an increase in reported conduct problems. This means that authoritarian parenting can influence children at various stages in life to different extents (Thompson, Hollis, & Richards, 2003).

An indirect correlation can be made between lower social classes and adversarial behavior, as authoritarian parenting is the bridge between the two; therefore, it is plausible to speculate that low socioeconomic statuses, causing low self-esteem, can lead to adversarial behavior. Hence, there is much ambiguity about how influential



authoritarian parenting is without any supporting factors, thus lowering the accuracy of the study. Because the researchers focused on the mothers' parenting styles, the internal validity of the study was increased as they measured the authoritarianism levels of the mothers alone; by not including the fathers' parenting styles, the researchers avoided having to determine which parenting style was more influential. However, this was disadvantageous as children develop through an amalgamation of both parents' parenting styles and the effects of each style can be difficult to distinguish. A study conducted in Singapore by Ang and Goh involving middle school students revealed that children found it harder to adjust to teachers and peers when either their mother or their father was reported as authoritarian (Ang & Goh, 2006). Because they found it challenging to separate the effects of each parent's parenting style, researchers were forced to conclude that authoritarianism as a whole affected the children's social development. Applying the findings of this study to Thompson et al.'s, the reported adversarial behavior at the ages of 5 and 10 may not have been solely resultant of the mothers' authoritarianism, as it doesn't take into consideration the influence that the fathers would have had on the children's social behavior. However, this limitation does not apply to 5.3% of the sample as they were single mothers. The conclusions of this study support the notion that authoritarian parenting can influence social behavior of children by triggering adversarial tendencies. Because the researchers only focused on authoritarian parenting, the effects of external factors, such as cognitive or biological features, are not considered. Therefore, the link between authoritarian parenting and adversarial behavior is correlational at best and is reductionist.

A study was also conducted in the USA by Gagnon et al. amongst 63 children between the ages of 3 and 5, investigating if a relationship existed between authoritarian parenting and social interactions with other children. The researchers measured the 'reactivity' of the children which focused on the extent to which the children would retaliate to situations where their surroundings changed, as well as parenting styles. Both were measured using questionnaires completed by parents, who had placed their children in early learning environments such as daycare centers or nurseries in North Carolina and Tennessee. In this study, adversarial behavior referred to instances of play disruption, such as "*physical aggression*" or "*demands to be in charge*". The researchers discovered that for the children who scored very high reactivity, there was a proportional relationship between authoritarian parenting and adversarial behavior displayed in a playground setting as well as a much lower extent of social interaction with other children. Conversely, for children who hadn't scored very high reactivity, there was no relationship between authoritarian parenting and adversarial behavior (Gagnon, et al., 2014). A possible explanation for the relationship could be that the children who scored a higher reactivity would have experienced more intense authoritarian parenting which stimulated the manifestation of more adversarial behavior. This study indicates that the effects of authoritarianism can be displayed at ages as young as 3.

However, the findings of this study are culture-specific and based on a small sample and are therefore only generalizable to the target population; therefore, it can be said that the study has high statistical generalizability but low analytic generalizability because it can only be narrowly generalized as the sample is not representative of all

children with authoritarian parents. Furthermore, a child is likely to be more reactive if the interaction involved another individual they were fond of than if it involved the converse. Therefore, reactivity is not the most accurate factor to measure social development, thus lowering the internal validity of the study. Because the children were so young, their parents might have adopted an authoritarian approach to parenting in order to establish authority in the relationship (a common habit when children are young). Therefore, the findings of this study might be resultant of the temporary authoritarianism and are not applicable to children of other ages, reinforcing the reduced levels of analytic generalizability. Using questionnaires also raises concerns because the children's reactivity levels were reported by their parents. The parents might have provided biased responses in order to present their children as more socially desirable, limiting the accuracy of the findings.

## Chapter 2: Bullying and Victimization

Authoritarian parenting can lower children's self-esteem because they are given minimal praise and encouragement which can result in children taking their own measures to raise their self-esteem. In school settings, this can develop into bullying. A study supporting this was conducted in Cyprus involving high school students from schools both in the urban and the rural areas of the country. 231 teenagers were asked to complete 3 questionnaires: an assessment of bullying and victimization levels experienced by the teenagers, a measurement of their cultural dimensions and an evaluation of the parenting styles used on them. The researchers discovered a correlational relationship not only between authoritarian parenting and bullying, but also between the former and victimization. Their correlational coefficients, 0.22 and 0.33 respectively, were rendered near to negligible when cultural dimension was considered when analyzing the results (Georgiou, Fousiani, Michaelides, & Stavrinides, 2013). This might have been because of the collectivist Cypriot society, promoting the notion of 'the group' above that of 'the individual'. Nevertheless, the results still weakly demonstrate that authoritarian parenting can lead to instances of bullying and victimization. If applied to individualist cultures, these coefficients might be significantly higher, as survival of 'the individual' is encouraged more than the collective. They might also be higher when considering that the children might have felt embarrassed or uncomfortable being completely truthful about any bullying or victimization experienced. The sample of this study is limited to one culture and nation therefore reducing the extent of analytic generalizability.

Authoritarian parenting is subject to culture. For instance, one culture could encourage stricter parenting, thus resulting in stronger effects in children. A study conducted by LeCuyer and Swanson in the USA compared levels of authoritarian parenting between African-American and European-American mothers. They discovered, through cross-culture analysis, that African-American mothers demonstrated higher levels of authoritarianism than European-American mothers, thus suggesting that parenting style is influenced by culture (Swanson & LeCuyer, 2017). Therefore, the results of the studies in this investigation are exclusive to the cultures they researched, lowering their scopes for generalizability.

A factor contributing to the accuracy of findings is the vicarious learning undergone by children. If a child in this study had siblings with a significant age difference between them, it is probable that an alternate parenting style will be adopted when dealing with each child owing to the difference in maturity. The effects of this vicarious learning can also have an effect on the social development of a child, reinforcing the consideration of accuracy within this area of psychology, as the parenting style absorbed by the child cannot be discerned.

Fousiani et al.'s study's findings are corroborated by those of a study conducted in the USA by Luk et al., involving participants who not only hailed from a wider range of cultures, but were also in university rather than high school. Participants were asked to report on parenting style and instances of bullying from as early as elementary schools. Researchers discovered that authoritarian parenting led to increased victimization

during adolescence. Moreover, authoritarian parenting, specifically exerted by mothers, prompted bullying. Both bullying and victimization led to graver problems involving alcohol; however, the basis of bullying and victimization stemming from authoritarian parenting shared a common factor – inadequate self-esteem (Luk, et al., 2016).

Participants could have reported parents as more authoritarian out of anger or frustration, should there have been any hostility between them. Therefore, the reports of authoritarian might be hyperbolic, altering the resultant correlations accordingly. Another issue raised through questionnaires is the presence of anomalous results. A researcher might disregard answers that deviate from the usual trend of reported authoritarian parenting and negative social consequences simply because they appear to be anomalous results; however, these might be legitimate responses that report a different set of consequences that can occur from authoritarian parenting. Therefore, researchers might be practicing confirmation bias through dismissing results that vary from the norm of those provided which then eliminates the scope of all results, lowering the accuracy and validity of research into authoritarian parenting and its effects on social development.

Conducting research on this specific effect of authoritarian parenting proved to be challenging, as bullying is as a very recent subject of investigation. Since it is relatively modern in comparison to the other effects investigated, there is limited research that has been published surrounding it. However, it still served as worth investigating as it has high theoretical generalizability because it acts as a firm foundation for future

research. Furthermore, the existent research suggests that there is an evident link between parenting and bullying/victimization, implying that there is potential for an even stronger link in the future and that if parenting is a predominant cause, measures must be taken to prevent it from growing further.

### Chapter 3: Relationships

A study in Pakistan by Sartaj and Aslam aimed to investigate the relationship between authoritarian parenting and levels of adjustment at home – more simply, how challenging it is to integrate oneself within the family. 200 high school students from two different areas of the country completed two questionnaires: the first was a standard one that sought to discover the perceived parenting style adopted by the children's parents while the second aimed to assess the level of adjustment – how successfully an individual overcomes various obstacles – in a handful of aspects, one of them being home – the quality of interactions had with members of the family. The researchers discovered that the children who reported having authoritarian parenting also reported having more difficulties involving home adjustment (Sartaj & Aslam, 2010). Although the study itself investigated other aspects of adjustments, a clear relationship was established between the two focused factors. This suggests that the effects of this parenting style are not exclusive to manifestation in settings away from the parents, but can display themselves within the same environment. Therefore, authoritarian parenting can render it difficult for teenagers to find a sense of belonging and acceptance within their home. Findings of the study conducted by Sheraz and Najam support this conclusion. The parents of the children also reported on the latter's interactions with members of the family. The researchers discovered a positive correlation between authoritarian parenting and reported conflict between children and their siblings, suggesting that not only had authoritarian parenting affected their attitudes towards teachers, but also the manner of interaction with their siblings (Sheraz & Najam, 2013).



Numerous studies into this area of psychology employ questionnaires as a significant element of their methodology which poses several opportunities for inaccuracy and bias. For instance, an individual can adopt elements of different parenting styles that could potentially give rise to a style that does not fit the description of an existing method. This then calls into question the accuracy of the reported parenting styles as the measurements used by the researchers can be inaccurate when the final overall style is a composition of small portions of different styles. In addition to this, the questionnaires can contain leading questions on behalf of the researchers wanting to elicit a response that would rule in favor of the hypotheses they formulated. For instance, the Likert-style questionnaires that parents were asked to fill out contained statements with very negatively and harshly connoted verbs. Parents might not have wanted to come across abusive or too austere and therefore would not have fully agreed to these although their style of parenting indeed fits the category of authoritarian. Because of this, the participants of the studies might be swayed in order to answer in such a way that would allow for more correlations to be made between authoritarian parenting and the relevant negative effects on social development. Furthermore, the questionnaires require the children and/or their parents to report on negative aspects of development and a very harsh style of parenting which can be embarrassing and uncomfortable for individuals to do. Therefore, the participants might have provided answers that presented themselves or their family members as individuals who possess socially desirable characteristics in order to avoid feeling judged, even if they were reassured that the questionnaires were anonymously

completed. The findings of the studies might report the correlations to be weaker than they actually are in reality.

A study supporting the weakened nature of relationships as a result of authoritarian parenting was conducted by Baumrind, Larzelere and Owens. Aiming to investigate the effects of various parenting styles and modes of imposing control on different aspects of teenage life (including social elements), researchers explored a sample of children above the age of 3 in preschools around Berkeley, California. Observations, interviews and questionnaires were employed in order to measure the levels of children activity, parenting styles and parent-child relationships. The researchers discovered that authoritarian parenting led to an imbalance in adjusting to social situations when interacting with peers or members of their family; furthermore, they determined that when coupled with customary acts of punishment (e.g. spanking), authoritarian parenting can trigger hindrances in social interactions, such as the adversarial behavior or the likelihood of bullying and victimization as mentioned before (Baumrind, Larzelere, & Owens, 2010). This study demonstrates that authoritarian parenting imposed on children at a very young age can continue to have effects on them during their youth years, implying that the effects of authoritarian parenting are not restricted to childhood alone.

The relationship presented between authoritarian parenting and its negative effects on social development poses the question of whether bidirectional ambiguity is a plausible factor to consider. For instance, although research suggests that authoritarian parenting

causes detrimental effects in social development, it can be argued that certain negative social behaviors practiced by children can force parents to adopt a harsher and more authoritarian style of parenting. A study conducted in Portugal involved 537 Portuguese high school students completing questionnaires regarding the parenting styles used on them and their teachers answering questionnaires that focused on their behavior and social aptitude in school settings. The researchers discovered that the children for which teachers reported more behavioral issues had actually reported their parents as more authoritarian (Silva, Morgado, & Maroco, 2012). The deduction drawn from this was that authoritarian parenting causes behavioral issues in social situations; however, an alternate explanation could be that for children who present more problems behaviorally, the parent-child relationship is strained, forcing parents to adopt authoritarianism as a preventive measure. Therefore, the research into this area of psychology must consider the relationship as a bidirectional ambiguous one as opposed to authoritarian parenting being the cause for hindrances in the social development of a child.

## Conclusion

Authoritarian parenting serves as a basis for the development of several negative effects within the social development of a child. These negative effects can influence their social behavior in classroom and school settings, where the child can exhibit disorderly behavioral acts in lessons. Moreover, the effects can include bullying and victimization in schools amongst children their age. Although the expected effects are involved in school settings, they can also take the form of hindrances within their home lives from where the instigation of the social issues transpires. The studies mentioned have demonstrated that these complications in social development can be induced within children at any age and the fact that there is no specific time after which these inconveniences can evince themselves. Similarly, there is no particular time period for which the negative effects last as they can affect individuals into adulthood. Although the hindrances display themselves, the bases for their development are common – authoritarian parenting has the potential to drastically lower a child's self-esteem, which almost always happens. The lowering of this self-esteem causes individuals to modify their normative behavior in order to compensate for the losses of the 'normal' life that they experience. Authoritarian parenting can also lead to children being unable to effectively communicate their thoughts and feelings to their parents (owing to their low responsiveness); therefore, this suppression over a long period time can lead them to subconsciously releasing them onto individuals around them in their everyday lives in manners that are often harsh. Although this investigation only features secondary sources – journal articles – the range of cultures and nationalities of the samples within the studies is extensive. Hence, because of the pervasive nature of the evidence

supporting the negative effects in social development of authoritarian parenting, it can be said with some certainty that the effects of authoritarian parenting are universal. Although the investigation might not hold high predictive validity, it serves as a plausible explanation for individuals who have had obstacles when dealing with social situations owing to the manner in which they were parented.

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## Extended essay - Reflections on planning and progress form

**Candidate:** This form is to be completed by the candidate during the course and completion of their EE. This document records reflections on your planning and progress, and the nature of your discussions with your supervisor. You must undertake three formal reflection sessions with your supervisor: The first formal reflection session should focus on your initial ideas and how you plan to undertake your research; the interim reflection session is once a significant amount of your research has been completed, and the final session will be in the form of a viva voce once you have completed and handed in your EE. This document acts as a record in supporting the authenticity of your work. The three reflections combined must amount to no more than 500 words.

**The completion of this form is a mandatory requirement of the EE for first assessment May 2018. It must be submitted together with the completed EE for assessment under Criterion E.**

**Supervisor:** You must have three reflection sessions with each candidate, one early on in the process, an interim meeting and then the final viva voce. Other check-in sessions are permitted but do not need to be recorded on this sheet. After each reflection session candidates must record their reflections and as the supervisor you must sign and date this form.

### First reflection session

Candidate comments:

My interest in my EE topic sparked from a GCSE Psychology lesson on aggression and its sources. Consequently, I wondered if aggression could stem from manner of parenting. Originally, I contemplated focusing on the extent to which parenting styles can affect child development. After initial research, I discovered that this topic was too broad and narrowed it down to social and cognitive development. However, after my first meeting with my supervisor, I concluded that I will only focus on one specific parenting style and one aspect of development. I will research each of the 4 parenting styles and the various aspects of child development, to deduce which of them possess the most credible data and which I can confidently about. I also discovered that I need to select sources that are more credible, since a couple that I relied on until now analyzed other studies. Therefore, I aim to focus on journal articles henceforth.

Date: January 17, 2018



## Interim reflection

Candidate comments:

When I initially selected this topic of authoritarian parenting, I was under the impression that the research I would gather would solely be regarding the negative social effects that children develop, since the general norm is that authoritarian parenting has significantly long-lasting negative effects on children. However, while conducting research, I was surprised to come across a journal article that discussed the possible positive effects of authoritarian parenting, specifically focusing on when the individuals were older and in their workplaces. Upon mentioning this to my supervisor, we cooperatively decided to alter the question such that it gave sufficient scope to discuss both the negative and the positive social effects. Therefore, I will have two chapters in my essay, one exploring the negative social effects and the other investigating the positives. However, I have found it difficult to find many studies that explore the positive social effects; thus, the chapter that will focus on these effects will be significantly shorter than the other. With regard to the sources I have discovered, I have been able to use the referenced studies in each article to gather more research in regard to my question. Furthermore, the studies feature several different cultures which extends the range of applicability of the research into my question.

Date: June 24, 2018

## Final reflection - Viva voce

Candidate comments:

Although having decided that I would also explore positive effects, I realized that there wasn't sufficient research to do so. Therefore, my question was refined to exploring how authoritarian parenting negatively affected social development. I decided to categorize the nature of the effects as the chapters of the essay. What I found most challenging was selecting information that was actually relevant to my research question because I found myself trying to include as much of the studies' results as possible. Therefore, I realized that a significant proportion of the referenced studies contained information that was unnecessarily included and not fully relevant to my research question. This research question allowed me to explore the effects of authoritarian parenting across a range of cultures, aside from the usual Western set and expected Asian set studies.

Date: February 14, 2019