Anchor study explication for

Parental discipline practices and locus of control: relationship to bullying

and victimization experiences of elementary school students.

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Title of study:

Parental discipline practices and locus of control:

Relationship to bullying and victimization experiences of elementary school students.

Article Summary

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Objective: The purpose of the study was to investigate the association between parenting practices and bullying and victimization experiences of their elementary school children. It sought to test two alternative hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that parent discipline practices predict children’s involvement in bullying and victimization. The second hypothesis was that children’s behavior helps to shape parental discipline practices through parental locus of control. The study was motivated by the fact that there is a lack of studies that address the link between parenting locus of control and the discipline practices of the parents whose children are involved in bullying and victimization.

Design: This study took the form of a survey that required the respondents to complete a self-report questionnaire that used a forced choice format. A number of different measuring instruments were used for children and parents respectively. The respondents completed the questionnaires independently and submitted them to the researchers.
Setting: The study was conducted in Cyprus. The sample was drawn from 4 different schools. Two of the schools were semi-rural, one was urban, and the other was rural.

Subjects: A total of 186 schoolchildren and their parents participated in the study. The children ranged in age from 9 – 13 years. Eighty seven (87) were males, and ninety three (93) were girls. Six (6) of them did not report any gender. The parent sample numbered 160, and ranged in age from 28 – 53 years. There were 50 fathers, and 110 mothers.

Results: The results of the study as they relate to the first hypothesis are summarized in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of parenting</th>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Implications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rule setting: (parents set rules and enforce them)</td>
<td>Negatively and significantly associated with parental efficacy, parental responsibility and parental control of child’s behavior.</td>
<td>A positive association between rule setting and an internal locus of control.</td>
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<td>Punishing: (parents use punishment as a disciplinary tool)</td>
<td>Positively and significantly related to parental efficacy and control of child’s behavior.</td>
<td>A positive association between punishing and an external locus of control.</td>
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<td>Inconsistency: (parents’ inconsistent discipline practices create uncertainty in children as to how they should behave)</td>
<td>Positively and significantly related to parental efficacy, belief in fate/chance, and parental control of child’s behavior.</td>
<td>A positive association with an external locus of control.</td>
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</table>

With respect to the second hypothesis, the study found that “bullying and the bullying/victimization interaction explained a small but statistically significant amount of variance in inconsistent practices to the direction showing that more bullying and victimization involvement predicted more consistent practices”(p.297)
Conclusion: The study concluded that, upon the basis of a series of regression analyses, children’s involvement in bullying and victimization could not be accurately predicted by their parent’s discipline practices. The first hypothesis was not supported by the results. The second hypothesis was only partially supported. “Children’s behavior helps shape parental discipline practices through parental locus of control” (p.296). The surprising finding was that there is a significant correlation between inconsistent parenting practices and children’s involvement in bullying and victimization. Increased involvement in these practices by children tended to predict more consistent parenting practices. The results also suggest that parents with an external locus of control tend to use more authoritarian discipline approaches, while having an internal locus of control can predict the use of effective limit setting practices.

Ecological validity: Although the study takes an indirect look at the behavior under review, there are still a number of things about it that suggest a reasonably sound ecological validity. The method used for the collection of data is one such factor. The respondents completed the questionnaires independently, and in familiar settings. For the parents this was done at home, and for the children in their classrooms with their teachers. In the case of the parents, their frankness and truthfulness in completing their questionnaire would have been, to some extent, a function of their locus of control. Locus of control was one of the factors under review in the study.

A variety of assessment instruments were used. The quality and usefulness of these instruments were reported to have been established through repeated use in a variety of studies. While this is so, there is a measure of concern about the structure of some of the questionnaires. For example, the questionnaire that assessed parental discipline practices used to control children’s behavior consisted of 19 items. These 19 items were distributed across 4 different
factors. One wonders if this was really a sufficient sampling, and if more realistic results would not have been yielded by a more extensive questioning.

The sample appears to have been representative of a good cross-section of respondents. The number of boys and girls was about even (83/97). The parent group, in context of educational attainment, was diverse. The study noted that educational attainment was used as an indicator of socio-economic status. This being the case, the diversity in educational attainment would be indicative of diversity in socio-economic status. The size of the sample could be a cause for concern. The total number of parents and children was 346. In addition, the mean number of children per family was 3. This means that, at most, only about 60 families were represented. This seems to be a small sample. A greater sample size would certainly have allowed for a more realistic generalization of the results.