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A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF PARENTING STYLES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDEPENDENCE IN 3-6-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

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1. INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Parenting style refers to clear patterns and behavioral tendencies exhibited by parents in children's daily lives. These habits focus on specific attitudes, emotions, parenting concepts, and parenting behaviors. Based on the directionality and dimensional classification of different family parenting models, they can be categorized into five types: overindulgent, democratic, permissive, authoritarian, and inconsistent (Wang, 2021). Some scholars believe that the family environment plays an indispensable role in young children's growth, with the impact primarily resulting from family parenting patterns. Additionally, some studies indicate that early childhood is a crucial stage in human development. To ensure happiness and satisfaction during early childhood, family education must be emphasized. Only by adopting correct educational methods can children develop healthy social skills.

Children's independence refers to their ability to receive education in all domains without excessive reliance on others' help, make autonomous judgments according to social norms, and act based on their own opinions and thoughts. They can act independently without seeking help from others. We need to have the ability to complete tasks based on our own experience and capabilities (Dong, 2018). Children's independence includes three aspects: self-reliance, self-control, and self-assertion. Domestic and international researchers primarily focus on factors such as parental education affecting children's growth. Family type, early childhood education science, and family income levels collectively form the foundation for independent family development, with family education methods emphasizing strong social skills being particularly crucial. However, current research on the impact of parenting styles on children's independence development remains relatively scarce. In early childhood, parents bear important responsibilities and obligations in family parenting, and their parenting styles have significant implications for children's independence development. With societal progress, more parents tend to adopt democratic parenting methods. However, although some parents have higher economic status, their educational methods remain unscientific, even showing tendencies toward overindulgence and permissiveness. The choice of family parenting style leads to changes in children's independent behavior, affecting the development of children's independence. Therefore, this study investigated the impact of parenting styles on the independence development of children aged 3 to 6 years (Scott, 2012).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Subjects

This study selected one public kindergarten in Kashgar, Xinjiang, and conducted questionnaires with parents of children aged 3-6 years. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, with 463 returned. After eliminating various invalid questionnaires, 463 valid questionnaires were obtained, including 138 from senior class, 165 from middle class, and 160 from junior class, with an effective recovery rate of 92.9%.

2.2 Survey Questionnaires

This study employed two types of questionnaires: a parenting style questionnaire and a 3-6-year-old children's independence development questionnaire. The questionnaires primarily consisted of closed-ended questions. The parenting style questionnaire comprised 40 items, with parenting types divided into overindulgent (1-7), democratic (8-17), permissive (18-26), authoritarian (27-34), and inconsistent (35-40). The independence scale consisted of 20 items covering self-reliance (1, 2, 3, 4, 7), self-control (6, 8, 9, 16, 18, 19, 20), and self-assertion (10, 11, 3, 14, 15, 17). Questions 7, 8, and 16 were reverse-scored (Zou, 2004; Yang & Yang, 1998). To ensure data reliability, both independent questionnaires' reliability was verified. Results showed that the Alpha coefficient for the 3-6-year-old children's independence development questionnaire was 0.7970, while the parenting questionnaire's Alpha coefficient was 0.770, demonstrating good reliability for both questionnaires. Survey data was processed using SPSS 24.0 multivariate statistical software.

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3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Descriptive Statistics of 3-6-Year-Old Children's Parenting Styles and Independence Development

3.1.1 Descriptive Statistics of 3-6-Year-Old Children's Parenting Styles

Analysis of the descriptive statistics from the questionnaire survey shows that among parents of 3-6-year-olds, democratic parenting was most commonly chosen, with the highest mean score, indicating that democratic parenting type holds a dominant position in parents' preferences. This was followed by authoritarian parenting style with a mean of 2.453, while permissive parenting style had the lowest mean at 1.984, and overindulgent and inconsistent parenting styles had means of 1.984 and 2.242 respectively.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Results of Children's Family Parenting Styles (n=463)

Name	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overindulgent Parenting Style	1.000	5.000	1.984	0.732
Democratic Parenting Style	1.000	5.000	3.623	0.662
Authoritarian Parenting Style	1.000	5.000	2.453	0.705
Permissive Parenting Style	1.000	5.000	1.908	0.775
Inconsistent Parenting Style	1.000	5.000	2.242	0.843

3.1.2 Descriptive Statistics of 3-6-Year-Old Children's Independence Development

Descriptive statistical analysis results show that children's independence development level is at a moderate state, with children's self-control having a higher mean value than self-reliance and self-assertion. Self-assertion ranks at the lowest position.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Results of Children's Independence (n=463)

Name	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-assertion	1.000	4.500	2.718	0.852
Self-reliance	1.167	4.667	2.795	0.681
Self-control	1.429	4.143	3.045	0.440

3.2 Analysis of Differences in 3-6-Year-Old Children's Parenting Styles and Independence Development

3.2.1 Differences in 3-6-Year-Old Children's Parenting Styles

This study conducted in-depth analysis based on five factors: children's age, parents' educational level, parents' personal monthly income, parents' marital status, and parents' occupation. Initially, we surveyed 463 parents of young children, including 233 females and 230 males. Regarding family structure, there were 349 families of three or four members, 81 three-generation households, 17 divorced or widowed families, and 16 families where parents lived separately.

Survey results indicate varying educational levels among children's parents. The data shows that parents with bachelor's degrees constitute the majority, reflecting that parents generally have received higher education levels.

Table 3: Comparison of Differences in Parenting Styles and Children's Age

	Middle(n=165)	Senior(n=138)	Junior(n=160)	F	P
Overindulgent Parenting Style	1.92±0.67	1.89±0.67	2.13±0.82	5.371	0.005**
Democratic Parenting Style	3.63±0.68	3.54±0.68	3.68±0.62	1.670	0.189
Permissive Parenting Style	1.84±0.73	1.90±0.74	1.99±0.84	1.667	0.190
Authoritarian Parenting Style	2.45±0.70	2.41±0.67	2.49±0.74	0.554	0.575
Inconsistent Parenting Style	2.19±0.87	2.19±0.79	2.34±0.85	1.741	0.177
*p<0.05 **p<0.01					

Children's ages are divided into three stages: 3-4 years for junior class, 4-5 years for middle class, and 5-6 years for senior class. Parents of children at different age stages also show differences in their choice of parenting styles. Through one-way ANOVA examining differences in overindulgent, democratic, permissive, authoritarian, and inconsistent types across children's age variables, the test found significant differences between overindulgent parenting style and children's age, with parents of junior class children showing a greater tendency to choose overindulgent parenting styles.

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Table 4: Comparison of Differences in Parenting Styles and Parents' Educational Level

	A.Master's and above(n=6)	B.Bachelor's(n=245)	C.Associate's(n=148)	D.High School(n=41)	E.Below Middle School(n=23)	F	P
Overindulgent Parenting Style	1.45±0.26	1.90±0.68	2.13±0.77	2.10±0.86	1.88±0.73	3.498	0.008**
Democratic Parenting Style	4.01±0.33	3.67±0.68	3.63±0.66	3.47±0.51	3.20±0.58	3.913	0.004**
Permissive Parenting Style	1.61±0.33	1.82±0.74	2.03±0.86	2.07±0.71	1.88±0.61	2.490	0.043*
Authoritarian Parenting Style	2.33±0.52	2.37±0.71	2.62±0.72	2.43±0.63	2.38±0.59	3.157	0.014*
Inconsistent Parenting Style	1.89±0.53	2.16±0.84	2.40±0.90	2.22±0.73	2.28±0.61	2.227	0.065
*p<0.05 **p<0.01							

Through one-way ANOVA examining differences in overindulgent, democratic, permissive, authoritarian, and inconsistent types across parents' educational level variables, with parents' educational levels divided into five levels: below middle school, high school, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and master's degree and above, results show significant differences in parenting styles based on parents' educational levels. Research results indicate that the higher the parents' educational level, the stronger their tendency to support democratic parenting styles.

Table 5: Comparison of Differences in Parenting Styles and Parents' Personal Monthly Income

	A.Below 2000 yuan(n=46)	B.2000-6000 yuan(n=246)	C.Above 6000 yuan(n=171)	F	P
Overindulgent Parenting Style	1.98±0.71	2.05±0.79	1.89±0.65	2.161	0.116
Democratic Parenting Style	3.37±0.63	3.61±0.69	3.71±0.62	5.159	0.006**
Permissive Parenting Style	2.02±0.74	1.95±0.81	1.82±0.72	1.996	0.137
Authoritarian Parenting Style	2.39±0.67	2.49±0.72	2.41±0.70	0.820	0.441
Inconsistent Parenting Style	2.26±0.65	2.32±0.88	2.13±0.83	2.401	0.092
*p<0.05 **p<0.01					

This study categorized parents' personal monthly income into below 2000 yuan, 2000-6000 yuan, and above 6000 yuan. Results show that most parents' personal income is concentrated in the 2000-6000 yuan range. Through one-way ANOVA examining differences in parenting styles across personal monthly income variables, significant differences were found between parents' personal monthly income and democratic parenting style. This indicates that the higher the parents' personal income, the more they tend to choose democratic parenting styles.

Table 6: Comparison of Differences in Parenting Styles and Parents' Marital Status

	A.Harmonious marital relationship and family(n=432)	B.Disharmonious family with occasional conflicts(n=8)	C.Others(n=23)	F	P
Overindulgent Parenting Style	1.97±0.74	2.20±0.52	2.22±0.68	1.687	0.186
Democratic Parenting Style	3.65±0.66	3.48±0.39	3.22±0.66	4.862	0.008**
Permissive Parenting Style	1.90±0.78	1.97±0.60	2.09±0.76	0.680	0.507
Authoritarian Parenting Style	2.45±0.71	2.34±0.59	2.63±0.71	0.804	0.448
Inconsistent Parenting Style	2.23±0.85	2.65±0.70	2.33±0.71	1.097	0.335
*p<0.05 **p<0.01					

Parents' marital status can be categorized into harmonious marriage, disharmonious family, and other situations. Research shows that parents' marital status has a significant impact on children's parenting styles. Through one-way ANOVA examining

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differences in parenting styles across marital status variables, results show significant differences in democratic parenting style. Specifically, harmonious families tend to adopt democratic parenting styles, creating a comfortable and harmonious family environment conducive to children's healthy physical and mental development.

Table 7: Comparison of Differences in Parenting Styles and Parents' Occupation

	A.Intellectuals (including teachers, doctors, technical personnel, etc.)(n=194)	B.Government officials(n=89)	C.Self-employed(n=39)	D.Employed workers(n=50)	E.Others(n=91)	F	P
Overindulgent Parenting Style	1.95±0.72	1.96±0.74	2.04±0.85	2.01±0.72	2.04±0.73	0.333	0.856
Democratic Parenting Style	3.72±0.67	3.66±0.68	3.62±0.50	3.50±0.71	3.45±0.63	3.114	0.015*
Permissive Parenting Style	1.86±0.78	1.93±0.83	1.95±0.86	1.83±0.71	2.02±0.69	0.813	0.518
Authoritarian Parenting Style	2.43±0.73	2.42±0.69	2.66±0.71	2.50±0.67	2.43±0.68	1.032	0.390
Inconsistent Parenting Style	2.22±0.85	2.22±0.88	2.33±0.93	2.23±0.85	2.29±0.76	0.251	0.909
*p<0.05**p<0.01							

This study categorized parents' occupations into 5 types, including intellectuals (teachers, doctors, scientists, technical personnel, etc.), administrators (government officials), self-employed, employees, etc. In terms of parenting style choices, intellectual families tend to choose democratic parenting styles (Xu, 2020). Through one-way ANOVA examining differences in parenting styles across occupational variables, results show significant differences in families adopting democratic parenting styles where parents are intellectuals.

3.2.2 Differences in 3-6-Year-Old Children's Independence Development

Self-reliance refers to children's ability to solve problems using their existing life skills when encountering difficulties, rather than seeking verbal, emotional, or behavioral help from others. Self-control means that children can accept and actively cooperate with adult guidance when facing behavioral rules, while actively avoiding misconduct and effectively adjusting and controlling their own behavior. As for self-assertion, it means that children can independently decide to engage in certain activities and maintain their position during execution without being influenced by external factors (Li, 2018).

Table 8: Comparison of Differences in Children's Independence and Age

	Middle(n=165)	Senior(n=138)	Junior(n=160)	F	P
Self-reliance	2.82±0.65	2.49±0.65	3.04±0.64	26.220	0.000**
Self-control	3.03±0.47	2.98±0.43	3.12±0.41	4.070	0.018*
Self-assertion	2.66±0.84	2.55±0.89	2.93±0.79	8.201	0.000**
*p<0.05**p<0.01					

Children of different ages demonstrate varying levels of independence. Through one-way ANOVA examining differences in self-reliance, self-control, and self-assertion across age variables, Table 8 shows significant differences in all three aspects related to children's age. Specifically, 3-4-year-old junior class children show notably lower abilities in self-reliance, control, and assertion compared to 4-6-year-old middle and senior class children. Regarding self-control ability, the difference between middle and senior class children is relatively small. The middle class stage is also a critical period for rapid development of children's independence.

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3.3 Correlation Analysis of the Impact of Parenting Styles on Children's Independence Development

Table 9: Correlation between Parenting Styles and Children's Independence Development

	Self-reliance	Self-assertion	Self-control
Overindulgent Parenting Style	0.141**	0.275**	0.029
Democratic Parenting Style	-0.024	-0.168**	0.032
Authoritarian Parenting Style	0.152**	0.181**	-0.005
Permissive Parenting Style	0.156**	0.230**	0.057
Inconsistent Parenting Style	0.193**	0.251**	0.052
*p<0.05 **p<0.01			

Family parenting styles are divided into five dimensions: overindulgent, democratic, authoritarian, permissive, and inconsistent. Meanwhile, children's independence can be measured from three dimensions: self-reliance, self-control, and self-assertion. Through correlation analysis testing, significant differences were found between different types of parenting styles and various dimensions of children's independence. Specifically, overindulgent, authoritarian, permissive, and inconsistent types show significant positive correlations with self-reliance and self-assertion, while democratic type shows a negative correlation with self-assertion. However, regarding self-control, parenting styles show no significant differences.

3.4 Regression Analysis of the Impact of Parenting Styles on Children's Independence Development

Table 10: Regression Analysis of the Impact of Parenting Styles on Children's Independence Development

	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	p
Constant	2.800/2.517	0.232/0.194	--	12.092/12.955	0.000/**0.000**
Overindulgent Parenting Style	0.249/0.040	0.067/0.056	0.213/0.043	3.735/0.714	0.000**/0.475
Democratic Parenting Style	-0.265/-0.048	0.058/0.049	-0.206/-0.046	-4.545/-0.977	0.000**/0.329
Permissive Parenting Style	0.001/0.020	0.070/0.058	0.001/0.023	0.009/0.345	0.993/0.730
Authoritarian Parenting Style	0.030/0.037	0.076/0.063	0.025/0.038	0.397/0.581	0.692/0.561
Inconsistent Parenting Style	0.138/0.108	0.065/0.055	0.137/0.134	2.111/1.973	0.035/*0.049*
R^2	0.132/0.043				
Adjusted R^2	0.123/0.032				
F	F(5,457)=13.923,p=0.000/F(5,457)=4.061,p=0.001				
D-W value	2.097/2.100				
Dependent variable: Self-assertion/ Self-reliance					
*p<0.05 **p<0.01					

Family parenting styles can be categorized into overindulgent, democratic, authoritarian, permissive, and inconsistent types as independent variables. Meanwhile, children's independence is measured through three dimensions - self-reliance, self-control, and self-assertion - as dependent variables for regression analysis. Regression analysis test results show that overindulgent type has a significant positive relationship with self-assertion. Inconsistent type has a significant positive influence on self-assertion and self-reliance, while democratic parenting type has a significant negative influence on self-assertion. Overindulgent, democratic, permissive, and authoritarian types do not have an influence on self-reliance. Permissive and authoritarian parenting types do not have an influence on self-assertion. Furthermore, parenting styles show no significant influence on self-control.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Discussion on 3-6-Year-Old Children's Parenting Styles

Results indicate significant differences between parenting styles and children's age. These differences may be related to the characteristics of a group of psychologically immature children. Middle and senior class children gradually develop self-awareness and cognitive abilities, judging things according to their preferences. However, due to their young age and underdeveloped mental functions, they are prone to errors in making choices. Therefore, to protect children and promote their healthy development, parents often make choices or restrict certain behaviors on their behalf. In comparison, junior class children are younger with poorer self-care abilities, and parents often feel insecure about letting young children try new things, tending to adopt overindulgent family parenting styles.

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According to research findings, parents with higher educational levels tend to adopt democratic parenting types, which aligns with related research results. The differences in parents' educational levels and occupations lead to variations in family parenting model choices. Additionally, among children's parents, many are public servants such as government officials, teachers, doctors, and parents with bachelor's and associate's degrees constitute the majority, possessing relatively high cultural literacy. When raising children, they deeply understand that children's experience, abilities, and knowledge reserves are inferior to adults, so they don't evaluate children's performance by adult standards. Instead, they tend to guide children with positive encouragement, emphasize scientific parenting methods, and communicate with children in a democratic, equal manner.

Parents' personal monthly income and marital status have significant influences on family parenting style choices. This may stem from parents with higher incomes and harmonious families paying more attention to their children while also being more concerned about whether their parenting methods are scientific. A happy family environment is often an important factor in parents' tendency to adopt democratic parenting styles.

Overall, when parents possess scientific worldviews, life philosophies, and values, form healthy personality traits and high cultural and moral standards, and shape an equal, free, and democratic image, it benefits the formation of family atmosphere and scientific democratic parenting models. Such family environments and educational methods play a positive role in children's independence development (Liu, 2019). Therefore, in the process of cultivating children's independence, parents should fully utilize scientific parenting methods and maximize the role of the family environment.

4.2 Discussion on the Impact of 3-6-Year-Old Children's Independence Development

Children's age has a clear influence on their independence development level. According to the results, all three dimensions - self-reliance, self-control, and self-assertion - show obvious differences. Because junior class children's parents tend toward overindulgent parenting styles, their children show relatively lower abilities in all three aspects of independence. Middle class children's performance in self-reliance is lower than senior class, while middle class children's independence develops more rapidly, due to the rapid enhancement of self-awareness at this age stage. Meanwhile, due to the continuous accumulation of life experience and knowledge, as well as significant improvements in thinking and independence, middle class children's independence development is particularly notable. In comparison, senior class children's development in various aspects is more stable.

In summary, 3-6-year-old children's independence development gradually improves with age, manifested in self-reliance, self-control, and self-assertion aspects. Therefore, due to increasing age, children's independence development shows a clear upward trend.

4.3 Discussion on the Impact of Parenting Styles on Children's Independence Development

Related research indicates that parents' degree of democracy and freedom in child-rearing has a significant positive correlation with children's independence development, while the degree of control shows a significant negative correlation with children's independence development (Li, 2015). Harmonious, equal, and democratic parenting styles can promote children's independence development, and different parenting types have varying impacts on children's independence development. Furthermore, research results show no significant association between self-control and parenting styles. However, self-reliance shows significant positive relationships with overindulgent, authoritarian, permissive, and inconsistent parenting types, indicating these parenting types have positive active connections with self-reliance. Conversely, self-assertion has a negative passive relationship with democratic parenting style, with lower democratic tendencies correlating to lower assertion ability development. Children aged 3-6 are in their early learning period, spending most of their daily activities at home and kindergarten. The development of independence requires not only parents' role but also kindergarten's role. Some parents are uncertain about their parenting style or even unaware of the importance of parenting. At this time, home-kindergarten cooperation and mutual learning are needed to promote children's independence development.

In conclusion, children's independence development has an interactive relationship with parenting types, but it is also related to kindergarten daily life. Choosing good parenting styles must be accompanied by achieving home-kindergarten co-education.

5. EDUCATIONAL SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Master Scientific Parenting Methods and Create a Democratic Family Environment

Research results show that children's independence development is influenced by both parental individual and family factors (Dong, 2012). These factors lead parents to choose different methods when raising children, with some parents not even realizing the role of democratic parenting in children's independence development. Parents should avoid excessive care and love, and should let young children grow independently. They should reduce conflicts between families and provide young children with a relaxed, comfortable, free, and democratic development environment (Li, 2019). Therefore, parents should let their educational methods play a scientific role (McConnell, Breitkreuz, & Savage, 2012). To achieve this goal, parents should master scientific knowledge and skills related to child-rearing and learn more relevant scientific methods through various means. To cultivate children's independence, parents should strive to become democratic parents, provide more encouragement and praise to children, value the role of family environment, and

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create a relaxed, free, democratic, and happy family environment for them. In such an environment, children can grow healthily and develop independence under good family atmosphere and education, ultimately becoming independent individuals in aspects such as life and learning.

5.2 Seize Key Developmental Periods and Cultivate Children's Independence

Research shows that junior class children have relatively weaker independence, while middle class is the critical period for independence development. Therefore, for middle and senior class children, focus should be placed on cultivating their self-assertion and self-control abilities. To seize this critical period, we should actively exercise children's independence and enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence. Through planning creative games, we can deepen children's sense of autonomy. Meanwhile, providing timely and appropriate encouragement helps cultivate their self-esteem and self-confidence. Additionally, young children should be encouraged to make decisions independently, and their thoughts should be patiently listened to when they fail, treating them equally, reasonably, and openly. This educational approach enables children to learn more actively in games, encourages them to work hard and think actively, allowing them to play leading roles in games. Ultimately, this reduces children's dependence on teachers and parents, promoting the development of independence aspects such as self-reliance, self-control, and self-affirmation.

5.3 Start from Daily Routines and Create Home-Kindergarten Cooperation

Kindergarten teachers and parents should grasp daily educational opportunities to enrich and expand children's life experiences. Specifically, especially for junior class children, teachers and parents should cultivate life skills through daily activities such as dressing, tying shoelaces, brushing teeth, and using chopsticks. Parents can share life events like animated characters, and children can freely choose clothes, books, and toys, thereby enhancing their autonomy and life skills. Kindergarten teachers can organize activities like making cakes and molding figurines, first teaching methods, then letting children complete tasks independently. Children trust and admire teachers, closely observing and imitating teachers' behaviors. Therefore, teachers should maintain a good image, regulate their words and actions, not scold children, and complete their tasks independently. Parents who accompany 3-6-year-old children long-term unconsciously influence them through their behavior. Therefore, when children are young, parents should deeply recognize that cultivating children's self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-discipline in the family environment is crucial. They must constantly mind their words and actions, leading by example. Kindergartens can also conduct activities like self-care skill competitions for different classes. Through examples from parents and teachers and independence-related activities organized by kindergartens, home-kindergarten cooperation can be achieved, starting from daily routines, children's independence development will be positively promoted.

Author Biography

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