

Research Commentary on Parental Psychological Control

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Abstract

Parental psychological control is an important dimension for parenting styles. The methods of researching psychological control mainly include questionnaires and observation. The current research on psychological control mainly includes psychological control's impact on the children and adolescents' mental health, factors influencing parental psychological control, the influence of parental psychological on children and adolescents of different group and different cultures.

Keywords

Psychological control, parenting style.

1. Concepts of Parental Psychological control

The role of negative parenting practices, such as parental psychological control on the development of children and adolescents has been examined by researchers across numerous fields. It refers to that parents invade children's inner world by the means of withdrawing their love, blaming children and cause them to feel guilty. Parental psychological control has negative effects on the individual's development like making them feel anxious, depressed and causing them to assault others, etc. In 1996, the researcher, Barber published an article entitled Parental Psychological Control: Revisiting a Neglected Construct on Child Development. Scholars began to pay attention to the topic of psychological control. Shaefer (1965) first explicitly proposed the concept of psychological control: parents do not allow children and teenagers to leave them and grow into independent people. "Aggressive" psychological control will hinder adolescents' mental development, such as self-efficacy, sense of self-worth sense, etc.

2. Association Between Psychological Control and Behavioral Control

Prior research has shown that parental psychological control and behavioral control are two distinct constructs (Barber et al. 1994), yet the relationship between them merits further exploration. Findings on the association between psychological control and behavioral control are mixed in both Western and Asian studies. For example, some studies in the U.S. have found that perceived psychological control was negatively correlated with perceived behavioral control among children and adolescents (Pettit et al. 2001; Barber et al. 1994, 2005), whereas another study found them to be positively correlated (Manzeske and Stright 2009). A few studies found that there was no correlation between the two forms of control for neither mothers nor fathers (Bean et al. 2006; Galambos et al. 2003). With regard to the research conducted in Asia, one study showed a positive correlation between psychological control and behavioral control among children in China (Wang et al. 2007), while another study indicated that the association between the two was negative for fathers but positive for mothers among adolescents in Hong Kong (Shek

2006). Such conflicting results contribute to the lack of clarity surrounding the association between psychological and behavioral control and the role played by cultural differences.

The examination of the association between the two forms of control can help to understand parental usage of control in different cultural contexts and how the meaning of parental control varies across cultures.

3. Tools to Measure Up Parental Psychological Control

In 1996, Barber made psychological control scale-- Psychological Control Scale-Observer Rating Scale, PCS-ORS. Dimensions for this rating scale include limit children's expression, invalidating or dismissing children's feelings or ideas, personal attacks, guilt induction, threatening to withdraw love, weird ways of expressing emotions and then further improved and designed 16 questions including 6-dimension questionnaire of psychological control-- Psychological Control Scale-Youth Self Report, PCS-YSR.

Mills (1998) and some people use the method of video observing to conduct research on the behaviors of parental psychological control. The coded category is some languages used to belittle children like abuse.

4. Parental Control in Different Cultures

Two dimensions of parental control have been distinguished: behavioral control and psychological control. Generally, behavioral control refers to parents who provide rules, regulations, and restrictions on their child's behavioral world (Barber et al. 1994; Smetana and Daddis 2002). These include knowing the child's whereabouts and activities, posing rules and expectations, monitoring behavior, and implementing discipline and demands (Shek 2006). Psychological control refers to parental influence over the psychological and emotional development of children (Barber et al. 2005), where it can intrude upon a child's individuation process or increase the degree of psychological distance between a child and parents (Sabatelli and Mazor 1985). Barber and colleagues conceptualized the construct of psychological control in the

following domains: constraining verbal expressions, invalidating feelings, personally attacking, inducing guilt, withdrawing love, and disrespecting (Barber et al. 2012).

Shame has also been identified as an emotional element of psychological control (Rudy and Halgunseth 2005), which reflects a sense of failure to live up to the expectations of one's role, performance, or status (Bedford and Hwang 2003). It is a

common socialization technique in Chinese culture but is often overlooked in the Western literature on parental control. In addition to those proposed by Barber et al. (2012), the present study thus regards shame as one of the psychological control

domains in addressing Taiwanese parenting.

5. Related Research on Parental Psychological Control

Theory and research suggest that a psychologically controlling parenting environment may play an important role in the development of self-criticism in adolescence (Blatt & Homann, 1992; Kopala-Sibley & Zuroff, 2014; Soenens et al., 2005). Recent studies have focused on achievement-oriented psychological control, a specific type of psychological control with particular relevance to self-criticism. Parents with high levels of achievement-oriented psychological control use intrusive techniques to communicate their own excessive demands for achievement and to pressure their child to strive for perfect performance. In such an intrusive and pressuring parenting environment, adolescents are liable to gradually adopt the parents' high standards for achievement and engage in self-critical evaluation when they are incapable

of meeting these externally imposed or self-imposed standards (Blatt & Homann, 1992; Soenens et al., 2010). Several studies, including a number of cross-cultural studies, have shown that achievement-oriented psychological control is related to adolescents' self-criticism (e.g., Soenens et al., 2012; Soenens et al., 2010; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Duriez, & Goossens, 2006). Further, studies in different cultures have shown that self-criticism plays an intervening role in the relationship between psychologically controlling parenting and depressive symptoms, thus explaining how psychologically

controlling parenting can influence adolescent depressive symptoms (Campos et al., 2010; Soenens et al., 2008; Soenens et al., 2012; Soenens et al., 2010).

Barber (2001)'s research found that parental psychological control can bring stress to children and teenagers, and influence their mental health. Parental psychological control can cause depression, anxiety, etc. Conger (1997)'s research found that teenagers whose parents had more psychological control over them had more problems of adjusting. Soenens (2010) found that parental psychological control can obviously and positively predict the increase of depression in college students. Nucci (2004) found in a cross-cultural research that parental high-level psychological control can cause anxiety, depression, interpersonal sensitivity and other psychological problems in adolescents.

Children growing up under the parental control and authority are unable to effectively and actively explore his or her career, and feel anxious and fearful about their future lives. (Fu, Chunling, Shi, Guochuan, 2010). At the same time, too much psychological control used by mother will influence the development of children's independence. (Chen, Wei, 2007). Nucci(2004) found in a cross-cultural research that parental high-level psychological control can cause anxiety, depression, interpersonal sensitivity and other psychological problems in adolescents. psychological control

and its related factors such as overintrusive parenting and authoritarian parenting were positively related to adolescent IA (Giles and Price, 2008; Huang et al., 2010; Cheung et al., 2015). while some scholars suggested that a positive relationship between parents and children is "the fundamental platform" that gives rise to parental control (Crouter and Head, 2002, p. 472).

Parental control in Chinese culture, specifically, has been depicted as controlling and directive, reflecting parents' strong involvement with their children (Huntsinger and Jose 1995; Chiu 1987) as well as authoritarianism (Steinberg et al. 1992). These parenting styles have been linked to negative youth outcomes (e.g., poor academic performance) in the U.S., but have been associated with positive school performance among Asian youth (Sue and Abe 1988).

As the conceptual distinction between behavioral and psychological control has been established across nationalities and ethnicities (Bean et al. 2006; Wang et al. 2007), the meaning and impact of these forms of parental control are expected to vary by culture. Research has revealed that Asian traditions generally support exercising strict control over children (Fung 1999), whereas parenting in European countries and among Anglo-Americans is generally less restrictive (Julian et al. 1994). Research evidence has indicated that supportive and non-punitive parenting is linked to positive psychosocial outcomes in all cultures (Rowe et al. 1994), but parental strictness

and dominance (characteristics of parental control), which are often considered negative parenting practices in Western cultures (Silk et al. 2003), also result in positive developmental outcomes among Asian children (Chao 1994). Some researchers have further argued that the effects of parental control may be different in Asian cultures compared with American culture (Wu 1985; Olsen et al. 2002). As interpersonal connectedness and interdependence are highly valued in Asian families as is hierarchical control (e.g., respect for authority figures and elders, strong patriarchal traditions), parental control over children's thoughts and feelings may not

be associated with a violation of children's sense of self in Asian cultures (Olsen et al. 2002) but rather as contributing to social order and societal well-being. This view is consistent with the general acknowledgement that the same parental behavior may convey different meanings to children and adolescents in various cultures (Kağıtçıbaşı 1996).

6. Future Research Prospects

To sum up, parental psychological control is a psychologically oriented, aggressive, restrictive and manipulative parenting style. The following research is expected to expand and deepen the research on parental psychological control: 1. Characteristics of parental psychological control, and laws of its change and development 2. Explore and have the innovation in the research ways In conclusion, there are still many problems to be explored and resolved in the future research on parental psychological control. Parenting styles have important effect on the harmony development of children and adolescents.

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