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The Longitudinal Relationship Between Family Functioning and Parenting Styles

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Background

The Relationships Between Parenting Styles, Family Functioning, and Children's Outcomes

- Studies have shown that better family functioning is associated with greater parenting satisfaction and positive parenting experiences (Hess et al., 2002, Angley et al., 2015).
- Families also function as a direct positive or negative influence on child behavior (Masten & Shaffer, 2006).
- Parenting styles may reflect patterns of family functioning (Matejevic et al., 2013), and have also been shown to predict children's developmental outcomes.
- For example, poor parenting practices were found to be associated with greater externalizing and antisocial behavior problems (Liu, 2004).

Research Gap:

- However, research on parenting styles has predominantly focused on parent-based predictors, and it is less known how family functioning is associated with parenting styles

Research Question:

What is the relationship between family functioning and parenting styles and the longitudinal impacts of family functioning on parenting styles?

Methodology

Participants:

172 mother-child dyads from a comprehensive birth cohort study in Singapore, GUSTO (Soh et al., 2014).

Measures:

- Mothers reported on family functioning when their children were 6 years old and parenting styles when their children were 4.5 and 8.5 years old.

Family Assessment Device (Epstein, Baldwin & Bishop, 1983) Scale of 1-4, 1= Strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree	Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire – Short (Robinson et al., 2001) Scale of 1-5, 1= Never, 5 = Always
General Functioning Subscale Assesses the overall health/pathology of the family. E.g., "Planning family activities is difficult because we misunderstand each other."	Authoritative Mean of items from connection, regulation and autonomy granting dimensions E.g., I give our child reasons why rules should be obeyed. Authoritarian Mean of items from physical coercion, verbal hostility and non-reasoning/punitive dimensions E.g., I yell or shout when our child misbehaves. Permissive E.g., I give into our child when the child causes a commotion about something.

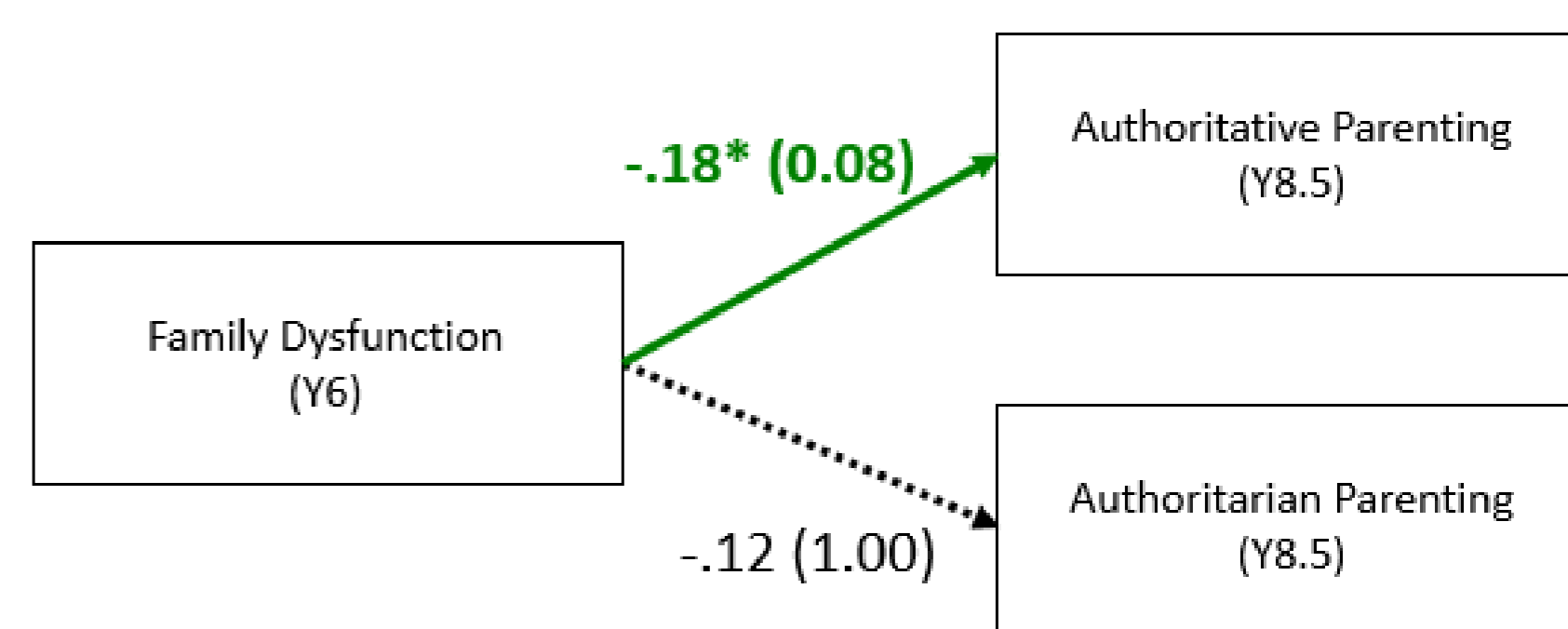
Analysis:

Linear regression was conducted to examine the relationship between the variables.

Results

Relationships between Family Functioning and Parenting Styles

- Regression results showed that a **lower level of family dysfunction** is linked to **greater maternal authoritative parenting**, even after accounting for earlier parenting styles ($B = -0.18$, $SE = .08$, $p = .03$).
- No significant relationship was found with Authoritarian parenting ($B = -0.12$, $SE = 1.00$, $p = .24$).
- These results suggest that better family functioning is predictive of a more authoritative approach to parenting.



Dotted line represents non-significant paths. Model included parenting style when child was age 4.5 as a covariate
Unstandardised coefficients are presented, along with standard errors in parentheses. * $p < .05$

Discussion

Influence of Family Functioning

- Reduced dysfunction and prosocial behaviour create an environment supportive of authoritative parenting (Carlo et al, 2018).

Implications of Key Findings

- Findings indicate that better family functioning positively influences the adoption of an authoritative parenting style. Future interventions should aim to enhance family dynamics could lead to more effective parenting approaches.

Limitations and Future Directions

- The internal consistency of the permissive parenting scale is low ($\alpha = 0.54$), which may be due to the few items on the permissive parenting scale, and have been excluded from the analysis.
- Future studies can explore the impact of family functioning on a broader range of parenting styles and child outcomes.

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