

**The Impact of Parental Behaviors on Children's Negative Emotions**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The study examined the role of different parental behaviors on children's negative emotions. Parents of 152 Finnish first grade children (79 girls and 73 boys) filled in diary-formed questionnaires which measure parental behaviors including affection, behavioral control and psychological control. Children's negative emotions are also measured by diary-formed questionnaires which are filled in by their parents. The results showed that parental affection was negatively related to children's negative emotions while parental psychological control was positively related to children's negative emotions. The study did not find relation between parental behavioral control and children's negative emotions.

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## **TABLES**

Table 1. Relation between children's negative emotion and parental affection

Table 2. Relation between children's negative emotion and parental psychological control

Table 3. Relation between children's negative emotion and parental behavioral control

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION .....	7
1.1 Parental Behaviors Research from Historical Perspective: Comparison between parental behaviors research and parental typological research.....	7
1.1.1 Baumrind: two dimensions of parental behaviors .....	7
1.1.2 Steinberg & Barber : psychological control as part of parental behaviors .....	9
1.1.3 Other research .....	10
2 THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL BEHAVIORS ON CHILDREN’S NEGATIVE EMOTIONS .....	11
2.1 Responsiveness .....	11
2.2 Psychological control.....	13
2.3 Behavioral control.....	15
2.4 Combination of different parental behaviors .....	15
3 RESEARCH QUESTION.....	18
3.1 Research question .....	18
3.2 Measured values.....	18
4 METHODOLOGY .....	20
4.1 Research design .....	20
4.2 Participants.....	20
4.3 Data collection .....	20
4.4 Data analysis .....	21
5 FINDINGS .....	22
5.1 Child gender difference in negative emotion.....	22
5.1.1 Child gender difference in mother-reported negative emotion in time 1.....	22
5.1.2 Child gender difference in mother-reported negative emotion in time 1.....	22
5.1.3 Child gender difference in mother-reported negative emotion in time 2.....	22
5.1.4 Child gender difference in mother-reported negative emotion in time 2.....	22
5.2 Relations between parental behaviors and children’s negative emotions .....	22
5.2.1 parental affection and children’s negative emotion .....	22

5.2.2 Parental psychological control and children’s negative emotions .....	23
5.2.3 parental behavioral control and children’s negative emotion .....	24
6 DISCUSSION .....	26
REFERENCES .....	29
APPENDICES .....	37
Appendix 1. Letter to parents.....	37
Appendix 2. Parent’s diary.....	39

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Parental Behaviors Research from Historical Perspective: Comparison between parental behaviors research and parental typological research**

Parental behaviors research is dimensional or variable approach. It gives attention to certain parental dimensions or behaviors. Earl Schaefer was the first one to articulate and explain three elements of effective parenting. Schaefer introduced three parenting dimensions which are acceptance versus rejection, firm control versus behavioral control, psychological autonomy versus psychological control (Schaefer, 1959; Schaefer, 1965). Baumrind introduced responsiveness and demandingness in 1966 (Baumrind, 1966).

Parental typological research is the approach to classify parents into different categories according to certain parental behaviors. It is contrasted with the dimensional approach. For example, Baldwin and his colleagues introduced three parenting styles, democratic, authoritarian and laissez-faire parenting. Baumrind introduced in total seven parental behaviors such as authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting, permissive parenting etc..

A collection of parental behaviors reflect certain types of parenting styles. Parenting styles are characterized by different parenting behaviors such as control, objectivity and so on.

### **1.1.1 Baumrind: two dimensions of parental behaviors**

Baumrind conceptualized three parenting styles defined by responsiveness and demandingness. She introduced that parents with high responsiveness and high/ moderate demandingness are considered as authoritative parents; low responsiveness and high demandingness are authoritarian parents; high responsiveness and low demandingness are permissive parents. (Baumrind, 1966). Because few parents fall exactly into these three parenting styles, Baumrind expanded parenting patterns to another four styles which are disengaged parenting, directive parenting, democratic parenting and good enough parenting. (Baumrind, 1989; Baumrind, Larzelere, & Owens, 2010). Disengaged parenting are low on

both responsiveness and demandingness. Directive, democratic and good enough parenting are average on responsiveness and/ or demandingness.

Following Schaefer's three dimensions, psychological control is included in Baumrind's parenting typology later on. She defines that authoritarian parents are characterized by firm behavioral control, psychological control and rejection; authoritative parents are characterized by optimal behavioral control, acceptance, and psychological autonomy; permissive parents are characterized by lax behavioral control, psychological autonomy, and acceptance; disengaged parents are characterized by lax behavioral control and rejection (Baumrind, 1996).

Baumrind concluded that optimal parenting combines responsiveness and demandingness. Optimal combination of responsiveness and demandingness are associated with optimal child outcomes. (Baumrind et al., 2010). This is reconfirmed by other researchers in their research (e.g. Steinberg, 2001).

In Baumrind's work, she conceptualized parental behaviors from two dimensions: responsiveness and demandingness.

#### *Responsiveness*

Responsiveness refers to parents' emotional warmth and supportive actions to children. This includes parents' proactive participation and involvement in children's activities, communication with children and understanding children's feelings and needs. Parents convey the message that they care and have expectations on children.

#### *Demandingness*

Demandingness/ control is the way that parents regulate children's actions. For authoritative parenting, control is more from behavioral aspect. For authoritarian parenting, control is from both behavioral and psychological aspects. In Baumrind introduction about the demandingness dimension of parental behaviors, there are two components of behavioral

control, namely confrontive control and coercive control. Confrontive control is usually exercised by authoritative parents. Confrontive control is demanding, goal-directed and firm. It has clear roles and instruction for children to follow. Coercive control is always exercised by authoritarian parents. Coercive control is manipulative, autonomy undermining, restrictive and manipulative. Children must follow the order from parents (Patterson, 1982; Baumrind, ). Thus, there is difference between behavioral control exercised by authoritative parents and behavioral control exercised by authoritarian parents.

### **1.1.2 Steinberg & Barber : psychological control as part of parental behaviors**

Becker and Schaefer made the distinction between psychological control and behavioral control initially (Becker, 1964; Schaefer, 1965). This distinction was not pursued regularly until Steinberg revisited it around 1990 (Steinberg, 1990; Steinberg, 2005). Barber also made the distinction of two types of control later on in his research (Barber et al., 1994; Barber, 1996; Barber et al., 2005)

#### *Behavioral control*

Behavioral control is the control targeted to children's behaviors. Its aim is to regulate children's behaviors to familiarize themselves with social norms and regulations. Behavioral control exercised by authoritative parents is confrontive and roles are clear while coercive and harsh by authoritarian parents. The difference was initially articulated in Baumrind's works on parenting styles.

#### *Psychological control*

MacKinnon and Allinsmith defined psychological discipline as parental behavior (MacKinnon, 1938; Allinsmith 1960). Following Mackinnon and Allinsmith, Becker and Schaefer explained psychological control and made the distinction between behavioral control and psychological control (Becker, 1964; Schaefer, 1965). Steinberg (1990) revisited psychological control in the 1990s. After 1990s many researches focus attention to psychological control which was considered as a dimension of parental behaviors.

Psychological control refers that parents control children through psychological ways in terms of regulating children's behavior and psychological world. Typical forms of psychological control are guilt induction, love withdrawal and shaming. Guilt induction refers that children's guilt is always aroused in the interaction with parents. Children feel guilty when something is wrong for they know their parents may be disappointed or not pleased. Love withdrawal is that parents show positive reaction only when children meet their expectations and requirements. This makes children feel that love is contingent. Shaming is typically happening in some Asian countries. Some "markers" of shaming include verbal techniques and nonverbal techniques. Verbal techniques include name calling, paralinguistic techniques such as angry intonation. Nonverbal techniques include rolling the eyeballs etc.. These markers show the isolation and turning away from children if children do something that parents are not satisfied. It gives the feeling of shaming to children. Barber et al. define psychological control as control of personal domain, manipulation and pressure, conditional regard, coercion and disrespect.

### **1.1.3 Other research**

Baumrind originally introduced responsiveness to the dimension of parenting behaviors. With more researches, responsiveness is expanded to a broader context. It is also about emotional dynamics of parent-child relationship. This includes parents' socialization, emotion coaching, and general emotional climate of the family. Children of authoritative parents receive appropriate response and coaching when they display their emotions. Authoritative parents validate, label and coach negative emotions. On the contrary, authoritarian parents or permissive parents react to children emotion display in negative ways, such as dismissing or minimizing emotion, being coercive about children's emotions.

## **2 THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL BEHAVIORS ON CHILDREN'S NEGATIVE EMOTIONS**

### **2.1 Responsiveness**

Responsiveness is associated with better adjustment outcomes in children and adolescents, such as greater regulation of negative emotions, better socio-emotional reactions and better adjustment in schools (Eisenberg, Valiente, & Eggum, 2010; Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007). Laukkanen et al. found that child low positivity is particularly linked to mother's low level of affection (Laukkanen et al., 2013). Parental Denham et al. found that parental expressive styles and parental emotional responsiveness to children's emotions are predictors of preschoolers' emotional competence and their general social competence (Denham et al., 1997). When parents show more affection/ responsiveness to children and involve in children's activities, they make children feel secure. Gray et al. found that parental involvement in 14- to 18-year-olds facilitate better development including helping teens excel academically, forming a healthy self-identity, and following roles appropriately. Meanwhile, parental involvement also plays a minor yet significant role on teens avoiding some pitfalls such as emotional problems, drug use and school poor performance (Gray et al., 1999). Mize and Pettit found that when parents emphasize the "good" in social interactions, provide support, guidance for children, children benefit in social relationships. Parents who have a responsive style and a better quality relationship with their children tend to lead better child social competence. Both parental responsive style and coaching are strongly associated with teacher ratings of children's social competence and teacher ratings of children's aggression. (Mize & Pettit, 1997).

On the contrary, less parental affection and parental inappropriate ways of responding to children's negative emotion could have detrimental effect on children. Ample evidence showed that negative reactions to children's emotions predict poor emotion regulation and maladjustment of children (Eisenberg et al., 1998). Children of authoritarian parenting styles feel being at risk when they are emotionally reactive or emotionally blunted (Morris et al.,

2007). Eisenberg got the same result again in 1999 that parents' reported reactions to children's negative emotions, such as punitive responses, have negative effect on children's regulation and expressing negative emotions (Eisenberg et al., 1999). What's more, the detrimental impact of inappropriate response to children's negative emotions remains across time. Engle et al. found that parental punitive reactions to toddlers negative emotionality is linked to children's subsequent internalizing behavioral problems when children are three years old and the relation is moderated by child gender and child negative emotionality. Parental punitive reactions to two-year-old children's negative emotion were related to greater children negative emotionality when children are three years old. This was only salient with boys who were with high levels of negative emotionality (Engle et al., 2010). Engle & McElwain (2011) found that Parents' punitive response to boy toddlers' negative emotion causes later internalizing behavioral problems only when boy toddler has a great negative emotionality.

Studies also indicate that parents' responses which over react on children's negative emotions, such as being overly emotional and magnifying negative emotion, will lead to children's emotion dysregulation and adjustment difficulties (e.g., Silk et al., 2011). Overreaction is also detrimental. Thus, supportive while constructive response to children's negative emotions are important (Gottman & Declaire, 1998; Gottman et al., 1997). For example, it is effective that parents teach children how to regulate and express emotions by giving suggestions and strategies. They provide children with concrete suggestions such as taking a deep breath or thinking about something else to cope with negative emotions. The balance of reaction to children's negative emotion is key factor in facilitate children's development.

It was as well indicated that a better parent-child relationship will enhance child self-disclosure which leads to more parents knowledge and deters adolescent problem behaviors (Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams- Wheeler, 2004). Family cohesion is also an important factor. Barber and Buehler found that family cohesion in terms of parental

supportive, nurturing ways benefit child functioning. Low level of cohesion was predictors of internalizing and externalizing problems. And it was consonant through adolescent years (Barber & Buehler, 1996).

## **2.2 Psychological control**

Psychological autonomy benefits children. Gagne found that autonomy support will satisfy people's psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which in turn leads to people's prosocial behaviors (Gagne, 2003). On the contrary, there is ample evidence which shows that psychological control is especially detrimental for children's development in emotions and behaviors (internalizing behaviors and externalizing behaviors). Psychological control is believed to have generally linear correlation with child psychological well-being. Barber indicated in his research that psychological control is measurable and it is a significant predictor of youth problem behaviors. Problems here include both depression and antisocial behaviors. Nanda et al. found parenting psychological control is positively related to childhood anxiety; children perceived control mediate the relation between parenting psychological control and childhood anxiety (Nanda et al., 2012). Aunola et al. found that certain day's parental psychological control increased children's negative emotion in the daily interaction and also the following day; children's negative emotion on a given day predicts decreased parental psychological control in the next day. Fathers have more important influence on children's negative emotions by psychological control and more adaptively adjust their control attempts in daily interaction according to children's negative emotions (Aunola et al., 2013). Aunola et al. also found that it was particularly mothers' and fathers' psychological control in daily interactions that increases the negative emotions of their children (Aunola et al., 2013). Nanda et al. indicated that there is significant relation between parental psychological control and children anxiety symptoms (Nanda et al., 2011). Stone et al. also got the similar result that child-reported psychological control was linked to children internalizing problems when controlling for behavioral control, responsiveness, and externalizing problems. Barber showed that psychological control is a significant predictor of youth problem behaviors (Barber, 1996). Soenens et al. found that the

association between parental psychological control and adolescent depressive symptoms (Soenens et al., 2008). Stone et al. found that psychological control was related to internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems among 4-8-year-olds (Stone et al., 2013). Nanda et al. also found that there is a striking relation between parental psychological control and child anxiety symptoms (Nanda et al., 2011). Gray et al. found consistent result on 14- to 18-year-olds that psychological control is deleterious to teens' emotional health, especially to internalizing condition and psycho-social development (Gray et al., 1999). Parental psychological control alone is associated with children anxiety symptoms regardless family economic status and children sleep quality (Sheikh et al., 2009).

Besides the direct effect of parental psychological control on children's negative emotions, Aunola et al. found that psychological control acts as mediator between parental depressive symptoms and children's daily distress (Aunola et al., 2013). And some research found that the effect of psychological control was contingent to child gender and child initial psychological state. Through several years' following the same group of children from their childhood until early adolescence and also their parents, Pettit et al. found that parental psychological control was related to girls' depression and children who were high in pre-adolescent anxiety/ depression (Pettit et al., 2001). In other researches, psychological control was tested as on factor as being detrimental to children together with other factors. Sheikh et al. found that three-way interaction of parental psychological control, family social economic status, and children sleep qualities were evident in predicting children's internalizing problems. Barber and Buehler found that family enmeshment in terms of parental psychological control was related to children internalizing problems (Barber & Buehler, 1996).

Besides the finding of detrimental aspect of psychological control to children, there is also some contradict finding. Barber found no relation between psychological control and internalizing problems. This might due to the difference of research method etc. (Barber, 1996).

### **2.3 Behavioral control**

Compared with psychological control, behavioral control is more complicated. It is believed there is a threshold which could predict best child outcomes and below or up it is considered to be detrimental. And there are different behavioral controls exercised by different types of parents. Confrontive behavioral control exercised by authoritative parents is associated with positive outcomes among adolescents. However coercive and harsh behavioral control exercised by authoritarian parents is associated with negative outcomes among children and adolescents. In Baumrind's research, she also indicates that lax control exercised by permissive parents is associated with adjustment difficulties among children and adolescents. Nathanson et al. found that children experiencing parental lax control more tend to have adjustment difficulties in kindergarten (Nathanson et al., 2009).

From a positive side, Gray et al. found that parental monitoring and supervision on 14- to 18-year-olds better prevent antisocial behaviors (Gray et al., 1999). Pettit et al. found that parental behavioral control in terms of monitoring was associated with fewer children delinquent behavioral problems (Pettit et al., 2001). Wood et al. found that observed parenting controlling of children was consistently linked to child shyness and anxiety disorder status across studies (Wood et al., 2003).

From a negative side, by pulling together the previous studies on the relations between child-rearing practices and child anxiety and depressions, Rapee concluded that rejection and control by parents was positively related to child later anxiety and depression. Meanwhile, there was limited evidence that rejection was more strongly associated with depression, whereas control was more specifically related with anxiety (Rapee, 1997).

### **2.4 Combination of different parental behaviors**

In recent years, the combination of different parenting dimensions-- affection, psychological

control and behavioral control are studied to see their joint effects on children. Aunola and Aunola & Nurmi found that high level of maternal psychological control together with maternal high affection predicts increased in the levels of both internal and external problem behaviors among children when transiting from kindergarten to primary school. High level of maternal behavioral control combined with low level of maternal psychological control predicts decreased children's external problem behavior (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005). In Baumrind's work, she believed that authoritative parenting is the optimal way for child raising. That means combination of parental affection and parental behavioral control is beneficial for child development. Authoritarian parenting with coercive behavioral control, psychological control and less affection is detrimental to child development. Williams' and colleagues' research were consonant with Baumrind's perspective. Williams et al. found that authoritative parenting contributes to fewer internalizing problems over time (Williams et al., 2009). Aunola et al. found that high affection combining with appropriate control predicts least child anxiety while high psychological control combining with low affection predicts the most anxiety from child. It is found by Laukkanen that negative emotionality is positively linked to mothers' use of behavioral and psychological control (Laukkanen, 2014). Williams et al. found that permissive parenting which is less in affection and control is related to internalizing problems in preschool and authoritarian parenting is related to externalizing problems in preschool (Williams et al., 2009). Nathanson et al. found that lax parenting style with less affection and control caused children's adjust difficulties. Harsh or other parenting styles have no relation with children's adjust difficulties (Nathanson et al., 2009). Tolvanen et al. found that children's negative emotions were positively associated with mothers' use of behavioral and psychological control.

From a broad cultural perspective, however, there is different opinions about the effect of different parenting and parental behaviors on children. Dornbusch et al. found in their research that authoritative parenting is not the best in all cultures and authoritarian parenting is not the detrimental in all cultures, either. Authoritarian parenting is not detrimental for African children and Asian children. In these countries, parental high control instead of

appropriate control, together with high affection shall predict best child outcome (Dornbusch et al., 1987). The possible reasons are as follows: control is viewed variably according to different cultures. Parental behavioral control has its own optimal extent in different culture. Different country situations also play key role in judging optimal parenting. For example, in African and Asian countries, due to some risky factors in the society, strict parental control could protect children from being in danger. Parenting strict guiding could prevent children from going astray. Thus, authoritarian parenting shall have better child outcome in these countries.

Except for the research on children, Gray et al. found the similar result on teens from 14 to 18 year old. Teens experience the healthiest psychological development when their parents grant high degree of psychological autonomy, remain proactively in teens' life, and also exercise certain limits. Meanwhile, high rating of psychological autonomy or involvement from parents could compensate on the low rating of the other in preventing teens' internalizing problems (Gray et al., 1999).

### 3 RESEARCH QUESTION

#### 3.1 Research question

The study aims to find if there is relation between parental behaviors, namely parental affection, behavioral control and psychological control, and children's negative emotion.

#### 3.2 Measured values

Daily parental behaviors, and child's emotions (positive emotion and negative emotion) were measured during 7 continuous days in the Fall semester (October or November) and also 7 continuous days in the following Spring semester (April). Parental behaviors are considered as relatively constant actions. Thus, in this study, parental behaviors (parental affection, psychological control, and behavioral control) are only measured once at the beginning of the study in the Autumn semester. Mean scores of maternal affection and paternal affection, maternal psychological control and paternal psychological control, maternal behavioral control and paternal behavioral control are calculated. Mean scores of mother reported children's negative emotion and father reported children's negative emotion are also computed relatively for the first time and second time.

In the Fall semester, children just went to primary school and began their first grade. During the seven successive days mother and father filled in the same questionnaires respectively each day. The questionnaire measures daily parental behaviors in terms of parents' daily interaction with children, and children's emotions. Parental behaviors are categorized into three types, namely affection, behavioral control, and psychological control. These three parental behaviors are measured in total with 14 items. *Affection* was measured with 4 items: **a.** I joked with my child; **f.** I gave reasons for matters to my child; **h.** I commended my child; **m.** I showed my child how much I care about him/her; *Psychological* control was measured with 5 items: **d.** I reminded my child how much I do and how much effort I make for her; **f.** I let my child understand that I am disappointed at him/her; **g.** I told things could have been done better; **j.** I showed my child how ashamed I am because of his/her behaviors; **k.** I tried

to make my child think or feel in another way; *behavioral control* was measured with 5 items: **c.** I reproached my child; **i.** I told him/her not to do something; **l.** I reminded my child about our family rules; **n.** I reminded my child of doing homework; **o.** I asked my child about his/her doings. *Children's emotion* was measured with 11 items, including 3 positive emotion items and 8 negative emotion items. The 8 negative emotion items are: today my child was 1. angry; 2. nervous; 3. guilty; 5. frustrated; 7. sad; 8. anxious; 10. embarrassed; 11. tired. For evaluation of both parental behaviors and children's negative emotion, parents rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1= not at all; 5= very much). Finally the mean score of father-rated children's negative emotion and mother-rated children's negative emotion, father-rated paternal behaviors (father affection, father psychological control, father behavioral control), mother-rated maternal behaviors (mother affection, mother psychological control, mother behavioral control) are calculated respectively for the study use.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Research design**

The study is part of VALO study (Aunola et al., 2007). VALO study concentrates interplay of children's emotional condition, parenting and teacher reactions. This study concentrates the relation between children's negative emotion and parental behaviors.

### **4.2 Participants**

In total 152 first graders, their parents and their teachers participated in the study. Their data were used for this study. The families were fairly representative of general Finnish population. 52% of the mothers, and 31% of the fathers had completed at least a senior high school education,; 47% of the mothers, and 66% of the fathers had completed at least a junior high school education (equally comprehensive school level); 1% of mothers, and 3% of fathers had not finished a junior high school education. Among all the families, 12% were blended families, 78% were nuclear families (67 families were married couples, 11 families were cohabiting couples), and 10% of families were single-parent families. The number of children in each family ranged from 1 to 10 ( $M= 2.39$ ,  $SD= 1.03$ ).

Each parent was paid 50 euro to guarantee they finished in time. Within 152 mothers (15 were single mothers) there were 150 (99%) who returned questionnaires in time. Within 137 fathers who involved in the study there were 115 (84%) who returned questionnaires in time. The main reason that parents did not respond to the questionnaires was that they were not at home on that day. The second time of collecting data which was in the next Spring semester used the same procedure.

### **4.3 Data collection**

VALO data was collected during three continuous years. Each year, sampling was started by contacting elementary schools ( $N=63$ ) of three medium-sized towns situated in different

parts of Finland. First, all the first-grade teachers in these school were requested to take part in the study. During the three years in total 334 teachers were contacted (113 teachers in the first year, 115 in the second year, 106 teachers in the third year). Among all the 334 contacts, 166 teachers gave their consent to participate in the study and signed the form. Second, one student is randomly chosen from each teacher's classroom by using drawn lots. The parents of this child were asked permission to participate. If the parents gave their consent this child is chosen officially for the study. If the parents did not give their permission, another child in the same class was chosen by using drawn lots. Their parents were then asked permission. The same method was used until a child was chosen in the teacher's class. During three years, a total of 114 parents gave their permission in the first round, 33 in the second round, 15 in the third round, and 4 in the fourth round. In total 166 children (N= 166), their teachers (N= 166) and their parents (N= 166) were chosen for the study. Among 166 children, 152 children were in normal classes (73 boys, 79 girls; Age M=7.5 years, SD= 3.61 months) and 14 children were in special classes. Finally the data of 152 children from normal class were used for the study.

#### **4.4 Data analysis**

The mean score of paternal affection and maternal affection, paternal psychological control and maternal psychological control, paternal behavioral control and maternal behavioral control, father-rated children's negative emotion and mother-rated children's negative emotion in time 1, father-rated children's negative emotion and mother-rated children's negative emotion in time 2 are calculated respectively. Then independent-samples t-test and partial correlate were used to check gender difference in negative emotion and the relation of children's negative emotion in time 2 and parental affection, psychological control, and behavioral control, when children's negative emotion in time 1 was controlled.

## **5 FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Child gender difference in negative emotion**

#### **5.1.1 Child gender difference in mother-reported negative emotion in time 1**

Mother-reported children's negative emotion in time 1 showed the result that boys and girls did not show differences in negative emotions in time1 ( $t = 0.424$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = 0.673$  ).

#### **5.1.2 Child gender difference in mother-reported negative emotion in time 1**

Father-reported children's negative emotion in time 1 showed the result that boys and girls did not show differences in negative emotions in time1 ( $t = - 1.101$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = 0.273$  ).

#### **5.1.3 Child gender difference in mother-reported negative emotion in time 2**

Mother-reported children's negative emotion in time 2 showed the result that boys and girls did not show differences in negative emotions in time 2 ( $t = 0.284$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = 0.777$  ).

#### **5.1.4 Child gender difference in mother-reported negative emotion in time 2**

Father-reported children's negative emotion in time 2 showed the result that boys and girls did not show differences in negative emotions in time2 ( $t = 0.225$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = 0.823$  ).

In all, independent-samples t-test showed that boys and girls did not show differences in negative emotions with mother-reported in time 1, father-reported in time 1, mother-reported in time-2, father-reported in time 2.

### **5.2 Relations between parental behaviors and children's negative emotions**

#### **5.2.1 parental affection and children's negative emotion**

When children's negative emotion in time 1 was controlled, parental affection in time 1 did

not show relation with children’s negative emotion in time 2; when children’s negative emotion in time 1 was not controlled, there is modest relation between parental affection in time 1 and children’s negative emotion in time 2. The significance level is 0.012.

**Table 1. Relation between children’s negative emotion and parental affection**

Control variable			Children’s negative emotion in time 2	Parental affection	Children’s negative in time 1
None	Children’s negative emotion in time 2	Correlation	1.000	-.213	.667
		Significance		.012	.000
	Parental psychological control	Correlation	-.213	1.000	-.227
		Significance	.012		.008
Children’s negative emotion in time 1	Children’s negative emotion in time 2	Correlation	1.000	-.085	
		Significance		.325	

### 5.2.2 Parental psychological control and children’s negative emotions

When children’s negative emotion in time 1 was controlled, parental psychological control in time 1 did not show relation with children’s negative emotion in time 2; when children’s negative emotion in time 1 was not controlled, there is modest relation between parental psychological control in time 1 and children’s negative emotion in time 2. The significance level is 0.007.

**Table 2. Relation between children’s negative emotion and parental psychological control**

Control		Children’s negative emotion	Parental psychological	Children’s negative

variable			in time 2	control	in time 1
None	Children's negative emotion in time 2	Correlation	1.000	.230	.667
		Significance		.007	.000
	Parental psychological control	Correlation	.230	1.000	.226
		Significance	.007		.008
Children's negative emotion in time 1	Children's negative emotion in time 2	Correlation	1.000	.109	
		Significance		.208	

### 5.2.3 parental behavioral control and children's negative emotion

When children's negative emotion in time 1 was controlled, parental behavioral control in time 1 did not show relation with children's negative emotion in time 2; when children's negative emotion in time 1 was not controlled, there was not relation between parental behavioral control in time 1 and children's negative emotion in time 2, either.

**Table 3. Relation between children's negative emotion and parental behavioral control**

Control variable			Children's negative emotion in time 2	Parental behavioral control	Children's negative in time 1
None	Children's negative emotion in time 2	Correlation	1.000	.122	.667
		Significance		.156	.000
	Parental behavioral control	Correlation	.122	1.000	.298
		Significance	.156		.000

Children's negative emotion in time 1	Children's negative emotion in time 2	Correlation	1.000	-109
		Significance		.208

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## 6 DISCUSSION

The study did not find gender difference in mother-reported and father-reported children's negative emotions in both time 1 and time 2. When children's negative emotion in time 1 was not controlled, the results of the study showed that parental affection was negatively related to children's negative emotions while parental psychological control was positively related to children's negative emotions. That means parental affection helps reduce children's negative emotion while parental psychological control enhances children's negative emotion. And there was no relation between parental behavioral control and children's negative emotions whether children's negative emotion in time 1 got controlled or not.

This study uses questionnaires to measure variables as many previous research which also studies parenting and parental behaviors. All the questions are designed in the Likert scale which relatively improves the accuracy of the result.

Another advantage of this study is that father's role is paid equivalent attention as mother's. For a long time in parenting studies, father's role has been missing. In recent studies, there is evidence showing that father's important impact on children. For example, there is study asserting that father involvement is related to girls' menarche/ pubertal time.

Limitations of the study: First, the sample of this study was small. There were 152 children and their parents and their teachers participated in the study. Among these 152 participants, there is still some missing data. For example, parents were not at not on a certain day during the study, so they did not finish the questionnaires. Small sample size and missing data affects the result of study. Second, the study was a cross-sectional study instead of a longitudinal study. Data of children's negative emotion was collected for twice, once in Autumn semester and another in the following Spring semester, respectively. Parental behaviors were measured only for once in the Autumn semester. This kind of cross-sectional research method has its limitations. Occasional factors and limited measuring times could have effect on the study result. Third, Parental behaviors are the reflection of parental

believes and parenting styles and parental behaviors are generally considered stable. But in a specific period of time or a specific time point, especially within very short period of time, such as in the Autumn week when parents self-measured their parental behaviors in the study, parental behaviors may vary from other time. Meanwhile, twice measuring of children's negative emotion also has occasionality. Fourth, there are ample evidence stating the significant relation between children's negative emotion and parental behaviors. However, there are also evidence showing that other factors could also lead to children's negative emotions. And these factors are found as the significant reasons for children's negative emotions in some research. Beardslee found that parents who are depressed tend to have negative effect on their children. Children of these parents tend to be depressed than their fellows (Beardslee, 2003). Sheikh et al. found the important role of biological factor on children's negative emotion (Sheikh et al., 2010). These evidence also put emphasis on factors other than parental behaviors on children's negative emotion. But it is always difficult to consider all the possible reasons in one study, such as parental factors, children effect, biological reasons, social reasons and so on. Fifth, in this study, children's negative emotion and parental behaviors all are measured by parents. This may lead to the subjective result, in turn affect the accuracy of the value. Some studies found there is difference between child-perceived parental behaviors and parent-perceived parental behaviors. Thus, proper combination of questionnaires for both parents and children, observation and interview will enhancing the accuracy of the study.

The study did not find relation between children's negative emotion and parental behavioral control. Besides the study limitations, it also might due to the following reasons: **behavioral control** was measured with the following 5 items: **1.** I reproached my child; **2.** I told him/her not to do something; **3.** I reminded my child about our family rules; **4.** I reminded my child of doing homework; **5.** I asked my child about his/her doings. Those five measurements are not very typical ones for assessing parental behavioral control. They do not necessarily happen everyday. During seven days of measuring week in October, the five items for

measuring parental behavioral control might never happen. Then these measuring items lost their meaning of existence in the study.

### **Future direction**

Parenting and parental behaviors studies are developing towards a multi-method and cross-discipline way in recent years. Researchers try to conduct the study comprehensively. They use as many as possible means to measure variables. They use questionnaires from both parents' and children's perspectives, interviews and observations to collect the data. Also they enlarge the area where they do research. By adopting both qualitative and quantitative methods, different factors such as parental factors, children factors, biological reasons, cultural and social reasons are well considered.

Parental studies are also carried out from different disciplines and more factors are considered at the same time and in one study. In recent decades there are a lot of research paying attention to the bidirectional process between parenting and children. Researchers claim that children's own characteristics may have effect on parenting. Lewis argued that children's authoritative parents need less control because these children initially have higher self-esteem, social competence and they are well behaved (Lewis, 1981). Meanwhile, researchers also found that siblings within same family environment elicit divergent behaviors and performs because they have different characteristics and they interpret same parenting differently. Rothbart & Bates claimed that even though parents played very important role on children's emotional socialization, children are biologically various in emotion regulation abilities (Rothbart & Bates, 2006). All the above assertion opens the way that children factor is also key to predict children behaviors together with parenting behaviors. Children's behaviors and performances are affected by complex factors, such as children's biological temperament, parental behaviors, family environments, social and cultural factors, school experiences and so forth. It is difficult to separate all the factors and only consider one. Usually, a comprehensive consideration is needed when we look at children issues.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Letter to parents

#### Dear parent / guardian!

You are participating in the '*Parents, teachers and the child's learning*' (*Vanhemmat, opettajat ja lapsen oppiminen*), VALO) study.

Please find attached a 'diary' to be filled in during the upcoming study week (week 41 **Sat 14 Oct-Sun 15 Oct** and week 42 **Mon 16 Oct-Fri 20 Oct 2006**). **Every day of the week from the upcoming Saturday to next Friday has its own sheaf of forms.** Thus, attached are in total 7 sheaves of forms. Please always fill in **ONE sheaf of forms every day from the Saturday of week 42 to the Friday of week 42.** Please note that the first diary is intended to be filled in already on Saturday!

The form is about the learning situations and activity of your child on the first grade during the day. Please try to fill in the forms approximately at the same time of day every day, preferably **before going to sleep**. If on some day you should forget to fill in a form, please fill it in as soon as possible on the next day. In this case please add a remark on the form including the date you filled in the form. Please always check after filling in the form that you have also filled in the information on the cover page (your name and **study date**).

Please return the forms on each day as soon as possible, at the latest on the Monday 23 Oct after the study week. Attached are return envelopes whose postage has been paid. You can put diaries from several days in the same return envelope.

The sheaf of forms might at a quick glance seem lengthy to you. It is however not the intention for you to spend very much time thinking about the answers. You can answer according to the feel you have on the day's events. There is no reason to consider in a very exact manner between the alternatives. Some of the questions ask you about whether a

specific thing has happened during the day. If it has not happened you do not need to answer the questions concerning it - in this case you can move on to the next page. It is also desirable that you try to answer the questions as honestly as possible.

The parents/guardians participating in the study get a compensation for their participation (**EUR 50**), paid in the spring after the study.

If you come up with any questions, comments or problems while filling in the forms, please contact me. I will be happy to answer all questions!

I value highly your contribution to the study!

Best autumnly regards

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**Appendix 2. Parent's diary**

**Name of parent:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of the child:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Study week:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Study date:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Mon, Tue, ...)

**TIME-SPENDING**

1. How much time have you spent in total with your child today (including the entire time spent together during the day (while awake)):

approx. \_\_\_\_\_ hours and \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

2. How much of the abovementioned time in minutes/hours did you spend:

a. helping the child with homework or teaching her/him about things related to school, approx. \_\_\_\_\_

b. playing with her/him, approx. \_\_\_\_\_

c. reading to or with her/him, approx. \_\_\_\_\_

d. otherwise \_\_\_\_\_, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did the child spend time today with a hobby outside home:

No

Yes, approx. \_\_\_\_\_ hours and \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

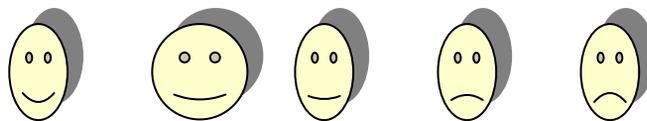
What was the hobby? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Did you speak with the child today on issues related to school and school attendance?
5. Did the child talk or tell you today about issues related to school, without you asking about them?
6. Did the child tell you today about anything or any incident any incident that was keeping her/him occupied, without you asking her/him about it?
7. Did the child tell you today about anything nice or any nice incident, , without you asking her/him about it?

**MOOD AND ACTIVITY DURING THE DAY**

**8. What did the child's mood seem like today?**

**8.1.** The faces are in order from very happy to very grim. Please mark the one best illustrating your child's mood today.



**8.2.** Please evaluate your child's mood today in the scale of 1 to 5:

<i>not</i>	<i>not</i>	<i>some-</i>	<i>quite</i>	<i>very</i>
<i>at all</i>	<i>much</i>	<i>what</i>	<i>much</i>	<i>much</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

**My child seemed today:**

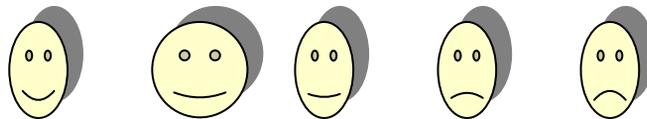
<b>1. angry/irritated</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
2. nervous/restless	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3. guilty</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

4. happy/excited	1	2	3	4	5
<b>5. frustrated</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
6. proud	1	2	3	4	5
<b>7. sad/dispirited</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
8. anxious	1	2	3	4	5
<b>9. thankful</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
10. embarrassed / ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
<b>11. tired</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
12. other,	1	2	3	4	5

please specify? \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Please evaluate your own mood today**

**9.1.** Mark the picture best illustrating your own mood today.



**9.2.** Please evaluate your own mood today in the scale of 1 to 5:

*not at all*    *not much*    *some-what*    *quite much*    *very much*

**1**    **2**    **3**    **4**    **5**

**I was today:**

<b>1. angry/irritated</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
2. nervous/restless	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3. guilty</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
4. happy/excited	1	2	3	4	5

<b>5. frustrated</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
6. proud	1	2	3	4	5
<b>7. sad/dispirited</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
5. anxious	1	2	3	4	5
<b>9. thankful</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
10. embarrassed / ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
<b>11. tired</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
12. other,	1	2	3	4	5
please specify? _____					

**10. Did anything special happen to your child, you or your family that you think would have had an impact on your mood?**

- No**
- Yes, please specify:** \_\_\_\_\_