

Abstract

Previous research shows that parents' disciplinary actions lie at the centre of child-rearing practice. According to Minton, Kagan and Levine (1971), by two years of age about two-thirds of the parent-child interactions involve attempts by parents to change children's behavior against their will. However, do parents simply discipline their children when problems arise? Or, parents can take a more active role in assisting their children to develop self-regulation and self-disciplined behaviours? Therefore, this study attempts to address the questions of what strategies parents adopt to improve children's social-emotional competence, and how parents' approaches may relate to children's temperament.

In order to provide a comprehensive view of parents' approaches to children's development of social-emotional competence, the study adopts a mixed method approach. Quantitative data show that all the six parenting approaches being investigated, i.e. the disciplinary approach, reciprocal approach, positive reinforcement, explicit teaching, modeling and giving in, are significantly correlated. Meanwhile, parents' emotional responses also play a central role in parents' approaches. Parents who felt neutral towards parent-child conflict tended to employ a more variety of different strategies than those who felt negative. Added to this, parents' rating of child temperament is found to be correlated with that by teachers at significant level. Further analysis of the results shows that parents' emotional responses moderate between parental approaches and children's social-emotional competence. Qualitative data also suggest that parents' preference for different approaches reflected their attitude towards parent-child relationship. Implications on the development of children's social-emotional competence have also been drawn.