

# The Impact of Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive Parenting Styles on Children's Later Mental Health in Japan: Focusing on Parent and Child Gender

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**Abstract** Few studies in Japan have examined whether children's later mental health is influenced by the way parental authority is exercised, specifically with a focus on gender. Our main purposes of this study were to confirm the three-factor structure of the Japanese version of the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and to verify its reliability and validity. We then used structural equation modeling to examine whether children's later mental health was influenced by parents' authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian parenting. The subcategories included in the Japanese version of the Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation-Outcome Measure were chosen as mental health indices. A total of 1,320 people in Japan, including company employees, university students, and hospital staff members, were asked to recall and evaluate the parenting they received and to report on their current mental health. Confirmatory factor analyses verified the three-factor structure of the Japanese version of the PAQ, with a reduction in the number of items from the original version. The respondents, regardless of gender, evaluated their mothers as having been more authoritative than their

fathers. Concerning the impact of parenting styles on respondents' later mental health, both maternal and paternal authoritarian parenting styles worsened respondents' later mental health, including symptomatic problems, risk to self and others, life functioning, and psychological well-being. Both maternal and paternal authoritative parenting had a beneficial impact on respondents' later mental health. Simultaneous analyses of multi-groups demonstrated that the nature of these influences did not vary with respondent gender. We present the above results in detail, and discuss them from psycho-socio-cultural viewpoints.

**Keywords** Japanese version of Parental Authority Questionnaire · Authoritative · Permissive · Authoritarian · Later mental health

## Introduction

Modern times have seen parents, school teachers, health professionals, and welfare workers introduced to the idea that children require adult guidance and protection and that they should be provided with optimal parenting based on their developmental stage. This reflects the widely accepted importance of the link between children's current and future welfare. As a result, a large number of empirical studies have been published in the realm of social psychology examining the influence of early parenting on later mental health (Gotlib et al. 1988; McKinney et al. 2011; Parker et al. 1979; Rodgers 1996).

In the very early phase of life, babies' relationships with their mothers are passive. The mother decides whether the baby receives care and has his or her frustrations alleviated. In this phase, the mother's care is the crucial factor, more important than any authority she may exercise. However,

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parenting authority becomes relevant once infants begin walking and actively exploring the world. From that point on, parental application of authority remains critical until late adolescence, when young adults become able to protect themselves from socially undesirable behaviors and dangerous situations.

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) was first developed by Buri (1991) based on the definition of the three parenting styles (authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative) proposed by Baumrind (1971). Authoritarian parents “attempt to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set of standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard, theologically motivated and formulated by a higher authority. They value obedience as a virtue and favor punitive, forceful measures to curb self-will at points where the child’s actions and beliefs conflict with what they think is right conduct” (Baumrind 1971). Permissive parents “attempt to behave in a non-punitive, acceptant, and affirmative manner towards the child’s impulses, desires, and actions. They make few demands for household responsibility and orderly behavior. They allow the child to regulate his own activities as much as possible, avoid the exercise of control, and do not encourage him to obey externally-defined standards” (Baumrind 1971). Authoritative parents “attempt to direct the child’s activities but in a rational, issue-oriented manner. They encourage verbal give and take, and share with the child the reasoning behind their policy” (Baumrind 1971). The parenting styles assessed by the PAQ should be regarded as reflecting the respondents’ internalized views of their parents. Long-term parent–child interaction results in the construction of these views by an individual’s psyche. The psychometric properties of the original version of the PAQ were confirmed by Buri (1991).

In Japan, there have been few studies which evaluated respondent’s perception of maternal and paternal parenting, specifically with regard to the way in which parental authority was put into practice, and how this evaluation differed by respondent gender. Parent gender seems to influence children’s evaluations of parenting styles. It can be presumed that mothers’ and fathers’ roles are socially dictated to some degree. It seems that in most societies, mothers spend more time with children than fathers (Ang 2006; McKinney and Renk 2008a; Phares et al. 2009). In addition, mothers are expected to spend more time caring for children and showing affection, while fathers are expected to be providers and disciplinarians (McKinney and Renk 2008a). Ang (2006) described the prototypical Asian father as “the detached disciplinarian.” This seems applicable to the traditional Japanese father, in terms of being less involved in child rearing, superior to any other family member, and the symbol of authority. Japanese

fathers have thus been more authoritarian than Japanese mothers.

Previous research has suggested that in addition to the parents’ gender, the child’s gender plays an important role in the evaluation of parenting. Some researchers have recently considered the gender aspects of parent–child dyads: father–son, father–daughter, mother–son, and mother–daughter. McKinney and Renk (2008a), in their literature review, noted that in general, sons are apt to evaluate their mothers as being overprotective, intrusive, and warm, and their fathers as distant and lacking in warmth. Daughters evaluate their mothers as being providers of a mutually supportive relationship and their fathers as figures of authority with whom they spend little time. Shek (2005), in reviewing the existing literature, also emphasized the importance of analyzing perceived parenting separately for male and female respondents. He calculated the effects of both parent and child gender as well as their interaction on perceived parenting styles. In the same way, in this study we took into account not only the influence of parent and child gender on perceived parenting, but also the interaction between the two.

In addition to parent and child gender, respondent age might also influence the evaluation of perceived parenting, specifically, it is questionable whether or not the traditional maternal and paternal roles mentioned above were still evident among contemporary Japanese families. Shek (2005) noted that from a cross-cultural viewpoint, it is important to take into consideration changes in parenting styles in non-Western countries, and touched on empirical studies showing that Japanese and Mexican parents were no longer taking on traditional maternal and paternal roles. It is probable that this change is partially due to the influence of modern Western ideas. As the ages of the subjects in this study ranged from 17 to 69, we anticipated that it would be interesting to gauge how parenting styles have changed in Japan over the past half century. It can be assumed that in the past, fathers were more likely to be strict disciplinarians. Thus older subjects might be more likely than younger subjects to view their fathers as more authoritarian and less permissive. Furthermore, the beneficial impact of communication between parent and child has come to be recognized only recently in Japan, and therefore younger subjects might be more likely to view their parents as authoritative.

Since the PAQ was developed, many studies have applied the three parenting styles defined in this inventory as predictive variables for a variety of concepts, including self-esteem (Buri et al. 1988; McKinney and Renk 2008a), depression (McKinney and Renk 2008a), anxiety (McKinney and Renk 2008a), academic achievement (Heaven 2008; Steinberg et al. 1992), and narcissism (Ramsey et al.

1996). In reviewing previous studies, we find that the “optimal parenting” that contributes to a child’s sound development seems to vary depending on culture. In general, Western cultures view authoritative parenting as beneficial to self-esteem (Buri et al. 1988) and academic achievement (Cohen and Rice 1997; Heaven 2008; Steinberg et al. 1992), and it is related to lower utilization of maladaptive achievement strategies such as “failure expectations,” “task-irrelevant behavior,” and “passivity” (Kaisa et al. 2000). Researchers have suggested that factors associated with authoritative parenting, for instance conscientiousness on the part of the child (Heaven 2008) and parental involvement in schooling (Steinberg et al. 1992), tend to result in good academic performance. McKinney and Renk (2008b) studied late adolescents in the United States of America and demonstrated that their emotional adjustment levels, represented by low depression and anxiety and by high self-esteem, were influenced by warm parenting. This style of care giving guarantees autonomy both directly as well as indirectly, through mediation by family environment, conflict, and parents’ expectations of their children.

On the other hand, authoritarian parenting is harmful to self-esteem (Buri et al. 1988) and academic achievement (Cohen and Rice 1997; Leung et al. 1998), and is related to an increase in the maladaptive strategies mentioned above (Kaisa et al. 2000). Results concerning the influence of permissive parenting styles on the above outcome measures are inconsistent: Cohen and Rice (1997) found that lower parental permissiveness was related to higher school grades, and higher parental permissiveness was related to increased tobacco and alcohol use in children. Ramsey et al. (1996) reported that parental permissiveness intensified children’s narcissistic tendencies, whereas Buri et al. (1988) demonstrated the lack of impact of parental permissiveness on children’s self-esteem.

In contrast, non-Western societies consider authoritarian parents to have a positive influence both on children’s academic performance and on the socialization process. Baumrind (1972) wrote that “the major conclusion from this exploratory analysis was that if the black families were viewed by white norms, they appeared authoritarian, but that, unlike their white counterparts, the most authoritarian of these families produced the most self-assertive and independent girls.”

Several studies have specifically used Asian subject populations. Leung et al. (1998) reported that authoritarian parenting had a positive effect on children’s academic achievement, whereas authoritative parenting did not. Elias and Yee (2009) demonstrated that authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles, be they paternal or maternal, were neither beneficial nor harmful to Malaysian children’s academic performance. Furthermore, surprisingly,

McBride-Chang and Chang (1998) reported that authoritative parenting hindered the development of adolescents’ autonomy. Ang (2006) demonstrated that for Malay adolescents, both authoritative and authoritarian maternal parenting styles were beneficial to social adjustment. The results of these studies are incompatible with those using Western subjects.

In contrast to the research referenced above, some studies using Asian subject populations produced similar results to those using Western subjects. Concerning school performance, Chen et al. (1997) showed a positive effect for authoritative parenting and a negative effect for authoritarian parenting. Shek (1999) showed that harsh and demanding parenting styles led to hopelessness, low self-esteem, and psychiatric morbidity in children. Both of these studies were conducted using Chinese subjects. In Japan, there have been no empirical studies which examined the way in which parental authority influences children. Most of the studies mentioned above used child or adolescent subjects, who presumably still resided with their parents. This study, on the other hand, was a retrospective study using adult respondents who for the most part did not live with their parents. The issue of whether or not different forms of parental authority have a long-term effect on children’s mental health is crucial for the optimal treatment of maladjusted adult patients.

In exploring the effects of perceived parenting on children’s mental health, the impact of children’s gender has also been taken into account. For instance, McKinney et al. (2011) reported that females’ emotional adjustment was significantly influenced by perceived parenting, whereas that of males was not. This could be interpreted as indicating that well-being is more influenced by interpersonal relationships for females than for males. As noted earlier, Baumrind (1972) showed that in African American families, authoritarian parenting is beneficial in raising more assertive girls, but this was not the case with boys. These results suggest the importance of assessing the impact of subjects’ gender on the influence of perceived parental authority on later mental health. Furthermore, it is also interesting to explore whether or not parents are inclined to use similar parenting styles, because there have been few studies which examined this topic.

To summarize, the adult respondents recruited for this study were asked to recall and retrospectively assess their mothers’ and fathers’ parenting styles, specifically the ways they exercised parental authority for the purposes of guidance and supervision, using the Japanese version of the PAQ (J-PAQ). They were also evaluated not only in terms of mental symptoms that included depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, and trauma, but also risk to self and others, life functioning, and psychological well-being. The aims of this study were as follows:

1. To confirm the three-factor structure of the J-PAQ by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and to examine its reliability and validity;
2. To examine the influence of respondents' and parents' gender, as well as the interaction between these in terms of the evaluation of parenting;
3. To identify which paternal and maternal parenting styles (as assessed by J-PAQ) had beneficial or negative effects on individuals' later mental health, and how these effects differed according to respondents' gender;
4. To examine whether or not mothers and fathers were likely to adopt similar parenting styles.

## Method

### Procedures and Respondents

In this study we administered a self-report questionnaire survey on two occasions, 4 weeks apart. Participation was voluntary and anonymity was assured. The respondents were medical staff from seven private hospitals in Kumamoto, Fukuoka; students from three universities in Kumamoto; and employees from eight companies in Kumamoto and Kagoshima. Questionnaires were distributed to 1,959 people and completed and returned by 1,320. Respondents' mean (SD) age was 35.0 (13.9), ranging from 17 to 69, and the numbers of female and male respondents were 881 and 433, respectively (the remainder did not indicate their gender). The research protocol was approved by the Ethical Committee of Kumamoto University (Institutional Review Board).

### Measurements

#### PAQ

The original version of the PAQ consisted of 30 items using a 5-point scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). The original English version of the PAQ was translated into Japanese by one of the authors (TK). This was translated back into English by an individual unfamiliar with the original document, and its accuracy was verified. As with the original version, respondents were instructed to “try to read and think about each statement as it applies to you and your mother (father) during your years of growing up at home.” The PAQ was included in the survey at both the first and second occasions in order to assess test–retest reliability.

#### CORE-OM

The CORE-OM was developed as a standardized brief outcome measure for use in both routine clinical practice

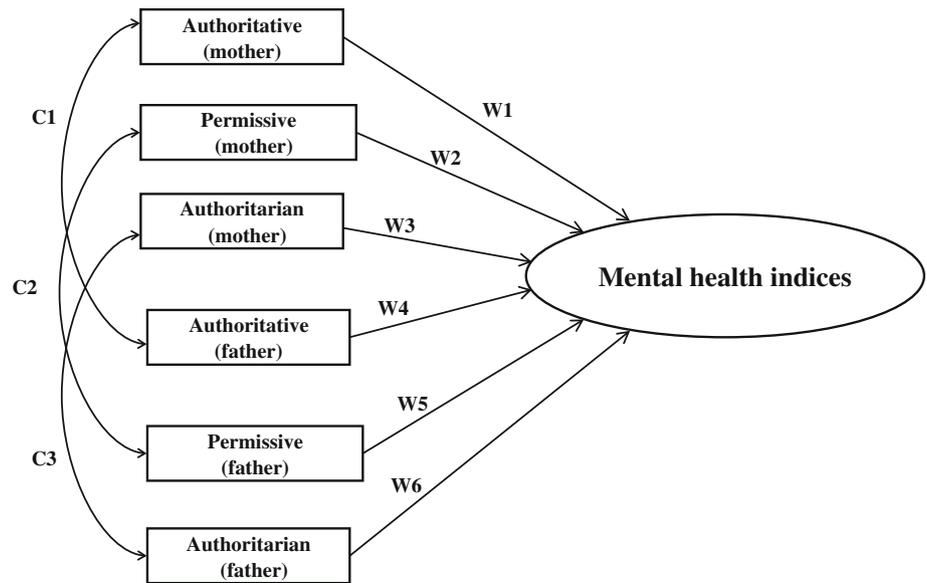
and psychotherapy research (Evans et al. 2002). The reliability and validity of the Japanese version of the CORE-OM have been previously demonstrated (Uji et al. 2012). The instrument is composed of four subcategories: symptomatic problems (four items each for depression and anxiety, and two items each for trauma and physical symptoms), risk to self and others (four items for risk to self, and two items for risk to others), life functioning (four items each for close, general, and social functioning), and psychological well-being (four items). In constructing the structural equation model, the items regarding life functioning and psychological well-being were included in the same category, because these two concepts are closely related. As with the original English version, the Japanese version of the CORE-OM includes 34 items using a 5-point scale, ranging from “disagree” (1) to “agree” (5). Higher scores indicate more severe problems. The CORE-OM was administered at the first occasion.

### Statistics

Based on the theory used in developing the original English version of the PAQ, we conducted a CFA to verify its three-factor structure. We also measured the invariance between respondents' gender and that of their parents, and verified the reliability and validity of the J-PAQ. To examine respondents' and parents' gender, as well as the interaction between these factors in the evaluation of parenting, three 2 (gender of parent)  $\times$  2 (gender of respondent) ANOVAs were conducted, one each for authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles. Parent gender was treated as the within-subject factor, and respondent gender was treated as the between-subject factor.

We then used structural equation modeling (SEM) to evaluate the hypothesis depicted in Fig. 1, with regard to the relationships between parenting styles and later mental health. The mental health indices, which were derived from the CORE-OM item scores, were treated as latent variables and are depicted as ellipses. The J-PAQ subscale scores (authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian for both mother and father) were treated as observed variables and are depicted as rectangles. To determine whether the identified influences of perceived parenting on respondents' later mental health varied between males and females, we conducted a simultaneous analysis of multi-groups. Absolute values of the critical ratio of more than 1.96 were defined as indicating a significant difference between the genders. In order to examine whether or not mothers and fathers were likely to adopt similar parenting styles, we premised covariances between each of the corresponding parenting styles of the mother and father (C1, C2, and C3 in Fig. 1). Significantly positive values of these covariances would indicate that parents tended to use

**Fig. 1** The hypothesis diagram



similar parenting styles, whereas significantly negative values would indicate the opposite.

The 1,248 respondents who completed every item on the maternal J-PAQ and the 1,225 respondents who completed every item on the paternal J-PAQ were used for the CFAs. Among these, the 1,154–1,169 respondents who completed every item in each of the CORE-OM subcategories were used for the SEM illustrated in Fig. 1. All statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 18.0 and Amos 18.0.

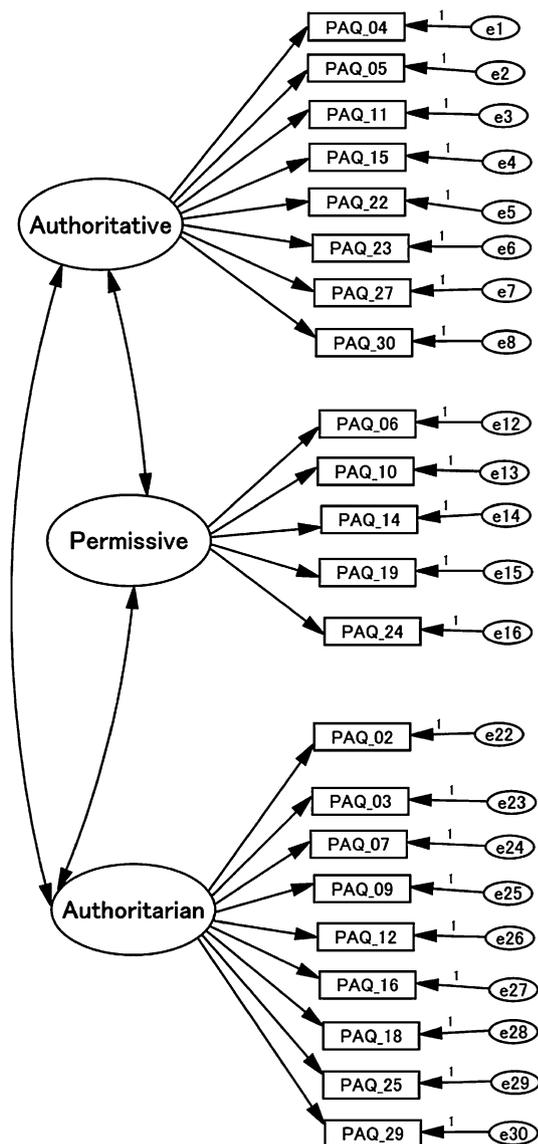
**Results**

We initially conducted the CFAs for the Japanese version of the 30-item PAQ separately for mothers and fathers. Similar results were obtained for the maternal and paternal PAQ, with unsatisfactory fitness (GFI: 0.827, AGFI: 0.800, and RMSEA: 0.075 for the maternal PAQ, and GFI: 0.822, AGFI: 0.794, and RMSEA: 0.075 for the paternal PAQ). For inclusion in the J-PAQ, we then chose items that had a factor loading of more than 0.45. This yielded 22 items: nine items for the authoritative parenting style, five items for the permissive style, and eight items for the authoritarian style. Using these 22 items, we performed the CFA again (Fig. 2), and the fitness of the data to the model was acceptable (GFI: 0.919, AGFI: 0.901, and RMSEA: 0.060 for both maternal and paternal J-PAQ). The measurement invariance of respondent gender was tested, resulting in satisfactory fitness (GFI: 0.896, AGFI: 0.879, and RMSEA: 0.045 for maternal J-PAQ, and GFI: 0.900, AGFI: 0.884, and RMSEA: 0.044 for paternal J-PAQ). In the same way, the measurement invariance of parent gender was also proven (GFI: 0.917, AGFI: 0.903, and RMSEA: 0.042).

We then verified the reliability and validity of the 22-item version of the J-PAQ (Tables 1 and 2). The item-total correlations are demonstrated in Table 1. The Cronbach’s alpha for each subscale was favorable, ranging from 0.73 to 0.86 (Table 2). The test–retest reliability ranged from 0.67 to 0.78 (Table 2). The permissive parenting subscale demonstrated relatively lower reliability as shown by Cronbach’s alpha and the test–retest reliability.

The influence of parents’ and respondents’ gender on the evaluation of parenting was examined using ANOVAs (Table 2). The significant main effects of the within-subject factor “parent gender” on all three parenting styles were identified. The between-subject factor “respondent gender” had a significant main effect on the evaluation only for authoritarian parenting. We did not identify any significant interaction effects between respondents’ and parents’ gender for any of the three parenting styles. Concerning the within-subject factor, mothers were more likely to be evaluated as having been more authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. This was most prominent for authoritative parenting ( $F = 228.46, p < .001$ ). As for the between-subject factor, male respondents were more likely than female respondents to evaluate their parents as having been authoritarian ( $F = 5.63, p < .05$ ). As to the impact of respondent age on the evaluation of parenting styles (Table 2), the older the respondents, the more likely they were to perceive their maternal and paternal parenting as more authoritarian and less permissive. Only mothers were perceived as less authoritative by older respondents.

SEM was performed to examine the hypothesis diagrammed in Fig. 1. In addition to the covariances C1, C2, and C3 in Fig. 1, we drew covariances between each possible pairing of the three parenting styles for both mothers and fathers, as identified by a CFA of the J-PAQ



**Fig. 2** CFA of the J-PAQ

(Fig. 2). The relationships between J-PAQ subcategories and CORE-OM symptomatic problems are shown in Fig. 3. The same analyses were conducted using the other CORE-OM subcategories listed in Table 3. This table shows the standardized causal coefficients from each parenting style to the various mental health indices.

Maternal authoritative parenting decreased risk to self and others. Paternal authoritative parenting, on the other hand, decreased symptomatic problems and improved life functioning. Both maternal and paternal authoritarian parenting increased symptomatic problems and risk to self and others, along with damaging life functioning and psychological well-being. Paternal permissiveness increased symptomatic problems. However, maternal permissiveness did not have an impact on any of the mental health indices. To examine the possible effect of respondent gender on

WI-6 in Fig. 1, simultaneous analyses of multi-groups were conducted for each subcategory of the CORE-OM. No significant differences between any of the six parameters were identified. Regarding the relationship between maternal and paternal parenting styles, as shown in Table 3, we found significantly positive correlations (C1-3 in Fig. 1) between maternal and paternal parenting styles when both were authoritative, permissive, or authoritarian.

## Discussion

A CFA of the J-PAQ confirmed its three-factor structure despite its reduced number of items. The measurement invariance was also verified. Cronbach's alpha and the test-retest reliability were lower for the second factor, permissiveness, due to its smaller number of items as compared to the other two factors.

Concerning the differences in parenting styles adopted by mothers and fathers, regardless of respondents' gender, mothers were perceived as more authoritative than fathers. This could be attributed to the fact that in Japan, as in many countries, mothers spend more time in child rearing than fathers, and have more time to dedicate to their children. Although mothers were evaluated as having been more permissive and authoritarian than fathers, this difference was less significant than that observed with authoritative parenting. In accordance with our hypothesis, our results suggest that the traditional authoritarian Japanese father is no longer evident in contemporary Japanese families.

With regard to the impact of age on the evaluation of parenting styles, the older a respondent's age, the more he or she perceived their maternal and paternal parenting as authoritarian and less permissive. Only mothers were perceived as less authoritative by older respondents. The differences in our findings between younger and older respondents might be the result of recently increased parental efforts to raise children to be more assertive. In the past, being less assertive and more passive was possibly considered to be a virtue in Japan, and children were expected to submit to their parents' authority. Our results are in accordance with the notion proposed by Shek (2005) that the traditional roles of parents are changing in non-Western countries. This might be due to the influence of Western culture in recent times.

An alternative interpretation for these changes is possible. In the past, many Japanese families lived in poverty due to rapid economic growth, with fathers working all day and frequently into the night. Shek (2008) suggested that economic pressures and psychological stress prevented parents from spending adequate time on their parenting responsibilities. It is not plausible that poverty under the rapid economic growth caused parents' psychological

**Table 1** The list of the J-PAQ

Mother PAQ subscale	Item number	Item-total correlation	Father PAQ subcategory	Item number	Item-total correlation
Authoritative (eight items)	4	0.68	Authoritative (eight items)	4	0.66
	5	0.74		5	0.74
	11	0.77		11	0.74
	15	0.58		15	0.64
	22	0.66		22	0.67
	23	0.79		23	0.79
	27	0.64		27	0.65
	30	0.70		30	0.68
Permissive (five items)	6	0.78	Permissive (five items)	6	0.70
	10	0.62		10	0.60
	14	0.70		14	0.69
	19	0.73		19	0.66
	24	0.40		24	0.32
Authoritarian (nine items)	2	0.73	Authoritarian (nine items)	2	0.71
	3	0.67		3	0.73
	7	0.76		7	0.76
	9	0.62		9	0.57
	12	0.60		12	0.69
	16	0.74		16	0.70
	18	0.76		18	0.71
	25	0.64		25	0.59
	29	0.69		29	0.69

**Table 2** The reliability of the J-PAQ and *t* test for comparison between mothers’ and fathers’ parenting styles

	Cronbach’s alpha	Test–retest reliability	Correlation with age	Mean score (SD) (male)	Mean score (SD) (female)	Parent’s gender effect (F value)	Child’s gender effect (F value)	Interaction effect (F value)
Authoritative (mother)	0.85	0.74	−0.17**	25.9 (4.75)	26.2 (5.40)	228.46***	0.004	3.46
Authoritative (father)	0.85	0.76	−0.03	23.7 (5.08)	23.4 (5.56)			
Permissive (mother)	0.79	0.68	−0.09**	16.8 (3.13)	16.6 (3.57)	6.64*	0.54	0.10
Permissive (father)	0.73	0.67	−0.10**	16.5 (3.21)	16.4 (3.46)			
Authoritarian (mother)	0.86	0.76	0.07*	22.2 (5.67)	21.6 (6.31)	5.05*	5.63*	1.00
Authoritarian (father)	0.86	0.78	0.12**	22.0 (5.85)	21.0 (6.33)			

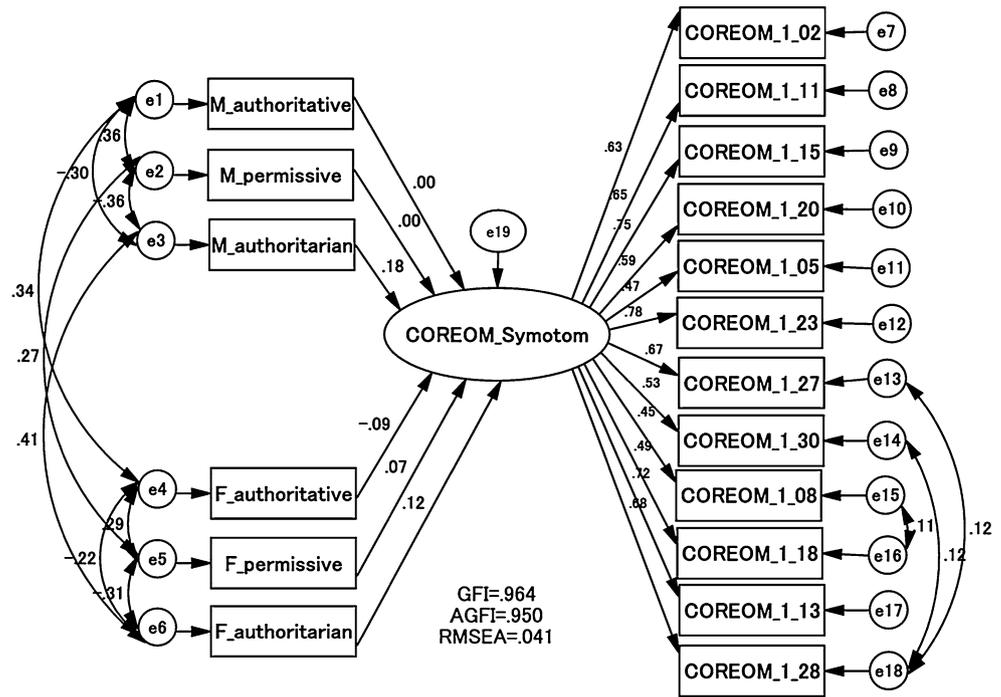
\**p* < .05; \*\* *p* < .01; \*\*\* *p* < .001

stress and damaged their psychological well-being, however, fathers in particular, did not have enough time or did not recognize the necessity in spending quality time listening to their children. Rather, they may have expected their children to submit to their authority and placed an emphasis on becoming financially secure.

In examining the impact of authoritative parenting on children’s later mental health, we found that regardless of

respondents’ gender, authoritative maternal and paternal parenting was beneficial to children’s later mental health. There are two aspects of authoritative parenting: first, respecting the child’s autonomy through mutual communication, and second, exercising parental authority over the child when necessary. Japanese mothers were more likely to be evaluated as authoritative compared to Japanese fathers, regardless of respondents’ gender. These results

**Fig. 3** SEM for the relationships between parenting styles and symptomatic problems



**Table 3** A list of the standardized causal coefficient and correlations in Fig. 1

Mental health index (CORE-OM subcategory)	Standardized causal coefficients in Fig. 1						Correlations in Fig. 1			The fitness indices		
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	C1	C2	C3	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA
Symptomatic problems	0.00	0.00	0.18***	-0.09**	0.07*	0.12***	0.34	0.27	0.41	0.961	0.947	0.044
Risk to self and others	-0.09*	0.00	0.18***	0.00	0.00	0.14***	0.34	0.26	0.41	0.969	0.949	0.055
Life functioning and psychological well being	0.00	0.00	0.18***	-0.11***	0.00	0.11**	0.35	0.26	0.42	0.892	0.860	0.074

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

suggest that it is necessary for Japanese fathers to be more authoritative to maximize their children’s future well-being.

In contrast to authoritative parenting, we found that authoritarian parenting had a variety of negative effects on children’s later mental health. These results were at odds with those of the previous studies, all conducted in non-Western countries, that we referred to in the “Introduction” section, a fact that might be attributed to recent social changes in Japan. In the past, the Japanese workforce contained fewer women than men. Workers were ensured lifetime employment under a rigid seniority system. It was customary for workers to devote themselves to their companies and for women to assist their husbands. The traditional Japanese virtues of passivity and modesty, which effectively maintain group harmony, proved advantageous in both the workplace and home environments. Influenced by modern Western ideas, however, Japanese companies

have stopped assuring lifetime employment, and in turn workers no longer demonstrate such intense loyalty to their companies and are open to new possibilities and other career paths. Passivity and modesty no longer benefit individuals in this social environment. Instead, assertiveness and self-confidence are necessary in order to maintain positive mental health attributes such as life functioning, psychological well-being, and self-esteem. Authoritative parenting, which requires healthy communication, is necessary for children to acquire these positive personality characteristics. We should note that none of the respondents recruited for this study were full-time homemakers, and all were employed. Different results may have been obtained if full-time homemakers had been included in the study population. Of the three maternal and paternal parenting styles, only paternal permissive parenting led to an increase in respondents’ symptomatic problems. Maternal permissiveness did not have any influence on respondents’ mental

health. Thus Japanese fathers must make a commitment to parenting and avoid leaving the mother in order for their children to live mentally healthy lives later in adulthood.

Without exception, we identified high positive correlations between the same subtypes of parenting styles for mothers and fathers. This can be interpreted in two ways. First, the assessments one makes of others tend to be similar. This can be due to psychological projection, the mechanism whereby one's perception of others is defined by attributing to others various elements of one's internal psychic world, such as unconscious desires, suppressed feelings, and undesirable impulses. Another interpretation is that a child's mother and father adopt similar parenting styles as a result of originally sharing similar ideas regarding child rearing or gradually coming to a consensus over time.

### Limitations

The limitations of this study were as follows. First, the PAQ was originally used with adolescent respondents. There have been no studies that have retrospectively administered this scale to adult respondents. Although a three-factor structure was identified for the J-PAQ as with the original version, it has not yet been determined whether the J-PAQ is applicable to Japanese adolescent respondents. Furthermore, this study did not examine discriminant, content, and convergent validities.

Second, the PAQ is a self-report questionnaire, and therefore may not accurately reflect respondents' actual parenting. In the majority of cases, questionnaire results are influenced by each respondent's personality and mental state. If we had evaluated the perspectives of individuals other than the respondents, such as their siblings, it may have been possible to assess the accuracy of respondents' evaluations of their parents. However, the subjects of this study were drawn from the general population and not a clinical one, suggesting the probability of only minimal cognitive distortion. In fact, although there may be a gap between perceived parenting and objectively observed parenting, from a clinical viewpoint the former is likely to be more important than the latter for understanding how the client's perceived parenting led to his or her current state of mental health, through conflictive interpersonal relationships caused by the projection of maternal and paternal images onto significant others.

The third limitation is that since this study used only a self-report questionnaire study, it might be affected by common methods variance that can confound the results. Fourth, because the J-PAQ and CORE-OM were evaluated at the same occasion, their causal relationships as identified in this study remain undetermined. Finally, the subjects of this study included only university students and company

staff members, and it has not yet been determined whether the results can be generalized to other populations.

### Application to Clinical Settings

In this study, we were able to identify both the beneficial impact of authoritative parenting and the negative impact of authoritarian parenting on children's later mental health. As suggested by the findings of McKinney and Renk (2008b), it is probable that there are several variables that mediate perceived parenting and later mental health. Although we did not examine these variables, which may include respondents' past conflicts with their parents as well as their parents' past expectations of them, this study should contribute positively to the clinical literature because it demonstrates how various forms of parenting authority leave their marks on many areas of children's mental health over a long span of time. When we see adult patients with dysphoric mood, low levels of functioning and psychological well-being, and high risk to self and others, an examination of their past relationships with their parents is essential. If they evaluate their parents as having been authoritarian, it is of the utmost importance that the clinician not exercise his or her authority in the same way as the client's parents did. We must keep in mind the importance of eliciting patients' feelings through the use of authoritative communication while guaranteeing their autonomy, which together can lead the patient to form a new object relationship.

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