

Reviewing the Literature Review for and Against Applied Behavior Analysis and Authoritative Parenting of Autistic Children

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Abstract: This research study delves thoroughly into the relationship between Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Authoritarian Parenting Style in the setting of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) children. Through comprehensive analysis of relevant literature research, ABA intervention is the practice of applying basic behavioral concepts that have been shown to be effective in changing problematic behaviors and improving adaptive and communicative skills among ASD children. ABA intervention aligns with the key principles of Authoritative Parenting, high expectations, and responsiveness. However, the literature review also reveals the growing discussion that ABA may bring. Scholars with opposing perspectives argue that ABA interventions may potentially undermine the intrinsic motivation of children with ASD symptoms and exacerbate stress; for instance, it may lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Moreover, the universality of the Authoritative Parenting style is questioned due to some evidence showing that its effectiveness and acceptability vary among different cultural and racial groups. The synthesis underscores the necessity for tailoring intervention measures based on the unique needs of ASD children. In the end, we call for a shift in intervention methods for autism towards more personalized and compassionate approaches that respect the diversity of ASD children. This literature review suggests that future intervention methods should focus more on personalization, taking into account the unique needs and backgrounds of children with ASD, such as through customized behavioral intervention plans and family engagement strategies.

Keywords: Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), authoritative parenting, parenting styles, family education, education of ASD

1. Introduction

The ancient Chinese philosopher and educator Mencius once said, "Without rules, no squares or circles can be formed." Mencius's viewpoint enlightens us that just as geometric shapes require rules to define, the education of children with ASD also requires clear structures and rules to guide their behavior and development. Children need to obey the rules their teachers and parents established to

become well-behaved. Nevertheless, autistic children are particularly unique individuals in that they are not able to follow the regulations.

Some scholars have argued that Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) is one of the top-notch tools capable of adapting to adjust to the distinctive requirements of ASD children [1]. This intervention inspires parents to understand and modify their children's challenging behaviors to enhance their functionality. ABA is endowed with positive reinforcement, clear expectations, and well-defined rules, and the method of Authoritative Parenting shares these attributes.

However, not all specialists support the theory of ABA; some of them may consider that ABA is out of date because the method of ABA sometimes might lead to PTSD symptoms in children [2]. There is currently no accurate data to prove long-term effectiveness in ASD patients [3].

Furthermore, This paper aims to address the research gap by investigating the effects of ABA and Authoritative Parenting interventions on the outcomes of ASD children. The following are several main questions. Why is ABA considered an effective method for autistic children? How does the Authoritative Parenting style fit with the needs of autistic children, and how is it considered to be suitable or not? How will this article explore the debate about ABA and Authoritative Parenting? Why are these insights crucial for the education of children with autism?

This literature review comprehensively examines the merits and demerits of ABA and Authoritative Parenting in the context of autistic children. It underscores the pivotal role of differentiated parenting methodologies and targeted intervention strategies, such as ABA, in aiding the developmental course and mental fitness of children within the autism spectrum.

2. Methodology

This literature review mainly argues the strengths and shortcomings of both ABA and Authoritative Parenting affect autism spectrum disorder children. Notably, this paper highlights viewpoints found within the diverse literature and the research methods of each literature review that are searched in *Jstore*, *Semantic Scholar*, *Google Scholar*, and *Taylor & Francis*, synthesizing and assessing the data presented. This literature review adopts a systematic search strategy, using keywords such as ‘Autism Spectrum Disorder, Authoritative Parenting, Parenting styles, Applied Behavioral Analysis, Family education, Education of ASD’, and sets clear inclusion and exclusion criteria based on the quality and relevance of the research. We excluded articles whose publication date was more than two decades before 2024, and the authors who lacked professional academic background in relevant fields. The article also encompasses experiments concerning ASD children’s behavior as evidence to clarify these perspectives.

3. Characterization

3.1. The Features of Autistic Children

From a medical perspective, ASD is a widely inherited, and heterogeneous neurodevelopmental disorder that has potential cognitive property and usually comes out with other diseases [4]. ASD children may exhibit impairments in social interaction, such as avoiding eye contact and having difficulties understanding facial expressions and body language. Children with ASD often exhibit social interaction disorders and repetitive behaviors, necessitating educational intervention policies that provide structured environments and clear social cues.

On the other hand, from the perspective of neurodiversity, ASD represents a brain difference in which parents can pass these alleles to their offspring. Based on the research, approximately ten percent of siblings of a child with ASD have profound autism [5]. These children require parents to concentrate more on their behaviors; parents need to cooperate with physicians to help their children

behave better than before; for instance, since many children with ASD exhibit repetitive behaviors, it is essential to identify the most effective parenting styles for them.

3.2. Authoritative Parenting" Encapsulate

The household educational segments include four main parenting styles: Authoritative Parenting, Permissive Parenting, Authoritarian Parenting, and Uninvolved Parenting [6]. The Authoritative Parenting style is one of the main parenting styles in the world. Furthermore, it is also one of the most effective methods in supporting children's development [7]. It is the combination of high responsiveness and high control that parents using this style strive to nurture their offspring to become individuals who can explain their opinions and have their perspectives. This style is characterized by cooperation and assertiveness.

Moreover, Aunola and Nurmi indicated that permissive parenting is typified by low behavioral control [6]. Permissive parents may exhibit high levels of emotional support and affection towards their children, but this will cause lacking the necessary discipline and rules. This parenting style may lead to a lack of self-discipline and responsibility, inadequate behavioral norms, poor academic performance, and weak self-control abilities. Authoritarian parents may bring more behavioral disorders to their children, as these parents overly emphasize discipline and obedience, but this can result in lacking emotional support and warmth for their children [6]. Neglectful parents typically exhibit low levels of care and behavioral control. They lack sufficient attention to children's emotional needs and behavioral norms. Moreover, they lack participation and guidance in the growth process of their children. This may lead to emotional problems, academic difficulties, social issues, and mental health problems. However, Authoritative parents provide emotional support and affection with clear rules and expectations. They guide children through reasonable discipline and open communication, encouraging autonomy and self-discipline. This parenting style is often associated with good children's adaptability, cultivation of self-discipline, social skills, and mental health development.

3.3. The Sketch of ABA

ABA is the technique that examines the impact of an individual's surroundings on their behavior and suggests intervention strategies based on this analysis to modify conduct [8]. Theoretically, it is based on operant conditioning, which is designed to evaluate and change challenging behaviors to promote and popularize more adaptive behavior, for instance, using systematic reinforcement including both positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement. The steps of ABA implementation include the breakdown of the target behavior, reinforcement, repeated practice, and the use of prompts. These steps help ensure that the individual can gradually master new skills and do it independently without prompting. ABA also includes behavioral measurements and data analysis to assess the influence of people undergoing the intervention.

3.4. The Relationship between Authoritative Parenting Style and ABA

Both the Authoritative Parenting Style and ABA have the following three features.

First of all, both Authoritative Parenting and ABA have clear expectations and rules. ABA is the process of applying basic behavioral principles such as reward and punishment to specific behaviors and evaluating whether changes are caused by the applied process [9]. Parents who practice Authoritative Parenting plan clear expectations and rules for their children. ABA uses reinforcement to support these expectations by awarding children who have met the standard that was set before. This rule can help children understand the expectations for them.

Secondly, both of them use the method of positive reinforcement. ABA is partitioned into three components: applied, behavior, and analysis [9]. Authoritative Parents often use positive reinforcement, part of ABA theory, to encourage their children to have wanted behavior and remove unwanted behavior. Unwanted behaviors are behaviors like throwing tantrums, hurting themselves, or harming others. ABA applies this principle by providing rewards when children exhibit the expected behavior. As a result, admirable manners are more likely to be learned by those children in the future.

Hence, it is imperative to comprehend the real significance behind "wanted behavior" and "admirable manners". It's also one of the research gaps in this article because different teachers and parents might have diverse perspectives on what is "really good" for their children. Do they want children to be obedient? Or do they want their children to possess independent judgment?

Proceeding to the third item, ABA holds the capacity to help curb the rebellious behaviors of ASD children. ABA theory has been proven to be able to transfer children's temper to other objects in the environment [1]. It has been shown that ABA practice can reduce autistic children's challenging behavior, like temper tantrums or hurting other people. This can help to avoid them from several dangers. Additionally, ABA is not only a tool that can help autistic children face challenges but also educates parents on how to support the growth of their children effectively.

4. Analysis

4.1. Benefits and Drawbacks of Authoritative Parenting

The primary benefit of Authoritative Parenting is that it reduces children's doubts about their abilities [10]. Another research paper also claims that ASD children can benefit from the Authoritative Parenting style, which can promote their social and emotional development [11].

Additionally, authoritative parents can provide a supportive family environment. Authoritative parents set expectations while also being responsive, guiding their children with warmth, positivity, and a nurturing communication style [10]. They can provide a supportive home environment by making children more confident by warming them up. In this kind of atmosphere, children can not only take on challenging tasks but also worry less about their failure. They Stimulate their independence and provide clarifications for their orders, enhancing autonomy skills and taking the child's views into account of their children [11]. Supportive parents can inspire them so children are not scared to show their emotions.

As a supplementary note, authoritative parents make personalized plans according to their children [10]. "a gentleman loves his children without imposing his will and guides them with principles without forcing them." This sentence comes from Xuncius, who was a renowned ancient Chinese philosopher and literary figure. It was similar to the purpose of Authoritative Parenting. It's preferable to honor their children's notions because listening to the advice of everyone in the family can keep the family harmonious.

What's more, these parents can enhance resilience and self-efficacy due to the style of Authoritative Parenting, which has a crucial and upbeat correlation with students' resilience ($P = 0.0001$) and self-efficacy ($P = 0.0005$). The data were analyzed by SPSS-16 using descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient and t-test) [11]. These skills can help children deal with problems effectively; moreover, they can build cordial relationships with their peers. Children learn to consider the viewpoints of the opposing party.

Although there are many edges to Authoritative Parenting, nonetheless, these edges are more focused on all the children not only on autistic children. Despite autistic children being included in the category of "children" as well, it seems like there is a gap among them. There are still many claims

which against the belief that Authoritative parenting is the "best parenting style" for children's development.

Authoritative Parenting may inhibit children's independence. Those children nurtured by dominant parents often have superior performance on tests of initiative, self-reliance, and confidence in themselves [12]. Although the Authoritative Parenting style may cultivate independence and confidence in children, parents with this style may overemphasize their children to obey the rules. It follows that they may lose the ability to independent thinking and action skills.

They may lead to communication barriers with their children. In the beginning, Authoritative Parenting parents usually have a positive reaction when their children communicate with them [12]. Some of the Authoritative Parenting parents only react positively when children obey them. Moreover, Victoria also said that this parenting style had high requirements for parents' communication skills [13]. An authoritative parenting style requires both high demands and high responsiveness from parents, so parents need to have stellar communication and guidance skills.

It may also lead to possible adaptability issues. Authoritative parenting style may change because of the difference between time and culture [12]. Authoritative parenting style has distinct effects under different cultural and historical backgrounds. Additionally, Victoria indicates that the authoritative parenting style is probably not suitable for all kinds of cultural environments [13]. Different cultural backgrounds have different expectations and acceptance methods for their children, which may influence the effectiveness of the authoritative parenting style. Furthermore, Akurathi mentioned that children in areas that still obey traditional cultural values, such as some rural areas [14].

It is significant to point out that the Authoritative Parenting Style is not universally valid. There are obvious differences among White mothers, Black mothers, Hispanic mothers, and Asian mothers [15]. These mothers are more inclined to be Authoritarian, Permissive, or Uninvolved Parenting. Authoritarian Parenting may be more productive for the development of Black children than White children, even when accounting for additional factors such as socioeconomic status. The Authoritarian Parenting style has been associated with the academic achievement of offspring in China and Japan. This style has been strongly associated with filial piety among Chinese and Korean children as well, which is a desirable child attribute within these cultures.

According to the above, Authoritative Parenting and ABA have numerous similar methods. So, there is a strong correlation between Authoritative Parenting and ABA. ABA has been used for more than half a century when it was first used in the early training of autistic children. So, some scholars assume ABA is an appropriate way to teach children because it's been used for many years. Others regard ABA as out-of-date. The following will discuss the merits and demerits of ABA.

4.2. Merits and Demerits of ABA

ABA has evidence-based validity. The use of the ABA principle is effective and considered an evidence-based strategy that is recommended for most people to use [16]. ABA has been known as a trustworthy strategy and scientifically validated due to its effectiveness in reducing unwanted behaviors and its ability to help children with autism improve their language and communication skills.

Additionally, it has been searched and applied for more than ten years which provided a historical basic for the later use of ABA. Hunter has also mentioned that ABA is one of the longest-established autistic treatments which means it has long-term usage records and accumulated experience [17]. It follows that ABA is widely accepted in the field of treating ASD.

ABA is the integration of Daily Activities and Intervention. This intervention can be completed during daily activities, such as eating, taking a shower, and so forth [1]. At an early stage, this intervention will help improve their developmental trajectories so that they are more similar to normal

children. ABA intervention can integrate into children's daily lives, and it helps improve their adaptability and study skills.

Moreover, ABA is parental Direct Involvement. Some scholars have elaborated that parents also participate in ABA intervention. Parents who use ABA therapy for their children can evaluate and set appropriate and effective goals for their children's educational planning [1]. ABA theory is known as an intervention method, and it mainly emphasizes that parents directly participate in ABA interventional measures in children's daily lives. Rodger explained that the success of ABA intervention often depends on the cooperation of parents and professionals, which can ensure effective implementation and continuous improvement of intervention measures.

Likewise, ABA is capable of promoting learning and communication. ABA can increase the communication, learning, and appropriate social behavior of autistic children [18]. These appropriate behaviors are just like defecating in the bathroom, speaking politely to his parents, and so on. Wilkenfeld indicated that ABA may be able to assist with improving autistic children's learning and communication skills. In Rodger's paper, he said that ABA could help improve social skills because ABA intervention has shown significant effects in improving the nonverbal intelligence of children with autism, and this may relate to enhancing social and communication skills.

Meanwhile, ABA assisted language development. Both Ledbetter and Rodger have believed that ABA can promote the development of language. ABA theory can establish language skills and form fundamental skills while bypassing the difficulties of psychological theory [19]. ABA can help autistic children establish language skills by using alternative pathways, especially when they have difficulty understanding the psychological states of other people. Rodger found that ABA intervention has a positive influence on improving the language comprehension ability of autistic children, which can help with their daily communication and social interaction [20].

One experiment that aimed to evaluate ABA compared its effectiveness to two other types of therapy. One of these was type-TEACCH, and the other was eclectic. The intervention programs were for Greek children with ASD symptoms from 2.5 years old to 6.5 years old [21]. The sample consists of 30 volunteers. The ABA programs involved 10 children, type-TEACCH programs involved 12, and the rest of them were from eclectic programs. ABA intervention lessons lasted about 4 to 5 hours per day for 5 days a week. During a lesson, children would complete a series of tasks according to ABA teaching principles and each task would last for about 5 to 10 minutes, then they would have a 5-minute short break. When children reach an accuracy rate of 80% under various stimuli and conditions, the intervention is considered successful. Initially, the intervention lessons were provided in a one-to-one format. Gradually, teachers would use group lessons to encourage autistic children's social interaction and communication skills.

They have also used some intervention programs which corresponded to type-TEACCH and eclectic. type-TEACCH has been implemented in two psychological education centers, and all the students would be treated in the morning, which lasted 4.5 to 5 hours every day for 5 days each week [21]. This program was separated into 7 'circles of functioning,' and children would be arranged based on their functioning level. Autistic children were treated in the format of one-to-one courses, group work, and individual work. The type-TEACCH program provided various study chances for autistic children, and it incorporated multiple intervention measures, like PECS, sign language, and sensory integration therapy.

And another program is called the Eclectic program which was conducted at a center specifically designed for children with ASD [21]. Each student had a course for 3 to 4 hours in the morning and it was for 5 days each week. They provided treatment and educational intervention, including the Snoezelen sensory integration, sensory relaxation, and so on.

Finally, they found that when the methods were different, the ABA intervention programs seemed to be the most effective for the children, especially in improving intellectual function. Makrygianni

got the result by using ANOVAs in intellectual function and they found that there is a marginally significant as well as moderate-sized difference in the effect of ABA on improving intellectual function compared to other groups.

Although ABA is still used as a primary intervention by many organizations, many scholars believe that it does more harm than benefit children. ABA might lead to PTSD symptoms. One scholar created an online survey of 26 questions, which included questions about both autism-specific and intervention-related questions [2]. The questions were modeled based on the PCL-5 Psychopathy Checklist Self-Report Scale, which assesses 20 PTSD symptoms in the DSM-5 and modifies the questions to assess whether the intervention itself a stressor in the context is. Basic information, as well as the duration of the autism intervention, were also collected, and the correlation between the severity of the children's traumatic stress symptoms and the duration of the intervention exposure was tested. Besides, the severity of PTSS was found to be higher in children exposed to ABA intervention.

This suggests that in some cases, the ABA intervention may harm autistic individuals suffering from PTSS or even PTSD. The study noted that ABA intervention recipients were more likely to have PTSS and that the symptom severity was correlated with the length of the intervention period. The generally limited contentment with ABA among adult autistic individuals may reflect their upsetting occurrence during the intervention, which could be associated with the perception of trauma. Polarization of adult patients' evaluation of ABA may indicate an extreme emotional response, which could be correlated to the development of PTSD symptoms.

In the meantime, ABA may go against ethical standards. Sandoval-Norton's paper mentioned that ABA only uses behaviorist principles, and they use interventions that are completely ignoring newer, further researched, or more holistic to those autistic children [22]. This behavior is irresponsible and harmful to children with ASD. Thus, this conflicts with the professional ethics of psychology. Furthermore, Peter Sun San also mentioned in their paper that ABA probably ignored the protection of children's rights during implementation and failed to consider their feelings and well-being.

Moreover, ABA may harm the potential for psychological development. In 1976, people used electric shock therapy as a punishment to increase the social and positive emotional behavior of ASD children [23]. These implementations, like electric shock therapy, may lead to long-term adverse effects on children's emotional and behavioral development. Sandoval-Norton also mentioned that some therapies for ABA may be harmful to autistic children's minds, especially when the treatment method does not take into account their special needs and feelings. So, ABA also has the potential to harm ASD children to some extent.

Additionally, ABA lacks sufficient scientific basis. There are currently plenty of autism treatment methods in use. Empirical data that can prove the effectiveness of these methods is often scarce [23]. Since most ASD children are not capable of expressing their feelings, it's hard to evaluate the effects on them. If we are capable of using methods like computed tomography (CT) scans to measure the impact of interventions on children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), these methods allow us to evaluate the relative efficacy of each intervention measure more directly. Nevertheless, Sandoval-Norton indicated that ABA lacks research support based on neuroscience [24]. Many ASD treatment methods, including ABA, may lack sufficient scientific evidence, and their effectiveness is questionable.

5. Conclusion

In the Authoritative Parenting approach, parents are advised to actively engage in their children's development, all the while honoring their unique identities and independence. However, not all children with ASD will benefit from this approach. ABA is a science-based method similar to the characteristics of Authoritative Parenting which aims to improve autistic children's lives by observing and adjusting their behaviors. Authoritative Parenting and ABA are effective in the short term for

children with autism, but their long-term effects are still not fully understood. Furthermore, as every child is unique, ABA is conducive to some ASD children, but not all of them. So, it's more effective for parents to formulate parenting strategies based on the differences of each ASD individual. We need to avoid potential negative consequences when implementing authoritative parenting and ABA, such as excessive control or suppression of children's autonomy, which can negatively impact their psychological health and social skills. Both parents and therapists should consider all the relevant factors of diverse ASD children to develop parenting strategies on their own that suit their children, ensuring they are capable of being nurtured in a healthy and positive family atmosphere. Just like the renowned ancient Chinese philosopher, educator, and statesman Confucius said, 'Teach students following their aptitude', so parents shouldn't merely imitate others' methods of educating children without one's judgment.

The limitations are considered within the scope of this paper's analysis, including that the resources on the nature of ABA treatment are too short, which complicates the evaluation of its impact on the long-term recovery of children with autism. Most of the research on Authoritative Parenting is for all children, not specialized for ASD children. It is also worth noting that children with autism are not capable of being entirely cured. Assessing autistic children's internal thoughts is challenging as well. Things that this paper can find are observations of ASD children's behaviors and the surveys of their parents but not the inner thoughts of these children. Future research can concentrate on the inner thoughts of autistic children more when they are taking treatments such as ABA but not the perspective of their parents.

Additionally, this paper aims to prevent people from ignoring or even prejudicing autistic children. Parents and teachers should be tolerant and give them the correct guidance to help them reduce harmful behaviors. Try our best to find out the talents of every child and use our enthusiasm to warm children who are born with disorders. Alert parents to the importance of focusing more on the daily lives of ASD children and provide suggestions on finding an effective parenting style that suits their children well.

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