

Researcher on a new study that found controlling parents 'harm future mental health'

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Dr Claire Hill, clinical psychologist specialising in parenting and child anxiety, says study shows role of fathers should not be ignored when assessing psychological problems in children.

Dr Hill, from the University of Reading's School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences, said:

"Parenting skills have been linked to the development of childhood anxiety disorders. It's very encouraging to see a study that considers the father-child relationship as well as the mother-child. In the field of childhood anxiety disorders, there is a real lack of studies that include both. In some areas paternal care was more strongly associated with wellbeing than [maternal care](#) - the role of fathers should not be ignored when assessing [psychological problems](#) in children.

"Crucially the study suggests that parenting interventions should be aimed at both parents, and not just the primary caregiver, who is typically the mother. But while this is an important study, caveats need to be applied to the results.

"We know that the influence of parent-child interactions on wellbeing is likely to be a two way street, something this study couldn't measure. This is a crucial point - parents are often blamed for causing difficulties with their child, where in actual fact, the situation is far more complex.

Evidence suggests that child behaviour is also likely to influence how parents respond to them, which may then subsequently impact on the child's wellbeing.

"As the authors note, the results are based on retrospective accounts of the participants' parental behaviour towards them. It is likely therefore that an element of bias creeps in, as mental state at recall may influence their responses. So it's possible that those who rated their life satisfaction and wellbeing lower, recall their experiences of being parented in a more negative way."

Provided by University of Reading

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