

# **OVERINDULGENCE, PARENTING STYLES, AND PARENT SENSE OF COMPETENCE<sup>1</sup>**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: STUDY 4<sup>2</sup>**

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# OVERINDULGENCE, PARENTING STYLES, AND PARENT SENSE OF COMPETENCE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: STUDY 4

### Purpose

This study is the fourth in a series of studies on overindulgence (for more information concerning the Overindulgence Project see [http://www.overindulgence.info/Research\\_Folder/Research.htm](http://www.overindulgence.info/Research_Folder/Research.htm)). It builds on the findings of Bredehoft, Mennicke, Potter, & Clarke's (1998) benchmark study on overindulgence by investigating the relationship of parental overindulgence to parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) and parent sense of competence (skills/knowledge; valuing/comfort).

This study explores the following questions: Is parental overindulgence related to specific parenting styles? And, is there a relationship between lack of parenting skills, parenting satisfaction, and parental overindulgence?

### Method and Data Collection

The sample consisted of 311 parents (89% female, 11% male; ages 20-79; Mean age 40.2) from 42 states and four additional countries outside of the United States. Participants entered the study by logging onto the study's web page (Bredehoft, Clarke, & Dawson, 2006). Once participants read and agreed to the consent form they answered a questionnaire consisting of demographic data, *OVERINDULGENCE: Parental Overindulgence Assessment Scale* (Bredehoft, Clarke, Dawson, & Walcheski, 2004) a 30 item<sup>6</sup> author developed likert-style inventory, and a series of normed, validated psychological inventories: the *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire PSDQ* (Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 1995); and the *Parenting Sense of Competence Scale PSCS* (Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978). Participants submitted their data electronically for analysis.

### Results

As predicted, the more parents overindulge their children, the more likely they were (See Table 1):

- to **not** be authoritative (less likely to use reasoning and induction);
- to be authoritarian (to use verbal/hostility, and corporal punishment), and
- to be permissive (lack of follow-through, ignore misbehavior, and lack parental self-confidence).

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<sup>6</sup> The original version of the *Parental Overindulgence Assessment Tool* was a 21 item true/false, yes/no assessment tool developed by Jean Illsley Clarke, Connie Dawson, and David J. Bredehoft (Clarke, Dawson, and Bredehoft, 2004, p. 293-294). For this version of the instrument, fifteen items were added by Bredehoft and Walcheski bringing it to a total of 36 items and changing them to a likert-style response set (never or almost never; seldom; sometimes, sometimes not; frequently; always or almost always). The scale was renamed: *OVERINDULGENCE: Parental Overindulgence Assessment Scale*. The 36 items were reduced to the 30-item version used in this study by using Cronbach's Alpha (alpha = .85).

As predicted, parents who overindulge their children (See Table 2):

- lack a global sense of competence about their parenting,
- lack parental efficacy (feels competent, capable of problem solving, and familiarity with parenting), and
- lack parenting satisfaction (feels frustrated, anxious, and are poorly motivated) with parenting.

This study’s findings were consistent with previous research (Bredehoft, Mennicke, Potter, & Clarke, 1998) in that a significant relationship was found between being overindulged as a child and overindulging your own children ( $r = .166$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $n=311$ ).

**TABLE 1**  
**Pearson’s correlations between OVERINDULGENCE and Parenting Styles Dimensions**  
**Questionnaire (PSDQ) Aggregate and Sub-scale Scores**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. OVERINDULGENCE:												
POAS	-											
AUTHORITATIVE	.009											
2. Warmth/ Involvement	.034	-										
3. Reasoning/ Induction	-.134**	.264****	-									
4. Democratic/ Participation	.123*	.272****	.470****	-								
5. Good natured/ Easygoing	-.031	.290****	.404****	.407****	-							
AUTHORITARIAN	.140**											
6. Verbal/Hostility	.187***	-.125*	-.177**	-.146**	-.464****	-						
7. Corporal Punishment	.047	-.123*	-.165**	-.290****	-.316****	.366****	-					
8. Non-reasoning Punitive strategies	.112*	-.190***	-.376****	-.284****	.375****	.390****	.356****	-				
9. Directiveness	.072	-.197****	-.082	-.216****	-.335****	.350****	.302****	.376****	-			
PERMISSIVE	.596****											
10. Lack of follow- through	.585****	-.052	-.244****	.015	-.168**	.455****	.170**	.247****	.151**	-		
11. Ignoring Misbehavior	.299****	.108	-.066	.202****	.115*	-.001	-.198****	.027	-.148**	.289****	-	
12. Lack of Parental Self-Confidence	.482****	-.032	-.273****	.015	-.233****	.360****	.145**	.242****	.178**	.677****	.315****	-

$n = 311$ . Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\*\*\* $p < .0001$

TABLE 2  
Pearson's correlations between OVERINDULGENCE and Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSCS) Aggregate and Sub-scale Scores

	1	2	3	4
1. OVERINDULGENCE: POAS	-			
2. Lacks a Sense of Competence	.278****	-		
3. Lack of Parenting Efficacy	.136*	.868****	-	
4. Lack of Parenting Satisfaction	.349****	.856****	.486****	-

n = 311. Note: \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001, \*\*\*\* p < .0001

### Limitations

Several limitations for this study exist.

- The sample is largely made up of mothers (females, 89%; males, 11%) and the results therefore should be cautiously applied to fathers.
- Participants were recruited through the Overindulgence Project's webpage [www.overindulgence.info](http://www.overindulgence.info). There may be a selection bias uniquely related to individuals who visit this web page seeking information about overindulgence and then choose to participate in research related to overindulgence.
- The initial internal reliability figures for *OVERINDULGENCE: Parental Overindulgence Assessment Scale* (Bredehoft, Clarke, Dawson, & Walcheski, 2004) are strong (alpha = .85) further validation of this scale is needed.
- Further research is needed to refine *OVERINDULGENCE: Parental Overindulgence Assessment Scale* (Bredehoft, Clarke, Dawson, & Walcheski, 2004) to identify specific types of overindulgence (Too Much, Soft-structure, and Over-nurture).

### Conclusions and Implications

1. Bredehoft, Mennicke, Potter & Clarke (1998) made a logical argument that Baumrind's "permissive parent" was not the same as an "overindulgent parent" by suggesting that not all overindulgent parents are permissive. This study provides empirical evidence supporting this assertion by demonstrating that overindulgent parents can be both permissive and authoritarian, or both.
2. Parents who overindulge their children lack a global sense of competence, efficacy, and satisfaction with parenting. The more these parents overindulge, the more they become frustrated, anxious, and poorly motivated as parents. They tend to feel more incompetent, incapable of problem solving and unfamiliar with parenting.
3. Parents who were overindulged as children will more likely grow up to become overindulgent parents and continue the cycle of overindulgence.

4. Family professionals should be attentive to normative and non-normative life transitions and stressors because parents are more susceptible to overindulge during these periods across the family life cycle (Walsh, 2003).
5. Using a variety of sources, family professionals should provide to parents information and alternatives to corporal punishment.
6. Family professionals should teach parents to:
  - give expectations regarding behavior before their child engages in an activity;
  - give reasons why rules should be obeyed;
  - help their child to understand the impact of behavior;
  - talk and reason with their child when misbehavior occurs; and
  - emphasize the reasons for rules.

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