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Parenting styles and preschool children's behaviour in a Saudi Arabian postgraduate dental setting

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Background: The parenting style is shifting universally. Children lack the skills needed to deal with life stressful situations like those present in dental setting. Previous studies showed a correlation between parenting style and the child's dental behaviour. No studies have been performed in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to relate parenting style to child's dental behaviour. The purpose of this study is to correlate parenting styles with the dental behaviour of their children, in Riyadh, KSA.

Methodology: Two hundred and eighty-two healthy preschool children aged 3–6 years were recruited in their first dental visit, to a postgraduate Paediatric Dentistry Clinics of the Dental University Hospital at KSU, Riyadh, KSA. The Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire were completed by the primary caregiver/parents. The behaviour of the children was evaluated after dental prophylaxis and fluoride application in the dental chair using Frankl behavior rating scale. Family and child demographic data were evaluated through a questionnaire.

Results: Two hundred and eighty-two healthy Saudi children participated in the study with their parents. Two parenting styles were identified among Saudi parents including authoritative (94%, n=265) and permissive parenting styles (6%, n=17). Most of the children behaved positively (n=205, 72.7%). Significant correlations were detected between parenting style and parent's dental anxiety (P value 0.02) but not significantly correlated to a child's dental behaviour.

Conclusions: In the KSU sample studied, two parenting styles were identified among Saudi parents, authoritative and permissive parenting styles. Parenting style was correlated to parental dental anxiety and had an influence on a child's dental behaviour. Clinically, interesting correlations were identified regarding factors affecting child/s first dental visit behaviour.