

Age-Related Differences in Autonomy-Supportive Parenting

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BACKGROUND

- **Autonomy:** degree of volitional control an individual feels over their actions, thoughts, and behaviours (Joussemet et al., 2005).
- **Autonomy-Supportive Parenting:** parenting practices which encourage and support children's thoughts, feelings, and perspectives; promote children's initiative taking and self-expression (Clark & Ladd, 2000; Rodríguez-Menéndez et al., 2024).
- Limited research on how autonomy-supportive parenting strategies change during middle childhood

METHOD

Participants

- N = 81 ethnically diverse sample from BC, Canada; 60.4% girls
 - 6-7-year-olds: (n = 48)
 - 8-9-year-olds (n = 33)

Procedure

- Dyads discussed a one-minute audio recorded story about a moral dilemma

RESULTS

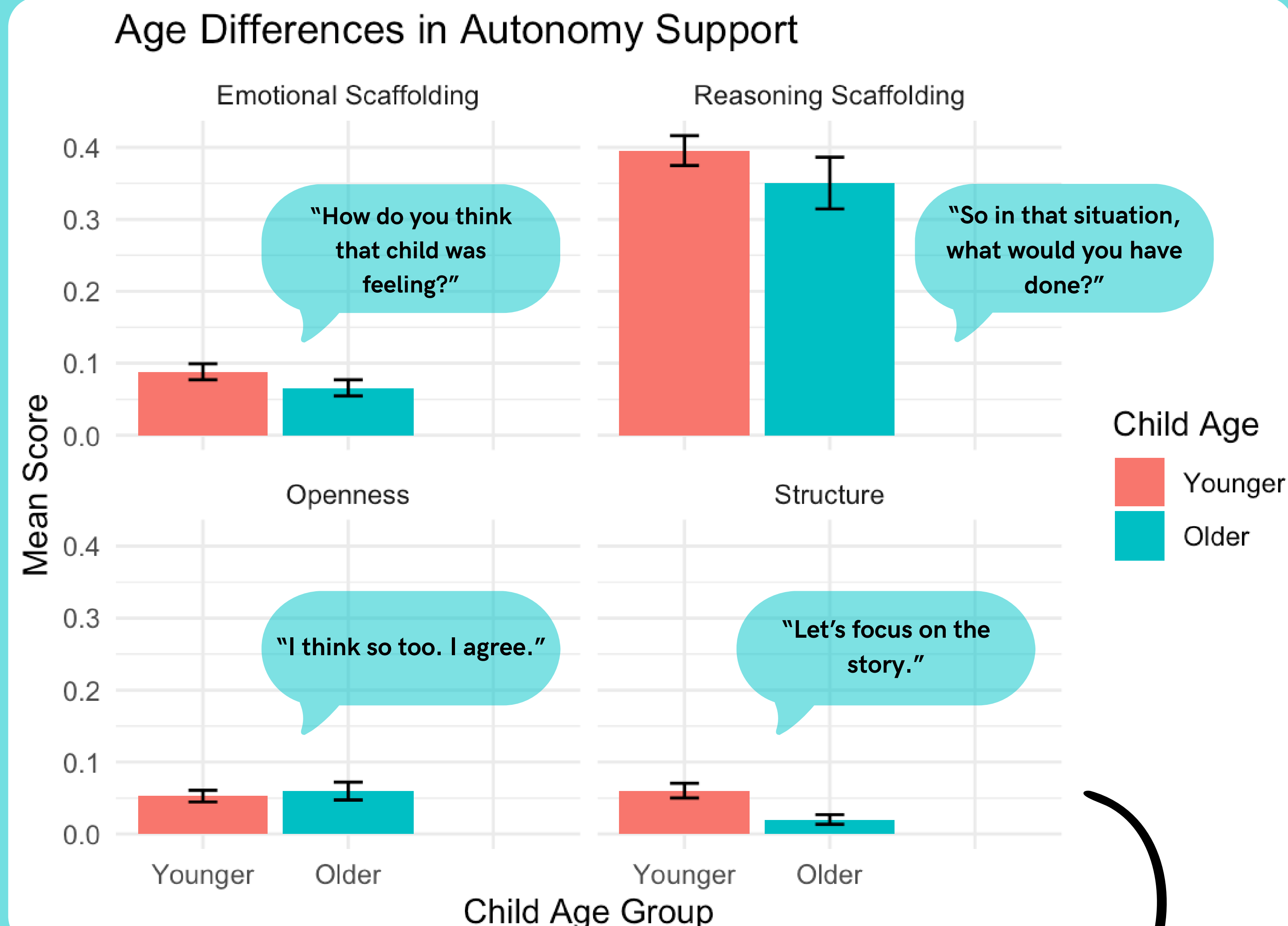
- **Openness:** $M = .053$ vs. $M = .059$ ($p = .60$)
- **Structure:** $M = .06$ vs. $M = .02$ ($p = .004$)
- **Reasoning Scaffolding:** $M = .39$ vs. $M = .35$ ($p = .20$)
- **Emotional Scaffolding:** $M = .088$ vs. $M = .065$ ($p = .17$)

CONCLUSION

- Reasoning scaffolding was the most common strategy used, likely to encourage children's autonomous thinking and problem solving (Kunz & Grych, 2013; Zhang & Whitebread, 2021)
- Younger children may require more support with staying on task than older children as older children may have strengthened attentional control over time

REASONING SCAFFOLDING WAS THE MOST COMMON STRATEGY USED ACROSS DYADS.

PARENTS OF YOUNGER AND OLDER CHILDREN EXERCISED SIMILAR TYPES OF AUTONOMY SUPPORT STRATEGIES...



... BUT STRUCTURAL AUTONOMY-SUPPORT WAS A MORE PROMINENT STRATEGY IN PARENTS OF YOUNGER CHILDREN.

MEASURES

- Autonomy-support was coded line-by-line using the discussion transcripts ($\kappa = .71 - .89$) and proportion score were calculated
- **Openness:** receptiveness to child's opinion
- **Structure:** keeping the child engaged in the discussion
- **Reasoning Scaffolding:** encouraging child's contribution to the discussion
- **Emotional Scaffolding:** expanding child's emotional understanding

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Future research should explore how changes in autonomy-supportive parenting contribute to children's moral identity development over the course of childhood and adolescence.

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