



Studying the Relationship between Parenting Styles and Behavioral Problems in 3 to 6 Years Old Children

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Abstract: This study aimed to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and behavior problems in 3 to 6 years old children in Rafsanjan. Descriptive - correlative method was used in this research. Two kinds of questionnaires were used to collect data. The required data was collected using preschoolers' behavioral problems questionnaire and Baumrind parenting style questionnaire. The sample was selected using simple random sampling method. Pearson correlation method and stepwise regression method and independent t-test were used to analyze data. According to the obtained results, there was positive and significant relationship between permissive and authoritarian parenting styles and behavioral problems. Moreover, there was significant and inverse relationship between authoritarian parenting style and behavioral problems. This indicated that both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are predictors of behavioral problems in children. Furthermore, the obtained results showed that the mean of behavioral problems among boys is higher than the one among girls.

Key words: behavioral problems, parenting styles

INTRODUCTION

Behavioral disorders cause many social and individual problems in society. Problematic children cause various problems in their families, schools and society. These disorders cause the fact that the children may be more vulnerable in dealing with psychosocial distresses common during adolescence and adulthood ¹. These disorders prepare the ground for occurrence of social deviance, including delinquency. Statistics on prevalence of these disorders in Iran varies in a wide range. Abualqasmi et al., ² showed that 2% of primary school children suffer from emotional disorders, 3% suffer from conduct disorder, 3.1% suffer from attention deficit disorder, 3.3% suffer from deficit hyperactivity disorder, 3.4% suffer from attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity and 2.6% suffer from oppositional defiant disorder.

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Proper and balanced relations between parents and children are actually one of the factors affecting their mental health. Research conducted in this context showed that two main factors are effective on nurturing healthy personality in both children and adolescents. These include mutual interactions between children and parents and the fact that how they communicate and deal with each other³. In this regard, educational practices and parenting styles used by parents act as mediators between the parents' normative variables and socialization of children. They are also associated with social competence⁴. In addition, research conducted in this area has shown that the adolescents with authoritarian parents are less self-reliant. They also cannot do their tasks on their own without help of either their parents or others. They do not have any opinion on any subject matter (or they do not express their feeling about various issues since they were repressed by their parents). These children are less flexible when they encounter practical, educational and mental problems every day in their lives⁴. Accordingly, parenting styles are the methods that parents use to raise their children⁵.

Sadegh Khani et al.,⁶ showed that mothers of children with headstrong and disobedient disorder (mothers of disobedient and headstrong children) use permissive and authoritarian parenting style more than other styles compared to mothers of normal children. The former parents use authoritative parenting style less than other styles. The parenting style used by parents has a major role in their children's mental health .

In the shadow of a healthy relationship, the needs of the children can be identified. Then, it is possible to meet the children's needs. Thus, it is essential to pay more attention to both effects and consequences of these styles. Bahmani and Alizadeh⁷ stated in their research that teaching proper parenting style to the mothers resulted in the fact that the symptoms of attention deficit / hyperactivity disorder may be improved. Beh Pajoooh et al.,⁸ Gau et al.,⁹ also achieved the same results. In this regard, Saifi Gandomani et al.,¹⁰ Gastel et al.,¹¹ also demonstrated that parenting styles are related to anxiety and depression in children. Ghanbari and Mousavi¹² also stated that authoritarian parenting style is a significant negative predictor while the authoritative parenting style is a significant positive predictor for all internalized symptoms in the children. These results were also confirmed in the study conducted by Lambrechts et al¹³. Kalantari et al.,¹⁴ stated that parenting styles are the methods and techniques by which parents raise their children. This has a major role in shaping the child's personality. Accordingly, they concluded that if the parenting scores increases, independence - independence, stringency-leniency and behavioral disorders significantly increases in the children .

Accordingly, it is essential to consider this variable since foundation and shaping of children's personality starts in the family environment (or the children's personality shapes within the family environment). It can affect all aspects of the children's life and the problems that they will face in the future. Thus, addressing such important variable and assessing its relationship with children's behavioral problems is essential. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between

parenting styles and behavioral disorders in preschool children. This study was conducted to assess the contribution of this variable in shaping children's behavioral problems. Then, it is possible to use the results obtained from this study in order to identify factors affecting behavioral problems in children.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a descriptive – correlational kind of study. The statistical population included all preschool children of staff of Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences .

Simple random sampling method was used to select the sample. According to Morgan table of sample size determination, 215 individuals were selected as sample from 486 individuals of the statistical population. The following tools were used to collect data .

Preschool Children's Behavioral Problems Inventory: This inventory consisted of 27 items. This was developed by Rutter ¹⁵ for distinguishing between normal children and children with behavioral problems. This inventory is scored based on three options scoring method. Then, score zero represents never, score 1 represent sometimes while score 2 represents most of the times. The range of scores was between 0 and 54. If the score of subject increases, it indicates that the child has more behavioral problems. In order to study the validity of the inventory, several methods were used. In order to assess reliability of the inventory, test-retest method was used in which 38 children were randomly selected. Then, they were evaluated again 4 to 6 weeks after the initial assessment by the same instructors. Reliability coefficient of the inventory was equal to 0.64 for all the tests. In addition, the reliability of retest (with two months gap) was reported as 0.74. The correlation between responses of mothers and fathers was equal to 0.64. In the study conducted by Abualqasmi et al., ² split-half reliability coefficient of the inventory was equal to 0.83. Accordingly, it can be stated that reliability coefficient of preschools behavioral problems inventory is appropriate. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was obtained as 0.45 .

Baumrind Parenting Style Questionnaire: this questionnaire was developed by Baumrind ¹⁶ in 1972. This questionnaire consists of 30 items in which 10 items are relevant to permissive parenting style, 10 items are relevant to authoritative parenting style while 10 items are relevant to authoritarian parenting style. The pattern used to respond to the questions was based on five-point Likert scale, which is obtained by the sum of all 10 items of the three components. This questionnaire was studied in several investigations. The reliability and validity of this questionnaire was reported satisfactory ¹⁷ .

RESULTS

The first research hypothesis assessed whether there is a significant relationship between parenting styles and behavioral problems in 3 to 6 years old

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children in Rafsanjan. The results of assessing this hypothesis are presented in the following table:

Table 1. the correlation between parenting styles and behavioral problems

Areas	Permissive parenting style	Authoritative parenting style	Authoritarian parenting style
Behavioral problems	0.16*	0.24**	-0.37**
Level of significance	0.019	0.0001	0.0001

* Correlation is significant in 0.05 level of significance.

** Correlation is significant in 0.01 level of significance.

Assessing the first research hypothesis rendered the results shown in table 1. Given the level of significance, there is a direct and significant relationship between permissive and authoritative parenting styles and behavioral problems. Furthermore, there is a significant and inverse relationship between authoritarian parenting style and behavioral problems.

The second research hypothesis assessed whether parenting styles can predict the behavioral problems in children. The relevant results are shown in table 2 and 3.

Table 2. Results of ANOVA for significant regression equation and multiple correlation coefficients of parenting styles variable and behavioral problems in children

Statistics of input variables	Source	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	F-value	R	R square	Mean of squares	Level of significance
Authoritative parenting style	Regression	518.26	1	34.68	0.37	0.14	518.26	0.0001
	Residual	3182.69	213				14.94	
	Total	3700.95	214					
Authoritarian parenting style	Regression	617.09	2	21.21	0.41	0.16	308.54	0.0001
	Residual	3083.86	212				14.54	
	Total	3700.95	214					

Criterion variable: behavioral problems

As it is observed in Table 2, first the component of authoritarian parenting style were entered in the regression equation, which explain 0.14% of variance of the equation in the first step. In this regard, the authoritative parenting style was excluded from the equation. The results of analysis of variance for validity of the regression equation also showed that the result is statistically significant ($P < 0.0001$).

Table 3. Results of stepwise regression analysis of behavioral problems with parenting styles

Statistics Variable	Standard coefficient		Standard deviation of error	t	Level of significance
	B-value	Beta-value			
Step one					
Constant value	35.43		2.13	16.64	0.0001
Authoritarian parenting style	-0.40	-0.37	0.07	-5.89	0.0001
Step two					
Constant value	32.28		2.42	13.33	0.0001
Authoritarian parenting style	-0.40	-0.38	0.07	-5.99	0.0001
Permissive parenting style	0.18	0.16	0.07	2.61	0.010

Criterion variable: behavioral problems

Based on the results presented in Table 3, as it can be observed, the level of significance of components of both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles is significant. In general, it can be stated that both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are predictors of behavioral problems in the children.

Finally, the research third hypothesis assessed whether there is a significant relationship between behavioral problems of 3 to 6 female and male children in Rafsanjan. The results are given in table 4.

Table 4. independent t-test between behavioral problems of two groups of male and female children

Indexes	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	t-value	Degree of freedom	Level of significance	
Behavioral problems	Female children	106	22.32	4.09	-2.34	213	0.020
	Male children	109	23.63	4.14			

According to Table 4, considering behavioral problems, the absolute value of calculated t-value (-2.34, 213 (df)) is greater than the t-value obtained from the t table (1.96). Moreover, due to the obtained level of significance (0.020 which is less than 0.05), it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between behavioral problems of female and male children with 95% confidence.

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Furthermore, the mean of behavioral problems among boys (23.63) is greater than the one among girls (22.32).

DISCUSSION

Family is a powerful environmental factor, which play a vital role in children development. The parenting style used by the parents to raise their children can predict the behavioral problems of the children. This is because parenting styles are important factors determining the structural characteristics and communicational patterns within the family. Therefore, they are expected as effective factors in creating children's behavioral problems. As it was noticed, the results obtained from this study showed that there is a significant and negative relationship between authoritarian parenting style and behavioral problems in children. This confirms that fact that authoritarian parenting style is the best kind of parenting style. Then, application of this style by the parents can reduce behavioral problems in children. However, the authoritative and permissive parenting styles had significant and positive relationship. This issue shows that if the parents are either excessively stringent or permissive, this can be an alarm for the child and for the family (the child may suffer from behavioral problems). This is because these styles are directly related to behavioral problems as the results obtained from this study showed. On the other hand, the gender variable was also taken into account in this study, which showed that there are more behavioral problems among male children compared to female children. This issue should be considered by both parents and educational authorities .

The results obtained from this study are in line with those obtained by Haji Seyed Razy et al ¹⁸. They found out that educating parents could not only improve parenting styles but also reduce the rate of behavioral problems in children. Kordestani et al., ¹⁹ also showed in their research that parenting styles are associated with problems such as attention deficit. This corresponds with the findings obtained in this research. In this regard, the findings of this research are in line with those obtained by Gau et al ⁹. This is also consistent with the results obtained by Sadegh Khani et al ⁶. They stated that parenting styles play a fundamental role in promoting children's mental health. Therefore, based on findings obtained in the present study, environment is one of the effective factors on children's training. Moreover, the family environment as an environmental component has an essential role in shaping the child's behavior. Furthermore, a review of literature showed that behavioral problems are influenced by parenting styles used by the family. Thus, paying attentions to the parenting styles as well as educating the parents can be effective in reducing behavioral problems in the children. Following the results obtained from the present study, it is recommended that parents get more familiar with specific parenting styles that are effective in this regard .

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