

Child self-esteem and different parenting styles of mothers: a cross-sectional study

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Summary

Aims: Several factors affect the formation of self-esteem in children, but given the importance of parental attitudes and educational practices in the development of a sense of self-worth in children, the present study was designed to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem in children.

Materials and Methods: The population of this cross-sectional, descriptive study included primary school children of Zahedan city during 2013–2014. The data collection tools used were Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and Diana Baumrind Parenting Style Inventory. Indicators such as the mean, standard deviation and frequency were used to describe data, and a multivariate regression test, Pearson correlation coefficient and SPSS software version 16 were applied in data analysis.

Results: The total self-esteem score of the children participating in this study was 5.6 ± 32.5 and most mothers had an authoritative parenting style (80.6%). There was significant relationship between self-esteem and authoritative parenting style ($p \leq 0.05$).

Conclusion: The results indicated that authoritative parenting style was a significant predictor of children's self-esteem, which suggests that children of parents with authoritative parenting style have significantly higher self-esteem.

self-esteem / child self-esteem / parenting styles

Acknowledgement

We thank all participants in this study, who made it possible for us to conduct our research.

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INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem, or a sense of self-worth, refers to the satisfaction with oneself. In other words, it is an individual's perspective towards him/herself in terms of both physical and psychological aspects [1]. Self-esteem is the judgement of one's admiration, manifesting in the person's attitudes towards self [2]. Several factors are involved in the formation and development of self-esteem, but the attitudes of parents and their parenting styles are regarded as the main factors [3, 4]. The role of intra-family communication and the relationship between parents, parents and children, and between children is considerable in the formation of personality, peace

of mind, confidence, and ultimately the development of appropriate behaviors and lack of mental disorders [5].

Parenting style refers to the practices adopted by parents during their children's growth and socialization stages and how the children are controlled [6]. It is a determining and effective factor with an important role in psychopathology and development of children [7]. "Parenting style" is a global space that encompasses family functions as well as shaping children's behaviors by parents and other primary carers [8]. It also includes a set of behaviors that describe the parent-child interactions in a wide range of circumstances [9, 10].

According to Baumrind's classification, every family adopts a certain style for personal and social education of their children and these styles are classified as authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles [11, 12].

Parents with the authoritarian style usually have cold interactions with and much control over their children; authoritative parents have control along with intimacy and responsiveness to their children, and, in contrast, permissive parents have little expectations of their children and do not have any control and accountability towards them [12]. Studies have shown that one of the most important factors affecting children's self-esteem and behavior is their parents' style [13, 14]. For example, children of parents with an authoritative parenting style have higher than self-esteem [15], however, research conducted on the effects of parenting styles on self-esteem in children has shown variable results. For instance, a study by Furnham & Cheng indicated that an authoritative parenting style has an impact on self-esteem, whereas research by Dabiri et al. pointed out that parenting styles do not have a significant impact on children's self-esteem [16, 17].

So, the only parental influence is not limited to hereditary influence; rather, selecting an appropriate parenting style can have an important effect on the formation of healthy self-esteem in children [18]. Therefore, the present study was carried out with the aim of investigating the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem in primary school children in the city of Zahedan during 2013–2014.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

Initially, 150 primary school children grades two (8 years old), three (9 years old), four (10 years old) and five (11 years old) different primary schools of Zahedan city and their mothers (n=150) entered the study. They filled in the self-esteem questionnaire and parenting style questionnaire, respectively.

INSTRUMENT

- Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)
- The questionnaire included 30 questions, each with 5 options: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = almost disagree, 5 = strongly disagree. Each question was scored between 4 and 0 points.
- Baumrind parenting styles are based on two aspects of parenting that are set up to be very significant. The primary aspect is "parental receptiveness", which refers to the level that the parent responds to the child's requirements. The next is "parental demandingness" which is the extent to which the parent expects more adult and responsible actions from their a child. By these two dimension, she known three different parenting styles:
- Authoritarian: the authoritarian parenting style is characterized by high demandingness and low responsiveness. An authoritarian parent is rigid, harsh and demanding. Abusive parents usually fall in this category.
- Permissive: this parenting style is characterized by low demandingness and high responsiveness. A permissive parent is overly responsive to the child's demands, seldom enforcing consistent rules. A "spoiled" child often has permissive parents.
- Authoritative: this parenting style is characterized by moderate demandingness with moderate responsiveness. The authoritative parent is firm but not rigid, willing to make an exception when the situation warrants it. An au-

thoritative parent is responsive to the child's needs but not indulgent [19].

- Based on their responses, the parents received a rating of between 0 and 120 points. The higher the score, the more authoritative and authoritarian the parenting style, and the lower the score, the more permissive the parenting style. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as 82% for the entire Baumrind questionnaire and the questionnaire's reliability was reported at 81%, 86% and 78% for the permissive, authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles respectively, according to a study by Burri et al. [12].
- The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory
- The self-esteem questionnaire contains 58 items that describe the feelings, opinions or reactions of an individual and it has two choices: like me (Yes) and unlike me (No). The items are divided between five subscales: public scale (26 items), social scale (8 items), family scale (8 items), school scale (8 items), and life scale (8 items). The scores from the five subscales and also the overall score enable identifying the context in which people have a positive image of themselves. The test is rated 0 and 1; a "yes" answer scores 1, and a "no" answer scores 0. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.88 was reported for the questionnaire [12].

Sample size

The sample size of 150 was estimated according to the conducted studies (6, 12) and the confidence level of 95%. The stratified sampling method was applied as well. The Education Department of Zahedan city was first divided into two districts. Then, three schools (two state and one non-profit) were randomly selected from each district, giving a total of six schools [20]. One class of each grade except grade one (5 classes) and 5 students from each class were selected for the study.

Statistical analysis

Indicators such as the mean, standard deviation and frequency were used for data presentation, and multivariate regression test, Pearson correlation coefficient and SPSS software version 19 were used in data analysis. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Overall, 150 primary school children and their parents participated in the study. Their self-esteem scores are shown in Table 1. The general self-esteem of these children was 5.6 ± 32.53 . The highest average self-esteem was on the public self-esteem scale at 15.3 and the lowest belonged to educational self-esteem, at 5.2.

Table 1. Self-esteem subscales in children participating in the study

Type of self-esteem	Mean	SD	Range
Public self-esteem (26 items)	15.3	2.5	8–21
Family self-esteem (8 items)	5.7	1.8	0–8
Educational self-esteem (8 items)	5.2	1.5	2–8
Social self-esteem (8 items)	6.1	1.5	2–8
Overall self-esteem (50 items)	32.5	5.6	16–43

The results showed that the permissive, authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles occurred in 6% ($n = 9$), 86.6% ($n = 121$) and 13.34% ($n = 20$) of mothers, respectively. To investigate the relationship between parenting styles and types of self-esteem, the Pear-

son correlation test was used. It showed a direct significant relationship only between the authoritative parenting style and different types of self-esteem ($p \leq 0.05$). The relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem in children

Parenting style	Authoritarian		Authoritative		Permissive	
	Correlation coefficient	p-value	Correlation coefficient	p-value	Correlation coefficient	p-value
Public	0.17-	0.1	0.3	0.003	0.1-	0.3
Family	0.05-	0.6	0.17	0.16	0.006	0.9
Educational	0.06	0.6	0.2	0.05	0.1	0.1
Social	0.1-	0.3	0.3	0.006	0.16	0.2
Overall	0.1-	0.3	0.3	0.002	0.04	0.7

Multiple linear regression analysis with stepwise method (backward) was used to determine the parenting style that had the greatest influence on children's self-esteem. In the order of importance, the authoritative style had the highest predictive power for self-esteem in children (Beta = 0.5), followed by the authori-

tarian style (Beta = 0.1) and the permissive style (Beta = 0.01). Of these styles, the authoritative style (p = 0.001) was significantly associated with self-esteem in children and explained 13% of the total variance. Table 3 indicates the predictive power of the parenting styles on children's self-esteem.

Table 3. Predictive power of parenting styles on children's self-esteem

Standardized coefficients		Non-standardized coefficients			
p-value	T	Beta	standard error	B	Model
0.6	0.4	0.05	0.13	0.06	Permissive style
0.2	1.2	0.1	0.17	0.2	Authoritarian style
0.001	3.3	0.5	0.14	0.48	Authoritative style

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem in primary school children. Results of the descriptive test showed that the most frequent and the least frequent parenting styles among parents of school-age children were authoritative and permissive, respectively. The highest and the lowest self-esteem scores were associated with family self-esteem and educational self-esteem, respectively.

Only the authoritative parenting style had a significant relationship with self-esteem in children, and it was a significant predictor of self-esteem in children; thus, the overall self-esteem of children with authoritative parents was higher. The authoritative parenting style had a direct significant relationship with public and social self-esteem. Results of the present study showed a significant relationship between public, educational, social and overall self-esteem and authoritative parenting style, while no sig-

nificant relationship was seen between self-esteem and other parenting styles.

Studies looking at the impact of parenting styles on children and young adults' self-esteem have shown different results. Various studies showed that children of parents with an authoritative parenting style had higher self-esteem [13, 15, 21-24]. On the other hand, Shoarinejad et al. showed that parents with an authoritarian parenting style had children with higher self-esteem [25], whereas Martinez et al. showed that permissive parents had children with higher self-esteem [26]. Finally, Dabiri et al. showed that parenting styles had no relationship with children's self-esteem [17].

Parents with authoritative parenting style act in three dimensions identified by Baumrind and (acceptance and close relationships, control, and giving independence) in such a way that they are intimate, welcoming and caring for the needs of their children, have reasonable expectations of appropriate behavior and constantly reinforce it. They let their children make decisions

according to their ability, and let them participate in decision-making. Authoritative parents nurture children with higher self-esteem compared with parents with other parenting styles. The reason is that these parents accept their children's strengths and weaknesses and consider clear and acceptable standards for them. They support their children in achieving these standards and effect a great increase of their children's self-esteem. Parents with authoritative behavioral patterns have much control and warmth in the upbringing of their children while authoritarian parents have much control and little warmth, but permissive parents apply little control and much warmth [14].

Each parenting style has different consequences. Authoritarian parenting style makes children lively, fresh, equips them with high self-esteem and high self-control. This makes them very courageous and successful in the course of their education. Families with authoritarian parenting styles are likely to nurture anxious, unhappy and incompatible children. Permissive parenting style makes the children impulsive, disobedient, rebellious, demanding and dependent, and they show poor performance at school [27]. According to the results obtained in this and other studies, there is a need to adopt measures to widely promote the correct methods of nurturing children so that the increase of self-esteem in children would provide the grounds for their success in the future. One of these measures is educating the families on how to properly nurture their children. This training can be realized through mass media such as videos and educational programmes for families and also through workshops in universities and counseling centers. It should be noted that these training programmes should emphasize the effect of training on children's self-esteem and the positive impacts of high self-esteem on increasing children's adaptability. In general, these training programmes can include educating parents about using non-controlling communication methods and recognizing their children's freedom. Also, if there is control, parents should provide a reason for that and praise their children for their desirable conduct.

CONCLUSION

The present study showed that an authoritative parenting style is a significant predictor of self-esteem in children; self-esteem is significantly higher in children of parents with an authoritative parenting style. Therefore, these results can be used in the preparation and formulation of educational interventions and programmes to improve the relations between children and parents and their parenting style. In general, it is suggested that, due to the lack of studies on the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem of children in Iran, there is a need for more detailed studies with larger sample sizes, taking into consideration the training for parents to improve the quality of nurturing they provide to their children.

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