

# The impact of authoritative, permissive and authoritarian behavior of parents on self-concept, psychological health and life quality

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## Abstract

The current study compared the effect of parenting style on self-concept, psychological health and quality of life of children with authoritative, permissive and authoritarian parents. In order to do this, parenting style questionnaire was first given to 180 parents of high school students in Iran. Then, based on this questionnaire, the parents were divided into authoritarian, permissive and authoritative. Following this, 30 children from authoritarian, 29 from permissive and 32 children from authoritative parents were selected. Then, the general health questionnaire, self-concept questionnaire and quality of life questionnaire were administered on these subjects after taking their consent. One way ANOVA, multiple comparisons of means and correlations were used to analyze the data. The results showed that there was a significant impact of parenting style on psychological health. This means that children raised by authoritative parenting style had better psychological health than children raised by authoritarian and permissiveness parenting styles. In addition, there was a significant impact of parenting style on self-concept. This means that children raised by authoritative parenting style had better self-concept than children raised by authoritarian and permissive parenting style. Finally, there was a significant impact of parenting style on quality of life. This means that children raised by authoritative parenting style had better quality of life than children raised by authoritarian and permissive parenting styles.

**Keywords:** parenting style, self-concept, psychological health, quality of life.

## Introduction

It is very common to witness how the expectations of adolescents and their parents seem to be violated as adolescents change dramatically during the course of puberty. Many parents see their child changing from a compliant being into someone who is noncompliant, oppositional and resistant to parental standards. Parents often clamp down and put more pressure on the adolescent to conform to parental standards.

Many parents often deal with the young adolescent as if they expect him or her to become a mature being within the next 10 to 15 minutes. But the transition from childhood to adulthood is a long journey with many hills and valleys. Adolescents are not going to conform to adult standards immediately. Parents who recognize that adolescents take a long time «to get it right» usually deal more competently and calmly with adolescent transgressions than do parents who demand immediate conformity to parental standards. Yet other parents, rather than placing heavy demands on their adolescents for compliance, do virtually the opposite, letting them do as they please in a very permissive manner.

We see parents responding to adolescent behavior or misbehavior in three different styles, two of them being unhealthy and one healthy. The permissive and authoritarian styles are unhealthy extremes while the authoritative parenting style is a well-balanced response to adolescent misbehavior. The formation of an adolescent's self-concept is also closely connected to parenting styles. If the children can't enjoy a good relationship with significant adults in their life, they will be negatively affected especially

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in their self shaping process. There are three ways children can be affected by the emotion that is being shown by their parents. First is when rejection happens. Second is when the parents become over-protecting and third when emotional confusion occurs as the result of the parents continually showing negative and positive emotions towards them one after another. However, how parents interact with their children depends on the principles and beliefs that they hold in managing and educating them. A family that is always facing prejudicial circumstances and does not have that many sources will educate their kids to become stronger and tougher from their childhood compared to the family that is the other way around.

In other words, when children's upbringing is different in many ways, of course they will respond in different ways towards a certain matter (Trawick, 1997). There are many factors affecting physiological health, self concept and quality of life of the children. Amongst the factors are the expectations of the significant people around them. Research has shown that every parent, despite any kind of background, cares and does have great expectations for their children's education (Trawick, 1997). The difference is in the way the parents interact with their children as has been said before. The parenting style that is being practiced by any parent definitely will have effects on the children's physiological health, self concept and quality of life. All these are strongly triggered by their positive and negative experiences with significant people including parents.

This research explores the relations between parenting style, mental health, self esteem and quality of life amongst a group of secondary school students. Classification of parenting style is made based on the Baumrind Classification (1971). Baumrind has classified parenting style according to the leadership style by emphasizing aspects like controls, explanation, matureness, orders and nurturance. Based on this, parenting style can be classified into authoritative, authoritarian and permissive (Eggen & Kauchak, 1994). This threefold classification is based on two indexes which are demandingness and responsiveness. The authoritarian style is primarily demandingness, whereas the permissive style is mostly responsiveness. The authoritative style is a balance of the two.

## Parenting style

Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviors that work individually and

together to influence child outcomes. Although specific parenting behaviors, such as spanking or reading aloud, may influence child development, looking at any specific behavior in isolation may be misleading. Many writers have noted that specific parenting practices are less important in predicting child wellbeing than is the broad pattern of parenting. Most researchers who attempt to describe this broad parental milieu rely on Diana Baumrind's concept of parenting style. The construct of parenting style is used to capture normal variations in parents' attempts to control and socialize their children (Baumrind, 1991). Two points are critical in understanding this definition. First, parenting style is meant to describe normal variations in parenting. In other words, the parenting style typology Baumrind developed should not be understood to include deviant parenting, such as might be observed in abusive or neglectful homes. Second, Baumrind assumes that normal parenting revolves around issues of control. Although parents may differ in how they try to control or socialize their children and the extent to which they do so, it is assumed that the primary role of all parents is to influence, teach, and control their children. Parenting style captures two important elements of parenting: parental responsiveness and parental demandingness. Parental responsiveness (also referred to as parental warmth or supportiveness) refers to «the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands» (Baumrind, 1991). Parental demandingness (also referred to as behavioral control) refers to «the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole by their maturity, demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys» (Baumrind, 1991).

### *Authoritarian Parenting*

Authoritarian parenting, also termed dictatorial or harsh, is low on warmth/nurturance, strict on discipline, high in parent to child communication but low in child to parent communication and high on expectation. This style has been predominant throughout Western history: «It was effective in status quo times, for example in agrarian-industrial societies» (Dinwiddie, 1995). Authoritarian parents show little affection and «seem aloof from their children» (Berger, 2001).

### *Permissive Parenting*

Permissive parenting, also labeled as neglectful or disengaged parenting, is high on warmth, very low on discipline and structure, low in parent to child communication but high in child to parent communication and low on expectation.

### *Authoritative Parenting*

Authoritative parenting is high on warmth, moderate on discipline, high in communication and moderate in expectations of maturity. This style is becoming more pervasive in the West. Authoritative parents are warm and nurturing, create a loving home environment and provide a high degree of emotional support (Ingersoll, 1989).

### *Hypotheses*

In the light of the objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. High school children reared by authoritarian, permissive and authoritative parenting style will differ on mental health.
2. High school children reared by authoritarian, permissive and authoritative parenting style will differ on self-esteem.
3. High school children reared by authoritarian, permissive and authoritative parenting style will differ on quality of life.

## **Methodology**

### *Sample and design*

In the beginning, parenting style questionnaire was administered on 180 parents of high school students. Then with the help of PSQ the parents were classified as authoritarian, permissive and authoritative. After that, 30 children from authoritarian, 29 from permissive and 32 children from authoritative parents were selected for the present study. So, total sample in the present study 91 subjects.

### *Instruments*

#### **Parenting styles questionnaire**

Parenting styles were measured by parenting style questionnaire developed by Booray Standard Parenting styles questionnaire with 30 questions. The 30-item scale contained 10 statements for each of the three types of parenting style. There are two forms of the scale one for mothers and another for fathers. In the present investigation, only the mother's form of the scale was used, this choice was made because in Iran mothers spend a lot more time with children than fathers, also the mother has more opportunities than the father to influence her off-

spring's psychological growth and behavior.

#### **Self-esteem questionnaire**

Self-esteem was measured with the help of copersmith's self-esteem inventory (1981). This inventory consists of 58 items that constitute the lie scale which is a measure of the student's defensiveness.

#### **Mental health questionnaire**

In the present investigation mental health was measured with the help of General Health questionnaire developed by Goldberg (1972). The questionnaire has 4 subscales of physical, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction and severe depression with 7 questions in each subscale.

#### **Quality of life (WHOQOL-BREF) questionnaire**

The WHOQOL-BREF is a 26-item instrument consisting of four domains: physical health (7 items), psychological health (6 items), social relationships (3 items), and environmental health (8 items)

### *Procedure*

The present study focuses on the mental health, self-esteem and quality of life of the children with authoritative, permissive and authoritarian parents in Iran. In the beginning parenting style questionnaire (PSQ) was administered on 180 parents of high school students. Then with the help of PSQ the parents were classified as authoritarian permissive and authoritative. After that, 32 children from authoritative, 30 from authoritarian and 29 children from permissive parents were selected. So the total sample was comprised 91 students. Then the general health questionnaire, self-esteem questionnaire and quality of life questionnaire were administered on these subjects after taking their consent. These tests were administered on them individually, the sample was collected from three schools of Tehran (IRAN), that is, Yser, Kosar, and Fathematol Zahra schools. It took 60 days (6 hrs each day) to collect the data.

## **Results and discussion**

One way ANOVA, multiple comparisons and correlations were used to analyze the data. According to table 1, there is a significant difference for mental health. Post-hoc test (LSD test) showed that there were significant differences between children reared by authoritative and authoritarian parenting style and between authoritative and permissive parenting styles. However, significant difference was not observed between authoritarian and permissive parenting styles (Table 2).

**Table 1. One way ANOVA summary for mental health.**

|                | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|------|
| Between Groups | 2888.826       | 2  | 1444.413    | 24.328 | .000 |
| Within Groups  | 5224.844       | 88 | 59.373      |        |      |

**Table 2. Multiple comparisons of means on total mental health.**

| (I) parenting | (J) parenting | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|------------|------|
| Authoritarian | permissive    | -.64023               | 2.00660    | .750 |
|               | authoritative | 11.47292(*)           | 1.95819    | .000 |
| Permissive    | authoritarian | .64023                | 2.00660    | .750 |
|               | authoritative | 12.11315(*)           | 1.97554    | .000 |
| Authoritative | authoritarian | -11.47292(*)          | 1.95819    | .000 |
|               | permissive    | -12.11315(*)          | 1.97554    | .000 |

Table 3 showed N, Means, Std. Deviation of different parenting style on total mental health. It means that children raised by authoritative parenting style had better mental health.

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics of mental health.**

|               | N  | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|---------------|----|---------|----------------|
| Authoritarian | 30 | 28.5667 | 9.21275        |
| Permissive    | 29 | 29.2069 | 8.89775        |
| Authoritative | 32 | 17.0938 | 4.19953        |

As table 4 indicates, a significant difference was reported for self-esteem.

**Table 4. One way ANOVA summary for self-esteem.**

|                | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|------|
| Between Groups | 1754.144       | 2  | 877.072     | 84.414 | .000 |
| Within Groups  | 914.334        | 88 | 10.390      |        |      |
| Total          | 2668.478       | 90 |             |        |      |

**Table 5. Multiple comparisons of means on total self-esteem.**

| (I) parenting | (J) parenting | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|------|
| Authoritarian | Permissive    | -.18448         | .83942     | .827 |
|               | Authoritative | -9.28437        | .81916     | .000 |
| Permissive    | Authoritarian | .18448          | .83942     | .827 |
|               | Authoritative | -9.09989        | .82642     | .000 |
| Authoritative | Authoritarian | 9.28437         | .81916     | .000 |
|               | Permissive    | 9.09989         | .82642     | .000 |

Table 6 showed N, Means, Std. Deviation of different parenting style on total self-esteem. It means that children raised by authoritative parenting style had better self-esteem than children raised by authoritarian and permissive parenting style. Present result is in agreement with the study conducted by (Milevsky *et al.*, 2007). They found that the authoritative parenting style was associated with high self-esteem and permissive parent-

ing was associated with lower self-esteem.

**Table 6. Descriptive statistics of self-esteem.**

|               | N  | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|---------------|----|---------|----------------|
| Authoritarian | 30 | 14.9000 | 2.12295        |
| Permissive    | 29 | 15.0845 | 2.56839        |
| Authoritative | 32 | 24.1844 | 4.39548        |

**Table 7. One way ANOVA summary for quality.**

|                | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F      | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|------|
| Between Groups | 1099.431       | 2  | 549.715     | 36.867 | .000 |
| Within Groups  | 1312.133       | 88 | 14.911      |        |      |
| Total          | 2411.563       | 90 |             |        |      |

**Table 8. Multiple Comparisons of means on total quality of life.**

| (I) parenting | (J) parenting | Mean difference | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|------|
| Authoritarian | Permissive    | -1.29386        | .97245     | .466 |
|               | Authoritative | -7.83331(*)     | .96541     | .000 |
| Permissive    | Authoritarian | 1.29386         | .97245     | .466 |
|               | Authoritative | -6.53945(*)     | 1.03117    | .000 |
| Authoritative | Authoritarian | 7.83331(*)      | .96541     | .000 |
|               | Permissive    | 6.53945(*)      | 1.03117    | .000 |

According to table 7, a significant difference was reported for quality of life.

According to table 9, children raised by authoritative parenting style had better quality of life than children raised by authoritarian and permissive parenting style.

**Table 9. Descriptive statistics of quality of life.**

|               | N  | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|---------------|----|---------|----------------|
| Authoritarian | 30 | 20.8220 | 3.49505        |
| Permissive    | 29 | 22.1159 | 3.95169        |
| Authoritative | 32 | 28.6553 | 4.09816        |
| Total         | 91 | 23.9889 | 5.17640        |

## Conclusions

### *Mental health*

A perusal of table 1 shows that F-ratio for parenting style on total mental health was found to be 24.32 which was significant at 0.01 levels of confidence.

Post-hoc test (LSD test) showed that there were significant differences between children reared by authoritative and authoritarian parenting style and between authoritative and permissive parenting styles. However, significant difference was not observed between authoritarian and permissive parenting style. Thus, the hypothesis 1 which states that high school children reared by authoritarian, permissive and authoritative parenting style will dif-

fer on total mental health was partly accepted by the findings of study.

A significant difference was found between children reared by authoritative and authoritarian parenting style on mental health. Table 3 showed that children reared by authoritative parenting style (Mean= 17.09) had better mental health than children reared by authoritarian parenting style (Mean= 28.56). Authoritative parents encourage children to be independent but still places limits and controls on their actions. These parents are not usually as controlling, they allow their children to explore more freely, thus having them make their own decisions based upon their own reasoning. Authoritative parents are so logical because of this parenting style these children had good mental health but authoritarian parents expect much of their child but do not explain the reasoning for the rules or boundaries, unlike the authoritative parent. Authoritarian parents are unresponsive to children's needs, and are most likely to spank a child as a form of punishment instead of grounding a child. Probably because of these parenting styles these children had poor mental health. Present result has also been supported by other studies (Dwairy, 2005; Bahrami & Fathi, 2008).

A significant difference was also found between children reared by authoritative and permissive parenting style on mental health. Table 3 showed that children reared by authoritative parenting style (Mean= 17.09) had better mental health than children reared by permissive parenting style (Mean= 29.20). Authoritative parents have unconditional



love and acceptance of their children. Expressing love and acceptance helps children to feel safe. Secure children whose parents are authoritative are often cheerful, happy and have good mental health but permissive parenting children tend to live and remain close to where they grew up, still dependent, and because of these parents they have poor mental health. This finding has also been supported by other studies (Dwairy *et al.*, 2007).

No significant difference was found between children reared by authoritarian and permissive parenting style on total mental health. Although these two groups did not differ from each other significantly but both these groups had poor mental health as is evident from their means from table 3. Children raised in permissive families experience too much freedom but children raised in authoritarian families, in contrast, do not experience enough freedoms. Children raised in authoritarian families are not encouraged to develop their own independent judgments. Probably because of these parenting styles these children had poor mental health and did not differ significantly from each other on this dimension. Present result has also been supported by the study conducted by Dwairy *et al.* (2006). They found that there was no significant relationship between the authoritarian and permissive parenting style on mental health measures.

### Self-esteem

A look at table 4 shows that F-ratio for parenting style on total self-esteem was found to be 84.41 which were significant at 0.01 levels of confidence.

Post-hoc test (LSD test) showed that there were significant differences between children reared by authoritative and authoritarian parenting style and between authoritative and permissive parenting styles. However, significant difference was not observed between authoritarian and permissive parenting style. Thus, the hypothesis 2 which states that high school children reared by authoritarian, permissive and authoritative parenting style will differ on total self-esteem was partly accepted by the findings of study.

A significant difference was found between children reared by authoritative and authoritarian parenting style on total self-esteem. Table 6 showed that children reared by authoritative parenting style (Mean= 24.18) had higher self-esteem than children reared by authoritarian parenting style (Mean= 14.90). The authoritative parent has time for both providing the child with discipline, as well as allow-

ing latitude to the child when it is warranted. This style is much more open emotionally, encouraging the child to engage with the parent on the issues that are at stake. There is not the same sense with this parenting style that everything the parent says is law, there is still a sense that the parent has the final decision, although it is not always exercised unilaterally. In Baumrind's (1991) analysis, it is the authoritative parenting style that is most associated with positive outcome for the child like self-esteem. Similar result has also been reported by other studies (Lara, 1999; Gina & Tana, 2001; Lopez, 2005; Bush *et al.*, 2006; Nguyen & Peter, 2008). All these studies found acceptance, approval, and support were significantly related to young adults' self-esteem.

A significant difference was also found between children reared by authoritative and permissive parenting style on total self-esteem. Table 6 showed that children reared by authoritative parenting style (Mean= 24.18) had higher self-esteem than children reared by permissive parenting style (Mean= 15.08). Authoritative parenting encourages children to be independent and allowing the child to explore more freely, thus having them makes their own decisions based upon their own reasoning. It results in children having a higher self-esteem and independence because of the democratic give-take nature of the authoritative parenting style. Present result is in agreement with the study conducted by Milevsky *et al.* (2007). They found that the authoritative parenting style was associated with high self-esteem and permissive parenting was associated with lower self-esteem.

No significant difference was found between children reared by authoritarian and permissive parenting style on total self-esteem. Although these two groups did not differ from each other significantly but both these groups had low self-esteem as is evident from their means in table 6. Authoritarian parenting style is characterized by the imposition of a set of rules and behaviors on the child that is strictly enforced. The child is made to understand that there are certain ways of behaving that must be adhered to; otherwise there will be consequences in the form of punishment. Instead of the unconditional acceptance of the child's desires and wishes, there is a high level of censure applied to what the child wants. In this parenting style there is no room for negotiation, the rules are handed down from the parent to the child and there is little allowance for discussion or emotional openness and also permissive parenting style respects the child's wishes and

desires and does not ask the child to give anything in return. Probably because of parenting style these children had low self-esteem. Present result has also been supported by other studies (Tomass & Cukey, 1992; Dwairy *et al.*, 2005; Rebecca, 2006; Hosseinian *et al.*, 2007; Martinez *et al.*, 2007).

### Quality of life

A perusal of table 7 shows that F-ratio for parenting style on total quality of life was found to be 36.867 which were significant at 0.01 levels of confidence.

Post-hoc test (Tamhane test) showed that there were significant differences between children reared by authoritative and authoritarian parenting style and between authoritative and permissive parenting styles. However, significant difference was not observed between authoritarian and permissive parenting style. Thus, the hypothesis 3 which states that high school children reared by authoritarian, permissive and authoritative parenting style will differ on total quality of life was partly accepted by the findings of study.

A significant difference was found between children reared by authoritative and authoritarian parenting style on total quality of life. Table 9 showed that children reared by authoritative parenting style (Mean= 28.65) had higher quality of life than children reared by authoritarian parenting style (Mean= 20.82). One parenting style would be authoritarian. This kind of parenting entails conforming to standard expectations as well as compliance to parental authority, adherence to rules and following directions. Authoritarian parenting poses to be a big problem to kids. Human as they are, they would want freedom and will to learn on their own. It does not mean that being their parents can give us the right to rule and govern their lives according to our sets of rules and preferences. We are parents and not rulers. This will result to jeopardizing our kids' own personality by molding them into a perfect clone of ours. They may prove to be on the surface but deep down, they are just the frustrated kind of person suppressed by our own self-professed power. Probably because of these parenting styles these children had poor quality of life.

A significant difference was also found between children reared by authoritative and permissive parenting style on total quality of life. Table 9 showed that children reared by authoritative parenting style (Mean= 28.65) had higher quality of life than children reared by permissive parenting style (Mean= 22.11).

The ideal parenting is so far found to be authoritative. This kind of parenting creates a healthy, warm and loving environment without jeopardizing any potential traits of our kids because we still have high standards going for them. Aside from that, we also create an environment which permits our kids to talk about their ideals and discovered principles. This kind of parenting will produce kids that are self-sufficient, good quality of life, self-confident, happy with whom they are and can reach out to others.

No significant difference was found between children reared by authoritarian and permissive parenting style on total quality of life. Although these two groups did not differ from each other significantly but both these groups had low quality of life as is evident from their means according to table 9. Another parenting style would be permissive. This kind of parenting is that of creating a very warm and loving environment with our kids but has a problem of very low behavioral expectation. Permissive parenting poses a great risk to our kids for lack in discipline. We as parents sometimes forget that allowing our kids to do what they like all the time because of our fear that we go overboard will likely result to jeopardizing their attitudes and personalities. They might become impulsive later on because they cannot control their desires and wants. Therefore, these children had low quality of life and it was also found in the offspring of authoritarian parent. They are like army commanders and prefer to issue commands and orders to their children and fully expect their children to carry out their orders without questioning them. They do not welcome nor appreciate any feedback from their children; they live by set and defined rules in a structured environment that these parenting styles also affect quality of life.

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