



Parenting Styles , Self esteem and Depression among 14-17 years old adolescents in Egypt

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore variations in adolescent self esteem and depression as a function of parenting styles. Participants were 300 students , aged from 15-17 years , from prep and secondary schools located in Al Arish Governorate, Egypt . Participants completed measures of parenting styles , self esteem , and depression . Authoritative mothering was found to relate to higher self-esteem and to lower depression. Paternal parenting styles was also related to psychological adjustment, however, although the advantage of authoritative mothering over permissive mothering was evident for all outcomes assessed, for paternal styles the advantage was less defined and only evident for depression.

Keywords Parenting styles . Self-esteem . Depression . Adolescence

Introduction

Parenting style has been a major topic of study for the later part of the Twentieth Century. Researchers have investigated the dimensions of parenting (Ang, 2005; Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Barver, Olsen & Shangle, 1994; Baumrind, 1971), identifying warmth/ acceptance/ responsiveness, control/demandingness and autonomy granting as the three important dimensions of parenting in Western societies. It is important to understand the notions of parenting styles in the Western countries and the application of these parenting notions in Asian countries.

An important framework for studying parenting style was developed by Baumrind (1967). She did not measure specific parenting behaviors for specific situations. Instead, parenting styles are the combination of parental attitudes, practices and nonverbal expressions that characterize the nature of parent-child interactions across diverse situations. (Glasgow, Dombusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997). Baumrind (1967) proposed that parents fall into one of four categories: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful. These styles of parenting are based on levels of demandingness and responsiveness used by the parents in disciplining the child. Parental responsiveness refers to the amount of acceptance that a parent displays toward a child, and parental demandingness refers to how restrictive and demanding parents are (Baumrind, 1991). Baumrind (1991) found that Authoritarian parents displayed high levels of demandingness and low levels of affection to their children. Permissive parents expressed affection to their children, but showed low levels of behavioral control. Authoritative parents displayed both demands and affection to their children.

Parenting Styles Among Arabs

In contrast with reports on the effect of authoritarian parenting in the West, some studies indicate that Arab children and youth are satisfied with this style (Hatab & Makki, 1978) and do not complain of the abusive-aggressive behavior of teachers (Dwairy, 1998, pp. 43-61). Among Egyptian college students, 64.4% of women and 33.1% of men favored “absolute submission” to parents. As for differentiation from parents, 57.7% of female and 25.7% of male students favored children having the same character and morals as their parents (Al-Khawaja, 1999). In a study conducted among Saudi female college students, 67.5% of the sample reported that they were physically punished at various stages in their life. When their attitudes toward physical punishment were studied, it was found that 65.1% of the students justified it (Achoui, 2003).

If these are the attitudes of college students, one can expect that similar or more pronounced results may be obtained in the general Saudi populace, although Saudi society is considered among the conservative societies as compared to other Arab or Muslim societies.

Generally speaking, female Arabs identify more than males with the traditional norms (Al-Khawaja, 1999), even when they are the victims of some of the norms, which is exemplified by the justification by females of female circumcision (Al-Kaa'ki, 2000). Some other studies indicated that authoritarianism is not associated with any detriment to the mental health of Arab youth (Dwairy, 2004a; Dwairy & Menshar, 2006). It seems that authoritarian socialization has a meaning and effect different from that known in the West when it is applied within an authoritarian culture such as the Arab or Muslim. Within this culture, children consider application of the authoritarian style of punishment as the normal duty of parents and teachers (Dwairy, 1997).

Despite that the Arab society treats women more strictly than men (Zakareya, 1999), Achoui (2003) found that male children undergo more physical punishment than female children in Saudi Arabia. Studies on Arab-Palestinian adolescents in Israel indicated that boys perceive their parents' style to be more authoritarian than girls do (Dwairy, 2004a, 2004b). Palestinian boys in the Gaza Strip also perceived both their parents as treating them more negatively than the girls did; they perceived their parents as being more strict in disciplining, more rejecting, and hostile than did the girls (Punamaki, Qouta, & El Sarraj, 1997).

Similar results were reported in Algeria (Fershani, 1998; Zegheena, 1994). A research study conducted in Egypt indicated an interesting interaction between sex and urbanization. Rural male adolescents reported a higher level of authoritarianism on the part of their parents than females, whereas urban females reported a higher level of authoritarian parenting than males (Dwairy & Menshar, 2006). Parents treat first-born children in a special way. Axelson (1999) claimed that first-born children "tend to receive more attention, are likely to carry the family's ambitions, and are assigned a dominant role with respect to later children" (p. 285). This description fits the Arab first-born children, too, who carry the parents' aspirations, on one hand, and enjoy more parental attention, care, and indulgence, on the other. Some research indicates that a first-born Arab child is treated more gently than the other children in the family (Achoui, 2003; Al-Teer, 1997).

These differences between first-born and other children are expected to influence the process of individuation and the parent-child connectedness. Some reports indicated that parental education, economic level, and urbanization influence the parenting styles and practices. This association between socioeconomic classes and a harsh style of parenting is universal, and not specific to Arabs. More educated mothers were less authoritarian and controlling than less educated parents in Saudi Arabia (Al-Mutalq, 1981), Egypt (Hana, 1974), and Algeria (Sahrawi, 1998). Mahmoud (1997) reported that mothers of a higher socioeconomic level tend to be more authoritative and encouraging of their children's independence than lower socioeconomic-level mothers.

Method

Sample

Participants in the current study included 300 students (155 males and 145 females), aged from 15-17 years, from prep and secondary schools located in Al Arish Governorate, Egypt.

Procedures

Letters were sent to the parents of the students in the target classes informing them of the nature of the study. Parents were asked to complete the questionnaires independently and without providing identifying information, then to send their completed surveys together in a single envelope.

Measures

Parenting Style

Each parent independently completed the Parent Authority Questionnaire. According to Ang (2006), the 30-item PAQ was developed to measure adolescent perceptions of Baumrind's (1971) parental authority and was validated on a sample of college students. In the current study, the PAQ was modified to address parental self-report of parenting style, substituting "my mother" with "I" for all items. Mother and father forms were identical. The revised PAQ consisted of 10 items measuring authoritarian parenting style, 10 items measuring authoritative parenting styles, and 10 items measuring permissive parenting style. An example of an authoritarian item is "When I ask my children to do something, I want them to do it immediately without asking any questions." An authoritative item is "When my family chooses to do something, I will discuss the reasons for the choice with the children." A permissive item is "I feel that children can do whatever they like." Responses to each of these items were rating on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Both mothers and fathers were requested to complete this survey separately.

Internal consistency of the resulting subscales was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha. For each subscale of the PAQ, a scale score was obtained by taking a mean of the relevant items. A higher score indicated a higher level of that particular parenting style. Among the Authoritarian scale items, items 2, 3, 12, 16 and 18 did not contribute to internal consistency of the scale. These items were therefore dropped, and the authoritarian composite included the remaining 5 items. Cronbach alpha coefficients revealed good internal consistency in the subscales (Authoritarian, $\alpha = .686$; Authoritative, $\alpha = .680$; Permissive, $\alpha = .663$).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (1965). A sample item is "I am able to do things as well as most other people." Each of the 10 items is given a score from 1 to 5 and higher scores indicate more positive self-esteem. The alpha reliability for the sample was .90.

Depression

Depression was assessed with the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Short Depression Scale (Andresen, Malmgren, Carter, & Patrick, 1994; Radloff, 1977). In this scale participants are given a list of feelings and behaviors and are asked to indicate how often they have felt this way during the past week. Sample items include "I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me," and "I felt that everything I did was an effort." Responses to each of the depression items were scored on a 1 to 4 scale, 1 being "rarely or none of the time" and 4 being "all of the time," with higher scores indicating higher levels of depression. The alpha reliability for the sample was .80.

Results

To examine the differences between mothers' and fathers' parenting style, paired t-tests for each parenting scale were conducted. Results of these tests were not significant. There were no significant differences between mothers and fathers on the four parenting scales scores.

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviation for Parenting Scale Scores

Variables	Mother		Father		r	Paired t
	M	SD	M	SD		
Authoritarian	2.88	0.58	2.89	0.19	0.31	-0.71, No sig
Authoritative	3.93	0.37	3.91	0.54	0.53	0.21, No sig
Permissive	2.98	0.69	2.65	0.49	0.51	-0.46, No sig
Neglectful	2.64	0.53	2.48	0.52	0.50	-0.43, No sig

Maternal parenting style

Post hoc comparisons for maternal style yielded significant differences between the authoritative style and the remaining three styles, with the authoritative style scoring higher on self-esteem and lower on depression than the remaining three styles. Additionally, the post hoc comparison yielded a significant difference between the permissive style and the authoritarian and neglectful style, with the permissive style scoring higher on self-esteem than the authoritarian and neglectful style (Table 2).

Table 2 Self-esteem, and depression for maternal parenting style categories

Maternal Parenting Styles	Outcomes			
	Self esteem		Depression	
	M	SD	M	SD
Authoritative	4.18	0.58	1.40	0.43
Permissive	3.72	0.77	1.34	0.39
Authoritarian	3.45	0.65	1.29	0.35
Neglectful	3.87	0.39	1.33	0.72

Paternal parenting style

Post hoc comparisons for paternal style yielded significant differences between the authoritative style and the authoritarian and neglectful styles, with the authoritative style scoring higher on self-esteem and life-satisfaction than the authoritarian and neglectful styles. Additionally, the post hoc comparison yielded a significant difference between the authoritative style and the permissive and neglectful styles, with the authoritative style scoring lower on depression than the permissive and neglectful styles (Table 3).

Table 3 Self-esteem, and depression for paternal parenting style categories

Paternal Parenting Styles	Outcomes			
	Self esteem		Depression	
	M	SD	M	SD
Authoritative	4.28	0.68	1.20	0.53
Permissive	3.62	0.67	1.44	0.49
Authoritarian	3.35	0.65	1.39	0.35
Neglectful	3.27	0.35	1.23	0.52

Discussion

The goal of this study was to compare mothers' and fathers' parenting styles within the Egyptian population from prep and secondary schools located in Al Arish Governorate, Egypt. In addition, this study examined associations between both mothers' and fathers' parenting styles and self esteem and depression adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 years.

Overall the results indicate that parenting styles are related to well-being in adolescents. Authoritative parenting was found to relate to higher self-esteem and life-satisfaction and to lower depression. These findings are consistent with previous work on children suggesting a link between parenting practices and adjustment (Karavasilis et al., 2003; Kauffman et al., 2000; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

However, of particular note is that although the advantage of authoritative mothering over permissive mothering is evident for all outcomes assessed, for paternal styles the advantage is less defined and is only evident for depression. These findings seem to indicate that permissive fathering may not be as detrimental to the child as permissive mothering. The importance of fathers in the lives of children has received recent attention in empirical studies (Lamb, 1986). Nevertheless, although fathers are beginning to play a large role in the lives of children, fathers seem to serve a different function in parenting than do mothers (Lamb, 1986), which may account for the differences found in the current study. It is possible that since fathers play a more playful role in the lives of children, having a permissive father may complement the fatherhood role and hence may not interfere with the child's well-being as much as having a permissive mother. As parenting studies assessing these relationships seldom included separate analyses for mothers and fathers, conclusions regarding these dynamics are necessarily speculative. These differences highlight the importance of examining the consequences of parenting practices separately for mothers and fathers.

Limitations of the Study

The current study has some limitations that need to be taken into consideration, including concerns regarding the characteristics of the sample. The majority of the parents' responses on questionnaires was quite similar and comprised a lack of variability. The lack of variance within the sample makes finding significant differences less likely. A larger and more economically diverse Chinese sample may reveal differences attributable to parenting style.

The measures used in this study were self-report, which is similar to other studies of the nature of using self-report measures (Chao, 1994; Wu et al., 2002). This study was limited by the sole use of the Parental Authority Questionnaire (Ang, 2006; Buri, 1991) and self-report data gathered from parents on how they interact with their children. As in any study relying upon the accuracy of parents' perception of relationship within the family, bias may have influenced the outcome. Future research might supplement parent report with adolescents' report. It would be interesting to compare parents' responses on parenting style measures. Researchers could also incorporate multiple methods, such as, observations and interviews in assessing parenting style. According to Wu et al. (2002), mean differences in self-rating could be due to response sets reflecting different cultural norms. For example, Confucian society encourages the avoidance of extremes (Wu et al., 2002).

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