

*Original Article***Relationship between mothers' parenting style in female students of guidance schools in Isfahan and background factors**

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Abstract

Background: Parenting style in communication with teenagers is a complex and double way process that affects progress and success of all generations both at present time and future. Due to the importance of having accurate knowledge about mothers' parenting style and its underlying factors, it has been assessed in this study.

Methods: This study was a descriptive cross-sectional study on 737 female students in guidance schools in Isfahan. Information about background factors and mothers' parenting styles were gathered according to parent's control and responding via specified questionnaires. Data was analyzed with Pearson correlation coefficient.

Results: According to the results, 30.8 % of students had mothers with authoritative parental style, 48.2 % had mothers with permissive parental styles, 7.9 % had despotic mothers and 13.2 % had mothers with neglectful parental style. Data analysis showed significant correlation between mother's education and parenting style but there was no significant relation between parental style and student's age, mother's age, birth rank and mother's employment.

Conclusion: This study concluded that permissive style and after that, despotic style, were the most common parenting styles in female guidance school students' mothers. Mothers with higher levels of education used permissive and despotic parenting styles more in comparison with other mothers. It seems that these mothers try to response to physiological and emotional needs of their daughters instead of teach them the family values.

Key words: Parenting style, mothers, guidance school students, daughters

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For establishing a stable personality, all of the humans need their parents' love and support and need to feel secure in family from childhood to be able to build their future psychological life according to factors like feeling popular and secure in family, correct adaptation with family and society environment and satisfying rational and right demands.

Parents provide the teenager's physiological and emotional needs and along with that, their expectations from their children encourage them to learn correct behavioral values.¹ According to parents' behaviors, teenagers understand how others judge them and they can evaluate them-

selves and strength their self-esteem.² In Iran 13-16 years old students go to guidance school. Significant physiological, emotional, social and behavioral changes begin in teenagers at guidance school age. Guidance school students face rapid physiological growth and puberty, social development and all of its aspects like independence, responsibility, discipline, finding their personal values and identity and membership in groups contain other students with same age. Variety in manners develops with puberty so education must be proportionate to variety and differences in teenagers' individual characteristics. During puberty, teenagers need to feel

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more love, worthiness, acceptance, understanding, sincerity and honesty³ and parents must prepare appropriate environment for them to develop these characteristics. In every society, parents use different strategies to communicate with teenagers that can be affected by their cultures, beliefs and values. These differences among parents in different families cause a wide spectrum of development in teenagers.⁴

Miller et al study showed, aggressive reactions are more common in teenagers with permissive mothers rather than those with authoritative or despotic mothers.¹ Merrell et al reported that teenagers with authoritative mothers have more behavioral control.⁵

Aunola et al showed failure and irrelevant and passive behaviors are less expected from teenagers with authoritative mothers.⁶ Kim et al concluded permissive and authoritative mothers have children with higher self-esteem.⁷

These studies demonstrated that teenagers' relations with their parents, especially mothers as the main axis of the relations, has specified importance and parental style determination especially maternal style can be useful in learning about the existing themes in the family for the teenagers' growth. Mother's parenting style isn't an isolated process and affected by many background themes exists in the family,⁸ so this study designed to assess different maternal styles in guidance school teenagers' families and their correlation with their family background factors which is necessary in preparation of mothers' educational programs.

Methods

Present study was a descriptive cross-sectional study on 737 female guidance school students in both governmental and private schools from all of the 5 educational regions in Isfahan, in 2006. Every subject had Iranian nationality and was under direct supervision of her parents. The exclusion criterion in the study was diagnosed mental illness in mother. Information was gathered via a 2-part questionnaire. Part one contained questions on demographic characteristics of the subjects and their mothers and part two contained questions for assessment mothers' pa-

renting styles. The primary parenting style questionnaire was prepared according to the questionnaire in Miller et al study which assessed parent's control and responding.¹ Content and form validity of the primary questionnaire was confirmed by 4 educational sciences specialists. Reliability of the questionnaire was tested through a pilot study on 20 guidance school students and confirmed with Cronbach's alpha coefficient which was equal to 85%. Multi-stage clustering sharing method was used as sampling method. Each educational region in Isfahan considered as a cluster and each cluster has a share according to number of its students. Schools were randomly chosen from every region and classes from first, second and third grades were randomly selected in each guidance school. Questionnaires were filled by the subjects. After information gathering, data was statistically analyzed. Factor analysis test was used for determination of parenting styles and after that parenting styles were categorized by k-means test. Assessed parenting styles were authoritative parenting style (more control, more response), despotic parenting style (more control, less response), permissive parenting style (less control, more response) and neglectful parenting style (less control, less response). Pearson correlation coefficient and spearman correlation coefficient were used to evaluate the correlation between parenting styles and background factors like student's age, mother's age, mother's education, mother's employment and birth rank.

Results

The findings of this study on 737 female students with the mean age of 13 ± 1.02 years showed that the parenting style of mothers was as follow: 30.8% authoritative, 48.2% permissive, 13.2% neglectful and 7.9% despotic.

The mean age of mothers was 37.05 ± 5.73 years. 19.23% of mothers were housewives. Regarding educational level of mothers, 3.4% were illiterate, 19.09% had primary school studies, 32% had high school studies, 32.8% had a high school diploma and 10.4% had university studies.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of mothers' parenting style based on their education.

Parenting style	Permissive	Authoritative	Despotic	Neglectful
Education				
Illiterate	12%	36%	20%	32%
Primary school	4.20%	51%	5.9%	19%
High school	4.31%	3.48%	6.7%	7.12%
High school diploma	2.37%	9.45%	2.6%	7.10%
University	5.32%	2.53%	8.7%	5.6%

As table 1 show, 32% of illiterate mothers' parenting style was neglectful and 53% of mothers with university studies had authoritative parenting style. There was a correlation between parenting style and background factor of education, but there was no correlation between parenting style and students' birth rank and age and mothers' age and job.

Discussion

The results of data analysis show that most mothers' parenting style for their daughters is permissive and then authoritative. In a research on male students from 13 to 16 years old in Isfahan, the results showed that most mothers' parenting style was authoritative (38.2%), then permissive (30.6%), and after that despotic and neglectful (13.3% and 13.2%, respectively).⁹ Studies in the United States show that 41% of mothers are authoritative, 29% are despotic and 30% are permissive.¹

Comparing these results show that in dealing with their daughters, mothers usually make a friendly relationship rather than applying controlling policies. However, Amrani et al believe that not having enough expectations from teenager causes lack of discipline in their personality and makes the emotional and behavioral control to be associated with destabilization of personality.⁴ But Endicott believes that teenagers who have permissive parents have a better self-confidence and social growth.¹⁰ Supple's study shows that parents' support improve children's self-esteem.¹¹

Considering the high percentage of permissive parenting by mothers, a controlling role by fathers can complete the supportive role of mothers that can positively affect the growth

process of teenagers and guide them towards coping with the social relations' existing conditions by respecting social norms and values. In most societies, fathers have the controlling role and it comes along with mother's supportive role.¹² Moreover, the social expectations from teenagers to respect the values of society alongside mothers' responsive characteristics, can impact on their social growth. Using neglectful parenting style with a frequency of 13.2% in this study is a warning sign and educational authorities should plan to educate parents on the effects of this parenting style.

Also, the results show that parents with higher level of education use authoritative parenting style more than others, while the most illiterate mothers use neglectful parenting style. Hoff et al found a relation between economic and social situation and parenting style and that parents with higher educational level have better communication with their children.¹³

It is reported that working mothers' job, especially if causes tiredness, dissatisfaction and stress, have harmful effects on their health, energy and self-esteem and in turn can affect their interaction with their children.¹³ However, the present study found no correlation between mothers' job and their parenting style.

Based on the results, a relatively high percentage of illiterate mothers use neglectful parenting style, which can have destructive effects on teenagers' growth. Therefore, it is recommended that PTA and public media provide necessary educations about parenting styles and dealing with teenagers.

Also, the authors declare that have no conflict of interest in this study and they have surveyed under the research ethics.

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