

# The Role of Father's Parenting Styles on Their Children's General Health

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**Abstract.** Aim: To determine the relationship between parenting style and general health, this study performed. Methods: 400 middle school students (200 boys and 200 girls) who were randomly selected were administered the Goldberg's 28-item questionnaire of general health. Also, the fathers of all participants responded to Baumrind's measure of parenting style questionnaire. The style of rearing included permissive, authoritarian and authoritative. General health was considered to be the subjects' level of adjustment and lack of psychopathological symptoms. The predictor or independent variable was the parent's child-rearing style and the dependent variable (criterion) was the subject's general health. Results: Our results showed that general health of students whose parents had authoritative rearing style was better than that of students whose parents had authoritarian and permissive rearing style. Conclusion: father's increased knowledge leads to their increased awareness regarding their rearing styles which, in turn, leads to adapting more suitable rearing styles.

**Key Words:** Parenting Style; General Health, Father's Education

## 1. Introduction

Examining the effects of parental rearing styles has been done from many different aspects; e.g., studying the relationship between parental rearing style and patterns of attachment [1]; the quality of adult relationship with adolescent and its role in the development of behavioral problems, and the evaluation of the role of personality factors in this regard [2]. Most of the studies performed in this area have looked at some important features of parent-child relationship including warmth, care and involvement in order to evaluate psychosocial consequences of such relationship.

The general characteristics of parent – child behavior are defined by some researchers in three different aspects including:

- Warmth: Parental behavior including affection more than ignoring and punishment.
- Monitoring: Parents bearing this behavioral aspect supervise their children very closely and set out stringent codes of behavior for their children to abide by; but do not necessarily punish them if they fail to do so [3].
- Involvement: Parents with this behavioral aspect are only able to explain their children's behaviors and attitude and from the viewpoint of attitude they are child – oriented; i.e., they abide by the rules of their children [4].

Three types of parent's behavioral pattern; Authoritative, Authoritarian and permissive have been offered regarding the warmth and control aspect of behavior [5]. In terms of child rearing, authoritative parents employ high control and warmth, authoritarian parents employ high control and low warmth and permissive patterns employ low control and high warmth, towards raising their children [6]. Children of authoritative parents, compared to those of authoritarian's, are more independent and have higher self-esteem. Also, they have higher sense of responsibility and are more flexible when encountering educational and mental problems. The children of authoritarian parents are unable to perform alone. They have a very low self-esteem, lack of sense of curiosity and are inflexible in terms of academic and mental problems [7].

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Despite the fact that numerous studies have been performed in order to assess some important features of parenting, no attempt has been made to determine the role of some demographic variables such as age or the level of education. Education also plays a role in different social classes when it comes to raising children. For example, middle class parents are interested in verbal stimuli and are more inclined to rearing their children's "internal traits" during their schooling [8].

Given the aforementioned facts, the question to be answered is what kind of rearing style brings about what types of psychological consequences in children. Specifically first whether there is a relationship between paternal rearing style with children's general health? And second, is there a relationship between demographic characteristics of fathers with their children's general health.

## 2. Method:

Our sample included 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Tehran who were randomly selected. In order to control variables such as income or severe cultural differences, the 4<sup>th</sup> district of education was chosen, and from this district four middle schools were randomly selected. From these students 400 (200 subjects from each gender) were randomly chosen. Then, following coordination with school officials, an invitation was extended to the subjects' fathers to attend the school in order to fill out the measure of parenting style.

## 3. Instruments:

### 3.1. Measure of Parenting Style

This questionnaire consists of 30 items, 10 of which relate to permissive, 10 to authoritarian and 10 to authoritative methods of raising children. In this research subjects following the study of each item, record their responses on a five-point scale.

The MPS was constructed based on Baumrind's theory [5] in 1991 and was translated into Farsi by Esfandiary in 1995[9]. The reliability of MPS for permissive, authoritarian and authoritative parental rearing method was, 0.69, 0.77, and 0.73, respectively. The stability of MPS was determined through a retest method as 0.81, 0.85 and 0.92 for permissive, authoritarian and authoritative, respectively, [5]. Furthermore, she reported the validity of the questionnaire as the following: mother's authoritarian had inverse relation with her permissive (0.50) and authoritative (0.52) method [9].

### 3.2. General Health Questionnaire

GHQ is comprised of 28 items each which includes 7 questions. The items of GHQ are scored on a simple Likert scale (0,1,2,3). A score of 23 and higher is an indication of lack of general health and a score below 23 is an indication of general health.

The GHQ was constructed by Goldberg in 1972 [10]. The results of meta analysis performed on GHQ have shown that the average sensitivity of this questionnaire to be 0.84 (between 0.77 and 0.89) [11]. Also in a preliminary study the validity of GHQ was determined by inviting those subjects who filled the GHQ and its sensitivity was calculated [12]. The reliability of 28-item version of this questionnaire has been assessed by retest as being 0.55 for the entire questionnaire, and 0.44, 0.46, 0.42 for the subscales of physical symptom, anxiety and social dysfunction respectively; and for depression subscale was 0.47 [13]. This questionnaire was administered to 223 students and its reliability coefficient based on Cronbach's Alpha was calculated as 0.94 [14].

## 4. Results

To answer the question as to whether the general health of children with different parental rearing pattern an analysis of variance was performed on our data the results of which are illustrated in table 1 :

Table1. Analysis of Variance of Difference Between Mean of General Health of children with different Parenting Style

General Health	Total Square	df	Mean Square	F	P VALUE
Between Group	30503.580	2	15251.790	193.114	0.0001

<b>Within Group</b>	31354.398	397	78.978
<b>Total</b>	61857.987	399	

As illustrated there is a significant difference between the general health of children's of fathers with different parental rearing styles ( $p < 0.0001$ ). The results of Tukey's test also show a significant difference parental rearing styles: specifically, between permissive and authoritative and authoritarian styles. However, there is no significant difference between permissive and authoritarian rearing style. These results are illustrated in Table 2.

Table2. The results of Tukey's test for Comparison of Child General Health with different Parenting Style

Father's Rearing Style	Father's Rearing Style	Mean Difference	Standard Error	P Value
Permissive	Authoritarian	0.213	1.4601	0.988
	Authoritative	18.1606	1.1410	0.001
Authoritarian	Authoritative	17.9475	1.2080	0.001

Table 4. Standard and Non-Standard Coefficient of Father's Demographic Variables in Predicting Children's General Health

Model	Unstandard Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	t	P Value
	b	Standard Error	$\beta$		
constant	22.733	4.567		5.620	0.0001
Father's Age	0.153	0.124	0.075	1.227	0.221
Fathers with education at Master's level	-14.811	1.791	-0.387	-8.268	0.0001
Fathers with education at Bachelor's level	-10.678	1.218	-0.416	-8.767	0.0001
Number of Children	4.069	0.706	-0.003	0.58	0.954
Family Income	3.341	0.0001	0.066	1.483	0.139

Apart from the relationship between parental rearing styles, it is necessary to study the relationship between some demographic features as well.

As such, to determine the relationship between demographic features of fathers (age, level of education, income, and number of children) and general health, a regression analysis was performed.

Regression model showed that 23.6% of observed variation in mental health can be explained by 5 predictor variables. An analysis of variance of regression coefficient of demographic variables for predicting the variable of children's general health is significant at  $P < 0.0001$ . The results of the analysis of variance are illustrated in Table 4.

The results of Table 3 illustrates that from 5 variables in the model only 2 can explain the changes in criterion (general health) variable. These variables are dependent on the level of father's education. Specifically, the level of father's education; i.e., Master's and Bachelor's with  $b = -14.811$  and  $b = -10.678$ , respectively, could significantly predict changes in children's general health. As such, the variable of father's education could explain the variable of mental health with %99 certainty.

## 5. Discussion

Our results showed that the general health of children whose fathers employ an authoritative style of rearing was better than those of children whose fathers employed an authoritarian and permissive style of rearing. This finding is consistent with the findings of another study [15] that showed individuals with high motivations for achievement are reared in environments where competence and efficiency is expected of them and are given independence at younger ages. Also, results of another research has shown that parental behavior moderated the association between children's difficult temperament and psychosocial development. [2]

Furthermore, our results were consistent with those of a study [6] which showed that adolescents raised by authoritative parents had high scores on social competence and low scores on psychosocial disorder scale. The converse of this was true for adolescence that identified their parents as permissive. Additionally,

adolescents with authoritarian parents had high score on scales pertaining to obedience and conformity with adult standards. However, compared to other adolescents, these individuals showed a lower comprehension of self. On the contrary, adolescents belonging to moderately liberal families had a higher sense of self – esteem; but, to some extent displayed behavioral problems at school such as high frequency of absence from school [6].

Given the aforementioned points, it seems that in addition to the features of child-rearing patterns, demographic features also play a determining role in the formation of children's general health which is apart from the role of educational styles. The results of the present research showed that the level of education can also play a determining role in the formation of children's psychological characteristics. The implication of the present findings is that the factor of father's education can potentially be used in the process of devising general health plans for children and, possibly, can be regarded as a preventive measure against children developing some form of mental illness.

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