

Original Article

**Comparison of Parenting Style in Single Child and Multiple Children Families**

Masoumeh Alidosti<sup>1</sup> Seyedeh Leila Dehghani<sup>1</sup> Akbar Babaei-Heydarabadi<sup>2</sup> \*Elahe Tavassoli<sup>3</sup>

1- Department of Public Health, Behbahan Faculty of Medical Sciences, Behbahan, Iran

2- Department of Public Health, School of Health, Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Iran

3- Department of Public Health, School of Health, Shahrekord University of Medical Sciences, Shahrekord, Iran

\*[tavassoli.eb@gmail.com](mailto:tavassoli.eb@gmail.com)

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**Abstract**

**Background and Purpose:** Family is the first and the most important structure in human civilization in which social lifestyles, mutual understanding, and compatibility is learned. Studies have shown that parenting style, is one the most important and fundamental factors in personality development. The purpose of this study was comparison of parenting style in single child and multiple children families.

**Materials and Methods:** This study, in total, 152 mothers from Andimeshk city, Iran, were selected by random sampling. Data were collected from a health-care center was chosen randomly, mothers who had 5-7 years old children were enrolled in this study. The data collecting tool was the questionnaire which investigates permissive, authoritative, and authoritarian parenting styles in parents. After data entry in SPSS software, the collected data were analyzed by ANOVA, independent t-test, and Pearson correlation test.

**Results:** The mean age of the participants was  $32.71 \pm 5.39$  years old participated in this study. 69 mothers (45.4%) had one child, 53 (34.9%) had 2 children, and 30 mothers (19.7%) had 3 and more children. The mean score of permissive parenting style was  $19.97 \pm 5.13$  in single child families; the mean score of authoritative ( $19.56 \pm 4.70$ ) and authoritarian parenting style ( $34.50 \pm 2.81$ ) that difference was significantly ( $P < 0.050$ ).

**Conclusion:** According to the results of this study, it seems that having more children would make parents more logical and paves the way for upbringing children. Therefore, it is recommended to plan some educational programs about this issue for parents.

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## 1. Introduction

Family is the first and the most important structure in human civilization in which social lifestyles, mutual understanding, and compatibility is learned. Family is the best context for flourishing human capabilities and talents (1) and it has a basic role in people's personality formation. Human starts his living from family and the base of his personality and intellectual values establish there (2). Each family utilizes specific methods for the personal and social education of their children. These methods, that are called "parenting style," are affected by various factors such as biological, cultural, social, political, and economic factors (3). Studies have shown that among various contributing factors of personality development, parenting style is one the most important and fundamental ones (4). Parenting is a complicated activity that includes some special methods and behaviors that affect children's growth separately or with interaction with each other. Actually, the base of parenting style is parents' effort to control and socialize their children (5). Parents try to transfer the norms and values of their own society which has been imposed to them by their own parents and teachers (4). The perception of parents about their children is also affected by their economic, social, and cultural levels or cultural capital (6). We can defiantly say that the family environment and parenting styles have important impacts on children's psychosocial development (6). Researchers believe that there is a significant association between parenting styles and anxiety in children and adolescents (7). The method that parents adopt to bring up their children

has a fundamental role in their children's mental health (8) and some studies have shown that opposition defiant disorder and conduct disorder and also problems in nurturing children are associated with the number of children in the family (9). In Farnoodian et al. study (10), there is the difference between parenting style and perfectionism and self-regulation in single child and multiple children families. In recent decades, the reduction in childbearing in Iran has been in a way that the 50% decrease in fertility, not only has made Iran unique among Islamic countries but such a record has not been observed anywhere else (11). Considering the importance of childbearing and parenting from Islamic, sociology and psychology perspective, it seems that comparison of the parenting styles in single child and multiple children families may provide useful information about the impact of the number of children on the method of parenting, and the result may be used in parenting and childbearing educations. Therefore, this study is conducted to compare the parenting styles in single child and multiple children families in Andimeshk city, Iran in 2015.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This is a cross-sectional descriptive study conducted in Andimeshk city in 2015. Among 5 health-care centers of Andimeshk city, one center was chosen randomly. The statistical population was 208 mothers with 5-7 years old children who had a profile in the health-care center. The sampling was done according to the census information. At first, a list of eligible people was prepared. Then by telephone calls, the aim

of the study was explained to them and those who desired to participate in the study were asked to come to the health-care center and fill the questionnaire. Consent was required to participate in the study and participants were assured that their information would be kept confidential.

The data were collected by Bamerind parenting style questionnaire. This questionnaire is adopted from the theory of parental authority. This theory that was created by Diana Baumrind contains three prototypes of parenting style which are permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. This questionnaire includes 30 statements that 10 of them are related to permissive, 10 to authoritative, and 10 to authoritarian prototype. Reliability of 3 subscales has been reported to be 0.81, 0.86, and 0.88, respectively (12). This questionnaire has been used in several studies in Iran and it has been reported to be valid and reliable (13-15).

Questions were in Likert 5 choice scale (from completely agree to completely disagree) and scores were ranged from 0 to 4. By summing the scores, 3 discrete scores for permissive, authoritative, and authoritarian parenting style were obtained. The analysis of collected data was done by SPSS software (version 16; SPSS Inc.,

Chicago, IL, USA) and using statistical tests of ANOVA, independent t-test, and Pearson correlation coefficient. The significance level was set at 0.050.

### 3. Results

In this study, 152 mothers participated. The mean age of mothers and their last child was  $32.71 \pm 5.39$  and  $6.06 \pm 0.76$  years old, respectively. 13 participants (74.3%) were housewives and 39 (25.7%) were employed. The education level of 28 people (18.4%) was under diploma, 57 people (37.5%) diploma, and 67 people (44.1%) academic. 69 people of participants (45.4%) had one child, 53 (34.9%) had 2 children, and 30 people (19.7%) had 3 and more children. The comparison of mean scores of parenting styles (permissive, authoritative, and authoritarian) in families with 1 child, families with 2 children, and families with 3 and more children. ANOVA test showed that there was a significant association between number of children (Table 1) and parenting styles, Tukey's post-hoc test showed the mean score of permissive style in single child families was significantly more than families that have 2 and 3 children also, the mean score of authoritative style in families with 2

**Table 1.** Comparison of the mean score of parenting style in three groups of families with 1, 2 and 3 and more children

Parenting style	Number of children			df	F	P value
	1 Mean $\pm$ SD	2 Mean $\pm$ SD	3 and more Mean $\pm$ SD			
Permissive style	19.97 $\pm$ 5.13	17.05 $\pm$ 5.13	16.03 $\pm$ 3.54	149	9.001	< 0.001
Authoritative style	16.10 $\pm$ 5.88	19.56 $\pm$ 4.70	16.66 $\pm$ 4.63	148	8.278	< 0.001
Authoritarian style	30.30 $\pm$ 5.21	30.13 $\pm$ 5.99	34.50 $\pm$ 2.81	149	6.874	< 0.001

SD: Standard deviation, df: degree freedom

**Table 2.** Comparison of the mean score of parenting style in housewives and employed mothers

Parenting style	Comparison between housewife and employed mothers		P value
	Housewife Mean $\pm$ SD*	Employed Mean $\pm$ SD	
Permissive style	18.52 $\pm$ 4.86	17.17 $\pm$ 5.74	0.190
Authoritative style	17.92 $\pm$ 5.09	15.94 $\pm$ 6.27	0.050
Authoritarian style	30.71 $\pm$ 5.43	33.12 $\pm$ 5.18	0.150

SD: Standard deviation

children was significantly more than families that have 1 and 3 children, and the mean score of authoritarian style in families with 3 and more children was significantly more than families that have 1 and 2 children ( $P < 0.050$ ), and there was a significant association between parenting style and the number of children (Table 1).

In investigation of the association between parenting styles and demographic characteristics, no significant association was observed but Pearson test showed that there was a significant adverse association between age and permissive parenting style ( $P < 0.050$ ,  $r = -0.22$ ). Comparison of the mean score of parenting style in housewives and employed mothers, with use from independent t-test; there was a significant difference between housewives and employed mothers in authoritative parenting style such that the mean score of authoritative parenting styles in housewives was significantly higher than it in employed mothers (Table 2).

#### 4. Discussion

In the explanation of parenting styles, it should be mentioned that parents would be in one of the permissive, authoritative, and authoritarian groups. The authoritarian parents are very controlling, demanding and also very accountable and amendable. The permissive parents apply less of control and

demand and much of accountability and acceptance. The authoritative parents are very demanding and controlling while their acceptance and accountability is low and they pay no attention to child's needs (16).

Baumrind found out that various parenting styles are different in two aspects: the first aspect is expectation and control and the other aspect is acceptance and compliance (13). Azad Moosavi and Jalali (17) have analyzed parents from these two aspects and found out that authoritarian parents have a high score in expectation and accountability. Authoritative parents had a high score in expectation also but a low score in accountability. Permissive parents had a high score in accountability and low score in expectation and inattentive parents had low score in expectation and accountability. It seems that among three studied parenting styles, the authoritarian style is closer to the responsible parenting which is recommended in our religious teachings. In the responsible parenting style, parents consider God's order on nurturing children. Therefore, responsible parenting which is according to the principles mentioned in Quran and Hadith may have positive outcomes. In responsible parenting style, parents believe that nurturing and guiding children are their duty and God oversees their performance, so they are accountable in dooms day and this guarantees

their proper performance (5). Permissive and authoritative parents may not be successful in doing this. In this study, such parents were observed mostly in families with fewer children (1 or 2) and it seems that having more children makes parents more logical and it paves the way for nurturing children according to Islamic teachings.

According to the results, permissive parenting style in single child families, authoritative style in families with 2 children, and authoritarian parenting style in families with 3 and more children was significantly more common. It seems that having more children makes parents more logic and paves the way for nurturing children. The authoritarian parenting style is closer to the responsible parenting which is recommended in religious teaching and maybe permissive or authoritative parents will not successfully implement responsible parenting style. Unfortunately, the viewpoint of some parents about having only one child has led to the reduction in childbearing and this issue not only has some demographic consequences but it may lead to unsuccessfulness in proper nurturing of children in our country. Therefore, due to the importance, it is recommended to perform more studies on this issue and some proper educational program be planned for parents.

### **Conflict of Interests**

The Authors have no conflict of interest.

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