

Investigating the Predictive Role of Personality Traits on Parenting Styles in Couples of 6-12 Years Children

Zahra Vafaenejad¹, Fourozan Elyasi², Mahmood Moosazadeh³, Zohreh Shahhosseini^{4*}

¹ Student Research Committee, Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, Sari, IRAN

² Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Research Center, Sexual and Reproductive Health Research Center, Addiction Institute, Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, Sari, IRAN

³ Health Sciences Research Center, Addiction Institute, Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, Sari, IRAN

⁴ Sexual and Reproductive Health Research Center, Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, Sari, IRAN

*Corresponding Author: zshahhosseini@yahoo.com

Citation: Vafaenejad, Z., Elyasi, F., Moosazadeh, M. and Shahhosseini, Z. (2020). Investigating the Predictive Role of Personality Traits on Parenting Styles in Couples of 6-12 Years Children. *European Journal of Environment and Public Health*, 4(2), em0041. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejeph/8215>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 16 Apr. 2020

Accepted: 20 Apr. 2020

ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study aimed to investigate the predictive role of parental personality traits on parenting styles.

Methods: Using a systematic sampling method, a total number of 617 couples with 6-12 years old child living in northeastern Iran, were recruited. The data were collected via the Robinson Parenting Styles & Dimensions Questionnaire, Goldberg's Big-Five Personality Inventory, and a socio-demographic form.

Results: Results indicated that (a) in mothers and fathers with increasing the personality traits such as emotional stability, and openness to experience, authoritarianism was decreased and authoritative was increased, (b) when mothers and fathers have more conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience, permissiveness was decreased, (c) when fathers have more extraversion, and conscientiousness, authoritarianism, and authoritative were increased respectively, (d) in mothers with agreeableness and conscientiousness, authoritative was shown, (e) in mothers with increasing openness to experience, permissiveness was decreased.

Conclusions: This study indicated mother-father differences in personality traits leads to a different typology of parenting styles for their children. Hence, the assessment of parenting styles should be an important focus for evaluation in parents with different personality traits and vice versa, when parental personality traits are investigated, attention to parenting styles should be essential.

Keywords: children, child rearing, personality traits, parenting styles, parenting

INTRODUCTION

Parenting styles play a significant role in the development of children's psychological and emotional characteristics (Rezayi Aval et al., 2016). The given styles are considered as models for training and education of children. They are typically shaped within parent-child interactions and during parental responses to children's behaviors (Maddahiet al., 2012). Three major parenting styles include authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive (Alavi et al., 2015; Kuppens and Ceulemans, 2019). Relationships between parents and children are not identical and compliant with a particular model which can be also affected by different factors such as parental personality trait (Huver et al., 2010; Rezayi Aval et al., 2016). The most important parental personality traits are extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, openness to

experience, and conscientiousness (Khormae and Farmani, 2014; Oshio et al., 2018).

Review of existing literature has been stated that parents with the personality traits of extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience have been mainly adopting an authoritative parenting style (Huver et al., 2010). In contrast, parents with lower levels of emotional stability have been likely to use authoritative or authoritarian parenting styles (Dickson et al., 2014; Huver et al., 2010), yet, some differences have been reported in the results of relevant studies (Danesh et al., 2014; Savitha and Venkatachalam, 2016).

Although, a number of investigations conducted on the relationship between parental personality traits and parenting styles, few studies have investigated this issue in couples simultaneously. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics, parenting style, personality traits of Participants

| Variables | | Mother (n=617) | Father (n=617) |
|----------------------------------|--|----------------|----------------|
| Perceived Socioeconomic Status** | High | 39.70 | 37.80 |
| | Moderate | 50.20 | 49.60 |
| | low | 10.10 | 12.60 |
| Level of education** | Primary | 29.00 | 30.00 |
| | Secondary | 43.90 | 36.60 |
| | Higher education | 27.10 | 33.40 |
| Employment status** | Employed | 19.10 | 95.90 |
| | Unemployed | 80.90 | 4.10 |
| Personality traits* | Extraversion (score ranged: 10-50) | 30.35 (6.24) | 30.52 (6.31) |
| | Agreeableness (score ranged: 10-50) | 40.34 (5.26) | 39.67 (5.78) |
| | Emotional stability (score ranged: 10-50) | 29.81 (6.89) | 31.97 (6.90) |
| | Openness to experience (score ranged: 10-50) | 36.36 (5.30) | 36.82 (5.87) |
| | Conscientiousness (score ranged: 10-50) | 40.33 (5.44) | 39.85 (6.20) |
| Parenting style* | Authoritarian (score ranged: 15-75) | 53.18 (13.18) | 53.55 (13.55) |
| | Authoritative (score ranged: 12-60) | 26.77 (7.53) | 25.39 (7.77) |
| | Permissive (score ranged: 5-25) | 11.41 (3.52) | 11.15 (3.13) |

* Mean (Standard Deviation)

** Frequency (Percent)

shed light on the predictive role of parental personality traits on parenting styles.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

This descriptive correlational study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Vice-Chancellor's Office for Research at Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, Iran (Ethical code: IR.MAZUMS.REC.2942).

Study Setting and Participants

During a systematic sampling, 617 Iranian couples with at least a child aged 6-12 years old were recruited in the city of Minudasht, in northeastern Iran, between mid-July and the end of December 2017. Several inclusion criteria were set. Participants were required to have reading and writing literacy and be two-parent families. The exclusion criteria included no completion of the questionnaires by at least one of the parents.

Ethical considerations involved assuring study samples in terms of confidentiality of collected data and obtaining informed written consent.

Measures

Parenting styles & dimensions questionnaire (PSDQ): This questionnaire has 32 items and covers three factors of authoritative parenting (15 items, total score range from 15 to 75), authoritarian parenting (12 items, total scores ranged 12 to 60), and permissive parenting (5 items, total score ranged 5 to 25). Each item of the scale was evaluated with the five points Likert as, "never", "once in a while", "about half of the time", "very often", "always". Internal consistency reliabilities based on Cronbach alpha for authoritative style, authoritarian style, and permissive style was 0.64, 0.86 and 0.82 respectively (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019; Rinaldi & Howe, 2012). In this study, scores related to parenting styles were determined using the PSDQ with a high score for the different styles reflecting the dominant approach espoused by a respondent (Howenstein et al., 2015).

Goldberg's Big Five personality inventory: Personality trait was measured using Big Five personality inventory with 50 items developed by Goldberg, which contains five subscales with 10- items (in five Likert scales) per each domain contains: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. Acceptable internal consistency reliabilities were reported for each of subscales with Cronbach alpha ranging from 0.79 to 0.87 (Giberson, Resick, and Dickson, 2005).

Socio-Demographic form: The given form included questions about age, gender, level of education, employment status, number of children and their characteristics including age and gender, marriage duration, housing status, and perceived socioeconomic status.

Statistical Analyses

The data were entered into the SPSS software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 16.0, SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois, USA). Mean and standard deviation was used to describe quantitative variables. Moreover, frequency and percentage were employed to illustrate qualitative ones. To compare the means in both groups, the t-test was used and one-way ANOVA was also employed for the comparison of means in more than two groups. Then a linear regression model was implemented. Statistical significance was based on a p-value of <0.05.

RESULTS

Twenty cases were dropped from these analyses due to no completion of the questionnaires by at least one of the parents (Response rate=96.8%). The mean age of mothers and fathers were 34.78±5.48 and 38.16±5.64 years old; respectively. Moreover, the marriage duration of participants and their children's numbers were 13.54±4.80 (years) and 2.20±0.80; accordingly. Other characteristics of the participants were summarized in **Table 1**.

Among the parents, 441(71.47%) exhibited agreement in parenting styles, and 82.50% raised their children in an

Table 2. Frequency (percent) of parenting styles in participants

| Parenting style | Mother (n=617) | Mother (n=617) | Both parents (n=441)* |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Authoritative | 427 (69.2) | 441 (71.05) | 364 (82.50) |
| Authoritarian | 103 (16.7) | 101 (16.4) | 48 (10.90) |
| Permissive | 87 (14.1) | 75 (12.2) | 29 (6.60) |

*Among those who have parental agreement (n = 441)

Table 3. Summary of regression analysis of parenting styles based on personality traits

| Variables | | Authoritative Parenting style | | Authoritarian Parenting style | | Permissive Parenting style | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | | Univariate analysis | Multivariate analysis | Univariate analysis | Multivariate analysis | Univariate analysis | Multivariate analysis | |
| | | r(p) | Beta (p) | r(p) | Beta(p) | r(p) | Beta(p) | |
| personality traits | Extraversion | Mother | 0.081 (0.045) | -0.056 (0.137) | -0.037 (0.357) | 0.053 (0.197) | -0.085 (0.035) | 0.004 (0.916) |
| | | Father | -0.45 (0.263) | -0.034 (0.386) | 0.111 (0.006) | 0.082 (0.049) | -0.095 (0.018) | -0.041 (0.342) |
| | Agreeableness | Mother | 0.350 (<0.001) | 0.202 (< 0.001) | -0.156 (<0.001) | -0.451 (0.329) | -0.196 (<0.001) | -0.063 (0.166) |
| | | Father | 0.289 (<0.001) | 0.067 (0.143) | -0.188 (<0.001) | -0.019 (0.690) | -0.100 (0.013) | 0.083 (0.094) |
| | Emotional stability | Mother | 0.223 (<0.001) | 0.110 (0.004) | -0.265 (<0.001) | -0.232 (<0.001) | -0.189 (<0.001) | -0.109 (0.008) |
| | | Father | 0.261 (<0.001) | 0.098 (0.013) | -0.306 (<0.001) | -0.212 (<0.001) | -0.178 (<0.001) | -0.107 (0.012) |
| | Openness to experience | Mother | 0.340 (<0.001) | 0.159 (< 0.001) | -0.184 (<0.001) | -0.097 (0.034) | -0.218 (<0.001) | -0.097 (0.033) |
| | | Father | 0.409 (<0.001) | 0.279 (< 0.001) | -0.279 (< 0.001) | -0.189 (<0.001) | -0.212 (<0.001) | -0.133 (0.008) |
| | Conscientiousness | Mother | 0.346 (<0.001) | 0.141 (<0.001) | -0.171 (<0.001) | -0.026 (0.563) | -0.229 (<0.001) | -0.116 (0.011) |
| | | Father | 0.343 (<0.001) | 0.133 (0.003) | -0.207 (<0.001) | -0.048 (0.310) | -0.185 (<0.001) | -0.108 (0.029) |

authoritative fashion. Authoritarian and permissive parenting styles were adopted by only 10.90% and 6.60% of the respondents, respectively (Table 2).

Linear regression showed that the personality traits of agreeableness ($\beta=0.202$, $p<0.001$), emotional stability ($\beta=0.98$, $p=0.013$), openness to experience ($\beta=0.15$, $p<0.001$), and conscientiousness ($\beta=0.110$, $p=0.004$) were directly related to the authoritative parenting style in mothers. In the same group, there was an inverse relationship between emotional stability and openness to experience and authoritarian parenting style ($\beta=-0.232$, $p<0.001$; $\beta=-0.097$, $p=0.034$; respectively) and permissive parenting style (respectively by $\beta=-0.109$, $p=0.008$; $\beta=-0.097$, $p=0.033$). Moreover, a statistically inverse relationship was observed between conscientiousness in mothers and the permissive parenting style ($\beta=-0.116$, $p=0.011$). According to the results of this study, the personality trait of extroversion was directly related to the authoritarian parenting style in fathers ($\beta=0.082$, $p=0.049$). In this group emotional stability ($\beta=0.098$, $p=0.013$), openness to experience ($\beta=0.279$, $p<0.001$), and conscientiousness ($\beta=0.133$, $p=0.003$) were in a direct relationship with authoritative parenting style. Whereas, in fathers, the personality trait of emotional stability and openness to experience were inversely related to authoritarian parenting style ($\beta=-0.212$, $p<0.001$; $\beta=-0.189$, $p<0.001$; respectively) and permissive parenting style (respectively by $\beta=-0.10$, $p=0.012$; $\beta=-0.13$, $p=0.008$). Furthermore, a statistically inverse relationship was found between the personality trait of conscientiousness in fathers and the permissive parenting style ($\beta=-0.108$, $p=0.029$) (Table 3).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed a relationship between parental personality traits and parenting styles. It seems that aspects of the parental personality traits related to proper

relationships with others and individuals' tendency towards empathy and trust such as emotional stability, agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness were associated with a parenting style that is relevant with intimacy. In contrast, lower levels of emotional stability were associated with individuals' tendency to experience tension, grudge, and depression; leading to very strict and authoritarian parenting styles (Alavi et al., 2015; Ataeifar et al., 2014). In line with the results of the present study, Scaffold et al. in their research on 451 teenagers and their parents in the United States reported that the personality traits of agreeableness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness in mothers and fathers were positively related to positive parenting styles containing parental warmth and support (Schofield et al., 2012). In contrast; in the study by Huver et al. in which 665 parents and their children (12-19 years old) in Belgium were examined, no relationship was found between the personality trait of openness to experience and parenting styles adopted, while parents with lower levels of emotional stability had adopted an authoritative parenting style (Huver et al., 2010). It seems parents with higher levels of emotional stability were likely to have higher expectations of their children and they were also more oriented to control their children and select strict parenting styles, and parents endowed with openness to experience were expected to pay much attention to other aspects of parenting; for example, they were likely to improve their children's artistic capacities. One possible explanation for this difference may be the age of our participants. It has been speculated that parents may show less authority and more affection for their younger children (Bornsteine, 2016; Planalp et al., 2016).

In the present study, there was no relationship between the personality trait of extroversion in mothers and fathers and authoritative and permissive parenting styles. However, there was a significant direct relationship between the personality trait of extroversion in fathers and authoritarian parenting style. In a study conducted on 47 mothers no relationship was

observed between extraversion and parenting styles adopted by mothers (Danesh et al., 2014). Contrary to the present study, another research examined 92 parents with preschool children and found a direct relationship between the personality trait of extraversion in parents and authoritative and permissive parenting styles and also an inverse relationship with authoritarian parenting style (Rezayi Aval et al., 2016). It is suggested that people with the personality trait of extraversion were better able to communicate with other individuals and consequently they could interact better with their children; however, the contrary results of the present study might be due to the age group of the study samples because that investigation had been carried out on preschool children and parents were likely to demonstrate less authority to children of lower age.

The predictive role of personality traits on parenting styles was differently expressed in participants' mothers and fathers. It seems as Belsky said for women in terms of their family roles, personality ends up being more predictive of mothering than of fathering. Traditional family roles come to mind again as a plausible explanation of such differences, in fact, were often the child's preference as a play partner, women functioned as basic care providers, comforting their children when distressed, responding to most of their expressed needs, and being affectionate with them (Belsky et al., 1995).

Among the limitations of this study was the use of parental self-reporting to determine the parenting styles. Also, this study is limited by the exclusive use of parental reports. Moreover, the research design was of a cross-sectional type and this issue could make it difficult to interpret communications as cause-and-effect relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study characterized the important role of parental personality traits in predicting parenting styles. The findings of this study could be also used in family education programs for parents to identify their personality traits and parenting styles and subsequently adopt an appropriate parenting style. Family therapists can also aid in this respect in terms of enhancing parental communication skills and promoting desirable personality traits in parents and thus provide support for the child, parent, and family health.

REFERENCES

- Alavi, Z., Afrooz, G. A. and Ghasemzade, S. (2015). Explore the relationship between stress and parenting styles of mothers of children with satisfaction parity aggressive. *Middle Eastern Journal of Disability Studies*, 5(11), 230-241.
- Ataifar, R., Amiri, S., Asgari, K. and Nadi, M. A. (2014). Develop a mother-child relationship model, based on "attachment style, communication skills, personality traits, sexual satisfaction," and spouses' communication. *Researcher*, 6(8), 99-106.
- Belsky, J., Crnic, K. and Woodworth, S. (1995). Personality and parenting: Exploring the mediating role of transient mood and daily hassles. *Journal of personality*, 63(4), 905-929. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1995.tb00320.x>
- Bornstein, M. H. (2016). Determinants of parenting. *Developmental psychopathology*, 4, 180-270. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119125556.devpsy405>
- Danesh, E., Kakavand, A., Saliminia, A., Sabeghi, L. and Sahimi, M. (2014). The relationship between personality factors and parenting styles in mothers of children with hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder. *Quarterly Journal of New Thoughts On Education*, 10(1), 9-26.
- Dickson, E., Agyemang, C. B. and Afful, J. (2014). Parental personality and parenting style: A Ghanaian perspective. *Developing Country Studies*, 4(5), 116-128.
- Giberson, T. R., Resick, C. J. and Dickson, M. W. (2005). Embedding leader characteristics: an examination of homogeneity of personality and values in organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(5), 1002. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.90.5.1002>
- Howenstein, J., Kumar, A., Casamassimo, P. S., McTigue, D., Coury, D. and Yin, H. (2015). Correlating parenting styles with child behavior and caries. *Pediatric dentistry*, 37(1), 59-64.
- Huver, R. M. E., Otten, R., de Vriesar, H. and Engels, R. C. (2010). Personality and parenting style in parents of adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 33(3), 395-402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2009.07.012>
- Khormae, F. and Farmani, A. (2014). Psychometric properties of the short form of goldberg's 50- item personality scale. *Journal of Psychological Models and Methods*, 4(16), 29-39.
- Kuppens, S. and Ceulemans, E. (2019). Parenting Styles: A Closer Look at a Well-Known Concept. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 28(1), 168-181. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-018-1242-x>
- Maddahi, M. E., Javidi, N., Samadzadeh, M. and Amini, M. (2012). The study of relationship between parenting styles and personality dimensions in sample of college students. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, 5(9), 3332-3336.
- Oshio, A., Taku, K., Hirano, M. and Saeed, G. (2018). Resilience and Big Five personality traits: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 127, 54-60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.01.048>
- Planalp, E. M. and Braungart-Rieker, J. M. (2016). Determinants of father involvement with young children: Evidence from the early childhood longitudinal study-birth cohort. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(1), 135. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000156>
- Rezayi Aval, M., Tahmasebi, S. and Maleki, B. (2016). The effects of five dimensions of personality and mental health of parents on parenting styles. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, (Special Issue), 314-327.
- Rinaldi, C. M. and Howe, N. (2012). Mothers' and fathers' parenting styles and associations with toddlers' externalizing, internalizing, and adaptive behaviors. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 27(2), 266-273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.08.001>

- Savitha, K. and Venkatachalam, J. (2016). Perceived parenting styles and personality factors - A study. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 3(4), 22-33.
- Schofield, T. J., Conger, R. D., Donnellan, M. B., Jochem, R., Widaman, K. F. and Conger, K. J. (2012). Parent personality and positive parenting as predictors of positive adolescent personality development over time. *Merrill-Palmer quarterly (Wayne State University. Press)*, 58(2), 255-283. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mpq.2012.0008>