JCHR

Journal of Community Health Research 2022; 11(4): 249-255.

The Relationship between the Attachment Styles of Children, Parenting Styles, and the Socio-Economic Status of parents

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ARTICLE INFO

Original Article

Received: 3 April 2022

Accepted: 31 December 2022

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ABSTRACT

Background: Family's socio-economic status may significantly influence parenting style. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between attachment styles of 7 to 12-year-old children, parenting styles, and the socio-economic status of parents.

Methods: This was a cross-sectional and correlational study. The study population included 7 to 12 children who studied in elementary schools of Tehran in 2021. A sample of 95 individuals were selected by random sampling method and evaluated by questionares regarding Socio-Economic status (SE) (Ghodratnama, 2013), Parenting Style (PS) (Baumrind, 1973), Kinship Center Attachment (KCA) (Halpern and Kappenberg, 2006). The information obtained from the samples was analysed by Pearson correlation coefficient through SPSS 22 software. The level of significance was considered 5%.

Results: There was a a significant correlation between the attachment styles of the children and parenting styles and the socio-economic status of parents ($r= -.284$, $p<0.01$). In parenting styles there was a significant relationship between authoritive parenting style and positive adjustment ($r= -.258$, $p<0.05$), emotional reactivity ($r= .218$, $p<0.05$), negative behaviour ($r= .394$, $p<0.01$) and distancing from caregiver support ($r= .407$, $p<0.01$). There was also a significant relationship between authoritarian and positive adjustment ($r= .315$, $p<0.01$), negative behaviour ($r= -.311$, $p<0.01$), distancing from caregiver support ($r= -.379$, $p<0.01$). A significant relationship was observed between permissive and negative behavior ($r= .232$, $p<0.05$).

Conclusion: Both authoritative and permissive parenting styles seem to be dysfunctional. They cause different behavioural and emotional issues in children due to their attachment styles.

Keywords: Object Attachment, Parenting, Social Class.

How to cite this paper:

Eftekhari A, Bakhtiari M, Kianimoghadam AS. The Relationship between the Attachment Styles of Children, Parenting Styles, and the Socio-Economic Status of parents. J Community Health Research 2022; 11(4): 249-255.

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[DOR: 20.1001.1.23225688.2022.11.4.5.7]

[DOI: 10.18502/jchr.v11i4.11640]

Introduction

Many researchers consider children's psychological problems familiar and debilitating disorders causeing many problems for the family, society, and the child (1). Usualyy, these problems are first seen in the early years of elementary school and peak between 8 and 15 years of age (2). Addressing this is crucial, especially as children with behavioural disorders quickly feel like a failure (3). Studies which examined the effect of family interaction patterns on the development of children's behavioural and emotional disorders, on the one hand, considered these disorders a child's reaction to family disorders. On the other hand, the reaction is directed toward the inappropriate environmental stimuli, such as rejection (4). The child's psychological status is associated with lack of love and support from parents, excessive love, helplessness in the family, coldness of the family, lack of care and compassion of the mother, insecure attachment during childhood and parenting style (5).

Parenting style is defined as a style in which parents set standards for their children's behaviour tailored to their needs. Parents believe that they should discuss discipline with their children and explain it to them. Accordingly, Baumrind (1966, 1971) studied three main parenting models: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive/indulgent. Over the years, authoritative parenting styles with a high level of demand and responsiveness had been identified as the most effective parenting style. This style has been associated with positive child outcomes such as successful developmental outcomes. Authoritative parenting promotes successful academic performance, empowerment, independence, and self-esteem. The fact that neglectful and authoritative parenting practices have the same positive effects on child outcomes has not been demonstrated. Permissive/indulgent parenting is associated with a high level of accountability. Negligent parents have little demand of their children and believe that children should be given the freedom to choose whatever they want (6).

Another factor which affects the psychological state of children is their attachment style. The theory of attachment, first proposed by Bowlby (1969), is about the internal connection between children and their caregivers. Parental responsiveness and availability in times of distress provide a haven for the child to shape experiences and control anxiety (7). Ainsworth et al. (1982) identified three styles of attachment: secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-ambivalent-resistant. Children with secure attachment are more confident about the availability of their mother (or guardian) and are likely to use them as a safe basis (8). Many studies have shown that secure attachment to parents is negatively associated with externalized behavioural problems such as theft, drug use and delinquency, aggressive and high-risk behaviour, as well as internalized behavioural problems such as anxiety and depressed mood (9). As a result, the quality of attachment to parents may act as a shield against the development and growth of internalized and externalized problems (10). Similarly, the relationship between secure attachment to parents and friends is associated with high levels of empathy and low levels of aggressive behaviour (11).

Research has also shown that perceived ST status in parents affects depression and antisocial behaviour in childeren (12). It is also effective on parenting and children's attachment style (13). A number of studies have demonstrated that a family's SE status may significantly influence parenting.(14). In addition, many other studies have suggested that parenting style can affect the attachment styles of children (15). In light of these findings, the relationship between these two variables is investigated. Although some studies have hinted at this relationship, few have focused on the relationship between SE status, and parenting and attachment styles in children between 7 and 12.

According to the aforementioned remarks, problems usually emerge in the early years of elementary school. The main aime of this study

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was whether there is a relationship between SE level, and parenting and attachment styles.

Methods

This was a descriptive and cross-sectional study. The study population included parents of the children aged 7 to 12 in Tehran. They answered the research questionnaires from January to March 2021.

The sample group consisted of 100 parents. In the first stage, a stratified random sampelingwas done, and Tehran was divided into five geographic districts of North, South, East, West, and central parts. In each district, a boys' primary school and a girls' primary school were selected (5 in total Girls 'school and 5 boys' schools). Sampling in each area was done availablybetween girls and boys' primary schools. Finally, 50 questionnaires were given to each school. The 95 individuals for sample size was based on type 1 error, frequency of 77% and the accuracy of 0.1. The informed consent of the parents was obtained and 100 questionnaires were given to the parents. 95 cases could be analyzed.

At first, parents were asked whether they wanted to participate in a study in which psychological factors of their children were investigated. If they answered “yes”, they were given an informed consent form to sign. Then, inclusion and exclusion criteria were checked. Participants had to meet the following inclusion criteria: 1) being at least 18, 2) mastering written and spoken Persian, and 3) having at least one child between 7 to 12 years. People suffering from a substance use disorder, psychotic disorder, or cognitive disability (e.g., intellectual disability) were excluded.

Baumrind parenting style questionnaire (BPS)

The-30-item BPS questionnaire was designed and developed by Diana Baumrind (1973)(16)0. This questionnaire has been translated by Hosseinpour (2002). It measures parents' parenting styles regarding three factors:

sentences 28, 24, 21,19, 17, 14, 13,10, 6, 1 are related to a permissive/indulgent model; sentences 29, 2, 3, 3, 7, 12, 16, 1, 25, 26, an authoritative model; and sentences, 4, 5, 8, 11, 15, 20, 22, 23, 27, 30 are related to the authoritative model. In front of each phrase is five columns (completely agree, to some extent agree, somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree) scored from 0 to 4. Then, points related to each model were added and divided by the number of separate questions.

The validity and reliability of this questionnaire has been confirmed by Bury (1991) used a diffrent approach to evaluate its validity and reliability. He observed that authoritarian style had a negative relationship with permissive/ indulgent, and parenting and logical approach had no significant relationship with authoritarian method. Bury (1991) used the retest method to calculate the reliability and obtained the following results: 0.81 for the permissive/indulgent, 0.86 for the authoritarian method, and 0.78 for the authorative model. He also calculated internal stability using Cronbach's alpha formula, which was 0.75 for the permissive/indulgent, 0.85 for the authoritarian method, and 0.82 for the authorative method. At the Iranian Institute of Psychiatry, Esfandiari (1995) translated the main form of Baumrind parenting methods and made the necessary corrections. Then, ten experts in the field of psychology and psychiatry were asked to determine the validity of each sentence by checking it. They may express their opinion and add their suggested sentence if necessary. The results showed that this questionnaire has a formal validity (17).

Kinship Center Attachment Questionnaire (KCAQ)

This questionnaire was designed by Halpern and Kappenberg (2006)(18). The number of questions is 20, and its purpose is to measure the children's attachment in junior high school (before elementary school) from four different dimensions: (1) positive adjustment development, (2) distancing from caregiver support, (3) emotional reactivity and (4) negative behaviours. The response was based on a 5-point Likert scale the points of which were as follows: never = 1, rarely = 2, occasionally = 3, often = 4, always = 5. Positive adjustment development (questions 1-6), distancing from caregiver support (questions 4-10),

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[DOI: 10.18502/jchr.v11i4.11640]

emotional reactivity (questions 11-16), and negative behaviours (questions 17-20) are included. This questionnaire scores had a range of 20 to 100.

In Soleimani et al.'s study (2014), the validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been investigated. The results of the factor analysis test showed that KCAQ was equal to 0.73 and at the desired level. Accordingly, the Bartlett test was statistically significant. The results of the factor analysis with Varimax rotation confirmed the existence of four factors in the items, which explained 48.72% of the total variance of the scale. The internal consistency coefficients of this questionnaire were obtained at a significant level. The calculation of the test-retest coefficient at one-month intervals was desirable (1).

A significant correlation betwwn the scores of this questionnaire and the scores of maternal emotion and SDQ questionnaires confirmed the convergent, divergent, and concurrent validity of the scale. Furthermore, the reliability of the test-retest of this questionnaire has been reported to be 0.79 (1).

Socio-Economic Satus Questionnaire (SES)

This questionnaire was developed by Ghodratnama (2013). It has 11 items and 4 components of income, economic class, education and housing status. It also contains 6 demographic and 5 main items. The comparison of measuring the questions in this five-point scale ranged from very low = 1 to very high = 5, respectively. Higher scores on this scale indicated better economic and social status. In the research by Islami et al. (2013), the content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by 12 sports experts. Moreover, using Cronbach's alpha test, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated at 0.80 (19).

Statistical analysis

In this study, data were analysed using SPSS software version 22 with Pearson correlation test was used to examine the linear relationship between variables. The confidence level was 95% (P <0.05).

Results

The participants of this study included 10 (10.5%) males and 85 (89.5%) females. Regarding the children participants, there were 49 (51.6) boys and 46 (48.4) girls. The average age of all the parents was 32.95 (SD=5.33), and it was 8.92 (SD=1.55) for the children.

Table 1 shows that regarding SE , 15 (15.8%) individuals' status very low, 5 of them (5.3%)was low , 55 (57.9%) had an average status, 15 (15.8%), high, and 5 (5.3%) participants had a very high status.

Table 2 demonstrates that the children included 49 (51.6) boys and 46 (48.4) girls.

Table 1. The descriptive data of SE status regarding parents

	N	%
Very low	15	15.8
Low	5	5.3
Average	55	57.9
High	15	15.8
Very high	5	5.3
Total	95	100.0

Table 2. The bivariate correlations of parenting and attachment styles

		Positive adjustment	Emotional reactivity	Negative behaviour	Distancing
Authoritive	r	-.258*	.218*	.394**	.407**
	Sig	.012	.034	.000	.000
Authoritarian	r	.315**	-.095	-.311**	-.379**
	Sig	.002	.361	.002	.000
Permissive	r	.046	-.001	.232*	.002
	Sig	.663	.989	.027	.988

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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Table 2 indicates that there was a significant and negative relationship between authoritative parenting style and positive adjustment (r= -.258, p<0.05), authoritive parenting style and emotional reactivity (r=.218, p<0.05), and between authoritive and negative behaviour (r=.394, p<0.01). Furthermore, there was a significant and negative relationship between authoritive style and distancing from caregiver support (r=-.407, p<0.01).

There was also a significant and positive relationship between authoritative style and positive adjustment (r= 0.315, p<0.01), a significant and negative relationship between authoritative style and negative behaviour (r=-0.311, p<0.01), authoritative style and distancing from caregiver support (r=-0.379, p<0.01), and between permissive style and negative behavior (r= 0.232, p<0.05).

Table 3. Bivariate correlations between parenting and attachment styles and SE status

		Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive	Positive adjustment	Emotional reactivity	Negative behaviour	Distancing
SE	r	-.075	-.021	-.052	.158	.098	-.284**	.122
Score	Sig	.470	.839	.627	.127	.344	.005	.238

**. Correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed).

Table 3 illustrates that there was a significant and negative relationship (r= -.284, p<0.01) between SE status and negative behavior regarding attachment styles of children.

Discussion

This research aimed to investigate the relationship between the attachment style of 7 to 12-year-old children, parenting style, and the socio-economic class of parents. Findings suggested that there was a significant and negative relationship between authoritative parenting style and positive adjustment, and distancing from caregiver support. There was also a significant and positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and emotional reactivity, and between authoritative style and negative behaviour. These results are in line with the research by Bortz, et al (2019), which showed parents with authoritative parenting styles were more likely to have aggressive children (18). These parents use a punitive approach, including threatening, criticizing, and dictating rules, limiting their children's autonomy, and deciding on their own what their children should do. So, this style has negative behavioural consequences such as aggression, external and internal disorders, and emotional disturbance.

There was also a significant and positive relationship between authoritarian style and positive adjustment, a significant and negative relationship between authoritarian style and negative behavior in attachment styles, also a significant and negative relationship between authoritarian style and distancing from caregiver support. They were consistent with Moazeni et al.'s study (2013), which showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between the secure attachment and authoritarian parenting styles, between ambivalent attachment and permissive parenting styles. However, avoidant attachment had a negative and significant relationship with authoritarian parenting (21). One possible explanation for this correlation could be that authoritarian parenting, which balances clear, high parental demands with emotional responsiveness and recognition of child's autonomy, is one of the most consistent family predictors of competence from early childhood through adolescence. It can lead to positive adjustment and deacrease in negative bahaviour.

Likewise, there was a significant and positive relationship between permissive and negative behaviour. This finding was consistent with the study by Moazen et al. (2013), which showed permissive parenting style has a significant and

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positive relationship with behavioural issues. In other words, negligent parenting style was associated with an increase in behavioural issues in children (23). To explain this finding, it can be said that a permissive parenting style is characterized by the lack of parental control and response to the child's wishes. Permissive parents try to create a warm, calm, and welcoming environment for their children. However, they have no control over their children. Such parents adopt unstable or unstructured rules. Although these parents may be emotional, their failure to regulate their children's behaviour can lead to low self-esteem. This is because children also fail to learn the proper forms of self-regulation which, may lead to the formation of negative behaviours in the child.

A significant and negative correlation was observed between SE status and negative behaviour regarding the attachment styles of children. This was in line with Birch's findings (2013) (24). He stated insecure attachment (ambivalent or avoidant) is often related to negative outcomes. Insecure attachment, associated with parental negativity and rejection, predicts externalizing behaviour such as aggression and disruptiveness; and internalizing behaviours such as depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal. Negative child-raising styles or inconsistent control and low parental supervision negatively affect the child’s behaviour. Lack of warmth and having a low SE status can lead to negative behaviour in children as well.

In sum, both authoritative and permissive parenting styles seem to be dysfunctional, each of which is related to different behavioural and emotional problems in children.

According to these results, counsellors and child psychologists are recommended to evaluate behavioural disorders of parenting styles and attachment of children, and do their best to understand as much as possible the factors regarding behavioural disorders. The findings of the present study can significantly help in the development and implementation of effective preventive and therapeutic interventions for behavioural disorders. It is recommended that if possible, this study be repeated on the general population, not just on a particular class. Besides, research on the same subject but with a larger sample size should be done, and the results should be reviewed for comparison. Finally, it is suggested that other scales in attachment and parenting styles be used, including children's opinions.

There were some limitations regarding this study. The questionnaires were completed by parents; thus there was a possibility of bias. Also, the large number of questions in the questionnaires made the respondents tired and reduced the number of collaborators. This research was done in Tehran, and can not be generalized to other communities. Since the research was correlational, it was not possible to have a causal conclusion.

Conclusion

The results of this research showed that both authoritative and permissive parenting styles seem to be dysfunctional, which in turn causes different behavioural and emotional issues in children due to their attachment styles.

Acknowledgments

This study obtained ethics approval (Code: IR.SBMU.MSP.REC.1400.433) from Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences. The present article was financially supported by “Research department of the School of Medicine, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences” (Grant Number 28414).

Conflict of interest

There authors declared is no conflict of interest.

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[DOI: 10.18502/jchr.v11i4.11640]