

# The Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Aggression in Adolescents of Zahedan City in 2014

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## Abstract

**Background:** Family is the first environment in which children grow up, and for this reason, it has a significant effect on their future behaviors. The encouragement, discouragement, premonitions, indifference, and behaviors that characterize the primary stages of children's lives will influence their future lives.

**Objectives:** This research aims to study the relationship between different parenting styles in order to identify aggression among adolescents in Zahedan city.

**Methods:** The present research is a cross-sectional, descriptive-analytical study. The research population consisted of 206 high school students and their parents in Zahedan city, and the study was carried out during the winter and spring of 2014. The respondents were selected through cluster sampling and were evaluated using Baumrind's parenting style questionnaire, as well as the AGQ aggression questionnaire.

**Results:** According to the 206 questionnaires completed, there was a significant inverse relationship between authoritative parenting, and aggression ( $P = 0.02$ ) and spitefulness elements ( $P = 0.023$ ). In addition, there was a significant relationship between permissive parenting and anger ( $P = 0.01$ ), and a direct significant relationship was also found between despotic parenting, and anger ( $P = 0.01$ ) and aggression ( $P = 0.008$ ).

**Conclusions:** The results suggest that the best parenting style to lower aggression and its elements is the authoritative style. Dominant parents place more emphasis on independent behaviors. While they are kind and friendly, they also impose boundaries, direct their children toward independence, and pave the way to safeguarding their mental health.

**Keywords:** Parenting Style, Aggression, Adolescents

## 1. Background

Aggression is one of the most important disorders in psychiatry and clinical psychology (1), and refers to certain behaviors that are intended to annoy or harm somebody (2, 3). It is one of the most common behavioral problems, and it is known to cause discomfort and distress to others and disrupt the mental health of the person, his or her family, and the community (4, 5). In this context, the escalation of violence and aggression, especially in recent years, is considered to be one of the most serious social ills in Iranian society (6). In addition, the prevalence of violence among students is becoming increasingly worrying (7). Aggressive behaviors in humans are defined as violent acts toward others that may be motivated by avoidance or retaliation

(8). Pharmacological therapy, behavioral therapy, and cognitive therapy, or a combination of various methods, can be used for the treatment of aggressive behaviors (9). Aggression can also be controlled in adolescents by teaching them how to reason and think logically through collective discussions (5). Failure to treat aggression in childhood increases the likelihood of antisocial personality issues in adulthood (10), and one of the most important factors in the development of aggressive behaviors is family, especially parental behavioral patterns (11). Parenting style is said to be the most important and influential role parents play in terms of their child's social and emotional development. In essence, parenting style describes a set of behaviors governing parent-child interactions in a wide variety of situations (12). Parenting styles can be categorized

into three types: authoritative (democratic), despotic (autocratic or dictatorial), and permissive. Each style plays an important role in the development of a child's personality (13). Authoritative parenting is the best parenting style, and such parents are typically warm and intimate, but at the same time, they are powerful controllers (14). According to Rajab-Pour et al., group therapy for parent-child relationships, which is focused on teaching parenting skills, is effective in the reduction of verbal and physical aggression in preschool children (15). Parenting style is important because, as noted by Zareie in his study, it can lay the groundwork for damage to children (16). In effect, most of the behavioral problems of children reflect their complicated interpersonal relationships with family members, especially parents (17, 18).

## 2. Objectives

The results of parenting styles that lead to the formation of children's behavior do not just affect families, but also the community. Thus, the current study was conducted with the aim of determining the frequency of parenting styles and their relationship with aggression in adolescents in Zahedan.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Study Design

This research is in the form of a cross-sectional, descriptive-analytical study. The population consisted of adolescents aged 13 to 18 years attending junior and senior high schools in Zahedan. The cluster sampling method was applied, and one third of the total number of high school students in each grade was selected.

### 3.2. Participants

In cooperation with the department of the faculty of education in Zahedan, 12 high schools were selected from three regions of the city, including one senior and one junior high schools for girls and one senior and one junior high schools for boys. The inclusion criterion was the selection of adolescents of high school age (13 to 18 years) and their parents, and the exclusion criterion was the presence of any disease or condition in any of the respondents.

### 3.3. Data Collection

The required information about parenting styles and adolescents' aggression was gathered through Baumrind's parenting style questionnaire and the AGQ aggression questionnaire.

Parenting style questionnaire: The questionnaire contained 30 questions, 10 of which related to the authoritative style (30, 27, 23, 22, 20, 15, 11, 8, 5, and 4), 10 to the despotic style (29, 26, 25, 18, 16, 12, 9, 7, 3, and 2), and 10 to the permissive style (28, 24, 21, 19, 17, 14, 13, 10, 6, and 1). Each question was scored from 0 to 4. Three separate scores were obtained by adding up the scores for each style. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as 82% for Baumrind's questionnaire; its reliability for the permissive, despotic, and authoritative styles was 81%, 86%, and 78%, respectively (14, 19).

The instrument used to collect data on aggression was the AGQ aggression questionnaire, which comprised 30 questions. Of the questions, 14 measured anger, eight queried invasion, and a further eight related to spitefulness. The overall score of the questionnaire was 0 - 90, which was obtained by adding up the scores for all questions. The more a person's score exceeded the average score of 42.5, the higher that person's aggression rating was likely to be. The reliability of the AGQ aggression questionnaire was 87% using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, while a reliability value of 61% was achieved for the entire questionnaire using the bisection method, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 89% (20).

### 3.4. Sample Size

Considering an alpha level of 0.05 % and a confidence interval of 0.95%, and taking account of a 20% loss, as well as a 0.16 % prevalence of parenting styles (permissive style 16%, despotic style 23%, and authoritative style 61%) (5), the samples were calculated for the 206 respondents using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{pqz^2}{d^2} \tag{1}$$

$$P = 16\%, q = 1 - P = 84\%, z = 1.96, d = 5\%.$$

$$n = \frac{(0.16) \times (0.84) \times (1.96)^2}{(0.05)^2} \tag{2}$$

$$\approx 206$$

### 3.5. Data Analysis

The mean, standard deviation, and frequency indicators were used to describe the data frequency, and the ANOVA statistical test, as well as the Pearson coefficient test, was used for data analysis. SPSS software version 16 was applied for this purpose as well.

#### 4. Results

Overall, 206 high school students of 13 to 18 years participated in this study, of whom 96 were male (46.6%) and 110 were female (53.4%). Of the participants in the study, 68 (33%) were found to be aggressive (40 boys and 28 girls). The aggression frequency based on anger, invasion, and spitefulness is shown in Table 1. The most frequent aggression type was anger (n = 27, 39.07%) and the least frequent was spitefulness (n = 18, 26.5%).

**Table 1.** Frequency of Aggression in Terms of Anger, Invasion, and Spitefulness in the 206 Adolescents Participating in the Study

Variable	Frequency (%)	Mean	SD
Anger	27 (39.7)	33.48	9.32
Aggression	23 (33.8)	26.27	10.38
Spitefulness	18 (26.5)	20.13	6.97

The results showed that the frequencies with respect to the permissive, authoritative, and despotic parenting styles were 36.4% (75 respondents), 33% (68 respondents), and 30.6% (63 respondents), respectively. The highest mean belonged to the permissive parenting style (29.09), while the lowest mean belonged to the despotic style (25.75). The order of frequency in terms of parenting styles was permissive, authoritative, and despotic, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Frequency of Parenting Styles (Despotic, Permissive, and Authoritative) for the Parents Participating in the Study

Variable	Mean	SD	Frequency (%)
Permissive parenting style	29.09	6.76	75 (36.4)
Authoritative parenting style	26.57	8.97	68 (33)
Despotic parenting style	25.75	6.22	63 (30.6)

To investigate the relationship between the parents' parenting styles and the adolescents' aggression, Pearson's correlation coefficient and the ANOVA test were used. The results showed that there was a significant direct relationship between parents' permissive style and students' anger. There was also a significant inverse relationship between parents' authoritative parenting style and students' invasion, spitefulness, and aggression, while a significant direct relationship was found between parents' despotic parenting style and students' invasion, spitefulness, and aggression.

To investigate the relationship between parenting styles and parents' education and jobs, the ANOVA test

was used. The results showed a significant relationship between the permissive parenting style and parents' education levels. Specifically, the higher the parents' education levels, the more permissive their parenting style was likely to be. No significant relationship was seen between other parenting styles and level of education. There was also a significant relationship between parents' jobs and the authoritative and permissive parenting styles ( $P \leq 0.05$ ), as can be seen in Table 4. Moreover, a significant inverse relationship was found between education levels and aggression elements ( $P = 0.03$  and  $F = -0.17$ ). Specifically, the higher the parents' education levels, the less aggressive their children were likely to be.

#### 5. Discussion

This 2014 study aimed to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and aggression in adolescents of Zahedan city. The results indicated an aggression prevalence of 33% among those who were surveyed. To put this in context, the results of similar studies conducted in Iran and other countries reported the incidence of aggression among adolescents to be between 20% and 50% (21-23). In a study conducted by Woods et al. in 2016 (24), those authors emphasized the importance of focusing on children's emotional control skills and on adaptive maternal responses to children's negative emotions. The results showed that there was a significant inverse relationship between the authoritative parenting style and anger. However, no significant relationship was seen between this parenting style and invasion and spitefulness, which was consistent with the results of studies conducted by Rahmani et al. in 2005 and Silva in 2016 (25, 26). The results of these studies showed that the despotic style was associated with aggression in children, which was consistent with the results of the study conducted by Gao and Zhang et al. in 2015 (27).

The current study indicated that the highest average of teenage students' behavioral problems related to the incompetent parenting style (1.9), while the lowest related to the authoritative (or democratic) parenting style (28, 29). Baumrind showed that the children of decisive and reassuring parents grew relatively well, and were cheerful, socially responsible, self-reliant, capable of developing, and got on well with adults and peers. On the other hand, the children of permissive parents, especially boys, were often impulsive and aggressive (30).

The findings of the present study are consistent with those of the US national institute of mental health research, which confirmed that the authoritative style of parenting reduces anger among adolescents (31, 32).

Furthermore, there was a significant direct relationship between despotic parenting styles and the element of

**Table 3.** Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Adolescents' Aggression

Variable	Level	Correlation Coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	P-Value
Authoritative style	Invasion	-0.153	0.01	0.021
	Anger	-0.008	0.01	0.904
	Spitefulness	-0.142	0.01	0.023
	Aggression	-0.182	0.01	0.009
Permissive style	Invasion	0.01	0.01	0.83
	Anger	0.19	0.01	0.01
	Spitefulness	-0.08	0.01	0.23
	Aggression	0.01	0.01	0.88
Despotic style	Invasion	0.19	0.01	0.008
	Anger	0.18	0.05	0.01
	Spitefulness	-0.1	0.01	0.18
	Aggression	0.18	0.01	0.01

**Table 4.** Relationship Between Parenting Styles, and Parental Education Levels and Jobs Using ANOVA

Parenting Style	Authoritative		Despotic		Permissive	
	F	P-Value	F	P-Value	F	P-Value
Education	1.27	0.28	0.66	0.53	2.02	0.001
Job	2.03	0.03	0.53	0.2	3.4	0.04

anger, and there was a statistically significant inverse relationship between this parenting style and the elements of invasion and spitefulness. The above finding was consistent with the study conducted by Shaffer, who found that, according to Baumrind's theory, the preschool children under study were exposed to all three parenting styles. He also found that children of despotic parents tended to be moody or apparently upset more often, and were easily annoyed. On the other hand, the children of permissive parents were often impulsive and aggressive (33). In general, different studies showed that the adolescents of decisive families had more psychosocial competencies than their peers who were growing up in despotic, permissive, or negligent families. The children in the former group were generally responsible, disciplined, creative, curious, and self-confident (34). Permissive parents are responsive rather than demanding, and are typically not traditional. They tend to be easygoing and often do not behave maturely or engage in self-regulation (35).

Alizade et al. found that the children of permissive parents were frequently impulsive and aggressive, especially boys. They tended towards directorship, autonomy, and defiance, and showed no signs of independence and responsibility (36). The results of a study conducted by Beato

et al. showed that maternal disengagement was associated with higher levels of anxiety symptoms in children, while the over involvement of fathers was associated with higher levels of parental anxiety (37). Negligent or careless parents seemed not to have control over their children, and were even at risk of never accepting them. According to Sigelman's report, the children of this group of parents tend to have behavioral problems such as aggression and repeated tantrums. In addition, their adolescent children tend to have anti-social issues, use drugs, do not have long-term objectives, and are more likely to participate in delinquent acts (38). It seems that some of the factors affecting parenting styles have a greater overall effect and can influence the impact of other factors. However, no research has been reported in this regard, and further studies on the role of the other factors affecting parenting styles are recommended (35).

5.1. Conclusion

Since the above findings show that parents who practice authoritative parenting styles have less aggressive children, it is necessary to impart knowledge and information on this subject to families through educational centers,

broadcasting stations, counseling centers, and classes on parenting skills.

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## Footnote

**Conflict of Interest:** The author(s) declare no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, its authorship, and/or the publication of this article.

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