

Original Article

Relationship between parents' child rearing style and emotion-regulation skills in adolescents: moderating role of parenting stresses

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Abstract

Background: Adolescence is one of the most challenging periods in the life of humans during which the individual is faced with personal, social, occupational, and family problems as well as extensive physical and cognitive changes. Dealing with these problems and changes requires emotional regulation and management. Parents play a vital role in adolescences' coping styles with the mentioned problems and emotions. Hence, the present study aimed at examining the moderating role of parenting stress in the relationship between child rearing style and emotion regulation skills in adolescents.

Methods: A correlational study was carried out. Statistical population consisted of all of adolescences in male and female schools in Tehran and their mothers in 2016. Of this population, 400 who had the inclusion criteria were selected using multistage cluster sampling method. To collect data, Parents' Stress Index, Parenting Style Questionnaire, and Emotional Regulation Checklist were used. The obtained data were analyzed using Pearson Regression Coefficient and stepwise multivariate regression.

Results: In the present study, the mean age of participating adolescents and mothers were 16.55 and 38.83, respectively. Moreover, findings implied that parents' stress and authoritative parenting styles could predict 0.067 and 0.35 percentages of variances in the scores of emotional regulation in adolescences, respectively ($P < 0.05$). Also, since R^2 increased to 0.10, it can be stated that 0.135 of variance observed in emotion regulation scores gained by adolescents is explained by mediating role of parenting stress.

Conclusion: Parenting stress can moderate the relationship between child rearing style and emotion regulation skills in adolescents

Keywords: Adolescents; Child Rearing; Emotion regulation; Parenting

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Introduction

There has been growing research on adolescents in the recent decades. These studies have shown that

psychological disorders are not more common in adolescence than in other

periods of life and that the transition of many adolescents from this period occurs with no major problems. Nevertheless, adolescence is not completely without problems and has its own set of stresses and concerns just like any other stage of life (1). In fact, adolescence is a sensitive period in each person's life that is along with physiological, emotional, and cognitive changes such as maturity and increasing pressure to play new roles in the future so that this period may be full of feelings, emotions, and stresses in the absence of required skills (2).

Many years of research suggest the important role of emotion regulation in coping with stressful life events (3). The term "emotion regulation" refers to the measures taken to change or moderate an emotional state. In psychology, this concept is often used to describe the process of moderating negative emotions and requires a series of essential skills that everyone should learn at least partly in order to get through their everyday life. Emotion regulation is a central process for all the aspects of human actions that plays a major role in the way people cope with stressful as well as happy experiences (4). Emotion regulation in children and adolescents comprises an important subject for research. The absence of emotion regulation is associated with many psychological disorders (5). Negative emotions can be one of the main reasons for disorder in adolescents (6). Negative emotions are in fact one of the main components of the endogenous and exogenous disorders of childhood and adolescence. Children with endogenous disorders experience severe sadness, depression, anxiety, and fear, and when unable to satisfy their needs in any other way, they come to externalize these emotions and show greater anger, distress, and fear than their friends and peers and face further negative emotions as they grow older and their adaptation diminishes over time (7). Studying the factors affecting

emotion regulation in children and adolescents is preventing these problems. Parents' child rearing style is one such factor. Studies have shown that parents' child rearing style is associated with emotion regulation skills in adolescents (8, 9). The parents' rearing style is indicative of the emotional as well as general relationship they have with their children and is considered a major factor involved in the children's development and learning (10). This construct is reflective of the parents' raising children to become competent adults (11).

Results obtained from various studies have proved the effect of child rearing styles on social performance and cognitive functions of children (12, 13). The results of the study conducted by Guastello et al. indicated the effect of authoritative parenting styles (combination of control and high affection) on increased social responsibility, self-esteem, and autonomy in adolescence. On other hand, it should be noted that family plays a vital role in behavior of children so that incoherent families may collapse (15). Therefore, any stress or tension in parents may lead to severe familial problems destroying the relationship between parents and children (16). Conducted studies show that parents' stress may cause dysfunction of family system and inappropriate parenting (17).

Since children are fostered in family texture, the interaction between parent and children and parent's stress can be effective in emotional growth and their coping styles with tensions and emotions. Hence, the present study aimed to investigate the moderating role of parenting stress in the relationship between child rearing style and adolescents' emotion regulation.

Methods

A cross-sectional study was conducted. Statistical population of the study consisted of all adolescences studying in male and female schools in Tehran and their mothers in 2016.

Of this population, a total of 400 eligible members were chosen using multistep cluster sampling method.

Inclusion criteria in the present study included having educated parents (having diploma at least), age range of 13-18, and the tendency for participation in study. To collect data, Parents' Stress Index (PSI), Baumrind's Parenting Styles Questionnaire (BPSQ), and Emotional Regulation Checklist (ERC) were used.

The Parenting Stress Index (PSI): This 36-item index, published in 1990 by Abidin and, has a longer 120-item version. It is comprised of three sections and measures three main sources of parental stress. Section one measures the parents' perception of their children's problematic features and behaviors. Section two identifies the main attributes of the parents and family variables that can affect the parents' child rearing capabilities. Section three investigates circumstantial-demographic life stress. Each item is scored based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5.

This questionnaire is comprised of three subscales including parenting depression, problematic specifications of child, and inefficient interactions between parent-child. The reliability coefficient and internal consistency of this questionnaire was obtained to be 0.93 for a 248-member group of Hong Kong mothers using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. This coefficient was obtained to be 0.85 in child scope and 0.91 in parent scope. Discriminant validity of the instrument and simultaneous validity domain with 5 different tension instruments were obtained to be 0.38-0.66 (18).

In Iran, Dadsetan et al. conducted a study in which, internal consistency of instrument was obtained to be 88% for total scale and the reliability coefficient of retest with 10-day time interval was obtained to be 94% (19).

Baumrind's Parenting Styles Questionnaire: This questionnaire was

developed in 1991 by Baumrind to evaluate the parents' child rearing styles, including permissive, authoritative or authoritarian. Buri et al. reported the test-retest reliability of this questionnaire as 0.81 for the permissive style, 0.92 for the authoritative style, and 0.92 for the authoritarian style. The correlation was calculated as -0.5 for the permissive and authoritative parenting styles and -0.52 for the authoritative and authoritarian styles in mothers and its validity was accordingly confirmed (20). Moreover, Moradian et al. reported the reliability indices of this instrument using Cronbach's alpha to be 0.79, 0.69, and 0.86 for permissive style, authoritarian style, and authoritative style, respectively (21).

The Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC) for children and adolescents: This 24-item checklist contains both positive and negative items and is a hetero-evaluation that targets central processes of regulation and affectivity, including emotional talent, value, flexibility, and severity and right circumstances for emotional expression. Each item is scored based on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ('almost always') to 4 ('never'). This instrument was developed to assess children's emotion regulation from the perspective of their guardians. In the present study, we did not use the subscale of Emotional Liability/Negativity, which contains items liability, the lack of flexibility, and negative affection; we only used the subscale of Emotion Regulation, which contains items on the expression of emotions, emotional self-awareness, and empathy. Internal consistency of ERC was obtained to be 0.89 indicating high reliability of this questionnaire (22). In Iran, Ismailian et al. (23) estimated the reliability of this questionnaire to be 0.70 using Cronbach's alpha.

The data obtained was analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient and stepwise multivariate regression (hierarchical) using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 22.0.

Results

Demographic information related to mothers of the adolescents is given in Table 1. The participating adolescents' average age was 16.55 and mothers' average age was 38.83.

The results obtained from Pearson correlation matrix in Table 2 indicate positive and significant correlations between emotional regulation of adolescences, parenting style, and parents' stress ($P < 0.001$).

The moderating role of parenting stress in the relationship between the parents' child rearing style and the adolescent's emotion regulation was determined using hierarchical regression analysis (Tables 3 and 4).

As shown in Tables 3 and 4, the comparison of the results of the regression analysis for assessing the moderating effect of parenting stress on the relationship between child rearing style and emotion regulation in models 1 and 2 showed that parenting stress increases R^2 by 10%, which was significant ($P < 0.05$). These models show that 0.135 of the variance in the scores of emotion regulation are explained by the moderating effect of parenting stress.

Findings showed that parenting stress and parenting styles could respectively predict 0.067 and 0.35% of variance in emotion regulation scores during adolescence ($P < 0.05$).

1. Descriptive characteristic of studied sample

Variables	N (%)	
Age	25-40	251 (62.75)
	40-55	128 (32)
	>55	21 (5.25)
Education	Diploma and lower	128 (32)
	Associate degree	98 (24.5)
	BA	94 (23.5)
	MA and PhD	59 (20)

Table 2: The correlation matrix of the study variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Emotion regulation	1				
2. Parenting stress	0.24**	-			
3. Permissive parenting style	0.31**	0.41**	-		
4. Authoritative parenting style	0.28**	0.38**	0.65**	-	
5. Authoritarian parenting style	0.35**	0.55**	0.67**	0.64**	1

** $P < 0.001$

Table 3. Results of multivariate regression analysis for moderating role of parents' stress in relationship between parenting styles and emotional regulation skills in adolescence

Model	Variable	Adolescents' Emotion Regulation				
		B	SE	β	t	P
1	Authoritarian style	0.24	0.032	0.35	7.45	0.0001
2	Authoritarian style	0.18	0.043	0.26	4.11	0.0001
	Permissive style	0.12	0.056	0.13	2.13	0.034
3	Authoritarian style	0.16	0.048	0.23	3.26	0.001
	Permissive style	0.11	0.056	0.13	2.06	0.23
	Parenting stress	0.027	0.023	0.067	1.2	0.04

Table 4. A hierarchical regression model based on standard and non-standard coefficients on emotion regulation

Variable	Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	ΔR^2	ΔF	P
Emotion regulation	1	0.35	0.12	0.12	0.122	55.45	0.001
	2	0.354	0.125	0.121	0.003	1.45	0.23
	3	0.368	0.135	0.129	0.01	4.53	0.034

Discussion

The current study approved mediating role of parenting stress in the relationship between child rearing style and emotion regulation in adolescents so it could predict emotion regulation. This finding is in line with those obtained by other studies (24-27).

To explain this finding, it can be stated that family can affect the process of emotion regulation in children using any kind of three child rearing styles. In the first method, children learn emotion regulation through observational learning that is imitating social and familial resources. In the second method, parental behaviors related to emotion fostering and emotion management can affect growth of emotion regulation in children. Finally, in the third method, emotion regulation of child is influenced by emotion mood of family in child rearing methods, relativeness relationships, communications between family members, and marital relationships (25).

In addition, previous studies showed that among child rearing styles, authoritative method has the highest effect on the growth of emotion regulation in children. In fact, powerful parents behave in a kind and intimate way toward their children. These parents not only control their children logically but also expect their children to have fair and rational behavior; although these parents respect for decisions and reasoning of their children, they insist on their willpower and present definite reasons for their recommendations (28). In contrary, those parents who showed excessive love and intimacy toward their children without required control lose the opportunity to increase their children's

understanding of the rules and promotion of autonomy that is associated with such understanding (29). Therefore, undoubtedly, authoritative style leads to better emotional growth and more ability of children to cope with the tensions and emotions compared to the other two styles (permissive and authoritarian).

Moreover, Yap et al. indicated that intimate family environment increases adolescents' ability to learn coping strategies making them resistant against problems (30). In addition, since parents are the first social factor for children to learn emotion regulation skills, they can affect the emotional growth within interaction between child-parent through emotion, expressing emotion, and reacting to the child's emotion (31). As a result, if parents are not able to overcome their stress and anxiety about confusion of adolescent and other challenges in child rearing in challenging period of adolescence, despite the attempts to prepare an intimate environment with control, such stress can affect the adolescent making it difficult for him/her to manage negative affections, since parents, as supporters, were not able to give the sense of security and trust to their children (29). In fact, it can be stated that stressful parents foster children that cannot control their negative feelings and affections.

In the current study, we did not study about father's role in child rearing styles and emotion regulation skills. Therefore, further studies can investigate about father role in child rearing styles in future.

In general, the results of the current study showed that parent stress in parents could moderate the relationship between child rearing styles and emotion regulation skills.

Therefore, parents can use authoritative styles and control their stress to prepare an intimate and warm environment for fostering children with positive affections that are able to regulate their emotion; these could help children to cope with challenges related to adolescence efficiently. So, we suggest child rearing trainings be provided for parents in rural and urban health service centers for implantation of emotion regulation skills in children and adolescence.

Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

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