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The relationship between parenting styles and children's perfectionism in a sample of Iranian families

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between parenting styles and children's perfectionism in a sample of Iranian families. 400 high school students (213 girls, 187 boys) along with their parents (342 fathers, 364 mothers) were included. Students and their parents were asked to complete the Tehran Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (TMPS; Besharat, 2007) and Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991), respectively. The results revealed that only father's authoritarian style was significantly associated with dimensions of perfectionism in their children. It can be concluded that authoritarian style of parenting would influence the development of children's perfectionistic characteristics.

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1. Introduction

Perfectionism is a personality trait characterized by striving for flawlessness and setting excessively high standards for performance, accompanied by tendencies toward overly critical evaluations of one's behaviour (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Perfectionism is seen as a multidimensional personality disposition (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

Hewitt and Flett (1991) introduced three separate and stable dimensions of perfectionism including Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP; "a striving to attain perfection in one's endeavours as well as strivings to avoid failures," p. 457), Other-Oriented Perfectionism (OOP; "unrealistic standards for significant others," p. 457), and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP; "a perceived need to attain standards and expectations prescribed by significant others," p. 457).

Many studies have documented that parenting has a powerful influence in child development. Parenting styles can be described as patterns of behaviour that primary caregivers use to interact with their children. These patterns of childrearing create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviours are expressed (Baumrind, 1971, 1977; Coplan, Hasting, Lagace-Seguín, & Moulton, 2002; Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

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Baumrind (1971, 1989, and 1991) and Maccoby and Martin (1983) outlined demanding and responsiveness as two independent dimensions of parenting. Demanding refers to the extent to which parents show control, power assertion, maturity demands, and supervision in their parenting. Responsiveness refers to the extent to which parents show their children affective warmth, emotional expression, acceptance, and support. Based on the degree of parental demanding and responsiveness, four parenting styles have been described (Baumrind, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983): *authoritative* (both demanding and responsive), *authoritarian* (demanding but not responsive), *permissive* (responsive but not demanding), and *neglectful* (neither demanding nor responsive). Each type of parenting is believed to differentially influence child perfectionist characteristics.

Researchers have demonstrated the association between parenting styles and perfectionist tendencies in children. For instance, maladaptive perfectionist characteristics have proven to be associated with harsh and authoritarian parenting styles (Flett, Hewitt, & Singer, 1995; Kawamura, Frost, & Harmatz, 2002; Rice, Ashby, & Preusser, 1996). Flett et al. (1995), utilizing a multidimensional perfectionism scale (Hewitt & Flett, 1991), concluded that SPP was the only dimension of perfectionism related to authoritarian parenting just among male participants. The aim of this study was to investigate how parenting styles may relate to children's perfectionist tendencies.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and Procedure

Four hundred students (213 girls, 187 boys: mean age: 16, age range: 14-18, SD: 1.13) from Tehran high schools in sections 8, 10, 11 and 19 in the academic year 2009-2010 along with their parents (342 fathers, mean age: 45, age range: 34-66, SD: 5.62; and 364 mothers, mean age: 40, age range: 30-57, SD: 5.24) took part in the present study as volunteers. Participants were asked to take part in a "study on family relations and personality" via announcements made by relevant lectures in classrooms. Students and their parents were asked to complete the Tehran Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (TMPS; Besharat, 2007) and Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991), respectively. Analysis of the data involved both descriptive and inferential statistics including means, standard deviations, Pearson's correlation coefficients, and regression analysis.

2.2. Measures

Tehran Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (TMPS; Besharat, 2007) - This is a 30-item questionnaire made up of three subscales: Self-Oriented Perfectionism (10 items), Other-Oriented Perfectionism (10 items), and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (10 items). Participants respond to the items using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Adequate psychometric properties of the English (e.g., Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Hewitt & Flett, 1991) and the Farsi (Besharat, 2007) versions of the scale have been reported. In the present study, internal consistency coefficients of .93, .89, and .91 were obtained for SOP, OOP, and SPP, respectively.

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991)- This 30-item questionnaire measures three parenting styles including authoritative (10 items), authoritarian (10 items), and permissive (10 items). Parents were asked to fill the PAQ using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Adequate psychometric properties of the PAQ (e.g., Buri, 1991; Dwairy & Menshar, 2006) have been reported. In the present study, internal consistency coefficients of .91, .90, and .91 were obtained for authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles, respectively.

Results

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated among parenting styles and dimensions of children's perfectionism. It was shown that only paternal authoritarian parenting style score had significant positive

correlations with self-oriented perfectionism ($r = .11$), other-oriented perfectionism ($r = .15$), and socially prescribed perfectionism ($r = .23$).

Multiple regression analyses with dimensions of children's perfectionism as the dependent variables, where parenting styles were entered simultaneously into the equation, produced the following results: paternal authoritarian parenting style revealed a significant R^2 of .02 for self-oriented perfectionism, both paternal authoritarian parenting style and maternal authoritative parenting styles revealed significant R^2 of .04 for other-oriented perfectionism, and paternal authoritarian parenting style revealed a significant R^2 of .06 for socially prescribed perfectionism (see Table 1).

Table 1. Results of regression analysis with parenting styles as predictors and children's dimensions of perfectionism as dependent variables

<u>Self-Oriented Perfectionism</u>				
Variable	R^2	F	β	t
Regression	.02	1.24		
Paternal Authoritative Style			0.54	0.97
Paternal Authoritarian Style			0.12	2.14*
Paternal Permissive Style			-0.02	-0.44
Maternal Authoritative Style			-0.04	-0.63
Maternal Authoritarian Style			-0.02	-0.26
Maternal Permissive Style			0.07	1.25
<u>Other-Oriented Perfectionism</u>				
Variable	R^2	F	β	t
Regression	.04	2.72		
Paternal Authoritative Style			-0.05	-0.90
Paternal Authoritarian Style			0.14	2.59*
Paternal Permissive Style			-0.05	-0.83
Maternal Authoritative Style			0.06	1.21
Maternal Authoritarian Style			0.02	0.37
Maternal Permissive Style			0.09	1.53
<u>Socially Prescribed Perfectionism</u>				
Variable	R^2	F	β	t
Regression	.06	3.93		
Paternal Authoritative Style			0.02	0.30
Paternal Authoritarian Style			0.23	4.22*
Paternal Permissive Style			-0.03	-0.57
Maternal Authoritative Style			0.02	0.42
Maternal Authoritarian Style			0.03	0.50
Maternal Permissive Style			0.05	0.94

* p values < .05

4. Discussion

The present study examined whether parenting styles were associated with children's perfectionism in a sample of Iranian families. The results revealed that paternal authoritarian parenting style was associated with self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially prescribed perfectionism in children. Multiple regression analyses revealed that paternal authoritarian parenting style could significantly predict children's perfectionism. These findings are consistent with the existing literature that has provided evidence of a relative relationship between parenting styles and dimensions of perfectionism in children (Craddock, Church, & Sands, 2009; Flett et al., 1995; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Kawamura et al., 2002; Rice et al., 1996). Authoritarian parents have been described as high on demanding and low on responsiveness (Baumrind, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). These parents employ strict discipline, may be insensitive to the child's emotional needs, and impose power, control and demands on their children (Mandara,

2003). They attribute negative behaviours to their children and criticize them for any possible mistake. They expect children to follow their rules without question (Coplan et al., 2002). As a result of this style of parenting, children do not learn non-perfectionist evaluation of others and their own behaviours. Internalizing parental standards may also lead children of authoritarian parents to accept those standards as their own and develop their own perfectionist characteristics (Kawamura et al., 2002).

The different impacts of fathers and mothers parenting styles on children's perfectionist characteristics found in the present study may partly be explained by gender role in an Asian culture. Men in Iranian culture are expected to be more authoritarian than women. On the other hand, based on the fundamental changes of Iranian women roles during recent decades, Iranian mothers have become more educated, more powerful, and more authoritative. These gender specific differences highlight the importance of investigating the consequences of parenting styles separately for mothers and fathers.

Limitations and implications of the present study: The cross-sectional design of this study does not allow us to draw conclusions about the directions of causality between parenting styles and children's perfectionism. This study included only Iranian parents. Further studies are needed to confirm and verify the results of the present study and to compare them with the relationships between parenting styles and children's perfectionism of other cultures. Such studies may lead to a better understanding of the role of parenting styles in the development of children's perfectionist tendencies. Finally, it must be pointed out that parenting styles may interact with other variables to product positive or negative consequences. Future studies need to be pursued to address this issue. Understanding what contributes to children's perfectionist tendencies allows us to better predict outcomes, which may in turn aid in the development of more effective preventive programs, or in identifying people likely have personal and interpersonal problems of perfectionism.

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