



The relationship between parenting style and mother-daughter communication

Mojgan Javadnoori¹, Maryam Torke Harchegani^{2*} and Khadijeh Shiralinia³

¹Reproductive Health Promotion Research Center, Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Iran.

²Department of Midwifery, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Iran

³Department of Counseling, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran.

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Abstract: Parenting style including the amount and content of communication between parents and children have a great impact on the development of adolescent personality and the formation of healthy or unhealthy behaviors in them. This study aimed at examining the relationship between parenting style and mother-adolescent daughter communication. Present study was conducted on 363 female students at high school level (14-18 years old) selected by multi-stage cluster sampling method in Ahvaz, Iran. The research instruments included the Persian version of Baumrind's Parenting Style Questionnaire and Mother-Daughter Communication Scale. The data were analyzed using the SPSS software version 21 and the Spearman test. The majority (63%) of adolescent girls had an average level of communication with their mothers. The level of their communication had only a significant relationship with the permissive parenting style and girls whose mothers had permissive styles had lower levels of communication. Permissive mothers were less likely to successfully establish a communication with their adolescent daughters.

Key words: Parenting Style; Adolescent; Mother-Daughter Communication

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization, adolescence refers to the age range of 10 to 19 years old as one of the most significant and critical life periods of each person. The physical, psychological, and social changes begin in this period (1). The major changes in adolescence are those in family relationships. The role and the influence of family on the shaping of character is mainly in three aspects including the impact of parenting style (especially mothers), the influence of family members, and the child birth order (3). Good relationships between adolescents and parents can barely remain stable without open and healthy communication between them. Parents-adolescents communication has a major role in family functioning throughout teen years (4). Relationships between parents and adolescents also affect shaping the context, content, style as well as the concept of a teenager's communication with people outside the family (5). Dialogue is one of the most important interpersonal aspects and is of utmost importance in the formation of family structure, human interaction, and interpersonal matters. Numerous researchers have focused on communication between parents and adolescents in the family and consider this is an issue so complicated that it creates challenges between the teens and their parents. One of the main obstacles to parents-adolescents communication is the difficulty and the difference between the two generations. Dialogue between parents and teenagers can be a bridge which connects the two generations and helps them to respect each other's opinions (6). Effective dialogue at home clarifies the role of the adolescents in the family, develops empathy skills, and also helps to find out the identity of the adolescents (7). However, studies have revealed that there is a relationship between the communication styles of parents and adolescent sexual risk behaviors. In a study on adolescents in India, it was reported that friendly and close communication of the parents makes the teens less engaged in risky behaviors (8).

Family, family atmosphere, and the type of relationships of parents with children have an effect on parenting styles and each family selects a particular parenting style of raising children and the way to talk with them (2). Parenting styles are standard patterns of bringing up children which are determined by parents' specific practices and responses to their children's behavior. The parenting style has a significant impact on the development and progress of the adolescents in this period. Teens in strong families are protected from risky behaviors. Considerable evidence suggests that the behavioral styles and techniques of parents who are warm and friendly influence the academic achievement and the psycho-social development of adolescents (9). A study in this field showed that 53% and 33% of adolescents have difficulty in communication and dialogue with their fathers and mothers, respectively. Only 69% of boys and 65% of girls could easily have a conversation with their mothers (10). If teens feel constantly supported by their parents and monitored, they are less likely to be exposed to sex and early pregnancy (11).

Parenting styles show parents-children emotional relationships as well as the general conversation style. In describing the relationship between parents and children, Baumrind focused on two fundamental aspects of the level of parents' response to the needs of children and the level of parents' control over children (12). The parents-adolescents communication styles can be considered as a criterion for the diagnosis of the parenting style. Parenting styles can be seen as a set of behaviors describing the parents-children interactions in extended circumstances (13).

Baumrind believes that the parenting style has a great influence on the growth and development of children's personality and has conducted extensive research on parenting styles and their effects. Accordingly, Baumrind

*Corresponding Author:

Maryam Torke Harchegani,

Department of Midwifery,

School of Nursing and Midwifery,

Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences,

Ahvaz, Iran.

introduced three parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Authoritative parents are those who are not only receptive but also demanding. Authoritarian parents are demanding, but not receptive; and permissive parents are receptive, but not demanding (12).

Parenting styles are influenced by several factors which fit into three categories: (1) the characteristics of children including personality, mood, and cognitive abilities, (2) parents' characteristics including personality, expectations, beliefs, and understanding of the motivation, abilities and the nature of children, culture, and social experience, and (3) the social context of the relationships between parents and children (14). Parenting styles are of the fundamental factors in the growth and education of children and are often related to the most important achievements of children such as cognitive and social abilities. They are also the underlying factors for many aspects of personality, attitudes, emotions, and individual habits (15). Frank (2010) in a study indicated that authoritative parenting style in Africa had a negative and significant relationship with adolescent violence and authoritarian parenting style had no effect on the reduction of juvenile delinquency among African-American adolescents (16). Having at least one authoritarian parent or permissive parents lead to better outcomes for adolescents, while permissive parents lead to the poorest outcomes for adolescents including depression and anxiety (17).

The current study examines the relationship between the parenting style and the adolescent daughter-mother communication style.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is an analytical epidemiological study on 363 female adolescents at high school level conducted in Ahvaz in 2015. After the approval of the research proposal at Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences and its confirmation by the Ethics Committee with the code ajums.REC.1393.307.; an official introduction letter was obtained from the Vice-Chancellor for Research and the Ministry of Education in Ahvaz to conduct the sampling. The second author (a midwife) referred to schools and after explanations to school administrators, could obtain parents' verbal consent (by telephone) through the school authorities. In this study, multi-stage cluster sampling was used. Thus, among the eight education districts in Ahvaz, two schools from each district were introduced by the Ministry of Education in Ahvaz to the researcher where students had similar socio-economic levels. Based on the administrators' suggestions, six classes from each school and two classes for each grade were randomly selected. After reviewing the research inclusion criteria and the explanation of the objectives of the study to the students, informed consents were obtained and the students were invited to cooperate and participate in this project. The inclusion criteria of the study were adolescent girls aging between 14 to 18 years old living in a family environment and the verbal consent from the adolescents. As well, the criteria for exclusion from the study were unwillingness to cooperate, mothers' death or divorce, living with a

stepmother, and distorting the questionnaire. The instruments of this study included the following questionnaires:

Demographic Data Questionnaire

The questionnaire includes age, educational level, language, living place, number of siblings, age of parents, parents' job and education, parental marital status, and family relationship indicators.

Mother-Daughter Communication Scale

This questionnaire was designed based on the questionnaire developed by Barnes and Olson (1982) and then its validity and reliability was evaluated. It consists of 16 items that are rated in the form of 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, strongly disagree = 2, and disagree = 1). Items 3, 4, 8, 9, 12, 15 and 16 were coded strongly agree (1) and strongly disagree (5) using the cut-off median of respondents (18). The scores between 0-49.9 represent low level of communication, the scores between 50-74.9 are related to average communication level, and the scores above 75 indicate the high level communication. Its validity and reliability by 72% was obtained by ten members of the faculty of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences and reproductive health professionals.

Baumrind's Parenting Style Questionnaire

Baumrind's Parenting Style Questionnaire contains 30 items in the form of Likert scale and determines three styles of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive in which each category of 10 items measures one style. Buri (1991) reported the reliability level of this questionnaire through test-retest reliability by 81% for the permissive style, and 81% and 92% for the authoritarian and authoritative styles, respectively (19).

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was examined in Iran by Esfandiari (1995) by surveying 10 psychiatrists and psychologists. The reliability of the authoritative manner was 73%, and the reliability for the authoritarian and permissive styles was 77% and 76%, respectively. In this study, Cronbach's alpha for the authoritative style was 78%, and 66% and 74% for the authoritarian and permissive styles, respectively (20).

RESULTS

All statistical analyzes were performed using the SPSS software version 21 and the significance level of ($P < 0.05$) was considered.

The mean age of the participants was 16 ± 1 years old (the age range between 14 and 18 years old), the average age of mothers was 40 ± 5 years old (the age range between 30 to 57 years old) and the average age of fathers under study was 46 ± 5 years old (the age range between 34 and 70 years old). The variables of communication with fathers and emotionally close feelings were associated significantly to the extent of mother-daughter dialogue.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of mother-daughter communication and parenting styles in the sample

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	
Level of Communication	low (0-49.9)	93	26%
	average (50-74.9)	228	63%
	high (above 75)	42	11%
Parenting Style	authoritative	308	85%
	authoritarian	39	11%
	permissive	16	4%

Table 2: Examination of mother-daughter communication level based on the indicators in the family

Variable	Mean for Communication with Mother	Frequency	Percentage
Communication with Father	daily	59.88±13.37	0.002
	weekly	54.88±14.61	
	monthly	52.62±14.68	
Responsible for Training	mother	54.84±14.43	0.016
	father	51.78±18.78	
	both	59.19±13.43	
Emotionally Close Relationships	father	56.54±13.61	0.000
	mother	48.43±15.51	
	both	62.43±12.67	
Home Stay	whole family	44.38±4.59	0.707
	father	43.94±4.31	
	mother	44.07±4.28	
	living together	57.96±13.61	
Parents' Marital Status	divorced	57.64±18.39	0.837
	father's death	55.31±16.47	

The highest level of communication belongs to the girls who have daily conversations with their fathers and emotionally close relationships with their parents (both of them), and then the girls who have just emotionally close communications with their mothers. The lowest level of communication is associated with girls who have just an emotional connection with their fathers. Moreover, girls who are brought up by their fathers and mothers, mostly have dialogues with their mothers. There is no relationship between mother-daughter communication and the marital status of parents and the teenager's home stay with each parent.

Table 3: The relationship between parenting style and mother-daughter communication level

Parenting Style	Communication Level
Permissive	P = 0.005
	r = -0.148
Authoritarian	P = 0.106
	r = 0.085
Authoritative	P = 0.166
	r = 0.073
Spearman Correlation Test	

As it can be seen in the Table above, there is only a significant relationship between permissive parenting style and mother-daughter communication. The inverse relationship between permissive parenting style and mother-daughter communication level shows that the more permissive the parenting style is, the mother-daughter communication level lowers, and vice versa.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between parenting style and adolescent daughter-mother communication. The results showed that most mothers had authoritarian style and the mother-daughter communication was mostly at an average level. Moreover, there was a significant relationship between permissive parenting style and mother-daughter communication in the sense that girls whose mothers were permissive had lower-level communication with their mother. The variables of communication and close emotional relationships with parents had a significant connection with mother-daughter communication. In fact, girls who had further communication with their mothers had also more dialogue with their fathers.

Lehr *et al.*, in their study on African-American teen talks with their mothers concluded that adolescent girls had more open communication with their mothers than their fathers ($p \geq 0.001$) (18). Schouten in a study on Dutch adolescent girls came to the conclusion that adolescent girls have significantly more conversation with their mothers than boys ($p \leq 0.001$) (19). In the study by Luk which was consistent with the present study, 33% of girls had difficulty communicating with their mothers and only 65% of the girls could easily have a conversation with their mothers (10).

Numerous studies have revealed that there is a significant relationship between parenting style and constructive or destructive behavior of children. For example, Newman in a review study indicated that authoritative parenting style was a protective factor of adolescent risk behaviors (21, 23). Zarei *et al.*, (2010) found a significantly negative correlation between permissive parenting practices and risky behavior avoidance (22, 24). Rahmani also showed that permissive parenting style has a significant correlation with adolescent behavior problems (14, 25). In addition, Mueller and Powers showed that teenagers who have a warm and friendly communication with their parents are less involved in risky behaviors (8).

The study by Yaaghoubi Doust *et al.*, (2014) in Iran demonstrated that permissive parenting style has a significant and positive correlation with domestic violence to children and permissive or authoritarian parents commit different types of home violence. Therefore, that is why girls with more permissive mothers are less likely to have contact with their mothers (23). Laali Faz in a study revealed that permissive parenting style has a significant relationship with the girls' feeling of loneliness; so that the more permissive the parenting style is, the more loneliness the girls feel. According to the results, this feeling of loneliness can be due to lack of proper communication between them and their mothers (24). Considering the results of these studies, it can be concluded that some positive parenting styles can create a safe and secure environment for parents and teens to communicate with each other.

Thus, according to the results of this study in which parenting styles had an impact on mother-daughter communication along with the results of previous studies and their emphasis on the influence of parenting styles and parents-adolescents behavior on teen behavior; it can be concluded that one of the ways through which the parenting styles affect teen behavior is the quality and the level of adolescents-parents communication.

It is recommended to examine the influence of parenting styles on the content of the communication between mothers and daughters, as well as the impact of counseling on parenting style and its impact on communication with the children in further studies.

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