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Parenting Style and Maternal Self-efficacy as Predictors of Emotional and Social Adjustment among Preschool Children in Palestine

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Abstract

It is generally assumed that parent characteristics play a critical role in determining the potential for a positive transition into formal education systems for all children. The current study examines the contribution of parenting styles and maternal self-efficacy as predictors of social and emotional adjustment among preschoolers. The study included 151 kindergarten age children and their mothers. Findings demonstrated that a positive relationship exists between an authoritative balanced parenting style and social emotional adjustment, while both permissive and authoritative styles predicted lower levels of adjustment. It was further identified that positive maternal self-efficacy was linked to higher levels of social-emotional adjustment in pre-school children.

Keywords: : Maternal Self-efficacy; of Emotional and Social Adjustment;

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1.Introduction

Social Emotional Adjustment is known to be a predictor of both academic and relational success across the life span. Children with low levels of social-emotional adjustment are perceived as being more aggressive, less accepted by their peers and more likely to be labeled hyperactive (Hulya & Alev, 2013). It is suggested that social emotional adjustment is directly related to parenting. Social Emotional Adjustment has been linked to parental involvement in kindergarten (Dubeau & Coutu, 2013), quality of parenting (Haskett & Willoughby, 2006), and primacy maternal parenting (Chen & Chang, 2005). The current study examines both parenting style and maternal self-efficacy as predictors of Social Emotional Adjustment in a Muslim Arabic Speaking preschool population.

1.1.The concept of adaptation:

Piaget (Piaget, 1966), defines adaptation as change related to two processes: integration (assimilation) of new knowledge into the individual's existing schema, and adaptation (accommodation) of the individual to their environment when differences cannot be absorbed under current structures. These two processes complement each other and allow individuals to maintain their previously developed cognitive structures while learning new norms, to sustain a balance between themselves and the environment.

1.2.Emotional adaptation:

An emotionally adjusted child is one who is defined as having the ability to manage environmental stressors, maintaining a feeling of self-efficacy high self-efficacy and acting in an independent proactive manner (Halberstadt, Denham & Dunsmore, 2001). Children who express their feelings accurately (Denham, et al., 2003), have positive social relationships with their peers (Izard, 2002) and view the world in positive light (Feldman & Eidelman, 2008) are defined as "well-adjusted".

1.3.Social adaptation:

Social adaptation refers to how children relate with peers, the extent to which they are able to maintain socially acceptable behavior and inhibit negative behaviors in varying social environments (Rubin, Stewart & Chen, 1995). A child's behavior is socially adaptive when it reflects the behavioral norms of the group and demonstrates the knowledge of what is permissible and what is forbidden. Children with social adjustment capabilities are more popular and receive more acceptance from their peers (Ladd & Kochenderfer, 2002). To the contrary, social rejection can cause a child to experience loneliness, social anxiety and depression (Peake & Rodrigues, 2000). The ability to establish meaningful positive relationships with friends of the same age group is a major predictor of mental health and life satisfaction (Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter & Keehn, 2007). Emotional and social development are related (Kandır & Alpan, 2008), within the context of social interaction, as emotions and cognitive skills affect behavior and reactions in a variety of situations (Izard, 2001). Kindergarten is the child's first institutionalized social world, exposing children to shared situations of play, work, and learning. Creating effective relationships with peers in the early years is an important developmental skill (Mostov, Izard, Fine & Trentacosta, 2002). Relationships with friends during the kindergarten years can influence the child's social behavior and success in studies in future years (Hay, Payne & Chadwick, 2004).

1.4. Parenting styles:

Parents are the central figures in the life of the young child modeling attitudes, behavior, lifestyle, and values. The beliefs that parents adopt regarding parenting itself are influenced by several factors: the history of the parent, socio-cultural factors, personal experiences as a parent, personality, and current community views on parenting (McGillicuddy-De Lisi & Sigel, 2007). Parenting style research as identified the elements of control, supervision, support and care as essential and proposed three typologies related to parenting styles (Baumrind, 1971). Authoritarian parenting style, Authoritative parenting style, Permissive parenting style and Indifferent-uninvolved style.

1.5. Parenting styles and social and emotional adjustment:

Children who grew up in homes characterized by an authoritative parenting style received higher scores on a wide range of adjustment indices, including social development, self-esteem and mental health, as compared to peers who grew up in homes characterized by other parenting styles (Baumrind, 1991, 2005). Other studies have found that children from homes with authoritative parenting styles are healthier emotionally, demonstrate higher levels of social adaptation abilities and exhibit fewer behavioral problems (Kaufmann, et al., 2000). They demonstrate better social adaptation abilities and greater psychological health than children and adolescents with parents of other parenting styles (McKinny, Donnelly & Renk, 2008), and higher levels of emotional adjustment (Milevsky et al., 2007).

1.6. Maternal self-efficacy:

Parental efficacy is the extent to which parents perceive themselves as capable of performing various tasks connected with the role of the parent, in an efficient and effective manner. A parent with a high level of self-efficacy has a high level of self-confidence in their ability to act as a parent, is willing to invest in this task, is inclined to believe that they have the ability to positively affect the development and behavior of his child, and to meet the child's needs in both an efficient and correct manner (Jones & Prinz, 2005; Pelletier & Brent, 2002). Parental self-efficacy has been found to be associated with positive parenting strategies (Giallo, Kienhuis, Treyvaud & Matthews, 2008). A positive relationship has been found to exist between the self-efficacy of the parent and effective child-rearing practices (MacPhee & Miller-Heyl, 2003). Mothers who view themselves as having high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate a warm and responsive style of parenting combined with strict discipline and control over the child's behavior. Parental efficacy has been linked to child adjustment in various areas (Jones & Prinz, 2005) including academic achievement (Pelletier & Brent, 2002). With regard to behavior, it has been found that children of parents with high parental efficacy tend to report fewer behavioral problems than children of parents with low parental efficacy (Bogenschneider, Small & Tsay, 1997).

2. Method

2.1. Participants:

The study sample was drawn from a sample of government preschools and included 151 Arabic speaking mothers of a 3 to 4 year-old target child. Mothers ages (47,7%) between the ages of 20 and

30 (47.7%), between the ages of 31 and 40 (47.7%), (4.6%) between the age of 41 and 50, and the remainder aged fifty and up (0.7%).

2.2. Tools:

Personal Information Questionnaire: Mother's age, mother's education, family status, child's age, child's gender, child's birth order and number of children in family.

2.3. Parenting Styles Questionnaire:

This is a self-report questionnaire was constructed by the researchers and reviewed by field experts. The questionnaire includes 49 items, of which 10 items are descriptive of a permissive parenting style, 12 items describe an uninvolved parenting style, 14 items describe an authoritative parenting style, and 12 items describe an authoritarian parenting style. Each mother is ranked on a 3 step Likert scale; (1 = high, 2 = medium, 3 = low). In the current study the measures of internal consistency are, general parenting style $\alpha = 0.64$, permissive parenting style $\alpha = 0.50$, uninvolved parenting style $\alpha = 0.69$, authoritative parenting style $\alpha = 0.73$, authoritarian parenting style $\alpha = 0.74$.

2.4. Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (Aviram, 1990):

It is a tool for measuring the individual's expectations regarding their ability to begin and maintain their behavior that has been found to be effective for reporting various measures of personality. Responses are recorded on a four step Likert scale (1 = very much agree, 4 = very much disagree), reverse-scoring used. In the current study the reliability coefficient for general self-efficacy was $\alpha = 0.62$.

2.5. Adjustment Questionnaire:

Child adjustment was measured using the "Adjustment scale of children to kindergarten and school for teachers" of Smilansky and Shfatyah (2001). The scale includes 18 questions and measures adjustment in three areas: academic, emotional and social. Each question includes five statements describing and rating the child's behavior with the respondent being instructed to select the most appropriate response. For the current study, the measure of reliability for general adjustment was $\alpha = 0.94$, for emotional adjustment $\alpha = 0.82$, and for social adjustment $\alpha = 0.84$.

2.6. Research process:

In the first phase of the study all the questionnaires were translated into Arabic, utilizing a "back translation" method. The study was carried out in six public preschools, during the 2013 – 2014 school year. The study after receiving the required approvals from the government's Chief Scientist and informed consent from participants, each child received a letter for their parents, briefly explaining the subject of the study and its purpose, including ethical issues of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Questionnaires were distributed to mothers with instructions to be completed at home. Teachers completed a social-emotional adjustment questionnaire for each child. Coded matching procedures maintained the coordination of the gathered data.

3. Findings

Table 1: Correlation of study variables

Self- Authoritative Style	General Authoritarian Style	Emotional Efficacy Style	Social Adjustment Style	Permissive Adjustment	Uninvolved Adjustment	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	
(7)	(8)					
(1) -						
(2) -.28 ***	-					
(3) -.30 ***	.91***	-				
(4) -.24 **	.94***	.82***	-			
(5) -.13	.22**	.23**	.21**	-		
(6) -.22 **	.24**	.19*	.24**	.27**	-	
(7) .24**	.51 ***	-.49 ***	-.49***	.01	-.22 **	
(8) -.23**	.39***	.37***	.39***	.10	.52***	-.32 ***

*p<0.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

Table 1 shows statistical significant negative correlations between self-efficacy and the variable parenting styles (with the exception of the permissive parenting style) and a significant positive correlation with the authoritative parenting style, and statistically significant negative correlations between self-efficacy and all components of adjustment.

A statistically significant relationship exists between the different parenting styles and general adjustment, emotional and social; statistically significant positive correlations exist between

permissive parenting style, and between uninvolved parenting style and authoritarian parenting style and general adjustment, emotional and social, and statistical significant negative correlations exist between authoritative parenting style and emotional and social adjustment.

Table 2. Stepwise regression analysis for predicting adjustment. (N=149)

Adjustment	General Adjustment		Social Adjustment		Emotional Adjustment	
	ΔR^2	B	ΔR^2	B	ΔR^2	β
	Step 1: Control Variable	.17		.21		.10
Child's age	.17**		.26***		.19**	
Child's gender	.37**		.50**		.31*	
Step 2: Variables	.60		.57		.55	
Permissive parenting style	.62**		.67**		.81***	
Uninvolved parenting style	.17		.18		-.33	
Authoritative parenting style	-1.32***		-1.14***		-1.42***	
Authoritarian parenting style	.51**		.64**		.64**	
Self-efficacy	-.20*		-.12		-.11	
R ² General						
N	125		128		125	

*p<0.05 ** p< .01 *** p< .001

Stepwise regression analysis was employed to test the research hypotheses. The first hypothesis focused on the relationship between adjustment and authoritative parenting style. Table 1 shows that a significant negative correlation exists between overall adjustment and authoritative parenting style ($r = .51, p < .001$). In the regression analysis of the variables as predictors of general adjustment in Table 2, it is found that authoritative parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in general adjustment ($B = -1.32, SE = .18, \beta = .45$). The findings also indicate a significant negative correlation between social adjustment and authoritative parenting style ($r = -.49, p < .001$). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 2, as predictors of social adjustment, shows that an authoritative parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in social adjustment ($B = -1.14, SE = .21, \beta = -.35$). The findings also indicate a significant negative correlation between emotional adjustment and an authoritative parenting style ($r = -.49, p < .001$).

Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 2, as predictors of emotional adjustment, shows that an authoritative parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in emotional adjustment ($B = -1.42$, $SE = .20$, $\beta = -.47$). Examination of the relationship between adjustment and the authoritarian parenting style in Table 1 shows that a significant positive correlation exists between overall adjustment and the authoritarian parenting style ($r = .39$, $p < .001$). In the regression analysis of the variables as predictors of general adjustment in Table 2, it is found that the authoritarian parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in general adjustment ($B = .51$, $SE = .17$, $\beta = .21$). The findings also indicate a significant positive correlation between social adjustment and the authoritarian parenting style ($r = .39$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 2, as predictors of social adjustment, shows that an authoritarian parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in social adjustment ($B = .64$, $SE = .19$, $\beta = .24$). The findings also indicate a significant positive correlation between emotional adjustment and the authoritarian parenting style ($r = .37$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 2, as predictors of emotional adjustment, shows that an authoritarian parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in emotional adjustment ($B = .64$, $SE = .19$, $\beta = .25$). Examination of the relationship between adjustment and the permissive parenting style in Table 1 shows that a significant positive correlation exists between overall adjustment and the permissive parenting style ($r = .22$, $p < .01$). In the regression analysis of the variables as predictors of general adjustment in Table 1, it is found that the permissive parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in general adjustment ($B = .62$, $SE = .17$, $\beta = .21$). The findings also indicate a significant positive correlation between social adjustment and the permissive parenting style ($r = .21$, $p < .01$).

Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 1, as predictors of social adjustment, shows that a permissive parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in social adjustment ($B = .67$, $SE = .19$, $\beta = .21$). The findings also indicate a significant positive correlation between emotional adjustment and the permissive parenting style ($r = .23$, $p < .01$). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 2, as predictors of emotional adjustment, shows that a permissive parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in emotional adjustment ($B = .81$, $SE = .18$, $\beta = .27$).

The second hypothesis focused on the relationship between adjustment and self-efficacy. Table 1 shows that a significant negative correlation exists between overall adjustment and self-efficacy ($r = -.28$, $p < .001$). In the regression analysis of the variables as predictors of general adjustment in Table 2, it is found that self-efficacy provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in general adjustment ($B = .20$, $SE = .08$, $\beta = .14$). The findings also indicate a significant negative correlation between social adjustment and self-efficacy ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 3, as predictors of social adjustment, shows that self-efficacy does not provide a unique contribution in explaining the variance in social adjustment ($B = -.12$, $SE = .08$, $\beta = -.09$). The findings also indicate a significant negative correlation between emotional adjustment and self-

efficacy ($r = -.30$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 2, as predictors of social adjustment, shows that self-efficacy does not provide a unique contribution in explaining the variance in emotional adjustment ($B = -.11$, $SE = .07$, $\beta = -.09$).

4. Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine the contribution of parenting styles and maternal self-efficacy as predictors of emotional and social adjustment among kindergarten children. It was found that a positive relationship exists between the authoritative parenting style and social-emotional adjustment, and a negative relationship was found to exist between authoritarian and permissive parenting styles and social-emotional adjustment in this sample. A positive relationship was found to exist between maternal self-efficacy and the child's emotional and social adjustment to kindergarten. This finding is supported by studies showing that the emotional and social adjustment of children of parents with an authoritative parenting style who combine warmth and support with flexibility, is higher than that of their peers who have experienced other parenting styles (McKinny et al., 2008).

The converse was also supported, in that a negative correlation was found between an authoritarian and a permissive parenting styles and the social-emotional adjustment of kindergarten children. The finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies that found that the authoritarian parenting style was found to be related with difficulties in social-emotional adjustment during the periods of childhood and adolescence (Baumrind, 1991). This finding is contradictory of a previous study of Arabic speaking parents which found that the authoritarian parenting style was perceived as being positive, and not harmful regarding adjustment among adolescents (Dwairy, 2004; Dwairy & Achoui, 2006), and that the authoritarian parenting style is seen as an expression of the positive attitude of parents towards them, characterized by caring, love, respect, and protection.

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