

Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Emotional Intelligence in Nursing and Midwifery Students at Golestan University of Medical Sciences

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ABSTRACT

It is imperative for students in any nation to maintain good health due to their pivotal role in shaping the future of society. Emotional intelligence, which is influenced by parenting style, is a significant determinant of health. This study aimed to evaluate the relationship between parenting style and emotional intelligence among nursing and midwifery students. Employing a cross-sectional design, this research utilized descriptive, analytical, and census methodologies. The study population comprised 435 nursing and midwifery students from Golestan University of Medical Sciences, Iran. Data collection instruments included the demographic information form, Buri's Parental Authority Questionnaire, and Shearing's Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation coefficient via SPSS version 26 software. The findings indicated a negative association between emotional intelligence and both permissive ($r=-0.47, p=0.000$) and authoritarian ($r=-0.52, p=0.000$) parenting styles. Additionally, a significant negative correlation was identified between self-control and authoritarian parenting styles ($r=-0.16, p=0.01$). Conversely, self-awareness ($r=0.16, p=0.004$), self-control ($r=0.13, p=0.03$), and social skills intelligence ($r=0.10, p=0.03$) were positively correlated with authoritative parenting. The results suggest that enhancing parenting styles can bolster children's emotional intelligence. Consequently, counselors and educators who maintain close relationships with students should emphasize the influence of the family environment and parenting style on emotional intelligence. They should also work to increase parental awareness through workshops and training sessions, thereby encouraging greater attention to children's needs and capabilities.

Keywords: Parenting; Emotional Intelligence; Nursing Students; Midwifery Students

Introduction

University students represent a significant proportion of the population in every nation [1]. Consequently, the health of students, as future contributors to society and the succeeding generation, should be prioritized [2]. Emotional intelligence (EI), a determinant

of individual health [3], has garnered considerable attention [4] due to its crucial role in personal success, reflecting the extent and manner of social interactions [5]. EI encompasses abilities such as data collection and the management of one's own and others' emotions [6]. It enhances stress management

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and boosts efficiency in both academic and professional domains [7].

Various factors can affect an individual's EI [8], with family-related factors being particularly influential [9]. Among these, parenting style [10, 11] involves parental efforts to socialize their children and is considered a composite of parental behaviors across different contexts, establishing a consistent parenting environment [12]. Baumrind identified three key characteristics: acceptance and closeness, control, and autonomy, which differentiate effective from less effective parenting. The interplay of these characteristics results in three parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive [13]. The authoritative style is marked by acceptance, closeness, adaptive control methods, and appropriate autonomy [14]. In contrast, the authoritarian style is characterized by low acceptance and closeness, high coercive control, and minimal autonomy support. Permissive parents, on the other hand, are affectionate and accepting, impose few demands, exert limited control, and allow children to make decisions irrespective of their readiness [15].

Research findings on the relationship between parenting styles and EI have been mixed. Alegre et al. found no significant correlation between parenting styles and children's EI [16], whereas other studies have identified a significant relationship between parenting style and EI in adolescents [17]. According to Cameron et al., adolescents raised with authoritative and permissive parenting styles demonstrated higher EI compared to those raised with authoritarian styles [18]. Few studies have explored the relationship between parenting style and EI [18]. Given the adverse effects of inappropriate parenting styles on children, the critical role of students as future societal contributors, and the influence of these styles on their physical and mental health, as well as personal, academic, and social functioning, it is imperative to evaluate the impact of parenting styles on EI development. This is particularly important for fostering a healthy future generation. No similar study has been

conducted on university students at a national or international level, as previous research in Iran and other countries has focused on children or school-aged students. This study aims to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and EI among nursing and midwifery students at Golestan University of Medical Sciences in 2022.

Materials and Methods

This analytical cross-sectional study was conducted on all undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students in nursing and midwifery at Golestan University of Medical Sciences in 2022.

Main hypothesis: A significant relationship is identified between parenting styles (permissive, authoritative, and authoritarian) and EI among nursing and midwifery students.

The sample size was estimated based on the literature review [19] and using Cohen's Δ effect size.

$$n = \frac{(z_{1-\beta} - z_{1-\alpha})^2}{\Delta^2}$$

The finite-population correction factor $\left(\frac{n_0}{1+n_0/N}\right)$ was utilized, given that the estimated sample size is larger than the population one. In addition, the entire population ($N=460$) was examined using the census method in terms of the employed variables since the estimated value ($N=499$) was close to the population size ($N=500$) by applying the correction factor. Finally, the sample size was 435, as 25 students refused to participate in the study.

The students' contact information was obtained following approval from Golestan University of Medical Sciences and coordination with the Education Unit at the School of Nursing and Midwifery. The researcher, initiated sampling based on the census method, sending a text message to participants to introduce the research design and objectives, explain data confidentiality, emphasize the anonymity of responses, and provide a link to the study questionnaires. Consent to participate was obtained at the

beginning of the online questionnaire. Sampling continued until the desired sample size was reached. Inclusion criteria included consent to participate, enrollment as an undergraduate, master's, or doctoral student in nursing and midwifery, no self-reported history of mental disorders, and the absence of parental divorce. The exclusion criterion was an incomplete questionnaire, defined as more than 5% of questions left unanswered. All questionnaires submitted to the researcher's email were completed, as the online questionnaire in Google Docs required responses to all questions. Data collection occurred from November 2022 to March 2022.

The study employed demographic variables, including age, gender, marital status, field of study, academic level, semester, parental education, and household size, alongside the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire and the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ).

Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

The Shiring Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire comprises 33 items, divided into subscales for self-stimulation (7 items), self-awareness (8 items), self-control (7 items), social awareness (6 items), and social skills (5 items). Responses are recorded on a Likert scale ranging from "never" [5] to "always" [1], with items 1, 9, 12, 14, 18, 22, 28, 31, and 33 reverse-scored (i.e., "never" = 1 and "always" = 5). The potential score range is 33 to 165, with higher scores indicating greater emotional intelligence. The internal consistency of this instrument, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.85 in an Iranian sample, and its construct validity was deemed appropriate [20].

Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)

The PAQ, developed by John R. Buri in 1991, consists of 30 items across three subscales: permissive (10 items: questions 1, 6, 10, 13, 14, 17, 19, 21, 24, and 28), authoritarian (10 items: questions 2, 3, 7, 9, 12, 16, 18, 25, 26, and 29), and authoritative (10 items: questions 4, 5, 8, 11, 15, 20, 22, 23, 27, and 30) parenting styles. The questionnaire is identical for fathers and mothers, except for the specific references to "father" or "mother." It is scored on a 5-point

Likert scale, with options ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Scores for each subscale are calculated by summing the relevant items, with possible scores ranging from 10 to 50 per subscale. Buri reported Cronbach's alpha values of 0.85, 0.87, and 0.74 for the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles, respectively [21]. Sephrian et al. reported internal consistency coefficients of 0.72, 0.73, and 0.70 for the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles, respectively, using Cronbach's alpha [22]. Besharat et al. found internal consistency coefficients of 0.91, 0.90, and 0.91 for the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles, respectively [23]. In this study, Cronbach's alpha values for the permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative styles were 0.62, 0.70, and 0.75, respectively, with an overall score of 0.81.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to, with the study's objectives explained to participants, and informed consent obtained. Participants were assured that results would be published in aggregate form, ensuring individual anonymity. Furthermore, participants completed the questionnaires without providing their names, and all data were treated with strict confidentiality. This study was approved by the Golestan University of Medical Sciences under the ethical code IR.GOUMS.REC.1401.416.

Date analysis

Normality of the data was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate mean scores for parental authority and EI. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between the parental authority scores and EI. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26 software, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Results

The average age of the subjects was 24.71 years (5.90), the majority of whom were female (75.9%) with a bachelor's degree (75.9%).

Regarding the educational background of the participants' parents, 34.5% of mothers held diplomas, 28.7% completed secondary education, and 12.6% possessed bachelor's degrees. In contrast, 28.7% of fathers had bachelor's degrees, 26.4% held diplomas, and 24.1% completed secondary education. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants.

The mean scores (SD) for parenting styles were as follows: permissive parenting style, 21.80 (4.64); authoritarian style, 21.33 (5.64); and authoritative style, 24.93 (4.92). The mean score (SD) for emotional intelligence (EI) was 100 (9.12).

Notably, EI was negatively correlated with permissive ($r=-0.47$, $p<0.001$) and authoritarian ($r=-0.52$, $p<0.001$) parenting styles (Table 3), indicating that students

exposed to these styles exhibited lower EI scores.

In essence, permissive and authoritarian parenting styles were associated with reduced EI in students. Additionally, a significant negative correlation was identified between self-control and authoritarian parenting style, with students experiencing this style demonstrating lower self-control ($r=-0.16$, $p=0.01$).

Furthermore, self-awareness ($r=0.16$, $p=0.004$), self-control ($r=0.13$, $p=0.03$), and social skills intelligence ($r=0.10$, $p=0.03$) were positively associated with authoritative parenting styles, resulting in higher scores in these EI components for students exposed to this style (Table 2).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of subjects (N=435)

| Characteristics | | Number (%) | Characteristics | | Number (%) |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 24.1 (105) | Father's education | Illiterate | 2.3 (10) |
| | Female | 75.9 (330) | | Cycle | 24.1 (105) |
| Education | Bachelor | 75.9 (330) | Diploma | 26.4 (115) | |
| | Master | 18.4 (80) | Postgraduate Diploma | 8 (35) | |
| | PhD | 5.7 (25) | Bachelor | 28.7 (125) | |
| Field of study | Nursing | 50.6 (220) | Master | 8 (35) | |
| | Midwifery | 49.4 (215) | PhD | 2.3 (10) | |
| Marital status | Married | 29.9 (130) | Mother's education | Illiterate | 12.6 (55) |
| | Single | 70.1 (305) | | Cycle | 28.7 (125) |
| Number of family members | 3 | 9.2 (40) | | Diploma | 34.5 (150) |
| | 4 | 40.9 (178) | | Postgraduate Diploma | 11.5 (50) |
| | 5 | 30.3 (132) | | Bachelor | 12.6 (55) |
| | 6 | 6.9 (30) | | Master | - |
| | 7 | 9.2 (40) | | PhD | - |
| | 8 | 3.4 (15) | | | |

Table2. Results of Pearson's correlation test between EI components and parenting styles among students

| Variables | Parenting style | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|
| | Permissive | | Authoritarian | | Authoritative | |
| | r | P-value | r | P-value | r | P-value |
| Self-stimulation | 0.005 | 0.95 | 0.11 | 0.19 | 0.04 | 0.57 |
| Self-awareness | 0.10 | 0.05 | 0.07 | 0.16 | 0.16 | 0.004 |
| Self-control | -0.11 | 0.06 | -0.16 | 0.01 | 0.13 | 0.03 |
| Social awareness | -0.08 | 0.07 | -0.03 | 0.45 | 0.04 | 0.40 |
| Social skills intelligence | -0.06 | 0.23 | -0.04 | 0.39 | 0.10 | 0.03 |
| Overall EI | -0.47 | 0.000 | -0.52 | 0.000 | 0.19 | 0.13 |

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the relationship between parenting styles and students' EI. The total EI score was inversely related to permissive and authoritarian parenting styles, which were associated with decreased EI in students. Moreover, a negative correlation was observed between self-control and authoritarian parenting style, with students exposed to these styles exhibiting lower self-control levels. Conversely, self-awareness, self-control, and social skills were positively associated with authoritative parenting. Nasirzadeh identified a positive correlation between authoritative parenting and EI, while authoritarian and permissive styles were negatively correlated with EI [24].

Mirderikvand et al. reported a significant association between authoritative parenting style and all EI components, except self-expression, consistent with the findings of this study [25]. However, George et al. found that parenting style was negatively associated with EI among boys, girls, and students, which contrasts with the results of the present study, although some components were associated with EI [26]. A review of the literature [18, 27, 28] suggests that parenting styles can have both positive and negative effects on EI. Cameron et al. conducted a retrospective study involving 85 undergraduate students, concluding that the responsiveness and support levels characteristic of these styles have the strongest positive relationship with adults' EI [18]. Other studies have identified parenting style as a critical factor in predicting students' EI, influencing their EI development [27, 28].

Each parenting style creates a distinct emotional environment that contributes to EI development. Parents serve as the primary context for recognizing and transmitting emotional messages during the socialization process. These emotional messages aid children in interpreting and responding appropriately. Parental emotional expressiveness and the emotional environment fostered through their parenting style facilitate children's use of emotional communication in

daily social interactions and advance emotional learning beyond the acquisition of social skills to the application of emotional rules in various contexts [29].

Authoritative parents establish clear standards, ensure their implementation, and apply sanctions when necessary. They are attuned to their children's emotions and utilize emotional situations to comprehend distressing issues and identify appropriate responses. Rather than imposing their will, these parents facilitate adolescents' experiences of emotional openness and independence, enabling them to understand the rationale behind actions [30]. The authoritative style allows adolescents to engage with their own emotions and those of others, thereby fostering enhanced emotional awareness. This self-awareness leads to autonomous emotional regulation, with interpersonal awareness and management supplanting intrapersonal ones [31, 32].

In contrast, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles have been found to impede the development of children's emotional intelligence (EI). Adolescents raised under these parenting approaches often exhibit lower levels of EI. Authoritarian parenting is characterized by the enforcement of strict rules and the expectation of unquestioning obedience, often without explanation. Such parents tend to be unsupportive, dismiss their children's autonomy, and rigidly apply rules. Consequently, adolescents raised in authoritarian environments may lack emotional and cognitive stability, rendering them more susceptible to psychological stress. Conversely, permissive parenting is marked by a lack of clear guidelines and expectations. The absence of defined rules fosters reliance on personal preferences, thereby preventing adolescents from confronting real-life challenges. Children raised by permissive parents often become undisciplined, inattentive, self-centered, and directionless. They may struggle with self-regulation, fail to develop a sense of responsibility, or face difficulties in adapting to social norms. Collectively, these parenting styles present significant barriers to adolescent emotional

growth. Consequently, children raised by authoritarian or permissive parents typically demonstrate lower emotional intelligence [27].

Based on these findings, parenting styles can predict variations in EI. Authoritative parenting emerged as the strongest predictor of EI among the study participants. Thus, parents should adopt this style by acquiring sufficient knowledge and training. Psychologists, counselors, and educators can address the role of the family environment and parental parenting style in EI and apply the findings to planning and special educational classes for parents and students. Given that the present study was conducted on nursing and midwifery students and the data were collected using a questionnaire, the results should be cautiously generalized to other groups. Additionally, the results should be cautiously interpreted as this was a correlational study. Data were collected through self-reports, and an individual's mental state while answering the questionnaire may have influenced the results.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that parenting style can significantly influence emotional intelligence (EI) in children. Specifically, an authoritative parenting approach positively impacts EI components, including self-awareness, self-control, and social skills. Conversely, permissive and authoritarian parenting styles may diminish EI. Consequently, enhancing parenting styles to bolster students' EI can lead to improved student outcomes, particularly in educational and clinical settings. Counselors and instructors who maintain close relationships with students should emphasize the importance of the family environment and parenting style in shaping EI. This can be achieved by educating parents, as well as nursing and midwifery students, through workshops and training sessions. Such initiatives encourage parents to be more attentive to their children's needs and abilities, thereby fostering healthier family dynamics and child development.

Declaration of conflict interests

We do not have any competing financial and non-financial interests.

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