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### Investigating the relationship of parenting styles with creativity and moral development in male preschoolers in Yazd city

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#### ABSTRACT

*The present study seeks to investigate the relationship of parenting styles with creativity and moral development in male preschoolers in Yazd city in the 2012-2013 academic year. The study adopted a descriptive-correlational method. In terms of purpose, the study is an applied research. The population of the study consisted of all male preschoolers in Yazd city in the 2012-2013 academic year (N=4000). From among the population, a number of 120 students were selected as the participants. The data was collected using three standardized scales including Baumrind's Parenting Style questionnaire (1972), Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (1989) and Kohlberg moral development questionnaire (1958). Beside descriptive statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was also used to examine the normality of the data. Subsequently, Pearson correlation formula and stepwise multiple regression analysis was run to analyze the data. SPSS 18 was used to do statistical analysis. The results showed a significant positive correlation of authoritative parenting style with moral development ( $r=0.48$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) and creativity. The results also revealed a significant positive correlation between creativity and moral development in the preschoolers ( $r=0.43$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). Only could authoritative parenting style and creativity predict moral development so that they could account for about 39 percent of moral development variance in preschoolers ( $F=26.24$ ,  $R^2=0.39$ ). However, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles could not predict preschoolers' moral development. The study ends with applicable recommendations in order to develop creativity and morality in preschoolers. Recommendations are also given to researchers for conducting further studies on the topic.*

**Keywords:** parenting styles, creativity, moral development

#### INTRODUCTION

Family is an important social institution that plays an essential role in the individual's social life so that one may not deny the importance of family as a basic social institution. Although children are influenced by society and peers, they are primarily influenced by family that significantly contributes to their development of cultural, social and moral perception [3]. Balanced parent-child relationship would significantly contribute to children's mental health. Research has shown that reciprocal parent-child interaction and parents' dealing with children are the essential factors contributing to child rearing and the development of a bright personality [21]. Considering parenting styles, psychological researchers and educational experts have addressed a number of variables in previous studies including social growth [14], social adaption and creativity [13], and moral development [14].

Broomand Nasab (1994), Mehr Afrouz (1999) and Purabdoli et al. (2008) reported that when parents hold higher internal expectations, greater responsiveness (warmness, acceptance and commitment) and highly demanding behavior (control and supervision) and tend to deal with their children in authoritative manner, children enjoy greater creativity [5]. Several studies have been conducted on creativity, and behavioral scientists have always paid attention to the factors both contributing to and hindering creativity development. Psychologists believe that family, educational environment and personal factors are the dominant determinants of creativity [15]. Creative thinking constitutes four key components: fluency (i.e. the ability to generate ample ideas), originality (i.e. the ability to generate innovative, unusual ideas), flexibility (i.e. the ability to generate diverse ideas), and elaboration (i.e. the ability to notice the details) [17, 18, 19].

Morality is one of the most human necessities to reach blessedness. Human is born with a sense of morality that emanates immediately. It appears within family, is shaped by teachers and is nurtured by society [12]. In fact, family, school and society teach morality codes. However, it differs in different developmental stages as to how children develop an internal inclination to follow moral codes and what motivates them to do so (Mason et al, 1997). Children's moral development follows an evolutionary process beginning from preschool years and continues up to puberty. In this period, when normal children are raised in a moral environment, they will gain the potential to seek out moral integration. Beside family, educational environment is an appropriate locus of morality and personality development in children. However, when education and curriculum fail to improve behavior and morality in children, they will not bring about favorable moral results. Still, the building block of morality is set in family before children enter school [21]. Free, creative child development is an important factor contributing to appropriate moral development. Creativity is a unique human characteristic that distinguishes him from other creatures.

With different intelligence quotients and normal/abnormal social and moral behavior, children are primarily the product of family rearing rather than schools. In this regard, developmental psychologists have always sought the effect of child rearing practices on the development of social capacities in children. Parenting style is one of the most important topics in this regard [2]. Parenting is a complex practice involving particular methods and behaviors affecting child development either jointly or independently. Indeed, parenting styles denote parents' attempts to control and socialize their children [1]. Ghadimi (2011) reported that authoritarian parenting style had a more significant effect on children creativity comparing with other styles. Yousofi Shair (2009) studied the relationship of parenting styles and emotional family atmosphere with preschoolers' creativity in Tabriz city and reported a significant positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and children creativity. Yousofi Shair (2009) also reported a significant positive relationship of independent, emotional family atmosphere with creativity. Karwowski and Soszynski (2008) studied the development of creative thinking through creativity training and reported that role play in schools could considerably contribute to creativity development in children.

In this regard, the present study aims to investigate the relation of children moral development with their potential creativity and common parenting styles. The researcher will address the question 'is there any relationship of parenting styles with preschoolers' moral development and creativity?'

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In terms of purpose, the present study is an applied research adopting a descriptive-correlational method. The population of the study consisted of all male preschoolers in Yazd city in the 2012-2013 academic year (N=4000). A number of 120 preschoolers were selected as the participants through cluster random sampling using Cochran table. Three standardized scales were used to collect the data. Baumrind's Parenting Style questionnaire (1972) consists of 30 items and examines authoritative, authoritarian and indulgent styles. Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) (1989) involves three major activities including picture construction tasks, picture and line completion tasks. The tests measure the four subscales of fluency, originality, flexibility and elaboration. The sum total of scores on each subscale constitutes the total creativity score. Kohlberg moral development questionnaire (1958) involves two stories. Karimi (1999) added some tests to this scale. The tester reads the stories and encourages children to judge and reason about the story. The stories, however, could be adjusted based on measurement objectives so that the themes could include actual childhood events, needs and situations consistent with children's subjective world. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. As to descriptive statistics, frequency distributions as well as the measures of mean and standard deviation were used to describe the data. Considering the inferential statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was first run to examine the normality of the data.

Then Pearson correlation and stepwise multiple regression analysis were run to analyze the data. SPSS 18 was used to do statistical analysis.

## RESULTS

The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test confirmed the normal distribution of the data; thus, parametric tests were run to analyze the data. Table 1 illustrates the Pearson correlation results of the relationship of parenting styles and creativity with moral development in preschoolers.

**Table 1. Pearson correlation results of the relationship of parenting styles and creativity with preschoolers' moral development**

Variables	N	M	SD	r	P
Authoritative parenting style	120	41.65	4.74	0.48	0.001
Indulgent parenting style	120	25.52	4.48	-0.09	0.234
Authoritarian parenting style	120	24.45	4.86	-0.04	0.189
Creativity	120	132.24	46.83	0.43	0.001

As shown in the table, there is a significant positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and moral development in preschoolers ( $r=0.48$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). In other words, parents who use more of authoritative style have children with greater moral development. However, there is no significant relationship between other parenting styles and preschoolers' moral development. There is a significant positive correlation between creativity and moral development in the preschoolers ( $r=0.43$ ,  $P<0.01$ ).

**Table 2. Pearson correlation results of the relationship between parenting styles and creativity in preschoolers**

Parenting styles	Authoritative	Indulgent	Authoritarian
<b>R</b>	**0.34	-0.07	-0.07

\*\* $P<0.01$

As shown in the table, there is a significant positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and creativity. In other words, the more parents adhere to the authoritative style, the more they nurture creativity in their children. However, no significant correlation is observed between creativity and other parenting styles. The results of multiple regression analysis showed that only could authoritative parenting style and creativity predict moral development so that they could account for about 39 percent of moral development variance in the preschoolers ( $F=26.24$ ,  $R^2=0.39$ ). However, other parenting styles could not predict preschoolers' moral development.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship of parenting styles and creativity with moral development in male preschoolers in Yazd city in the 2012-2013 academic year. The results showed a significant positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and moral development ( $r=0.48$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). That is, the more parents draw upon authoritative parenting style, the more they will develop morality in their children. Authoritative parents establish good relations with their children and teach them that disagreements would be effectively settled by considering opponent opinions through negotiation. They teach their children moral codes consistent with their age. They hold reasonable expectations. While they set up restrictions and require conformation, they show affection and intimacy with their children. In general, this parenting style is a liberal, rational approach that considers both parents' and children's rights [12]. In this style, parents are flexible so that while they give freedom to their children, they would also define clear rules and regulations for them to follow. They usually believe that reasonable control is freedom that helps children internalize moral codes and appropriate behavior in order to take responsibility for their actions [1]. Authoritative families provide their children with strong emotional support and help them take critical approach to different situations [12]. Under such conditions, children would continue learning and adhering to moral codes.

The present findings also revealed a significant positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and creativity in preschoolers. In other words, parents with greater adherence to authoritative parenting style have more creative children. However, there was no significant correlation of creativity with indulgent and authoritarian parenting styles. This is consistent with the findings of Ghadimi (2011), Yousofi (2011), Khosrojerdi (2005), Mehrafza (2005), Javidi (1994) and Kefayat (1994). Authoritative parents may liberate their children's minds from

dogmatic, inflexible thoughts and nurture free, creative and divergent thinking in them. Indeed, authoritative parents provide their children with an environment that contributes to their creativity. They nurture creativity in their children through acceptance of divergent opinions as well as sharing of opinions and experiences [19]. They may use such techniques as challenging questions, encouragement of discussion, contests and entertainment, criticalness, learning through different means of learning, jovial environment and updated information to develop creativity in their children.

The present findings also revealed a significant positive correlation between creativity and moral development in the preschoolers. In other words, the more a preschooler was creative, the more he was morally developed. The subscale of flexibility denotes the diversity of ideas and opinions so that it makes the preschoolers flexible in dealing with environmental stimuli and enables them to come up with different answers to the same questions.

The results showed that authoritative parenting style might help develop creativity and morality in preschoolers. Therefore, parents need to consider appropriate parenting style in raising their children. It is recommended that both teachers and parents be trained as to how to develop creativity and moral development in children. It is recommended that further studies be also conducted on female students, on elementary to high schoolers and on other provinces.

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