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# The Relationship between Attachment Styles and Parenting Styles of Elementary Students' Mothers

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## A B S T R A C T

The present study is aimed to investigate the relationship between attachment styles and parenting styles of mothers of elementary school aged children in 2017. Regarding the subject and objectives of the research, the present study is of a descriptive-correlation type. The sampling method is a multistage cluster method taken from different schools and among the mothers participating in parent-teacher meetings. Their consent to participate in the study have been obtained In order to assess the attachment style, the 18itemed attachment style questionnaire(ASQ) whose validity and reliability has also been confirmed in Iran, was used and also in order to determine the parenting style of the mothers , the 30-itemed parenting style questionnaire (PSQ) was completed. The questionnaire has been based on Baumrind's theory and its validity and reliability have also been confirmed in Iran. After the data collection, the data were entered and analyzed in SPSS software. The sample size was 372 By testing the first hypothesis, the Pearson rate equals -0.368 which shows at the 0.99 level ( $\alpha= 0.01$ ) that there is an inverse and rather average relationship between the authoritarian parenting style and secure attachment, but as the acceptable significance level is lower or equal to 0.05, therefore we conclude that there is no significant correlation between mothers' secure attachment and their authoritarian parenting style. In the second hypothesis, the Pearson rate equals 0.67 which has become significant at the 0.99 level ( $\alpha= 0.01$ ); as the acceptable significance level is lower or equal to 0.05 we therefore conclude that there is a positive, significant relationship between mothers' secure attachment and authoritative parenting style. In the third hypothesis, the Pearson rate equals -0.398 which shows at the 0.99 level ( $\alpha= 0.01$ ) that there is an inverse and rather average relationship between authoritarian parenting style and secure attachment; but as the acceptable significance level is lower or equal to 0.05 thus we conclude that there is no significant correlation between mothers' secure attachment and the permissive parenting style.

**Keywords:** Attachment Styles, Secure Attachment Style, Parenting Methods.

## INTRODUCTION

Children are reared and socialized in their family. This means that the society is in the second position in this regard. Parents, as the main family members, have the most basic role which is the training and education of children. Meanwhile, mothers play a special role. Mothers, as the primary caregivers and the only source of providing security and food in the primary years of the children's life are all the meaning of life and the world of their

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children(Bacciagaluppi, 2016). Bowlby refers to this as attachment and maintains that attachment plays a vital role in the life of humans<sup>1</sup>. This means that attachment affects the behavior and character of a child, not only in childhood but also all through its life.

However, in addition to this issue, the type of education that parents choose and implement for the growth and fulfillment of their children, builds the future life of children(Pennestri et al., 2015). Therefore, as parents educate their children differently from others, they provide the society with different children and in the future, humans with different conducts and behaviors. Studies have shown that there are parenting styles (or training principles) as many as the number of parents(Bowlby, 2010).

It seems that attention to the issue of attachment and parenting styles is important and necessary since it is the family which, as the first social institution, is the individual's center of security and attachment and can also influence the society by its own culture. The behaviors and reactions that each one of us shows in social circumstances are affected by the type of training and family in which we have been raised(Jones, Cassidy, & Shaver, 2015; Kalantarkousheh, Sharifi, Mehri, & Sajjad, 2014). As humans are social creatures, one of the most significant features of humans, is the ability to form inter-personal relations and protect it. These relations that are totally important to each one of use for survival, reproduction, love, job, and so on, are in different forms(Ehsan-Niarmi, Heydari, Zare-Bahramabadi, & Davoudi, 2019); but the most satisfactory relations are formed with the family, friends and relatives; this mental-emotional cycle of relations which takes place by means of an emotional bond, is called "attachment". Attachment has different forms among humans, such as the attachments between teacher and pupil, professor and student, relatives and lovers. In this field and in developmental psychology, attachment refers to the emotional bond between the child and its care provider; some researchers of developmental psychology maintain that the child's attachment to its mother in the first year of life provides a strong basis for its later development. John Bowlby, who has carried out many studies in the field of attachment, believes that the child and the mother become instinctually attached to each other(Tan, Zimmermann, & Rodin, 2005). According to him, by prattling, smiling and crawling, the child tries to keep the mother close to it. This way, children show signs of attachment to specific people specifically in the second six months of life. The person to whom the child becomes attached is called "support of attachment". By maintaining the closeness of the baby to the mother, attachment insures its health and security and survival. This is why "Bowlby" considers the attachment bond in the child to be a primary and basic need. To be precise, all humans are influenced by their primary attachment bonds but whether these influences are positive or negative, healthy or pathogenic depends on the quality of the attachment bond.

Bowlby (2010), asserts that an uncut special attachment bond with a person is necessary for the healthy and non-pathological development of the individual, and the secure experience in the child is the basis and foundation of psychical and mental health functioning. Then again, an insecure attachment bond eventually leads to a character whose characteristic is lack of trust, fragility and problems in the areas concerning sympathy with others, sensitivity, happiness and emotional satisfaction in close emotional bonds. Bowlby believes that different methods of the interaction between child and its caregivers cause the formation of the three secure, avoidant insecure and anxious-ambivalent insecure attachment styles. Based on theories of psychoanalysis and praxeology, the internal feeling of affection and security which results from a healthy attachment bond, helps to all aspects of mental development(Karavasilis, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2003; Pittman, Keiley, Kerpelman, & Vaughn, 2011). A broad longitudinal study consistent with this view, revealed that people who had secure attachment in childhood were evaluated to be excellent by their pre-school teachers in terms of self-confidence, social

competence, helpfulness and popularity. In contrast, their peers who had avoidant attachment were evaluated as reserved and those who had ambivalent attachment were evaluated as destructive and hard. After they re-examined these children at 11 on the summer vacation, it was revealed that those who were secure in juvenility, had favorable relations with their peers and their social skills were better. The formation of the children's behaviors depends on the way parents interact with them. Although all parents wish to provide the best facilities at home, they may not accurately provide them for their children. Regarding the needs and characteristics, children also differ from one another (Pickren, Dewsbury, & Wertheimer, 2012). For each child, according to its unique characteristics, different behavioral principles must be deployed. There are different styles for parenting. The type of domestic life of the child also has a significant effect on the development of its personality, and this is determined by the parents as well. Parents who, due to the previous experiences of their childhood, feel unstable and uncertain in carrying out their demanding tasks, don't have emotional stability and don't have a high view of their children, or disagree on the training method, will provide an unfavorable domestic life for the development of the personality of children (Cairns & Beverley, 2007).

According to what has been mentioned above, the main goal of the present study is to investigate the relationship between attachment styles and parenting styles in elementary students' mothers. Here the main question is whether there is a relationship between attachment styles and parenting styles of elementary students' mothers or not.

## METHODOLOGY

In accordance with the subject and goals of the present research the study is of the descriptive correlation research type, and it was implemented in order to investigate the relationship between attachment styles and parenting styles among mothers of Iranian elementary students in 2017.

The population under study in this research, to which the research results are generalized, includes all the mothers of elementary students who reside in the city in the time range of the project implementation (the year 2017). According to the population of 12000 elementary mothers, based on the Morgan table it is about 372 individuals. As every study access to the whole population requires a lot of precision and costs although it is not applicable we consequently have to select a sample of the population and this sample must be the actual residual and side of the society so as to be able to generalize the research results to the proposed population. The sampling has been undertaken in the multi-stage cluster method in different schools in Iran and among the mothers participating in parent-teacher meetings. After collection, the data were entered the SPSS-21 software. According to the quantitative and qualitative variables under study in this research in the inferential statistics section of the table the frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation were analyzed and in the analytical section by means of the Pearson correlation coefficient test they were analyzed at the  $\alpha=0.01$  level.

**Attachment style questionnaire (ASQ):** The attachment scale of adults was first provided in 2011 by Collins and Rid and was reviewed in 1996. Its theoretical basis is this attachment theory test. The adult attachment scale which investigates the evaluation of the individual by communicational skills and his/her intimate relationship, has 18 statements and responders in a 5-point Likert scale state their degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements.

This questionnaire has three subscales of attachment that assess the degree of testable emotional intimacy and closeness with others, and the subscale of anxiety that evaluates the individual's fear of rejection. Each of the subscales is allocated 6 statements.

To obtain the scores related to each subscale, add the statements related to that and divide it by the number of statements. The subjects are placed in one of the three groups having the secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles based on the results obtained. Secure attachment style: people whose score in the subscale of closeness and dependency is above average and in the subscale of anxiety below average. Anxious attachment style: people whose score in the subscale of anxiety is above average and in the subscales of closeness and dependency average. Avoidant attachment style: people whose score in all three subscales is low.

The re-test reliability coefficient of this test for each of the three subscales of closeness, dependency and anxiety are reported to be 0.68, 0.71, and 0.52 the results of which are also depicted in table 1. Collins and Read (1990), showed that that the subscales of closeness (C), dependency (D), and anxiety (A) in the time range of 2 months and even 8 months remains stable<sup>25</sup>. As the Cronbach's alpha rates in all cases are equal to or above 0.80, the obtained reliability level is high.

**Table 1.** Reliability coefficient of attachment scales

Attachment scale	Reliability coefficient
Closeness	0.68
Dependency	0.71
Anxiety	0.52

In Iran also the reliability level by means of the test-retest method as correlation between two implementations on a sample with a size of 100 subjects was done and the results obtained from the two times of implementation of this questionnaire with the time distance of one month from each other indicated that the difference between the two implementations of the s A,D,C scales in RAAS are not significant and this test is reliable at the 0.59%, but according to the correlation between the results of the two implementations the A subscale is the most reliable ( $r=0.75$ ) and in the next degree the C subscale is reliable ( $r=0.57$ ) and D has had the least reliability level among these three scales ( $r=0.47$ ).

On the other hand, by calculating the Cronbach's alpha it was determined that the subscale of anxiety (A) has the highest reliability (0.74) and that of dependency (D) the least reliability (0.28), and the reliability of the subscale of closeness (C) is average (0.52) and the results have been in line with investigations by means of re-tests.

Parenting Style Questionnaire (PSQ): This tool is an adaptation of the parents' authoritative theory which based on Baumrind's theory has been constructed by the three permissive, authoritarian and rational authoritative models of parents in order to investigate the influence models and the parenting styles. This questionnaire includes 30 articles 10 articles of which are related to the absolute permissive style, 10 articles to the authoritarian style and 10 other articles to the rational authoritative style of parents in the child's training.

Reported the re-test reliability of this questionnaire to be 0.69 for the permissive, 0.77 for the authoritarian and 0.73 for the rational authoritative style the results of which are also presented in table 2-362.

**Table 2.** Re-test reliability based on the results

Parenting style	Reliability coefficient
Permissive	0.69
Authoritarian	0.77
Rational authoritative	0.73

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The reliability degree of this questionnaire in the re-test method has been reported to be 0.81 for permissive, 0.85 for authoritarian and 0.92 for rational authoritative style of fathers 26. Table 3.

Also, he has reported the following results regarding the validity of the questionnaire: there is an inverse relationship between the father's authoritarian style, and the permissive style (0.50) and rational authoritative style (0.52).

**Table 3.** Re-test reliability based on results

Parenting style	Reliability coefficient
Permissive	0.81
Authoritarian	0.85
Rational authoritative	0.92

In this test, by studying each article the mothers of the subjects determine their views by the  $\times$  sign based on a 5-point scale which is scored from 0 to 4, and by sum of the scores three separate scores are obtained for the rational permissive, the authoritarian and the rational authoritative styles for each subject.

## RESULTS

In order to answer this question, the Pearson test has been used the results of which have been presented in the table below:

**Table 4.** Investigating the relationship between secure attachment and authoritarian parenting style of students' mothers

Variable	Abundance	Mean	Std. deviation	R	Sig.
Authoritarian parenting method	372	15.25	8.6	-0.368	0.99
Secure attachment	372	0.2	0.4		

As could be observed in table 1, the Pearson rate equals -0.368 and this rate at the 0.99 level ( $\alpha= 0.01$ ) shows that there is an inverse and rather average relationship between authoritarian parenting method and secure attachment, but as the acceptable significance level is lower or equal to 0.05 thus we conclude that there is no significant correlation between secure attachment and authoritarian parenting method of mothers.

**Table 5.** The relationship between secure attachment and authoritative parenting style of students' mothers

Variable	Abundance	Mean	Std. deviation	R	Sig.
Authoritative parenting method	372	31.41	6	0.67	0.99
Secure attachment	372	0.2	0.4		

As could be observed in table 2, the Pearson rate equals 0.67 and this rate is significant at the 0.99 level ( $\alpha= 0.01$ ). As the acceptable significance level is lower than or equal to 0.05 then we conclude that is a positive significant relationship between secure attachment and authoritative parenting style of mothers.

**Table 6.** Investigating the relationship between secure attachment and permissive parenting style of students' mothers

Variable	Abundance	Mean	Std. deviation	R	Sig.
Permissive parenting method	372	44.27	5.03	-0.398	0.99
Secure attachment	372	0.2	0.4		

As could be observed in table 3, the Pearson rate equals -0.398 and this rate at the 0.99

level ( $\alpha= 0.01$ ) shows that there is an inverse and rather average relationship between authoritarian parenting method and secure attachment, but as the acceptable significance level is lower or equal to 0.05 thus we conclude that there is no significant correlation between secure attachment and permissive parenting method of mothers.

## **CONCLUSION**

It seems that attention to the issue of attachment and parenting styles is important and necessary since it is the family which, as the first social institution, is the individual's center of security and attachment and can also influence the society by its own culture. The behaviors and reactions that each one of us shows in social circumstances are affected by the type of training and family in which we have been raised. Rutgers et al. (2007), conducted the present study in order to investigate and compare attachment styles, parenting styles and marriage and parenting process in parents of autistic and normal children. The following results were obtained: by a 99% confidence, it could be said that the means of society based on parenting methods are not similar and have a significant difference; also, with a 95% confidence, it could be said that there is a significant difference between the four groups above regarding the attachment style, and by a 95% confidence it could be said that there is a significant difference between the groups of the parents under study in terms of the marriage type, and by a 95% confidence it could be said that there is no relationship between parenting styles and attachment style in the group of children's parents.

In a study that Lambert and Dollahite (2008), undertook in order to investigate the marital commitment of religious couples, the couples reported that religious beliefs and practices had helped them to include God in their marriage as their partners, believe in marriage as a religious institution that sustains and find meaning in commitment to marriage.

In this study no positive and significant relationship was observed between the grades of secure attachment style and authoritarian parenting style. In this study, a positive and significant difference observed between the calculated mean scores of secure attachment style and authoritative parenting style.

The research findings show that there is no positive and significant difference between the calculated mean scores between secure attachment style and permissive parenting style. This result is aligned with the findings of studies by Rutgers et al. (2007). As this theory has shown that other people except the mother can also bring about this attachment bond with the child, fathers must pay more attention to their role compared with the past, since it is the quality of attachment that matters and not its quantity. The authoritarian beliefs of parents predicted the reticence behaviors of children. The results of this study showed a difference in the predictability power model of parents' parenting styles for children's behaviors in games in the girls' group compared with boys.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

1- As the basis and foundation of attachment styles are formed in infancy, and also the type of people's attachment style affects their adult personality and life, thus it is recommended that parents specially mothers be educated regarding the child training model as the secure attachment or learn to train their children according to the secure attachment.

2- As this theory has shown that other people except the mother can also bring about this attachment bond with the child, fathers must pay more attention to their role compared with the past, since it is the quality of attachment that matters and not its quantity.

3- Working mothers are recommended not to take their children under three to nursery schools or put under the charge of people who take care of them mechanically, or if possible, reduce their working hours.

4- It is necessary that parents, specifically mothers, deploy methods in training their children that have the basic role in providing the mental health of their children. It is in view of healthy relationship that children's needs could be recognized and measures could be taken so as to provide and satisfy them.

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