The Social Sciences 11 (9): 1986-1992, 2016
ISSN: 1818-5800
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# Comparison the Attachment Styles and Parenting Styles of Bullying and Normal Student's Mothers

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study was to evaluate and compare the attachment styles and parenting styles of bullying and normal parents. The research design was a descriptive with casual-comparative method. The research population included all 5th and 6h grade boys and girls in primary school in Eghlid in 1392-93 school years. The sample was included 392 people, 192 student bullying and 200 normal students. Sample of normal school students were selected using a multistage random sampling method. Census method was used to select groups of students bullying. Data collected from the Hazan and Shaver attachment styles questionnaire and Bamrynd parenting styles questionnaires. The data were analyzed with MANOVA. The results of multivariate analysis show that there are significant differences between attachment styles of bullying and normally parents. The results also showed that the authoritarian and authoritative parenting style was significant difference in bullying and normally. Families that has a strong emotional relationship with their children and apply proper operation, subsequent children are less prone to behavioral disorders.

**Key words:** Attachment, parenting, bullying, mothers, children

## INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a special form of aggressive behavior and it can be described as a status that the students reputedly and consequently exposure to the negative behavior of others (Olweus, 1993). These negative behaviors cure when there is no balance between the victim and aggressor. Consecutive bullying is defined as a recurrent behavior that is repeated sometimes several times per month or weekly. According to the definition of bullying, the following items should be included: the bullying that leads to injury, frightening and annoying the victim; this bullying is not pre exited. It occurs repeatedly. Commonly bullies in comparison with victims are more powerful. In other words bullying occurs in an unequal situation in terms of power or social status. It happens in a small social group that its members are familiar with each other. Bullying is clearly different from battle between two persons that are equal to each other in terms of physical strength (Olweus, 1997; Salmivalli and Peets, 2009). The bullying can be as a direct physical bullying, direct oral bullying and indirect bullying. Direct physical bullying can be in form of pushing, kicking, hittingor giving the objects of others by force. The direct oral bullying contain the behaviors such as: calling with a bad name, threatening and mocking (Juvonen *et al*., 2003; Crozier and Skliopidou, 2002). The indirect bullying is considered as communicational or psychological bullying (Espelage and Swearer, 2003). The different form of indirect bullying include insulting, gossiping, excommunicating the others in terms of socialand seeking dominance in friendly relationships (Stanley and Arora, 1998; Juvonen *et al*., 2003; Crozier and Skliopidou, 2002). Bullying is a social serious prevalent problem especially in school age. Due to media attention to the increased violence and bullying among children and adolescents in school it has attracted the public attention in current year to itself. Estimating the exact prevalence percent of bullying in schools is still difficult because of diversity extension of this type of behavior. The international researches findings in all the countries show that 4-45% of children are victim or bully (Fleming and Jacobsen, 2009). One out of ten students is bully (Rigby and Cox, 1996).

One of the main preventive approaches focuses on identifying the hazardous factors in high risk populations. According to the family role and the effect of family as the

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first sociable institution, contains some risky factors related to the family including lack or poor relation between children-parents, lack of suitable pattern among adults, rough family environment, bullying parenting method, Physical punishment upbringing, lack of parents support of children (Espelage and Holt, 2001; Dake *et al*., 2003). As in this research there is not opportunity to take in to consideration all predisposing factors so, besides emphasizing on being this disorder behavior as a multifactor this is analyzed from the aspect of attachment styles and parenting methods. It is obvious that study on growth and development of children without considering the attachment styles and parenting methods it will be as an inadequate and incomplete matter.

The relation between mother and child is the most important principle in growth of personality that is emphasized by most of psychologists such as: Freud, Klein, Sullivan and Bowlby. In different theories of psychology science, different terms are used for describing the relation between parents-children such as: thematic relation, dependency and attachment. Bowlby states that the relation patterns between children and mother constitute attachment style of a person that includes: the sustainable patterns of communication perceptions, emotions and behaviors (Mikulincer and Florian, 2001). The attachment theory focuses on cognitive schemata. These schemata have effect on the organizing the personal relation with the others and also his perceptions of surrounding world. These schemata evolve during the life time. The schemata form in childhood according to experiences that baby has from first care and in childhood and adolescence become completed (Boris and Zeanah, 2005). Following the assumptions by Bowlby and Ainsworth to determine the children attachment style, an experimental visual situation entitled unfamiliar situation was planned; according that the child experiences three stressful components: unfammiler environment interacting with an unfamiliar person short term separation from parents orany protector. Accordingly, three styles of safe attachment, avoidance attachment style and anxious-ambivalent attachment style have defined (Mikulincer and Florian, 2001). The safe attachment style is defined as being comfortable at the time of being close to the others and being sure from the others' reactions. The avoidance style implies to being unsafe in interaction with the others and tends to be separate from the others. Anxious-ambivalent style is defined as being not safe against the others reactions and having high enthusiasm to sincerity. The researchers believe that constituted attachment in childhood, continues in the next life stages and effects on the person lifestyle (Atari *et al*., 2006).

Most of these researches have conducted according to the elements of parenting defined by Baumrind and Diaz. As it was mentioned, Baumrind has presented three methods of bullying, forcefulness and easygoing parenting by considering parental control. The obtained results of conducted researches on these three methods have showed that these methods may increase the negative or positive consequences in children. The bullying parenting is specified with strong inhibitor, high level of seriousness, unstable and strict discipline and relatively low levels of emotional sincerity. Forcefulness parenting is specified with the combination of high emotional support inhibitor, appropriate levels of independence and mutual interaction between children and parent. The easygoing method that has attracted less researches to itself in comparison with two other methods is determined with the shortage of parents inhibition, accordingly parentexercising power on the children behavior fails and willingness to accede to the child's wishes (Rinaldi and Howe, 2012). The relationship between attachments styles and parenting methods with the children behavior problems has been shown in the researches. Such as Kamijani and Maher by their study entitled "The Comparison of Parents Parenting Methods of Adolescents with Disorder Behavioral with the Ordinary Adolescence" show that the method of bullying parenting in parents of adolescents with disorder behavior is used more than the parents of normal adolescents. Baezzat *et al*. (2009) in their study examined the attachments methods of students with disorder behavioral and normal behavioral. The obtained results show that the normal students have secure attachment style and the students with disorder behavioral haveambivalent insecure attachment style. Sadeghkhani *et al*. (2001) conducted a study entitled "Comparison of Mothers Parenting Methods of the Son Students Aged 7-9 in Primary School with Stubborn and Disobedience Disorder and Ordinary Son Students" the findings of study showed that the mothers of children with stubborn and disobedience disorder in comparison with mothers of normal children, use more the bullying and easygoing parenting method and less use the forcefulness parenting method. Smart according to the obtained results of a study found that how interaction of parent-child mainly can be used as a predictor for children behavior problems. The interactions that usually are along with mutual hostility, pessimism, over control and violence have intervention in most of childhood pathologies (Hollenstein *et al*., 2004; Allen *et al*., 2002) by reviewing the attachment style as a social skills predicator and criminal behaviors in adolescents found that safe attachment style increase social skills in adolescence

while the style of insecure attachment is as a predictor of criminality in this period. Jenifer and Peterson (Wainright and Patterson, 2006) by reviewing the type of family and its relation with criminality found that the best predicator of adolescents criminal had been the quality of their relation with their parent. It means this bad relation is the cause of their criminality. Since, children spend many time with their mother and conversely fathers less time are near their children. And there was not any research that directly reviews and compares the attachment styles and parenting methods in bully and normal students.

**Objectives:** The purpose of present study is reviewing and comparing the attachment styles and parenting methods of bully and normal students' mothers. Conducting a study in this regard to clarify the attachment styles and parenting methods of bully and normal students' mothers for obtaining the practical strategies seems necessary. For this purpose some hypothesizes were proposed as follows:

- There is a significant relationship between attachment styles of bullying and normal students' mothers in 5th and 6th grade in primary school
- A significant relation has been seen between parenting methods of the bullying and normal students' mothers in 5th and 6th grade in primary school

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research project is descriptive and in terms of data collecting method is considered among scientific-comparison researches. The target population includes all mothers of girls and boys studentsin 5th and 6th grade in primary schools of Eghlid city in 2013-2014 academic year. The case study of present study were 392 persons includes 192 persons of bully students' mother (96 boys and 96 girls) and 200 person of normal students (100 boys and 100 girls). The case studies of normal students' motherswere selected byusing the method of multi-sage random sampling. To select the bully students' mother, the census method was used.The bully students of 5th and 6th grade of 32 primary schools were selected for this purpose and were examined in form of sociometry in a way that is explained in tools chapter. To implement the project after doing scociometry and analyzing its obtained results, the selected students in scociometry, responded to the questionnaire of relationship with homogeneous (part of that measures the bullying rate of children). Then, 192 children based on analysis of the obtained results of sociometery and also the obtained scores of relation with homogeneous questionnaire wereconsidered as a bully student. For collecting data, the questionnaires ofHazen and Shaver attachment styles and the method of Bamrind parenting were at the disposal of bully and normal students' mother.

### Measurements

**Sociometry:** Inreviewing the sociometry it has asked from children to evaluate their homogeneous based on the understanding from them. Sociometry in general was conducted on the present children with a group. Researches in general ask the children to report their peer's social position. In review of sociometry it was asked from children of one class to introduce some of their classmates that like them as well as some classmate that don't like them or classify their peers according to their cooperation rate. In the present study, it was asked from participants to confidentially write the name of their bully classmates on the available papers. Finally, by summarizing the students' responses, the students that were introduced as a bully person by greater number of their peers were considered as a bully.

**Parenting relationship questionnaire:** It has regulated for reviewing the relationship between primary school students. This self-report tool has 20 types that are scored from 1-5 in Likert scale. The alpha coefficient of persian version of this scale for three subscales of: bullying, victim and social acceptable behavior is reported 0.73, 0.70 and 0.53%, respectively (Tabaeian *et al*., 2012).

**Attachment styles questionnaire of Hazan and Shaver:** This questionnaire includes 15 questions that 5 articles of this questionnaire are related to safe attachment style, 5 articles are about avoidant attachment style and 5 articles are regarding anxious attachment style/ambivalent. The questions are scored by using 5° scale of Likert, never (score: zero), randomly (score: one), sometimes (score: two), most of times (score: three) and almost always (score: four). Hazan and Shaver (1987) obtained total retesting reliability of this questionnaire 0.81 and reliability with Cronbach's alpha was 0.87 as well. Collins and Rid, also obtained validity by using Cronbach's alpha method 0.79. According to the obtained results of a study conducted by Hadinejad on the students in grade high school, questionnaire reliability coefficient is reported >0.83 (Pakdaman, 2004) reported the validity of this test for safe style, avoidance and anxious/ambivalent 0.37, 0.53 and 0.73%, respectively and the amount of Cronbach's alpha was reported 0.79.

**Baumrind parenting questionnaire:** This questionnaire according to the Baumrind theory and by himself in 1972 was regulated and contain 30 questions that evaluate 3 methods of parenting; 10 questions evaluate bullying method, 10 questions forcefulness and 10 questions easygoing as well. The questions by using the 5 sores scales of likert, quite disagree (score: zero), disagree (score: one), almost disagree (score: two), agree (score: three) and completely agree (score: four) are scored. This questionnaire in several studies is reviewed and its validity and reliability is reported in a desirable level (Boon, 2007) reportedthe reliability coefficient of this questionnaire by using retesting method between mothers group for bullying method 0.86, forcefulness 0.88 and easygoing 0.81. In Iran (Esfandiarei, 1995) by surveying from 10 expert psychologist and psychiatrist reported validity of content of the questionnaire in a high level and its reliability by using retesting method after one week for bullying method 077, forcefulness method 0.73 and easygoing method 0.76.

Studied data in SPSS 20 Software and using multivariable analysis of variance statistical method was analyzed.

**Ethical considerations:**

- About objectives, method and how to do research, the required explanation was given to the case study group and they were satisfied
- To respect the privacy of persons it was refrained to mention their name in questionnaire and reports
- The participants could excludein any phase of the study if they wish

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 represents the frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation of attachment styles in bullying and normal students' mothers.

Table 1: Frequency, mean and standard deviation of attachment styles in bullying and normal students' mothers

| Variables | Group | Frequency | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Secure attachment style | Bullying | 192 | 18.08 | 4.59 |
| | Normal | 200 | 20.85 | 3.43 |
| Avoidant attachment style | Bullying | 192 | 19.59 | 3.28 |
| | Normal | 200 | 17.48 | 2.55 |
| Anxious-ambivalent attachment style | Bullying | 196 | 21.45 | 6.20 |
| | Normal | 200 | 18.69 | 5.22 |

Table 1 indicates that mean scores of anxious-ambivalent attachment style and avoidant attachment style in bullying students' mothers were higher than normal students' mothers; while, secure attachment mean scores in normal students' mothers were higher comparing mean scores of bullying students' mothers.

Table 2 illustrates frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation of parenting styles in bullying and normal students' mothers.

According to Table 2, mean scores in arbitrary and permissive parenting styles in bullying students' mothers were higher comparing normal students' mothers; whereas, mean scores of authoritative parenting styles were higher in normal students' mothers than bullying students' mothers.

Table 3 shows results of Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) in scores of attachment and parenting styles of bullying and normal students' mothers.

As seen in Table 3, multivariate F-value is 6.43 ($p>0.001$) which is statistically significant. Results of MANOVA indicate that there is a significant difference seen between attachment and parenting styles of bullying and normal students' mothers. This difference was determined by ANOVA, the results of which are shown in Table 4 as follows.

As seen in Table 4, there is a significant difference between attachment and arbitrary and authoritative parenting styles in bullying and normal students' mothers. Results demonstrate that bullying students' mothers have more insecure attachment styles (avoidant

Table 2: Frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation of parenting styles in bullying and normal students' mothers

| Variables | Group | Frequency | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arbitrary | Bullying | 192 | 25.36 | 6.59 |
| | Normal | 200 | 18.06 | 3.87 |
| Authoritative | Bullying | 192 | 16.03 | 4.01 |
| | Normal | 200 | 21.11 | 2.12 |
| Permissive | Bullying | 196 | 22.49 | 5.43 |
| | Normal | 200 | 19.98 | 4.11 |

Table 3: Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) of attachment and parenting styles' scores of bullying and normal students' mothers

| Tests | Value | df hypothesis | Degree of freedom | F-values | Significance level |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pillai's trace | 0.487 | 3 | 56 | 6.43 | 0.001 |
| Wilks's lambda | 0.565 | 3 | 56 | 6.43 | 0.001 |
| Hotelling effect | 0.784 | 3 | 56 | 6.43 | 0.001 |
| Roy's largest root | 0.784 | 3 | 56 | 6.43 | 0.001 |

Table 4: ANOVA in attachment and parenting styles of bullying and normal students' mothers

| Variables | Sum of squares | Degree of freedom | Mean squares | F-values | Significance level | Beta | Test power |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Secure attachment | 62.711 | 1 | 62.711 | 4.011 | 0.050 | 0.44 | 1.0 |
| Avoidant attachment | 175.451 | 1 | 175.451 | 19/352 | 0.001 | 0.33 | 0.8 |
| Anxious-ambivalent attachment | 140.937 | 1 | 140.937 | 5.687 | 0.005 | 0.28 | 0.9 |
| Arbitrary parenting | 276.501 | 1 | 276.501 | 6.814 | 0.001 | 0.23 | 1.0 |
| Authoritative parenting | 520.493 | 1 | 520.493 | 6.117 | 0.001 | 0.19 | 0.8 |
| Permissive parenting | 12.373 | 1 | 12.373 | 0.313 | 0.652 | 0.20 | 0.8 |

and anxious-ambivalent) than normal students'; moreover, arbitrary parenting style is more adopted by bullying students' mothers comparing normal students' mothers ($p<0.001$). Bullying students' mothers apply authoritative parenting styles less than normal students' mothers ($p<0.001$). There is no significant difference between bullying students' and normal students' mothers in term of permissive parenting styles ($p>0.05$).

The purpose of this research is to study and compare attachment and parenting styles of bullying and normal students' mothers. The mean and standard deviation of attachment and parenting styles of mothers clearly show the status of bullying and normal students. One hypothesis of the present research, indicating there is a significant difference between attachment styles of bullying and normal students' mothers at grades 5 and 6 in elementary school was maintained. The results reveal that normal students' mothers use secure attachment style more than bullying students' mothers. It may be explained that secure attached individuals, influenced by the warm and constructive relationships with parents, since childhood, may learn how to express their emotions and react to others' expressed emotions in a way that is socially accepted. Authoritative parents with a high level of expectation and responsiveness would help forming children's secure attachment such that children may grow a positive functional model toward themselves and other individuals. Therefore, they believe that they deserve to be loved; further, others are also responding and accepting. Such attachment is positively correlated to mental health and other social competence factors. Warm, loving and supporting parents involving in children affairs may foster secure attachment in children. As a result, children get to attain positive attitude toward them. This cognitive schema protects them from risky behaviors leading to cognitive mental health, adequacy and competency.

The results also demonstrated that bullying students' mothers hold insecure attachment styles (avoidant and anxious-ambivalent) more than normal students'. As earlier stated in literature review, no academic research reported on this area; however (Allen *et al*., 2002), Jenifer and Peterson (Wainright and Patterson, 2006) and Baezzat *et al.* (2009) proved strong, positive relationship of mothers' attachment styles in reducing difficulties, behavioral disorders and juvenile delinquency. It can be explained that avoidant and anxious-ambivalent attachment styles are associated to bullying behavior such that these attachment styles are strong predictors of behavioral disorder, juvenile delinquency as well as antisocial personality disorder. The parents developing insecure attachment in their children cause negative personal attitude in children. This cognitive schema not only makes them vulnerable to risky behaviors but also weakens their social competence and self-esteem. According to research findings, it is expressed that the differences in attachment styles result from different interactions of parents in particular mothers and others (Yagon, 2003) in a study, represented that the individuals experiencing insecure attachment to their parents in childhood show misbehavior at school. Scholars maintain that these children were ignored and inappropriately responded by parents. In general, it may be explained that how quality of care and how interaction between family members determine the attachment type in the child, adolescent and matured individual. Thus, the family with strong emotional ties to children applying proper performance would consequently cause creating secure attachment in children being less prone to behavioral disorders. Such that parents' sensitivity and responsiveness to child's needs and demands influence creating secure attachment style.

The second finding of this research maintains this hypothesis that there is a significant difference between parenting styles of bullying and normal 5 and 6 grade elementary school students' mothers. Results indicate that arbitrary parenting styles in bullying students' mothers is used more than normal students' mothers. Bullying students' mothers apply authoritative parenting styles less than normal students' mothers. Moreover, there is seen no significant difference between bullying and normal students' mothers in term of permissive parenting styles. There is no consistent reported academic research; however, Smart (as cited by Hollenstein *et al*., 2004; Sadeghkhani *et al*., 2001) demonstrated the positive, strong relationship of parenting styles in decreasing difficulties, behavioral disorders and delinquency. Explaining this relationship it is stated that the children nurtured under arbitrary model are usually diagnosed with neuro-psychiatric and behavioral disorders. In this model, the parents blame child for its mistakes; though, punishment reason may never be explained. There is no rational relationship between the type of punishment and the mistake the child committed and any errors of the child is responded by an unnecessary violence, personality attack and feel guilty. Consistent blaming leads to poor mental image in child which gradually decreases its self-confidence, makes its behavior worse and causes him/ her to soon believe that what the parents thought of him is the pure truth. All these sufficiently guide the juvenile tending toward risky behaviors including bullying. Vindictive punishment, persistent blaming as well as feel of guilty make the child believe that he is as bad as he

deserves disrespect and neglect. In many antisocial behaviors such as running away from home, doing drugs, theft, hooligans and criminal groups in addition to other antisocial behaviors, the traces of this educational model are clear.

## CONCLUSION

Parenting styles play fundamentally in providing children mental health. Children requirements are recognized and satisfied under the light of a healthy relationship. As earlier mentioned, each style separately influences child behavior of which arbitrary parenting style has the most negative, destructive effect. Parents, sometimes, make irreparable mistakes in children's nurture. Many parents think that submissive, obedient and healthy children are the result of force and violence, threats and fearing setting as well as disregarding (ignoring) the child's psychological needs. On the other side, some parents believe that the best parenting style is to be permissive, disregarding and indifference. Anyway, both these styles are going astray.

## LIMITATIONS

In spite of required controls, there still are some limitations in the present research including:

- This research merely assigned to students' comments on "bullying group". It is clear that parents and teachers' ideas may also helpfully supplement students'
- As the study is carried out on elementary students of grades 5 and 6, generalizing research results needs some caution
- This study was conducted in one city and province; thus, results' generalizability requires some caution

According to obtained results, it recommended that through holding educational (training) workshops the parents be aware of educational models and their effects on children.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Researcher would like to express his gratitude to the authorities of Education Department, Oghlid City that provided the opportunity for carrying out this research. Also, I like to thank the participants (students and mothers) in my survey who have willingly shared their precious time during the process.

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