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The relationship between parenting styles and emotional intelligence of kindergarten children

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the relationship between the parenting styles and emotional intelligence of a sample of kindergarten children in Zarqa II Governorate, Jordan. To achieve this objective, two measures were utilized, namely, the emotional intelligence scale of the kindergarten children and the parenting styles scale on a sample of 100 kindergarten children, 47 of whom were male and 53 were female. The results revealed that the prevalent parenting styles were the democratic, authoritative, and permissive styles respectively. Further, the results showed a statistically significant positive relation between the democratic parenting style and emotional intelligence in all its domains, and showed a statistically significant negative relationship between the authoritative and permissive styles and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the results revealed a lack of statistical differences in all areas due to the impact of gender in emotional intelligence. The study recommended that parents should pay more attention to the most appropriate parenting styles with their children.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

Parenting styles; emotional intelligence; kindergarten child

Introduction

The family is the first and most vital cell of society in which children are raised and is one of the most important social environments in their education, through which they learn many values, behaviours, skills and trends that help them adapt to life and develop their abilities and talents. The family environment plays a key role in the formation of a child’s personality. A family environment which is full of trust and loyalty and the spirit of dialogue will foster a healthy personality, in contrast to a family environment in which quarrels and tense relationships produce an abnormal personality and behavioural problems.

At the end of the twentieth century, a group of psychologists developed a new understanding of human intelligence necessary for success in life, (Malekar & Mohanty, 2008). Goleman (2001) points out that personal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence in Gardner’s multiple intelligences theory, which emerged in the early 1980s, had the greatest impact on building the concept of emotional intelligence.

In 1988, Bar-On developed his concept of emotional intelligence to reflect how a person interacts and uses his emotional states in different situations. He also tried to measure emotional intelligence using the term EQ as a counterpart to IQ. Mayer and Salovey (2000) introduced a model of emotional intelligence in their book Imagination, Knowledge, Personality in 1990 and defined it in an article that year as the ability to monitor the feelings and emotions of the individual and others. Bar-On (2006)
points out that the concept of emotional intelligence became common after Goleman published his book entitled *Emotional Intelligence* in 1995.

Since the emergence of the concept of emotional intelligence in psychology, many definitions have been put forward for this concept such as the concept of afflectional intelligence in addition to emotional intelligence. Sala (2001) proposes that emotional intelligence is not separate from cognitive intelligence, as emotion and thinking are inseparable, interrelated, and interacting processes. On the other hand, Coban, Karademir, Acak, and Devecioglu (2010) point out that the success of an individual in social or professional life depends not only on the individual’s cognitive abilities, but also on the emotional and social skills that constitute the components of this intelligence. In the same vein, Freedman (2007) believes that this kind of intelligence allows individuals to arrange their priorities and determines the majority of their daily life behaviours.

Regarding emotional intelligence, a great overlap has been found in the various definitions by researchers in the abilities and skills represented by this concept, with some differences in its theoretical bases. Emotional intelligence is defined as a subset of social intelligence that includes several abilities: the ability to monitor self-emotions, the ability to monitor the emotions of others, to distinguish between different emotions and to use relevant information to guide a person’s thinking and behaviour. Subsequently, researchers added to the former definition a new capacity: the individual’s ability to solve problems and reasoning based on emotions (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovy, 2002).

Goleman (2001) considers his model of emotional intelligence as set of personal skills which are self-awareness, trust, motivation, and the social skills the individual needs for career success in life, such as empathy, communication, and conflict management. Bar-On (2000) agrees with Goleman’s definition of emotional intelligence as a set of social, emotional, and personal abilities and skills that affect an individual’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental stresses. Furthermore, Freedman (2007) argues that emotional intelligence refers to understanding our way of thinking, our feelings, our behaviours, and the formation of interactions with others.

It is apparent that the previously mentioned definitions of emotional intelligence are mostly concerned with the ability to understand one’s own emotions, control and manage them, and adapt them to problem solving, so that one is able to cope with psychological stress and understand as well as appreciate the feelings of others. Obviously, these abilities would contribute to success in various aspects of an individual’s life.

Mayer and Salovey (1997) identified the dimensions of emotional intelligence as knowing one’s emotions and consciousness, in addition to managing and controlling emotions. Likewise, Emmerling and Goleman (2003) identified several abilities of emotional intelligence, viz., the ability to accurately perceive emotion, the ability to generate emotions, and the ability to regulate emotions. Furthermore, Goleman (1998) points out that emotional intelligence determines our potential to learn the five basic emotional skills: self-awareness, self-organization, empathy, motivation, and social skills.

Psychologists’ interest in emotional intelligence is due to its important role in developing an individual’s self-awareness, deal with frustrations, control nerves, regulate moods, and cope with life problems. Psychological research indicates that 80% of success in life in general, depends to a large extent on emotional intelligence, while the remaining 20% depends on mental intelligence (Rizk, 2003; Widding, 2014).

Emotional intelligence can be developed through learning and education, depending on the methods used by parents to help children develop their emotional intelligence (Spinrad et al., 2007). According to Elksnin and Elksnin (2006), the emotional intelligence skills can be taught to children by capable parents, while Caitlin, Christopher, and Joanne (2016) point out that emotional intelligence increases with age, reaching a peak in the 40s and 50s.

Parenting styles play a key role in developing children’s emotional intelligence (Annear & Yates, 2010). Baumrind’s (1966) study, cited in Rodriguez, Donovick, and Crowley (2009), created a major development in this field when it came out with three main parenting styles, namely, democratic, permissive, and authoritative.
Concerning the relationship between these parenting styles and emotional intelligence, Ashley et al. (2012) believes that inherited emotional intelligence is developed through life experiences, especially the emotional lessons that individuals receive during their childhood or adolescence from their parents, family, and school. Some studies (e.g. Chan, Bowes, & Wyver, 2009; Eisenberg et al., 2005) have shown that there is a high correlation between parenting styles (democratic, permissive, and authoritative) and the level of emotional intelligence of children at different ages. Moreover, other studies (e.g. Beth, Russella, Susan, & Monica, 2016; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007; Spinrad et al., 2007) indicated that the supportive and democratic parenting styles correlated with a high level of emotional intelligence which consequently increased children’s social participation in school.

According to Debra, Donnah, and Anthony (2015), a child may be born with a high potential of emotional intelligence. However, parental negligence and emotional abuse could negatively affect these potentials. This is confirmed by the findings of Chang, Schwartz, Dodge, and McBride-Chang (2003) and Kotaman (2016) that the strict parenting attitudes directly and negatively affect children’s emotional control. The parental impact on emotional intelligence is caused by preventing children from showing any expression of anger or fear, and treating them with cruelty, criticism, or punishment until they stop displaying fear or anger. In contrast to this treatment, parents may enhance their children’s emotional intelligence via investment, thus dealing with these emotions seriously, working to figure out their causes, and assisting them to detect positive ways to calm these emotions (Goleman, 2001). Based on these findings, researchers found that there is a need to study the subject of parenting styles and their relation to the emotional intelligence of children, including those at the kindergarten level.

**Literature review**

It is clear from previous studies related to parenting styles and emotional intelligence that research variables are discussed from different viewpoints; this may be due to the different theoretical approaches of researchers as well as to their research methodology and the selected samples. Some previous studies, including Alegre and Benson (2010) and the studies of Carlo, Hayes, McGinley, Batenlorst, and Wilkinson (2007) have insisted that parenting styles marked by acceptance and emotional experience in managing life situations, dialogue and flexibility in dealing with children, contribute to the development of emotional intelligence traits such as self-awareness, control of emotions, comprehension, perception and respect for others’ feelings. Also, other studies (e.g. Alrashidi, 2013; Amara & Abu-isha, 2013; Sanchez, Fernandez, Montanez, & Latorre, 2008; Sung, 2010) indicated that parenting styles marked by violence, rejection and obsession lead to the formation of a weak personality in emotional intelligence skills of children, and this appears clearly through a weakness of emotional control and feelings of anger and self-motivation while dealing with others.

Most studies, such as Almomani (2009), Abidat (2008), AbuSnina (2007), Al-Zoubi (2005) and Al-qudah (2006), confirm that parenting styles marked by rejection and obsession may lead to weak intelligence skills. In addition, parenting styles which depend on children’s acceptance empower them with personalities that have emotional balance and self-awareness of others’ feelings during interaction with different life situations. Based on this observation, the current study benefited from the results of previous studies, where the questions were clearly recognized.

As for the gender variable and its impact on emotional intelligence skills, previous studies showed contradictory results. Some of these studies, such as the study of Shaaban (2010), indicate that there are no differences between males and females in emotional intelligence skills. Other studies indicated that there was a difference between males and females in emotional intelligence skills, in which case there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and gender. Females were more developed than males in emotional intelligence skills (Harrod & Scheer, 2005). Therefore, because this variable plays a prominent role in the parenting styles and emotional intelligence of children, the
gender variable was of importance to the present study and it shaped the third goal of the current research.

It should be noted that the samples selected in the previous studies (e.g. Abu Samra, 2000; AbuS-nina, 2007; Alegre & Benson, 2010; Almomani, 2009; Carlo et al., 2007; Harrod & Scheer, 2005; Obaidat, 2008; Petrides, Fredrickson, & Furnham, 2004; Al-qudah, 2006; Sanchez, Fernandez, Montanez, & Latorre, 2008; Shaaban, 2010; Sung, 2010) were samples of university students, and students of secondary, elementary or primary schools. What makes this study distinctive from previous studies is that the selected sample is kindergarten students and thus fills a gap in the range of students. Furthermore, an investigator of the relationship between parenting styles and emotional intelligence will note a conspicuous lack of research of the two variables in the Jordanian environment.

**Objectives of the study**

Based on the literature reviewed herein, the objectives of the present study were determined as follows:

1. To identify parenting styles and their relationship with the emotional intelligence that is formed in kindergarten children.
2. To shed light on the role of parenting styles in shaping the emotional intelligence in children.
3. Identify the differences in parenting styles of kindergarten children attributed to gender.

**Problem statement and questions**

The present study is devoted to an exploration of the relationship between parenting styles and emotional intelligence by answering the following questions:

1. What are the prevalent parenting styles of kindergarten children?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship (at \( \alpha = 0.05 \)) between parenting styles and the emotional intelligence of kindergarten children?
3. Are there statistically significant differences (at \( \alpha = 0.05 \)) in the parenting styles of kindergarten children due to gender?

**Significance of the study**

The significance of the present study stems from the essential role that emotional intelligence plays in individual lives (Elias & Weissberg, 2000). Furthermore, this emotional intelligence gives ordinary people the spirit of perseverance, high morale, self-control, friendship and intelligent handling of emotions, leading them to success in their lives. The results of the Nabhan and Kamalis study (2003) indicate that the importance of emotional intelligence lies in ability to promote social success. That is, individuals who possess a high emotional level have a greater ability to organize their feelings and form friendships and engage in social interactions successfully and effectively. Furthermore, research has revealed the prominent association between emotional intelligence and the individual’s environment and parenting styles, especially in the early stages of one’s life. At this early age, the training of children to develop positive reactions in dealing with different pressures and emotions is easier, and the skills learned in this period continue with them throughout their lives (Eliase, Harriett, & Hussey, 2003).

The significance of the present study can be summarized as follows:

- The study aims at drawing the attention of counsellors and decision makers in the Ministry of Education of Jordan to the importance of emotional intelligence and its role in the formation of the
child’s social and psychological personality, thus integrating emotional intelligence skills in the curriculum.

- The study gives a realistic picture and highlights the prevalent parenting styles of preschoolers in civil society.
- The study sheds light on the relationship between parenting styles and the children’s level of emotional intelligence, which helps to draw the attention of officials in various educational, social, and media sectors to develop appropriate programmes in light of the results of the current study.

**Operational definitions**

*Emotional intelligence*: the level of the emotional intelligence obtained by the child on the emotional intelligence scale developed by the researchers of the present study, which includes five areas: emotional awareness, empathy with others, emotional management, motivation, and social skills.

*Parenting styles*: a set of pedagogical practices adopted by parents in dealings with their children: democratic, authoritative, permissive.

**Limitations of the study**

The present study has the following limitations:

- The study is limited to an exploration of emotional intelligence and its relation to parenting styles.
- The study is limited to kindergarten children in Second Zarqa II Directorate of the Jordanian Ministry of Education in the first semester of the academic year 2017/2018.
- Only two measures were developed to obtain the results of the study: the emotional intelligence scale, and the parenting styles scale.
- The results of the study will depend on the validity and reliability of the emotional intelligence scale and the parenting style scale, the objectivity of the respondents, and their scientific integrity. The generalization of the study results is valid only for the population that the sample was drawn from and similar communities.

**Design of the study**

**Populations**

The population of the study is kindergarten children from Zarqa II Directorate of Education in the first semester of the academic year 2017/2018. The study included 37 kindergartens, consisting of 491 males and 504 females. Statistical data from the Jordanian Ministry of Education is illustrated in Table 1.

**Sample of the study**

The sample of the study is 100 kindergarten children, 47 males and 53 females, with ages ranging between 5–6 years old as illustrated in the Table 2.


Instruments

Two instruments used to elicit the sample’s responses: emotional intelligence scale and parenting styles scale.

Emotional intelligence scale

The emotional intelligence scale of Jarwan (2013) was adopted. The scale consists of 68 items divided into five categories: 8 items for emotional intelligence management, 12 items for motivation, 15 items for social skills. This scale was adopted because its content is consistent with the nature of the present study and the target age group which is the kindergarten child. In addition, there are no Arab or foreign measures developed for or limited to the Jordanian environment with the exception of the scale of emotional intelligence of Jarwan (2013). Correct answers receive one mark while wrong answers receive a zero.

To check the validity of the instrument, the items were reviewed by a group of faculty members from Jordanian Universities specialized in early childhood development, measurement, evaluation, and psychology. 80% of the items were approved by the judges, and based on their feedback, the other items were modified accordingly.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted with a group of participants similar to the actual participants of the survey to ensure the reliability of the instrument. A sample of 30 participants from the kindergarten children who did not participate in the study responded to this scale. Test-Retest and Pearson correlation coefficients were used to calculate the validity as illustrated in Table 3.

Parenting styles scale

The parenting styles scale was developed by the researchers after reviewing the literature in the field and based on some related studies such as Al-Zoubi (2005); AbuSnina (2007); Obaidat (2008); Almomani (2009). The scale is divided into two parts: the first part relates to the demographic information of the sample members of the study. The second part consists of 45 items distributed into three dimensions, namely the democratic dimension, the authoritarian dimension, and the permissive dimension. This scale was developed to indicate the importance of parenting styles in emotional intelligence in early childhood and to disclose the relationship between them.

To determine the validity of the instrument, the items were reviewed by a group of faculty members from Jordanian universities specialized in early childhood development, measurement, evaluation and psychology. 80% of the items were approved by the judges, and based on their feedback the other items were modified accordingly. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot

| Table 3: Stability coefficients for the emotional intelligence measure of the kindergarten child using both test and return methods and internal consistency. |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|
| The patterns of emotional intelligence | Test-retest | Internal consistency |
| To their mothers | 0.81 | 0.87 |
| Sympathy with others | 0.85 | 0.88 |
| To their mothers | 0.80 | 0.84 |
| Motivation | 0.80 | 0.85 |
| Social skills | 0.84 | 0.88 |
| Total stability of emotional intelligence measure | 0.90 | 0.92 |

Table 2. Frequency and percentages of the study sample by study variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
study was conducted with a group of participants similar to the actual participants in the survey to ensure its accuracy. A sample of 30 mothers of kindergarten children from Zarqa City, Jordan, who did not participate in the study, responded to this scale. Test-Retest and Pearson correlation coefficients were used to calculate the validity as illustrated in Table 4.

### Results and discussion

The results of the present study are discussed according to the research questions as follows:

**Research question one**: What are the prevalent parenting styles for kindergarten children?

To answer this question, frequencies and means were calculated as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5 illustrates that the democratic parenting style was the most common style $M = 3.31$, then came the permissive style $M = 3.22$, and the least common style was the authoritative $M = 2.92$.

It is clear that the democratic parenting style was the most common one. This could be due to the application of democratic practices in Jordanian society which have become widespread in the last two decades and are being applied in schools and universities, which in turn have affected society and the family. This result could be attributed to the families’ awareness of the importance of dealing with their children in a democratic way. The educational level of parents and media outlets cannot be ignored, since they also have played a significant role in spreading and improving the families’ democratic environment. The results of this study are consistent with the results of the AbuSnina study (2007) which confirmed that the prevailing parenting style was the democratic one, though the results of this study differed from the results of the Al-Qudah study (2006).

**Research question two**: Is there a statistically significant relationship (at $\alpha = 0.05$) between the parenting styles and emotional intelligence in preschool children?

To answer this question, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was employed and the results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 shows that there is a statistically significant positive relationship (at $0.05 \geq \alpha$) between the democratic parenting style and emotional intelligence with coefficients of correlation at 0.432 while there is a statistically significant negative relationship (at $0.05 \geq \alpha$) between the authoritative and permissive parenting styles and emotional intelligence with coefficients of correlation $-0.528$ and $0.671$ respectively.

These results indicate that there is a positive relationship between the democratic parenting style and emotional intelligence. This may be due to the fact that the use of motivation by parents, rather than punishment, could enhance the children’s emotional intelligence. In addition, using explanation and dialogue to help children understand the causes and consequences of their behaviour might also enhance the children’s emotional intelligence. Parents also respond positively to their children’s reactions in a very safe environment. This democratic style is very flexible and improves the children’s commitment to the rules and facility regulations.

### Table 4. Stability coefficients for the emotional intelligence measure of the kindergarten child using both test and return methods and internal consistency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting styles</th>
<th>Test-retest</th>
<th>Internal consistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5. Means and standard deviations of the parenting patterns of kindergarten children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting styles</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
treatment of the child in a resolutely democratic manner regulates and respects both the rights of parents and the children, will positively affect the children as they develop the ability to self-control, and will raise their self-confidence and level of self-esteem and self-reliance, all of which consequently increases the level of emotional intelligence.

These findings can be explained in light of what Goleman (2001) points out, namely, that parenting styles and care received by children from parents instil different emotional habits. When parents are compatible with their children they can train them to empathize with others. When parents respect their children’s feelings, they increase their feelings of respect for their parents. When they are sympathetic with their children’s emotions, such as sadness and joy, this generates empathy for others. The results of this study are consistent with the results of the study of Carlo et al. (2007) who confirmed that there is a strong relationship between parenting styles and emotional intelligence.

In contrast, the negative relationship between the authoritative and permissive parenting styles and emotional intelligence may be attributed to the use of threat, corporal punishment without providing an explanation to children about the reason for punishment, the obligation to obey, and the use of reinforcement of desired behaviours to a lesser extent, which reduce the feeling of child safety. On the other hand, leaving children without care, attention, and discipline, and allowing them to make decisions that are not commensurate with their age, so that they leave the house whenever they wish and do what they want freely and irresponsibly, may reflect negatively on their personalities and behaviours. This consequently will lead to children’s inability to control their conditions and emotions and lower their level of self-esteem. The results of the present study are consistent with the results of the Sanchez et al. (2008) study which indicated that democratic parenting styles are the best in cultivating children’s emotional intelligence, while the authoritative and permissive parenting styles negatively affect the development of children’s emotional intelligence.

**Research question three:** Are there statistically significant differences at the level of α 0.05 in the patterns of parenting in kindergarten children due to gender?

To answer the question, the Independent T-Test (T) was used. Results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7 shows that there are no statistically significant differences at the level of significance (α0.05) in the three parenting styles of kindergarten children due to gender, where the values of T = 1.098, 0.454, and 0.398 respectively.
These results could be attributed to the fact that the parents’ parenting styles with children of both genders are similar, especially at this age. This finding may be attributed to the fact that the population of the present study have a common origin, a homogeneous culture, and live in the same social environment. The study contrasted with the results of the study of Amara and Abu-isha (2013), and Harrod and Scheer (2005) which indicated that the differences were positive in favour of females.

Conclusions
To conclude, the findings of the present study revealed that the democratic parenting style was the most prevalent style practiced by parents, while the authoritative parenting style was the least practiced one. Furthermore, the results showed that there is a positive relationship between the democratic parenting style and emotional intelligence in all its fields. The findings also showed a negative relationship between the authoritative and permissive parenting styles and emotional intelligence as a whole, and no statistical differences due to the gender factor in all areas of emotional intelligence were found.

Based on the results of the present study, it maybe concluded that parenting styles have a strong and effective impact on children’s level of emotional intelligence not only at the present time but also in the future. Thus, parents are required to adopt the most suitable parenting styles in nurturing their children since this will shape their personalities in the future and these styles will be adopted by children when they grow up.

Some recommendations were provided by the researchers regarding the possible ways to change the negative parenting styles in order to increase the children’s emotional intelligence in Jordan. This is because many Jordanian parents are willing to increasingly engage in educational programmes to improve their children’s care and are willing to adopt the best parenting styles with their children. However, they simply often do not know how to deal properly with their children and unfortunately do not get any encouragement and support from the institutions concerned to fulfil their aspirations.

Therefore, one should be responsible for encouraging parents to participate in activities that teach them how to deal with their children, which will consequently have a positive impact on children’s emotional intelligence. Moreover, more efforts should be made to involve parents in an educational partnership by providing them with different opportunities for real interaction with children in their learning places. That is, only real interaction between parents and their children can help children learn better and increase their emotional intelligence. Hence, it is necessary to pay attention to the quality of the parenting styles and to increase the awareness of parents regarding correct pedagogical methods.

Recommendations
Based on the study’s findings, some recommendations are pinpointed as follows:

- The necessity to increase parents’ awareness of the most appropriate parenting styles.
- Researchers are recommended to conduct similar studies to determine the relationship between parenting styles and other variables in kindergarten children such as self-esteem, emotional disorders, and aggressive behaviour.
- Researchers are recommended to conduct similar studies on different samples and other age groups.

Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.
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