

Educational Styles as Perceived by Tehran Pre-University Students

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Abstract

The present study explores parents' educational styles (or 'parenting styles' as used by previous researchers) as perceived by their pre-university-aged children. Sample size formula was administered to determine the number of participants; accordingly, 800 (380 males and 420 female) students studying at Tehran pre-university schools were selected through stratified random sampling. Participants were given a researcher-made, 35-item questionnaire devised to measure parenting styles. Data was then analyzed using the Factor Analysis method. Findings revealed four distinguished parenting styles, i.e. Decisive-kind, Decisive-unkind, Permissive-kind & Permissive-unkind styles.

Keywords: Educational Style, Pre-University Student, Factor Analysis.

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Introduction

Education' means developing and actualizing potentials; thus it entails deliberate attempts to bring about desirable changes (Ghaemi, 1384) in various aspects including physical, spiritual, mental, intellectual, social, cultural, affective, political, moral, economic, and scientific, etc.

The ultimate goal of education is to rear divine individuals who manage to keep themselves from indulging in vices and immoralities and thereby, to actualize their excellent spiritual potentials; such individuals adorn themselves with spiritual perfection and human virtues so as to deserve perpetual felicity (Eccles and Harold, 2005). In other words education aims ideally to bring up trained individuals who seek to have themselves aware of numerous materialistic chains as well as of their existential heterogeneity [in their path toward existential monism] and can pave the way for their pervasive development, for their discovering social and individual mysteries surrounding their ever-changing universe, and finally for their learning the 'hows' of knowing, doing, living with others and developing themselves into distinguished entities. Such individuals, as brought up by education, can fill their own as well as others' lives with love and wisdom (Gutman and Midgley, 2000).

Education, from another perspective, refers to the behavioral manifestation of spiritual perfections. An educated individual, thus defined, carries three unique characteristics:

1. **Symbolic role:** signifies the individual's being characteristic or representative of his/her environment, society or organization. In this sense, any educated person serves as the embodiment of a behavioral model to others.
2. **Guidance role:** educated people know the path to felicity and are able to explain it to others as well; such people are likely to act as practical leaders or guides.
3. **Responsiveness role:** educated people are precursor agents, rather than subsequent ones, acting on events and perils occurring in the immediate environment; that's to say they feel the needs prior to the environment, are equipped with robust receptors and are *advance-feelers* of the needs (Khorshidi, 1386).

Education may also be considered a pre-requisite of human life, because the more educated someone gets, the more productive they

can be for their organizations, society and universe. Education is so important that one can say human beings are products of education.

There are many factors influencing education, the most important of which are listed as follows:

- 1- Family
- 2- Heredity
- 3- Environment
- 4- Society
- 5- School, University, educators and etc.

Among these factors, family is of the most critical importance. Clearly, the quality of a child's interactions during childhood has strong implications, because it is within this time that the seeds of self-esteem, self-confidence, responsibility-taking and honesty are sown in children. Therefore, family is the primary environment which shapes the child's personality, values, and subjective criteria and which plays a crucial role in determining the child's destiny as well as his/her living style in the future (Khorshidi 1384).

Since family is the basic social institution in which children grow, and the initial environment in which children gain their first interactional experiences, any kind of dysfunction in its system will exert destructive effects on children's mentalities (Ma, 2003).

One important factor through which families exert their influence on their children is parents' educational (or parenting) styles. Educational style refers to specific behavioral patterns which parents exhibit while conducting their children's behaviors (Muller, 2000).

As there are cross-cultural differences between the structure of families and the values they are to instill in children, it is safe to state that parents and their educational styles will inevitably differ from one culture to another. For instance, good parenting style in some societies might have been defined as the kind of child-rearing in which satisfying children's basic needs, such as water, food, clothing, shelter, security and instinctive needs, is the most phenomenal duty parents have; while in others appropriate parenting might have put more emphasis on affective, immaterial, social and mental needs of the children, like their need for self-esteem, self-actualization and the like.

Parents ought to educate their children, through the application of appropriate parenting styles, in such ways that they will be able to

adapt to both society and themselves. That is to say, parents need to be informed of different parenting styles and practices in order to be able to both choose from among those styles the one that fits them the most, and to have constructive interactions with their children.

With reference to the goal of education being to create desirable, enduring, persistent and gradual changes in children's behavior, one determinant factor parents ought to consider while choosing their educational style, is to take moral and familial values into account. It's only by attending to moralities, virtues and values that one can hope desirable changes in children's behavior will follow.

Findings show appropriate educational (parenting) styles are positively related to life skills, different aspects of development (including physical, social, ideological, cultural, political, academic, affective and etc.), academic motivation, innovativeness, internal locus of control, self-confidence, socialization, national identity, religious identity, positive self-concept and etc.

Based on the above-mentioned issues and the importance of applying appropriate educational styles, researchers in this study extracted all educational-style factors according to both national-global findings and interviews with professionals; these factors were then administered on the sample group, according to which appropriate parenting styles for Iranian parents were developed.

Previous research pinpoints many educational styles. Some of these styles are listed in the following paragraphs:

Ginott (1965) introduces the free-yet-disciplined style. At the heart of this method is the recognition that the acknowledgement of children's feelings by parents and close others allows children to heal and consequently become better problem-solvers. Ginott encourages open communications among children and parents. Children reared with this style tend to be social, express their feelings openly, have confidence, have a sense of responsibility and participate in different social affairs.

Gordon (1970) introduces parent-effectiveness-training (PET) method. He regards communication and mutual acceptance and understanding as the basis for educating children. Specifically, He posits that parents and children's close relatives should recognize children's feelings and encourage them to express their emotions and

feelings openly. At the other side of the coin, parents had better express their own opinions, feelings, thoughts and attitudes honestly to the children. Children reared by this style tend to have characteristics such as openness, self-initiation, social interest, self-control and self-confidence.

Dreikurs (1970) describes his parenting style as logical outcomes. He also emphasizes that affection, acceptance, encouragement and approval by parents are crucial factors helping parents educate their children. Children brought up by parents utilizing this style show law-observation, responsibility-taking, self-regulation, self-control and sense of co-operation.

Still another style is Becker's (1971) behavioral parenting style. He points to three factors for educating children, namely: environmental control, medication and changing the consequences of behavior. Children of behavioral style develop behaviors like conditioning, slavish adherence to rules, and execution of others' orders.

In Cantor's (1953) group-training style, a group of parents come together in a calm and accepting environment analyzing their children's behavioral disorders with the help of trained psychologists and counselors (actually, parents are not aware of the presence of psychologists and counselors in the group). Each parent offers solutions to the mentioned problems in order for others to utilize them after approval.

Nakagawa (2003) divides parenting styles into permissive, authoritarian, authoritative and logical styles. He regards logical style, which emphasizes the promotion of logical thinking and self-enhancement, the most appropriate one.

Pena (2007) classifies parenting styles in three categories: authoritarian, indulgent and progressive style. He regards the progressive style as the most helpful because it fosters cooperation, sympathy and development of logical behaviors in children.

Shumow (2005) divides parenting styles into domineering, obedient and self-enhancing. He posits self-enhancing style will probably bring about the most appropriate consequences because in this style there is mutual understanding, cooperation, feedback and inductive reasoning in the interactions between parents and the child. As a matter of fact, this style acts as a model for children who learn behaviors from their parents.

Trusty and Harris (2002) specify three parenting styles namely,

problem-solving, innocent and accurate (permissive semi-accurate/ strict semi-accurate/ undifferentiated). They state that permissive semi-accurate style will probably lead to more positive outcomes as it fosters cooperation, participation, positive feedback, improved self-confidence and positive behaviors.

Renzulli (1994) distinguishes between software, as well as, hardware-based parenting styles. Software-based parenting is associated with positive outcomes in children such as identity achievement in various aspects, social development, positive behaviors, positive self-concept, and heightened self-esteem. He also states that adults behave towards others the same way they were treated during their childhood. Parents who have strong bonds of affection with their children and build their interactions on respect, love, tact and friendliness have children who show more adaptability; such children can be good role models for other people including peers.

Shaw (2006) studied the effect of parenting styles on children's academic self-control in New York schools. Results revealed parents' appropriate parenting style was related to improved self-control and academic achievement among their children.

Slawin (2003) states that parents with authoritarian styles have anxious, ambivalent and passive children; democratic parents, on the contrary, educate children who have enough educational, social and affective maturity. Such children have friendly communications with others, are less likely to face emotional problems, and are ready to regard others' opinions as natural, have high frustration tolerance, respect others and themselves and act as role models to their peers.

Nelson and Israel (2002) studied the effect of parents' parenting styles on their children's cultural growth among Chinese American and Korean American students. Their study revealed there was a correlation between the application of proper parenting styles and their adolescents' cultural growth. In other words, children from homes with more appropriate parenting were more likely to adhere to their original culture.

Shaw (2007) extended this line of research by studying the effects of parenting styles on children's social, emotional and educational growth. It was found that the influences of parenting styles on children were not merely restricted to the home environment; rather they

extended to impact children's behavior in out-of-home settings where they spent most of their time. Therefore, this study implies that parents with intact parenting styles will grow competent children who are likely to be role models in social settings over and above home.

Martinez-pons (2002) concluded that parents' supports for self-regulatory processes precede students' development of these skills, and these skills are in turn significant predictors for their success at school. Results from this study attest to the role of parents in helping their children become self-sufficient and self-confident learners. Martinez-pons argues that competent parents expose their children to parental modeling and social support for self-regulated learning activities, whereas other children are left to their own resources to become self-regulatory.

Postle Thwait (2004) divided parenting styles into three categories: democratic, imperative and undifferentiated. He concluded democratic parenting style was significantly related to positive outcomes, whereas imperative style led to outlaw, phobia, personality disorders, compulsive anti-social behavior, anxiety and depression. Undifferentiated style, on the other hand, was related to having lax, ego-centered, irresponsible and 'amotivated' children.

Braxton (2005) mentions destructive and constructive parenting styles. Constructive style was found to relate to intellectual, social, mental, affective and educational maturity in children; while, destructive style was reported to negatively affect different aspects of development. To be specific, children from constructive homes were able to communicate with others, had a high level of self-confidence, had positive self-concepts, were role models among their peers, and gave others positive impressions of themselves. It was also found that this style increased the likelihood of successful religious identity achievement. On the other hand, parents who utilized inefficient, strict and punitive strategies like physical punishment, aggressive behaviors and denial of feelings, instilled anti-social behaviors in their children.

Bell (2005) states that communication and interaction is among the most phenomenal factors in human life and parents' parenting styles set the stage for learning communication skills.

Gatzels and Jackson (2001) showed parents of creative children and adolescents rarely used punitive styles; rather they had positive interactions with their children in an autonomy-granting atmosphere.

Mir Kamali and Khorshidi (1387) mentioned the following points as factors giving rise to creativity in children and adolescents: 1) getting enough respect from parents; 2) being granted the liberty to explore the world around; 3) being given enough freedom of choice in decision-makings; 4) being granted autonomy; 5) not being too much dependent on parents; 6) perceiving parents' concern for themselves and; and 7) vast familial relations, so that they would not have to rely solely on their parents' characteristics.

Accordingly, the main purpose of this study is to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the dominant parenting styles in Iran?
- 2- What factors does each parenting style comprise of?

Research methodology:

This study is a survey research, in nature. Population of the study included all pre-university students in Tehran city. To obtain a representative sample yielding more reliable statistical indices, stratified sampling method was utilized to select 800 subjects for participation in the study.

Instruments: This research used a researcher-made questionnaire, initially consisting of 50 items. Items of this instrument were devised with help from both national/global findings and interviews with professionals. They were rated on a 9-point scale. Cronbach ALPHA was used to evaluate the reliability of this instrument, which was estimated to be 0.84. Validity of the instrument was investigated through a procedure called Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Such factor analysis yielded 35 items to be used in order to measure parents' educational style.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistic methods were used to summarize the obtained data. Items were then analyzed using Classical Test Theory (CTT). For each item, point-biserial correlation (for item discrimination index) and item difficulty index were calculated. In order to estimate the number of factors that made up the variables, PCA by Varimax Rotation procedure was utilized.

Findings

Table 1 shows descriptive indices for each of the four variables classified by participants' field of study.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics scores for each educational style as perceived by female participants classified by their field of study

Educational Style	Mean Score			Standard Deviation			Skewness			Kurtosis		
	Humanities	Science	Mathematics	Humanities	Science	Mathematics	Humanities	Science	Mathematics	Humanities	Science	Mathematics
Decisive and Kind	7.89	7.79	7.76	.72	.73	.74	.13	.12	.11	.56	.53	.52
Decisive and unkind	7.73	7.63	7.53	.79	.78	.77	.60	.59	.58	.26	.25	.24
Permissive and Kind	6.46	6.26	6.29	.85	.84	.83	-.77	-.76	-.72	-.8	-.7	-.8
Permissive and Unkind	5.70	5.68	5.20	.176	.182	.146	-.76	-.142	-.138	-.271	-.269	-.296

Table 2. Descriptive statistics scores for each educational style as perceived by male participants classified by their field of study

Educational Style	Mean Score			Standard Deviation			Skewness			Kurtosis	
	Humanities	Science	Mathematics	Humanities	Science	Mathematics	Humanities	Science	Mathematics	Humanities	Science
Decisive-Kind	7.59	7.48	7.36	.79	.91	.86	.31	.20	.17	.56	.53
Decisive-unkind	7.11	7.1	7.02	.89	.88	.81	.17	.19	.12	.26	.25
Permissive-Kind	6.11	6.02	6.08	.179	-.17	.16	-.79	-.80	-.72	-.8	-.7
Permissive-Unkind	5.38	5.20	5.11	.941	.87	.86	-.79	-.91	-.76	-.271	-.27

Tables 1 and 2 indicate that the decisive-kind, decisive-unkind, permissive-kind and permissive-unkind styles have the highest mean scores, respectively, among both male and female groups as well as in all fields of study.

Data Analysis

Estimated Cronbach alpha coefficient was .86 for a total of 50 items. However, this coefficient was again estimated about .84 after questions number 3, 5, 16, 17, 31, 30, 32, 33, 50, 49, 48, 47, 46, 45 and 44 were omitted from the questionnaire. Factor analysis showed none of these questions yielded significant factor loadings.

Table3. Validity scores for the four dimensions of educational style

Factors	Mean score	Standard deviation	Correlation with the test as a whole	Alpha coefficient
Decisive-kind	7.64	0.18	0.55	0.84
Decisive-unkind	7.35	0.47	0.52	0.84
Permissive-kind	6.19	0.53	0.44	0.84
Permissive-unkind	5.37	0.71	0.42	0.83

Factor Analyses of Items in the Questionnaire

In order to determine the factorial structure of the questionnaire, PCA was utilized. The index for adequacy of sample size was adequate for factor analysis (KMO=.84). Results of Bartlett Sphericity Test indicated the correlation between items was adequate ($\chi^2 = 20827.42$, $P < .001$).

Criteria to determine the number of components included Eigen values higher than 1 and Scree-plot. Accordingly, it was found that the questionnaire was made up of four factors. Table 4 presents results of the exploratory factor analysis.

Table 4 presents results of the factor analysis. As one can see in the table, 16.30, 5.70, 5 and 3.50 of variances in the questionnaire are explained by first to fifth factors, respectively. These factors account for 30.5 percent of variance in the questionnaire, altogether.

Final Solution (After Rotation)

As the unrotated factor matrix and its plots of factor loadings did not yield a significant structure, it was decided that the extracted factors be transformed into new axes using the Varimax method so that a discovery of general structure of the items as well as a simpler structure for stable solutions could be obtained. Table 6 shows the Varimax-rotated factor matrix.

Table 4. Results of Exploratory Factor analysis

Item	First factor	Item	Second factor	Item	Third factor	Item	Fourth factor
34	0.698	1	0.648	12	0.650	22	0.428
35	0.642	2	0.636	13	0.608	23	0.455
36	0.617	4	0.611	14	0.593	24	0.461
37	0.600	6	0.610	15	0.591	25	0.452
38	0.590	7	0.672	18	0.590	26	0.402
39	0.575	8	0.611	19	0.510	27	0.401
40	0.574	9	0.502	20	0.511	28	0.320
41	0.564	10	0.454	21	0.465	29	0.324
42	0.463	11	0.452				
43	0.442						
Eigen value	15.62		5.46		4.83		3.38
Variance (by percent)	16.30		5.70		5		3.50

The following criteria were considered for naming the four extracted factors:

- 1- The utmost contribution of the extracted factors to the variance,
- 2- Review of dictionaries to study the meaning and nuanced implications of the used names,
- 3- Review of relevant theories and literature.

Factors and a brief description of them are summarized in the following sections:

The first factor was named the decisive-kind style; parents with this style are hypothesized to be informed of educational principles, to be skillful at rule-setting for managing their children's behaviors and to apply those rules adequately in different settings.

The second factor was named the decisive-unkind style, for parents with this style manage to establish and follow a set of disciplines for managing their children's behaviors, yet they are too strict to consider and satisfy their children's emotional needs.

The third factor was called permissive-kind; parents with this style have little or no knowledge of educational principles and seldom do they apply any rules to bring their children's behaviors under control. Meanwhile they are indifferent towards their children's affective needs.

The fourth factor was named permissive-unkind, as parents with this style are both indulgent and at the same time indifferent towards children's feelings.

Discussion:

Principal Component Analysis of these items yielded 4 distinct educational styles which were named with help from professionals; these styles were decisive-kind, decisive-unkind, permissive-kind and permissive-unkind.

Decisive-kind style is characterized by parents who are calm and logical, use inductive reasoning, show interest towards educational issues, are realistic and have appropriate knowledge of their own, as well as of their children's negative and positive traits. Considering the similarity between this style and other adaptive styles mentioned by previous researchers, it would probably be safe to conclude that children from such families will have positive characteristics such as self-confidence, religious affiliation, pro-social behaviors and being custodian of moral values.

Parents with decisive-unkind style tend to be strict, unforgiving, cruel and self-righteous who probably resort to maladaptive strategies such as physical punishment, using belittling remarks and coercive disciplines while interacting with their children. Children from these families will hypothetically be stressed out, lack confidence, have a sense of inferiority, exhibit slavish behaviors and show symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Permissive-kind parents spoil their children, indulging in their every whim. According to previous researchers, such child-centered behaviors make children from these homes irresponsible, ego-centric, arrogant, opinionated, discourteous and contemptuous of their parents.

Permissive-unkind parents criticize their children harshly, heap scorn on them, resort to physical punishment, tend to regard their misbehavior as intentional and are indifferent to their needs. Children reared under this style exhibit apathetical behavior, are impertinent, tend to engage in anti-social behavior, are religiously unaffiliated, debase moral values and are likely to take part in delinquent behaviors.

Results from this study are consistent with findings from Eccles & Harold (2005), Gutman & Midgely (2000), Ma (2000), Muller (2000), Ginott (1965), Trusty & Harris (2002).

Research on parenting styles in different cultures have yielded mixed results. The discrepancy found in previous findings may, at

least partly, have been affected by utilizing scales and questionnaires that did not conform to the specific culturally-based connotations of parenting. Thus, cross-cultural research is warranted to derive scales that are appropriate for measuring parenting styles peculiar to any particular culture. This research was such an attempt in pursuit of devising a reliable and valid questionnaire for measuring educational (parenting) style within an Iranian culture.

It is hoped the educational styles developed, and items selected for measuring them in this study, be profitable for helping parents be aware of their parental behaviors and modify them into more adaptive ones. Family training and education centers may also be benefitted by results of the study; they can conduct research on dimensions of parenting and try to develop applicable plans for providing guidelines tailored to Iranian parents' need to educate children who are socially competent.

Index:

Decisive-kind educational style includes the following items:

- 1- My parents consult with me in my affairs
- 2- My parents have positive feedback sessions with me
- 3- My parents fulfil whatever they promise
- 4- My parents are calm when they face difficulties
- 5- My parents behave logically when they face difficulties
- 6- My parents attend to their own educational issues
- 7- My parents attend to my educational issues
- 8- My parents are aware of my abilities and inabilities
- 9- My parents are aware of their own abilities and inabilities
- 10- My parents are realistic

Decisive-unkind educational style includes the following items:

1. My parents are too strict
2. My parents are too unforgiving while interacting with me
3. My parents are sort of cruel
4. My parents sometimes use physical punishment when I misbehave
5. My parents do not pay attention to my financial needs (things I need)

6. My parents do not pay attention to my viewpoints

7. My parents are ego-centric and have no regard for other people's viewpoints

Permissive-kind style includes the following items:

1. My parents indulge in my every whim
2. My parents try to satisfy all my needs
3. My parents have no knowledge of educational principles
4. My parents sweeten me up
5. My parents pay no attention to events occurring around me
6. My parents are child-centered in their behavior
7. I am the one who gives the command at home
8. My parents do not have feedback sessions with me

Permissive-unkind style includes the following items:

1. My parents criticize me harshly
2. My parents constantly scorn me
3. My parents think my misbehaviour is deliberate
4. My parents pay no attention to me
5. My parents always use physical punishment against me
6. My parents do not observe moral-educational issues
7. My parents always compare me with others and debase me
8. My parents never pay attention to my needs

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