

Examining the Relationships Between Personality and Parenting Style in Greek Adolescent Mothers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of personality on parenting style in mothers of Greek adolescents aged 12-18. A total of 132 mothers were studied with the Parenting Style Four Factor Questionnaire (PS-FFQ), the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). The results showed that mothers with higher level of neuroticism or lower level of psychoticism and extroversion tend to adopt authoritarian parenting style; mothers with lower level of extroversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, or trait anxiety tend to adopt authoritative parenting style; more extraverted or psychotic mothers more frequently adopt a permissive parenting style; mothers with higher level of neuroticism, tend to adopt an uninvolved parenting style.

Keywords: parent personality, parenting style, adolescent mothers.

1. Introduction

Nearly 4 decades ago Belsky (1984) proposed a process of designing a parental model according to which parenting is determined by many factors, the key determinant emerging to be parents' personality due to its power to affect parental behavior both directly and indirectly.

Based on the Belsky' model and their own research, Seigny and Loutzenhiser (2010) concluded that parental behavior depends on the interactions between three main factors, among which parents' personality characteristics tend to be the most powerful (the rest two factors are personal characteristics of the child, mainly temperament, and the social contextual influences of stress and support).

However, despite the undeniably recognized impact of parental personality on children's development and adjustment, its contribution to the quality of parenting remains unclear (Bahrami et al., 2018). Moreover, as Bornstein and co-workers (2011: 658-659) have mentioned, previous studies on the relation between parental personality and parenting have been criticized for several reasons, one of them being the selection of atypical and even psychopathological samples, for example, clinically depressed mothers.

- The authoritative parenting style is the most commonly used and the uninvolved parenting style is the least commonly used parenting style, among Greek adolescents' mothers.
- The authoritarian parenting style is with higher frequency among mothers with higher level of neuroticism and lower level of psychoticism and extroversion.
- The authoritative parenting style is with higher frequency among mothers with lower level of extroversion, neuroticism, psychoticism and trait anxiety.
- The permissive parenting style is with higher frequency among mothers with higher level of extraversion and psychoticism.
- The uninvolved parenting style is with higher frequency among mothers with higher level of neuroticism.

Aiming to overcome this shortcoming, the present study was designed with the purpose to extend research on this issue examining a sample drawn from a general population of Greek adolescents' mothers and using two commonly accepted instruments for assessment of personality.

2. Method

A total of 132 Greek women with at least one child aged 12-18 years old voluntarily participated in the study. The mean age of the participants was 36.19 years ($SD=4.81$).

Parenting Style Four Factor Questionnaire (PS-FFQ) was used to measure the parenting styles. It is a self-reported Questionnaire with four subscales (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved parenting style) that was created by Shyny (2017) as a tool for assessment of parenting styles of parents of adolescents. The reported Cronbach's alpha of PS-FFQ by Shyny (2017) is 0.919.

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) (Spielberger, 1989) were used to measure the participants' personality characteristics.

The EPQ is a self-reported questionnaire designed to measure three major dimensions of personality: extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism.

The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) is a self-reported questionnaire that measures two types of anxiety – state anxiety, or anxiety about an event, and trait anxiety, or anxiety level as a personal characteristic.

3. Results

Results of the descriptive statistics, performed on the Parenting Style Questionnaire, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics on The Parenting Style Questionnaire

Parenting style	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Authoritarian	132	10.00	37.00	20.62	.461	5.38
Authoritative	132	17.00	38.00	27.02	.434	4.93
Permissive	132	13.00	38.00	25.46	.444	5.11
Uninvolved	132	8.00	31.00	16.53	.407	4.68

As seen, the group demonstrated highest mean scores for the authoritative parenting style and lowest mean scores for the uninvolved parenting style, suggesting that the authoritative

parenting style is the most commonly used one, and in contrast – the uninvolved parenting style is the least commonly used parenting style among Greek adolescents' mothers.

The results concerning the distribution of mothers according to their dominant parenting style confirmed the trend established in the group. As seen in Table 2, the authoritative parenting style was the most preferable for almost half of the total group and the uninvolved parenting style was the least preferable one.

Table 2. Distribution of mothers according to their dominated parenting style

Parenting style	Frequency	Percent
Authoritarian parenting style	16	12.1
Authoritative parenting style	65	49.2
Permissive parenting style	47	35.6
Uninvolved parenting style	4	3.0
Total	132	100.0

Table 3 presents the results of descriptive statistics and Table 4 presents the results of Chi-Square Analysis, performed on the Eysenk Personality Questionnaire and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on The Eysenk Personality Questionnaire and The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory

Personality characteristic	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Extraversion	132	2.00	28.00	14.38	.441	5.07
Neuroticism	132	2.00	22.00	12.27	.419	4.76
Psychoticism	132	0.00	13.00	3.12	.228	2.46
State anxiety	132	25.00	70.00	40.17	.786	8.66
Trait anxiety	132	27.00	68.00	42.85	.810	7.33

Table 4. Distribution of mothers according to the level of studied personality characteristics

Personality characteristic	Level (n), %					
	Introverts		Ambiverts		Extroverts	
Extraversion	(13)	9.8%	(61)	46.2%	(58)	43.9%
Neuroticism	(29)	22.0%	(84)	63.6%	(19)	14.4%
Psychoticism	(16)	12.1%	(92)	69.7%	(24)	18.2%
State Anxiety	(23)	17.4%	(63)	47.7%	(46)	34.8%
Trait Anxiety	(8)	17.4%	(67)	50.8%	(57)	43.2%

As seen, both at a group and individual level, mothers demonstrated average level of Extraversion, Neuroticism, Psychoticism, State and Trait Anxiety.

Results of the correlation analysis, performed between the mean scores of parenting styles and the mean scores of mothers' personality characteristics, are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Correlations between the mean scores of parenting styles and personality characteristics

	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)			
	Authoritarian parenting style	Authoritative parenting style	Permissive parenting style	Uninvolved parenting style
Extroversion	-.208* (.017)	-.254** (.003)	.198* (.023)	.094 (.283)
Neuroticism	.339** (.000)	-.185* (.034)	-.144 (.099)	.187* (.032)
Psychoticism	-.275** (.001)	-.207* (.017)	.274** (.001)	.124 (.158)
State anxiety	.075 (.393)	.036 (.680)	.039 (.653)	-.024 (.788)
Trait anxiety	.036 (.680)	-.179* (.040)	.051 (.0561)	.062 (.480)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As seen, the authoritarian parenting style was positively correlated with Neuroticism ($r=.339$; $p<.000$) and negatively correlated with Extroversion ($r=-.208$; $p=.017$) and Psychoticism ($r=-.275$; $p=.001$); the Authoritative parenting style was negatively correlated with Extroversion ($r=-.254$; $p=.003$), Neuroticism ($r=-.185$; $p=.034$), Psychoticism ($r=-.207$; $p=.017$) and Trait anxiety ($r=-.179$; $p=.040$); the Permissive parenting style was positively correlated with Extroversion ($r=.198$; $p=.023$) and Psychoticism ($r=.274$; $p=.001$); and the Uninvolved parenting style was positively correlated with Neuroticism ($r=.187$; $p=.032$).

4. Discussion

The results showed that the authoritative parenting style is the most commonly used and the uninvolved parenting style is the least commonly used parenting style among Greek adolescents' mothers, which is in agreement with findings from previous studies (Bahrami et al., 2018; Huver et al., 2010; Rezayi et al., 2016; Vafaenejad et al., 2020).

Regarding personality characteristics, at a group level, the Greek mothers' sample demonstrated an average level of all measured personality characteristics, namely: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Psychoticism, and State and Trait Anxiety.

As for the main goal of the study – examining the relations between personality and parenting style among Greek adolescents' mothers, several significant tendencies emerged. The results showed that authoritarian parenting style was directly related to the mothers' neuroticism, but inversely related to the mothers' psychoticism and extroversion, which means that the authoritarian parenting style is with higher frequency among mothers with higher level of neuroticism and lower level of psychoticism and extroversion. Authoritative parenting style was inversely related to the mothers' extroversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and trait anxiety, which means that the authoritative parenting style is with higher frequency among mothers with lower level of extroversion, neuroticism, psychoticism and trait anxiety.

Permissive parenting style was directly related to the mothers' extraversion and psychoticism, which means that the higher levels of these personality traits in the Greek adolescents' mothers are associated with more frequent adoption of the permissive parenting style. Uninvolved parenting style was directly related to the mothers' neuroticism, which means that the higher level of neuroticism is related to more frequent adoption of this parenting style.

The overall pattern of results is in line with previous research findings confirming the existence of a relationship between parents' personality traits and parenting styles (Bahrami et al., 2018; Huver et al., 2010; Rezayi et al., 2016; Vafaenejad et al., 2020).

The present study's results are consistent with the results of Vafaenejad et al. (2020) and Rezayi et al. (2016), who also found a significant positive relation between neuroticism and authoritarian parenting style and negative relation between neuroticism and authoritative parenting style, with the results of Huver et al. (2010) who reported a positive relation between emotional stability (low neuroticism) and authoritative parenting style, as well as Schofield and co-workers (2012) who found a positive relation between emotional stability and positive parenting styles that contain parental warmth and support.

With regard to the relationship "extraversion-parenting style", the results of the current study are in agreement with the results of Rezayi et al. (2016) that permissive mothers tend to be more extroverted, but are in disagreement with their finding that authoritative mothers tend to be more extroverted and authoritarian mothers – more introverted. Also contrary to the current study, two other studies have failed to find a relation between mothers' extraversion and parenting styles (Danesh et al., 2014; Vafaenejad et al., 2020).

It could be assumed, that not only methodological differences, but also cultural-related differences may underlie the inconsistency of research findings. Future cross-cultural studies with demographically matched samples could increase our understanding of the relationship between parent's personality and parenting style.

A limitation of this study was the use of parental self-reported instruments to assess personality and parenting styles of the participants. Nevertheless, the study reached its purpose to shed light on the predictive role of mothers' personality characteristics on their parenting styles, especially for Greek population.

5. Conclusion

This study confirmed the potential of mothers' personality traits in predicting their parenting styles. Its findings increase our knowledge of the relationship between mothers' personality characteristics and parenting styles and could be successfully used in family education and therapeutic programs for enhancing parental capacity especially in Greek adolescents' mothers.

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