

Greek Adolescents' Mothers and Fathers Differ in their Preferred Parenting Styles

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare parenting styles of mothers and fathers of Greek adolescents, aged 12-18. A total of 132 Greek couples were studied with the Parenting Style Four Factor Questionnaire (PS-FFQ). The results showed that although more than half of parent couples (56.8%) exhibit agreement in parenting styles, with the authoritative parenting style being the most preferable and the uninvolved parenting style the least preferable parenting style among both parents, mothers were oriented towards more positive and effective parenting styles than fathers.

Keywords: adolescents, parenting styles, mother/father comparison.

1. Introduction

Parents play a key role in their children's lives. In the last 2-3 decades, research in the field of parenting has tended to focus on the concept of parenting style as one of the most informative approaches to understanding parental influences on human development. After the pioneer of research in the field of parenting – Baumrind (1967), who first introduced the concept “parenting style” as correlation to children’s socialization, many researchers have focused on studying the relationship between parenting styles and various parameters of child/adolescent development, academic achievement, and outcomes (Dornbush et al., 1987; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Langer et al., 2014; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Martínez & García, 2007; Masud et al., 2019; Pong, Johnston & Chen, 2010; Smokowski et al., 2015; Steinberg et al., 1992).

It is important to note that research has focused mainly on mothers’ parenting styles. Some authors suggested that this trend is due to similarity of parenting of the two parents (for discussion see Simons & Conger, 2007). Such an assumption is not sufficiently reasoned given the limited studies on the issue. Moreover, a part of previous studies have had methodological limitations. For example, Baumrind (1973) assessed the parenting styles of both parents but only analyzed the results of the couples with similar parenting styles, excluding one quarter of the total sample from the analyses because the two parents have demonstrated different parenting styles.

- Authoritative parenting style is most preferable and the uninvolved parenting style is least preferable among Greek adolescents’ mothers and fathers.
- Greek adolescents’ mothers are oriented towards more positive and effective parenting styles than fathers.
- The most common family parenting style is that of two authoritative parents and in contrast, the least common parenting style – that of two uninvolved parents

Dornbush et al. (1987) used an approach for assessing parenting styles in families that is criticized (see Simons & Conger, 2007) because it used categories which differ from those introduced by Baumrind (1967).

Steinberg et al. (1992) also examined parenting styles of the two parents in families but then averaged the parenting scores of each couple.

Despite the above-mentioned methodological problems of the few studies of parenting styles of both parents in the family, which makes it difficult to compare the results of various studies, previous studies’ findings have shown that most commonly the two parents in the family demonstrate the same parenting style (Baumrind, 1973; Dornbush et al., 1987; Simons & Conger, 2007; Steinberg et al., 1992).

The present study was designed with the aim to address this issue. For this purpose, the preferred parenting styles of both parents (mother and father) in the family of Greek adolescents were compared. These comparisons were made according to a typology that included all possible combinations of mother and father parenting styles.

2. Method

A total of 132 Greek couples with at least one child aged 12-18 years old voluntarily participated in the study. The mean age of mothers was 36.19 years (SD=4.81) and the mean age of fathers was 39.67 years (5.94). The inclusion criteria covered two-parent families, who are biological parents of their children. The exclusion criteria covered families in which at least one of the parents did not complete the questionnaire.

Parenting Style Four Factor Questionnaire (PS-FFQ) was used to measure the parenting styles. It is a self-reported Questionnaire that was created by Shyny (2017) as a tool for assessment of parenting styles of parents of adolescents.

The PS-FFQ consists of 32 items and the following four subscales: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved parenting style. Participants answered the items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scores on each subscale ranged from 8 to 40. The reported Cronbach’s alpha of PS-FFQ by Shyny (2017) is 0.919.

3. Results

Results of the Independent Samples T-test, performed on the Parenting Style Questionnaire, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean scores (Mean, SD) of the mothers' group and the fathers' group on The Parenting Style Questionnaire

Parenting style	Fathers		Mothers		<i>t</i> (<i>p</i>)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Authoritarian	23.78	5.44	20.62	5.38	$t_{(262)}=4.741; p<.000$
Authoritative	25.55	5.19	27.02	4.99	$t_{(262)}=-2.126; p=.034$
Permissive	21.27	5.95	25.46	5.11	$t_{(262)}=-6.142; p<.000$
Uninvolved	18.30	4.95	16.53	4.68	$t_{(262)}=2.987; p=.003$

As seen, at the group level, Greek mothers and fathers differed significantly in the mean values for all 4 scales of the test, with the group of mothers showing higher mean score compared to the group of fathers for authoritative parenting style ($t_{(262)}=-2.126, p=.034$) and permissive parenting style ($t_{(262)}=-6.142, p<.000$), and the group of fathers showing higher mean score compared to the group of mothers for authoritarian parenting style ($t_{(262)}=4.741, p<.000$) and uninvolved parenting style ($t_{(262)}=2.987, p=.003$). Therefore, Greek adolescents' mothers seem to be oriented towards more positive and effective parenting styles than Greek adolescents' fathers.

Results of the Pearson Chi-Square test, which compares the distribution of the participants in the two groups according to their preferred parenting style, revealed significant differences between Greek mothers and fathers (see Table 2).

Table 2. Between-group comparison of the participants' distribution according to their preferred parenting style

Group	Parenting styles			
	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Permissive	Uninvolved
Fathers	31.1%	33.3%	22.7%	12.9%
Mothers	12.1%	49.2%	35.6%	3.0%
Pearson Chi-Square	$\chi^2_{ 3 }=26.812, p<.000, \text{Cramer's } V=.319$			

As seen, between-group differences were statistically significant ($\chi^2_{|3|}=26,812, p<.000, \text{Cramer's } V=0.319$), with higher percentage of the mothers' group than the fathers' group being authoritative or permissive parents, and vice versa – with higher percentage of the fathers' group than the mothers' group being authoritarian or uninvolved parents. Therefore, while the authoritative and permissive parenting style had significantly higher frequency among mothers, the authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles had significantly higher frequency among fathers.

Next Table 3 presents the Pearson Chi-Square test results about the distribution of studied parent couples depending on the combination of their preferred parental styles.

Table 3. Distribution of the parent couples according to the combination of their preferred parental styles

Combination of mother and father parental style	Frequency	Percent
Authoritarian - Authoritarian	11	8.3
Authoritative - Authoritative	36	27.3
Permissive - Permissive	26	19.7
Uninvolved - Uninvolved	2	1.5
Authoritarian - Authoritative	22	16.7
Authoritarian - Permissive	8	6.1
Authoritarian - Uninvolved	5	3.8
Authoritative - Permissive	10	7.6
Authoritative - Uninvolved	6	4.5
Permissive - Uninvolved	6	4.5

56.8% of parents exhibited agreement in parenting styles and the rest 43.2% did not. Slightly more than a quarter of the studied parent couples (27.3%) raised their children in an authoritative fashion; 19.7% of the parent couples raised their children in a permissive fashion; 8.3% of the couples raised their children in an authoritarian fashion and only 1.5% of the couples raised their children in an uninvolved fashion.

From all parent couples that exhibited disagreement in parenting styles, the largest was the percentage of those who raised their children in an authoritarian-authoritative fashion – 16.7%, and the lowest was the percentage of those who raised their children in an authoritarian-uninvolved fashion – 3.8%. From the rest combinations, the combination of authoritative-permissive parental styles was reported by 7.6% of the parent couples, the combination of authoritarian-permissive parental styles was reported by 6.1% of the parent couples, and both combinations: authoritative–uninvolved and permissive–uninvolved parental styles were reported by 4.5% of the parent couples.

4. Discussion

The results revealed that both at a group and individual level, the authoritative parenting style was the most preferable and the uninvolved parenting style was the least preferable among Greek adolescents' mothers and fathers.

Gender-related comparisons on the parenting style preferences showed that mothers seemed to be oriented towards more positive and effective parenting styles than fathers, which is consistent with the results reported by Simons and Conger (2007). We found that although the biggest part of the mothers' and fathers' groups have assessed themselves as authoritative parents, the authoritative and permissive parenting styles had significantly higher frequency among mothers, and the authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles had significantly higher frequency among fathers.

Regarding the prevalence of the various family parenting styles, the results showed that slightly above the middle of studied parent couples (56.8%) displayed the same parenting style. In general, our findings agree with the results obtained by Baumrind (1973), who reported that 3/4 of the parent couples displayed strong concordance on parenting style, as well as the results of Simons and Conger (2007) who reported that according to perceptions of adolescents 67.9% of the couples had the same parenting style, and according to the perception of trained observers this percentage is 58.3%.

Regarding the frequency with which various combinations of mother-father parenting styles tend to occur, we found that the most common family parenting style was that of two authoritative parents, followed by the family parenting style of two permissive parents and the family parenting style of one authoritarian and one authoritative parent. In contrast, the least common family parenting style was that of two uninvolved parents, followed by the family parenting style of one authoritarian and one uninvolved parent.

A limitation of the present study is that some characteristics of adolescents, such as the presence of neurodevelopmental or emotional and behavioral disorders, that may have a modulating effect on parenting, including parenting style, were not taken into account. Replications that take into account this factor are needed to assure the validity of the results received in this study.

5. Conclusion

The current study's findings reinforce previous studies' results indicating that adolescents' mothers and fathers differ in their parenting styles, with mothers being oriented towards more positive and affective parenting styles than fathers. An important finding was that the most common parenting style among adolescents' mothers and fathers nowadays in Greece is the authoritative parenting style, and the least common – the uninvolved one. With regard to the frequency of family parenting styles, the results indicated a higher frequency of concordant combinations of mother and father styles than discordant, with the most common one being that of two authoritative parents and in contrast, the least common one – that of two uninvolved parents.

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