

# Relationship between Parenting Styles, Self-compassion and Emotional Intelligence and Antisocial Behaviors in Students

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## Abstract

**Background:** According to the observations, antisocial behaviors are among major behaviors among male and female students. People with antisocial behaviors suffer from problems with respect to the quality of life.

**Objectives:** The present study aimed to determine the relationship between parenting styles, self-compassion, and emotional intelligence with antisocial behaviors in students.

**Methods:** The population included all students in Shiraz, Iran in the academic year of 2016. The sample was comprised of 148 students (74 male and 74 female) who were selected randomly through multi-stage sampling method. The instruments used in the study were parenting style questionnaire, self-compassionate scale (SCS), trait meta mood scale (TMMS), and Levenson antisocial behavior scale. Extracted data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression statistics in SPSS version 21.

**Results:** Authoritarian parenting style ( $t = 2.08$ ,  $B = 0.17$ ,  $P = 0.03$ ), permissive parenting style ( $t = 2.16$ ,  $B = 0.16$ ,  $P = 0.01$ ), self-compassion ( $t = -4.08$ ,  $B = -0.31$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ), and emotional intelligence ( $t = -2.93$ ,  $B = -0.28$ ,  $P = 0.01$ ) are predictors of antisocial behaviors. According to multiple regression analysis, authoritarian parenting style, permissive parenting style, self-compassion, and emotional intelligence were significant predictors of antisocial behavior. Moreover, authoritative parenting style was not included in the analysis.

**Conclusions:** Authoritarian parenting style, permissive parenting style, self-compassion, and emotional intelligence should be highly regarded as they highly predict antisocial behavior.

**Keywords:** Parenting Styles, Self-Compassion, Emotional Intelligence, Antisocial Behaviors, Students

## 1. Background

Since families and societies suffer from the consequences of antisocial personality disorder and behaviors, studying this personality disorder and its corresponding behaviors is highly important. (1). According to DSM 5 (2), antisocial personality disorder is defined as the main manifestation of antisocial behavior that is a pervasive pattern of disregard and violation of the rights of others. It begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood. This pattern is also referred to as “psychopathy” or “sociopathy”. Research has shown that sociopathy at least includes two aspects: (1) Primary sociopathy (interpersonal and emotional aspect) that includes apathy, narcissism, and acting against morality; and (2) secondary sociopathy which is the aspect of antisocial life style that includes behaviors that are considered impulsive, hostile, and irrational (3). Moreover, it has been shown that several risk factors are associated with antisocial behavior such as socioeconomic level (4) and violence (5).

One of the examples of family dysfunction is inappropriate parenting styles. Studies show that effective parenting methods are comprised of three characteristics. They include acceptance, control, and giving independency (1). Difference in these characteristics leads to three parenting styles including authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles. Coercive parent-child interaction (1), parents' weak guidance and monitoring (1), and low positive parent-child interactions are of the factors involved in the incidence of antisocial behavior and its increase (1). Interpersonal characteristics can be used to identify individuals with violent behaviors (1).

These factors are taken into account in emotional intelligence and many studies have shown the correlation between emotional intelligence and antisocial behaviors. Some aspects of emotional intelligence are significant predictors of antisocial behaviors. Furthermore, antisocial characteristic is a valid predictor of violence and drug abuse (5).

While much research has been conducted on the risk

factors related to crime and antisocial behavior, there is a lack of research regarding decreasing the consequences of antisocial behavior (6). Self-compassion is a positive index of mental health (6). Neff (2003, a) defines self-compassion as "a sense of compassion and worry toward oneself".

Research shows that self-compassion has a negative relationship with antisocial behavior, aggressiveness, and anger (6). Considering the importance of mental health in adolescents and the youth and the attempts to maintain it on the one hand, and the worsening effects of antisocial behaviors on physical and mental health on the other hand, carrying out research in this field deems necessary.

## 2. Objectives

The present study aimed to determine the relationship between parenting styles, self-compassion, and emotional intelligence with antisocial behaviors in students.

## 3. Methods

The population in this project included all the students in Shiraz, Iran in the academic year of 2016. The population under study consisted of all 14 to 18 year old male and female students.

In the beginning, 200 students (100 male and 100 female) entered the study. However, the questionnaires of 56 students were excluded from the study on the ground of the errors they had. Therefore, the final sample was comprised of 148 students (74 male and 74 female). Subjects were selected randomly using multi-stage sampling method. First, 8 schools were randomly selected. Then, 3 classes from each school were selected. Finally, half of the students of each class were randomly selected to answer the questionnaires.

In this study, parenting styles, self-compassion, and emotional intelligence were the predictor variables, while the criterion variable was antisocial behaviors. Data were analyzed by SPSS statistical software using descriptive as well as inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression).

### 3.1. Research Instruments

#### 3.1.1. Self-Compassionate Scale

Self-compassionate scale (7) is comprised of 26 items. This scale measures three bi-polar components in case of 6 subscales of self-compassion versus self-judgment, mindfulness versus extreme replication, and humane commonalities versus isolation. This scale is scored from Almost never (= 1) to Almost always (= 5). Research shows the appropriate convergent validity (8), discriminant validity, internal consistency, and test-retest reliability of this scale.

Its internal consistency in Iranian studies is 0.84 using Chronbach's alpha (9).

#### 3.1.2. Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS)

Trait Meta Scale (10) is comprised of 30 items. This test measures emotional intelligence based on three dimensions including attention to emotions, clarifying and discriminating the emotions, and mood reconstruction (11). This questionnaire is scored from Totally disagree (= 1) to Totally agree (= 5). Chronbach's alpha of variables including attention, discrimination, and reconstruction for Iranian university students are 0.65, 0.62, and 0.75, respectively, while these variables are estimated to be 0.85, 0.83, and 0.75 for American university students (10) and in this study chronbach's alpha was 0.82, 0.80, and 0.72 and according to Sarafraz, Jannesar, and Farahani, the validity of this scale is appropriate in Iranian sample (12).

#### 3.1.3. Buri Parenting Styles Questionnaire

This scale is comprised of 30 items and is designed based on Baumrind's parenting style questionnaire. Each style includes 10 items and is scored from "Totally disagree" (= 1) to "Totally agree" (= 5) (13). The final score for each style is from 10 to 50. The style with the highest score indicates the distinctive style perceived by participants from parents. Buri (13) shows acceptable reliability coefficients for authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles which are 0.78, 0.86, and 0.81, respectively. The questionnaire is translated by Dabiri et al. (14) into Persian. Chronbach's alpha of the translated questionnaire for authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles were 0.66, 0.71, and 0.66, respectively.

#### 3.1.4. Levenson Antisocial Behavior Scale

Levenson antisocial behavior scale (15) is comprised of 26 items and 2 primary antisocial behavior subscales (LSRP1) that measure heartless and emotionless personality styles, and secondary antisocial behavior (LSRP2) that measures impulsive antisocial behavior. It is scored from "Totally disagree" (= 1) to "Totally agree" (= 4). Research shows the higher confidence of LSRP1 with Chronbach's alpha of 0.82, compared to LSRP2 with a Chronbach's alpha of 0.63 (14), and validity was appropriate and for the first time was measured in an Iranian sample in this study, and the reliability of study was suitable with Chronbach's alpha 0.74 for LSRP1 and 0.71 for LSRP2.

## 4. Results

The study sample consisted of 148 students including 74 girls and 74 boys in Shiraz, Iran. Students' age ranged

from 14 to 18 years with an average  $\pm$ SD of  $16.43 \pm 1.32$ . [Table 1](#) shows the mean and the standard deviation of scores of the studied variables.

**Table 1.** The Mean and Standard Deviation of Scores of Studied Variables

| Variables                     | Mean $\pm$ Standard Deviation |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Authoritarian parenting style | 26.43 $\pm$ 4.38              |
| Permissive parenting style    | 27.81 $\pm$ 4.47              |
| Authoritative parenting style | 34.64 $\pm$ 3.64              |
| Self-kindness                 | 15.71 $\pm$ 3.61              |
| Self-judgment                 | 14.16 $\pm$ 3.72              |
| Common Humanity               | 13.01 $\pm$ 3.08              |
| Isolation                     | 11.18 $\pm$ 3.15              |
| Mindfulness                   | 13.24 $\pm$ 2.54              |
| Over-identified               | 11.05 $\pm$ 3.29              |
| Total self-compassion         | 76.54 $\pm$ 13.17             |
| Attention                     | 44.56 $\pm$ 6.67              |
| Clarify                       | 35.41 $\pm$ 6.48              |
| Repair                        | 20.98 $\pm$ 3.92              |
| Total emotional intelligence  | 100.84 $\pm$ 11.84            |
| First antisocial behaviors    | 35.04 $\pm$ 5.65              |
| Second antisocial behaviors   | 23.32 $\pm$ 3.81              |
| Total antisocial behaviors    | 57.53 $\pm$ 7.75              |

Pearson correlation coefficients were extracted and are shown in [Table 2](#).

To assess the analysis between students in research variables, Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis were applied.

Before performing multiple regression, assumptions were evaluated. First, Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used to examine the assumption of normality of distribution that confirmed the normality of all the variables. The non-significant results of Kolmogorov Smirnov test proved that the distribution of variables was normal. The second step was to examine the linearity of variables. The third step was regression analysis which was carried out after removing the outlier data. It should be noted that the existence of outliers was also taken into account. The lack of independence of the independent variables or independent variables associated with each error score was checked by Durbin-Watson test in which the values between 1.5 and 2.5 indicate independency of observations which is acceptable and can be justified to perform the analysis (16).

In this context, according to the results of Durbin-Watson test, the predictor variables were independent with a corresponding value of 2.34. Finally, multiple regression

was used to examine the predictive role of various parenting styles for antisocial behaviors ([Table 3](#)).

According to the results of regression analysis, authoritarian parenting style, permissive parenting style, self-compassion, and emotional intelligence are the most significant predictors of antisocial behaviors.

[Table 3](#) shows that authoritarian parenting style ( $t = 2.08$ ,  $B = 0.17$ ,  $P = 0.03$ ), permissive parenting style ( $t = 2.16$ ,  $B = 0.16$ ,  $P = 0.01$ ), self-compassion ( $t = -4.08$ ,  $B = -0.31$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ), and emotional intelligence ( $t = -2.93$ ,  $B = -0.28$ ,  $P = 0.01$ ) can predict antisocial behaviors. Furthermore, the variance inflation factor (VIF) statistic did not confirm any multicollinearity problem. Finally, Durbin-Watson statistics close to two indicates the independence of error sentences. Besides, taking into account what has been mentioned earlier, an analysis of Durbin-Watson indicators and variance inflation factor ensures multivariate regression analysis assumptions.

## 5. Discussion

The current research investigated the relationship between parenting styles, self-compassion, and emotional intelligence and antisocial behaviors in students. According to multiple regression analysis, authoritarian parenting style, permissive parenting style, self-compassion, and emotional intelligence were the most significant predictors of antisocial behavior. It needs to be mentioned that authoritative parenting style was not included in the analysis.

The findings of the present study are consistent with those which show the individuals who go through unpleasant parenting styles are more likely to show antisocial behavior (1). Therefore, those individuals who have experienced authoritarian and permissive parenting style, compared to those individuals who have experienced authoritative parenting style, are more likely to show antisocial behavior. It can be inferred that arbitrary and violent interaction in strict parenting style or neglect and poor monitoring in permissive parenting style result in outflow and antisocial behaviors.

Moreover, findings of the present study admit that those with higher scores in sociopathy, had lower scores in emotional intelligence (5). In a theoretical review of antisocial behaviors, Garcia-Sancho, Salguero, and Fernandez-Berrocá (17) show that emotional intelligence and aggressive behavior are negatively related. On the other hand, they presented a combination of phrases such as emotional intelligence and one or more of the following terms such as "antisocial behavior" and "social behavior". This study is in line with others that show that lower levels of emotional intelligence, in combination with poor social

**Table 2.** Correlation Matrix of Variables

|                                      | 1                  | 2                 | 3     | 4                  | 5                  | 6 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------|--------------------|--------------------|---|
| <b>Authoritarian parenting style</b> | 1                  |                   |       |                    |                    |   |
| <b>Permissive parenting style</b>    | -0.07              | 1                 |       |                    |                    |   |
| <b>Authoritative parenting style</b> | -0.23 <sup>a</sup> | 0.22 <sup>a</sup> | 1     |                    |                    |   |
| <b>Self-compassion</b>               | -0.06              | 0.04              | -0.82 | 1                  |                    |   |
| <b>Emotional intelligence</b>        | -0.16              | 0.02              | 0.04  | 0.33 <sup>a</sup>  | 1                  |   |
| <b>Antisocial behaviors</b>          | 0.23 <sup>b</sup>  | 0.08              | -0.06 | -0.34 <sup>a</sup> | -0.37 <sup>a</sup> | 1 |

<sup>a</sup> 0.01.<sup>b</sup> 0.05.**Table 3.** Results of Stepwise Multiple Regression to Predict Antisocial Behaviors Based on Parenting Styles, Self-Compassion, and Emotional Intelligence<sup>a,b</sup>

| Criterion Variable          | Predictor Variables           | B     | Beta  | T     | Adjusted R Square | S.E   | P Value | VIF  |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------|-------|---------|------|
| <b>Antisocial behaviors</b> | Authoritarian parenting style | 0.17  | 0.16  | 2.08  | 0.245             | 0.083 | 0.03    | 1.12 |
|                             | Permissive parenting style    | 0.16  | 0.15  | 2.16  |                   | 0.073 | 0.01    | 1.08 |
|                             | Self-compassion               | -0.31 | -0.31 | -4.08 |                   | 0.091 | 0.00    | 1.11 |
|                             | Emotional intelligence        | -0.28 | -0.21 | -2.93 |                   | 0.002 | 0.01    | 1.12 |

<sup>a</sup> Predictive variables: authoritarian parenting style, permissive parenting style, self-compassion, emotional intelligence.<sup>b</sup> P < 0.05 level.

skills, are related to antisocial behaviors (18-21). Besides, findings reveal that those individuals who gained higher scores in sociopathy, gained lower scores in emotional intelligence (5). This indicates that these individuals have less efficacy compared to others in dimensions of emotional intelligence including understanding the emotions, using the emotions, perceiving the emotions and, finally, managing them. Considering the definition of emotional intelligence and its dimensions and the relationship between this variable and mental health, it can be inferred from the findings that the weaker the performance of individuals in various aspects of this structure, the more they tend to show antisocial behavior. It indicates the importance of this structure in the incidence of such behaviors (5).

Despite the lack of research, findings of the review shows the negative role of self-compassion in antisocial behaviors. In several studies, Morley (6), Neff and Vonk (22), Neff, Rude, and Kirkpatrick (23) there claimed to be a significant relationship between self-compassion and antisocial behaviors and crime. These are in line with the results of the present study. Self-compassion increases feelings of concern for others and touching the suffering of others (6). Therefore, self-compassion can predict lower antisocial behaviors (24). Another variable that is a significant predictor for antisocial behavior is being self-compassionate. Being self-compassionate is defined as a negative index of antisocial

behavior accompanied with violence (6). The results of the present study admit that being self-compassionate is a significant predictor of antisocial behavior. It seems obvious since being self-compassionate is considered as a protective factor against antisocial behavior. According to the research, the dimension of mindfulness in self-confidence is proved as a negative index of crime (6). In another study, it was shown that individuals with antisocial behavior usually show lower levels of empathy that is related to being self-compassionate (6). These findings show that being self-compassionate is a variable that is directly related to mental health. It can be explained that the dimensions of which being self-compassionate is made are those variables that are among the protective factors of mental health. Therefore, they have an inverse relationship with harmful behaviors such as antisocial behaviors. Empathy is related with self-compassion. Empathy is described as the tendency to show concern about other people's situation. Self-compassion increases empathy, social functioning, and concern for others. People with antisocial behaviors show a lack of empathy and self-compassion (25-27).

The limitation of this study was that the samples were selected only from Shiraz, Iran. The other limitation was the small sample size and using questionnaires as the only means for collecting data. Therefore, including subjects from other cities and even villages is suggested for further studies. Moreover, using interviews helps researchers gain

more accurate information and insight into the subject.

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## Footnote

**Authors' Contribution:** Alireza Zareian was responsible for the collection of the data, output presentation, and drafting of the manuscript. Fakhri Tajikzadeh was responsible for drafting of the manuscript, study conception and design. Mehdi Reza Sarafraz was the corresponding author and was responsible for the study supervision.

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