What Is Best for Your Children? Authoritative vs. Indulgent Parenting Styles and Psychological Adjustment of Spanish Adolescents

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Abstract
A growing body of research suggests that the authoritative style of parenting is not always necessarily associated with optimum psychological and social outcomes among adolescents. This paper analyzed the relationships between parenting styles and adolescents' psychological adjustment using a two-dimension four-typology model of parenting styles, with the aim to determine which style of parenting Authoritative vs. indulgent was associated with optimum psychological adjustment outcomes among Spanish adolescents. Parenting styles were measured with the Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (Rohner, 1990). The outcome measures were six indicators of psychological adjustment measured with the Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Rohner, 1990). Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVAs) were conducted with a sample of 489 Spanish children. Results suggest that adolescents of indulgent families do perform equal or even better in measures of psychological adjustment than adolescents from authoritative households. Authoritarian and neglectful parenting was associated, in general, with the minimum adjustment of adolescents.

Research examining relationships between parenting styles and children's outcomes follow largely a four typology model of parental socialization styles. In 1983, Maccoby and Martin proposed, after Baumrind's (1967, 1971) tripartite model—authoritative-authoritarian-permissive—a bidimensional model of parental socialization in which the dimensions demandingness and responsiveness were theoretically orthogonal (Darling
self-report methods for substance use provided valid data (Johnston & O'Malley, 1985; Morgan, 1997), and similar results have been obtained on parenting styles in spite of different methods of data collection (see Baumrind, 1991; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994). Second, the study was cross-sectional and hence did not provide the possibility to test causal hypotheses. It is possible that adolescents' outcomes influence their parents' child-rearing styles rather than vice versa (see Maccoby, 2000).

Considering the above mentioned limitations, this study was able to show that the authoritative style was not better than the indulgent style for predicting psychological adjustment. The study reinforces the idea that the relationship between parenting styles and adolescents' adjustment is not constant among cultures, and questions the idea that the authoritative style of parenting is always associated with optimum developmental outcomes. For the Spanish culture, our results suggest that adolescents from indulgent families score equal or even higher on several indicators of psychological adjustment that adolescents from authoritative families. At least with respect to psychological adjustment, the combination of high levels of parental warmth and involvement with low levels of control appears to be the best parenting strategy in the Spanish context. Values in family relationships such as equality and tolerance, as well as toward a more permissive and democratic modes of child rearing that tend to characterize contemporary Spanish families seems to support the advantages of the indulgent style of parenting (Alberdi, 1999; Gracia & Herrero, in press; Lila, Van Acken, Musitu, & Buelga, 2006). Future research would need to examine the relationship between parenting styles and a wider range of developmental outcomes for children and adolescents.

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Parenting Styles and Psychological Adjustment


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