


Investigating the Relationship between Parenting Styles and Suicide Ideation with the Mediation of Avoidant Insecure Attachment Style

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Quantitative Study

Abstract

Background: This research was conducted with the aim of investigating the effect of parenting style variable on youth suicide variable with the mediating role of avoidant insecure attachment style.

Methods: The current research was correlational. The statistical population of the research consisted of all young people aged 15 to 23, who in 2013 visited the psychological clinics where the researcher started the research and filed a case. The sampling method was simple random sampling. The size of the statistical population was equal to 570 people and the sample size of 230 people was selected for this research. To determine the sample size, the calculation method using Cochran's formula was used, and the sample size of 230 people was selected for this research. Beck Scale for Suicidal Ideation (BSSI), Baumrind Parenting Style Scale, and Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ) were measured. Finally, the data were analyzed using SPSS and Smart PLS 3 software and with the structural equation modeling (SEM) method. The statistical findings were considered significant at the 0.05 level.

Results: There was a relationship between authoritarian parenting style and suicidal thoughts ($\beta = 0.486$, $P < 0.001$), permissive parenting style and suicidal thoughts ($\beta = 0.216$, $P = 0.004$), authoritative parenting style and suicidal thoughts ($\beta = -0.283$, $P < 0.001$), and insecure attachment and suicidal thoughts ($\beta = -0.049$, $P = 0.353$).

Conclusion: The analysis showed that the variable of parenting style was effective on youth suicide. In terms of parenting styles, it can be said that two parenting styles, authoritarian and parenting, have a significant and positive effect on suicidal, but the authoritative parenting style variable has a significant and negative effect on suicidal. On the other hand, the results of this study showed that insecure attachment style, as a mediating variable, had no significant relationship with youth suicide.

Keywords: Parenting; Suicide; Avoidant insecure attachment style

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Introduction

Suicide is one of the serious and complex issues that exists in many societies around the world. One of the most important factors that can affect suicidal thoughts is parenting style. Parenting styles are classified into three general categories. This theoretical classification is based on the level of acceptance/sensitivity and demand/control that parents of children show in their interactions with their children (Pinquart & Gerke, 2019). In the autocratic parenting style, children do not fully understand the concept of freedom, equality, and mutual respect, and they do not learn any of these behaviors, only domineering behavior, complete obedience to parents, and bullying of weaker individuals (Lin & Wang, 2022). Usually, in families with a permissive parenting style, chaos reigns, because the parents do not impose any restrictions and do not give any guidance to the child for proper behavior. In addition, normally, negligent parents accept their child's demands with no question, which causes them to face unreasonable demands and many negative consequences in the future (Kiefner-Burmeister & Hinman, 2020). In an authoritative style, the child's parents put a lot of energy into raising their child and use the reward and encouragement method. As a result, they promote the independence of their children and have reasonable demands from them. Children of parents who show this parenting style are much stronger in many areas such as communicating with peers and making friends and social interactions (Nie, Yan, & Chen, 2022). Several types of research on adolescents show that parenting styles may affect suicidal thoughts and ultimately suicide attempts. Likewise, parenting styles may interact with individual factors and, as a result, increase the risk of suicide. Negative and violent parenting, which is often a feature of an authoritarian parenting style, is associated with suicidal behavior (Banstola, Ogino, & Inoue, 2020).

In the previous study, the researchers found that an authoritarian parenting style was one predictor of suicidal behavior (Arafat, Menon, Dinesh, & Kabir, 2022). Another important and influential variable that could affect suicide is attachment style. According to Aminabadi et al., (2012), attachment includes the innate human ability to create and develop emotional bonds. Therefore, the emotional bond is established between the caregiver and the child from the very childhood and acts as a survival and protective function, in such a way that the attachment can dominate the physical and emotional development level of the child (D'Arienzo, Boursier, & Griffiths, 2019). People with this attachment style may have had caregivers who were emotionally unavailable or inconsistent in their responsiveness, leading them to develop a belief that they cannot rely on others for comfort or support. As a result, they may distance themselves from others, suppress their emotions, and prioritize independence over connection. They may also struggle with trusting others, expressing their needs, and forming lasting relationships (Golshani et al., 2021). The research results showed a higher level of attachment avoidance rather than attachment anxiety among the most at-risk adolescents. The odds ratio (OR) for attempted suicide was over two times higher for adolescents who were insecurely attached to their fathers compared to adolescents who were insecurely attached to their mothers. Research results confirmed the importance of attachment, especially paternal attachment, in developing suicidality during adolescence (Leben Novak, Gomboc, Postuvan, De Leo, Rosenstein, & Drobnic, 2023).

In addition, based on the results of some research, it has been shown that people with a history of attempted suicide were higher in anxious attachment compared to participants with no such history. Those aimed at reducing suicide attempts should

focus on reducing attachment anxiety by helping people develop skills in emotional regulation (Green, Berry, Danquah, & Pratt, 2021). According to one survey, it has been shown that childhood trauma had a completely mediated effect on the presence of prior suicide attempts through its effect on avoidant attachment (Ihme et al., 2022). Based on one study, insecure attachment is widely accepted as a risk factor for suicidal thoughts and behavior (Green et al., 2021). According to another research, a direct relationship was found between avoidant attachment and suicide ideation (Turton, Berry, Danquah, Green, & Pratt, 2022). In a study, the researchers found a link between avoidant attachment style and parents' levels of suicidal ideation and depression, and an association between anxious attachment style and the parent's level of suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety (Shtayermman & Zhang, 2022). This research was conducted with the aim of investigating the effect of parenting style variable on youth suicide variable with the mediating role of avoidant insecure attachment style.

Methods

The current research was correlational. The statistical population of the research consisted of all young people aged 15 to 23, who in 2013 visited the psychological clinics on which the researcher conducted research and filed a case. The size of the statistical population was equal to 570 people. The sampling method was simple random sampling. Sampling was done in this way: firstly, a list of names of all the people who filed a psychological file in the investigated clinics in this research was obtained. In the next step, the research community was determined based on the entry criteria and exit criteria in the research. This work was done in such a way that all people who were between 15 and 23 years old were selected and other people were excluded from the research. In the next step, the researcher took a random sample from among the people. To determine the sample size, the calculation method using Cochran's formula was used and the sample size of 230 people was selected for this research. At the same time, since the researcher intended to use the structural equation modeling (SEM) method, according to Gadagnoli and Veliser (1998), the number of 300 people and more was suitable for determining the sample size of the SEM method. From each member of the sample, three variables of parenting style, suicide, and insecure attachment style were measured. In order to comply with the ethical principles, before the implementation of the questionnaires, a willingness to cooperate form was taken from the participants in the research, and there was no obligation for them to participate in the research and continue it. They were told that participation in the research was completely voluntary and they could withdraw from the research at any time. It was also explained to them that the tests did not contain identity information.

Beck Scale for Suicidal Ideation (BSSI): This scale is a tool for measuring suicidal thoughts, which includes 19 items that evaluate the presence and severity of suicidal thoughts (Beck, Brown, Steer, Dahlsgaard, & Grisham, 1999). Each item is scored based on an ordinal scale from 0 to 2, and the total score can be scored from 0 to 38. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire was equal to 0.96 based on Beck et al.'s (1999) review, which reports a high level of reliability (Beck et al., 1999). Esfahani et al. (2015) reported Cronbach's alpha value of 0.82 for this questionnaire (Esfahani, Hashemi, & Alavi, 2015). The value of Cronbach's alpha obtained by the researcher in this research for this questionnaire was equal to 0.81, which indicates a high level of reliability in this test.

Baumrind Parenting Style Scale: The Parenting Style Scale by Baumrind (1991) including 30 items was used to evaluate parenting styles. This scale has three dimensions, which are: authoritative parenting style (10 items), authoritarian parenting style (10 items), and permissive parenting style (10 items). Adolescents rated their parents on these items using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scale scores range from 10 to 50 for each dimension, with a high score indicating a high level of parenting style in each dimension. In a study, test-retest reliability of the Persian version of this scale after a two-week interval was 0.74 (Aminabadi, Pourkazemi, Babapour, & Oskouei, 2012). Cronbach's alpha values for parenting style subscales in the present study are as follows: authoritative (0.73), authoritative (0.79), and permissive (0.75).

Simpson's Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ): This questionnaire was created by Simpson (1990) and is used to measure parenting styles. This test consists of 10 items on a Likert scale, and the subject must choose one of the 5-point options (from completely agree to completely disagree) in response to each question. There are four items in this questionnaire to evaluate secure attachment style, three items to evaluate avoidant attachment style, and three items to evaluate anxious attachment style. Rezazadeh et al. (2023) obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.61 for the insecure attachment subscale (Rezazadeh, Hosseini, & Musarezaie, 2023). In this study, the researcher obtained Cronbach's alpha equal to 0.72.

Finally, the data were analyzed using SPSS software (version 27, IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY, USA) and Smart PLS 3 software and with SEM method. Statistical findings were considered significant at the 0.05 level. The researcher used SPSS software to check the descriptive statistics in this research. At the same time, SEM method was used to examine the path coefficients and mediating variables. Bootstrapping was also used to check the significance of the model. In addition, Sobel test was used to check the significance of mediating variables.

Results

The mean ± standard deviation (SD) of the age of the participants was 18.73 ± 2.62. Likewise, 95 of the participants were men (41.3%) and 135 of them were woman (58.7%). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check the normality of the distribution of the research variables, and since this test was significant for the research variables, as a result, the research variables did not have a normal distribution (Table 1).

Table 2 shows that the lowest correlation between the variables was related to the relationship between the insecure attachment variable and the suicide variable ($r = 0.622$) and the authoritative parenting style variable had a negative relationship with the suicidal thoughts and insecure attachment variables.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation (SD) of research variables

Variable	Mean ± SD	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Shapiro-Wilk
Age (year)	18.73 ± 2.62		
Authoritarian parenting style	11.86 ± 26.37	P < 0.001	P < 0.001
Permissive parenting style	13.48 ± 27.33	P < 0.001	P < 0.001
Authoritative parenting style	13.56 ± 30.48	P < 0.001	P < 0.001
Suicidal thoughts	8.84 ± 21.62	P < 0.001	P < 0.001
Insecure attachment	3.70 ± 14.27	P < 0.001	P < 0.001

SD: Standard deviation

Table 2. Correlation matrix of research variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Authoritarian parenting style	1.000				
Permissive parenting style	0.831**	1.000			
Authoritative parenting style	-0.725**	-0.740**	1.000		
Suicidal thoughts	0.836**	0.794**	-0.763**	1.000	
Insecure attachment	0.701**	0.702**	-0.634**	0.622**	1.000

According to table 3, the path coefficient of the variable of authoritative parenting style with insecure attachment was not found significant, and also the path coefficient of the variable of insecure attachment with suicidal thoughts was not found significant.

Figure 1 show Standard research coefficients in general.

Table 4 show summary of T-value and path coefficients of the model, and the summary of the results of the interface between the variables of the model.

Figure 2 show path coefficients between variables.

Researcher used the Sobel test to check the significance of the mediator variable. The Z-value obtained after calculation through the Sobel test formula was equal to 0.36648992, which shows that the mediator variable does not have a significant role in the model.

$$Z - value = \frac{a * b}{\sqrt{(b^2 * s_a^2) + (a^2 * s_b^2) + (s_a^2 * s_b^2)}}$$

Table 5 show goodness of fit of the research model.

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of parenting styles on youth suicide with the mediating role of insecure attachment style. In general, it should be mentioned that based on the results, the parenting style variable is effective on the suicide variable. It can be said that two parenting styles have a significant and positive effect on suicidal thought, but the authoritative parenting style variable has a significant and negative effect on suicidal thought. This result shows that the more the authoritative parenting style increases among parents, the more the amount of suicidal parenting among adolescents decreases.

On the other hand, as the amount of despotic and parenting styles increases, it can be expected that the amount of suicidality among young people will also increase. Several studies are a line with the previous studies (Choi et al., 2020; Dienst, Forkmann, Schreiber, & Holler, 2023; Sadjadpour, Heydarinasab, Shairi, & Gholami Fesharaki, 2022). According to a study, students in the authoritarian parenting group had a more permissive attitude toward suicide compared with the democratic and permissive parenting groups.

Table 3. Standard research coefficients

Relationships of variables	P-value
Authoritarian parenting style -> suicidal thoughts	< 0.001
Authoritarian parenting style -> insecure attachment	0.003
Permissive parenting style -> suicidal thoughts	0.004
Permissive parenting style -> insecure attachment	0.005
Authoritative parenting style -> suicidal thoughts	0.001
Authoritative parenting style -> insecure attachment	0.061
Insecure attachment -> suicidal thoughts	0.353

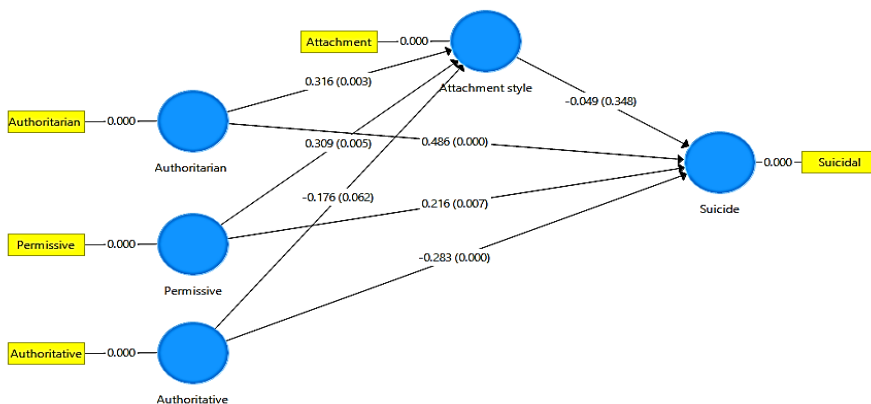


Figure 1. Standard research coefficients in general

These students considered that suicide was justified in certain situations and that choosing suicide was an individual’s right. They also had a negative attitude toward talking about suicide or intervening in others’ suicide. This association remained statistically significant after adjusting for the impact of confounding factors that could affect attitudes toward suicide, except for suicidal processes and preparedness to prevent suicide. In the mediation analysis, researchers observed that some components of the attitudes toward suicide mediated between authoritarian parenting attitudes and suicidal ideation suicide as a right, preventability, suicide as normal/common, preparedness to prevent suicide, and resignation (Choi et al., 2020).

In addition, based on one survey, it was found that the parents' use of an authoritarian style increased the likelihood of their children committing suicide. On the other hand, the results of this study showed that insecure attachment style, as a mediating variable, had no significant relationship with youth suicide. This was inconsistent with the findings of Sadjadpour et al. (2022), which confirmed the mediating role of difficulty in emotion regulation in the relationship between avoidant attachment and suicidal ideation. Avoidant attachments and a high need to belong are risk factors for suicidal ideation in people with thwarted belongingness. Therefore, attachment style and the need to belong should both be considered in suicide risk assessment (Dienst et al., 2023).

One of the limitations of the current research was the implementation of the research among only those who filed a case in psychological clinics, and therefore, it can be said that it does not include many people. For this reason, it is suggested that similar research be conducted among other people with different conditions.

Table 4. Summary of T-value and path coefficients of the model, and the summary of the results of the interface between the variables of the model

Relationship of variables	Path coefficient	T-value	Result of the hypothesis
Authoritarian parenting style by suicidal thought	0.486	5.67	Confirmation
Parenting style by suicidal thought	0.216	2.86	Confirmation
Authoritative by suicidal thought	-0.283	5.26	Confirmation
Insecure attachment by suicidal thought	-0.049	0.93	Rejection

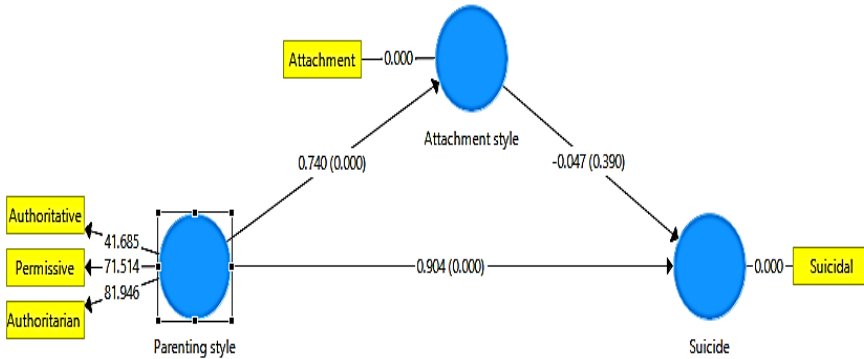


Figure 2. Path coefficients between variables

Table 5. Goodness of fit of the research model

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Parenting style	-1.096	0.671	0.844
Suicide	1.000	1.000	1.000
Attachment style	1.000	1.000	1.000

AVE: Average variance extracted

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, the variable of parenting style is impressive on the variable of suicide. Among these, as the amount of despotic or authoritarian parenting styles increases, the amount of suicidality among young people also increases, and as the amount of authoritative parenting styles increases among parents, the amount of suicidality among children decreases. In addition, the insecure attachment style variable could not play a mediating role in the relationship between parenting style and suicide variables.

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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