



## The effect of teaching negotiation styles to parents of female adolescents on parent-child relationship

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### General Note



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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction and Objective:** Adolescence is one of the important periods of life and transition from childhood to adulthood. Prevalence of many psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and substance use disorder increases during adolescence. Proper communication between parents and adolescents is conducive to better physical, mental and social maturity in adolescence. This study tended to determine the effect of teaching negotiation styles to parents of adolescent girls on parent-child relationship. **Methods:** This study was a quasi-experimental intervention with pre-test and post-test with control group. The sample was selected using convenience sampling and included 64 parents with moderate to poor negotiation skills and their adolescent girls aged 13 to 18 years. The data collection continued from May to August 2019. Data was collected using a demographic questionnaire, Pierre's negotiation style and skills questionnaire and Fine's parent-child relationship survey. Analysis was done using SPSS 20 software and descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, chi-square, pairwise T and independent T tests. **Results:** Teaching parenting negotiation style led to a significant increase in parent-child relationship score for adolescent girls ( $P < 0.0001$ ). The mean score of mother-child relationship for adolescent girls before and after the intervention was higher than the father-child relationship score, although this improvement was not statistically significant ( $P > 0.05$ ). This means that teaching parenting negotiation style improves parent-child relationship in both parents and there was no significant difference between mother-child relationship and father-child relationship. Moreover, parent-child relationship score of adolescent girls of intervention group in the mothers and fathers group showed a significant increase ( $P < 0.001$ ). **Conclusion:** Teaching parenting negotiation styles is effective on parent-child relationship and improves parental relationship with adolescent girls. Therefore, teaching negotiation styles is recommended for adolescent girls to prevent puberty disorders.

**Keywords:** Negotiation style, parent-child relationship, adolescent, girls, puberty

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is one of the most critical years of life in which adolescent's peace and balance are disturbed (Shakour et al., 2016). According to the Census of 2016, there are 11150000 adolescents (10 to 19 year olds) in Iran, accounting for 13.95% of population. The prevalence of many psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse increases during adolescence (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2003). Physical and psychological changes during this period include physical changes, sexual maturity, psychosocial changes, emotional and behavioral changes such as aggression, emotional behavior and risk taking. Adolescence is a stressful phase for parents and adolescents; parental influences during this stage and evolution of its natural changes and parent-child relationship are very important. Interactions between parents and children form the basis of emotional development (Mousavi & Jeloyari, 2014). Proper parent-adolescent communication underpins physical, mental and social maturity and development in adolescence and beyond, in addition to providing comfort and empowering emotions, such as trust, confidence, security and independence (Mirzaee & Mitracherzad, 2009). Adolescents develop their identity through emotional interaction and engagement with others, especially the parents (Parhizgar & Mahmoodnia, 2009). Parenting styles play an important role in adolescents' psychosocial development and family communication, decision-making ability and their success (Rahmani, 2008; Asadi et al., 2006). Parenting styles are the same methods that parents use to educate their children (Roman et al., 2015). Family by type of relationship with children has the most influence on their psychological, social and cultural personality and indirectly affects society (Shafiabadi, 2014). At adolescence, changes occur in the type and severity of parent-child relationships, close relationships with parents decrease and negative interactions between parents and adolescent children increase (Parhizgar & Mahmoodnia, 2009). The unfavourable family climate, low level of parent-child relationship, lack of coordination or incompatibility between parent-child values, and low respect for parents' views are associated with more peer friendship experience and premarital sexual intercourse (Farahani & Mehyar, 2011). Adolescents who have a stronger emotional attachment to their parents have better social skills and better physiological adjustments than other adolescents, and the best predictor of adolescent delinquency is the quality of their relationship with their parents. That is, weak relationships between adolescents and their parents lead to their delinquency (de Minzi & Sacchi, 2004; Musa et al., 2012). Most of the conflicts that occur between adolescents and parents are due to inadequate negotiation skills among family members, poor problem solving skills, inadequate communication skills, lack of anger control skills, and poor decision-making and assertiveness skills (Mousavi & Jeloyari, 2014).

Negotiation means reaching an agreement through communication (Down, 1991) and a way of mastering a set of skills such as planning, effective communication, and needs assessment (Eman, 2010). Negotiation style is therefore effective and is a key factor in negotiation process. In general, there are four styles of negotiation including realism, intuition, normative and analytical. In the realism style, the basic assumption is that the facts state everything. Behaviors are based on presenting the facts in an impartial manner, reminding others of their conversations, relating facts with experiences, responding calmly and cautiously, and statements based on reason and evidence. The intuitive style assumes that imagination can solve everything. The negotiator expresses warm and exciting terms, focuses on the problem or situation, emphasizes principles, plans the future, moves beyond facts, creates new ideas, pushes at one time and steps back in another time. In the normative style, it is assumed that negotiation is bargaining and being judgmental, evaluating facts according to individual values, rejecting and confirming, agreeing and disagreeing, offering rewards and incentives, resorting to emotions to reach agreement, threatening and demanding, requiring and using power, a sense of solidarity, expressing effective expressions and using interactions with people are on the agenda. In the analytical style, it is assumed that logic leads to correct results. Behaviours include reasoning, reasoning for agreeing or disagreeing, guiding, analyzing, organizing and caring for logical reasons, using cause-and-effect relationships, and putting components in a logical order (Musa et al., 2012).

Usually, the parent-child relationship is a vertical one, which consists of command-and-order communication that is applied from top to bottom. The above framework should be changed to a horizontal relationship during adolescence. Parents should rather place themselves at the same level of adolescence rather than top-to-bottom, and the relationship should be based on empathy, sympathy, and understanding of the adolescent status, which is the most desirable type of relationship, rather than imperative and coercive. In this situation, the adolescent finds parents alongside them, and this effective parent-adolescent relationship reduces many psychological, physical, and emotional problems of adolescence (Shafiabadi, 2014). Learning and applying the right style of negotiation can help improve this process. Since no study was found in this case, this study tends to determine the effect of teaching negotiation styles to parents of adolescent girls on parent-child relationship.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a quasi-experimental study with pre-test and post-test design with control group. The statistical population consisted of parents with moderate and less negotiation style living in Mashhad and their female adolescents at the age of puberty. Sampling and intervention were done from May to August of 2019. Sample size was determined using similar studies (Coatsworth et al., 2015) with 90% test power and 95% confidence coefficient in each group; 32 cases were selected considering possible loss in each group (control and intervention). One of the health centres in Mashhad was randomly selected and a census list of parents of 13- to 18-year-old girls who met the inclusion criteria was extracted by visiting the centers. Data was collected using a demographic information questionnaire and Pierre's negotiation skills and style questionnaire, developed in 1998, and its validity was measured using the Kappa coefficient of 91% and reliability of the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's alpha of 89% (Keshtkaran et al., 2014). Data was then analyzed using SPSS software version 20 and descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, and chi-square. Samples of participants in the study who scored less than 240 indicating low to moderate negotiation skills were identified; by acquiring the required sample size (64 parents), they were randomly divided into control and intervention groups, 32 in each, by permutation blocks. At this stage, PCRS developed by Fine, Morland and Schwebel (1983) to measure the quality of parent-child relationship was completed by adolescent girls participating in the study. The survey consists of 24 items and has two identical forms (one for assessing child-mother relationship and the other for assessing child-father relationship). Reliability of this survey was also reported in a research using Cronbach's alpha for the father questionnaire at 0.93 and for the mother form at 0.92 (Parhizgar & Mahmoodnia, 2009), indicating good internal consistency. Then the intervention group parents received five sessions of workshop; each workshop was held in about two hours in five consecutive weeks using educational equipment by a team consisting of one psychology master, one nursing education PhD and one master student of community health nursing in one of conference halls of the health centre. Educational content included: defining adolescence and adolescent characteristics and needs, child communication skills and communication barriers, defining negotiation skills, and teaching negotiation styles. After one month of release, the parent-child relationship was re-measured by PCRS. At the end, data analysis and conclusion were made.

## 3. RESULTS

In this study, the effect of teaching negotiation styles to parents of adolescent girls was analyzed on parent-child relationship. Data on 64 adolescent girls and their parents was analyzed in two groups of parents as intervention and control groups. Some of the findings are as follows (Table 1 – 3):

**Table 1** demographic variables of parents

Variable	Control	Intervention	P-Value
Education			Control
First secondary	13	9	0.377
Second secondary	19	23	
GPA	16.48±1.54	16.45±1.60	P=0.941
Major			
Human sciences	3	5	
Experimental science	11	14	
Mathematics-Physics	10	8	
Vocational	2	2	
Work and knowledge	6	3	

**Table 1** demographic variables of adolescent girls

Variable	Control	Intervention	P-Value
Age	45.25±4.90	44.49±5.34	0.512
Parent			
Father	8	8	1
Mother	24	24	
Occupation			
Housewife	14	12	0.389
Employee	10	13	
Self-employed	7	5	
Retired	1	2	
Education			
Elementary school degree	0	1	0.443
Middle school degree	5	3	
High school diploma	9	7	
Associate's degree	9	11	
Bachelor's degree	6	7	
Master's degree and higher	3	3	

**Table 2** findings

Variable		Control	Intervention	
		Mean±SD	mean±SD	
Parent negotiation style score	Pre-intervention	181.59±14.95	178.16±16.54	P=0.423
	Post-intervention	182.45±15.35	256.21±18.58	P<0.0001
Parent-children relationship score	Pre-intervention	56.82±14.95	58.07±15.39	9=0.392
	Post-intervention	57.96±15.39	122.25±25.03	P<0.0001
Parent-children relationship time	Pre-intervention	1.45±0.37	1.39±0.43	P=0.357
	Post-intervention	1.41±0.39	2.65±0.89	P=0.021

Distribution of research units between the control and intervention groups was not significantly different in terms of mean age of adolescent girls, GPA, major, age, occupation and parental education. The mean score of parental negotiation style increased in the intervention group from 178.16±16.54 before the intervention to 256.21±18.58 after the intervention. Moreover, the mean score of parent-child relationship increased in the intervention group from 58.07±15.39 before the intervention to 122.25±25.03 after the intervention. There was no significant difference between two groups in the mean of parent-children interaction time before intervention (P=0.357), while parent-children interaction time significantly increased in the intervention group compared to the control group after the intervention (P=0.021).

## 4. DISCUSSION

Findings of this study showed that 81.25% of control group parents and 90.62% of intervention group parents had poor relationship with adolescent girls. Similar studies have also suggested a decline in the close relationship of parents to children, which causes many physical and psychological problems for parents, especially mothers and children, at different stages of child development (Shakour et al., 2016; Khosravan et al., 2017). Decreased relationship also leads to a tendency to destructive behaviors (Parhizgar & Mahmoodnia, 2009). The findings of this study showed a significant difference in parent-child relationship after the intervention in the control and intervention groups. The majority of adolescent girls in the intervention group had moderate and strong parent-child relationship with their parents. This finding is similar to results of a study conducted in Texas in 2018 (Eisemann et al., 2018), which showed that training in negotiation skills and style will enable the parties to communicate properly. One study has shown that parenting style of most adolescents is often authoritative, with fewer parents having permissive or authoritarian styles; teaching parenting style has insignificant effect on change and consequently sense of loneliness of their adolescents (Mansoorian et al., 2015). However, we showed that teaching negotiation style can improve parent-child relationship. A 2010 study in Egypt found that negotiation skills are one of the most important skills to succeed in current world, and the longer the training period, the better the performance of people in this skill (Eman, 2010), which is consistent with findings of our study. Improvement of parent-child relationship due to communication-based training in adolescent girls was studied in 2013 in Tehran and the results showed that communication approach can improve parent-child relationship in adolescent girls (Gottman et al., 2013). Although the educational approach in this study was not quite similar to our study, it does have some commonalities that suggest that teaching behaviour change improves the parent-child relationship between parents and adolescent girls. The results of our study showed a significant increase in the parent-child relationship scores of the adolescent girls in the intervention group compared to the control group after the teaching intervention. Pairwise t-test showed a significant increase in parent-child relationship scores of adolescent girls in intervention group in mothers and fathers group. After intervention, there was a significant increase in time of parent interaction with adolescent girls in the intervention group compared to the control group. These findings are consistent with results of other studies (Zaree & Zahrakar, 2013), in which the important role of parent-child relationship during adolescence has been recognized for adolescent development and physical and mental health. The findings of our study indicate that teaching parenting principles and styles of negotiation to parent's leads to improved parent-child relationship and reduced conflicts between parents and their adolescent daughters. These findings are consistent with results of a study conducted in 2015 to determine effectiveness of negotiation styles on severity of ethical conflict among nurses working in selected hospitals of Gilan University of Medical Sciences. In this study, teaching was done by holding negotiation style workshop with the same educational content as our study with topics of negotiation definition, negotiation principles and types of negotiation styles and it was shown that teaching negotiation styles reduced ethical conflicts among nurses (Jahandar et al., 2015).

In our study, negotiation skill score of parents in the intervention group significantly increased after intervention compared to the control group. Thus, the first hypothesis (teaching negotiation skills and styles to parents of adolescent girls is effective on their negotiation style) is confirmed at 95% probability. The results also showed that the mean score of parent-child relationship of adolescent girls in the pre-intervention study was not significantly different between the two groups, however after the intervention, a significant increase was observed in parent-child relationship scores of adolescent girls in the intervention group compared to the control group. Therefore, the second hypothesis is also confirmed at 95% probability.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Overall, the results of this study showed that teaching negotiation styles to parents improves their parent-child relationship with adolescent girls and can help in managing conflict due to inadequate negotiation and parent-adolescent dialogue. Moreover, using appropriate negotiation style in appropriate situations can reduce problems such as emotional disturbances, weakness in parent-adolescent interaction, lack of anger management skills, anger and confusion and weakness in decision making. Teaching negotiation style can improve parents' relationships with adolescent girls.

### Limitations

- Probability of inadequate accuracy of research units in answering questionnaire questions
- Emotional natural changes and their potential impact on educational outcomes

### Ethical approval

The ethical code of the study in ethics committee is: IR.GUM. REC.1397.120

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