The Association Between Attachment Patterns and Parenting Styles With Emotion Regulation Among Palestinian Preschoolers

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Abstract

In the current study, we investigated the contribution of attachment and parenting to emotion regulation among preschool children in Palestine. Specifically, we set out to test the hypothesis that both parenting styles and patterns of attachment would be associated with children's emotion regulation abilities. The sample comprised 150 children from 10 public preschools in Northern Palestine. The preschoolers' levels of emotion regulation were found to be associated with their parents' parenting styles. More specifically, permissive and authoritative parenting styles were positively associated with emotion regulation and authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles were negatively associated with emotion regulation. In addition, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between secure attachment and emotion regulation.

Keywords

attachment patterns, parenting styles, emotion regulation, preschool children

Introduction

Only at preschool age do children truly begin to develop sophisticated techniques for emotion regulation, as they progressively acquire the ability to follow rules and strategically plan their behaviors (Parrigon et al., 2015). These striking new developments take place in parallel with other changes in preschoolers' perceptions of self and others, and in their social understanding more generally (Carlson & Moses, 2001). Children at this age begin to deploy speech as a technique for controlling thoughts and actions (Bronson, 2000).

Parents meanwhile are a source of both positive and negative reinforcement for preschool children. They play a major role in their children's lives both during the early years and later on in childhood and adolescence (Farzana et al., 2013).

In Palestinian society—which may be characterized as collectivist, given its cultural emphasis on the values of dignity and respect—parental actions communicate the importance of belonging to the extended family, reflecting the strong bond between young parents and their families of origin (Pasternak, 2014). Nonetheless, Palestinian communities today are undergoing a process of modernization that is giving rise to change in many aspects of social and family life including (a weakening of) the father's role as the patriarch of the family, a decline in social interactions with extended family, more emphasis on higher education

for all, and a greater acceptance toward the changing roles of women outside the home. These changes have caused friction in Palestinian society (Machool, 2007) and can affect the behaviors of Palestinian families and the social and emotional functioning of their children.

Specifically, these changes in the status of women and the status of the father, in combination with the cultural and social changes resulting from the shared life with Jewish society, have resulted in a shift in the priority scale in education among Palestinian families. This change highlights discipline and compliance with instructions, while emphasizing emotional and psychological components as well as emotion regulation among their children. This shift is demonstrated by increased requests for psychological counseling, workshops for mothers on children's education, fostering emotional intelligence among children, and referring children to informal activities.

The present research was designed to address the lack of existing studies on the relationship between parenting styles

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and child's emotional competence in Palestine. As well as advancing our understanding of this topic, a further aim of the study was to test emotional regulation among Palestinian children and the prevailing parenting styles in their parents.

Accordingly, we formulated two main research hypotheses for the present pilot study. First, we hypothesized that differences in children's emotion regulation would be associated with parenting style (Cole et al., 2018). Specifically, we expected that the more a parent displayed an authoritative parenting style, the more children will display competence in emotion regulation (H1). Second, we expected that differences in children's emotion regulation would be associated with specific attachment patterns (Birmingham et al., 2017). Namely, the more secure is the child's attachment, the more advanced their emotion regulation skills; the less secure attachment, the poorer will be emotion regulation in children (H2).

Theoretical Background

Emotion Regulation

Emotion (self-) regulation entails the ability to comply with orders or requests; initiate or end a behavior as appropriate; adjust the intensity, frequency, and duration of verbal and motor operations in social and educational environments; delay gratification; perform appropriate and acceptable social behaviors in the absence of external monitoring; and regulate one's emotional reactions (Clear & Gembeck, 2017; Fonagy & Target, 2002). Achieving emotion regulation is a key developmental goal for young children (B.-R. Kim et al., 2014). Even infants attempt to adjust their behavior in such a way as to experience positive emotions and avoid negative ones. To do this, they deploy basic strategies to modifying the expression of these negative emotions designed to reduce the experience of negative emotions. Basic strategies for regulating arousal, such as looking away, are already available to the child in early infancy (Brumariu, 2015; Spangler & Zimmermann, 2014). As children grow older, their strategies become more complex given that their cognitive abilities, in areas such as memory and attention, have become more sophisticated (Moutsiana et al., 2014). Not all children develop the same level of self-regulation abilities and individual development in this area can vary quite widely. Several factors determine these individual differences. For example, differences in temperament and environment can significantly affect young children's development of emotional self-regulation.

Attachment Patterns

Attachment is the primary bond that each individual infant forms with one of its caregivers (usually the mother). Infants seek to maintain physical intimacy with their key attachment figures and experience anxiety when separated from them. Attachment provides the infant with the security it needs to explore its environment and forms the basis for interpersonal relationships (Martins, Soares, Martins et al., 2012). Gradually, children learn to distinguish among the different signals sent to them by their primary caregivers and later on to see themselves as independent (Jones et al., 2014).

Roisman and Tsai (2004) proposed that the child develops internal working models based on its experience with caretakers, which are linked with the quality of the child's attachment pattern and general social competence. These models include emotional and cognitive components, courses of action, and rules for directing attention, organizing memory, and interpreting information related to attachment.

Ainsworth et al. (1980) developed the Strange Situation procedure for observing and measuring attachment, classifying children's attachment behaviors into four styles.

Secure Attachment Style

Children with this style use their mother as a secure base from which to embark on exploring the surrounding environment. In comparison with other attachment patterns, these children display fewer tendencies toward disruptive and aggressive behaviors (Rossman & Rea, 2005).

Insecure–Avoidant Attachment Style

Children with this style do not seek close sensory contact with their mother. They display a similar attitude toward "strangers," but with fewer avoidance behaviors. They do not appear to be emotionally invested in connecting with either their mother or strangers (Mendels, 2003).

Insecure–Anxious/Ambivalent Attachment Style

The anxious/ambivalent pattern is characteristic of children who have been beaten, children of depressed mothers, and children whose parents have experienced trauma or have lost a close family member (Volling, 2001). These children do not deploy a uniform strategy when under pressure but display contradictory patterns of behavior (Volling et al., 1998).

Disorganized/Disoriented Attachment Style

A disorganized-insecure attachment style may result from a lack of consistency in behavior on the part of the child's caregiver. A parent or caregiver who may seem to be a figure of both fear and reassurance to the child may cause the child to become dazed, confused, or apprehensive in their presence. In turn, the child's actions are often a mix of behaviors including avoidance or resistance (Reisz et al., 2017).

The literature features a number of studies on the relationship between patterns of emotional attachment and emotion regulation. For example, Cassidy (1994) reported a child's attachment history as an influence on emotion regulation, finding securely attached children had an increased ability integrating both positive and negative emotions,

whereas insecurely attached children experienced heightened or restricted negative emotions. Furthermore, Miller and Commons (2010) identified a positive relationship between secure attachment and emotion regulation, such that children with secure attachment are more independent, adapt more easily when problems arise with their peers, and are more successful at forming relationships with others. In addition, Bergin and Bergin (2009) reported that, along with high levels of educational achievement, secure attachment was also positively associated with low levels of attention deficit disorder and juvenile delinquency.

There is also empirical evidence that emotional synchronization between mother and infant can enhance the child's self-control. Specifically, synchronization of the mother's emotions with her child's, between the ages of 3 and 9 months, is related to self-control at the age of 2, suggesting that the mutual regulation of emotion in early childhood is key to the development of self-control (Agbaria, Berte, & Mahamid, 2017; Feldman et al., 1999). Furthermore, Eisenberg et al. (1998) reported a link between parental emotional socialization with developed emotion regulation skills, while also linking unsupportive emotion socialization by parents with a decreased emotion regulation in children.

In recent years, several studies examining the relationship between attachment patterns and parenting styles established a positive association between authoritative parenting and secure attachment, whereas negligent parenting predicted avoidant attachment (see Karavasilis et al., 2003). In a study by Neal and Horbury (2001), findings showed that 92% of the students with authoritative parenting styles were securely attached. Akhtar (2012) drew similar conclusions when establishing a significant association between authoritarian parenting style and anxious attachment style in children. Furthermore, a respectively significant correlation emerged between the permissive parenting style of a father and a mother with an avoidant and anxious attachment style of parenting. In another study, Paulussen-Hoogeboom et al. (2008) explored negative emotionality, an aspect of temperament referring to a child's tendency to respond to stressors with negatively with anger, irritability, and sadness. This study showed that a mother's authoritative parenting style partially mediated the child's negative emotionality attachment patterns. In a separate study, Chan et al. (2009) studied methods used by Hong Kong Chinese parents to educate children on emotion and emotion regulation, finding that parenting styles in Hong Kong Chinese mothers influence emotion socialization. Furthermore, this study reported an authoritarian parenting style was positively correlated with a dismissive approach of children's emotions, whereas the authoritative parenting style was positively correlated with an emotion-encouraging approach.

Parenting Styles

Parenting styles are methods of raising children that include elements of control and supervision of the children's behavior and actions, support and care, other specific attitudes, and behavior patterns that influence children's outcomes. Parents should provide a suitable environment for children to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, self-control, and the ability to develop meaningful relationships with others outside the family circle (Feldman & Eidelman, 2009).

Authoritarian Parenting Style

Parents with this parenting style act to shape and control their children's behavior according to a clear set of standards that they themselves have established, with the expectation they obey these rules and enforce punishment for failure to comply (Zupancic et al., 2004). They express little affection, use few words to convey their expectations to their children, and expect the children to accept their words at face value (Berg, 2011).

Authoritative Parenting Style

Parents with this style attempt to combine a high level of control with strong parental support, providing their children with clear-cut rules that they work to enforce, but also recognizing the children's desires and personal opinions, and trying to direct their children's actions while offering rational explanations and deploying negotiation strategies (Zupancic et al., 2004).

Permissive Parenting Style

Parents with this style enforce a low level of parental control combined with a high level of support for their children, responding positively to their children's pursuits and without punishment. This type of parent comes across to the child as a resource for meeting its needs, rather than as an active agent responsible for shaping its behavior (Dwairy, 2004).

Uninvolved Parenting Style

Parents with this style chose to remain uninvolved with respect to the needs of their children, with the appearance of being indifferent or even neglectful. Children who are raised by parents exhibiting a lack of emotional responsiveness and/or love may find it difficult to form emotional attachments with others later on in life (Huver et al., 2010).

In being defined as a collective society, Palestinians view adherence to parents' and teachers' expectations and rules as something to be expected (Dwairy, 2004). Within a collective society, individualism is circumscribed and so individuals tend to present more of a collective self rather than an individual one. An individual's own identity is seen as marginally distinct from his or her family. Moreover, an individual's sense of worth as well as emotion regulation is highly dependent on family support, along with the family's reputation and status in the society (Dwairy, 2002; Mahamid, 2020).

Chan et al. (2009) studied parenting styles as it relates to a child's emotion development in Hong Kong Chinese parents, also part of a collective society. The study identified an authoritarian and more controlling parenting style predominated in this culture compared with Western cultures. Some styles were further characterized as psychologically controlling through emotion manipulation (Chan et al., 2009).

In Palestinian society, interdependence and emotional dependency are prevalent in families as children are often expected to adopt the values and attitudes of their parents (Dwairy & Achoui, 2009). Accordingly, a study by Dwairy et al. (2013) that analyzed cultural beliefs in the Palestinians showed that Palestinian identity was characterized by a number of pivotal values such as conservatism, respect for parents, discipline, family protection, and hierarchical social structuring. As a consequence, the prevailing shape of parenting style within the Palestinian society is the authoritative type as opposed to the permissive and authoritarian styles.

Studies carried out among Palestinians show that the authoritative parenting style is associated with higher levels of self-esteem, less anxiety and depression, and lesser behavioral or identity problems (Dwairy, 2004). On the contrary, the permissive parenting style does not fit with the Palestinian society, whereas an authoritarian style doesn't meet social expectations typical of Arabic cultures (Agbaria, Berte, & Mahamid, 2017; Dwairy et al., 2006). Finally, research stressed how a negative parenting style (domineering/authoritarian) can inhibit the development of emotion regulation in children leading to dysfunctional behaviors (Punamaki et al., 1997).

Recent studies on social and emotional adjustment, as well as self-control, and their association with parenting styles, have yielded contradictory findings. Tan et al. (2012) studied adjustment as measured by the Child Health Survey (CHS), which is designed to measure behavioral and emotional problems as well as strengths and competencies. While overall adjustment was positively associated with an authoritarian parenting style, these factors of adjustment were found to be significantly negatively associated with global, permissive, uninvolved, and authoritative parenting styles. In contrast, Kaufmann et al. (2000) found overall adjustment, as measured by its CHS factors, to be positively associated with authoritative parenting styles and negatively associated with authoritarian parenting styles.

Other studies have documented the inhibiting effect of authoritarian parenting styles on preschoolers' self-regulation and adjustment (Eisenberg et al., 2009; Zhou et al., 2004). Children of authoritative parents tend to succeed in controlling their behavior in accordance with the expectations of adults and exhibit extremely low levels of antisocial behavior. Hence, it might be expected that authoritative parenting styles make a more positive contribution to children's development of emotion regulation than the other parenting styles.

The Study

Although, as just outlined, young children's emotion regulation skills are key to their later development and influenced by many environmental factors, no studies on this topic have been conducted to date with Palestinian preschool children. Hence, the current study represents an attempt to fill this gap in the literature by investigating the relationship between parenting styles and children's attachment patterns, on one hand, and emotion regulation, on the other, among Palestinian preschoolers.

Specifically, we set out to answer the following research questions: Is there an association between parenting styles and emotion regulation ability among preschool children? Is there an association between attachment patterns and emotion regulation ability among preschool children?

Method

Participants

Participants in the study were 150 children aged 3 to 4 years and their mothers ($N = 150$) and were recruited at 10 public schools in Northern Palestine in a convenience sampling. These schools were each located in a city defined with a moderate socioeconomic status. The 10 schools were selected purposively from schools that offer kindergartens and characterized by intensive parental involvement in the school measured by the degree of children's presence in nonformalized activities that schools organize for parents and children. Fifteen children from each school were selected. The research was conducted after the required authorization had been received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of An-Najah National University. All parents had provided informed consent. First, a letter presenting the study topic and aims was sent home to the parents through the children. The letter specified that participant data would be treated anonymously and that families could withdraw from the study at any time. It was explained that the questionnaires would be delivered to the mother through her child once the mother had provided written consent. The children of the mothers who returned the signed consent forms received an envelope containing the questionnaires during regular school hours and were asked to take it home to their mother. On the envelope, it was written that the parent was responsible for returning the questionnaires to the preschool after filling them out. Out of 200 students selected to participate, 150 parents expressed consent and completed the questionnaires. The protocol was distributed to 150 mothers, and the returned questionnaires were collected by teachers at kindergarten. The criteria for inclusion in the study were (a) never having been diagnosed with any form of neurodevelopmental or psychological impairment, (b) living in Palestine, and (c) parents who have children in public preschools and agreed to participate in the study.

In terms of the mothers' age, 46.3% were aged between 20 and 30 years, 42.9% between 31 and 40 years, and the remainder (10.9%) between 41 and 50 years. A small proportion of the participating mothers (2.8%) had completed elementary school, less than half (37.2%) had completed high school, more than half (56.6%) were graduates, and the remainder (3.4%) had received some other form of education. About a third of the participants (31.5%) were mothers of three children, less than a third (28.8%) had two children, almost exactly a third (34.3%) had more than three children, and the remainder (5.5%) had only one child. Almost half of the participating children (47.2%) were boys. One third of the children (33.8%) were firstborns, just more than a third (36.1%) lastborn, a little less than a third (30.6%) middle children.

Research Tools

The research tools used were translated from English into Arabic and reviewed to ensure content validity and comprehensiveness. A committee of 10 experts in psychology, counseling, Arabic language, and education reviewed the tools. A score of 80% agreement between experts facilitated the inclusion of each item. Minor modifications to the tools were made based on feedback from committee members.

Once completed, an independent language expert back-translated the questionnaires into English. Twenty parents were asked to pilot test the translated versions, and based on their comments, were refined for further clarity. An-Najah IRB validated the study instruments (Parenting Style Questionnaire, Emotion Regulation Checklist [ERC], and Emotion Attachment Questionnaire) as they were previously used in other published studies (Agbaria, Mahamid, & Berte, 2017; Diab et al., 2017; Dwairy, 2004; Kanninen et al., 2003; Mahamid & Berte, 2019, 2020).

Parenting Style Questionnaire (self-report instrument for mothers). This instrument was developed by Abu Taleb (2013) and reviewed by a group of experts for content validity and comprehensiveness. The questionnaire was developed in Arabic among the Palestinian population in Jordan. For the current study, validity and reliability values were calculated. The questionnaire comprises 49 items. Of these, 10 items describe a permissive parenting style, for example, "No limits are placed on the child in the home"; 12 items describe an uninvolved parenting style, for example, "Child's needs are not responded to quickly"; 14 items describe an authoritative parenting style, for example, "There is a strong connection between myself and my child"; and 12 items describe an authoritarian parenting style, for example, "I always have control over my child." Mothers were asked to rank the items on a 3-point Likert-type scale: 1 = *disagree*, 2 = *somewhat agree*, 3 = *completely agree*. Internal consistency coefficients in Abu Taleb's (2013) study were authoritative, α = .82; authoritarian, α = .79; permissive, α = .70; uninvolved,

α = .80. In the present study, the internal consistency values were global parenting style, α = .85; permissive parenting style, α = .81; uninvolved parenting style, α = .74; authoritative parenting style, α = .84; authoritarian parenting style, α = .78.

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERC). The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire created by Shield and Cicchetti (2001) was used to assess emotional regulation among children, is a parent report instrument consisting of 24 items to be rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = *rarely*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *often*, 4 = *always*). It assesses children's levels of emotion regulation via two subscales: an Instability/Negativity subscale (Emotional Lability/Negativity—L/N), composed of 15 items representing lack of flexibility, unstable mood, and unregulated negative affect (sample items: "Experiences extreme changes in mood" and "Is likely to have angry outbursts or tantrums").

The Emotion Regulation (ER) subscale contains eight items outlining situationally appropriate emotion expressions as well as emotional self-awareness (sample items: "Able to say when he feels sadness, anger, fear or concern" and "Responds positively when another child approaches him in a friendly or neutral manner"). A further questionnaire item belongs to neither of the subscales. In the original validation study, internal consistency reliability for the Instability/Negativity subscale, as measured using Cronbach's alpha, was α = .96. Internal consistency reliability for the ER subscale was α = .83. The two subscales were found to be strongly intercorrelated ($p < .001$, $r = .5$). The questionnaire also yields a global emotion regulation score, calculated by reversing all the negative items and calculating the mean of the 24 items: higher scores indicate greater emotion regulation ability. Internal consistency reliability for this global measure was α = .89 . In the current study, the internal consistency coefficient for global emotion regulation was α = .72.

Emotional Attachment Questionnaire (AQSQ—Attachment Q-Sort Questionnaire). The AQSQ is a parent report instrument developed by Robinson (1995), who adapted and condensed it to test secure and insecure attachment styles between a mother and her child, and is intended for use with children aged 1 to 4 years. The AQSQ comprises 12 items and ask parents directly about their child's behaviors; items are rated on a scale of 1 to 9 (1 = *not at all typical of my child*, 5 = *sometimes typical of my child*, 9 = *very much not typical of my child*). A cut-off score for secure attachment on the AQSQ which is 5 out of 9 was also calculated by Robinson (1995) to discriminate secure and insecure children, those who receive 5 scores and above are considered securely attached children. LaMont (2010) obtained a Cronbach's alpha for this scale of .70. In the present study, internal consistency was calculated for global emotional attachment: α = .74.

Table 1. Summary of Descriptive Statistics for the Sample (N = 150 preschoolers).

	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Attachment patterns	5.73	1.22	2.14	8.10
Permissive parenting style	2.27	0.28	1.00	2.88
Uninvolved parenting style	1.63	0.25	1.11	2.50
Authoritative parenting style	2.61	0.29	1.14	3.00
Authoritarian parenting style	1.67	0.3	1.08	2.69
Child's emotion regulation	3.04	0.32	2.14	3.78

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated to test the statistical reliability of the instruments and study variables included in the research design. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the associations among the variables. Finally, stepwise regression analysis, with gender and birth order as control variables, was performed to assess the power of attachment and parenting style as it is associated with children's emotion regulation. The data set had negligible missing values as a percentage of the set. In addition, log transformation was applied to achieve normality in the study variables. A posttransformation normality test was retested and found to be normally distributed.

Findings

Reported in Table 1 are the descriptive statistics obtained by our sample which include means, standard deviations, along with maximum and minimum scores.

High scores were obtained for overall attachment behaviors (M = 5.73, SD = 1.22); mean range of Emotional Attachment Questionnaire is from 1 to 9; a cut-off score for secure attachment on the AQSQ within the Palestinian context is 5. In addition, the highest score was obtained on authoritative parenting style (M = 2.61, 0.29), followed by permissive parenting style (M = 2.27, SD = 0.28); mean range of Parenting Styles Questionnaire is from 1 to 3 with 1 to 1.66 = low, 1.66 to 2.33 = average, and 2.33 to 3.00 = high, with the means for these variables falling above the middle of the range. The children also generally obtained high scores for emotion regulation (M = 3.04, SD = 0.32); mean range of Emotion Regulation Checklist is from 1 to 4, with 1 to 1.75 = low, 1.75 to 2.5 = average, 2.5 to 3.25 high, and 3.25 to 4.00 = very high. Next, the correlations among the study variables were calculated, as shown in Table 2.

Statistically significant correlations were found between the different parenting styles and emotion regulation. Specifically, emotion regulation was negatively correlated with uninvolved (r = −.29***, p < .001) and authoritarian (r = −.39***, p < .001) parenting styles and positively correlated with permissive (r = 17*, p < .05) and authoritative (r = .41***, p < .001) parenting styles. There was also a statistically significant positive correlation between emotion

regulation and attachment behaviors (r = .43***, p < .001), whereas statistically significant correlations were also found between attachment patterns and different parenting styles. Specifically, attachment patterns were negatively correlated with uninvolved (r = −.16, p < .05) and authoritarian (r = −.20*, p < .05) parenting styles and positively correlated with authoritative (r = .20*, p < .05) parenting style.

Finally, to further test the research hypotheses, stepwise regression analysis was carried out as illustrated in Table 3.

H1 focused on the relationship between parenting styles and the child's emotion regulation. We found a significant positive correlation between emotion regulation and the permissive parenting style (r = .17, p < .05). However, regression analysis with emotion regulation as target variable showed that permissive parenting style did not make a significant contribution to explaining variance in emotion regulation (B = −.009, SE = .10, β = −.008). Furthermore, the correlational analysis indicated that there was a significant negative association between emotion regulation and the uninvolved parenting style (r = −.29, p < .001). However, regression analysis again showed that uninvolved parenting style did not make a significant contribution to explaining variance in emotion regulation (B = −.13, SE = .11, β = −.103). In addition, a significant positive correlation was identified between emotion regulation and authoritative parenting style (r = .41, p < .001). The authoritative parenting style significantly contributes to explaining variance in emotion regulation (B = .35, SE = .10, β = .32). Finally, the significant negative correlation between emotion regulation and the authoritarian parenting style (r = −.39, p < .001) also explains variance in emotion regulation (B = −.20, SE = .09, β = −.22).

In relation to the second research hypothesis concerning the relationship between the child's attachment patterns and emotion regulation, emotion regulation and attachment patterns were found to be significantly correlated (r = .43, p < .001). In regression analysis, child gender and birth order were entered at Step 1, and attachment patterns, permissive parenting style, uninvolved parenting style, authoritative parenting style, and authoritarian parenting style were entered at Step 2.

The regression analysis showed that attachment patterns (B = .33, SE = .12, β = .31), authoritative parenting style (B = .35, SE = .10, β = .32), and authoritarian parenting style (B = −.20, SE = .10, β = −.20) made a significant contribution to explaining variance in emotion regulation, whereas child's gender (B = .08, SE = .10, β = .06) and child's birth order (B = .05, SE = .12, β = .02) were not significant to explaining variance in emotion regulation.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to examine the contribution of emotional attachment patterns and parenting styles as factors associated with emotion regulation among Palestinian preschool children. We found that parenting styles and secure

Table 2. Correlations Among Study Variables (*N* = 150).

Measure	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Emotion regulation	—					
(2) Attachment Patterns	.43***	—				
(3) Permissive parenting	.17*	−.02	—			
(4) Uninvolved parenting	−.29 ***	−.16	−.01	—		
(5) Authoritative parenting	.41***	.20*	.46***	−.22**	—	
(6) Authoritarian parenting	−.39 ***	−.20*	−.17*	.54***	−.38***	—

*p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

Table 3. Stepwise Regression Assessing the Predictors of Children's Emotion Regulation.

	B	β	*SE*	ΔR²
Step 1: Variables				.004
Child's gender	.08	.06	.11	
Child's birth order	.05	.02	.12	
Step2: Variables				.25
Attachment patterns	.33	.31**	.12	
Permissive parenting style	−.009	−.008	.10	
Uninvolved parenting style	−.13	−.103	.11	
Authoritative parenting style	.35	.32***	.10	
Authoritarian parenting style	−.20	−.20**	.10	

**p < .05. ***p < .001.

attachment were associated with the preschoolers' emotion regulation skills. With regard to the distribution of parenting styles among participants, the most common was the authoritative parenting style followed by the permissive. Authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles were the least frequently reported. This result is in line with previous studies indicating that Palestinian parents used commonly authoritative/flexible parental style (Agbaria, Berte, & Mahamid, 2017; Hanafi & Mousa Thabet, 2017). The most commonly reported attachment pattern was secure attachment.

These findings are related to ongoing changes in the traditional structures of Palestinian society and Palestinian family structure in particular (Veronese et al., 2011). For example, over the years, the role of the extended family in Palestinian society has declined in the last decades. As a result, authoritarian parenting styles declined accordingly (Agbaria, Berte, & Mahamid, 2017). Furthermore, an increased level of education among parents changed their perceptions of parenting behaviors and beliefs from authoritarian parenting styles to more authoritative or permissive parenting styles (Patrice, 2000). More recently, there has been a radical change in gender equal opportunities, in terms of enhanced women's access to education and an increased number of women working outside the home to contribute to the family economy (Mahamid & Veronese, 2020). Women education and job opportunities played a pivotal role in changing family decision-making processes and in preferred parenting styles in educating children (Clear & Gembeck, 2017).

Parenting Styles and Emotion Regulation

We found preschoolers' emotion regulation skills to be positively associated with authoritative parenting styles and negatively associated with permissive parenting styles, and even more markedly negatively associated with authoritarian parenting styles. This finding supports previous research in Western societies in which authoritarian parenting styles were shown to inhibit self-control and adaptation among preschool children (Eisenberg et al., 2009; Zhou et al., 2004).

The positive link between authoritative parenting and emotion regulation ability may be explained by the fact that the parental support and involvement which is characteristic of an authoritative parenting style encourages the child to adapt to parental influences; also, the combination of support and understanding that is implicit in this style may enable more effective socialization on the part of children, helping them to develop their self-control skills, act responsibly, and express their abilities.

Another explanation for this finding might be related to the characteristics of the sample, in that a significant portion of the participating mothers were university graduates and a higher level of education is associated with authoritative parenting styles fostering children's ability to regulate their emotions.

Children's emotional regulations capacities and parenting styles as predictors are clearly related. While parental response to a child's negative emotion has an effect on the child's emotional regulation, the style of parenting in response to a child's negative emotions, such as distress, may produce undesired results. It may influence the child to internalize these emotions when the parents display a response that may vary between positive and negative emotions in such circumstances. Hence, the child will become more apt at learning which emotions are suitable to display in particular situations (Eisenberg et al., 2009).

Moreover, how a parent regulates their own emotions may also indicate they type of parenting style they practice. Authoritative parents (seen as warm yet firm) may express positive emotions in response to their children's negative emotions, whereas authoritarian parents (seen as cold and firm) counter with their own negative emotions as a response (Halberstadt et al., 1999).

Our results are in line with the findings of Crugnola et al. (2013) who studied the relationship between the quality of

attachment through maternal representations and mother–infant interactions of emotions and regulating attention during free play with objects. Authors showed that the coherence of maternal discourse, a characteristic of the authoritative parenting style, was associated with superior dyadic attention and emotion regulation among children. Our finding that authoritarian parenting style is negatively associated with emotion regulation is also in keeping with those of Ahmetoglu et al. (2018), who indicated that parents who tended to respond punitively to their children's emotions and children with emotional dysregulation displayed less attachment to their parents as compared with children who had more robust emotion regulation.

Attachment Patterns and Emotion Regulation

The second research hypothesis was that differences in children's emotion regulation could be attributed to their patterns of attachment, such that more securely attached children would display more advanced emotion regulation skills. Our findings confirmed this hypothesis.

The positive relationship found between secure attachment and emotion regulation is in line with the outcomes of previous research (Miller & Commons, 2010), in which securely attached children demonstrated higher levels of achievement and lower levels of attention deficit disorders and delinquency than children with insecure attachment (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). It is important to note that previous studies have shown insecurely attached children (displaying avoidance, resistance, and disorganized attachment) to have difficulty regulating their emotions, experience feelings of fear, and be prone to displaying anger toward other children (Kochanska, 2001).

Our finding may be explained by the fact that secure attachment allows children to develop mental models of themselves as loved and of their parents and environment as trustworthy. "Secure" children tend not to be driven by fear during separation from attachment figures but to take an interest in their surroundings and in creating close relationships with others. It is easier for them to direct their behavior, experience positive emotions, control negativity, and in general to develop emotion regulation skills.

The findings of this study concur with those reported by Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2017), who reviewed 23 studies in the field of attachment patterns and emotional regulation in children. All of these studies identified at least one connection between attachment and emotion regulation that was of significance. A complementary line of research was pursued by Panfile and Laible (2012), who examined the influence of multiple factors on empathy, attachment, negative emotionality, and emotion regulation. Results indicated that attachment styles were predicting empathy through the mediation of emotion regulation. Our findings are also in line with H. Kim and Page's (2012) work which examined the association between attachment patterns and school-related behavior problems exhibited by elementary school children. The authors showed that children's emotion regulation and the school-related behavior problems could be predicted by parenting styles. In another study, Crugnola et al. (2011) examined the relationship between emotion regulation and quality of attachment in infants with different attachment patterns. Results indicated that infants with secured attachment used strategies of positive social engagement and emotional regulation more than insecure avoidant infants.

Finally, the current findings also align with the study by Kerns et al. (2007) as to how attachment relates to children's emotion regulation. Higher levels of positive emotional functioning, more constructive coping capabilities, and better regulation of emotions were all related to secure attachment and maternal secure base support.

Implications

This study has multiple implications at both the theoretical and practical levels. It adds to other studies on the same theme conducted in other societies and, together with them, helps to fill in the picture regarding specific aspects of parenting styles and attachment patterns in the (Palestinian) Arab community and how these relate to emotion regulation among Arab preschoolers. The study offers informed observation of the educational and learning experience of Arab students in early childhood and may be of assistance in the planning and implementation of education programs. Therefore, raising awareness of the various parenting styles by designing and conducting ad hoc workshops for parents may indirectly contribute to enhancing children's emotion regulation abilities. Our findings can also usefully inform the design of workshops and lectures for mothers on the subject of developing emotional attachment, with a view to helping mothers to acquire skills for reinforcing their bond with their children, understand and improve the mother–child relationship, and discover tools for creating an environment that can boost their children's self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-control. In other words, helping mothers to foster a secure attachment pattern that will contribute to enhancing their children's emotion regulation abilities. In addition, studies using a mixed method approach or a longitudinal data set could further investigate attachment styles, parenting styles, and emotion-related parenting styles as predictors of child emotion regulation.

A number of limitations presented in this study need to be acknowledge and addressed. The first limitation being that the sample was not a random sample, but a convenience one initiated in restricted geographical areas. Second, the study was entirely based on quantitative data collected via self-report instruments completed by mothers. Third, the mothers' questionnaires were delivered to them via their children and completed without the presence of the researchers, so that when doubts concerning how to respond to the questionnaire arose the mothers had no means of seeking immediate clarification. Fourth, testing of the study instruments and

their psychometric characteristics had not been previously tested with this specific population, and therefore atypical results could not be fully ruled out. Fifth, this was not a longitudinal study and, as such, it does not clearly identify whether attachment patterns and parenting styles are predictors of emotion regulation or variables associated with emotion regulation. The research performed was correlational and the effects could be bidirectional; for example, a child with low emotion regulation and a difficult temper may elicit more authoritarian parenting.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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