

Article

Parenting styles and suicidal ideation of adolescents: The moderating role of social skills

Filipa Nunes¹ and Catarina P. Mota²

¹University of Porto, Portugal. Center for Psychology at the University of Porto

²University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, Portugal. Center for Psychology at the University of Porto

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 28/07/2022
Accepted: 14/10/2022

Keywords:

Parenting styles
Empathy
Assertiveness
Self-control
Suicidal ideation

ABSTRACT

Background/objective: The parenting styles and social skills are important factors to emotional development of young people and can associate, positive or negative way, to suicidal thoughts of adolescents. The current study analyzed the contribution of parenting styles of mother and father and social skills on suicidal ideation of adolescents. Further, it tested the moderating role of social skills on the previous association. **Method:** The sample comprised 604 adolescents (54.6% were girls) with ages ranging from 15 to 18. Participants responded to a measure of parenting styles of mother and father, social skills, and suicidal ideation. **Results:** The results showed that the mother's physical coercion was positively linked with suicidal ideation, while assertiveness was negatively associated with adolescents' suicidal thoughts. Results also indicated that empathy moderated the association between authoritative and authoritarian styles of both parents and suicidal ideation. Moreover, findings revealed that assertiveness moderated the association among mother's authoritative style and suicidal ideation. Results also exhibited that the permissive style of both parents was linked suicidal ideation, regardless of the social skills of adolescents. **Conclusions:** Findings are discussed according to Baumrind's parenting styles approach and taking into consideration the importance of parents and social skills in understanding the processes inherent to suicidal ideation of adolescents.

Estilos de parentales e ideación suicida en los adolescentes: El papel moderador de las habilidades sociales

RESUMEN

Antecedentes/objetivo: Los estilos parentales y las habilidades sociales son factores importantes para el desarrollo emocional de los jóvenes y pueden asociarse, de manera positiva o negativa, a los pensamientos suicidas de los adolescentes. El estudio actual analizó la contribución de los estilos parentales de la madre y el padre y las habilidades sociales sobre la ideación suicida de los adolescentes. Además, analizó el papel moderador de las habilidades sociales sobre la asociación anterior. **Método:** La muestra estuvo compuesta por 604 adolescentes (54,6% eran niñas) con edades entre 15 y 18 años. Los participantes respondieron a cuestionarios de estilos parentales relativo a la madre y el padre, habilidades sociales e ideación suicida. **Resultados:** Los resultados mostraron que la coerción física de la madre se relacionó positivamente con la ideación suicida, mientras que la asertividad se asoció negativamente con la ideación suicida de los adolescentes. Los resultados también indicaron que la empatía moderó la asociación entre los estilos autoritario y autoritario de ambos padres y la ideación suicida. Además, los resultados mostraron que la asertividad moderó la asociación entre el estilo autoritario de la madre y la ideación suicida. Los resultados también mostraron que el estilo permisivo de ambos padres estuvo relacionado con la ideación suicida, independientemente de las habilidades sociales de los adolescentes. **Conclusiones:** Se discuten los resultados con base en el enfoque de estilos parentales de Baumrind, considerando la importancia de los padres y las habilidades sociales en la comprensión de los procesos inherentes a la ideación suicida de los adolescentes.

Palabras clave:

Estilos parentales
Empatía
Asertividad
Autocontrol
Ideación suicida

Introduction

Parenting styles and suicidal ideation of adolescents: the moderating role of social skills.

As a source of primary socialization, family plays a relevant role in the transmission of affective components that may contribute to the psychosocial development of children and adolescents (Morris et al., 2007). According to Baumrind (1996), during childhood, important skills are acquired in order to establish well-adjusted relationships in adolescence and adulthood, with parenting styles being especially relevant in this process. Parenting styles establish the behavioral repertoire of the caregiver, which includes their attitudes, as well as some unique aspects of the dyadic interaction between parents and children, such as body language, attention, tone of voice and affective availability.

Baumrind (1996) developed an approach that defines three parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. According to the author, the authoritative style is characterized by the attribution of equal value to obedience and independence, as well as by compliance with rules, affective responsiveness and clear communication. The authoritarian style is characterized by the arbitrary imposition of rules and limits, by punishment and inflexibility in the parental interaction. The permissive style, on the other hand, is defined by low levels of control and high levels of affection, by excessive tolerance, as well as absence of rules and punishment, which may lead to children becoming less structured and, therefore, highly dependent (Silva et al., 2012).

According to empirical evidence, the children of authoritative parents exhibit better cognitive, social and emotional skills, especially when this parenting style is implemented in adolescence (Morris et al., 2007; Silva et al., 2012). Conversely, children educated according to an authoritarian or permissive parenting style tend to exhibit lower levels of self-esteem, autonomy and social competence, and show greater vulnerability to risk (Fotti et al., 2006). Although the typological approach, by Baumrind (1996), was proposed to examine the preponderance of parenting styles throughout childhood, it is also currently used to study several aspects of adolescence. According to some researchers, the contribution of parenting styles tends to extend into adolescence, mainly in terms of social skills (Silva et al., 2012).

The social skills are behaviors emitted in an interpersonal situation, through the coherent manifestation of affection, desires, beliefs and/or attitudes (Botvin & Griffin, 2004). Thus, behaviors such as helping others, sharing, starting relationships, asking for help, thanking or praising others are factors that establish fundamental dimensions for human development, since interaction and social acceptance are a basic need of the human species. According to the conception of Del Prette and Del Prette (2010), the development of skills such as assertiveness, empathy and self-control are important for the adequate social adjustment of adolescents, given the contribution of these skills towards the ability to establish positive interpersonal relationships.

The importance of caregivers for the acquisition of social skills has been demonstrated by some studies, which suggest that children of authoritarian and permissive parents are less autonomous and report less social responsibility and assertiveness, compared to individuals who grow up experiencing authoritative parental

behaviors (Fotti et al., 2006). According to several authors, the provision of parental care adapted to the needs, interests and concerns of the adolescent can shape certain social skills, such as the recognition of emotions and internal control, which, in turn, contribute to a well-adjusted psychosocial development (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2010). As such, the study of family dynamics and processes, inherent to parenting styles, is relevant for understanding social skills that enable a deeper knowledge of the emotional experiences and risks inherent to adolescence.

Although the literature recognizes the relevance of parenting styles to the social skills of adolescents, few studies have analyzed the intertwining of parenting styles and social skills on suicidal ideation of adolescents. The development of studies that enable a deeper understanding of this intertwining can better inform interventions which aim to promote more adaptive development trajectories.

Adolescence is a developmental stage that requires significant changes at the biopsychosocial level (Fleming, 2005). Thus, with its many transformations, adolescence establishes a period of mental restructuring and significant emotional instability, which can be associated with greater vulnerability to risk. According to Macedo (2010), some adolescents have personal resources to suppress the internal distress resulting from this transition period, whereas others are unable to overcome the developmental challenges due to a lack of skills. It is according to this perspective of lability and reorganization that Morris et al. (2007) consider that adolescents, when faced with resource depletion (burn-out), may equate suicidal ideation as a form of “escape” from unbearable suffering.

According to the literature, suicidal behavior comprises three distinct categories, namely ideation, attempt and consummated suicidal, which operate on a continuum of increasing severity and heterogeneity. Suicidal ideation is defined by the presence of ideas and plans about the end of one’s own existence and, as such, can be the first step towards consummated suicidal (Fotti et al., 2006). In accordance with empirical evidence, adolescents educated in authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, and with deficient social skills, are more prone to suicidal ideation (Peter et al., 2008). In the conception of Fotti et al. (2006), contact with non-authoritative parenting styles can be indicative of adjustment problems in adolescence, since they contribute to the deficient acquisition of social skills, which, in turn, can be associated with suicidal cognition. According to several authors, deficient social skills in childhood and adolescence are associated with several psychological problems, such as anxiety, depression and suicidal (Greening et al., 2010).

Recognizing the relevance of this evidence, it should be emphasized the importance of studying the protective role of social skills, given the negative role that less adaptive parenting styles can play in the emotional adjustment of adolescents, namely in triggering suicidal thoughts. According to data reported by the World Health Organization (WHO), suicide is a serious public health problem that affects around one million people a year, worldwide (WHO, 2012). The WHO reports state that suicide is the second leading cause of death in adolescence. The expressiveness of these data is worrisome, but is even more acute, due to the fact that they are incomplete, since suicidal behavior is a manifestly under-declared phenomenon due to it’s the political, religious and sociocultural stigma. Thus, it is important to implement new studies that promote knowledge closer to the current reality and to implement strategies aimed at preventing suicidal ideation.

The current study intends to analyze the contribution of parenting styles of mother and father and social skills on suicidal ideation of adolescents, as well as to test the moderating role of social skills on the previous association.

Method

Participants

The sample comprised 604 adolescents (54.6% were girls) whose ages ranged from 15 to 18 ($M = 15.99$, $SD = 0.97$). Regarding the participants' schooling, 37.1% adolescents were in the 10th grade, 42.2% were in the 11th grade, 18.2% were in the 12th grade, while 2.5% were in their first grade of University. Regarding to the parents, the fathers had ages ranged from 32 to 71 ($M = 45.69$, $SD = 5.34$), while the mothers had ages ranged from 31 to 60 ($M = 43.59$, $SD = 5.25$).

Measures

Sociodemographic Questionnaire. A sociodemographic questionnaire was developed in order to obtain information related to the adolescents' age, gender and education level, as well as gather information about to parents' age.

Parenting Styles & Dimensions Questionnaire: Short Version (PSDQ). The short version of PSDQ (Robinson et al., 1996; translated and adapted to the Portuguese population by Nunes and Mota, 2018) was used to assess the perception that the adolescents have in relation to parenting styles. This self-report measure contains a total of 32 items that provide a version for the "Father" and another for the "Mother", in which the responses are presented on a Likert scale varies from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*). Regarding to the organization of the questionnaire, it contains three dimensions: the Authoritative Style, Authoritarian Style and Permissive Style. The authoritative style includes 3 subscales: support and affection (*My parents are sensitive to my feelings and needs*, 5 items); regulation (*My parents emphasize the reasons behind the rules they implement*, 5 items); and concession of autonomy and democratic participation (*My parents take my desires into consideration before asking me to do something*, 5 items). The authoritarian style includes one subscale, physical coercion and punishment (*My parents punish me physically as a way of disciplining me*, 8 items). Lastly, the permissive style includes one subscale, indulgence (*My parents give in when I throw a tantrum*, 5 items). The average of each dimension is obtained from the sum of the items belonging to each sub-dimension divided by the total of items that constitute each sub-dimension. The highest result obtained in each dimension suggests the presence a perception larger, by part the adolescents regarding the frequency of the events described in items. Cronbach's alphas were $\alpha = .82 / .85$ for support and affection, $\alpha = .77 / .82$ for regulation, $\alpha = .81 / .84$ for concession of autonomy and democratic participation, $\alpha = .80 / .77$ for physical coercion and punishment, $\alpha = .65 / .65$ for indulgence, in father and mother versions, respectively. The confirmatory factorial analyses presented acceptable adjustment values (SRMR = .07 / .07, CFI = .95 / .92, RMSEA = .07 / .08, / $\chi^2_{(80)} = 308.29$, $p = .001$, $\chi^2_{(79)} = 384.37$, $p = .001$ / $\chi^2_{(80)} = 308.29$, $p = .001$) for the father and the mother, respectively.

Social Skills Questionnaire (SSQ). The SSQ (Gresham & Elliott, 1990; translated and adapted to the Portuguese population by Mota et al., 2011), was used to assess the social skills of adolescents.

It is a self-report instrument, consisting of 39 items, in which the responses are given according to the frequency of behavior, assessed on a Likert scale that varies from 1 (*never*) to 3 (*very often*). This questionnaire assesses four dimensions, namely: assertiveness (*I make friends easily*, 9 items); empathy (*I say nice things to others when they have done something well*, 10 items); self-control (*I ignore others when they make fun of me or insult me*, 10 items); and cooperation (*I listen to adults when they are talking with me*, 10 items). In the current study, only the first three dimensions were analyzed, since these dimensions were those that best met the initially-formulated objectives. Cronbach's alphas were $\alpha = .66$ for assertiveness, $\alpha = .75$ for empathy, and $\alpha = .65$ for self-control, respectively. The scale revealed acceptable adjustment indices (SRMR = .05, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .07, $\chi^2(24) = 101.68$, $p = .001$).

Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SIQ). The SIQ (Reynolds, 1988; adapted by Ferreira and Castella, 1999) was used to evaluate the occurrence of suicidal thoughts in adolescents over the last six months. This instrument is unidimensional (*I thought it would be better to not be alive*, 30 items), in which the responses are presented on a Likert scale varies from 1 (*Never*) to 7 (*Always*). Each one of the 30 items is rated 1-7 in a total of 180 points. The theoretical assumptions the instrument establish, that a score ≥ 41 , may be indicative of significant psychopathology and potential risk of suicidal. The scale revealed a cronbach's alphas of $\alpha = .97$ and good adjustment indices (SRMR = .03, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .02, $\chi^2(35) = 445.22$, $p = .001$).

Procedure

Data were randomly collected in several secondary schools and the general population in the northern region of Portugal in November and December 2013. The current study had the following inclusion criteria: aged between 14 and 18 years. Exclusion criteria consisted of the manifestation of cognitive deficits which make it impossible adequate understanding of the evaluation protocol and/or the participant's waiver of its own accord. Meetings with the Directors of the Executive Council of each school has arranged to explain the various aspects inherent to the study (pertinence, structure and objectives). Directors of the Executive Council granted the authorizations for data collection. The authors' institutional Ethics Committee approved the study. Informed consent was obtained before data collection. Data collection occurred in the classroom context, in the presence of the supervising researcher who, in a succinct manner, administered the standard instructions, including the general objectives of the study as well as guaranteeing free will, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of all the information provided. To avoid skewness of the responses because of fatigue, the inversion of the self-assessment questionnaires in the evaluation protocol was performed.

Data analysis

The current study is a cross-sectional nature given that the set of measurements were all carried out at the same moment in time. Data treatment was carried out using the statistical program SPSS—Statistical Package for Social Sciences—, version 20.0 for Windows. In order to identify and exclude missings and eventual outliers, in a preliminary form, the sample was cleaned. This

procedure of “cleaning of the sample” consists of the exclusion of incomplete questionnaires or considered unsuitable for presenting more than 10% of missing data per instrument. The values that were calculated confirmed that the sample being studied followed all the normal criteria, proceeding, in this sense, to statistical analyses by parametric tests. The original structure of the instruments was tested, according to the proposed theoretical models, through *First-order Confirmatory Factor Analyses* (CFA), using the maximum likelihood estimation method (using the EQS 6.1 program). Correlational analyses, means and standard deviations of the variables under study, as well as multivariate analyses of variance were performed. The objective was also to test the presence of a predictive effect between the variables under study, for which the Multiple Hierarchical Regression Model was used, as well as the moderating effect of social skills, for which analyses of variance were used (Marôco, 2014).

Results

Table 1 presents the correlations between variables under study. As shown, suicidal ideation was negatively correlated with support and affection, regulation and concession of autonomy and democratic participation of both parents and self-control (r from $-.09$ to $-.28$). In turn, suicidal ideation was positively correlated with physical coercion and punishment, and indulgence of both parents (r from $.11$ to $.21$).

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis

To answer the objectives initially proposed, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted, in which suicidal

ideation was used as a dependent variable. It is worth noting that, in the impossibility of obtaining more reliable and rigorous results and of covering all the independent dimensions under study, the hierarchical method was chosen instead of simple regression analyses (Marôco, 2014).

The hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed by introducing 5 blocks, specifically gender, age, social skills and parenting style for the father and the mother. It is important to note that the variables gender and age were also controlled and recoded in dummy, in order to analyze which gender (0-male; 1-female) and ages (0-15 to 16 years old; 1-17 to 18) best explain and predict the variable. The recoding in Dummy variables establishes a method that makes it possible to calculate artificial variables by adopting values of “0” or “1”. This recoding proves to be advantageous, since it allows for the presentation of different groups in a single equation according to their variance in the model relative to the dependent variable (Missio & Jacobi, 2007). The criterion used to establish the cutoff point between the two age groups (15/16 and 17/18 years of age) results from the differences reported in the literature, in view of the developmental requirements and day-to-day vicissitudes faced by both (Seco et al., 2005).

In the hierarchical multiple regression analysis of suicidal ideation, 5 blocks were introduced: in block 1, although gender (*dummy*) does not present a significant contribution, $F(1, 535) = 7.43, p = .072$, accounting for the 1.4% of the total variance ($R^2 = .014$) and individually contributes with 1.4% of the variance ($R^2_{change} = .014$). Regarding block 2, age (*dummy*) does not present a significant contribution, $F(2, 534) = .23, p = .407$, and explains 1.4% of the total variance ($R^2 = .014$), although it does not individually contribute to the variance of the model

Table 1.
Correlation between variables, means and standard-deviation ($N=604$).

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<i>PS_FATHER</i>														
1. Support and affection	-													
2. Regulation	.77**	-												
3. Concession of autonomy and democratic participation	.80**	.71**	-											
4. Physical coercion and punishment	-.16**	-.04	-.21**	-										
5. Indulgence	.04	-.06	-.06	.40**	-									
<i>PS_MOTHER</i>														
6. Support and affection	.70**	.51**	.55**	-.16**	-.03	-								
7. Regulation	.57**	.82**	.53**	-.03	.01	.62**	-							
8. Concession of autonomy and democratic participation	.60**	.54**	.79**	-.16**	.00	.75**	.60**	-						
9. Physical coercion and punishment	-.14**	-.07	-.19**	-.76**	.38**	-.29**	-.07	-.29**	-					
10. Indulgence	-.05	.00	-.02	-.37**	.14**	-.04	-.01	-.01	.42**	-				
11. SUICIDAL IDEATION	-.27**	-.11**	-.27**	.11**	.21*	-.09*	-.22**	-.28**	.18**	.18**	-			
<i>SOCIAL SKILLS</i>														
12. Assertiveness	.27**	.29**	.29**	-.05*	.03	.19**	.24**	.02	-.00	-.00	-.22**	-		
13. Empathy	.19**	.23**	-.16**	-.09*	-.14**	.25**	.19**	.11**	-.06	-.06	.05	.37**	-	
14. Self-control	.29**	.32**	.18**	-.12**	-.22**	.34**	.35**	.18**	-.26**	-.26**	-.14**	.25**	.35**	-
M	3.51	3.38	3.39	1.63	2.01	3.82	3.55	3.53	1.71	2.15	1.80	1.23	1.63	1.27
SD	1.04	.97	.98	.59	.75	.92	.89	.90	.67	.79	1.05	.32	.28	.30

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; PS_Father = Parenting styles father; PS_Mother = Parenting styles father.

Table 2.
Multiple hierarchical regression for suicidal ideation.

Suicidal Ideation	R ²	R ² Change	B	SE	β	p
Block 1 GENDER (<i>dummy</i>)	.014	.014				
Block 2 AGE (<i>dummy</i>)	.014	.000				
Block 3 – Social Skills	.056	.042				
Assertiveness			-.48	.16	-.14	.003
Empathy						
Self-control						
Block 4 – PS_Father	.154	.098				
Warmth and support						
Regulation						
Concession of autonomy and democratic participation						
Physical coercion and punishment						
Indulgence						
Block 5 – PS_Mother	.194	.040				.001
Warmth and support						
Regulation						
Concession of autonomy and democratic participation						
Physical coercion and punishment			.34	.11	.21	.003
Indulgence						

Note. B, SE e β para um nível de significância de $p < .05$. Block 1 = Gender; Block 2 = Age; Block 3 = Dimensions of social skills (SSQ); Block 4 = Dimensions of father's parenting styles (PS_father); Block 5 = Dimensions of mother's parenting styles (PS_mother).

($R^2_{change} = .000$). In block 3, the introduction of social skills significantly contributes to the model, $F(5, 531) = 7.90, p = .001$, and explains 5.6% of the total variance ($R^2 = .056$), presenting an individual contribution of 10% ($R^2_{change} = .042$). As for block 4, the parenting styles implemented by the paternal figure were introduced, which were also significant, $F(10, 536) = 12.22, p = .001$, and explained 15.4% of the total variance ($R^2 = .154$), presenting an individual contribution of 4% ($R^2_{change} = .098$). In block 5, the parenting styles implemented by the maternal figure presented a significant contribution, $F(15, 521) = 5.17, p = .001$, explaining 19.4% of the total variance ($R^2 = .194$) and exhibited an individual contribution of 4.0% for the variance of the model ($R^2 = .040$). Through the individual analysis of the contribution of each of the independent variables of the blocks, it seems that two exhibit a significant contribution ($p < .05$) as predictors of suicidal ideation, and will be presented in order of importance: physical coercion and punishment by the mother ($\beta = .21$) and assertiveness ($\beta = -.14$) (see Table 2).

Moderating analysis

The association between the father's authoritative style and suicidal ideation shows a significant interaction, by the variables of assertiveness, $F(1, 504) = 8.39, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .02$, and empathy, $F = 4.01, p = .044, \eta_p^2 = .04$. Moreover, adolescents who perceived that their parents had a lower authoritative style, but who reported higher levels of assertiveness, revealed less suicidal ideation, compared to adolescents who perceived a higher authoritative style and revealed lower rates of assertiveness. The results also indicated that adolescents who perceive a lower authoritative style

from the father, but who show higher levels of empathy, exhibit less suicidal ideation than individuals who perceive a lower authoritative style and reveal lower levels of empathy. The results suggest that assertiveness and empathy moderate the interaction between the father's authoritative style and suicidal ideation. Moreover, findings shown a non-significant interaction of the subscale self-control on the association between the father's authoritative style and suicidal ideation, $F(1, 566) = 0.07, p = .790, \eta_p^2 = .00$, which suggests that self-control does not moderate the association between the father's authoritative style and suicidal ideation.

Regarding to the association among father's authoritarian style and suicidal ideation, results indicated a significant interaction of assertiveness, $F(1, 502) = 4.24, p = .040, \eta_p^2 = .01$. Adolescents who perceive a lower authoritarian style from the father, but have higher levels of assertiveness, exhibit less suicidal ideation, compared to those who have parents with a higher authoritarian style and lower levels of assertiveness. Further, individuals who perceive a higher authoritarian style from the father, and have higher levels of assertiveness, exhibit less suicidal ideation than adolescents who perceive a higher authoritarian style and reveal lower levels of assertiveness. These results suggest that assertiveness moderates the interaction between the father's authoritarian style and suicidal ideation. Regarding the other dimensions of social skills, there were no statistically significant differences in the scales of empathy, $F(1, 562) = 0.03, p = .866, \eta_p^2 = .00$, and self-control, $F(1, 564) = 1.03, p = .311, \eta_p^2 = .00$, which suggests that the father's authoritarian style predicts suicidal ideation regardless of empathy and self-control.

Regarding the association between the father's permissive style and suicidal ideation, there was no interaction among the variables assertiveness, $F(1, 501) = 0.62, p = .430, \eta_p^2 = .12$,

empathy, $F(1, 561) = 0.15, p = .152, \eta_p^2 = .00$, and self-control, $F(1, 563) = 0.93, p = .337, \eta_p^2 = .00$. The results seem to suggest the father's permissive style is linked to suicidal ideation, regardless of the social skills of adolescents.

What concerns the association between the mothers' parenting style and suicidal ideation, results show a significant interaction relative to empathy, $F(1, 578) = 4.43, p = .037, \eta_p^2 = .04$. Adolescents who perceive a lower authoritative style from the mother, but have higher levels of empathy, report less suicidal ideation, compared to those who perceive a lower authoritative style and have lower levels of empathy. Findings seem to suggest that empathy moderates the interaction between the mother's authoritative style and the adolescent's suicidal ideation. Further, the results indicated no statistically significant differences in the scales of assertiveness, $F(1, 519) = 3.16, p = .076, \eta_p^2 = .00$, and self-control, $F(1, 580) = 0.80, p = .372, \eta_p^2 = .00$, which suggests the absence of moderation on association between the mother's authoritative style and suicidal ideation.

Moreover, the results for the mother also indicated the presence of a significant interaction in the association between her authoritarian style and the adolescents' suicidal ideation, relative to assertiveness, $F(1, 516) = 9.63, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .02$. Adolescents who perceive a higher authoritarian style from the mother, and reveal higher levels of assertiveness, exhibit less suicidal ideation, compared to those with a higher authoritarian style and lower levels of assertiveness. Further, individuals who perceive a lower authoritarian style from the mother, and have higher levels of assertiveness, reveal less suicidal ideation than adolescents who perceive a lower authoritarian style and exhibit lower levels of assertiveness. These results suggest that assertiveness moderates the association between the mother's authoritarian style and suicidal ideation. Regarding the other dimensions of social skills, statistically significant differences in the scales of empathy, $F(1, 575) = 0.10, p = .758, \eta_p^2 = .00$, and self-control, $F(1, 577) = 2.45, p = .118, \eta_p^2 = .00$, were not found. These findings suggest, as with the father, the mother's authoritarian style predicts suicidal ideation, regardless of empathy and self-control.

What concerns the association between the mother's permissive style and suicidal ideation, there is no significant interaction regarding the variables assertiveness, $F(1, 517) = 0.38, p = .538, \eta_p^2 = .00$, empathy, $F(1, 576) = 1.22, p = .270, \eta_p^2 = .00$, and self-control, $F(1, 563) = .03, p = .860, \eta_p^2 = .00$. Therefore, as with the father, the permissive style implemented by the mother is predictive of suicidal ideation, regardless of adolescents' social skills.

Discussion

The current study intended to analyze the contribution of parenting styles of mother and father and social skills for suicidal ideation of adolescents, as well as to test the moderating role of social skills on the previous association.

The results suggest that adopting authoritative parental behaviors is positively associated with the dimensions of social skills, and negatively associated with suicidal ideation. Further, the authoritarian and permissive attitudes of parents are negatively associated with some of the dimensions of social skills and positively associated with suicidal ideation. Thus, it seems that adopting authoritative parenting styles contributes to the congruent acquisition of social skills that are

an important protective factor against suicidal thoughts. Conversely, adopting parental behavior based on the arbitrary imposition of rules and limits and excessive tolerance seems to predispose the adolescent to establish less positive interpersonal relationships, which may contribute to a greater risk of suicidal ideation.

According to the assumptions of the typological approach to parenting styles, family interaction marked by authoritative conduct fosters greater security and self-confidence in adolescents, which, in turn, enables an adequate expression of feelings and opinions and, thus, less introjection of problems that are a risk factor for suicidal ideation (Botvin & Griffin, 2004; Morris et al., 2007). According to Baumrind (1996), parental care based on availability and affective engagement stimulates the adolescent's ability to accept social norms and rules. As such, given appropriate care adapted to their needs, adolescents demonstrate greater ease in terms of emotional expression and social contact, which can contribute to a more adjusted psychosocial development (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2010). At the same time, Baumrind (1996) emphasized that, with permissive parenting styles, adolescents tend to be poorly structured and very insecure, revealing difficulties in establishing positive social interactions, given the impact of maladaptive parenting on the adolescent's self-esteem and self-confidence. It should be noted that the permissive style is characterized by excessive tolerance, indulgence and absence of rules and punishment, in which children are free to make their own decisions, growing up without the presence of a secure base of support to guide them when necessary (Baumrind, 1996). Previous studies have found that the adoption of authoritative parenting styles fosters the congruent development of social skills in childhood and adolescence, while authoritarian and permissive styles are associated with deficient social skills (Fotti et al., 2006) and suicidal ideation (Greening et al., 2010).

The results of this study also show that social skills are negatively associated with suicidal ideation. It is suggested that adolescents who manifest adequate levels of empathy, assertiveness and self-control show greater ease in expressing their feelings and convictions, in a coherent way and adjusted to reality, which promotes a more adaptive developmental trajectory and, thus, less predisposition to suicidal ideation. Moreover, social skills have been proposed as a relevant framework to understand the association of social interaction and acceptance with other variables that may produce greater vulnerability towards the risk of suicidal ideas (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2010). Authors such as Silva et al. (2012) argued that the balanced and adjusted development of social skills contributes to greater emotional security, through which the adolescent becomes able to identify internal and external resources to overcome difficulties, thus leading to a lower risk of activating maladaptive strategies. These results corroborate several studies which show that deficient social skills positively contribute to suicidal ideation (An et al., 2010; Peter et al., 2008).

The results obtained also allow to verify that suicidal ideation is positively linked by the physical coercion and punishment adopted by the mother. Therefore, it is suggested that parental care provided by the maternal figure takes on a different relevance in the adolescent's developmental trajectory, compared to the behaviors adopted by the paternal figure, within the family subsystem. Focusing on this result, it is believed that parental care based on excessive control and deprivation of affection may be favorable

for suicidal ideation, through its contribution to establishing unsafe emotional bonds in the mother-adolescent dyad. According to the theoretical assumptions put forth by Baumrind (1996), the authoritarian style is marked by obedience, order, authority, lack of communication and punishment in the parental interaction, which may contribute to an insecure bond between parents and children. These conceptions are in line with the attachment theory, which argues that the presence of an insecure bond with the maternal figure contributes to several internalizing problems (e.g., anxiety and depression), which, in turn, are relevant predictors of self-destructive behaviors (Bowly, 1969). According to the literature, this association can be understood by the fact that parenting styles contribute to the quality of affective bonds established within the family, as well as by the fact that the mother is the main attachment figure (Morris et al., 2007). The conclusions drawn corroborate the empirical evidence suggesting that authoritarian parenting fosters the development of suicidal ideation (An et al., 2010).

Discussing these results about the contribution of parenting styles on suicidal ideation, it should be highlighted that findings of the current study reveal a differential pattern in the individual contribution of the mothers and fathers in adolescents' suicidal ideation. The discussion on the contribution of the father and mother in the development of young people has long been the focus of attention of researchers. For instance, Lamb (1977) has been arguing that ultimately the father takes the same role as the mother figure in the development of adolescents. Results suggest that there are some aspects of mother and father parenting styles that need to be better understood. Although there are social and cultural expectations regarding the role of the mother and the role of father, our results seem to suggest that there are psychological dimensions and processes that may have different meanings when implemented by the father and the mother. More studies are needed to understand this differentiating role of the parenting styles of father and mother in suicidal ideation of adolescents.

As expected, the findings indicated that assertiveness is negatively linked to suicidal ideation, which suggests that the ability to express one's thoughts and feelings freely, safely and convincingly establishes an important protective factor against self-destructive behaviors, during adolescence. A developmental trajectory guided by assertive and congruent emotional expression encourages the experience of positive interpersonal situations, leading to a lower risk of adolescents contemplating suicidal ideation when faced with problems. According to Morris et al. (2007), adolescents who do not externalize their anxieties, due to difficulties in terms of emotional expression, become very insecure, dependent and unavailable, which, in turn, can predict the use of self-destructive behaviors. Sharing this conception, Del Prette and Del Prette (2010) argue that assertiveness is a protective factor against suicidal ideation, as it contributes towards the capacity for analysis, management and resolution of conflicts. Several empirical studies suggest that assertiveness contributes to a more capable developmental trajectory, through which adolescents activate adaptive strategies to deal with daily vicissitudes (Kowk, 2014).

As expected, the results indicated that adolescents that perceived a low authoritative style of the parents but revealed higher assertiveness and/or empathy had less suicidal ideation scores than young that perceived a high authoritative style and low empathy and/or assertiveness. Further, findings shown that adolescents

who perceive a high authoritarian style from their parents but who show high assertiveness revealed less suicidal ideation, compared to those who perceive a high authoritarian style and manifest low assertiveness. These results are significant since they suggest that the ability to interact assertively with others or to express interest and respect towards others can act as a protective factor against the development of suicidal ideation. Discussing this result it should be highlighted that, in this period of transition into adulthood, the establishment of positive interpersonal contact may significantly contribute to the emotional adjustment of adolescents.

The findings of the current study seem to suggest that assertiveness and empathy are resilience factors that help to "attenuate" the negative contribution that authoritarian and permissive parenting has on the adolescent's psycho-affective development. These results were expected since the typological approach of parenting styles argues that authoritative parenting attitudes foster feelings of devaluation and personal misunderstanding that predispose the adolescents to a less adaptive developmental trajectory (An et al., 2010; Baumrind, 1996). Greening et al. (2010) argue that, by establishing assertive and empathic interactions with others, adolescents experience feelings of acceptance and social understanding, which enable a less vulnerable trajectory, in the face of risk. These conclusions are, in part, in accordance with the research conducted by Kwok (2014), who found, in a sample of 302 young people, that emotional competence moderate the interaction between an authoritative parental behavior and cognitions about ending their own lives.

Moreover, the results indicated that the interaction between a permissive parenting style and social skills does not significantly affect suicidal ideation. These findings suggest that poor assertiveness, empathy and self-control do not significantly compromise suicidal ideation stands out. The adoption of permissive parental behaviors seems to be better linked to suicidal ideation than poor social skills. Regardless of social skills, the adoption of indulgent parental behavior may contribute to a less adaptive developmental trajectory. These results are in line with Baumrind's (1996) typological approach, since it suggests that permissive parental behavior can be associated with suicidal ideation (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2010). Previous empirical studies also found that adopting permissive parenting styles contributes, more consistently, to suicidal ideation, regardless of other variables, as for instance the emotional competence (Kowk, 2014).

It is important to discuss and analyze the practical implications achieved with the current study, as well as to reflect on its limitations and possible cues for future research. The results of the current study highlight the importance that the parenting styles implemented by the father and mother assume in the suicidal ideation of adolescents. Furthermore, these results emphasize the positive contribution that social skills can make to the psycho-affective development of adolescents, namely "mitigating" the negative contribution of adopting non-authoritative parental behaviors. It be expected the conclusions of this study to contribute towards the knowledge, closer to the present reality, regarding suicidal cognition, as well as to the structured implementation of prevention strategies, as early as possible. It would be beneficial to implement parental education programs that promote healthy styles of interaction and family communication, in order to foster the prophylaxis of child and youth psychopathology.

Despite its noteworthy strengths, this study has some limitations that must be acknowledged. It should be highlighted the correlational and cross-sectional design of this study and our exclusive use of self-report measures precludes any firm conclusions about cause-effect relationships or the temporal development of suicidal ideation. It is important that future studies complement the data collection with semi-structured interviews, as well as to analyze other relational variables, such as the parental metaemotion and attachment to parents. It would be valuable to develop longitudinal studies, in order to monitor the affective development of young people across adolescence. Despite this, it should be highlighted that the current study provides important conclusions about the role that parenting styles implemented by the father and mother, as well as social skills can play in the suicidal ideation of adolescents.

References

- An, H., Ahn, J., & Bhang, S. (2010). The association of psychosocial and familial factors with adolescent suicidal ideation: A population-based study. *Psychiatry Research*, *177*(3), 318-322. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2010.03.007>
- Baumrind, D. (1996). Effects of authoritative parental control of child behavior. *Development*, *37*, 887-907. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1126611>
- Botvin, G., & Griffin, K. (2004). Life skills training: empirical findings and future directions. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, *25*(2), 211-232. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JOPP.0000042391.58573.5b>
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss. Vol. I: Attachment*. Basic Books.
- Del Prette, Z., & Del Prette, A. (2010). Habilidades sociais e análise do comportamento: Proximidade histórica e atualidades [Social skills and behavior analysis: Historical proximity and current affairs]. *Revista Perspectivas*, *1*(2), 104-115. <https://www.revistaperspectivas.org/perspectivas/article/view/33/23>
- Ferreira, J., & Castela, M. (1999). Questionário de ideação suicida (Q.I.S) [Suicidal ideation questionnaire (S.I.Q)]. In M. R. Simões, M. M. Gonçalves, & L. S. Almeida (Eds.), *Testes e provas psicológicas em Portugal* [Psychological tests and tests in Portugal] (pp.129-130). Sistemas Humanos e Organizacionais, Lda.
- Fleming, M. (2005). *Entre o medo e o desejo de crescer. Psicologia da adolescência*. [Between fear and the desire to grow. Adolescence psychology]. Edições Afrontamento.
- Fotti, S., Katz, L., Afifi, T., Candidate, P., & Cox, B. (2006). The associations between peer and parental relationships and suicidal behaviors in early adolescents. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, *51*(11), 698-703. <https://doi.org/10.1177/070674370605101106>
- Greening, L., Stoppelbein, L., & Luebke, A. (2010). The moderating effects of parenting styles on African-American and caucasian children's suicidal behaviors. *Journal Youth Adolescence*, *39*, 357-369. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-009-9459-z>
- Gresham, F., & Elliott, S. (1990). *Social skills rating system: Manual*. American Guidance Service.
- Kwok, S. (2014). The moderating role of emotional competence in suicidal ideation among Chinese university students. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* *70*(4), 843-854. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.12246>
- Lamb, M. E. (1977). The development of mother-infant and father-infant attachments in the second year of life. *Developmental Psychology*, *13*(6), 637-648. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0012-1649.13.6.637>
- Macedo, M. (2010). *Adolescência e psicanálise. Interseções possíveis* [Adolescence and psychoanalysis. Possible intersections]. Edipucrs.
- Marôco, J. (2014). *Análise estatística com utilização do SPSS [Statistical analysis using the SPSS]*. Sílabo.
- Missio, F., & Jacobi, L. (2007). Variáveis dummy: especificações de modelos com parâmetros variáveis [Dummy variables: model specifications with variable parameters.]. *Ciência e Natura*, *29*(1), 111-135. <https://doi.org/10.5902/2179460X9764>
- Morris, A., Silk, J., Steinberg, L., Myers, S., & Robinson, L. (2007). The role of the family context in the development of emotion regulation. *Social Development*, *16*(2), 361-388. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2007.00389.x>
- Mota, C. P., Matos, P. M., & Lemos, M. S. (2011). Psychometric properties of the social skills questionnaire Portuguese adaptation of the student form (Grades 7 to 12). *Spanish Journal of Psychology*, *14*(1), 480-493. https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_SJOP.2011.v14.n1.44
- Nunes, F., & Mota, C. P. (2018). Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire - adaptação da versão portuguesa de heterorrelato [Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire - Adaption of the observer reporting version to the Portuguese population]. *Revista Colombiana de Psicología*, *27*, 117-131. <http://doi.org/10.15446/rcp.v27n1.64621>
- Peter, T., Roberts, L., & Buzdugan, R. (2008). Suicidal ideation among Canadian youth: A multivariate analysis. *Archives of Suicide Research*, *12*(3), 263-275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13811110802100882>
- Reynolds, W. (1988). Psychometric characteristics of the adult suicidal ideation questionnaire in college students. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *56*(2), 289-307. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5602_9
- Robinson, C., Mandleco, B., Olsen, S., & Hart, C. (1996). Psychometric support for a new measure of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting practices: Cross-cultural connections. Paper presented in symposium New measures of parental child-rearing practices developed in different cultural contexts, Canada.
- Seco, G., Casimiro, M., Pereira, M., Dias, M., & Custódio, S. (2005). Para uma abordagem psicológica da transição do ensino secundário para o ensino superior: pontes e alçapões [Towards a psychological approach to the transition from secondary to higher education: bridges and hatches]. Instituto Politécnico de Leiria.
- Silva, J., Morgado, J., & Maroco, J. (2012). The relationship between Portuguese adolescent perception of parental styles, social support, and school behavior. *Psychology*, *3*(7), 513-517. <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2012.37074>
- World Health Organization. (2012). *Public health action for the prevention of suicide: A framework*. WHO Document Production Services. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/75166/9789241503570_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Funding:** This work was funded by the Portuguese Science Foundation (UIDB/00050/2020) and a PhD scholarship (SFRH/BD/133032/2017).
- Institutional Review Board Statement:** The Ethics Committee of University of Trás-os-Montes and Douro (UTAD) approved this study.
- Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained before data collection.
- Data Availability Statement:** The raw data and materials used in this manuscript are not openly available due to privacy and ethical restrictions, but can be obtained from the corresponding author.
- Conflicts of Interest:** There are no relevant financial or non-financial competing interests to report.