Adolescents’ emotional intelligence and parental styles

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Abstract

Parents try to adopt a parental style adapted to their own sons and daughters’ needs, some of them consider opportune educating adolescents like they were once educated, and others wish to act differently from their parents’ education. The present study proposes to highlight the relationship between the level of development of emotional intelligence and parental styles. There were implied 90 adolescents and their parents. The adolescents completed 2 individual tests which evaluate the developmental level of emotional intelligence and its components: Emotional Intelligence Scale – EIS (Schutte et al., 1998) and Battery of Emotional Intelligence Profile – BTPIE (Wood, Tolley, 2003). The parents were asked to fill in the Questionnaire for the parental styles– CSP. The results show the fact that the development level of emotional intelligence is influenced by the five parental styles: authoritarian, dictatorial, permissive, democratic and rejecting / neglecting. The manner in which parents raport to their own adolescents, marks the level of development of emotional intelligence.

1. Introduction

With the introduction of the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) and its theoretical development, interest has focused on the relationship between IE and various aspects of psychic life and its implications in everyday life. Its supporters argue that emotional skills are important in almost all areas of a person's life - from career success to being liked by the others. In the specialty literature there are numerous researches aiming at the relationship between emotional intelligence and various aspects of mental life, such as academic performance, deviant, abusive and self-destructive behaviour, Life Space, life satisfaction, the quality of interpersonal relationships, teaching and professional career, leadership and

In Adina Baran-Pescaru’s view (2004), parenting style is the manner in which parents express their beliefs about what it means to be a good parent or a bad parent. The author has identified five parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, democratic or balanced, rejecting-neglecting and dictatorial. Parents tend to adopt a style and easily and quickly move to another one (when they are angry and frustrated they become authoritarian, they become permissive when tired and try to compensate through democratic approaches), which negatively affects the psychological development of children and adolescents.

2. Method

2.1. Hypotheses

The parentalm style influences the development of emotional intelligence in teenagers. Starting from this general hypothesis we formulated the following specific hypotheses:

- Authoritarian parental style is associated with a low level of emotional intelligence.
- Dictatorial parental style is associated with a low level of emotional intelligence.
- Democratic parental style correlates positively with high levels of emotional intelligence.
- Permissive parental style correlates positively with high levels of emotional intelligence.
- Rejecting / neglecting parental style correlates with low emotional intelligence.

2.2. Participants

There were involved 90 teenagers in the eleventh and twelfth grade (60 girls and 30 boys) and their parents. For piloting the Questionnaire for finding out the parental style - CSP, 46 parents who have one or two teenagers were asked to fill it in. To respect the rules of professional conduct, the written consent of each student participant has been demanded. The results are confidential and used only in the present study.

2.3. Measures

Adolescents were individually assessed with two psychological tests that measure the level of development of emotional intelligence and its components: Emotional Intelligence Scale – EIS (Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, Dornheim, 1998) and Battery of Emotional Intelligence Profile – BTPIE (Wood, Tolley, 2003).

Parents were asked to complete the Questionnaire for finding out the parental style – CSP. This was designed in this research based on the model proposed by Baran-Pescaru (2004). CSP includes five dimensions, each one covering a parental style (authoritarian, permissive, democratic, dictatorial, rejecting / neglecting). Initially the questionnaire was composed of 35 items, with seven items characteristic for each parental style and has been validated on a sample of 46 parents. The results obtained have led to the designing of the Questionnaire for finding out parental style – CSP, which comprises 30 items (6 items each for each of the five parenting styles). The answer to each item is given based on a Likert scale, where 1 means strong disagreement, 2 means disagreement, 3 is partial agreement, 4 is agreement and 5 represents total agreement. Regarding the internal consistency of CSP high values of Alfa Cronbach coefficients were obtained for all five dimensions: $\alpha = .769$ for the
authoritarian style, $\alpha = .764$ for the permissive style, $\alpha = .808$ for the democratic style, $\alpha = .711$ for neglecting/rejecting style, and $\alpha = .779$ for the dictatorial style.

3. Results

To complete psychometric data on the qualities of the instrument aimed at assessing the emotional intelligence with the Emotional Intelligence Scale – EIS (Schutte et al., 1998) and the Questionnaire for finding out the parental style – CSP, the $\alpha$ Cronbach indices for internal consistency were calculated for each sample, on the research group included in the research (90 adolescents and their parents).

Table 1. Cronbach’s $\alpha$ coefficient values for EIS and each dimension of the CSP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensiunea</th>
<th>$\alpha$ Cronbach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IE – EIS (Schutte et al., 1998)</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian parental style – SAR-CSP</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive parental style – SPR-CSP</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic parental style – SDO-CSP</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglecting/rejecting parental style – SRN-CSP</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictatorial parental style – SAT-CSP</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The Emotional Intelligence Scale -EIS is homogenous, having an $\alpha = .94$ (Tabel 1). Note that the internal consistency index obtained for EIS is very close to the one presented by the authors in the test description (Schutte et al., 1998). Regarding the Questionnaire for finding out the parental style - CSP, the results show a good internal consistency for each of the five dimensions (authoritarian, permissive, democratic, dictatorial, rejecting / neglecting).

To check the general hypothesis and the specific ones, we performed a correlational analysis and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlations between emotional intelligence and parenting styles

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian parental style – SAR-CSP</td>
<td>r - .254*</td>
<td>- .335**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive parental style – SPR-CSP</td>
<td>r .352**</td>
<td>.481**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic parental style – SDO-CSP</td>
<td>r .266*</td>
<td>.367**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglecting/rejecting parental style – SRN-CSP</td>
<td>r - .045石</td>
<td>- .087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictatorial parental style – SAT-CSP</td>
<td>r - .429**</td>
<td>- .440**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01

The results obtained support the fact that between the level of development of the emotional intelligence measured with the Emotional Intelligence Scale – EIS (Schutte et al., 1998) and the authoritarian parental style ($r = -.254$, $p < .05$) and the dictatorial one ($r = -.429$, $p < .01$) there is a negative correlation, statistically significant. The permissive parental style ($r = .352$, $p < .01$) and the democratic one ($r = .266$, $p < .05$) positively and statistically significantly correlate with the level of development of the emotional intelligence, measured with the same instrument.
The level of development of emotional intelligence measured by the Battery of Emotional Intelligence Profile - BTPIE (Wood, Tolley, 2003) correlates: • positively, statistically significant with the permissive parental style (r = .481, p < .01) and the democratic style (r = .367, p < .01); • negatively with the authoritarian parental style (r = -.335, p < .01) and the dictatorial style (r = -.440, p < .01).

The parental style adopted by adults who have teenagers in their family influences the development of the latter. Thus, parents who adopt the permissive or the democratic style forms adolescents able to:

• identify and express their emotions, adopt a positive attitude, be honest with themselves and respect themselves avoiding focusing only on logic and reason;
• manage their own emotions and impulses, be more flexible, detached by problems and to express emotions in an assertive manner;
• channel their desire and endeavour to achieve the established goals, take initiative and maintain the optimistic attitude towards the challenges of life;
• identify and accept the feelings of others, to participate in emotional issues of the others avoiding getting involved in solving them, to relate to the feelings and needs of the others without sacrificing their own emotional experience;
• to initiate, develop and maintain constructive and of high quality interpersonal relationships, to communicate and collaborate effectively in group activities.

Parents who prefer the authoritarian and the dictatorial style are likely to form rigid, inflexible teenagers, who need clear rules to feel safe, who do not take responsibility for their own feelings but blame the others for them, who attack, command, criticize, interrupt, lecture, give advice to others, issuing judgments of value about people, hide information or lie about their feelings, exaggerating or minimizing their own feelings, who act according to feelings rather than talk about them and without thinking about future feelings or the feelings of others.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The statistical analysis of the variables included in this research led to the confirmation of the general hypothesis and the confirmation of four out of the five specific hypotheses. Thus, the results revealed that the manner in which parents report to their adolescents leaves its mark on the level of development of the emotional intelligence and on how they behave in interpersonal relationships. The teenagers’ ability to manage their own emotions and impulses, to be more flexible, detached from problems and to express emotions in an assertive manner depends to a large extent on the style adopted by the parents and the relations between the family members. The statistical results support the need for designing and implementing a developmental program focused on the development of parents’ emotional intelligence, with positive effects on the personal development of their adolescents.

References


