



# Modeling children's behavioral problems based on parenting methods with parent-child relationship mediation

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## Abstract

**Aim:** The present research was conducted with the aim of modeling children's behavioral problems based on parenting methods with the mediation of parent-child relationship. **Methods:** In a cross-sectional study in the form of a correlational design, all mothers of primary school students with behavioral problems in Karaj city were selected using a simple random sampling method from the list of names of students diagnosed with behavioral problems. After obtaining informed consent, the research data were used with the help of the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) - Achenbach and Rescorla (2001), parenting style questionnaire (1973) and Pianta parent-child relationship questionnaire (2015). In order to check the assumptions of the statistical tests and test the hypotheses of the research, using the SmartPLS software, the identified paths of the research have been investigated according to the conceptual model. Version 3.3 of SmartPLS software was used to compile the confirmatory factor analysis model and structural equations, and SPSS version 26 was used for descriptive statistics. Path analysis has also been used to determine direct and indirect coefficients. **Results:** The results obtained from the bootstrap method and the Sobel test both show that the indirect effect of parenting methods on children's behavioral problems due to the parent-child relationship is -0.298, and the value of the Sobel statistic is significant at the 95% confidence level. (Sobel = 5.28, P<0.001). **Conclusion:** It can be concluded that parenting methods have a significant effect on children's behavioral problems due to the mediating role of parent-child relationship. The findings of this study are consistent with the background. Research shows the effect of parenting methods by mediating the parent-child relationship in creating children's behavioral problems, which can be used in the prevention program while removing clinical implications.

**Keywords:** *parent-child relationship, attachment styles, behavioral problems.*

## Introduction

Common childhood disorders are usually classified into two broad areas: externalizing disorders and internalizing disorders. Externalizing disorders are characterized by behaviors such as aggression, disobedience, hyperactivity, and impulsivity that are more directed outward (Gallenkamp et al., 2018). Children's behavioral problems include attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder<sup>4</sup>, conduct disorder<sup>5</sup>, and oppositional defiant disorder. Internalizing disorders are characterized by behaviors such as depression, social withdrawal, and anxiety that are more introverted (Kring et al., 2017). Behavioral problems in children appear in the form of different behaviors, which are caused by many factors. The most important of them are biological, environmental, social, cultural and family factors (Zoppardo et al., 2021).

Children's behavioral disorders create challenging problems for teachers, families, and children themselves, and have caused concern about mental health and its impact on children's growth and performance (Wolfolk, Allen, and Apter, 2017). Accordingly, experts emphasize the importance of timely evaluation and treatment of psychological disorders.

Parent-child interaction is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. The relationship that parents have with other family members, especially their children, has important effects on the development of children's health and their psychological health (Wolf-King et al., 2017). The importance of these relationships is because the early experiences formed in this institution will have an important impact on the development of the personality and behavior of family members in the following years of life. Among these experiences is the child's strong emotional relationship with the primary caregiver (often the mother) (Steptoe, Wakeman, Molloy, Messerli-Borgi, & Caskey, 2013). According to Sigelman and Ryder (2019), the strong emotional relationship of a mother with a child causes the child to form a secure attachment and reduces or prevents many of his behavioral problems. According to his belief, in people with a secure attachment style, the mother is emotionally available to the child and they have warm, positive and responsive interactions with their child, they have high self-esteem and feel that others love them and care about them. (DiTella & Castelli, 2016). According to the stated goals, the present research intends to model children's behavioral problems based on parenting methods with the mediation of parent-child relationship. Therefore, this research seeks to answer the following question:

Does the model of children's behavioral problems based on parenting methods with the mediation of parent-child relationship have a good fit?

## Method

In a cross-sectional study in the form of a correlational design, all mothers of primary school students with behavioral problems in Karaj city were selected using a simple random sampling method from the list of names of students diagnosed with behavioral problems. After obtaining informed consent, the research data were used with the help of the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) - Achenbach and Rescorla (2001), parenting style questionnaire (1973) and Pianta parent-child relationship questionnaire (2015). In order to check the assumptions of

the statistical tests and test the hypotheses of the research, using the SmartPLS software, the identified paths of the research have been investigated according to the conceptual model. Version 3.3 of SmartPLS software was used to compile the confirmatory factor analysis model and structural equations, and SPSS version 26 was used for descriptive statistics. Path analysis has also been used to determine direct and indirect coefficients.

### Results

The results obtained from the bootstrap method and the Sobel test both show that the indirect effect of parenting methods on children's behavioral problems due to the parent-child relationship is -0.298, and the value of the Sobel statistic is significant at the 95% confidence level. (Sobel = 5.28,  $P < 0.001$ ).

### Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of modeling children's behavioral problems based on parenting methods with the mediation of parent-child relationship. The results obtained from the bootstrap method and the Sobel test both show that the indirect effect of parenting methods on children's behavioral problems is significant due to the parent-child relationship. Therefore, parenting methods have a significant effect on children's behavioral problems due to the mediating role of parent-child relationship, and the research hypothesis is confirmed.

The limitations of the present research are: In this research, cultural and social factors such as parenting methods, attachment styles and emotional regulation strategies of mothers were not used, and psychological variables were used as predictors, which may have explained less of children's behavioral problems. Non-cooperation of some participants made the research time consuming and also changed some sample people. Due to the fact that the patients answered the sometimes long questionnaires, it is possible that the mothers participating in the research were tired and as a result had a bad effect on the results. It is suggested that children and teenagers undergo different psychological evaluations at the beginning of each school year. Parenting methods, attachment styles, and emotional regulation strategies of mothers through the mediation of parent-child relationship may increase or create children's behavioral problems in children and adolescents, and as a result, create many problems for children and adolescents in the family and in the school environment. Therefore, the results of this research should be taken into account in treatment plans. Based on the results of the present research, parenting methods with the mediation of parent-child relationship may increase or create children's behavioral problems in children and adolescents, therefore, they require training in cognitive techniques as well as psychological interventions to modify parenting methods. It is suggested that the research on the present research model be conducted in different cultures and children with different social and family conditions, so that it is possible to compare the research results and the impact of social conditions on children's behavioral problems. In order to find the causes and influential factors related to children's behavioral problems, it is necessary to carry out in-depth qualitative research. It is especially important to conduct research to understand how children's behavioral problems are formed and the impact of parenting methods, attachment styles, and emotional

regulation strategies of mothers. The results of this research can be used at two theoretical and practical levels. On the one hand, it can expand the knowledge of psychology in the field of identifying effective factors regarding children's behavioral problems and their psychological explanations. Also, it can help child and adolescent psychologists in management, psychological interventions and treatment protocols.

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