

# Effectiveness of Group Positive Parenting Program (Triple-P) in child Behavioral Problems and Parenting Styles: An Intervention Study in Urmia- Iran

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**ABSTRACT: Introduction & Objectives:** The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of a group-based family intervention program known as the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P), program in reducing behavioral problems in children aged 2 to 12 years and improving the parenting styles of mothers referring to the Urmia Counseling Center. **Methodology:** Participants of both the intervention and control groups (N=15 and N=15, respectively) were recruited from mothers visiting counseling center in Urmia. Intervention and control groups were assessed in terms Baumrind Parenting Styles Questionnaire and Edberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI), both pre- and post-intervention. **Results:** To analyze the data, multivariate covariance analysis of MANCOVA test was used to determine the intervention's effects. According to the obtained significant level ( $p < 5\%$ ) of the means, the ECBI (Child Behavior Inventory) indicated a significant intervention effect. **Conclusion:** In addition, the post intervention scores for permissive parenting styles was significantly reduced in the intervention group, and the authoritative parenting style increased significantly in the intervention group. Providing positive parenting programs for mothers could significantly reduce children's behavioral problems and could also reduce parents' conflicts with their children and could improve parent-child communication.

**Key words:** Positive parenting program, Behavioral problems, parenting styles.

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## INTRODUCTION

The behavioral problems refer to abnormal behaviors that exceed the normal range for the corresponding age in terms of severity and duration. These behavioral problems arise during development and can lead to more serious behavioral deficits and emotional issues (Yang et al., 2019). Behavior problems are usually considered as quite stable and ubiquitous feature of childhood (Liukkonen, 2017).

The importance of early prevention is revealed more when we see that young children refer to mental health centers and a delay in the identification of the problems of children aged 1 to 5 (preschool children) will cause serious problems in their rehabilitation or treatment (Balali & Agha Yousefi, 2011).

Parental strategy in rearing children has a significant impact on children's developmental outcomes. Theoretically, it could be expected that negative parenting characteristics, including strictness, neglect, control,

punishment, and lack of support will potentially lead to subsequent child behavioral problems such as emotional problems and misconduct at school (Sangawi et al., 2015).

Parenting is a dynamic process, influenced by socio-cultural factors. It is an important contributing factor to child development and childhood psychopathology (Sahithya et al., 2019).

Parenting style plays a major role in child development by influencing cognitive, social-emotional development, academic performance, and behavioral problems. These characteristics are fairly stable right into adulthood (Rangarajan et al., 2020).

Parenting styles refer to ways in which parents interact with their children, which can have a high effect on the child development and his or her future characteristics of his personality (Mash & Barkley, 2012).

(Barnes & Farrell, 1992) found that parenting styles were significant predictors of behavioral problems, suggesting that positive parenting techniques such as high level of parental support and monitoring tended to have children who were less likely to exhibit drink problems, drug use, misconduct at school and deviant behavior in general.

The Triple P - Positive Parenting Program is an established, evidence-based system of parenting intervention. It is based on social learning principles, cognitive behavioral and developmental theory, and aims to treat and prevent child behavioral and emotional difficulties by improving the skills, knowledge and confidence of parents, improving communication between parents, and reducing parental stress. Several meta-analyses have provided solid evidence that the program is effective in improving child behavior and parenting outcomes. Some meta-analyses have provided strong evidence that this program is effective in improving parenting achievements and child behavior. Positive parenting programs have been adapted to various groups, such as the parents of disabled children, indigenous families, and divorcing families (Lohan et al., 2016).

This program is designed as a comprehensive, multi-level, and preventive parenting support system. This program was developed by (Fujiwara & Kato, 2011) at the University of Queensland in Australia. The goal of this program is to prevent behavioral, developmental, and emotional disorders in children through increasing the level of knowledge, skills, and self-esteem of parents. The positive parenting program uses five positive parenting principles that address the factors related to positive developmental outcomes in children: (1) providing a safe and attractive environment, (2) providing a positive learning environment, (3) using decisive training, (4) having realistic expectations, (5) taking care of yourself as a parent. With this program, parents learn a range of parenting strategies to improve the quality of the parent-child relationship, encourage desirable behaviors, train new skills, and manage misconducts. Triple P emphasizes the development of parent self-regulation, which includes self-sufficiency, parental self-efficacy, self-management, and personal agency (Wakimizu et al., 2014).

Many studies have been conducted on the effects of various aspects of the triple-p program. In a meta-analysis study, (Fujiwara & Kato, 2011) reviewed 116 studies on the multilevel system of positive parenting program over the past 33 years. This program had a significant impact on improving children social, emotional and behavioral skills, parental satisfaction and self-efficacy, such as parents` satisfaction and reducing conflict between them, parental adjustment, parents` communication and independent observation of the child`s desirable and undesirable behaviors.

In a study conducted by (Zhou Yu et al., 2017) under the title of "Triple-P assessment in Singapore: Improving parenting styles and prevention risks for recurrent misbehavior", the change in the treatment related to positive parenting program was investigated on 83 caregivers. The results showed a significant improvement in shared achievements such as improving parenting styles, child's behavioral problems, parents' satisfaction, and psychological adjustment of parents for both groups of caregivers.

In a study conducted by (Wakimizu et al., 2014). Aims to investigate the effectiveness of a group-based family intervention program known as the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) with families raising a child with developmental disabilities in Japan. Reductions in children's behavioral problems, changes in dysfunctional parenting practices, and promoting effects on family empowerment were examined. Participants (N=54) were recruited from mothers visiting two hospitals and two parental groups in the Tokyo metropolitan area. The results showed a significant reduction in behavioral problems and the use of ineffective parenting styles up to 6 months after the intervention.

In a study conducted by (Fujiwara & Kato, 2011) on the effect of positive parenting program on changing the child behavior, parenting styles aimed at reducing child behavioral problems, changing ineffective parenting styles, and influencing parenting settings were investigated. The results showed a significant reduction in children's behavioral problems, changes in dysfunctional parenting practices, and effects on parenting adjustment were examined. Group Triple P is effective in decreasing child conduct problems, dysfunctional parenting practices, depression, anxiety, stress, and the perceived level of parenting difficulty, as well as in improving parenting confidence, among Japanese families.

(Tehrani Doost et al., 2009) conducted a study to evaluate the effect of positive parenting program in reducing the child's behavioral problems. In this study, the effect of the positive parenting program on improving parenting styles, child behavioral problems, mothers' behavioral symptoms and marital problems was investigated. The study revealed that these interventions could reduce the level of behavioral and emotional problems of children. Based on the studies conducted on positive parenting program and parenting styles and applying interventions to improve parents' behavior and enhancing the parenting skills and the level of knowledge of parents, it seems that children's emotional and behavioral problems could be reduced.

The present study aimed to answer the question of whether providing the positive parenting program to mothers can reduce the behavioral problems of children aged 2 to 12 years and improve their parenting styles.

#### *Purpose of the study*

The purpose of the current study was to investigate whether positive parenting program (Triple P) intervention system could bring any change to parenting styles as well as in children's problem behaviors. Specific hypothesis were:

- 1) Mothers who completed Triple P intervention, overall, would have less inappropriate parenting. Their children would have lower levels of behavior problems.
- 2) Mothers who completed benefits on parenting and child behaviors, would have reduced anger and dysfunctional attributions about their children.

#### *Participants*

The present study's population included all mothers referred to Aramesh Counseling Center for their children's behavioral problems. This counseling center is in Urmia city, which is center of Azerbaijan state in Iran. Inclusion criteria were considered in this research and they were included in the questionnaire in the form of demographic questions. Mothers' inclusion criteria included: 1- Having at least the diploma level of education, 2- Lack of divorce, 3- Lack of history of psychiatric and psychological problems, 4- Having willingness to cooperate and participate in all training sessions and, 5- Having moderate economic level. In this study, about 30 eligible mothers were randomly divided into two groups of experimental (n = 15) and control (n = 15). After examining the result of pre-test, the mothers of the experimental group participated in group-based positive parenting program sessions. The educational content of the present study was based on the educational content of Level 4 of the positive parenting program, which consisted of 8 two-hour sessions at the intervals of one week for approximately two months.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research was a quasi-experimental study with a pretest-posttest design with a case and control group. The present study's population included all mothers referred to Aramesh Counseling Center for their children's behavioral problems. As studies have shown that behavioral training programs have little effect on parents with lower socioeconomic and lower education levels, the inclusion criteria were considered in this research and they were included in the questionnaire in the form of demographic questions. Parents' inclusion criteria included: 1- Having at least the diploma level of education 2- Lack of divorce 3- Lack of history of psychiatric and psychological problems 4- Having willingness to cooperate and participate in all training sessions and 5- Having moderate economic level. In this study, about 30 eligible mothers were randomly divided into two groups of experimental (n = 15) and control (n = 15). After examining the result of pre-test, the mothers of the experimental group participated in group-based positive parenting program sessions. The educational content of the present study was based on the educational content of Level 4 of the positive parenting program, which consisted of 8 two-hour sessions at the intervals of one week for approximately two months.

#### *Intervention*

Group Triple P comprises eight sessions over an 8 week period, and it is conducted in groups of 15 mothers. Since it is extremely difficult to persuade Iranian fathers to participate in such programs, because of cultural barrier, so we focused on mothers. The eight sessions are as follows (Table 1). In addition, participants are introduced to a "planned activities routine" to generalize what they have learned and help them strengthen their parenting skills. Active training methods such as modeling, rehearsal, practice, feedback, and goal setting are used throughout the program to teach specific parenting skills. In the final group session, participants share the knowledge and insights they acquired during the program, set future goals, and create plans to achieve those goals.

**Table 1.** The educational content of the positive parenting program was as follows.

Title	Content of educational sessions
Session 1 (group positive parenting)	Familiarity of the members with each other and with the goals and content of the program and explaining the cause of behavioral problems for mothers.
Session 2 (child growth promotion 1)	Training strategies for creating positive communication with the child
Session 3 (child growth promotion 2)	Training strategies for increasing positive behaviors
Session 4 (child growth promotion 3)	Training strategies for providing new behaviors and new skills to the child, accidental teaching, technique of questioning, saying, doing for parents)(
Session 5 (ineffective behavior management)	Describing the negative outcomes of punishment for parents and training strategies to cope with child misbehavior
Session 6 (ineffective behavior management)	Training alternative punishment strategies for effective coping with inappropriate and ineffective behaviors
Session 7 (ineffective behavior management)	Training three applied programs, including a daily follow-up program, behavior correction program and a behavioral chart for managing child's misbehavior
Session 8 (preplanning)	Training techniques for managing child behavior in high-risk situations

At the end of each session, the summary of the content of the session was presented to the participants in print and the necessary tasks related to the session were given to them to exercise at home. No educational intervention was given to control group mothers and they only participated in the pre-test and post-test. After completing the educational sessions, post-test was performed from both groups.

**Measures**

*Baumrind Parenting Styles Questionnaire:* This questionnaire was constructed by Diana Baumrind in 1972. It includes 30 questions assessing three parenting styles. Ten questions assess the authoritative parenting style, ten questions assess the authoritarian parenting style, and ten questions assess the permissive parenting style. The answer to the questions is done on a 5-point Likert scale. This questionnaire was already used by (Hoshiar Sadiq, 2015) in Iran. (Hoshiar Sadiq, 2015) reported the test-retest reliability of this questionnaire 69% for permissive parenting style, 79% authoritarian parenting style, and 73% for authoritative parenting. (Sanders et al., 2014) conducted a research in Iran and on a group of Tehran students in order to ensure the reliability of parenting styles and used Cronbach's alpha coefficient to examine the reliability of the parenting style questionnaire. It showed that the reliability of the questionnaire was 72%. Moreover, the status of each question and the internal consistency of the questionnaire was examined and the results showed that in the case of excluding some questions, the reliability of questionnaire would decrease.

*Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI):* It is a self-report questionnaire that includes 36 questions to assess the problematic behaviors in children aged 2 to 16 years. Parents determined how many of the 36 descriptions of child's misbehavior were problems to them in a "Yes/ No" format, which were summed into a Problem subscale. Meanwhile they also responded on a 7-point Likert Scale to indicate the frequency of those misbehaviors for their child. Their responses were then summed into an Intensity subscale. Iranian reliability of this questionnaire 0/93 for intensity scale and 0/92 for problem scale using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In addition, the test-retest reliability of questionnaire was obtained 0/74 for intensity scale and 0/58 for problem scale (Haji Seyedrazi et al., 2013).

**RESULTS**

The mothers participating in the study had an age of 25 to 45 years. 29% of them had an age of 25-30, 61% of them had an age of 31-35, and 10% of them had an age of 36-45 years. The highest frequency in both groups was the age group of 31-35 years. In terms of maternal education, 44% had diploma, 42% had bachelor, and 14% had master degree and the highest frequency in both groups was diploma and bachelor degrees. In terms of children's age, 65% had an age of 3-6 years, 30% had an age of 7-10 years, and 5% had an age of 11-12 years and the highest frequency in both groups belonged to age of 3-6 years.

Descriptive results obtained from the implementation of research tools have been presented in (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of the pre-test and post-test of the experimental and control groups.

Row	Pre-test in experimental group	Post-test in experimental group	Pre-test in control group	Post-test in control group
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Intensity of behavioral problems	126.08(21.34)	86.23(21.33)	111.57(28.30)	111.93(31.31)
Frequency of behavioral problems	18.54(4.40)	12.62(6.62)	18(7.26)	18.14(6.39)
Permissive style	13.98(5.81)	13.46(5.95)	15.57(3.08)	13.26(4.26)
Authoritarian style	13.92(6.62)	13.31(4.62)	12.36(3.36)	13.79(6.83)
Authoritative style	3031(3.86)	31.54(7.09)	32.43(3.73)	32.64(3.95)

This (Table 3) shows the mean and standard deviation of scores related to behavioral problems and parenting styles in experimental and control groups.

\* Research hypothesis: Teaching the positive parenting program to mothers can reduce the behavioral problems of children and improve the parenting styles of mothers in Urmia.

As the effect of an independent variable (teaching positive parenting program) on several dependent variables (behavioral problems and parenting styles) has been examined and compared in two groups in this study, MANCOVA test was used to test the hypothesis.

**Table 3.** Covariance analysis test for the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores between the experimental and control groups.

Source	Dependent variable	F	Significance level
Pretest of behavioral problems intensity	Posttest of behavioral problems intensity	5.525	0.028
Pretest of behavioral problems frequency	Posttest of behavioral problems frequency	5.432	0.029
Posttest comparison of two groups	Posttest of behavior intensity	12.745	0.002
	Posttest of behavior frequency	7.478	0.012
Pretest of permissive style	Posttest of permissive style	10.728	0.003
Pretest of Authoritarian style	Posttest of Authoritarian style	2.513	0.127
Pretest of Authoritative style	Posttest of Authoritative style	6.153	0.021
Posttest comparison of two groups	Posttest of permissive style	0.170	0.684
	Posttest of Authoritarian style	0.360	0.55
	Posttest of Authoritative style	0.551	0.466

This table showed that the pre-test scores of intensity and frequency of behavioral problems were significantly associated with those of intensity and frequency of behavioral problems in the experimental group. After moderating the pre-test scores, there was a significant effect of the factor among the subjects (behavioral intensity: squared Eta = 0.375,  $P = 0.002$ ,  $F = 12.745$ ), (behavior behavior: squared Eta = 0.245,  $P = 0.012$ ,  $F = 7.478$ ). The means showed that the intensity and frequency of the behavioral problems of the experimental group in comparison with the control group had significantly lower scores in the post-test. This table also showed that the pre-test scores were significantly related to the post-test scores of the permissive and authoritative styles in the experimental group, while the pre-test of the authoritarian style variable in the experimental group had no meaningful relationship with the post-test of the authoritarian style variable in the experimental group. In contrast, F-value, in comparison with the post-test in both the experimental and control groups (permissive:  $F = 0.170$ ,  $Sig = 0.684$ ), (authoritarian:  $F = 0.360$ ,  $Sig = 0.555$ ), (authoritative:  $F = 0.551$ ,  $Sig = 0.466$ ) was not significant. After removing the effect of pre-test, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups in the post-test of parenting styles. Mean scores showed that the scores of the experimental group in the post-test of the parenting styles differed slightly with those of control group.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the present study have been presented as follows: a) Teaching positive parenting program to mothers had significantly reduced the behavioral problems of children aged 2 to 12 years. b) Given the variations in the post-test, compared to pre-test of the experimental group, the subscale of permissive parenting style decreased and the authoritative parenting style increased significantly. In contrast, there was an improvement in the authoritarian parenting style, but this improvement was not significant. In a study conducted by (Wakimizu et al., 2014). on the effectiveness of the positive parenting program on families of children aged 2 to 12 with developmental disabilities in Japan and in a study conducted by (Fujiwara & Kato, 2011) under the title of “the effectiveness of positive parenting program in modifying the behavior of the child and parenting styles”, and in a study conducted by (Tehrani Doost et al., 2009) under the title of “the effect of positive parenting program on reducing child behavior problems”, results suggested significant reduction in behavioral problems as well as a reduction in the use of ineffective parenting styles. Their results were in line with the results of this research. In explaining the results of this study, it can be stated that most parents, due to the low level of knowledge about parenting skills, had difficulty in effectively management of their children's behavior and experienced high levels of conflict with their children. As a result, by providing a group-based training program, parents can achieve many effective ways to deal with the child's behavioral problems and thus can prevent the occurrence of behavioral problems. In addition, improving authoritative parenting style (high level of parental support and supervision) reduces deviant behavior of children, since negative parenting methods, such as poor supervision, contradictory education and physical punishment, can lead to negative behavior in children. At the end of the educational sessions in the present study, mothers reported the reduced use of ineffective punishment methods, such as the use of physical punishment, and increased the use of mild punitive methods and the reduction of aggressive behavior in their children.

## CONCLUSION

In justifying the significant improvement in the permissive and authoritative parenting among the mothers and non-significant improvement in authoritarian parenting style among the mothers in this study, it can be stated that only mothers were trained in this study and fathers were unwilling to participate in the educational sessions, which was one of the limitations of this research. During the sessions, many of the mothers in the experimental group reported the lack of father coordination in the use of effective parenting styles. As both mother and father play an effective role in the effectively establishment and implementation of education, participation of both of them guarantees the success of this educational program. As it is very difficult to persuade fathers to participate in such programs, it was focused on teaching the mothers. Additionally, as parents are nowadays receiving some information about parenting styles through the media, this study has been effective. It can be concluded that teaching the parents and increasing the knowledge of parents on correctly dealing with their child and gaining knowledge of the most effective parenting styles by parents (authoritative style), can reduce the behavioral problems of children and the parents' conflict with their children and it can be effective in improving the child-parent communication. In the family setting, as a limited community, the interaction and reactions among the members have a significant impact on

reducing or increasing behavioral problems. It is suggested to therapists and researchers that the training program to be implemented at the presence of mother and father and the results to be compared. Future studies can provide a more comprehensive picture of teaching the parent. In addition, direct observations of child and parent interactions have not been included in the design of the present study, so they should be added to future research programs.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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