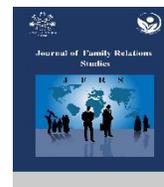




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## Research Paper

Comparison of the theory of mind, planning and organization, perceived parenting style, and hyperactivity symptoms in 7-12 years old children with employed mothers and housewives in Isfahan



Crossmark

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to compare the theory of mind (ToM), planning and organization, perceived parenting style, and hyperactivity symptoms in 7-12 years old children with employed mothers and housewives in Isfahan.

**Methods:** The statistical population of the present study included all children in Isfahan in the second half of 2020. 60 subjects were selected by the available sampling method. Data were collected by the Steernman Mind Theory Questionnaire, Coolidge Executive Functions, the Bamrind Parenting Style, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Symptom questionnaire and analyzed by the Manova method.

**Results:** The results showed that there were significant differences between the scores of children with employed mothers and those with housewife mothers in the scales of ToM, planning and organization, parenting style, and hyperactivity symptoms ( $P < 0.05$ ). It was revealed that differences in terms of parenting styles and relationships between children and parents could explain such differences.

**Conclusion:** It is suggested addressing the parenting styles and relationships between children and parents to help with the reduction of the rate of hyperactivity symptoms.

## 1. Introduction

Family is a network of communication patterns in which parents and children have reciprocal interactions with ability of significant effects on each other (Wang, Huebner, & Tian, 2021). In recent decades, psychologists consider reciprocal reactions as the basis of the cognitive-affective development of a child and believe that the intimacy of parents may decrease the risk of mental disorders (Zhang, Yang, Wang, Han, & Wu, 2022). In the family environment

as a limited society, reactions and actions among members have significant effects on decreasing or increasing current problems (Fernández-Vera, Urrutia, Rossel, Herskovic, & Fuentes, 2022; Shin, Park, & Ki, 2022).

ADHD is a disorder associated with hyperactivity and spontaneous behaviors with high intensity and frequency. 3-5% of children suffer from ADHD. ADHD children have difficulties in both concentrated attention and the control of impulsivity (Cibrian, Lakes, Schuck, & Hayes, 2022).

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In recent decades, more attention is paid to the training and managing of parents in the treatment of ADHD (Nissley-Tsiopinis et al., 2022). This disorder involves the problems of executive functions and working memory (Buchanan, D'Angiulli, Samson, Maisonneuve, & Robaey, 2022). Nowadays, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is interesting for experts and researchers for many reasons. First, this disorder is very common among children and adolescents so that it creates many difficulties for many students and has effects on social-cognitive performance, and emotional and family functions; in later life, it affects job and marital performance. Second, the etiology and treatment of this disorder is not completely known. Finally, a better understanding of this disorder may contribute to a better understanding of other overlapping disorders such as oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, and learning disabilities (Desai et al., 2018; Mahone & Denckla, 2017; Miller et al., 2019).

The theory of mind (ToM) refers to the ability to attribute mental states to ourselves and others, and understanding these states may be different from one's own states (Quesque & Rossetti, 2020). Currently, ToM is used to point to specific cognitive capacity. The main element of ToM is the understanding of purposeful factors of others' behaviors and direction-based perception of others. The evolutionary origin of ToM goes back to primates. Probably, ToM is an adaptive reaction to primitive social interactions (Papachristou, 2020; Quesque & Rossetti, 2020).

Following studies on the normal development of ToM, the pathology of ToM has been expanding rapidly, and significant findings are available about the defects of ToM among people who suffer from schizophrenia, personality disorder, autism, and Asperger's syndrome (Melloni, Benedetti, Vai, & Lalumera, 2020). Relationships between parents and children are considered an important issue that attracts the attention of experts and educational professionals (Aziz, Mehrinejad, Hashemian, & Paivastegar, 2020). Sometimes, inappropriate parents-children interactions may cause abnormal behaviors in children (Aydin, 2022). Studies suggest that mothers whose children have no good relationships with their children may suffer from sleep disorders and behavioral and maladaptive problems in externalized difficulties (Jenkins, Simpson, Dunn, Rasbash, & O'Connor, 2005; Matalon & Turliuc, 2022).

The parenting style is a determinant and effective factor that plays a role on the mental pathology and development of children (Areshtanab et al., 2021). Parents of ADHD children use a negative and

authoritarian parenting style, they have low self-confidence in the education of children and use punishment frequently that may contribute to child abuse and neglect (Alizadeh, Applequist, & Coolidge, 2007). Sesma et al. (2009) investigated relationships between executive functions (working memory, planning, and organization), attention, encoding, fluency of reading, and reading comprehension. Their findings showed that executive functions, e.g. decision making, planning, and organization, may help reading comprehensively (Keeler, 1994).

Studies indicate that ADHD children have difficulties in executive functions. Training programs are developed for improving executive functions, and their effectiveness are approved by studies (Nilsen & Fecica, 2011). In general, people who are able to use ToM have the ability to think and make reasons about others' mental states.

The novelty of the present study was to explain the status of four influential variables on children with housewives and working mothers, including theory of mind, planning and organization, perceived parenting style, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. In addition, because the treatment and treatment conditions are better for these people in the centers, it is different to try to compare the status of these four variables in the centers and in practice the results of this study can be used by people with children and their mothers are involved in being used and helping families' problems.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The present research is a causal-comparative study. A descriptive study is a set of methods aiming at describing conditions or phenomena. Since the present study aimed to compare ToM, planning, organization, the perceived parenting style, and ADHD symptoms in 7-12 years old children with employed and housewife mothers in Isfahan city, a causal-comparative method was selected in this research. Because there was no manipulation in subjects or the population, the design of this study was a descriptive comparison. In the present study, 60 (7-12 years old) male children of employed or housewife mothers (30 subjects from each group) were selected as the samples from Isfahan city. Data were gathered using standard questionnaires besides books and articles for the theory and research background related to variables. After selecting samples, field data were collected using questionnaires through survey research. After giving the necessary explanation, questionnaires were completed by the subjects.

Having ADHD, 7-12 years old and employed or housewife mothers were inclusion criteria of this research.

The information related to the data collection tool is fully explained by the questionnaires used in the research in the following section. This information includes the name of the questionnaire, number of questions, questionnaire scoring scale, validity and reliability of the questionnaires used.

**ToM Questionnaire:** The main version of this questionnaire was developed by [Steerneman \(1999\)](#) to assess the ToM of normal children and those with the pervasive developmental disorder from 5 to 12 years old. It provides information about the social perception, sensitivity, and attitudes of children, as well as the intensity and frequency of accepting others' feelings and thoughts. The questionnaire was adjusted in Persian, and its questions were decreased from 72 to 38; Persian names were also used instead of English names. Reliability and validity were calculated on trainable mentally disabled and normal children from Shiraz. The calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire in the present study was equal to 0.81. The desired time for the whole test was between 15 to 20 minutes. The scoring method was such that the subject's correct answers are given a score of "1" and his incorrect answers are given a "zero" score. This is designed based on an evolutionary and multidimensional perspective and assesses ToM in an expanding age range through a more complicated, advanced way than classical tests ([Ahmadi, Jalaie, & Ashayeri, 2015](#)).

**Planning and Organization Inventory:** This questionnaire of executive functions was developed by [Coolidge \(2002\)](#) consisting of 19 items that were completed by parents. This is based on APA criteria and is standardized on 329 children of 5-7-year-old (169 males and 160 females). This inventory is adapted from Coolidge's personality and the neuropsychological questionnaire with 200 items to assess many neuropsychological and behavioral disorders. In fact, it assesses defects of executive functions. Each disorder in this inventory has a subscale, except for two cases. It has 19 items that are rated by a 4-point rating scale (0= not at all, 1 = sometimes, 2 = usually, and 3 = always). Questions 1-18, 9-16, and 17-19 are used for planning, organization, and inhibition, respectively. If the scores of the questionnaire are between 19 and 38, the rate of executive functions is poor. If the scores of the questionnaire are between 38 and 57, the amount of executive functions is at a moderate level and if the

scores are above 57, the level of executive functions is very good. ([Coolidge, Thede, Stewart, & Segal, 2002](#)). Cronbach's alpha for the Executive Function Questionnaire is 0.91.

**Perceived Parenting Style Questionnaire:** This questionnaire with 30 questions was developed by [Banmrand \(1973\)](#) and translated into Persian by [Minaei and Nikzad \(2017\)](#). It measures authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles. Questions 28, 10, 6, 1, 14, 13, 24, 21, 19, and 17 are used for permissive style, questions 29, 2, 3, 7, 9, 12, 16, 18, 25, and 26 for authoritarian style, and questions 4, 5, 8, 11, 15, 20, 22, 23, 27, and 30 for authoritative. In front of each question, there are five columns (totally agree, partly agree, partly disagree, disagree, and totally disagree) for rating from 0 to 4. Scores are summed and then divided into the number of questions to obtain the total score, 0.81 for the negligent method, 0.86 for the authoritarian method, 0.78 for the authoritative method. It also was calculated internal stability using the Cronbach's formula were obtained 0.75 for the simplification method, 0.85 for the authoritarian method, and 0.82 for the logical authority method. At the Iranian Psychiatric Institute, [Esfandiari \(1995\)](#) translated the main form of the questionnaire and made the necessary corrections. Then, 10 experts in the field of psychology and psychiatry (2 PhDs in psychology, 1 psychiatrist, 2 masters of psychology, 2 postgraduate students and 3 psychologists) were asked to determine the validity of each sentence. The obtained results showed that the mentioned questionnaire has formal validity. ([Minaei & Nikzad, 2017](#)).

**ADHD Symptoms Questionnaire:** This questionnaire was designed by [Swanson, Nolan, and Pelham \(2021\)](#) to measure ADHD in children and is completed by teachers. The Swanson, Nolan and Pelham Concentration Disorder Questionnaire consists of 30 questions that range from 0 to 3 on a Likert scale (never 0, very low 1, high 2, very high 3). Questions 1,2,3,4,5,6,6,7,8,9,11,12,13 Components of lack of concentration and questions 10,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29, 30 are hyperactivity components. The minimum possible score will be 0 and the maximum 90. Score between 0 and 30: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in children is low. Score between 30 and 60: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in children is moderate. Score above 60: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in children is high. Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated in the study for this questionnaire was estimated above 0.7.

### 3. Results

According to Table 1, Variables of Theory of Mind includes of Primitive theory of mind, Basic expression of real ToM and Advanced ToM, Variables of Planning and organization inventory includes of planning and organization, Variables of perceived parenting style questionnaire includes of permissive,

authoritarian and authoritative. At the end variables of ADHD symptoms consist of lack of concentration and hyperactivity that be categorized two group.

Demographic data showed that means of age were  $8.87 \pm 0.97$  and  $9.24 \pm 1.11$  years for children with employed and housewife mothers, respectively. Descriptive results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive results**

Variable	Group	Mean	SD
Theory of Mind			
Primitive theory of mind	Employed	13.73	4.51
	Housewife	10.80	4.22
Basic expression of real ToM	Employed	7.83	4.03
	Housewife	4.53	4.57
Advanced ToM	Employed	3.03	1.88
	Housewife	1.36	1.56
Planning and organization inventory			
Planning	Employed	18.53	4.39
	Housewife	9.40	4.83
Organization	Employed	16.60	4.76
	Housewife	11.60	5.84
Perceived parenting style questionnaire			
Permissive	Employed	11.23	4.07
	Housewife	20.80	6.15
Authoritarian	Employed	11.07	4.25
	Housewife	20.74	6.17
Authoritative	Employed	10.16	4.63
	Housewife	21.09	6.87
ADHD symptoms			
Lack of concentration	Employed	6.667	4.64
	Housewife	10.933	6.48
Hyperactivity	Employed	7.900	7.53
	Housewife	11.63	11.42

According to Table 2, the mean score of children with employed mothers (13.73) is higher than that of children with housewife mothers (10.80) in primitive ToM. The mean score of children with employed

mothers (7.83) is higher than that of children with housewife mothers (1.36) in the early expression of ToM.

**Table 2. Results of mean comparison of groups related to hypothesis variables**

Variable	Group	Mean	Mean Difference	Standard Error	P
Theory of Mind					
Primitive theory of mind	Employed	13.73	2.93	0.79	0.001
	Housewife	10.80			
Basic expression of real ToM	Employed	7.83	3.3	0.78	0.001
	Housewife	4.53			
Advanced ToM	Employed	3.03	1.67	0.31	0.001
	Housewife	1.36			
Planning and organization inventory					
Planning	Employed	18.53	9.13	0.84	0.001
	Housewife	9.40			
Organization	Employed	16.60	5	0.97	0.001
	Housewife	11.60			
Perceived parenting style questionnaire					
Permissive	Employed	11.23	-9.57	0.95	0.001
	Housewife	20.80			

Authoritarian	Employed	11.07	-9.67	0.96	0.001
	Housewife	20.74			
Authoritative	Employed	10.16	-10.93	1.05	0.001
	Housewife	21.09			
ADHD symptoms					
Lack of concentration	Employed	6.667	-4.266	1.030	0.001
	Housewife	10.933			
Hyperactivity	Employed	7.900	-3.733	1.766	0.001

The mean score of children with employed mothers (3.03) is higher than that of children with housewife mothers (1.36) in advanced aspects of ToM. It can be argued that the mean score of children with employed mothers is different from that of children with housewife mothers in subscales of ToM. This implies that children with employed mothers obtained high scores than those with housewife mothers in subscales of ToM. The mean score of children with employed mothers (18.53) is higher than that of children with housewife mothers (9.40) in the subscale of planning. The mean score of children with employed mothers (16.60) is higher than that of children with housewife mothers (11.60) in the subscale of organization. The mean score of children with employed mothers (11.23) is less than that of children with housewife mothers (20.80) in the subscale of permissive style. The mean score of children with employed mothers (11.07) is less than that of children with housewife mothers (20.74) in the subscale of authoritarian style. Also, the mean score of children with employed mothers (10.16) is less than that of children with housewife mothers (21.09) in the subscale of authoritative style. In addition, the mean score of children with employed mothers (6.667) is less than that of children with housewife mothers (10.933) in the subscale of lack of concentration. Finally, the mean score of children with employed mothers (7.900) is less than that of children with housewife mothers (11.633) in the subscale of hyperactivity.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to compare ToM, planning and organization, perceived parenting style, and ADHD symptoms in 7-12 years old children with employed or housewife mothers in Isfahan city. Results from the first hypothesis showed that the mean score of children with employed mothers in subscales of ToM (10.80), terms of basic expression (4.53) and ToM aspects (1/36) were higher than those with housewife mothers. The mean score of children with employed mothers (7.83) was higher than those with housewife mothers. According to the findings, it can be concluded that the mean score of employed

mothers' children was different from housewife mothers' children in terms of ToM and its subscales. This implies that children with employed mothers may obtain high scores in ToM and its subscales. These findings are consistent with those of [Norouzi and Sepehrian \(2021\)](#) who reported that the ToM of 51 children aged 3.5-6 years raised by authoritative parenting style were higher than peers raised by other parenting styles.

The findings of the present study suggested that the planning and organization of employed mothers' children were different from housewives' children in Isfahan city. The mean score of employed mothers' children (18.53) was higher than housewife mothers' children (9.40) in terms of the planning subscale. The mean score of employed mothers' children (16.60) was higher than housewife mothers' children (11.60) in terms of the organization subscale. It can be concluded that the mean score of employed mothers' children is different from housewife mothers' children in terms of planning and organization subscales. This implies that children with employed mothers may obtain high scores in planning and organization subscales. These findings are consistent with those of [Atadokht et al. \(2018\)](#) who compared planning, organization, and cognitive flexibility of 45 students with employed or housewife mothers and reported that students with housewife mothers gained lower scores in planning, organization, and cognitive flexibility tests than students with employed mothers ([Atadokht, Narimani, Hazrati Saghsolo, & Majdy, 2018](#)).

Perceived parenting style was different between children with housewife mothers and employed mothers in Isfahan city. The mean score of employed mothers' children (11.23) was lower than housewife mothers' children (20.80) in the permissive parenting style subscale. The mean score of employed mothers' children (11.07) was lower than housewife mothers' children (20.74) in the authoritarian parenting style subscale. Also, the mean score of employed mothers' children (10.16) was lower than housewife mothers' children (21.09) in the authoritative parenting style subscale. These findings are consistent with those of [Beliad, et al. \(2019\)](#) who compared the social and cognitive development of 5-7 years old children based

on the parenting styles of employed parents. They suggested that the relationship between cognitive and social development and parenting style was different among different parenting styles. The social and cognitive development of children with the authoritative style was higher than permissive and authoritarian styles (Baliad, MajidAv, & Ahadi, 2020). These findings imply that correct parenting styles can be used in cognitive and social development; using a more authoritative style will result in more cognitive and social development.

ADHD symptoms are different between children with employed and housewife mothers. The mean score of employed mothers' children (6.667) was lower than housewife mothers' children (10.933) in the inattention subscale. The mean score of employed mothers' children (7.900) was lower than housewife mothers' children (11.633) in the hyperactivity subscale. These findings are consistent with those reported by Aghajani et al. (2020) who studied the relationship between natural traits of mothers and ADHD symptoms with the mediator role of parenting style. They suggested that parenting style could be a mediator between ADHD symptoms and mothers' natural traits. New-seeking has an indirect effect on ADHD symptoms, and authoritative parenting style has a mediating role in this relation. Damage-avoidance has an indirect effect on ADHD symptoms and authoritative parenting style has a mediating role in this relation. Persistence seeking has an indirect effect on ADHD symptoms and authoritative parenting style has a mediating role in this relation. Mothers with harmful traits in the parent-child interaction showed a non-authoritarian style that causes ADHD symptoms (Aghajani, Sepehrinasab, Fallahi, & Ahangar, 2020). There is a correlation between avoidance with permissive (0.275), peace with rejection (0.243), forced with permission (0.241), dominant with rejection (0.268), and dominant with support (0.346) with 0.5% error. These correlations mean that relationship difficulties between mothers and ADHD children influence conflict-resolving between partners. Therefore, family relationships should be addressed in ADHD children. Also the findings of the present study are consistent with Klahr et al (2018) in terms of most times that parents rely on controlling methods, which make ADHD symptoms worse. Besides, strict control creates serious conflicts between them by worse symptoms (Klahr, Thomas, Hopwood, Klump, & Burt, 2013).

Based on the results, children with employed mothers were better than those with housewife mothers regarding ToM and planning and organization

scales. It can be argued that employed mothers contribute to the development of ToM and train planning and organization to their child better than housewife mothers. In the perceived parenting style, children with housewife mothers gained higher scores than those with employed mothers. Housewife mothers were stricter and more authoritarian than employed mothers making children passive. Besides, housewife mothers treat children in a cool way (not intimacy), which will lead to a continued vicious circle.

The score of ADHD for children with housewife mothers was higher than those with employed mothers, which implies that employed mothers can control children better than housewife mothers. Also, the relationship between parents and children is not ineffective in this issue.

#### Research Limitations

The limitations of the present study were are the research limit to Isfahan city and the age range of subjects. The age range of subjects was 7-12 years old suggesting that the random method is used on other age ranges.

### 5. Ethical Considerations

#### Compliance with ethical guidelines

The authors considered all ethical principles in this research. The participants were informed about the aim of the study. Furthermore, they were assured of confidentiality and were free to withdraw from the study whenever they wished.

#### Funding

This study did not receive any grant.

#### Authors' contributions

All sections of the current study were conducted with the participation of all authors.

#### Conflicts of interest

The authors had no conflict of interest.

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