Parenting and Adolescents’ Self-esteem: The Portuguese Context

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Abstract

This study analyzes the relationships between parenting styles and adolescent’s psychosocial adjustment (self-esteem) in the Portuguese culture. The sample was of 517 adolescents, 214 males (41.39%), and aged 11 to 18 years. The Parental Socialization Scale (ESPA29) was applied to measure parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful), and the Multidimensional Self-Esteem Scale (AF5) to measure five dimensions of self-esteem: Academic, social, emotional, family and physics. Results from this study indicate that adolescents from indulgent families scored equal to or even better than those from authoritative families in some indicators of psychosocial adjustment. These results suggest that authoritative parenting is not associated with optimum self-esteem in Portugal. The study refers to the need for further research, taking account new contexts and cultures.

Keywords: Parenting styles, parental warmth, parental strictness, self-esteem.

Resumen

Este estudio analiza las relaciones entre los estilos parentales y el ajuste psicosocial (autoestima) en la adolescencia dentro del contexto portugués. La muestra estuvo formada por 517 adolescentes, 214 varones (41,39%), con edades entre los 11 y los 18 años. Se usó la Escala de Socialización Parental (ESPA29) para determinar los estilos parentales (autoritativo, autoritario, indulgente y negligente), y la Escala de Autoestima Multidimensional (AF5) que mide cinco dimensiones de la autoestima: académica, social, emocional, familiar y física. Los resultados de este estudio mostraron que los adolescentes de familias indulgentes puntuaron igual o incluso mejor que los de familias autoritativas en algunos indicadores del ajuste psicosocial. Estos resultados sugieren que la parentalidad autoritativa no está asociada con una mayor autoestima en el contexto portugués. El estudio refiere la necesidad de mayor investigación, teniendo en cuenta nuevos contextos y culturas.

Palabras clave: Estilos parentales, afecto parental, severidad parental, autoestima.

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Introduction

Research during the past decades shows the influence of parenting socialization on psychosocial adjustment of their children (Beccoña et al., 2011; García & García, in press; Gavazzi, 2013; Levine & Munsch, 2010; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Traditionally, the relationships between parental styles and children’s adjustment have been studied following a two-dimensional framework of parental socialization (Maccoby & Martin, 1983), in which the dimensions responsiveness and demandingness, also denominated acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition (Adalbjarnardottir & Hafsteinsson, 2001; Cano, Solanas, Mari-Klose, & Mari-Klose, 2012; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Shucksmith, Hendry, & Glendinning, 1995; Steinberg, 2005; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994; Turkel & Tezer, 2008), were theoretically orthogonal (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Both dimensions reflect two main persistent patterns of parenting behavior in the socialization process (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The acceptance/involvement dimension refers to the extent to which parents show warmth and affection to their children, giving them support and communicating with them by reasoning; as a form to representing the respect that parents have for the individuality of their children. The strictness/imposition dimension refers to the extent to which parents use parental firmness strategies to keep an assertive position of authority with their children and require of them maturity, so as to help the parents to set clear limits in their children’s conduct.

Scholars have strongly recommend combine the two main dimensions of parental socialization model in order to analyse appropriately its relationships with children’s psychosocial adjustment (see Lamborn et al., 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Steinberg et al., 1994). Crossing these two orthogonal dimensions, have been defined four parenting styles: Authoritative, characterized by acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition; indulgent, characterized by acceptance/involvement but not strictness/imposition; authoritarian, characterized by strictness/imposition but not acceptance/involvement; and neglectful, characterized by neither acceptance/involvement nor strictness/imposition (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994; Steinberg, 2005). Both authoritative and authoritarian parents are defined by strictness/imposition; however, only the authoritative parenting style can exercise authority in a rational and flexible manner, encouraging communication and negotiation with children, and explaining their decisions to children. Thus, the authoritative parents set clear
limits but also showing warmth and affection to their children. Indulgent parents, like the authoritative ones, also foster an environment of acceptance, dialogue and affection. But when children transgress the family norms they are not impositive, because they believe that children can regulate their own behavior through dialogue and reflection. On the other hand, authoritarian parents tend to shape and control the behavior of their children whenever possible, using direct and imposing approaches, and not showing warmth and affection to their children. They are parents little responsive to the emotional needs of their children. Whereas neglectful parents tend to limit the time that they spend in their parenting tasks, and they are often focused on their own interests. The neglectful parents, like the authoritarian parents, are little responsive to the emotional needs of their children (Baumrind, 1967, 1971; García & Gracia, in press; Lamborn et al., 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Musitu & Garcia, 2001, 2004; Steinberg et al., 1994).

Among the most robust findings reported in the literature on parent adolescent relationships, since the early studies carried out by Baumrind (1967, 1971) with middle-class American families, is that young people who have been raised in these authoritative households have the better psychosocial adjustment. An authoritative parenting style, characterized by acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition, gives to their children opportunities to strength their independent decision making skills while retaining the advantage of their parent’s direction and advice. Research conducted in Anglo-Saxon contexts supporting the idea that the authoritative style is the optimum parenting style. For example, children from authoritative families were more resilient (Kritzas & Grobler, 2005), obtained better academic performance (Cohen & Rice, 1997; Im-Bolter, Zadet, & Ling, 2013; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989), better psychological competence (Lamborn et al., 1991), better use of adaptive strategies (Aunola, Stattin, & Nurmi, 2000), and less behavior problems and drug use (Barh & Hoffmann, 2010; Montgomery, Fisk, & Craig, 2008). On the opposite side, children of neglectful parents (emotionally and physically disengaged from their children, showing little monitoring, supervision, and support of their children’s behavior) appeared to be at highest risk for instrumental incompetence (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Numerous empirical studies have been published that adolescents from authoritative families, characterized by acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition, would perform better in all youth outcomes examined while adolescents from neglectful families, characterized by neither ac-
Acceptance/involvement nor strictness/imposition, would perform worse in all youth outcomes examined (Aunola et al., 2000; Lamborn et al., 1991; Montgomery et al., 2008; Steinberg et al., 1994). Adolescents from authoritarian and indulgent families would perform on all outcomes between the maximum adjustment of the authoritative style and the minimum adjustment of the neglectful style. On the one hand, adolescents from authoritarian parents, characterized by strictness/imposition but not acceptance/involvement, showed a reasonably adequate position of obedience and conformity with norms (they did well in school and were less likely than their peers to be involved in deviant activities); in opposition, they also manifested lower self-reliance and self-competence, and higher psychological and somatic distress. On the other hand, adolescents from indulgent families, characterized by acceptance/involvement but not strictness/imposition, showed high self-reliance and self-competence, but also showed higher levels of substance abuse and school problems (Lamborn et al., 1991; Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, & Flay, 1996). These patterns did not vary neither as a function of adolescents’ age or sex (Aunola et al. 2000; Barton & Kirtley, 2012; Gracia, Fuentes, García, & Lila, 2012; López-Jáuregui & Oliden, 2009), nor as a function of parents’ sex (Kazemi, Ardabili, & Solokian, 2010; Martínez, García, Camino, & Camino, 2011; Martínez, García, Musitu, & Yubero, 2012).

However, empirical research has repeatedly demonstrated that cultural context and race/ethnicity background differences challenge the ideal parenting style. In the scientific literature there were studies carried out in US with minority ethnic groups and in different countries which questioned the idea that the authoritative parenting style was always associated with the best psychosocial adjustment, suggesting that the authoritarian style (characterized by strictness/imposition but not acceptance/involvement) was also an adequate parenting style. Baumrind (1972) found that authoritarian parenting was associated with independence and assertiveness among African-American girls in the US. Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, and Dornbusch (1991) found that the authoritarian style was related, among Asian-Americans, to a highest ability to adjust and to highest academic achievements. Chao (2001) found that Chinese-American adolescents from authoritarian families obtained better academic achievement than adolescents from authoritative families. Dwairy and Achoui (2006) found that in Arab societies authoritarian parenting did not harm adolescents’ mental health (see Dwairy & Menshar, 2006; Dwairy, Achoui, Abouserfe, & Farah, 2006a, 2006b; Dwairy et al., 2006). Moreover, re-
sults from studies with poor families also questioned the idea that the authoritative style of parenting was always associated with optimum outcomes among adolescents (Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002). Leung, Lau, and Lam (1998) found for low-educated parents in the United States and Australia, authoritarian parenting was positively related to highest academic achievement.

On the other hand, emergent research in diverse cultural contexts (mainly south European and Latin American countries) supported the idea that the authoritative style was not always associated with the best results in children and adolescents, suggesting that the indulgent parenting style, characterized by acceptance/involvement but not strictness/imposition, was related to better psychosocial adjustment of adolescents or, at least indistinguishable from authoritative style. In Spain, García and Gracia (2010) found that adolescents from indulgent homes obtained better scores in different indicators of psychological adjustment, such as emotional stability and positive worldview, than those from authoritative families; Garagordobil and Aliri (2012) found that the indulgent style of parenting promote the fewest sexist attitudes in youth; Torre, Casanova, García, Carpio, and Cerezo (2011) found that the indulgent style showed a lowest level of stress; and, López-Romero, Romero and Villar (2012) found that the indulgent style was less related to psychopathic personality in childhood. Other studies in Spain (Alonso-Geta, 2012; Gamez-Guadix, Jaureguizar, Almendros, & Carrobles, 2012; García & Gracia, 2009; Gracia et al., 2012), Italy (DiMaggio & Zappulla, 2013; Marchetti, 1997), Turkey (Turkel & Tezer, 2008), Germany (Wolfradt, Hempel, & Miles, 2003), Mexico (Villalobos, Cruz, & Sánchez, 2004), Brazil (Martínez & García, 2008; Martínez, García, & Yubero, 2007), Iran (Kazemi et al., 2010) and Philippines (Hindin, 2005), reported similar findings.

These discrepancies in the results seem to show the influence of culture on the relationship between parental socialization and psychosocial adjustment in adolescence, suggesting that the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent adjustment and well-being varies depending on the ethnic, socioeconomic or cultural context (Chao 1994; Dwairy & Achoui, 2006; Espino, 2013; Garcia & Gracia, 2009, 2010; Kazemi et al., 2010) and, therefore, the optimal parenting style will depend on the cultural environment in which parent-child relationships would generally develop (Berns, 2011; Gavazzi, 2013; Sigelman & Rider, 2012; Weiten, Dunn, & Hammer, 2012; White & Schnurr, 2012). It has been suggested that people adjust better and are more satisfied in environments that match
their attitudes, values, and experiences (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). For example, since poor ethnic minority families are more likely to live in dangerous communities, authoritarian parenting may not be as harmful and may even carry some protective benefits in hazardous contexts (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999). In collectivist cultures like Asiatic and Arab societies, children perceive the individual self as part of the family self. In these societies for parents and children the relationship between generations is expected to be vertical and hierarchical, assuming strictness and imposition as a parental responsibility. Authoritarian practices have a positive impact because in those contexts parenting strict discipline and parenting imposition is perceived as favorable for the children; and its absence would be regarded as a lack of direction and concern (Dwairy et al., 2006; Grusec, Rudy, & Martini, 1997; Martínez & García, 2008). On the other hand, studies in Spain and Brazil suggest that in horizontal collectivist cultures, as South American countries or South European countries, the self is conceptualized as a part of a larger group (the family), but that group is organized on an egalitarian, rather than a hierarchical basis (see, Garcia & Gracia, 2009, 2010; Martínez & García, 2007, 2008; White & Schnurr, 2012). In the horizontal collectivist cultures the egalitarian relations are emphasized and more attention is placed on the use of warmth, acceptance, and involvement in children’s socialization. Moreover, in these cultures strictness and impositions in the socialization practices, seems to be perceived in a negative way (Garcia & Gracia, 2009; Kazemi et al., 2010; Martínez & García, 2008; Rudy & Grusec, 2001).

What is the optimum parenting style in the Portuguese culture? In the scientific literature there are not studies about the relationships between parental socialization styles and psychosocial adjustment of Portuguese children. The aim of this study was to establish which parenting style is associated with better results of psychosocial adjustment in Portuguese adolescents. Self-esteem is one of the most traditional indicators for assessing the adolescents’ psychosocial adjustment in studies of parenting styles (Berns, 2011; Hunter, 2009; Liem, Cavell, & Lustig, 2010; Wen & Danhua, 2012). In this study self-esteem is measured with five specific dimensions (academic, social, family, emotional and physical) positively related to various key aspects of the personal and psychological adjustment and negatively related to different measures of maladjustment (Fuentes, García, Gracia, & Lila, 2011a, 2011b).

Drawing from the above ideas one would expected that the optimum style of parenting in Portugal, a Mediterranean country
where the present study was conducted, should be the indulgent. Therefore, adolescents from indulgent families will score more positively on all dimensions of self-esteem than those from authoritarian and neglectful families (both are not characterized by acceptance/involvement) and, equal or higher than adolescents whose parents were authoritative (both characterized by acceptance/involvement, but the last one is also characterized by strictness/imposition).

Method

Participants and procedure

An a priori power analysis was performed in order to determine the minimum sample size required to detect with a power of .95 (α = .05, 1 - β = .95) a medium-small effect size (f = .18, estimated from ANOVAs of Lamborn et al., 1991, pp. 1057-1060) in an univariate F-test among the four parenting style groups (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009; García, Pascual, Frías, Van Kruickensven, & Murgui, 2008), requiring a minimum sample size of 536 observations.

Data were obtained from three public schools in the city of Lisbon selected by simple cluster sampling from all education centers. If clusters (i.e., schools) are selected randomly, then the elements within the clusters (i.e., students) are similar to those randomly selected (Kalton, 1983). The headmaster at each school was contacted (all agreed to participate) and parental permissions were obtained (there were only 3% of non-permissions). Students freely chose to participate and they were assured of complete confidentiality. Data were collected using a paper-and-pencil self-administered questionnaire, which was applied collectively to the whole class during a regular class period. The final response rate was 93%. Participants in this study were 514 adolescents, 211 boys (41.%) and 303 girls (58.9%), aged 11 to 18 years (M = 14.26 years old, SD = 1.85 years old). Although the sample size was a few lower than expected, a sensitivity analysis (Faul et al., 2009; García et al., 2008) showed that it could detect (N = 514, α = β = .05) the expected effect size (f = .18) with a power closed to the a priori fixed value (1 - β = .94).

Measures

Parental Socialization Scale (ESPA29) of Musitu & García (2001). This instrument is based on the theoretical bidimensional model of parental socialization (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; MacCoby & Martin, 1983). Consist of 212 items that assess the frequency of several parental practices (father’s and mother’s practices were asked about separately), with a 4-point Likert response
scale (ranging from “never” to “always”), in 29 different significant situations in Western culture: 13 of them are referred to adolescents’ compliance situations (e.g., “If I behave appropriately at home and don’t interrupt”) and 16 referred to adolescents’ non-compliance situations (e.g., “If I leave home to go somewhere without asking anyone for permission”). For each of the 13 compliance situations, adolescents had to rate the frequency of parental practices of affection (“he/she shows affection”) and indifference (“he/she seems indifferent”). For each of the 16 non-compliance situations, adolescents had to rate the frequency of parental practices of reasoning (“he/she talks to me”), detachment (“it’s the same to him/her”), verbal scolding (“he/she scolds me”), physical punishment (“he/she spanks me”), and revoking privileges (“he/she takes something away from me”). The family score for acceptance/involvement dimension was obtained by averaging the responses on the practices of affection, reasoning, indifference, and detachment (in the last two practices, the scores were inverted because they are negatively related to the dimension) of both parents. The family score for strictness/imposition dimension was obtained by averaging the responses on verbal scolding, physical punishment, and revoking privileges of both parents (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994). Higher scores represent a great

sense of acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition (highest score on both scales = 4). From these scores, families were classified into one of the four parenting styles (authoritative, indulgent, authoritarian or neglectful).

The factor structure of this scale had been confirmed in several studies in different samples of Spain and Brazil (Martínez et al., 2011; Martínez et al., 2012; Martínez, Musitu, García, & Camino, 2003; Musitu & García, 2001). In addition, it has been tested the implicit assumption that the structure of the instrument was invariant across age and sex (Martínez et al., 2012), showing how the variations in these variables did not change the relationships assumed by the model (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). This instrument also had the advantage of having the two main dimensions relatively orthogonal (Lim & Lim, 2003, p. 21).

Cronbach’s alpha for the two major dimensions were: Acceptance/involvement, .97, and strictness/imposition, .96. For each subscale were: Affection, .96, indifference, .95, reasoning, .95, detachment, .92, verbal scolding, .94, physical punishment, .94, and revoking privileges, .95.

Typologies: The four parenting styles (authoritative, indulgent, authoritarian and neglectful) were defined by dichotomizing the sample using the median split procedure on the two major dimensions of parenting (acceptance/involvement
and strictness/imposition), considering these two variables simultaneously (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994) and controlling for sex and age (Musitu & García, 2001). Thus, authoritative families were those who scored above 50th percentile on both dimensions, indulgent families were those who scored above 50th percentile on acceptance/involvement and below it on strictness/imposition, authoritarian families were below 50th percentile on acceptance/involvement and above it on strictness/imposition, and, finally, neglectful families were below 50th percentile on both dimensions.

Multidimensional Self-esteem Scale (AF5) of García & Musitu (1999). This instrument is based on the Shavelson’s hierarchical and multidimensional theoretical model (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976), who considered that self-esteem have different, but related aspects, which may be differentially related to various areas of human behavior. Consist of 30 items with a 99-point response scale (ranging from "complete disagreement" to "complete agreement"), designed to measure five self-esteem dimensions: Academic (e.g., "My teachers think that I am a hard worker"), social (e.g., "I am a friendly person"), emotional (e.g., reversed item, "Many things make me nervous"), family (e.g., "I feel that my parents love me") and physical (e.g., "I like the way I look"). Higher scores represent a great sense of self-esteem in each of its dimensions.

The factor structure of this instrument had been confirmed in several studies using exploratory factor analysis in samples of Spain (Cerrato, Sallent, Aznar, Pérez, & Carrasco, 2011; García & Musitu, 1999; López-Jáuregui & Oliden, 2009), Brazil (Martínez et al., 2003), and Italy (Marchetti, 1997), and confirmatory factor analysis in samples of Spain (Eloua & Muñiz, 2010; Fuentes et al., 2011a, 2011b; Murgui, García, García, & García, 2012; Tomás & Oliver, 2004), Portugal (García, Musitu, & Veiga, 2006) and Chile (García, Musitu, Riquelme, & Riquelme, 2011). It was not found method effects associated with negatively worded items (García et al., 2011; Tomas & Oliver, 2004). Also the construct validity of its five dimensions had been widely proved in numerous studies (Delgado, Ingles, & García-Fernández, 2013; Garaigordobil & Aliri, 2011; Ingles, Martínez-González, García-Fernández, Torregrosa, & Ruiz-Esteban, 2012; Košir & Pečjak, 2005). Cronbach's alpha for each dimension were: academic, .83, social, .70, emotional, .77, family, .80, and physical, .79.

Statistical analysis

A three-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was applied for the outcome variables (multidimensional measure of self-
esteem) with parenting style (indulgent, authoritative, authoritarian and neglectful), sex (males vs. females) and age (11-15 years old vs. 16-18 years old) as independent variables in order to test interaction effects between these variables. Univariate $F$ tests were used to examine differences in self-esteem, and significant results on the univariate tests were followed up by Bonferroni procedure for controlling the Type I error rate.

### Results

**Parenting styles groups.** Parenting style groups were formed by using median split procedures, controlling for sex and age. Table 1 provides information on the sizes of each of the four parenting groups as well as each group’s mean and standard deviation on parental dimensions’ measures: acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Indulgent</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Neglectful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Acceptation/Involvement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Indulgent</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Neglectful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strictness/Imposition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Indulgent</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Neglectful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Scores on the acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition scales could range from 1 to 4.*

Additional analyses showed that parental dimensions’ measures (acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition) were relatively orthogonal, $r(n = 514) = .12$, $r^2 = .01$, $p < .01$, and the distribution of the families across the four parenting styles was statistically homogeneous, $\chi^2(3) = 1.56$, $p > .05$.

**Preliminary multivariate analysis.** First, possible interactions between parenting style, adolescents’ sex and age were tested.
A 4 x 2 x 2 factorial multivariate analysis of variance was computed between parenting style (indulgent, authoritative, authoritarian, and neglectful), sex (girls vs. boys), and age (15 years old or younger vs. older than 15 years) on the five self-esteem dimensions: academic, social, emotional, family, and physical (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>$\Lambda$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting style (A)</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>$F(15, 1364.1) = 6.17$</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (B)</td>
<td>.854</td>
<td>$F(5, 494.0) = 16.93$</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (C)</td>
<td>.953</td>
<td>$F(5, 494.0) = 4.87$</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A x B</td>
<td>.968</td>
<td>$F(15, 1364.1) = 1.09$</td>
<td>.361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A x C</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>$F(15, 1364.1) = 1.16$</td>
<td>.298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B x C</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>$F(5, 494.0) = 1.62$</td>
<td>.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A x B x C</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>$F(15, 1364.1) = .63$</td>
<td>.854</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* $a_1$, indulgent; $a_2$, authoritative; $a_3$, authoritarian; $a_4$, neglectful.

*b* $b_1$, male; $b_2$, female.

*c* $c_1$, <15 years; $c_2$, >15 years.

The MANOVA results yielded significant main effects for all three independent variables on self-esteem (Table 2). Parenting styles, $\Lambda = .834$, $F(15, 1364.1) = 6.17$, $p < .001$, sex, $\Lambda = .854$, $F(5, 494) = 16.93$, $p < .001$, and age, $\Lambda = .953$, $F(5, 494) = 4.87$, $p < .01$. No significant interaction effects between parenting and each of the demographic variables (sex and age) were found. Hence, the univariate main effects were examined.

**Main effects for demographic variables.** Although not central to the thrust of this study, univariate $F$ tests showed significant differences between males and females in emotional, $F(1, 512) = 18.58$, $p < .001$, and physical self-esteem, $F(1, 512) = 38.42$, $p < .001$. On both dimensions males obtained higher scores than females (emotional: $M = 6.07$, $SD = 2.07$, vs. $M = 5.29$, $SD = 1.95$; physical: $M = 7.20$, $SD = 1.76$, vs. $M = 6.22$, $SD = 1.75$). With respect to age, one statistically significant difference in emotional self-esteem was found, $F(1, 512) = 9.71$, $p < .01$, indicating that older adolescents scored higher than younger adolescents (emotional: $M = 6.01$, $SD = 2.14$, vs. $M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.95$).
Main effects for parenting styles. Five follow-up univariate analyses (ANOVAs, see Table 3) indicated that parenting styles had statistically significant main effects for all self-esteem dimensions except for physical self-esteem.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indulgent</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Neglectful</th>
<th>F(3, 510)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>6.98 (1.34)</td>
<td>6.79 (1.38)</td>
<td>6.40 (1.69)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.41 (15.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>7.75 (1.12)</td>
<td>7.44 (1.32)</td>
<td>7.24 (1.31)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.33 (1.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>5.93 (1.89)</td>
<td>5.56 (2.04)</td>
<td>5.22 (1.95)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.72 (2.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>8.92 (9.6)</td>
<td>8.34 (1.26)</td>
<td>6.91 (2.02)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.81 (1.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>6.86 (1.61)</td>
<td>6.69 (1.79)</td>
<td>6.36 (1.94)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.57 (1.90)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\alpha = .05; 1 > 2 > 3 > 4.$

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Adolescents who characterized their parents as indulgent obtained higher scores in academic self-esteem than adolescents from authoritarian and neglectful families. With respect to social and emotional dimensions of self-esteem, adolescents from indulgent families scored higher than those adolescents who defined their parents as authoritarian. Finally, adolescents who perceived their parents as indulgent obtained higher scores in family self-esteem than those from authoritative, authoritarian and neglectful families.

Discussion

This study analyzed the relationships between the parenting styles and the psychosocial adjustment of Portuguese adolescents, using the two-dimensional four-typology framework of parental socialization (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The central hypothesis of this research was that the indulgent style, characterized by acceptance/involvement but not strictness/imposition, was related to better psychosocial adjustment than the authoritarian and neglectful style and even better, or at the least it is indistinguishable, from the authoritative parenting style.

In general the results obtained confirm this hypothesis, since the adolescents from Portuguese indulgent families scored highest on four self-esteem dimensions: Academic, social, emotional and family. Not where found statistically signifi-
cant differences between the four parenting styles for physical self-esteem. In the opposite side, adolescents from Portuguese authoritarian families scored lowest in these four self-esteem dimensions; moreover, these differences between Portuguese indulgent families and Portuguese authoritarian families always were statistically significant in these four self-esteem dimensions. Conversely, Portuguese adolescents from authoritative families only scored statistically higher than the adolescents from authoritarian or neglectful families (but also lower than adolescents from indulgent families) in family self-esteem. Also in family self-esteem, Portuguese adolescents from neglectful families scored highest (the difference were statistically significant) than adolescents from authoritarian families.

From these results, indulgent parenting (characterized by acceptance/involvement but not strictness/imposition) appears to be in the Portuguese cultural context the optimum parenting style. Although a numerous number of studies in Anglo-Saxon contexts suggested that the authoritative style, characterized by acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition, was always associated with better psychosocial adjustment of children (Aunola et al., 2000; Barh & Hoffmann, 2010; Lamborn et al., 1991; Montgomery et al., 2008), results from this study support the idea that the indulgent style is the optimum parenting style in Portugal. Confirming previous research in other cultural contexts in which adolescents from indulgent families obtained equal, or even better scores in the different indicators of psychosocial adjustment than adolescents from authoritative families (Kazemi et al., 2010; García & Gracia, 2009, 2010). Hence, the current findings add to a growing body of empirical research that questioned the idea that the authoritative style is always related to the best psychosocial adjustment of adolescents (Lamborn et al., 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Steinberg et al., 1989).

The indulgent and authoritative parental socialization styles are both characterized by acceptance/involvement. However, the current findings add to research that supported the importance of using practices such as parental warmth and bidirectional communication for the optimal psychosocial adjustment of adolescents (Garcia & Gracia, 2009, 2010; Torre et al., 2011). Nevertheless, only the authoritative style is characterized by parental strictness/imposition. Although strictness/imposition dimension is considered an important component in some cultures, even more than warmth (Chao, 2001; Dwairy, 2008), or necessary together with warmth (Steinberg et al., 1994; Steinberg, 2001), no relationship between strictness/imposition and a better psychosocial adjustment of Portuguese adolescents was found. A possible explanation may be due

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to the fact that in the Portuguese culture, considered as horizontal collectivist, even if the children are very connected with their families, the relationship among different generations is expected to be more egalitarian than in vertical collectivist cultures (such as the Asiatic or Arabic) or individualistic (e.g., American). In this sense, the use of strictness, punishment, imposition and control in Portuguese culture, is perceived by children as intrusive and coactive parenting practice, and not as a component of mind and responsibility from parents for their children (Dwairy et al., 2006; García & Gracia, 2009, 2010; Martínez & García, 2007, 2008; White & Schnurr, 2012). In the Portuguese culture, considering the four parental styles, adolescents from indulgent families, characterized by acceptance/involvement but not strictness/imposition, had better outcomes than adolescents from authoritative families. One could say that parental strictness is not related to better adjustment of adolescents in the Portuguese culture. Moreover, adolescents from authoritarian families (characterized by strictness/imposition but not acceptance/involvement) and those from neglectful families (characterized by neither acceptance/involvement nor strictness/imposition) obtained generally the lowest scores in self-esteem dimensions. These results also confirm previous research that concluded that authoritarian and neglectful parental styles were associated with worse psychosocial adjustment in adolescents (Lamborn et al., 1991; Martínez & García, 2007).

Furthermore, the results of this study support previous research indicating that relationship between the four educational parental styles and the adjustment criteria does not change with the variations of the socio demographic variables, that is, parental styles do not interact with the sex and age of children (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Baumrind, 1993; García & Gracia, 2009, 2010; Lamborn et al., 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Martínez & García, 2007; Steinberg et al., 1994; Turkel & Tezer, 2008). At the same time, variations were observed in the same sense described in previous research, in the criteria with both socio demographic variables analyzed, like sex (Aunola et al., 2000; López-Jáuregui & Oliden, 2009) and age (Martínez et al., 2011; Martínez et al., 2012). It was found significant differences between males and females in emotional and physical self-esteem (García & Gracia, 2009, 2010). On both dimensions males obtained higher scores than females (Gracia et al., 2012). With respect to age, one statistically significant difference in emotional self-esteem was found, indicating that older adolescents scored higher than younger adolescents (Martínez et al., 2011; Martínez et al., 2012).

This study has several strengths and limitations. The strengths of
this study are: (1) the cultural context where it was conducted. In this sense, this study is the first carried out with Portuguese families in order to test the optimum parental socialization style in relation to adolescents’ psychosocial adjustment. (2) The performance of an a priori sample size calculation for reducing the likelihood of a Type II error in statistical inference, and (3) the use of an orthogonal measure for assessing the parental socialization styles. With respect to limitations: (1) the classification of the families into one of the four parenting styles was based on the responses of the adolescents. Nevertheless, some studies suggested that the perception of children tends to be more objective than the perception of their parents, which tends to be more biased by the influence of social desirability (Gonzales, Cauce, & Mason, 1996) and (2) the design of this study was cross-sectional. It did not allow us to test causal relationships between the variables examined in the study.

Despite these limitations, the present study extends the current knowledge on the relationships between parental socialization styles and adolescents’ psychosocial adjustment in Portugal, where this relation had not yet been studied. Results support the idea that the indulgent style, characterized by acceptance/involvement but not strictness/imposition, is the optimum parental style for the Portuguese adolescents. Moreover, the optimal parenting style is related to the context where that socialization takes place.

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