

## **Parental Socialization Styles and Psychological Adjustment. A Study in Spanish Adolescents**

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### Abstract

Contributing to the current debate in the literature about the optimal educational parenting style that benefits the best psychosocial adjustment of children, the aim of this study was to analyze which parenting style is related to the best psychological adjustment among Spanish adolescents. Participants in the study were 772 adolescents, 358 males (46.4%) and 414 females (53.6%) between 12 and 17 years old ( $M = 14.95$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ). Families were classified according to their parenting style (authoritative, indulgent, authoritarian, or neglectful). Self-concept and psychological maladjustment in their multidimensional measures were assessed as criteria. Results showed that indulgent style, fundamentally based on affection and not on parental imposition, is related to the best results on the criteria assessed. The importance of parental affective involvement in the socialization of their children for the adequate psychological and emotional adjustment of Spanish adolescents is highlighted.

*Keywords:* Adolescence, affective involvement, parenting styles, psychological adjustment.

### Resumen

Contribuyendo al actual debate de la literatura acerca del estilo educativo parental óptimo para el mejor ajuste psicosocial de los hijos, el objetivo de este estudio fue analizar qué estilo se relaciona con el mejor ajuste psicológico de los adolescentes españoles. Participaron en el estudio 772 adolescentes, 358 hombres (46.4%) y 414 mujeres (53.6%), entre 12 y 17 años ( $M = 14.95$ ,  $DT = 1.59$ ). Se clasificó a las familias según su estilo de actuación (autorizativo, indulgente, autoritario o negligente). Como criterios se evaluaron autoconcepto y desajuste psicológico en sus medidas multidimensionales. Los resultados muestran que el estilo indulgente, basado fundamentalmente en el afecto y no en la imposición parental, se relaciona con los mejores resultados en los criterios evaluados. Se destaca, por tanto, la importancia de la implicación afectiva de los padres en la socialización de sus hijos para el adecuado ajuste psicológico y emocional de los adolescentes españoles.

*Palabras clave:* Adolescencia, implicación afectiva, estilos parentales, ajuste psicológico.

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## Introduction

Psychological well-being is one of the most important constructs in research in comprehensive health, especially important during adolescence, period of transition to adulthood marked by continuous biological and psychological changes in which the adolescent will form its own identity and personal autonomy (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Due to the significant impact that an inadequate psychological development can have during this developmental stage as well as into adulthood, several studies have focused on the analysis of the factors that are related to an optimal psychological adjustment in adolescence (Inglés, Martínez-González, García-Fernández, Torregrosa, & Ruiz-Esteban, 2012; Ferrándiz, Hernández, Bermejo, Ferrando, & Sáinz, 2012).

Among these factors, family, as the main agent of socialization, has received an important attention among researchers. Thus, variables such as family structure, cohesion and the presence of conflicts at home both between parents and between parents and children, among others, have been widely studied in relation to different criteria of psychological adjustment of children (Gavazzi, 2013; Povedano, Hendry, Ramos, & Varela, 2011). The study of these variables presents consistent results in the literature, so that generally, family variables that represent an optimal family functioning

are related to a good psychological adjustment of children; while family variables that denote negative aspects in family functioning, such as low cohesion and conflicts between parents, are related to a worse psychological and emotional development of children (Cosgaya, Nolte, Martínez-Plambiega, Sanz, & Iraug, 2008; Manso, García-Baamonde, Alonso, & Barona, 2011).

Among family variables, one of the research areas of interest for decades in the scientific literature is the study of the relationships between the different educational styles of parents in the socialization process and the psychosocial adjustment of children. Research on parental socialization has traditionally been based on the theoretical model of two major theoretically independent dimensions (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; MacCoby & Martin, 1983), acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition, which define parental behavior. Acceptance/involvement dimension refers to the degree in which parents are involved in an affective way in the socialization of their children showing them warmth, offering them their support and communicating with them using reasoning when they behave inadequately. Strictness/imposition dimension refers to the degree in which parents behave in a strict and imposing way in order to set limits on their behavior and thus impose their authority. The review of the literature highlights the importance of combine

both orthogonal dimensions, leading to four typologies of parental behavior (authoritative —high acceptance/involvement and high strictness/imposition—, indulgent —high acceptance/involvement and low strictness/imposition—, authoritarian —low acceptance/involvement and high strictness/imposition—, and neglectful —low acceptance/involvement and low strictness/imposition—), to represent all the theoretical distinctions that the model offers (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994).

Empirical research has largely demonstrated that the relationships between the four parenting styles and the different criteria of psychosocial adjustment of children do not change with the variations in demographic variables like age and sex of the adolescents or parents (Aunola, Ståtin, & Nurmi, 2000; Gracia, Fuentes, García, & Lila, 2012; Martínez, García, Camino, & Camino, 2011; Martínez, García, Musitu, & Yubero, 2012). In such a way that a certain style is related to better results depending on regardless of the sex of children or parent or at a particular age. However, there are important inconsistencies in scientific literature regarding how the parental behavior in the socialization process influence on the psychological adjustment and well-being of children (Becoña et al., 2012; García & Gracia, 2014; White & Schnurr, 2012). While most studies have concluded

that parental behavior based fundamentally on affection (high acceptance/involvement) is related to an optimal psychological adjustment (Alegre, Benson, & Pérez-Escoda, 2013; Bastaitis, Ponnet, & Mortelmans, 2012), its combination with the strict and imposing behavior of parents (strictness/imposition) generates serious doubts about the effect that it has on the psychological well-being of children, especially when the cultural and social environment in which this relationship is studied varies (Baumrind, 1991; Dwairy, 2008; Linares, Rusillo, Cruz, Fernández, & Arias, 2011).

In this sense, one of the results most consistent obtained fundamentally in Anglo-Saxon cultural contexts is that the parenting style characterized by the combination of affection and imposition (high acceptance/involvement and high strictness/imposition), the authoritative style, is related to the best psychological and social adjustment of children (Baumrind, 1991; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994). For example, Kritzas and Grobler (2005) concluded that children from authoritative families showed a greater ability to cope with and overcome adverse and stressful life events maintaining adaptive behaviors. In the same line, Aunola et al. (2000) found that adolescents with authoritative parents did a better use of adaptive strategies. Moreover, different studies have concluded that the academic achievement is higher (Im-Bolter, Zadeh, & Ling, 2013)

and they have fewer behavior problems and drug use (Bahr & Hoffman, 2010; Becoña et al., 2013).

However, there is empirical evidence that suggests that this combination of affection and imposition not always is associated with the best results on the psychological and social well-being of children. Different studies carried out in different cultural contexts to Anglo-Saxon (Dwairy & Achoui, 2006; Dwairy & Menshar, 2006), in ethnic minority groups (Chao, 2001; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991) and even in families with low socioeconomic status (Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002), suggest that the educational style based fundamentally on parental imposition but not on parental affection (low acceptance/involvement and high strictness/imposition), the authoritarian style, is an adequate educational style. For example, Baumrind (1972) found that African-American adolescents from authoritarian families showed the best scores in assertiveness and independence. Dwairy (2008) also concluded that this parental behavior style did not affect negatively the mental health of Arab adolescents.

Another set of studies conclude that high parental affection and low parental imposition (high acceptance/involvement and low strictness/imposition), the indulgent style, is related to the best adjustment and well-being of children (Brazil, Martínez, & García,

2008; Italy, DiMaggio, & Zappulla, 2014; Portugal, Rodrigues, Veiga, Fuentes, & García, 2013). It is in this line of results where the emerging research in Spain is located (Alonso-Geta, 2012; García & Gracia, 2009, 2010; Gracia, Fuentes, & García, 2010). For example, Garaigordobil and Aliri (2012) found that parents characterized by this parenting style promoted less sexist attitudes in children. Moreover, different studies have concluded that children from indulgent families showed a better use of learning strategies and higher academic achievement (Cerezo, Casanova, de la Torre, & Carpio, 2011), fewer behavior problems and substance use (Calafat, García, Juan, Becoña, & Fernández-Hermida, 2014; Gracia et al., 2012; Martínez, Fuentes, García, & Madrid, 2013). These results suggest that in Spain parental behavior based fundamentally on affection but not on imposition (high acceptance/involvement and low strictness/imposition), the indulgent style, is the one related to the best results in psychosocial adjustment of children.

Because the majority of research conducted in this field of study analyze the general relationships between parenting styles and children's psychosocial adjustment (Alonso-Geta, 2012; García & Gracia, 2009, 2010; Gracia et al., 2012), the aim of this study was to analyze which parenting style is related to the best psychological ad-

justment of Spanish adolescents, using a representative sample from a Spanish Autonomous community (i.e., Balears). Psychological maladjustment through a multidimensional measure and self-concept, as a classic indicator of adolescent adjustment (Delgado, Inglés, & García-Fernández, 2013; Fuentes, García, Gracia, & Lila, 2011a, 2011b; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976), also in its multidimensional measure (academic, social, emotional, family and physical), were evaluated as adjustment criteria. Empirical research has repeatedly demonstrated that multidimensional measures of self-concept offer more detailed, concrete and specific information in its relationship with different areas of human behavior in comparison with that offered by one-dimensional measures (García-Sánchez, Burgueño-Menjíbar, López-Blanco, & Ortega, 2013; Inglés et al., 2012; Rodríguez-Fernández, Droguett, & Revuelta, 2012). Thus, the specific assessment of psychological adjustment instead of psychosocial adjustment in general allows obtaining specific conclusions about the relevance of the family and, specifically, about parental behavior in the socialization process for the adequate psychological and emotional development and adjustment of children. Furthermore, for evaluating parental behavior, unlike other studies using instruments that give rise to typologies that are not adjusted to the theoretical model

of socialization (Cano, Solanas, Marí-Klose, & Marí-Klose, 2012; García-Linares, de la Torre, Carpio, Cerezo, & Casanova, 2014) or studies in which the relationships between parenting practices in isolation and different adjustment criteria have been analyzed (Linares et al., 2011), in the present study an instrument based on the theoretical model of socialization was used (Maccoby & Martin, 1983), allowing both a general analyses with respect to the relationships between the two major dimensions (acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition) with the criteria assessed, and a more concrete and specific analysis with respect to the relationships with parenting styles (authoritative, indulgent, authoritarian and neglectful). In this way, all the theoretical possibilities offered by the model are represented and the conclusions derived from the analyses of its relationships with the psychological adjustment criteria will not be limited in this respect.

Taking into account the results from previous research carried out in Spain with respect to adolescents' psychosocial adjustment, it is expected that the indulgent style is related to the best psychological adjustment; so that the adolescents from families characterized by this parenting style (high affection and low imposition) obtain the highest scores on the dimensions of self-concept, and the lowest scores on the dimensions of psychological maladjustment.

## Method

### Participants and procedure

In order to conduct the present study with a statistical power of .95, an *a priori* estimation of the minimum sample size required was performed. The error rates in statistical inference in the conventional limits ( $\alpha = \beta = .05$ ) and a medium-small effect size ( $f = .15$ , Cohen, 1977) in univariate *F* tests between the four parenting styles (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994) were set. Results indicated that the minimum sample size required was 768 participants (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009; García, Pascual, Frías, Van Krunckelsven, & Murgui, 2008).

Considering this result, 10 educational centers were randomly selected from a complete list of all centers in a Spanish Autonomous Community (i.e., Balears). By selecting previously the schools randomly, the sample obtained (the students who compose each center) is similar to those obtained through a random system (Kalton, 1983). The headmaster of each center was contacted to report the research aims. After their consent, the corresponding parental permissions were requested (a 4% of the parents did not give their permission). The students who obtained their parents' permission freely chose to participate in the study, obtaining a final response rate of 95%. The final sample consisted of 772 participants,

414 females (53.6%) and 358 males (46.4%) aged 12 to 17 years ( $M = 14.95$  years old,  $SD = 1.59$  years old).

### Instruments

*Parental Socialization Scale (ESPA29, Musitu & García, 2001).* This instrument is based on the bidimensional theoretical model of parental socialization (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). It consists of 212 items with a response scale from 1 ("never") to 4 ("always") in which the adolescents assess their parents' behavior in 29 representative scenes of the daily family life in Western culture. Of the 29 scenes, 13 refer to situations of compliance with family rules ("If I take care of my belongings and walk around neat and clean") in which the adolescents evaluate the frequency with which their parents show them affection ("he/she shows affection") and indifference ("he/she seems indifferent"); and 16 that refer to situations of non-compliance with such rules ("If I leave home to go somewhere without asking anyone for permission") in which the adolescents indicate the frequency with which parents respond using dialogue ("he/she talks to me"), detachment ("it is the same to him/her"), verbal scolding ("he/she scolds me"), physical punishment ("he/she spans me"), and revoking privileges ("he/she takes something away from me"). The family score

in *acceptance/involvement* was obtained by averaging the responses in affection, dialogue, indifference and detachment (in the last two subscales the responses were reversed because they are negatively related to the dimension). The family score in *strictness/imposition* was obtained by averaging the responses in verbal scolding, physical punishment and revoking privileges (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994). Both family indices vary between 1 to 4 points, higher scores corresponding to high levels of acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition. From these scores the family socialization style is typified as authoritative, indulgent, authoritarian or neglectful. Its factorial structure and invariance of demographic variables sex and age has been confirmed in different studies (Martínez et al., 2011; Martínez et al., 2012), as well as the orthogonality of the two major dimensions (Lim & Lim, 2003). The composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) obtained were CR = .97 and AVE = 58.16% in acceptance/involvement, and CR = .95 and AVE = 53.32% in strictness/imposition. In the subscales, the values obtained were CR = .96 and AVE = 68.53% in affection, CR = .94 and AVE = 62.65% in indifference, CR = .96 and AVE = 64.86% in dialogue, CR = .91 and AVE = 51.66% in detachment, CR = .94 and AVE = 59.27% in verbal scolding,

CR = .94 and AVE = 58.78% in physical punishment, and CR = .95 and AVE = 60.40% in revoking privileges.

*Multidimensional Self-Concept Scale AF5* (García & Musitu, 1999). It consists of 30 items that evaluate 5 dimensions of self-concept, 6 items by dimension, with a response scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 99 (“strongly agree”). *Academic self-concept* (“I am a good student”), *social self-concept* (“I am a friendly person”), *emotional self-concept* (reversed item, “I get scared easily”), *family self-concept* (“My parents give me a lot of confidence”) and *physical self-concept* (“I take good care of my physical health”). Higher scores correspond to high self-concept in any of the dimensions. Its factorial structure has been confirmed in different studies in samples of Spain (Cerrato, Sallent, Aznar, Pérez, & Carrasco, 2011; Murgui, García, García, & García, 2012), Chile (García, Musitu, Riquelme, & Riquelme, 2011), Portugal (García, Musitu, & Veiga, 2006) and United States (García, Gracia, & Zeleznova, 2013); as well as its factorial invariance of the variables sex and age (Fuentes et al., 2011a, 2011b). The composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) obtained were CR = .91 and AVE = 75.12% in academic self-concept, CR = .82 and AVE = 70.53% in social self-concept, CR = .80 and AVE = 65.57% in emotional self-concept, CR = .89

and AVE = 76.24% in family self-concept and, CR = .84 and AVE = 68.20% in physical self-concept.

*Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ, Rohner, 1990)*. It consists of 36 items with a response scale ranging from 1 (“almost never true”) to 4 (“almost always true”) that assess the adolescents’ perceptions about their personality and behavioral traits from 6 dimensions, 6 items by dimension, of psychological maladjustment. *Hostility/aggression* (“I get so mad I throw or break things”), *negative self-esteem* (“I feel I am no good and never will be any good by others”), *negative self-adequacy* (“I feel I cannot do many of the things I try to do”), *emotional irresponsiveness* (“It is hard for me when I try to show the way I really feel to someone I like”), *emotional instability* (“I am cheerful and happy one minute and gloomy or unhappy the next”) and *negative worldview* (“I see the world as a dangerous place”). The scores range from 1 to 4, higher scores correspond to high levels of psychological maladjustment. The composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) obtained were CR = .78 and AVE = 62.20% in hostility/aggression, CR = .79 and AVE = 63.13% in negative self-esteem, CR = .76 and AVE = 60.42% in negative self-adequacy, CR = .75 and AVE = 58.71% in emotional irresponsiveness, CR = .75 and AVE = 60.64% in emotional instability and, CR = .82 and

AVE = 66.35% in negative worldview.

### Statistical analysis

First, considering the scores previously obtained in the two dimensions of the socialization model, acceptance/involvement and strictness/imposition, Pearson correlations were applied to analyze the general relationships between the two main parental behavior patterns with self-concept and psychological maladjustment.

Then, from both family scores, families were classified according to their educational style. For this purpose, the procedure of dichotomizing the sample using the median split (50th percentile) on both theoretically independent dimensions, considering further the adolescents’ sex and age (Musitu & García, 2001), was used. Thus, authoritative families were those who scored above the median on both dimensions, indulgent families scored above the median on acceptance/involvement and below it on strictness/imposition, authoritarian families scored below the median on acceptance/involvement and above it on strictness/imposition and, finally, neglectful families scored below the median on both dimensions (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994).

A factorial multivariate design (MANOVA,  $4 \times 2 \times 2$ ) with each set of criteria variable (self-concept and psychological maladjustment)



was performed considering the educational style (authoritative, indulgent, authoritarian and neglectful), sex (male and female) and age (12-14 years and 15-17 years) as independent variables to test possible interaction effects. After that, univariate *F* tests were conducted to examine the differences in the adjustment variables analyzed and the post-hoc Bonferroni test was applied.

## Results

### Distribution of the families according to the parenting style

In Table 1 is presented the distribution of the families according to the educational style, as well as the means and standard deviations obtained in each of the dimensions of the model.

Table 1

*Distribution of the Families According to the Parenting Style*

	Authoritative	Indulgent	Authoritarian	Neglectful	Total
Frequencies	226	201	175	170	772
Percentages	29.3	26.0	22.7	22.0	100
Acceptance/Involvement					
<i>M</i>	3.46	3.44	2.70	2.66	3.11
<i>SD</i>	0.26	0.26	0.28	0.34	0.45
Strictness/Imposition					
<i>M</i>	2.07	1.46	1.99	1.47	1.76
<i>SD</i>	0.29	0.16	0.26	0.17	0.37

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

Analyses performed a posteriori showed that the two major dimensions were relatively orthogonal,  $r(n = 772) = .10$ ,  $r^2 = .01$ ,  $p < .01$ , and that the cross-distribution of the families in the four parental styles with children's sex,  $\chi^2(3) = 4.13$ ,  $p > .05$ , and age,  $\chi^2(3) = 0.68$ ,  $p > .05$ , was statistically homogeneous.

### Correlations between the two parental behavior dimensions, self-concept and psychological maladjustment

Acceptance/involvement dimension showed statistically significant and positive correlations with the five dimensions of self-concept with effect sizes between small and

Table 2  
Correlations between the Two Major Dimensions of Parental Behavior with Self-Concept and Psychological Maladjustment

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. A/I	—												
2. S/I	.11**†	—											
3. Academic S.	.34*****††	-.08*†	—										
4. Social S.	.22*****††	-.04	.17***†	—									
5. Emotional S.	.08*†	-.14***†	.10***†	.19***††	—								
6. Family S.	.52***†††	-.19***††	.42***†††	.27***†††	.11**†	—							
7. Physical S.	.22*****††	-.04	.35*****†††	.36*****†††	.03	.26***†††	—						
8. Host./Aggr.	-.30***†††	.14***†	-.31***†††	-.10**†	-.15***†	-.39***††††	-.04	—					
9. Neg. S.	-.33***†††	.13***†	-.33***†††	-.35***†††	-.26***†††	-.46***††††	-.34***†††	.32***†††	—				
10. Neg. Self-Ade.	-.30***†††	.07*†	-.31***†††	-.35***†††	-.24***†††	-.40***††††	-.31***††††	.20***††††	.65***††††	—			
11. Emot. Irresp.	-.36***†††	.06	-.23***†††	-.39***††††	-.20***†††	-.40***††††	-.19***†††	.31***††††	.41***††††	.40***††††	—		
12. Emot. Inst.	-.17***†	.13***†	-.19***††	-.18***††	-.39***††††	-.16***†	-.13***†	.42***††††	.34***††††	.25***†††	.27***†††	—	
13. Neg. Worldview	-.25***†††	.12**†	-.24***†††	-.30***††††	-.29***††††	-.37***††††	-.20***†††	.33***††††	.50***††††	.38***††††	.31***††††	.36***††††	—

Note. A/I = Acceptance/Involvement; S/I = Strictness/Imposition; Academic S. = Academic Self-concept; Social S. = Social Self-concept; Emotional S. = Emotional Self-concept; Family S. = Family Self-concept; Physical S. = Physical Self-concept; Host/Aggr. = Hostility/Aggression; Neg. S. = Negative Self-esteem; Neg. Self-Ade. = Negative Self-adequacy; Emot. Irresp. = Emotional Irresponsiveness; Emot. Inst. = Emotional Instability; Neg. Worldview = Negative Worldview.

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

§Small effect size,  $r = .10$ ,  $R^2 = \eta^2 = .01\%$ , medium,  $r = .24$ ,  $R^2 = \eta^2 = .06\%$ , and large,  $r = .37$ ,  $R^2 = \eta^2 = .14\%$ . †small:  $r \leq .17$ , ††medium:  $r = .18-.30$ , †††large:  $r \geq .31$ .

medium. It also showed statistically significant and negative correlations with the six dimensions of psychological maladjustment evaluated with effect sizes between small and large. Strictness/imposition dimension showed statistically significant and negative correlations with the academic, emotional and family dimensions of self-concept with effect sizes between small and medium and, statistically significant and positive correlations with five of the six dimensions of psychological maladjustment with small effect sizes (hostility/aggression, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, emotional instability and negative worldview) (see Table 2).

### **Preliminary multivariate analysis**

The MANOVA applied with self-concept showed statistically significant differences in the main effects of *educational style*,  $\Lambda = .72$ ,  $F(15, 2076.34) = 17.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ , and *sex*,  $\Lambda = .847$ ,  $F(5, 752) = 27.18$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .15$ . A statistically significant interaction effect between *sex* and *age* was also found,  $\Lambda = .980$ ,  $F(5, 752) = 3.07$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ .

The MANOVA applied with psychological maladjustment showed statistically significant differences in the main effects of *educational style*,  $\Lambda = .818$ ,  $F(18, 2124.63) = 8.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ , *sex*,  $\Lambda = .927$ ,  $F(6, 751) = 9.90$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ , and *age*,  $\Lambda = .980$ ,  $F(6, 751) = 2.60$ ,  $p < .05$ ,

$\eta^2 = .03$ . No statistically significant interaction effect was obtained.

### **Parenting styles and self-concept**

The ANOVA showed significant differences in the five dimensions of self-concept evaluated (see Table 3). The Bonferroni tests ( $\alpha = .05$ ) indicated that children from indulgent families obtained statistically higher scores in academic and family self-concept, followed by adolescents from authoritative families, corresponding the statistically lower scores to children who defined their parents as authoritarian and neglectful. In emotional and physical self-concept, adolescents from indulgent families obtained statistically higher scores than children with authoritative, authoritarian and neglectful parents. Finally, adolescents from indulgent and authoritative families obtained statistically higher scores in social self-concept than children with authoritarian and neglectful parents. The detected effect sizes were between small and medium, from .04 to .21.

### **Parenting styles and psychological maladjustment**

Statistically significant differences in the six dimensions of psychological maladjustment evaluated were obtained (see Table 3). Tests conducted a posteriori (Bonferroni,  $\alpha = .05$ ) indicated that children from indulgent families obtained statistically lower scores in hostility/ag-

Table 3

*ANOVAs between the Four Educational Styles with Self-Concept and Psychological Adjustment*

Self-Concept	Parenting Style				F(3, 768)	$\eta^2$
	Authoritative	Indulgent	Authoritarian	Neglectful		
Academic self-concept	2.92 <sup>2</sup> (0.62)	3.18 <sup>1</sup> (0.49)	2.66 <sup>3</sup> (0.57)	2.65 <sup>3</sup> (0.61)	36.32***	.12 <sup>††</sup>
Social self-concept	3.15 <sup>1</sup> (0.48)	3.27 <sup>1</sup> (0.43)	3.00 <sup>2</sup> (0.48)	2.99 <sup>2</sup> (0.48)	15.27***	.06 <sup>†</sup>
Emotional self-concept	2.59 <sup>2</sup> (0.54)	2.80 <sup>1</sup> (0.54)	2.52 <sup>2</sup> (0.55)	2.52 <sup>2</sup> (0.53)	9.61***	.04 <sup>†</sup>
Family self-concept	3.48 <sup>2</sup> (0.48)	3.69 <sup>1</sup> (0.34)	3.03 <sup>3</sup> (0.62)	3.15 <sup>3</sup> (0.56)	65.98***	.21 <sup>†††</sup>
Physical self-concept	2.71 <sup>2</sup> (0.56)	2.86 <sup>1</sup> (0.56)	2.60 <sup>2</sup> (0.62)	2.57 <sup>2</sup> (0.60)	9.25***	.04 <sup>†</sup>
Psychological Adjustment						
Hostility/aggression	1.88 <sup>2</sup> (0.52)	1.73 <sup>3</sup> (0.51)	2.09 <sup>1</sup> (0.53)	2.08 <sup>1</sup> (0.53)	20.52***	.07 <sup>††</sup>
Negative self-esteem	1.81 <sup>2</sup> (0.49)	1.62 <sup>3</sup> (0.46)	2.06 <sup>1</sup> (0.48)	1.97 <sup>1</sup> (0.47)	30.60***	.11 <sup>††</sup>
Negative self-adequacy	1.86 <sup>2</sup> (0.47)	1.75 <sup>2</sup> (0.45)	2.04 <sup>1</sup> (0.50)	2.04 <sup>1</sup> (0.48)	16.90***	.06 <sup>†</sup>
Emotional irresponsiveness	2.08 <sup>2</sup> (0.51)	1.98 <sup>2</sup> (0.51)	2.41 <sup>1</sup> (0.56)	2.35 <sup>1</sup> (0.55)	30.40***	.11 <sup>††</sup>
Emotional Instability	2.63 <sup>1</sup> (0.53)	2.45 <sup>2</sup> (0.53)	2.74 <sup>1</sup> (0.48)	2.69 <sup>1</sup> (0.53)	11.39***	.04 <sup>†</sup>
Negative Worldview	2.03 <sup>2</sup> (0.56)	1.82 <sup>3</sup> (0.54)	2.18 <sup>1</sup> (0.55)	2.15 <sup>1</sup> (0.55)	16.65***	.06 <sup>†</sup>

#  $\alpha = .05, 1 > 2 > 3$ .\*\*\* $p < .001$ .§  $\eta^2 = .01 - .06$  (small effect<sup>†</sup>),  $> .06 - .14$  (medium effect<sup>††</sup>),  $> .14$  (large effect<sup>†††</sup>).

gression, negative self-esteem and negative worldview, followed by adolescents with authoritative parents, corresponding the statistically

higher scores to children from authoritarian and neglectful families. In emotional instability, adolescents from indulgent families obtained

statistically lower scores in comparison to children with authoritative, authoritarian and neglectful parents. Finally, in negative self-adequacy and emotional irresponsiveness, children with indulgent and authoritative parents obtained statistically lower scores than adolescents from authoritarian and neglectful families. The detected effect sizes were small, from .04 to .11.

### Main effects for demographic variables

Statistically significant differences in the variable sex in *academic self-concept*,  $F(1, 770) = 14.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ , *emotional self-concept*,  $F(1, 770) = 51.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ , and *physical self-concept*,  $F(1, 770) = 63.86$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ , were obtained. Females obtained statistically higher scores in *academic self-concept* ( $M = 2.95$ ,  $SD = 0.62$  vs.  $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ); while males obtained statistically higher scores in *emotional* and *physical self-concept* (respectively, *emotional self-concept*,  $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = 0.54$  vs.  $M = 2.51$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ , *physical self-concept*,  $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 0.57$  vs.  $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ). In psychological maladjustment, statistically significant differences in *hostility/aggression*,  $F(1, 770) = 10.16$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ , *negative self-adequacy*,  $F(1, 770) = 11.61$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ , *emotional instability*,  $F(1, 770) = 14.93$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ , and *negative worldview*,  $F(1,$

$770) = 4.08$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ , were obtained. Males obtained statistically higher scores in *hostility/aggression* and *negative worldview* (respectively, *hostility/aggression*,  $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 0.58$  vs.  $M = 1.88$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ , *negative worldview*,  $M = 2.08$ ,  $SD = 0.60$  vs.  $M = 1.99$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ); while females obtained statistically higher scores in *negative self-adequacy* and *emotional instability* (respectively, *negative self-adequacy*,  $M = 1.97$ ,  $SD = 0.48$  vs.  $M = 1.85$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ , *emotional instability*,  $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = 0.51$  vs.  $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ). In age, statistically significant differences in *hostility/aggression*,  $F(1, 770) = 3.99$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ , and *negative self-adequacy*,  $F(1, 770) = 4.69$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ , were obtained. Adolescents aged 15 to 17 years obtained statistically higher scores in *hostility/aggression* ( $M = 1.97$ ,  $SD = 0.53$  vs.  $M = 1.87$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ); while adolescents aged 12 to 14 years obtained statistically higher scores in *negative self-adequacy* ( $M = 1.96$ ,  $SD = 0.50$  vs.  $M = 1.88$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ).

### Interaction effect between demographic variables

A statistically significant interaction effect between sex and age in physical self-concept,  $F(1, 756) = 6.95$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ , was obtained. The analyses performed a posteriori indicated that, when adolescents are aged between 12 and 14 years old there are not statistically significant differences be-

tween males and females; but, when they are aged between 15 and 17 years old, males have a statistically higher physical self-concept than females (see Figure 1).

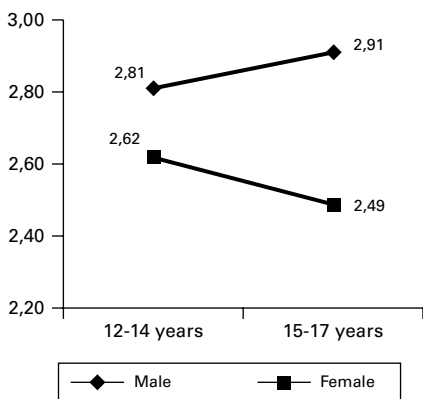


Figure 1. Interaction between sex and age in physical self-concept.

## Discussion

Due to the current debate in the literature on the adequacy of combining or not parental affection and imposition in the socialization process for the appropriate psychosocial adjustment of children, the aim of the present study was to analyze which parenting style is related to the best psychological adjustment in Spanish adolescents. Considering the results obtained in previous research carried out in Spain about adolescents' psychosocial adjustment, it was expected that children from families characterized by a parenting style based fundamentally

on affection but not on imposition, the indulgent style, was related to the best results in the psychological adjustment criteria evaluated.

The results obtained confirm this hypothesis. First, it was found that parental behavior based on demonstrations of affection and warmth, support and dialogue using the reasoning to correct the maladjusted behavior of children, the acceptance/involvement dimension, was significantly related to higher self-concept in all its dimensions and fewer psychological maladjustment problems in children; while parental strictness and imposition to set the behavior limits in their children, the strictness/imposition dimension, was significantly related to lower academic, emotional and family self-concept, and higher hostility/aggression, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, emotional instability and negative worldview problems.

In the same way, the educational style characterized fundamentally by parental affection but not by parental imposition (high acceptance/involvement and low strictness/imposition), the indulgent style, was significantly related to the best results in the criteria of psychological adjustment of children. Adolescents from indulgent families obtained significantly higher scores in the academic, emotional, family and physical self-concept dimensions than children who characterized their parents with an authoritative behavior style (high affection

and high imposition), authoritarian (low affection and high imposition) and neglectful (low affection and low imposition). Although the results showed no significant differences between the indulgent and the authoritative style in the social dimension of self-concept, adolescents with indulgent parents obtained higher scores. With respect to psychological maladjustment, adolescents from indulgent families obtained significantly lower scores in hostility/aggression, negative self-esteem, emotional instability and negative worldview than children with authoritative, authoritarian and neglectful parents. Again, although no significant differences were found between the indulgent and the authoritative style in negative self-adequacy and emotional irresponsiveness, children from indulgent families obtained, one more time, the lowest scores.

These results allow concluding, therefore, that the educational indulgent style (high acceptance/involvement and low strictness/imposition) is the parenting style which is related to the best results in psychological adjustment in Spanish adolescents. These results are consistent with those obtained in previous research conducted in our cultural context about children's psychosocial adjustment (Calafat et al., 2014; Cerezo et al., 2011; Garaigordobil & Aliri, 2012; Gracia et al., 2012; Martínez et al., 2013). Although the results of different studies carried out in other cul-

tural contexts have concluded that only parental imposition (Dwairy, 2008; Dwairy & Menshar, 2006; Hoff et al., 2002), or its combination with parental affection (Aunola et al., 2000; Baumrind, 1991; Kritzas & Grobler, 2005; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994) is necessary for the adequate psychological and social adjustment, the results of this study do not allow concluding that in Spain parental imposition is related to the best results in the psychological adjustment of children; since, first, it was significantly related to lower scores in self-concept (academic, social, emotional, family and physical) and significantly higher scores in psychological maladjustment (hostility/aggression, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, emotional instability and negative worldview). Also, adolescents from families characterized by strictness behavior (authoritative and authoritarian) always obtained significantly lower scores than adolescents from families that are not characterized by this behavior style but by affection, the indulgent style. Concluding, thus, that the affective involvement of parents in the socialization process showing them affection and warmth, offering them their support and communicating with them using reasoning when they behave inadequately, is necessary and fundamental for the adequate psychological and emotional development and adjustment in Spanish adolescents (Alegre et al., 2013; Alonso-

Geta, 2012; García & Gracia, 2009, 2010; Martínez et al., 2013).

These results did not vary when the adolescents' sex and age were considered; that is to say, no significant interaction effects between the parental socialization styles and the demographic variables were found in the psychological adjustment criteria evaluated, supporting, in this way, the results obtained in previous research that conclude that the changes in these demographic variables do not significantly vary the relationships between the parenting styles and children's psychosocial adjustment (García & Gracia, 2009, 2010; Lamborn et al., 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Steinberg et al., 1994). These results suggest that the parenting style characterized fundamentally by affection but not by parental imposition, the indulgent style, is the parenting style which relates significantly to the best psychological adjustment in Spanish adolescents despite the developmental changes associated with the adolescents' sex and age. In this sense, significant differences in the criteria evaluated were found in these demographic variables. Males obtained significantly higher scores in emotional and physical self-concept and in hostility/aggression and negative worldview; while females scored significantly higher in academic self-concept and negative self-adequacy and emotional instability. In age, the adolescents aged between 15 and 17 years old obtained significantly higher scores in

hostility/aggression than the adolescents aged between 12 and 14 years old who obtained significantly higher scores in negative self-adequacy. This set of results is consistent with those obtained in previous research (Esnaola, 2009; Molero, Zagalaz-Sánchez, & Cachón-Zagalaz, 2013).

As limitations of the study, it is necessary to mention that the classification of the families according to their parenting style was based on children responses. However, results of different studies that have used parents' responses for the classification to their parenting style are similar to those obtained in the present study (Alonso-Geta, 2012; Garai-gordobil & Aliri, 2012). Moreover, there is empirical evidence that concludes that children responses tend to be less biased by social desirability than parents' responses (Barry, Frick, & Grafeman, 2008). Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not allow making conclusions about causal relationships between the study variables. Further research using, at least, quasi-experimental designs would deepen the analysis of these relationships (Ato, López, & Benavente, 2013; Veiga, García, Neto, & Almeida, 2009).

Despite these limitations, results of this study highlight the importance of the parental behavior based fundamentally on affection and warmth, support and involvement as well as the use of dialogue and reasoning with children in the socialization process for their ade-



quate psychological and emotional adjustment, providing, thus, empirical evidence to the emerging research conducted in Spain that concludes that the indulgent style is the parenting style that is related to the best results in children's psychosocial adjustment. In this way, it is highlighted the necessity of considering in our cultural context the family context in the design of effective intervention programs to promote the use of appropriate educational strategies by encouraging parental behavior patterns that favor children's adaptation and well-being both in the family and in other development environments, especially in school, secondary agent of

socialization that shares the responsibility of children's education with family (Spera, 2006), emphasizing the importance of parental participation and involvement in the teaching-learning process to successfully get the full development and adjustment of children in society.

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