

Parental Socialization and Adjustment Components in Adolescents and Middle-Aged Adults: How are They Related?

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Purpose: Classic studies mainly of European-American families broadly identify the benefits of parental strictness combined with parental warmth. However, current research tends to identify parental warmth as positive for adjustment, even without parental strictness. In addition, less is known about the relationship between parenting and adjustment beyond adolescence. The present study examined warmth and strictness and its relationship with self, sexism, and stimulation values. Self-esteem, academic-professional self-concept, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values were used to capture adjustment.

Patients and Methods: Participants (n = 1125) were adolescents and adult children of middle-age from Spain. The statistical analyses used were correlation analysis and multiple linear regression.

Results: In general, the relationship between parenting and adjustment was found to have a similar pattern for adolescent and middle-aged adult children, although more marked in adolescents. Parental warmth and strictness were predictors of adjustment, but in a different direction. Specifically, parental warmth positively predicted academic-professional self-concept and self-esteem, whereas parental strictness was detrimental as a predictor of higher benevolent sexism.

Conclusion: Overall, the present findings suggest that an effective socialization during the socialization years and even beyond can be positively predicted by parental warmth, whereas parental strictness might be unnecessary or even detrimental.

Keywords: parenting, parental socialization, family, adjustment, adolescence, adulthood

Introduction

The socialization process takes place in different contexts in which several agents participate such as parents,¹ peers,² teachers,³ and the media.⁴ Parental socialization is the process of transmitting social values or standards with the objective that the child, who is immature and dependent, when reaching the adult age becomes a mature adult, autonomous, and adjusted to social demands.^{5–7} Once the children reach adult age, they and their parents are both adults.^{8,9} Adult children tend to maintain the relationship with their parents,¹⁰ while continuing their development in the areas of work, partnership, and even becoming parents themselves.^{11–13} An important question is to know the relationship between parenting dimensions and child adjustment during parental socialization, for example, in adolescence but also when parental socialization is ended, such as in middle-life.

Much of the studies on parenting use the two-dimensional model, based on two theoretically orthogonal or non-related dimensions: warmth and strictness.^{14–17} Parental warmth refers to parental love, support, and acceptance. It represents the degree to which parents show their children warmth and acceptance, give them support, and communicate reasoning with them.^{18,19} On the opposite side, parental strictness is also known as discipline or rigor as parents control their children's behavior by maintaining an assertive authority position with their children.^{18,20}

Parents can be characterized by two main dimensions: warmth and strictness.^{14,17,21,22} Within parents defined by higher levels of warmth, those characterized by high strictness or authoritativeness have been distinguished from those characterized by low strictness or indulgentness. Authoritative families are close and involved and use reasoning with their children, but, at the same time, they are strict and tend to use authority and punishment to correct misbehavior. The indulgent families are also close and involved in parenting and use reasoning as a way of correcting their children but without using punishment and imposition.^{14,23,24} Within parents defined by lower levels of warmth, those characterized by high strictness or authoritarian homes have been distinguished from those characterized by low strictness or neglectful homes. Both families share low involvement, less love and warmth, and less use of reasoning and dialogue. In addition, authoritarian families use correction and authority, without reasoning when their children misbehave.^{14,23,24}

Family studies examine the relationship between parenting and child adjustment. Overall, according to the studies mainly carried out with European-American families, only greater parental strictness when is combined to greater parental warmth (ie, the authoritative style) tends to be related to the highest child adjustment.^{6,8,23,25–30} Children benefit from high levels of parental strictness combined with high levels of parental warmth reporting good self-perceptions^{23,29} and self-esteem,^{31,32} fewer behavioral problems^{23,26} and a good social adjustment^{28,29} and greater internalization of norms.^{23,29} Nevertheless, the combination of greater levels of warmth and strictness are not always associated with the highest adjustment in all cultural contexts.^{15–17,33–35} Some studies revealed some benefits of higher parental strictness accompanied by low warmth in ethnic minority families from US such as African-American^{35,36} and Chinese-American^{34,37} as well as in those from Arab Societies.^{38–40}

Additionally, emergent studies mainly conducted in European and South American countries revealed the benefits of parental warmth but with lower parental strictness on child adjustment.^{4,16,17,41–50} Children raised in homes characterized by high warmth with low strictness (ie, the indulgent style) showed the greatest adjustment in different indicators such as self,^{43,46} maturity,¹⁷ less problems and better social adjustment,^{47,48} school achievement,^{16,48} and internalization of social values.^{43,44}

Among the objectives of socialization are that children achieve self-confidence and a good self-perception, as well as an adequate social adjustment to social demands and the internalization of social values. Within self-perceptions, self-esteem as the global dimension and self-concept as the specific components have been distinguished.^{32,51–54} Self-esteem and self-concept have been considered important indicators of psychosocial adjustment in children, adolescents, and adults across cultural contexts,^{31,32,43,55–60} although some scholars have described differences in self-concept scores across ethnic and cultural contexts.^{56,61} Self-concept, defined as a person's perception of self in different domains, is formed through experiences with the environment,⁶² and it is influenced by environmental reinforcement and significant others, such as parents.^{52,56,57} Specifically, academic/professional self-concept, defined as self-perceptions of competence in school and work, is positively related to academic performance and success in high school and college studies, as well as in work and career.^{52,53,56,63}

Furthermore, a good adaptation to any cultural context requires a great adjustment of the individual to the demands of society.^{11,14–17} Prejudice represents a drastic form of poor adaptation to the demands of society. Sexism is a prejudice against women, which is related to high maladaptation^{64–66} and even to a higher probability of aggressive behavior.^{67,68} Sexism, in general terms, has been related to attitudes that legitimize violence against women.^{64,65} This is particularly benevolent sexism, which according to the theory of ambivalent sexism is conceptualized as a set of beliefs about women and their relationship to men that are subjectively positive but are stereotyped by seeing women in restricted roles.^{66,69}

Additionally, the internalization of social values represents the individual identification with their own society, so that the socially acceptable behavior is motivated by internal and not external factors, is one of the main objectives of parental socialization,^{14,15,70} and it has been identified as the key to obtaining well-developed children.^{6,17,44,50,71,72} It has also been observed that parenting differentially affect children's internalization of values.^{70,72} Within social values, stimulation values derive from the organismic need for variety and stimulation.^{73,74} The stimulation values help to maintain an optimal, positive, rather than threatening, level of activation. In this sense, stimulation values are related to the need underlying self-direction values.^{74,75}

The Present Study

The present study analyzes the relationship between warmth and strictness parenting dimensions with child adjustment in adolescents and also in middle-aged adults. Most of parenting studies have focused on socialization years (ie, childhood and adolescence),^{6,17,23,27} but less is known about the if the relationship between parenting dimensions and child adjustment shows a similar pattern once parenting is ended, in adult children of middle years. In particular, family studies with middle-aged adults tend to be focused on their developmental task as parents and their relationship with their children, who are often adolescents^{76–78} or with their parents, who are usually older adults.^{12,79–82} However, less has been explored for middle-aged adults as adult children in their relationship with their parents during socialization years based on warmth and strictness. Even when examining parenting and adjustment in middle-life, middle-aged adults and adolescents who are raised by their parents have not been compared at the same time based on the main parenting dimensions and using the same outcomes or criteria for the comparisons.⁸³

The present study aims to examine the relationship between parental warmth and strictness with self (academic/professional self-concept and self-esteem), benevolent sexism, and stimulation values in adolescents and middle-aged adults. It is expected that parental warmth would be related to greater scores in adjustment in terms of greater scores in self and values and lower in benevolent sexism. By contrast, it was also expected that parental strictness would not be associated with adjustment.

Materials and Methods

Design and Setting

The design includes four independent variables, parental warmth, parental strictness, age, and sex, as well as four dependent variables, which were academic-professional self-concept, self-esteem, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values. The methodology of the present study is non-experimental as in most of previous parenting studies conducted with a community sample in US²³ and Europe⁴⁸ but also in non-western setting such as Arab Societies.³⁸ The study was conducted in a European country: Spain. Participants were attending from high school or from middle-class neighborhoods in a Spanish city of approximately one million inhabitants.

Participants and Recruitment

The study was based on adolescent children and adult children of midlife. There are different criteria to define age groups, especially adolescence,^{84,85} for example, a recent proposal suggests adolescence up to 24 years of age.⁸⁶ However, age groups for adolescents and middle-aged adults were defined based on previous parenting studies. Adolescent children were participants aged 12 to 18 years,^{87,88} while adult children from midlife were participants aged 36 to 59 years.^{89,90} The inclusion criteria were as follows: (a) they were Spanish, as well as their parents and grandparents; (b) lived in two-parent nuclear families with a mother or primary women caregiver and a father or primary male caregiver.

The sampling method for the participants (adolescents and middle-aged adults) was as follows: Adolescent participants were recruited from the full list of high schools (six were selected and one of them refused to participate). For this purpose, the principals of each high school invited to participate were contacted. If high school refused to participate, a replacement high school was elected from the full list until the required sample size was reached.^{42,47} Middle-aged respondents were recruited from randomly selected middle-class neighborhoods. The selection of middle-aged respondents was based on door-to-door canvassing. The different neighborhoods were stratified by quartiles of household wealth, and four middle-class neighborhoods were randomly selected. This sampling method is usually used with middle-aged adults in community studies.^{91,92}

Measures

Parental Socialization

Parental socialization was assessed under two main dimensions (ie, warmth and strictness). Warmth was measured with 20 items from Warmth/Affection Scale (WAS).⁹³ This scale measures the degree to which children perceive their parents

as warm and affectionate (eg, “Say nice things about me”). WAS adult version measures the degree to which adult children had perceived their parents as warm and affectionate and has all items written in the past tense (eg, “Said nice things about me”). The alpha value was 0.945. Strictness was measured with 13 items from Parental Control Scale (PCS).⁹³ This scale measures the degree to which children perceive their parents as controlling and strict (eg, “It make sure that I know exactly what I can and can not do”). The PCS adult version measures the degree to which adult children had perceived their parents as controlling and strict and has all items written in the past tense (eg, “It made sure that I knew exactly what I could and could not do”). The alpha value was 0.907. For the two scales, responses were given on a 4-point scale from 1 (“almost never true”) to 4 (“almost always true”). In general, studies with adult children use the same measures to assess parenting as the one used for adolescent children, but the items are written in the past tense, as in WAS and PCS scales⁹⁴ but also in other questionnaires.^{95,96} The WAS and PCS scales are reliable and valid measures for children to assess parental socialization, ie, the degree of warmth and strictness used by their parents in the socialization process and beyond.^{94,97,98} Higher scores on the WAS and PCS scales represent a higher degree of parental warmth and strictness.⁹⁹

Adjustment

The academic-professional self-concept was measured with the 6-item subscale of the Form 5 Self-Concept Scale [AF5].¹⁰⁰ This dimension of the self includes how one perceives oneself in the academic/professional context (eg, “I do my homework well [professional works]”), and how one feels that one’s teachers/superiors value one’s performance (eg, “My superiors [teachers] think that I am a hard worker”). Participants responded on a scale of 1 to 99, being 1 (strongly disagree) and 99 (strongly agree). The higher the score on the scale, the higher the academic-professional self-concept. The alpha value was 0.902. The AF5 questionnaire has been widely applied in adolescents^{42,43,46} and adults.^{9,24,101} Exploratory analyses¹⁰⁰ and confirmatory factor analyses^{102–104} have been carried out and have proven the invariance in the dimensional structure of the AF5 in different cultural contexts such as Spain,¹⁰³ Portugal,¹⁰⁵ Brazil,⁵² Chile,¹⁰¹ United States,¹⁰⁶ and China.⁵⁶ Besides, its invariance by sex and age has been validated in several studies across different languages, such as Brazilian-Portuguese,⁵² Portuguese,¹⁰⁵ Chinese,⁵⁶ and English¹⁰⁶ with the Spanish version.

Self-esteem was measured with the 10-item Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale [RSE].⁵¹ This scale assesses the extent of self-acceptance and self-respect (eg, “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself”). Participants responded on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The higher the score on the scale, the higher the self-esteem. The alpha value was 0.848. This scale is one of the most widely used measures of global self-esteem.¹⁰⁷

Benevolent sexism was measured with the 11-item subscale of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory Scale [SAS].⁶⁵ This scale assesses the extent of benevolent sexism understood as “viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles, but are subjectively positive in feeling tone (for the perceiver) and also tend to elicit behaviors typically categorized as prosocial (eg, helping) or intimacy-seeking (eg, self-disclosure)”⁶⁵ p. 491. A sample of item is “Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.” Participants responded on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The higher the score on the scale, the higher the benevolent sexism. The alpha value was 0.875.

Stimulation values were measured with the 3-item subscale of the Schwartz’s Values Inventory [VAL].¹⁰⁸ This scale assesses the excitement, novelty, and challenge in life (eg, “A variegated life [Full of challenges, changes and surprises]”). Participants responded on a scale of 1 to 99, being 1 (strongly disagree) and 99 (strongly agree). The higher the score on the scale, the higher the stimulation values. The alpha value was 0.770.

Data Collection

Power analysis was calculated with G*Power, a statistical program widely used in previous studies.^{109,110} A priori power analysis showed that with a small effect size ($R^2 = 0.010$, $R = 0.100$), assuming a type I error probability of 0.05 and a power of 0.95, a sample of 1302 is required to find statistically significant differences.^{109,111} However, the sensitivity analysis showed that with the sample size of the study ($n = 1125$) and assuming a probability of type I error of 0.05 and a power of 0.95, statistically significant differences can be found with a small effect size ($R^2 = 0.016$, $R = 0.128$).^{112,113}

Data were collected through online questionnaires with mandatory responses that participants completed during 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 academic years. The data collection tools contains an online survey that includes all measures (parental socialization, academic-professional self-concept, self-esteem, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values) and demographic basic data (ie, age and sex). It was mandatory to answer all the items of the online survey. Additionally, it should be considered that respondents (a) participated voluntarily; (b) informed consent was requested; (c) anonymity of responses was warranted; and (d) parental consent was obligatory for adolescent participation. To warrant anonymity of responses, identifiers and survey data were deposited in independent files and directory passwords were protected, and sensitive files were coded.

The questionnaires were screened for questionable response patterns,^{101,104} and those participants whose responses were questionable were eliminated. About 1.6% ($n = 18$) of the participants were deleted from the sample due to questionable response patterns such as implausible inconsistencies between negatively and positively formulated responses.

Research Ethics Committee Approval or Ethical Consideration

The investigation was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The research project was approved by the College Research Ethics Committee (CREC) of Nottingham Trent University (protocol code No. 2017/90, May 2017) for studies involving humans.

Data Analysis

Correlation and multiple linear regression analysis were performed. Correlation analysis was performed between the two main parenting dimensions (warmth and strictness) and four child adjustment criteria (academic-professional self-concept, self-esteem, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values) that were measured separately for adolescent and middle-aged children. In addition, a linear regression was applied in which the predicted variables were the four child adjustment criteria (academic-professional self-concept, self-esteem, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values) and the predictors were the two main parenting dimensions (ie, warmth and strictness), age and sex.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

The present study was composed of a sample of 1125 participants (687 women, 61.1%, and 438 males, 38.9%; $M = 30.59$; $SD = 16.43$) that included adolescent children and middle-aged children. The adolescent children group consisted of 628 participants (56%) aged from 12 to 18 years ($M = 16.53$; $SD = 1.72$); the sex distribution of the adolescent children group was 379 women (60.4%) and 249 men (39.6%). On the other hand, the middle-aged group was composed of 497 participants (44%) aged from 36 to 59 years ($M = 48.36$; $SD = 6.46$); the sex distribution of the middle-aged group was 308 women (62.0%) and 189 men (38.0%). Age-specific and sex-specific descriptives were as follows: for adolescent women, $M = 16.74$, $SD = 1.65$; for adolescent men, $M = 16.22$, and $SD = 1.80$; for middle-aged women, $M = 48.49$, $SD = 6.17$, and for middle-aged men, $M = 48.13$, $SD = 6.92$ (see Table 1).

Table 1 Participants Characteristics for Age, Sex, and Frequency

	Adolescents		Middle-Aged Adults	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
n	379	249	308	189
Percentage	60.4	39.6	62.0	38.0
M years	16.74	16.22	48.49	48.13
SD years	1.65	1.80	6.17	6.92

Relation Between Study Variables

The results of the correlation analysis between parenting dimensions (ie, warmth and strictness) and the four child adjustment criteria (academic-professional self-concept, self-esteem, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values) are presented in Table 2. Some statistically significant correlations were found between the parenting dimensions and the four criteria named above.

In general, in both adolescent and middle-aged children, parental warmth was positively related to adjustment scores, giving positive correlations with academic-professional self-concept and self-esteem. On the contrary, parental strictness seems to be related to mixed results in adolescents, with more costs than benefits. Specifically, a high degree of strictness correlated negatively with academic-professional self-concept and positively with greater benevolent sexism. At the same time, more strictness is related to greater stimulation values, even though the value of the correlation is low. Among middle-aged adults, parental strictness did not show any relation to the different criteria of child adjustment.

Additionally, some child adjustment criteria were positively correlated between them. In the case of adolescents, a positive correlation was observed between academic-professional self-concept, self-esteem, and stimulation values. A negative correlation was also observed between benevolent sexism and academic-professional self-concept. In the case of middle-aged adults, it was found that the higher the academic-professional self-concept, the higher the self-esteem, and the lower the benevolent sexism. In addition, benevolent sexism was related to worse scores in academic-professional self-concept and self-esteem.

Relation Between Parenting and Adjustment

The results of the linear multiple regression analysis were similar to those obtained in the correlation analysis. Results for the predictions of the four criteria (academic-professional self-concept, self-esteem, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values), as a function of parenting dimensions (ie, warmth and strictness) and age and sex are presented in Table 3.

A multiple linear regression model was performed for each dependent variable. In general, the different parenting dimensions predicted the child adjustment criteria. In both the correlation and regression analyses, a common pattern was observed: parental warmth was positively related to child adjustment, while parental strictness was not related to child adjustment and may even be negatively associated with child adjustment.

The four models for regression reached a statistically significant level ($p < 0.05$). Parental warmth and strictness were predictors of adjustment, but in a different direction. Parental warmth was a significant positive predictor of academic-professional self-concept and self-esteem, whereas parental strictness did not reach a statistically significant level in most of the criteria. Greater scores on academic-professional self-concept and self-esteem were predicted by parental warmth. However, strictness alone did not positively predict any criteria and was even a significant predictor of benevolent sexism. Higher scores on benevolent sexism were predicted by parental strictness.

Relation Between Age and Sex with Adjustment

In general, age and sex also predicted child adjustment criteria. On the one hand, age was a statistically significant positive predictor of academic-professional self-concept and self-esteem and a negative predictor of stimulation values. Thus, among middle-aged adults in comparison to adolescents, their scores were higher on academic-professional self-

Table 2 Correlations Between Parental Dimensions and Child Adjustment[#]

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Parental warmth		-0.268**	0.308**	0.272**	-0.072	0.047
2. Parental strictness	-0.229**		-0.111**	-0.065	0.234**	0.081*
3. Academic-professional self-concept	0.234**	0.015		0.291**	-0.121**	0.107**
4. Self-esteem	0.248**	-0.079	0.407**		-0.017	0.143**
5. Benevolent sexism	-0.025	0.006	-0.118**	-0.123**		-0.022
6. Stimulation values	0.009	-0.070	0.020	0.115*	0.000	

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$. [#]Correlations for adolescents are shown above the diagonal and for middle-aged adults below the diagonal.

Table 3 Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients Between Parenting Dimensions, Sex, and Age and Child Adjustment

Dependent Variable	Predictors	B	SE	β	t	Lower	Upper
Academic-professional self-concept $R^2_{adj} = 0.184$ $F(4, 1120) = 64.56^{***}$	Parental warmth	0.034	0.004	0.249	8.72***	0.026	0.042
	Parental strictness	-0.003	0.005	-0.016	-0.56	-0.013	0.007
	Age	0.553	0.043	0.357	12.75***	0.468	0.638
	Sex	-0.519	0.086	-0.164	-6.04***	-0.687	-0.350
Self-esteem $R^2_{adj} = 0.105$ $F(4, 1120) = 33.99^{***}$	Parental warmth	0.011	0.001	0.268	8.99***	0.009	0.014
	Parental strictness	0.000	0.002	0.007	0.23	-0.003	0.004
	Age	0.110	0.014	0.235	8.02***	0.083	0.137
	Sex	0.098	0.027	0.103	3.62***	0.045	0.152
Benevolent sexism $R^2_{adj} = 0.069$ $F(4, 1120) = 21.87^{***}$	Parental warmth	0.000	0.003	0.005	0.18	-0.005	0.006
	Parental strictness	0.019	0.004	0.160	5.20***	0.012	0.027
	Age	0.010	0.031	0.009	0.32	-0.051	0.070
	Sex	0.489	0.061	0.233	8.01***	0.369	0.609
Stimulation values $R^2_{adj} = 0.108$ $F(4, 1120) = 35.10^{***}$	Parental warmth	0.007	0.005	0.038	1.28	-0.004	0.017
	Parental strictness	0.006	0.007	0.025	0.84	-0.008	0.019
	Age	-0.628	0.057	-0.321	-10.96***	-0.741	-0.516
	Sex	0.307	0.113	0.077	2.70**	0.084	0.529

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

concept and self-esteem, but lower on stimulation values. On the other hand, sex was a statistically significant predictor for academic-professional self-concept, self-esteem, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values. Men reported higher scores on self-esteem, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values, while women had greater scores on academic/professional self-concept.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between parental socialization and the adjustment of adolescent and middle-aged adult children. The results showed that the dimensions of parental socialization were consistently related to children's adjustment. While parental warmth was beneficial to children's adjustment, parental strictness was unrelated to or even detrimental to adjustment.

On the one hand, correlational analyses for adolescent and middle-aged adult children revealed that they showed a similar pattern in the relationship between parental dimensions (ie, warmth and strictness) and adjustment, although more marked in adolescents. On the other hand, regression analyses allowed statistically significant predictions of differences in self-esteem, professional academic self-concept, and benevolent sexism as a function of socialization type. Thus, parental warmth was a positive predictor of self-esteem and academic/professional self-concept. According to this prediction model, the more warmth during socialization, the higher the general self-esteem (self-esteem) and academic/professional self-perceptions (self-concept). Parental strictness was not a statistically significant predictor, and even benevolent sexism reached statistical significance as a predictor of greater scores. Thus, the higher the levels of strictness, the greater the predisposition to sexism against women. Some studies have examined parental socialization beyond adolescence, mainly with young adults^{41,114,115} and, to a lesser extent, middle-aged adults.⁸³ According to previous studies, parental socialization, even beyond adolescence, shows a pattern consistent with the adjustment of adult children compared to children and adolescents. The present findings confirm some previous studies that the relationship between parenting and adjustment is quite similar for adolescents and adult children of middle-aged, although more marked in adolescents. Additionally, the present study adds new evidence by examining parental socialization in adolescent and middle-aged adult children at the same time and using the same adjustment criteria.

Previous research has linked parenting (which is examined through warmth and strictness) and child and adolescent adjustment. The results of the present study are consistent with a growing body of research, conducted primarily in

European and Latin American countries, that identifies the broad benefits of warmth without strictness (the indulgent parenting).^{16,17,44,45,48,90} Consistent with this previous evidence, the results of the present study identify the benefits of parental warmth, which allow the child to obtain good adjustment, in terms of confidence in oneself as a valuable member of the society (ie, self-esteem) and good perception of his or her school and professional performance (ie, academic/professional self-concept). Parental strictness seems unnecessary or even detrimental due to it leads to an increase in prejudice against women in subtle ways (ie, benevolent sexism).

It is important to note that the findings of the present research do not coincide with those mainly from middle-class European-American families. According to these studies, only the combination of high strictness and high warmth is always beneficial for children's adjustment. In this sense, mainly for a good adjustment to social demands, few behavioral problems and good internalization of norms, children from strict families obtain the highest scores.^{23,25,28} However, the present study shows that parental strictness positively predicts benevolent sexism, a form of lack of adjustment to norms associated with maladjustment or even aggressive behavior. Given this new evidence that questions classic results, mainly from research with European-American families, it is especially important to analyze parental socialization in different cultural contexts because the combination of warmth and strictness (authoritative parenting) may not always be the most beneficial.^{15,33,35}

Likewise, age and sex were included in the regression models. In relation to age, it was a positive predictor of professional self-concept/academic and self-esteem and a negative predictor of stimulation values. Thus, middle-aged adults, compared to adolescents, showed better scores in self (self-esteem and academic/professional self-concept) but also lower priority for stimulation values than adolescents. Sex was a predictor of self-esteem, academic/professional self-concept, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values. Thus, the regression models predicted higher academic/professional self-concept in women, whereas, in men, greater self-esteem, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values.

There comes a time when the adolescent reaches adult age and parental socialization ends. Middle-aged adults probably have developed their professional career, they have a couple and perhaps their own family, being parents. The findings from this study reveal differences between middle-aged and adolescents given that they are at different life stages, middle-aged adults showing more academic/professional self-concept and self-esteem, and adolescents more priority for stimulation values. Many family studies have studied middle-aged adults in relation to their parents (older adults)^{79,82} or their children (probably adolescents),^{76,77} although this study focuses on the socialization process when they were raised by their parents. However, according to the present study, adult children even in middle age, like adolescents, benefit from a good self-esteem and academic/professional self-concept, which are key to functioning in society, if their families have been involved (high parental warmth). However, if they have been raised in families characterized by imposition (high parental strictness), they tend to show any benefit and even more mismatch in terms of benevolent sexism. This study shows that, even some time after socialization, there may be differences in adjustment also related to the type of family.

The present study has some important strengths. First, this study examined family socialization using an established theoretical framework: the two-dimensional model.¹⁴ In addition, most studies related to parental socialization have been conducted with samples of adolescents.^{4,16,23,29} In contrast, this model allows us to know in detail and in greater depth what are the positive or negative correlates of parental socialization, while it is taking place and once it has ended. In this way, predictions of children's adjustment can be made as follows: parental warmth during the socialization years would always be positive for adjustment, whereas parental severity would be unnecessary or even detrimental. In addition, this study adds new evidence focusing on middle-aged adults. This study is conducted based on four indicators that are relevant to the development of adolescents and middle-aged children: self-esteem, academic/professional self-concept, benevolent sexism, and stimulation values.

However, some limitations should be considered. Due to the long-time from parental socialization in middle-aged children, caution is advised because the study is not based on longitudinal data but is a cross-sectional study. However, a consistent pattern is observed between the dimensions of parental socialization (ie, warmth and strictness) and children's adjustment. Future follow-up studies should analyze the consequences of parental socialization by following the evolution of adult children during adulthood. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that no experimental methodology was followed in conducting this study.

The results of the present study do not completely coincide with those of classic studies, mainly of European-American families, in which it is found that the combination of high warmth and high strictness has a beneficial impact on adjustment.^{23,29} Therefore, when studying the relationship between the parental dimensions, which are warmth and strictness, with adjustment components, the cultural context in which socialization occurs must be considered.^{15,17,33} The main question of whether authoritative parenting is associated with universal benefits requires extending the study of parental socialization across the globe; different countries or cultural settings should be compared at the same time to identify optimal parenting using invariant measures so that the results are comparable. Furthermore, within the same society, different contexts, such as poverty and at-risk neighborhood, should be considered, or the correlates of parenting among children with different characteristics, such as school underachievement or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), should be examined. Future studies should conduct longitudinal follow-ups of adult children after parental socialization, despite the difficulties associated with follow-up. In addition, it seems relevant to examine parental socialization beyond adolescence; future research with adult children could use specific features of adjustment outcomes such as romantic relationship quality and identity status in young adulthood, parental stress and marital satisfaction in middle adulthood, and ego integrity and care for grandchildren in late life.

Implications for Practice

The present findings on the relationship between parental socialization and adjustment in adolescence, but also in midlife, have important implications for practice. Any professional practice should be based on previous research. According to the present findings, the use of parental strictness seems unnecessary or even detrimental, despite the fact that it is widely identified as beneficial in previous studies conducted primarily with European-American parents²³ and widely recommended in interventions with families.¹¹⁶ Current interventions may not be effective, at least in the European context, where, according to some emerging research, children benefit especially when they have relationships with their parents based on love, affection, and dialogue, but not on strict parenting practices.^{117,118}

Interestingly, most interventions with families in professional practice are with adolescent children, partly because that is when they are likely to have the most problems.¹¹⁹ However, even after the socialization years, in adulthood there is also a relationship between adjustment and maladjustment with the type of family socialization. Therefore, professional practice focused on middle-aged adults may also be possible. Even if they do not have clinical problems, middle-aged adult children who grew up without parental warmth (affection, and involvement) are more likely to have adjustment problems. Especially for middle-aged adults, many of whom are involved in the difficult dual task of raising their children (in many cases, adolescents) and caring for their parents (likely older adults),¹²⁰ an intervention based on life review of the socialization years might be especially helpful.¹²¹

Conclusions

The objective of parental socialization is for children to have maturity and independence when they reach adult age, when they are no longer under the care and supervision of their parents. A theoretical model based on two dimensions, warmth and strictness, has traditionally been used to study parental socialization.¹⁴ The results of the present study seem to suggest that parental socialization is related to children's adjustment, not only while parents are raising their children but also beyond adolescence. Even when socialization is over, a similar pattern is observed in middle-aged children between parental dimensions and adjustment to that found in adolescent children, but less marked, probably because of other variables and adult developmental influences. Thus, when predicting adjustment not only in adolescence but also in adulthood (eg, middle age), the influence of the family during the socialization process should be considered. However, the dimensions of socialization do not predict adjustment in the same direction. According to the present study, parental warmth positively predicts adjustment, the more scores the greater the adjustment of children in terms of self-esteem and academic/professional self-concept. However, strictness was not beneficial and even predicted greater benevolent sexism, the stricter the parents were, the more sexist the children would be.

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