

**BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY**

**The Association between Mothers' Parenting Style,  
Their Quality of Verbal-Emotional Communication,  
and the Child's Emotional Understanding as  
Expressed in Verbal Responses and Drawing of  
Facial Expressions**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of the current study was to examine whether there is an association between the mother's authoritarian parenting style and: a) the quality of verbal-emotional communication between mother and child; b) the emotional comprehension ability of preschool children, manifested in naming and comprehending emotions following drawings and short stories as well as drawings of facial expressions.

In the study participated 79 pairs (mother and child) from central areas in Israel. Evaluation scales of maternal mediation were used in order to assess emotional and communicative behaviors in mother-child interaction. In addition, parenting style questionnaires were filled out by the mothers. The children's emotional abilities were evaluated by recognition, comprehension and expression of simple and ambiguous facial expressions through tasks which included free and forced recognition of illustrated facial expressions, naming emotions, pointing at an illustrated face and drawing a face as it was featured in a short story. The children's self-regulation ability was also evaluated through an assignment which examines motor skills

The primary hypothesis focused on the verbal-emotional aspect of mother-child communication. It was hypothesized that a higher level of authoritarian parenting style by the mother would manifest in a lower level of verbal-emotional communication with her child. This hypothesis, based on the findings of previous supportive studies, was partially confirmed. It was found that maternal's authoritarian parenting style is associated with providing a sense of competence in the mother's interaction with her child. However, no significant association was found between maternal's authoritarian

parenting style and other communicative indexes (verbal and emotional meaning, length of communication chains adult's effect and general effect).

The second hypothesis examined whether children whose mothers express a high level of authoritarian parenting style, will score lower in recognition of drawings of facial expressions as well as in comprehending and expressing emotions following stories. This hypothesis was also partially confirmed. It was found that a higher level of maternal authoritarian parenting style is associated with lower achievements of her child in the ability to recognize and comprehend feelings by pointing at drawings of facial expressions. Similar associations were not found with children's achievements in the emotional naming task stimulated by a character in a story and in the drawing of facial expressions task. Furthermore, the findings of the current study indicate that the child's self-regulation ability as measured by the HTKS test, mediates the association between maternal's authoritarian parenting level and the child's achievements in recognition and comprehending of emotions.

The current study examined the association between a parenting style and, her emotional support for her child, and a direct measurement of the child's ability to recognize, comprehend and manifest emotions by drawing of facial expressions. The findings of the current study corroborate the association between parenting style and the child's regulation ability, a parameter which much explains the child's emotional ability. Nevertheless, it is known that the development of children's comprehension ability is related to their cognitive and linguistic development. Therefore, it is recommended to continue and examine preschoolers' emotional and cognitive-linguistic development and associate it with an authoritarian parenting style in an

additional study where the recognizing, naming and emotional expression ability tasks would be adjusted to the various age groups of the sample population.