

Testing the alleged superiority of the indulgent parenting style among Spanish adolescents

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Abstract

Background: While international studies have reported the superiority of the authoritative style (which combines parental involvement with demandingness), some studies in Spain and in other countries have found that the indulgent style (involvement without demandingness) might be just as good or even better. This study aims to discern whether the differences are cultural or methodological. **Method:** 306 adolescents from high schools in Madrid and Valencia (Spain) answered a questionnaire that included two parenting style instruments (SOC-30 and PSI), together with a self-esteem scale (AF5) and a question on academic performance. **Results:** Concordance between the two instruments assessing parenting styles was poor. When associating parenting styles (according to the SOC-30) with outcomes (self-esteem and academic achievement), results were similar to previous studies in Spain. But if we use the PSI, results were similar to studies in Anglophone countries: the authoritative style achieved the best outcomes. **Conclusions:** The discrepancies found between studies carried out in Spain and in Anglophone countries do not seem to be due to differences between cultures, but to methodological differences (i.e., differences between the instruments used). If we use the same instruments that were used in Anglophone countries, the most effective parenting style is still the authoritative.

Keywords: Parenting styles, indulgent, authoritative, demandingness, supervision.

Resumen

Comprobando la supuesta superioridad del estilo parental indulgente entre adolescentes españoles. Antecedentes: mientras estudios internacionales muestran la superioridad del estilo autoritativo (que combina el afecto con la exigencia), en España y otros países se ha encontrado que el estilo indulgente (afecto sin exigencia) podría ser igual de bueno o mejor. Este estudio pretende comprobar si las diferencias son culturales o metodológicas. **Método:** 306 adolescentes de centros educativos de Madrid y Valencia (España) respondieron a un cuestionario que incluía dos instrumentos de estilos parentales (SOC-30 y PSI), una escala de autoestima (AF5) y una pregunta sobre el rendimiento académico. **Resultados:** la concordancia entre los dos instrumentos de estilos parentales fue pobre. Al asociar los estilos parentales (según el SOC-30) con los desenlaces (autoestima y rendimiento académico), los resultados coinciden con los estudios previos españoles. Pero, si usamos el PSI, se obtienen los mismos resultados que en los estudios anglosajones: el estilo autoritativo obtiene los mejores desenlaces en los hijos. **Conclusiones:** las discrepancias halladas entre estudios realizados en España y en países anglosajones no parecen deberse a diferencias en las culturas sino a diferencias metodológicas (diferencias en los instrumentos utilizados). Si se usan los mismos instrumentos, se comprueba que el estilo parental más eficaz es el autoritativo.

Palabras clave: estilos parentales, indulgente, autoritativo, exigencia, supervisión.

Within the frame of family education and its effects on children, the model of parenting styles (Baumrind, 1967; Baumrind, 1968; Maccoby & Martin, 1983) has generated a vast amount of research and scientific literature. This model is based on two main variables: parental involvement (closeness, warmth) and demandingness (behavioral control, supervision), the combination of which results in four parenting styles: authoritative (high involvement and demandingness), indulgent (high involvement and low demandingness), authoritarian (low involvement and high demandingness), and neglectful (low involvement and demandingness).

The model has evolved over recent decades, and researchers have focused on different aspects (Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005; Power et al., 2013). Some have studied bidirectional effects between parenting and child behavior (Gault-Sherman, 2012; Kerr, Stattin, & Ozdemir, 2012). Others have differentiated between paternal and maternal practices (Di Maggio & Zappulla, 2014; Rinaldi & Howe, 2012) or have taken other influences into account, such as siblings or the community (Mosli, Miller, Peterson, & Lumeng, 2016; Ragan, Osgood, & Feinberg, 2014). In addition, some authors have moved from a typological to a dimensional perspective, and new dimensions have been added to the model (Becoña et al., 2013; Rohner & Khaleque, 2005; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994).

Furthermore, the inter-cultural issue has become crucial (Barber et al., 2005). Do parenting styles work in the same way across cultures? Within the literature on this issue, a dispute has arisen regarding certain Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking

countries, and their similarity (or dissimilarity) to Anglophone settings.

Several studies (mainly in Anglophone countries) have shown that children with authoritative parents have the best outcomes in different areas (Becoña et al., 2013; Darling, 1999; Donath, Graessel, Baier, Bleich, & Hillemacher, 2014; Hartman et al., 2015; Hernando, Oliva, & Pertegal, 2012; Hoffmann & Bahr, 2014; Shakya, Christakis, & Fowler, 2012; Tondowski et al., 2015; Torío López, Peña Calvo, & Rodríguez Menéndez, 2008). On the other hand, certain studies seem to have found that the results are different in certain countries such as Spain (Fuentes, García, Gracia, & Alarcón, 2015; García & Gracia, 2009; García & Gracia, 2010; Martínez & García, 2007; Musitu & García, 2004; Pérez Alonso-Geta, 2012), Brazil (Martínez, García, & Yubero, 2007), Portugal (Rodrigues, Veiga, Fuentes, & García, 2013), as well as in several European countries (Calafat, García, Juan, Becona, & Fernández-Hermida, 2014). According to these studies, children with indulgent parents perform as well or better than children with authoritative parents in these countries, suggesting that cultural differences might be influencing this issue.

However, Oliva (2006) suspects that this discrepancy in results may be due to a difference in the measures employed, rather than a cultural difference. Specifically, he points out that the methods employed by these authors for measuring the demandingness variable are different from previous measures. In fact, in one of the studies mentioned, Musitu and García (2004) deal with this issue. In order to avoid the use of different measures, the authors use two questionnaires: a previously used international questionnaire and a new one they themselves designed. In spite of this fact, Oliva (2006) believes that both questionnaires interpret demandingness as coercion, which is a particular way of understanding it, and not necessarily the same as that used in previous studies carried out in Anglophone countries.

We are justified, then, in wondering about the instruments used in these studies: are they similar to other instruments used in studies carried out in Anglophone countries? And, within these instruments, are the right subscales being used to construct the parenting style typologies?

With the aim of evaluating previous findings, we will concentrate on the above-mentioned study by Musitu and García (2004). The first questionnaire they used was the SOC-30, described by Rabazo Méndez (1999), and which is a Spanish adaptation of a Swedish questionnaire entitled EMBU (Perris, Jacobsson, Linndström, von Knorring, & Perris, 1980). The second is the ESPA29 (Musitu & García, 2001). We will focus on the first.

To the best of our knowledge, we have no evidence that any study using the SOC-30 has found better outcomes for authoritative than for indulgent families. Therefore, we need to compare the SOC-30 with other instruments that have found these results.

The SOC-30 has 4 subscales: Support, Punishment/Coercion, Overprotection/Control and Reprobation. Musitu and García (2004) use the first two subscales as the Involvement and Demandingness variables, respectively, in order to construct their parenting style categories. Are these scales appropriate for this goal? Are they similar to other scales? Would the results be different using another instrument?

An analysis of the items in the subscales employed suggests that the Punishment/Coercion subscale might not be an adequate measure of demandingness. This subscale assesses punishment, especially physical or disproportionate punishments (“my parents

strike me”, “my parents punish me severely, even for unimportant issues”, “my parents impose more corporal punishments on me than I deserve”), which is not necessarily the same as establishing rules and monitoring children. In fact, the Overprotection/Control subscale might be a better measure (“When I am not at home my parents care about what I am doing”, “my parents show interest in my obtaining good grades”).

The objective of our study is to replicate that earlier study, while at the same time comparing the SOC-30 to a different instrument that have found authoritative education to be advantageous in Anglophone settings: the Parenting Style Index (PSI) (Chao, 2001; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992; Steinberg et al., 1994).

We partially replicated the study reported in Musitu and García (2004), omitting some of their measures but adding certain additional ones. For measuring parenting styles, they used the SOC-30 and the ESPA29. Since they adduce that the SOC-30 is an international instrument that has been previously used, we used it and added another, which is both international and more widely used: the PSI. Qua variables concerning outcomes, these authors assessed self-esteem (with various instruments) and family communication. Differences between the indulgent and authoritative styles were found for self-esteem only, and not for family communication. So we chose self-esteem as a primary outcome, specifically using the last questionnaire they employed: the AF5 (García & Musitu, 1999). However, self-esteem is affected by parental involvement more than by demandingness (Darling, 1999), and consequently it is difficult to find differences between authoritative and indulgent families. Therefore, a variable that tracks academic performance was added as an additional outcome, one which has a higher dependence on parental demandingness (Darling, 1999).

While the replicated study compares styles in only a categorical fashion, we also used continuous scoring, in order to better understand the role of the different dimensions.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To compare the PSI scales with the SOC-30 scales. In particular, comparing PSI Involvement with SOC-30 Support, and PSI Strictness/Supervision with SOC-30 Coercion and with SOC-30 Overprotection/Control.
2. To compare the parenting styles defined by PSI with those defined by SOC-30.
3. To assess the correlation between each scale in the parenting style instruments (PSI and SOC-30) and two outcomes (self-esteem and academic achievement).
4. To compare the outcomes across the different groups as defined by parenting styles (using differing methods of defining such styles).

Method

Participants

The study was carried out with a convenience sample of high school students. We were allowed access to 4 high schools in Madrid and Valencia (Spain), which invited their students to answer the questionnaire. Altogether, 306 adolescents participated in the study. They were 13-17 years old (mean = 14.3, SD = 0.96) and most of them (69.3%) were female.

Instruments

Escala de Socialización FAMILIAR: SOC-30. This instrument (Herrero, 1992, cited by Rabazo Méndez, 1999) is comprised of 30 items that evaluate how children perceive their parents' educative style. It distinguishes 4 dimensions: Support (11 items), Punishment/Coercion (7 items), Overprotection/Control (5 items) and Reprobation (7 items). All items are measured by a 3-point Likert scale (from *Never* to *Always*). Previous research has found Cronbach alphas of .85 (Support) and .70 (Punishment/Coercion) (Musitu & García, 2004).

We performed a confirmatory factor analysis in order to test the original factor structure. We obtained an acceptably good fit (RMSEA = .048, CFI = .843). The Cronbach alphas were: .82 (Support), .71 (Punishment/Coercion), .46 (Overprotection/Control) and .46 (Reprobation).

In order to construct the parenting style typologies, each of the main dimensions (Support and Punishment/Coercion) were trichotomized, with tertiles being the cutoffs (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Musitu & García, 2004; Steinberg, Fletcher, & Darling, 1994). Participants in the upper category in both dimensions (N = 17) were defined as Authoritative; those in the lower category in both dimensions (N = 35) were defined as Neglectful; those in the upper category in Support and in the lower category in Punishment/Coercion (N = 61) were defined as Indulgent; and those in the lower category in Support and in the upper category in Punishment/Coercion were defined as Authoritarian (N = 58). There were 171 participants that were classified in a typology. As a sensitivity analysis, all categorical analyses were repeated, dichotomizing the dimensions with a median split instead of trichotomizing them (Calafat et al., 2014; Chao, 2001; Martínez & García, 2007).

Parenting Style Index (PSI). This instrument (Steinberg et al., 1992; Steinberg et al., 1994) is comprised of 26 items. It includes 3 dimensions (8 items in each dimension): Involvement, Autonomy-granting and Strictness/Supervision. The Involvement and Autonomy-granting items have a 4-point Likert scale (from *Strongly agree* to *Strongly disagree*). The items for Strictness/Supervision have different methods for answering. Previous research has found Cronbach alphas of .72 (Involvement), .82 (Autonomy-granting), and .76 (Strictness/Supervision) (Steinberg et al., 1992).

We translated and adapted the questionnaire to the Spanish population, and assessed the factor structure and the internal consistency of the subscales. The confirmatory factor analysis showed a good fit to the original factor structure (RMSEA = .043, CFI = .916). The Cronbach alphas were: .80 (Involvement), .63 (Autonomy-granting), and .60 (Strictness/Supervision).

With the Involvement and Strictness/Supervision dimensions, parenting styles were constructed in the same way as they were with SOC-30. In this case, 105 participants were classified: 24 authoritative, 45 neglectful, 11 indulgent and 25 authoritarian.

AF5. Autoconcepto forma 5 [Self-concept form 5]. This instrument (García & Musitu, 1999) is comprised of 30 items and assesses 5 dimensions of self-esteem (6 items each dimension): Academic, Social, Emotional, Family and Physical. All items have a 1-99 response scale. Previous research has found Cronbach alphas of .89 (Academic), .73 (Social), .73 (Emotional), .80 (Family) and .78 (Physical) (Musitu & García, 2004). An English version has recently been validated (García, Gracia, & Zeleznova, 2013).

In our study, alphas were: .87 (Academic), .74 (Social), .73 (Emotional), .77 (Family) and .77 (Physical).

Academic performance. We asked participants to indicate their mean grade in school over the last year (0-10 scale).

Procedure

Paper-pencil questionnaire. In one of the high schools, after obtaining permission from the school, one of the researchers went to the school and, with a teacher, delivered the paper-pencil questionnaires to the students in each participating class. Students were informed that participation was voluntary, and that answers would be anonymous. All the attending students were willing to participate, although some of them left a number of questions blank.

On-line questionnaire. In the remaining three schools, the teachers were given a web address. They invited the students to go to the computer room, enter the web site and fill out the questionnaire. The same information about voluntary participation and anonymity was given to these students. Here, all questions had an extra answer option: "NR/DK" (no response/don't know).

Data analyses

When calculating the score for each dimension, the subjects were considered to be missing cases if they answered fewer than half of the items in the dimension in question. If they had answered at least one half of the items, the mean of answered items was calculated. Missing cases were excluded from the corresponding analyses.

For correlation between variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. For concordance between parenting styles (as determined by SOC-30 or by PSI), the kappa index was measured.

When associating parenting dimensions with outcomes (self-esteem dimensions and academic performance), multiple linear regressions were also performed in addition to correlation. In the first regression, the dependent variable was academic self-esteem; the independent variables were age, sex and the four SOC-30 dimensions. A second regression included the three PSI dimensions instead of those from the SOC-30. Then, these two regressions were repeated for each of the outcome variables.

A comparison of outcomes among the different parenting styles was performed with ANOVAs and Tamhane's T2 tests.

Finally, subgroup analyses were performed for different subsamples (female/male, Madrid/Valencia), in order to test whether the results might apply only to certain specific samples.

All analyses were performed using Stata V.12. The Tamhane T2 test was performed with a Stata ado-file programmed by Marta García-Granero (Department of Biochemistry and Genetics, University of Navarra).

Results

Comparing instruments

Table 1 shows the correlations between SOC-30 dimensions and PSI dimensions. SOC-30 Support and PSI Involvement had a positive, high and significant correlation. However, PSI Strictness/Supervision did not correlate with SOC-30 Punishment/Coercion,

but rather with SOC-30 Overprotection/Control. SOC-30 Punishment/Coercion and SOC-30 Reprobation correlated best (and negatively) with PSI Autonomy-granting.

In addition, we analyzed correlations between the main dimensions within each instrument. Within the PSI, Involvement and Strictness/Supervision had a significant but low correlation ($r = .155$, $p = .008$). Within the SOC-30, Support and Punishment/Coercion had a high negative correlation ($r = -.519$, $p < .001$), but Support and Overprotection/Control did not correlate ($r = -.061$, $p = .288$).

Table 1
Correlations between SOC-30 dimensions and PSI dimensions

		PSI		
		Involvement	Autonomy-granting	Strictness/Supervision
SOC-30	Support	.635 ***	.354 ***	.149 *
	Punishment/Coercion	-.365 ***	-.389 ***	-.066
	Overprotection/Control	-.030	-.202 ***	.479 ***
	Reprobation	-.270 ***	-.422 ***	-.024

* $p < .05$
*** $p < .001$

Table 2
Concordance between parenting styles defined by SOC-30 (Support and Punishment/Coercion) and PSI (Involvement and Strictness/Supervision)

		Parenting style (PSI)				Total
		Authoritative	Indulgent	Authoritarian	Neglectful	
Parenting style (SOC-30)	Authoritative	2	1	0	1	4
	Indulgent	13	4	3	0	20
	Authoritarian	0	0	5	16	21
	Neglectful	1	1	5	13	20
Total		16	6	13	30	65

Note: 171 participants were classified in a style according to the SOC-30, and 105 according to the PSI. But this table includes only the 65 participants that were classified according to *both* criteria

Table 2 shows the concordance between parenting styles as defined by SOC-30 (Support and Punishment/Coercion) and those defined by PSI (Involvement and Strictness/Supervision). Agreement (participants placed in the same category according to both classifications) was only 36.9%, and concordance between both instruments was poor (kappa index = .16; weighted kappa index = .25).

However, when we used SOC-30 Overprotection/Control instead of SOC-30 Punishment/Coercion (data not shown), the concordance with PSI improved considerably (62.7% of agreement; kappa index = .46; weighted kappa index = .60).

Association between parenting and outcomes

The correlations between parenting dimensions (4 from SOC-30 and 3 from PSI) and outcomes (5 self-esteem dimensions and academic grades) are shown in Table 3. SOC-30 Support, PSI Involvement and PSI Autonomy-granting correlated positively with various outcomes (especially with Academic and Family Self-esteem). SOC-30 Punishment/Coercion and SOC-30 Reprobation correlated negatively with certain self-esteem measures. SOC-30 Overprotection/Control and PSI Strictness/Supervision correlated positively with Average grades and with Academic self-esteem, but negatively with Emotional Self-Esteem.

The association between dimensions and outcomes was also tested with twelve multiple linear regressions (two for each outcome). Each regression had one outcome as its dependent variable, while the independent variables were the following: age, sex, and the dimensions from one of the parenting styles instruments (SOC-30 or PSI). The adjusted associations between each parenting dimension and each outcome (data not shown) were very similar to those shown in Table 3.

Next, the outcomes from the participants in each parenting style were compared (Table 4). Following the SOC-30 parenting styles, children with authoritative or indulgent parents obtained the best results, with each of these groups scoring best in half of the outcomes, with no significant differences between the two groups. Following the PSI parenting styles, children with authoritative parents scored best in five out of six outcomes (all but Emotional Self-esteem, where the indulgent parenting style scored the best), although the difference between the authoritative and indulgent styles was significantly better only in the case of academic grades. With our new proposal of SOC-30 parenting styles (using the

Table 3
Correlations between parenting dimensions and outcomes

		Self-esteem					Average Grade
		Academic	Social	Emotional	Family	Physical	
SOC-30	Support	.259***	.064	.021	.603***	.206***	.059
	Punishment/Coercion	-.141*	-.065	-.074	-.447***	-.004	-.099
	Overprotection/Control	.125*	-.085	-.225***	-.054	-.090	.143*
	Reprobation	-.162**	-.063	-.120*	-.276***	-.047	-.050
PSI	Involvement	.293***	.133*	.025	.552***	.132*	.081
	Autonomy-granting	.175**	.081	.152**	.266***	.067	.145*
	Strictness/Supervision	.323***	.049	-.228***	.115	.081	.300***

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

Overprotection/Control dimension), the results (data not shown) were similar to those with PSI parenting styles.

All the analyses regarding categorical parenting styles were repeated, dichotomizing the dimensions instead of trichotomizing them. Results were similar to those presented here (data not shown).

Finally, all these analyses were repeated separately in different subgroups (female/male, Madrid/Valencia), which led to similar results (data not shown).

Discussion

In the United States, studies using the Parenting Style Index (PSI) have shown that the best outcomes occur among children with authoritative parents, using both a continuous (Steinberg et al., 1992) and categorical scoring (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994). Our study in Spain, using the above-mentioned questionnaire (PSI), presents similar results. The categorical analysis is not completely conclusive, but the superiority of the authoritative group is suggested. The continuous analysis clearly indicates what has previously been found in Anglophone settings: that Involvement is associated with self-esteem and that Strictness/Supervision is associated with school performance (Darling, 1999).

Actually, when studies in Anglophone countries show a superiority of the authoritative group, that doesn't mean that this group scores better than *any* other group in *all* possible outcomes. In Darling's words, "parental responsiveness predicts social competence and psychosocial functioning, while parental demandingness is associated with instrumental competence and behavioral control (i.e., academic performance and deviance)" (Darling, 1999). This means that, in the case of school achievement, adolescents with either authoritative or authoritarian parents may perform well; in the case of self-esteem, however, adolescents with either authoritative or indulgent parents perform well.

Concerning self-esteem, international studies do not show any advantage for authoritative versus indulgent parenting. In the United States, Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg and Dornbusch (1991) found that adolescents with authoritative parents scored better than those with indulgent parents in outcomes such as school competence and drug use, but not in self-reliance or social competence (with both outcomes being measured as forms of self-esteem). Driscoll, Russell, and Crockett (2008) found no differences in self-esteem between the same groups. In addition, Cardinali and D'Allura (2001) found a positive correlation between the self-esteem of American young adults and their mothers' permissiveness. In Australia, Herz and Gullone (1999) found a negative correlation between parental control and their children's self-esteem, both among Anglo-Australian adolescents and those of Australian-Vietnamese descent. Other international studies have found, in Israel (Cohen, Mansoor, Gagin, & Lorber, 2008) and Iran (Zakeri & Karimpour, 2011), that self-esteem was associated with parental acceptance but not with parental control. We cannot say, then, that previous international studies have found an advantage for authoritative groups over those that are indulgent. It does not seem, therefore, that there is any difference between Spain and other countries in this regard.

The study we have replicated, which does suggest this kind of difference, uses a different instrument: the SOC-30. We don't have any evidence that, when using this instrument in other countries, the results are different from those found in Spain. This is why we have compared the SOC-30 with the PSI.

Both instruments are to a certain extent similar, but results can differ depending on which sub-scales are used. The PSI dimensions generally used to construct the parenting style typologies are Involvement and Strictness/Supervision. As we have found, PSI Involvement has a positive correlation with SOC-30 Support. However, PSI Strictness/Supervision does not correlate with SOC-30 Punishment/Coercion (the scale used in the study we have replicated), but rather with SOC-30 Overprotection/Control.

Table 4
Means and standard deviations of self-esteem and academic grades, by parenting style

		Parenting styles according to SOC-30				
		Authoritative	Indulgent	Authoritarian	Neglectful	P *
Self-esteem	Academic	6.79 (2.16)	7.41 (1.85) ¹	5.91 (2.15) ²	5.68 (2.48) ²	<.001
	Social	7.75 (1.53)	7.74 (1.75)	7.31 (1.72)	7.39 (1.67)	.519
	Emotional	6.16 (2.08)	5.96 (2.05)	5.51 (2.08)	6.55 (2.26)	.156
	Family	8.52 (1.58) ^a	9.00 (1.48) ¹	6.31 (2.06) ^{2b}	7.49 (1.76) ^{2a}	<.001
	Physical	7.28 (1.64) ¹	7.15 (2.15) ^a	6.08 (1.81) ^b	5.68 (2.16) ^{2b}	.001
Average grade		6.94 (1.72)	7.28 (1.58)	6.78 (1.45)	7.00 (1.53)	.387
		Parenting styles according to PSI				
		Authoritative	Indulgent	Authoritarian	Neglectful	P *
Self-esteem	Academic	7.78 (2.19) ¹	6.14 (1.85)	6.83 (1.80) ¹	5.21 (1.91) ²	<.001
	Social	8.06 (2.13)	7.80 (1.80)	7.57 (1.42)	7.23 (1.87)	.354
	Emotional	5.84 (2.32)	6.93 (2.36)	4.79 (2.10) ²	6.43 (2.07) ¹	.011
	Family	9.02 (2.08) ¹	8.46 (1.45) ¹	7.89 (1.42) ¹	6.77 (1.95) ²	<.001
	Physical	7.26 (2.29)	6.66 (2.71)	6.32 (2.01)	6.14 (2.06)	.259
Average grade		7.43 (1.45) ¹	6.00 (1.20) ²	7.58 (1.42) ¹	6.63 (1.74)	.010

* P value of ANOVA.
Superscripts indicate statistically significant differences between groups ($\alpha = .05$) according to the Tamhane T2 test: 1> 2, a> b

In fact, SOC-30 Punishment/Coercion is very different from the original descriptions of the demandingness dimension and the authoritative typology. Baumrind defines this dimension as “the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys” (1991, cited in Darling, 1999). Indeed, Baumrind explicitly says that “parental control as defined here is not a measure of restrictiveness, punitive attitudes, or intrusiveness” (Baumrind, 1967). However, the latter is what SOC-30 Punishment/Coercion measures. It is not surprising that this dimension inversely correlates with outcomes, and that participants with high scores in this dimension (the authoritative group) have similar or worse outcomes than those with low scores (the indulgent group). In addition, this dimension presents a high correlation with SOC-30 Support, which makes both dimensions non-orthogonal, and therefore less appropriate for constructing the parenting styles categories.

Within the SOC-30, Overprotection/Control is the subscale which seems most suitable for measuring the demandingness dimension, in order to construct the parenting styles typologies. And, as our results show, this dimension is the one that correlates with PSI Strictness/Supervision. However, it doesn't correlate with SOC-30 Support, which permits both dimensions to work as orthogonal axes in defining parental styles. Indeed, it's worth wondering why this dimension is called “Overprotection/Control”. This pejorative name may lead to prejudging the dimension, when in fact it seems to lead (according to our findings) to more good than bad outcomes. Further studies with larger samples and different outcome variables might be able to determine whether this dimension is a good or bad predictor, and what kind of outcomes it predicts. However, a neutral name (such as “Protection/Control”) might be more appropriate.

In short, when using the PSI dimensions, and when using SOC-30 Support and SOC-30 Overprotection/Control dimensions, our results in Spain are similar to those found in previous studies in Anglophone contexts. On the contrary, when using SOC-30 Support and SOC-30 Punishment/Coercion, results are different. This difference seems to be due to a difference in measurement. Were we to claim a difference with regard to Anglophone cultures, we would need studies in those cultures, using the same measures, showing different results from those found here. It seems unlikely that such results would be found (given the data we have presented here), but further studies should confirm our findings.

Our study has some limitations. Our respondents do not comprise a random representative sample of Spanish adolescents. However, the sample size is large enough, and the results are similar in different subsamples.

Furthermore, we do not have information about the validity of our academic performance measure. Therefore, these results should be interpreted with caution.

Another limitation is the reach of the study in terms of countries and instruments. Various studies have found that the indulgent style might be as good or better than the authoritative style, and such findings have been obtained using different instruments, different outcomes and in different countries (Calafat et al., 2014; García & Gracia, 2010; Martínez et al., 2007; Martínez & García, 2007; Musitu & García, 2004; Rodrigues et al., 2013). Our study has only tested one of these instruments (SOC-30), with two outcomes (self-esteem and academic performance) and in one country (Spain). Results might be different under other conditions, but at least a door has been opened to question the statement that, in some countries (including Spain), adolescents need a more indulgent parenting style than in Anglophone countries.

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