

## PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF ETHIOPIAN ADOLESCENTS IN RELATION TO FAMILY STRUCTURE AND PARENTING STYLE

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The main objective of the present study was to investigate the relationship between family structure, parenting style and psychological well being and its dimensions using Ryff's multidimensional model. In the present study, randomly selected 502 adolescents (276 males and 226 females) from differently structured families filled out measures of psychological well being and parenting style. Participants were 17.76 years old on average (SD = 1.76). Results showed no statistically significant psychological well-being the difference between children's/adolescent's of intact and non-intact families. Reasonable and decent parenting styles positively, pampering and autocrat parenting styles negatively predicted psychological well-being in general and the six dimensions (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal sense of growth, purpose in life and self-acceptance) in particular. Furthermore, the regression and path analysis revealed that the relationship between family structure and psychological well being is fully mediated by parenting styles (especially, reasonable parenting style). This assured that parenting and parenting styles affect psychological well being more than family structure. Parents and child care centers were advised to exercise reasonable and decent parenting styles.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Adolescent; Family Structure; Parenting Style; Ryff's Model*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. The Period Adolescence**

Adolescence is a period of exploration and experimentation that needs adjustment to physical maturity, changing roles within families and with peers, and the emergence of a more independent lifestyle. Compared to adults, adolescents show higher stress levels and fewer coping resources. The stressful process of differentiation and identity consolidation can result in significant psychological distress. During adolescence boys and/or girls face different types of psychosocial problems such as, school problems (e.g. scholastic demoralization and school failure), skill developmental delays (e.g. low intelligence), emotional difficulties (e.g. poor management of emotions), family circumstances such as low income, lack of parental support, stressful life events, poor bonding to the family members and other problems (Fabes and Martin, 2000; Tirussew, 2007).

However, as the focus of the present research is on the psychological well being of adolescents, the presentation focused on positive development and well functioning of adolescents. It is recently that research in psychology and psychiatry has begun to examine how individuals can be mentally well and function properly in life rather than simply stating how adolescents are affected by the bio-psychosocial changes and considering adolescence as a period of storm and

stress (Rathi and Rastagi, 2007; Karamakar, 2016).

In sum, the period adolescence is known as a period of rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes. In addition, it is a period of transition to adulthood, independence, occupation, and career. These transitions may bring various challenges and lead an adolescent to storm and stress. However, these days as the emergence of positive psychology became important to investigate strengths and potentials that will result from an adolescent in quality life, success and satisfaction and proper preparation for the coming life

## **1.2. Conceptualizing Psychological Well-Being in Adolescence**

According to Huppert (2009), psychological well-being is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively. Beal (2011) noted that humans have three basic psychological needs (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) and satisfying with these needs lead one's to be psychologically well and well-becoming to an adolescent in the future.

On the other hand, Ryff explained psychological well-being as flourishing, functioning well and composed of six factors: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, a sense of independence, having a purpose in life, a sense of personal growth, and environmental mastery (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Psychological well-being of adolescents means being content with life and understanding an abundance of positive emotions, when joined with the absence of psychopathology, is linked with greatest academic function, social skills and support and physical health, being a stage that lays strong foundation for future personality, and a critical period during human development in which life goals, values, direction and purpose in life are created (Jessica, 2011; Berman, et.al, 2006), guaranteeing psychological well-being of adolescents is a socio-psychological necessity.

Having higher education for Ethiopian adolescents is a crucial task. This is because adolescents and elderly persons might have access to a better job opportunity. In addition, for admitting in a university, Ethiopian students have to pass entrance exams two times at grade ten and grade twelve (entrance for preparatory education and entrance for higher education); hence, they experience a lot of tensions due to a tough competition. It is well-documented that stressful life affects physical and psychological well being (Cohen et al. 2007; Karamakar, 2016; Thoits 2006). Thus, students/adolescents are expected to be at the good level of psychological well being in order to attain their goals. From among the different factors that affect psychological well being of adolescents the present study focused mainly on two family-related factors (family structure and parenting style).

## **1.3. Family Structure, Parenting Styles and Psychological Well Being**

Children in Ethiopia in particular and in the world, in general, grow up in a variety of family structures. Family structure refers to children's living arrangement either with their biological parents (intact family) or living arrangement with one of the biological parents, step-parents, relatives and or elderly siblings (non-intact family). Recently, children's living arrangement is becoming a worldwide topical issue that it has a great impact on children's well being in general and psychological well being and its dimensions in particular.

Family structure is hypothesized to directly and indirectly influence children's and adolescents' psychological well being by affecting family processes, such as parent child relationships (parenting and parenting styles) and individual characteristics, such as mother's/father's psychological well being. Therefore, family processes especially, parenting and parenting styles are considered to mediate the effects of family structure on children's/adolescents psychological well

being. Moreover, researchers reported that family processes/parenting and parenting styles have a higher impact on children/adolescent psychological well being than family structure (Acock and Demo, 1994; Falci, 1997). It is assumed that the two living arrangements (intact and non-intact) affect the psychological well being of children and adolescents differently. Most literature revealed that intact family has a positive relation with psychological well being whereas non-intact family has a negative correlation with psychological well being.

Parenting style and its effect on overall development is a well-researched topic among researchers. Parenting style represents the strategies that parents use in their child rearing. Researchers on parenting identified three basic styles of child-rearing: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative (Chao, 2001). The three parenting styles differ in two dimensions of parenting: the amount of warmth a child receives from parents and the extent to which a child's activities and behaviors are controlled by parents (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; Aemro, 2015; Abesha, 2012).

Parents who display authoritarian style restrict the autonomy of children and expect children to follow their orders without asking any questions. Permissive parents encourage their children's autonomy and do not impose any authority on their children. Authoritative parents tend to foster autonomy among children and employ moderate parental control. Children reared in this style are not completely restricted but have room for expressing their autonomy to a certain extent and consequently, this parenting style enables children to make their own decisions and regulate their own activities (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; Aemro, 2015; Abesha, 2012; Mohammad Reza et al., 2014).

Aemro (2015) reported that the perceived reasonable/authoritative parenting style contributed to higher levels of psychological well being. Similarly, Abesha (2012) found that authoritative parenting style has a positive impact on academic self-efficacy and achievement motivation among boys and girls compared to non-authoritative parents. Children of authoritative parents have a high level of autonomy/independence and tend to be self-reliant, self-controlled, secure, and curious than youth having authoritarian or permissive parents (Karmakar, 2016; Aemro, 2015; Abesha, 2012; Forjd, 2008). Warmth, supporting, and child-centered parenting style associated with the development of self -acceptance, positive relation with others and purpose in life (Forjd, 2008; Cripps & Zyromski, 2009).

## **2. PRESENT STUDY**

Previously conducted researches indicated that family structure and parenting style are both important family variables influencing well-being in adolescents. The present study was aimed to investigating the impact of family structure and parenting style on multiple dimensions of psychological well being (autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relation with others, positive sense of growth, purpose in life and self -acceptance).

Specifically, the present study tried to find answers for the following 3 basic questions:

- Is there Psychological well-being the difference between children/adolescents of intact and non-intact families?
- Is there a significant relationship between parenting style and adolescents' psychological well being?
- What is the mediating role of parenting style on the relationship between family structure and adolescents' psychological well being?

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1. Participants and Procedure

Participants for the study were randomly selected from 6 schools (3 grade ten and 3 grade twelve and twelve sections) in Amhara region 3 city administrations (Gondar, Bahir Dar, and Dessie) with an approximate population of 11789 students. After receiving verbal consent from school principals and participants, 502 students (276 males and 226 females) participated in the study. They answered questions about demographic data and filled out the questionnaires described in section 3.2 below in their classrooms in the presence of a research assistant. Participants' average age was 17.69 years ( $SD = 1.76$ ; ranging from 15 years to 22 years). With regard to family composition, 312 participants came from intact families (living in a household with both biological parents) and 190 participants came from non-intact families (e.g., single-parent families, stepparents, elderly siblings and relatives).

#### 3.2. Measures

To obtain information on the demographic characteristics of the participants' eight items were prepared by the researcher. Items measuring demographic variables such as gender, age, grade level, academic achievement, family background (family structure, family size, parentaleducation, and monthly parental income ) were presented to the participants.

##### Psychological Well-Being Measure

The present researcher used the medium version of Ryff's psychological well-being scale (consisting of 54 items) based on the advice given by the author of the theory and developer of the scale. The scale consists of a series of statements reflecting the six areas of psychological well-being: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life and Self-Acceptance. Each sub-scale consists of 9 items. Respondents rate statements on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 6 indicating strong agreement (Ryff, 1995). Validity and reliability were checked through the pilot test and the general psychological well-being measure, the internal item reliability was found to be .84 coefficients of alpha and its dimensions (autonomy.74, environmental mastery.84, personal sense of growth.83, personal relation with others.74, purpose in life.76 and self acceptance.75).

##### Parenting Style Measure

The present researcher used Adolescents' Perceived Parenting Style scale/APPS/, which was developed and validated by Aemro (2015) in the Ethiopian context specifically in Amhara region, to collect data from adolescents. The scale consisted of 26 items rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Of these 26 items, seven items were aimed at measuring reasonable parenting style, eight items were intended to measure decent parenting style, six of them were designed to measure pampering parenting style, and five items were aimed at measuring autocrat parenting style. Validity and reliability were checked and the parenting style measures were found internal item reliability.73 reasonable parenting style,.79 decent parenting style,.70 pampering parenting style, and.74 autocrat parenting style.

## 4. RESULTS

### Psychological well being and Family Structure

As one of the concerns of the present research was the effect of family structure on adolescents' psychological well being, a comparison was made between the means of children/adolescents in intact family and children/adolescents in a non-intact family. The computed independent sample t-test statistics revealed that there is no statistically significant psychological well -being the difference between the two groups of children/adolescents i.e. children/adolescents living in intact and non-intact families. Table 1 below presents the details of the computed independent sample t -test result.

**Table 1: Psychological Well being based on Family Structure/Type (N = 502)**

Sex	Frequency	Mean	SD	t	Sig
Intact Family	312	234.42	27.44	.151	.880
Non intact Family	190	234.04	27.97		

### 5. Df = 500

The independent sample t-test revealed that there is no statistically significant psychological well-being a difference based on children's living arrangement i.e. intact verse non-intact family. Additionally, the independent sample t -test revealed that there is no significant difference across the 6 dimensions of psychological well being based on family structure except for the dimension of 'Self Acceptance' (mean for intact family= 40.14 and mean for non intact family= 38.96, df =500, t =2.02, P<0.05). The table below presents the means and standard deviations of children of intact and non-intact families across the 6 dimensions of psychological well being.

**Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations for the 6 Dimensions of PWB Based on Family Structure/Type (N= 502, Intact Family = 312 and Non Intact Family = 190)**

	Living	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Autonomy	Intact Family	36.1186	9.14840	.51793
	Non intact family	37.4263	7.97631	.57866
Environmental Mastry	Intact Family	37.6378	7.22226	.40888
	Non intact family	37.6526	7.26777	.52726
Personal Growth	Intact Family	41.7212	7.32057	.41445
	Non intact family	41.5684	6.87785	.49897
Personal Relations	Intact Family	39.1442	5.98296	.33872
	Non intact family	38.7474	6.27832	.45548
Purpose in Life	Intact Family	39.6635	6.87875	.38943
	Non intact family	39.7000	7.12916	.51720
Self Acceptance	Intact Family	40.1410	6.55518	.37111
	Non intact family	38.9474	6.19074	.44912

PWB	Intact Family	234.4263	27.44959	1.55403
	Non intact family	234.0421	27.97558	2.02956

### **PWB =Psychological Well-Being**

When we see the mean differences of children of intact and non-intact family across the 6 dimensions, children of intact family scored higher than children of non-intact family in terms of a personal relationship with others and self-acceptance. On the other hand, children of non-intact family scored better only on autonomy. Even if, there is a mean score difference across the 6 dimensions, the difference is not statistically significant.

### **The Relationship between Parenting Styles and Psychological well being**

The relationship between the four parenting styles (reasonable parenting style, decent parenting style, pampering parenting style, and autocrat parenting style) and psychological well being were made using partial correlation analysis. Table 3 below, presents the inter correlation matrix between the four parenting styles and psychological well being.

**Table 3: Summary of Inter-Correlation Analysis (N= 502)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Psychological well being</b>	<b>Reasonable Parenting</b>	<b>Decent Parenting</b>	<b>Pampering Parenting</b>	<b>Authoritarian Parenting</b>
Psychological Well being	1				
Reasonable Parenting Style	.274**	1			
Decent Parenting Style	.178**	.502**	1		
Pampering Parenting Style	-.096*	.223**	.169**	1	
Autocrat Parenting Style	-.188**	-.346**	-.124**	.127*	1

**\*\*Correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (2-tailed)**

**\*Correlation is significant at the level 0.05 (2-tailed)**

As can be seen from Table 3 above, psychological well being (dependent variable) is positively and significantly correlated with reasonable and decent parenting styles ( $r = 0.274$ ,  $P < 0.01$  and  $r = 0.178$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) respectively. This shows that as the independent variables (reasonable parenting and decent parenting) styles are being exercised by parents, adolescents psychological well being will increase. On the other hand, the correlation test result shows a negative and significant correlation between psychological well being and pampering and autocrat parenting styles ( $r = -0.096$ ,  $P < 0.05$  and  $r = -0.188$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) respectively. This shows that as pampering and autocrat parenting styles are experienced the state of psychological well-being decreases. The ANOVA test also supports this correlation. The table below presents the details of the ANOVA test results.

**Table 4: Summary of ANOVA Table, Correlation Analysis (N = 502)**

<b>Source of Variation</b>	<b>Sum Square</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>
Regression	29424.684	4	7356.171	10.362	.000 <sup>b</sup>	.277	.077
Residual	352842.713	497	709.945				
<b>Total</b>	<b>382267.396</b>	<b>501</b>					

a Predictors: (Constant), Reasonable Parenting, Decent Parenting, Pampering Parenting, and Authoritarian Parenting

b Dependent Variable: Psychological well being

As can be seen from Table 4, the Analysis of Variance result shows that the four independent variables (reasonable parenting, decent parenting, pampering, and authoritarian parenting styles) have a significant positive contribution to the independent variable (psychological well being). The total correlation between the independent and dependent variable is positive and significant ( $R=0.277$ ,  $F=10.36$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) and all the four independent variables together contribute ( $R^2=0.077$ ) 7.70 percent to adolescents psychological well being. To investigate the contribution of each of the four independent variables regression analysis was made. The regression analysis test witnesses that two of the independent variables (reasonable and pampering parenting styles) contributed significantly. Specifically, reasonable parenting and pampering parenting styles have coefficient of determinations ( $\beta =.218$ ,  $p <.05$ ;  $\beta = -.149$ ,  $p <.05$ ) respectively. On the contrary, the autocrat parenting style contributed negatively. The table below presents the details of the results of the regression analysis.

**Table 5: Summary of Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable PWB) (N = 502)**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	213.633	9.146		23.358	.000
	Reasonable Parenting	1.084	.272	.218	3.989	.000
	Decent Parenting	.301	.240	.063	1.257	.209
	Pampering Parenting	-.926	.281	-.149	-3.295	.001
	Autocrat Parenting	-.209	.314	-.031	-.666	.506

a. Dependent Variable: Psychological well being

#### *The Relationship between Parenting Styles and the 6 Dimensions of Psychological Well Being*

To see the relationship between and among the four parenting styles (reasonable parenting, decent parenting, pampering parenting and authoritarian parenting) styles and the six dimensions of psychological well being (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal relation with others, personal growth, purpose in life and self acceptance) partial multiple correlation analysis was made. The inter correlation results were presented below.

**Table 6: The Inter Correlation between Parenting Styles and the 6 Dimensions of Psychological Well being (N =502)**

Variables	Aut	EnM	PG	PR	PL	SA	RP	DP	PP	AP
Autonomy	1									
Environmental Mastery	.209**	1								
Personal Growth	.277**	.370**	1							
Personal Relations	.173**	.397**	.387**	1						
Purpose in life	.163**	.348**	.465**	.306**	1					
Self acceptance	.218**	.368**	.340**	.341**	.286**	1				
Reasonable Parenting	.074	.192**	.177**	.128**	.097*	.235**	1			
Decent Parenting	.053	.084	.215**	.133**	.042	.076	.506**	1		
Pampering Parenting	-.005	-.017	-.07	.157**	.157**	.029	.226**	.168**	1	
Authoritarian Parenting	-.026	-.059	.133**	-.036	-.109	.166**	.355**	-.124**	.105	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at 0.01

\*Correlation is significant at 0.05

*Aut= Autonomy, EnM= Environmental Mastery, PG= Personal growth, PR= Personal Relation, PL= Purpose in life, SA= Self acceptance, RP= Reasonable Parenting, DP= Decent Parenting, PP= Pampering parenting and AP= Authoritarian Parenting.*

As can be understood from Table 6, the five dimensions of psychological well being (environmental mastery, personal growth, personal relation, purpose in life and self-acceptance) were positively and significantly correlated with reasonable parenting and decent parenting. Specifically, the correlation analysis showed that there is significant positive relation between reasonable parenting and environmental mastery, personal growth, personal relation with others, purpose in life and self acceptance ( $r = 0.192, P < 0.05, r = 0.177, P < 0.05, r = 0.128, P < 0.05, r = 0.097, P < 0.05$  and  $r = 0.235, P < 0.05$ ) respectively.

This shows that as parents exercise reasonable parenting style adolescents will be good in mastering their environment, sense of personal growth, establishing a good relationship with others, having a purpose in life and accepting the self. Similarly, decent parenting has a positive and significant relationship only with personal growth and personal relations with others ( $r = 0.215, P < 0.05$  and  $r = 0.133, P < 0.05$ ) respectively. This implies that as parents exercise decent parenting style adolescents will have more sense of personal growth and establishing good relations with others.

On the contrary, the correlation result showed a negative and significant correlation between pampering parenting style and adolescents ability of personal relations and having a purpose in life ( $r = -0.157, P < 0.05$  for both dependent variables of a personal relationship with others and purpose in life). Similarly, the autocrat parenting style has a significant negative relation with personal growth and purpose in life ( $r = -0.133, P < 0.05$  and  $r = -0.109, P < 0.05$  respectively). This shows that as pampering and authoritarian parenting styles are being experienced adolescents' states of personal growth, personal relation with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance will decrease.

With regard to the relations of parenting style with psychological well-being, the findings of the present study revealed that decent parenting style and reasonable parenting style contributed significantly and positively to psychological well-being, while autocrat parenting style and pampering parenting style did not contribute significantly. However, the result of inter-correlation coefficient between autocrat parenting style and psychological wellbeing showed a significant and negative relationship.

### **The Mediating Role of Parenting Style on the Relationship between Family Structure and Psychological Well-Being**

As one of the objectives of the present study was to determine whether or not parenting style would mediate the relationships between adolescents' perceived psychological well-being and family structure in which adolescents are grown up. Therefore, a model was tested and the model focused on the relationship between family structure and psychological wellbeing via parenting style. This model included both the direct effects from family structure to psychological well-being, and the indirect effects through parenting style.



**Table 6: Summary of Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable PWB) (N = 502)**

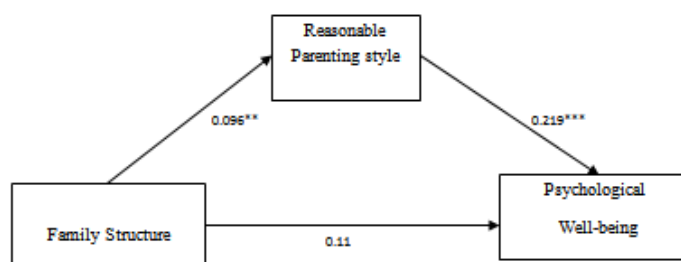
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Co linearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	212.718	9.878		21.534	.000		
Family Stru	.610	2.471	.011	.247	.805	.987	1.013
Reasonable	1.089	.273	.219	3.993	.000	.620	1.614
Decent	.299	.240	.062	1.244	.214	.737	1.357
Pampering	-.924	.281	-.149	-3.283	.001	.906	1.103
Autocrat	-.212	.314	-.032	-.674	.501	.834	1.199

**Table 7: Summary of Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable Parenting Style) (N = 502)**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Co linearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	28.322	.936		30.254	.000		
RP(1) Family Stru	-1.095	.503	.096	-2.177	.030*	.987	1.013
PP(2) Constant	18.770	.760		24.684	.000	.620	1.614
Family Stru	-.490	.409	-.054	-1.200	.231	.737	1.357

\*Significant < 0.05 (two- tailed) 1. Reasonable parenting style 2. Pampering Parenting style

The following figure showed the direct and indirect effects of family structure on adolescents' psychological well being.

**Figure 1: Simple Mediation Model/Path Coefficient for Predicting Psychological Well Being from Family Structure**

As indicated in the above figure the reasonable parenting style fully mediated (Sobel Mediation test specifically, Goodman test, 1.959,  $P < 0.05$ ) the relationship between family structure and adolescents' psychological well being. The results of the current study provided evidence for full mediation. Specifically, the path from family structure to psychological wellbeing was fully mediated by reasonable parenting style. This shows that adolescents who perceived their parents as reasonable have good psychological well being compared to their counterparts who perceived their parents as decent, autocrat and pampering parenting styles.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS

The study aimed at investigating the relationship between family structure and psychological well being as mediated by parenting style. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference in general psychological well being and any dimensions of well-being between adolescents from intact and non-intact families. This finding is in line with previous research (Demo and Acock, 1996; Vandewater and Lansford, 1998) that reported no or very little difference between the levels of well-being of adolescents living in different family structures. To explain the lack of or the small

magnitude of the relationship between family structure and adolescent well-being, Demo and Acock (1996) argue that family structure is a distant family variable and more proximal variables (such as family functioning) could account for individual differences in adolescents' well-being.

With regard to the relations of parenting style with psychological well-being, the findings of the present study revealed that decent parenting style and reasonable parenting style contributed significantly and positively to psychological well-being, while autocrat parenting style and pampering parenting style did not contribute significantly. However, the result of inter-correlation coefficient between autocrat parenting style and psychological wellbeing showed a significant and negative relationship. Whereas the finding of reasonable parenting style, being an aspect of authoritative parenting style, is compatible with other previous studies. For instance, (Gladstone and Parker, 2005; Aemro, 2015; Cripps & Zyromski, 2009) found out that children and adolescents who perceived their parents high in affection, warmth, and caring, but low in over-control tend to have better psychological well-being. Similarly, Baumrind (1991), and Maccoby and Martin (1983) also revealed that children and adolescents who considered their parents as authoritative related positively to their psychological well-being.

On the other hand, the result of autocrat parenting style (i.e., the characteristics of authoritarian type) is supported by the previous finding (Steinberg et al., 2001; Aemro, 2015), which demonstrated that authoritarian parenting style was significantly and negatively associated with psychological well-being. Regarding, the mediating role of parenting style on the relationship between family structure and adolescents' psychological well being, corresponded with previous research findings, which demonstrated that authoritative parenting style, being an aspect of the reasonable parenting style, predicted positively high psychological well being (Aemro. 2015; Cripps & Zyromski, 2009).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of the current study indicated the effective parenting styles that will result in high psychological well being of children and adolescents. In addition, the findings revealed that parenting style has a great role in mediating the relationship between family structure and children's/adolescents' psychological well being. Thus, from the findings of the present study, parents, child care centers and other stakeholders will benefit by being informed about the type of parenting style that is most effective to children and adolescents' positive development and high psychological well being.

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