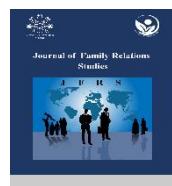




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### Research Paper

## The Effectiveness of Positive Parenting Programs on Parenting Stress and Parenting Self-Efficacy of Women as Heads of Households



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#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Family risk factors such as ineffective parenting by parents, especially mothers, can affect emotional and behavioral problems in adolescents and increase psychological problems of parents such as stress and parenting self-efficacy. The purpose of this research was to investigate the effectiveness of the positive parenting program on parenting stress and parenting self-efficacy of female heads of households with teenage children.

**Methods:** The current research was Pre-test - post-test with a control group. The research population consisted of all female heads of households under the support of the Yazd Relief Committee in 2020 who had teenage children. The research sample consisted of 20 females as heads of households, who were selected in an available manner and were randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups. In order to measure the research variables, Domka et al.'s parenting self-efficacy questionnaire (1996) and Abdin's parental stress questionnaire (1967) were used. The interventions were conducted during 8 weekly sessions for 90 minutes, and the covariance method was used for data analysis.

**Results:** The findings showed that positive parenting education has an effect on reducing parenting stress and improving parenting self-efficacy of females as heads of households with teenage children ( $P<0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** According to the results, mental health professionals can use a positive parenting program to improve females' psychological health and parenting self-efficacy.

### 1. Introduction

One of the manifestations of human life is living in a family, which due to various reasons such as natural disasters, moral incompatibility of spouses, divorce and death, causes one of the spouses to take care of themselves and their children and become the head of the household (Nagla, 2018). This modification does

not apply to men (Zare & Safari Dashtaki, 2019), and this is defined; Women without the regular presence of an adult male as head of the family are responsible for managing the economy and making vital decisions (Atafi Henzani et al., 2021). Women heads of households are one of the vulnerable sections of society

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who experience a lot of stress due to accepting many responsibilities for managing life and parenting affairs (Safari et al., 2020). Parenting stress is a kind of extreme anxiety and tension that depends on the role of the parent and parent-teenager interactions and has a strong impact on parenting behavior and children's development (Heydari & Izadi, 2024). In fact, parenting stress includes the child's stressful characteristics and the parents' responses to these characteristics (James Riegler et al., 2020). Women heads of households experience more parenting stress than other mothers and are exposed to various physical diseases and psychological disorders (Safari et al., 2020). The children are usually the most vulnerable persons to be dragged into marital disputes (Fatemi et al., 2022), therefore, children of women heads of households have a disturbed identity and are more likely to develop psychological and behavioral problems than compared to people who grew up in a healthy family. Therefore, to improve the mental health of children, attention should be paid to the quality of parenting (Sanders, 2002). The existence of many internal and external problems that affect the tensions and anxiety of female heads of the household requires high adaptation, which depends on the stability of self-esteem and high self-efficacy (Asadi Khalili et al., 2020). Parental self-efficacy is defined as parents' belief about their ability to parent and be effective in their child's development. Parental self-efficacy is not only an important factor for parents' behaviors, but also has indirect effects on the outcome of adolescents' behaviors through parenting methods (Khosrojerdi & Heidadi, 2023). If women's perception of self-efficacy and ability to adapt is high, women will have a sense of security and self-confidence so that they can better cope with the responsibilities of parenthood. Otherwise, with low self-efficacy, women feel incompetent and their adaptation to the situation decreases. Also, it can be said that self-efficacy and its level are a decisive variable in the lives of mothers who are heads of households, which affects their continuation of life.

There are various methods to improve the quality of life of women as heads of households and empower them for effective parenting; One of these methods that affects the parenting of women as heads of households and their empowerment is the positive parenting program (Falakodin et al., 2021). Parenting skills include an approach that aims to promote child development and manage child behavior in a constructive way (Sanders, 2003). The positive parenting program developed by Sanders (2003) is a multi-level strategic program about parenting with a supportive and preventive approach to families. This program is based on Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes mother-child

interaction (Haji Babaei Ravandi et al., 2022). Since the purpose of this program is to increase positive interactions between parents and children through the development of parenting skills, reducing depression, anger, anxiety and high stress (Sanders, 2008) and female heads of households experience high stress in parenting (Safari et al., 2020) also High and harmful levels of parenting stress reduce self-efficacy (Nejatifar et al., 2023). This intervention can be effective on parenting stress and self-efficacy of women heads of households. Researchers (Roshan Bin, 2007; Jafari et al., 2010; Ajil Chi et al., 2011; Foulad Chang & Hassan Nia, 2014; Kabiri & Kalantari, 2018; Haj Khodadai et al., 2021; Haji Babaei Ravandi et al., 2022; Arkan et al., 2020) have also shown that this program is effective in reducing children's behavioral problems and increasing parents' mental health. Among the research related to this issue, we can refer to the research of Arkan et al. (2020), which has shown that this program led to improvement of parents' mental health and reduction of problematic behavior of teenagers and reduction of tension in parent-teenage relationships. In addition, other studies show that positive parenting program for Young Children shows promise for increasing positive parenting and reducing harsh parenting and positive child behavior (Ward et al., 2020), and can improve children's emotional well-being (Morelli et al., 2020). Yazdanian and Shareh (2023) also showed in their research that the positive parenting program reduced parenting stress and increased emotional disturbance tolerance.

According to the United Nations Population Fund forecast, 30% of all households in developing countries are headed by women (Tabrizi Kaho et al., 2023). Research (Falekuddin et al., 2021; Tabrizi Kaho et al., 2023) has shown that females as heads of households experience many problems especially if they are divorced because divorce is associated with a range of negative psychological consequences, including increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, and somatization (Jafari et al., 2023). Therefore, since the number of households headed by women is significant and paying attention to the issue of mental health in these households can improve the health of the family and society. As a result, efforts to empower these mothers will be very important and effective. Also, considering the increasing number of these women (Tabrizi Kaho et al., 2023) and since they are responsible for the serious task of raising children and on the other hand, they are exposed to stress and anxiety, economic, social and high parenting pressure, which it can affect their parenting self-efficacy (Mikaeili, Salmani and Sharei, 2025), so it is necessary to pay more attention to them and provide them with sufficient support and facilities to propound their opinions.

Therefore, the present study was conducted with the aim of determining the effectiveness of positive parenting training on stress and parenting self-efficacy of female heads of households with teenage children. The Hypothesis of the research was that positive parenting training is effective on parenting stress of female heads of households with teenage children, and positive parenting training is also effective on parenting self-efficacy of female heads of households.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This was a semi-experimental study including pre-test and post-test design, with a control group. The statistical population and community of this research included all females as heads of households under the support of the Yazd City Relief Committee in the year 2020. The non-random sampling method in this research is available. The required sample for this research includes 20 female heads of households who were selected based on the entry criteria. It should be noted that the adequacy of the sample size was checked and reported using statistical methods. For this purpose, 20 female heads of households with teenage children were selected among the women as heads of households under the support of the Yazd City Relief Committee, and then, after obtaining consent, they were randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups (10 experimental and 10 control). At this stage, the parenting stress and self-efficacy scale was implemented as a pre-test on the subjects of the experimental and control groups. Then the experimental group received training on the effectiveness of positive parenting (Sanders, 2002). The control group was placed on the waiting list. After completing the treatment sessions, the stress and parenting self-efficacy scale was administered to the subjects as a post-test. The inclusion criteria in this study were: having a teenage child 10-18 years old, education at least at the diploma level, informed consent, being the head of the household due to divorce, death of spouse or spouse's disability, ability to attend all training sessions and Exclusion criteria in this study were: non-attendance (absence) in more than one training session, participation in other training and intervention sessions at the same time.

### Instrument:

**1. Parenting self-efficacy questionnaire:** The test used to measure parenting self-efficacy is the Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale (PASM). This test was developed in 1996 by Domka et al. to evaluate parenting self-efficacy. This test evaluates parents' general sense of confidence in the role of parent, ability to resolve parent-child conflicts, and parents' effort and resistance.

This test consists of 10 items, and the subject answers each question using a 7-point scale. A high score in this

test indicates high parenting self-efficacy and a low score indicates low parenting self-efficacy. The highest and lowest scores obtained in this test are 70 and 10. The method of scoring the test is that 5 questions (1-3-5-6-8) are scored in reverse; That is, in this question, the score for option 1 is 7, and option 2 is 6, and so on until option 7. The remaining five questions (2-4-7-9-10) are scored directly.

Domka et al (1996) reported the calculated Cronbach's alpha as 0.70 (Talei et al, 2012). Talei et al. (2012) reported Cronbach's alpha of this questionnaire as 0.7 and the validity of the test was reported through good face validity. For this purpose, the questionnaire was given to 3 experts and psychologists and after its correction, it was implemented on a sample of 25 mothers with 7-9 year old girls, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and its face validity were 70%.

**2. Parenting Stress Questionnaire (PSI):** This questionnaire was created in 1967 by Abdin. This tool is a questionnaire based on which the importance of tension in the child's parenting system can be evaluated. This questionnaire is based on the principle that parenting stress can result from some of the child's characteristics, parents' characteristics, or various situations that are directly related to playing the role of parents. The parenting stress index form of this research is a revised form of the previous forms, which is easier to correct and the amount of materials is less. This revision reduced the parenting stress index from 150 items to 101 items and added 19 optional items as a stress scale of 27.

The subscales related to each area and the number of their items are as follows: Children's realm (47 items) which includes: adaptability (11 items), acceptance (7 items), extravagance (9 items), temperament (5 items), inattention hyperactivity (9 items), empowerment (6 items) and parental domain (54 items) which include: depression (9 items), attachment (7 items), role limitations (7 items), sense of competence (13 items), Social isolation (6 items), relationship with spouse (7 items), parent's health (5 items) and life tension (an optional scale that is 19 items) Likert scoring method according to answers 1 to 5 (from completely agree to completely I disagree) is done. The process of interpreting the results of the parental stress scale, first of all, begins with the examination of the overall score of the scale (child and parent areas).

After that, the results of the subscales that are in each territory are analyzed based on the norm table. In this way, based on the scores of the child's and parent's domains and according to the results of the stress of life scale, it is possible to determine the specific framework of the occurrence of stress and adopt the appropriate intervention or therapy method. Downey's similarity

reliability coefficient was obtained as 0.95 by calculating Cronbach's alpha for the scale in a group of 534 parents living in the Virginia region of America. This coefficient was 0.89 in the child's domain and 0.93 in the parent's domain (Abdin 1995: cited in Krulik et al., 1999). Also, in the study conducted by Shirzadi et al. (2015), with the retest method, Pearson r values were variable between 0.38 - 0.84. And Cronbach's alpha coefficient was between 0.59 to 0.86.

A summary of the description of positive parenting

**Table 1. Summary of training sessions**

Sessions	contents
<b>First session</b>	Assessment in the areas of parents' concerns, conditions and family history. Relationships and interactions of communication network members and conflict resolution. Parental support.
<b>Second session</b>	Agreement on the current expectations of teenagers in different fields. Therapeutic expectations to improve the parent-adolescent relationship. Treatment expectations to improve the mental and psychological problems of the guardian parent as a person
<b>Third session</b>	Teaching parenting skills. Stress management skill training. Relax body training.
<b>Fourth Session</b>	Practice using positive and effective parenting strategies. Practicing communication skills. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of members.
<b>Fifth session</b>	Teaching parenting self-efficacy skills: managing dysfunctional thoughts. Positive self-talk. Returning attention. Challenge with negative thoughts
<b>Sixth session</b>	Continue training and practicing self-efficacy and positive parenting skills. Methods of creating correct behavior. The method of dealing with inappropriate behavior
<b>Seventh session</b>	Increasing pleasurable experiences: planning to allocate time for personal leisure and resuming forgotten personal activities. Increasing pleasurable experiences with teenagers
<b>Eighth session</b>	Review of skills learned, Tips for preventing recurrence of problems. Completion of the post-exam

### 3. Results

The average age of the investigated Subjects was 37.67, with a minimum age of 24 years and a maximum of 47 years 58% of mothers participating in this research have 2 children, 13% have one child and 29% of them have

training sessions is presented in Table 1.

For data analysis, at the level of descriptive statistics, statistical indicators such as frequency, average, and standard deviation are used. At the level of inferential statistics, statistical indicators were used to perform pre-tests such as equality of variances (Levene's's) test, Shapiro-Wilk normality test, and analysis of covariance test using SPSS 21 software was used to check and prove research Hypothesis.

**Table 2. Descriptive indicators of self-efficacy and parenting stress in the two study groups**

groups	variables	Pre-exam		Post-exam	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
<b>Experiment</b>	parenting stress	121/50	21/17	80/82	15/57
	self-efficacy	37/9	9/7	58/50	8/55
<b>control</b>	parenting stress	124/41	17/47	120/4	17/24
	self-efficacy	35/6	8/62	37/80	9/87

In order to use parametric tests, including the analysis of covariance test, the assumptions of the normality of the distribution of scores and the equality of variances of the dependent variables should also be observed. For this purpose, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk test were used to check the assumption of normality, and the Levene's test was used to check the assumption of equality of variances.

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests show the significance level of these tests for both parenting stress and parenting self-efficacy variables is greater than 0.05; therefore the research variables in the pre-test and post-test follow the normal distribution.

more than 2 children. 46% of these mothers have university education (bachelor's and master's) and the rest of them have a diploma and sub-diploma education. In the following, the descriptive indices of the research variables are presented in the Table.

The F value obtained for Levene's test is not significant in both variables, and it can be concluded that the assumption of equality of variances is respected and the use of the analysis of covariance method is unimpeded. The main premise of the research was that positive parenting education is effective on parenting stress and parenting self-efficacy of female heads of households with teenage children. The results of MANCOVA An analysis to investigate the effectiveness of positive parenting training on parenting stress and parenting self-efficacy of women heads of households is presented in the table below.

**Table 3.** Mankova test results

Type of test	Wilks lambda value	F	Df	Sig.	Effect size	test power
<b>Parenting stress pre-test</b>	0.758	2.401	2	0.125	0.24	0.40
<b>Pre-test of parenting self-efficacy</b>	0.624	4.524	2	0.029	0.37	0.68
<b>Group</b>	0.258	21.575	2	0.001	0.74	1.000

According to the above table, the results of multivariate covariance analysis by controlling the effect of pre-tests show that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of parenting stress and parenting self-efficacy of the participants according to group membership (experiment and control) ( $p<0.05$ ) therefore, the main assumption of the research is confirmed, so positive parenting training has been effective on parenting stress and parenting self-efficacy of women as heads of households. Also, the estimated effect size

shows that 74% of the changes in the dependent variables in the post-test were due to the effect of the intervention. The first sub-hypothesis of the research was that positive parenting education is effective on the parenting stress of female heads of households with teenage children. The results of the ANCOVA analysis to investigate the effectiveness of positive parenting training on the parenting stress of women heads of households are presented in the table below.

**Table 4.** Results of covariance analysis for the effect of positive parenting training on parenting stress of female heads of households with teenage children

The source of changes	sum of squares	df	mean of squares	F	Significance level	Eta square	Test power
<b>Pre-test</b>	1165/502	1	1165/502	5/29	0.034	0.238	0.583
<b>Post-test (grouping)</b>	6993.8	1	6993.8	31.79	0.001	0.652	0.999
<b>Error</b>	3739.698	17	219.98				
<b>Total</b>	11899.00	19					

Table 4 shows that the difference between the averages in the two groups was also significant in the pre-test stage, so the analysis of covariance test is the best option for the inferential analysis of this data in order to control the effects of the pre-test. By controlling the effect of the pre-test, a significant difference is observed between the average parenting stress scores of the participants according to group membership (experiment and control) ( $p<0.05$ ), so the first hypothesis of the research is confirmed.

The effect size also shows that 65% of the changes in the subjects' parenting stress in the post-test were due to the effect of the said intervention. The statistical power of 0.99 is very favorable. Therefore, positive parenting training is effective in reducing the parenting stress of female heads of households with teenage children. The results of the ANCOVA analysis to investigate the effectiveness of positive parenting training on parenting self-efficacy of female heads of households are presented in the table below.

**Table 5.** The results of the covariance analysis for the effect of positive parenting training on the parenting self-efficacy of female heads of households with teenage children

The source of changes	sum of squares	df	mean of squares	F	Significance level	Eta square	Test power
<b>Pre-test</b>	438/228	1	438/228	8/01	0.012	0.32	0.76
<b>Post-test (grouping)</b>	2142.358	1	2142.358	39.754	0.001	0.697	1
<b>Error</b>	929.772	17	54.69				
<b>Total</b>	11899.00	19					

Table 5 shows that the difference between the averages in the two groups was also significant in the pre-test stage, so the analysis of covariance test is the best option for the inferential analysis of this data in order to control the effects of the pre-test. By controlling the effect of the pre-test, a significant difference is observed between the average parenting self-efficacy scores of the participants according to group membership (experiment and control) ( $p<0.05$ ), so the second hypothesis of the research is also

confirmed. The size of the effect shows that the mentioned intervention has caused a 69% change in the parenting self-efficacy of the subjects, so positive parenting training is effective in improving the parenting self-efficacy of female heads of households with teenage children. The statistical power of 1 is also very favorable. Also, the statistical power and significance level indicate the adequacy of the sample size.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of the positive parenting program on parenting stress and parenting self-efficacy of female heads of households with teenage children. The results showed that both research hypotheses that were, positive parenting training is effective on parenting stress of female heads of households with teenage children, and positive parenting training is also effective on parenting self-efficacy of female heads of households, were confirmed.

In explaining this result, A positive parenting program can reduce mothers' distress by making changes to the parent-child relationship and increasing intimacy between them (Kabiri and Kalantari, 2018). Also, this program takes steps by raising the awareness of mothers about effective communication with the child by using strategies such as talking to the child, loving and allocating time for the child in order to increase the quality of the parent-child relationship and then reduce the parent's stress. In this program by teaching the correct methods of punishing the child's behavior and using techniques such as applying clear rules, guided discussion, giving direct orders and ignoring, this program will clarify the rules of the house and give instructions to the child that will reduce the child's confusion, obey the rules, Familiarity with the consequences of breaking the law at home and eventually stress becomes a parent. In general, the positive parenting program by teaching the optimal skills of dealing with children can lead to the reduction of children's behavioral problems and reduce the stress of this important part of the life of mothers who are heads of households (Sanders, 2012). Also, by receiving the training of the positive parenting program by providing appropriate information about the conditions of the teenager and how to treat him, the mothers improved their adaptability and were able to accept the conditions of their children and based on the information received from the positive parenting program in identify and solving behavioral problems Let your teenage child have a more effective role. As a result, by teaching the correct and effective behavior of parenting, coping behaviors and behavioral disorders of adolescents are reduced, which can also lead to a reduction in parenting stress (Pickering and Saunders, 2016; Ozyurt et al., 2018).

In the explanation of the confirmation of the second hypothesis, it can also be said that one of the basic change mechanisms of positive parenting is changing people's attitudes; In such a way that in the meetings, positive parenting education to mothers with teenage children caused a change in the attitudes, beliefs and thoughts of mothers towards their teenage children and corrected their perceptions and reactions. This method increases

parents' sense of competence and self-management by teaching parents to exercise proper control and create constructive behaviors in their teenage children, and by learning the skills to communicate intimately with their children and create fun activities for them, it reduces the amount of constant care and concern of parents. About children's behavior and how it reduces and improves the quality of parent-child interaction.

Also, by increasing mothers' self-confidence about their ability to perform parenting duties, this treatment improved mothers' perception of their ability to raise and take care of their children.

Also, because many of the behavioral problems of a person go back to their youth. Therefore, considering the importance of this period of life, mothers have many needs in the field of dealing with their children and using communication skills. In this research, the implementation of the positive parenting program by encouraging mothers to apply the rules and use behavior correction methods and apply the principles of behavior control reduces the behavioral problems of adolescents. By raising their problems and experiences, these mothers received necessary solutions and empathy, and this social support was beneficial for parents under stress. In fact, the education of mothers made a great contribution in increasing positive interactions between mothers and their children and reducing destructive behaviors. In order to feel self-efficacy, they needed knowledge and information in the field of effective methods of child care and education. By receiving positive parenting training, they trusted their abilities and made sure that their performance had a positive effect on their children's behavior. As a result, mothers achieved higher self-efficacy and in this state, their stress also decreased.

Mothers learned that in addition to paying attention and punishing their child's negative behaviors, it is necessary to spend time having intimate relationships with teenagers and strengthening their positive behaviors (Olivari, 2015). Finally, when the mothers implemented the control techniques learned in the therapy sessions and observed their consequences, they found a positive view of their ability and became more motivated to implement the therapy techniques, so that the cycle continued. Mothers should have more confidence in taking care of their children.

This research also had limitations; Among other things, this research was conducted in a city (Yazd) and included mothers of children aged between 10 to 18 years old. Also, sampling of this method has been available. In addition, another limitation is the use of teaching positive parenting skills and ignoring other variables affecting parenting self-efficacy. Therefore, one should be cautious in generalizing its results.

It is suggested that this research be carried out in other cities of the country and mothers with ages as low as 10 years and more than 18 years and its results be compared with this research. Also, it is suggested to use other sampling methods in future research and to control the variables affecting the research results. Finally, it is recommended that therapists and psychologists who provide services to mothers who are heads of households should use the positive parenting training program in order to improve parenting self-efficacy and reduce parenting stress of these people.

## 5. Ethical Considerations

### Compliance with ethical guidelines

Compliance with ethical guidelines, all ethical principles were considered in this article. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and its implementation stages. They were also assured about the confidentiality of their information and were free to leave the study whenever they wished, and if desired, the research results would be available to them.

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### Authors' contributions

All authors have participated in the design, implementation, and writing of all sections of the present study.

### Conflicts of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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