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## The relationship between parenting styles and academic self-handicapping through the mediating role of metacognitive and perfectionism skills

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the causal relationship between parenting styles and academic self-handicapping by mediating role of meta-cognitive and perfectionism skills.

**Methodology:** The statistical population of the study consisted of all the second grade secondary school students in studying the academic year of 2017-18, in Bojnourd. A sample of 350 students was selected using multi-stage cluster sampling. To collect the data, (a) Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ), (b) Metacognitive Skills Questionnaire (MCSQ) (Dowson, Mcinerney, 2004), (c) Perfectionism Scale (Hewitt, Flett (1991) and (d) Academic self-handicapping Scale (ASHS) (Schwinger, 2014) were used. Pearson correlation coefficient and Structure Equation Modeling were used to analyze the data.

**Findings:** Findings showed that parenting styles directly to academic self-handicapping was not significant, But through the mediating role of meta-cognitive skills and perfectionism was significant. and the hypothetical model had good fit.

**Conclusion:** teaching of the metacognitive skills to students will reduce the academic self-handicapping, and the increasing of perfectionism will increase the likelihood of academic self-handicapping in the students.

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## 1. Introduction

In the last few years, the concept of academic self-handicapping as a common psychological traumatic disorder among learners of educational systems has attracted the attention of educational experts and scholars (Berglas, Jones, 1978). Despite the advances made in the field of psychology, educators have always been interested to know why some learners, despite their normal intelligence and learning ability, do not make the expected progress in their education, and in some cases they even face serious educational problems which decrease their academic performance. The finding of related studies shows the negative effect of self-handicapping strategies on the important educational processes and academic performance (Martin, Marsh, Debus, 2001). According to Covington self-worth theory (1984), self-handicapping represents behaviors that learners mainly use to protect themselves from future academic failures. He believes that self-handicapping behaviors often occur in situations where their self-esteem is threatened; these situations mostly occur in schools and universities (Snyder, Malin, Dent, Linnenbrink- Garcia, 2014). Tendency to self-handicapping should be investigated in social and individual situations. A review of the research on self-handicapping suggests that a combination of different factors should be considered about self-handicapping (Arkin, Oleson, 1998). Parenting styles is one of the factors associated with self-handicapping. It is a contextual determinant that plays an important role in the pathology and the growth of children. The relationship between parents and children has attracted the attention of many experts and scholars for years. The relationship between parents and children is the first representative of the world of communication for a child, feeling of love and security is directly related to this relationship (Cames Holt, 2012).

The nature of interaction of children and parents has a significant effect on the behavioral and emotional functioning of children. Parental non-acceptance can affect the self-esteem of children and therefore causes or increases behavioral, cognitive and social problems (Dupree Shilelds, 2007). There are different views of parenting styles. Some scholars and authors define it as a set of behaviors that determine the parent-child mutual interaction in a wide variety of situations and is thus assumed to create a wide interactive space and as fundamental variables affect the present and future behaviors of children which influence the socialization of children (McLeod , Sigman, Hwang, Chu, 2003). For example, Frick (1991) is one of the scholars who have considered both the positive and the negative aspects in defining parenting styles. He referred to the following constructs: positive parenting, poor supervision, corporal punishment, and parental involvement, exercise of power and authority, and lack of awareness of each other. Many studies support these findings and have shown that there is a relationship between parenting styles and academic self-handicapping. For example, Sultan Nejad, Sa'idipour and Asadzadeh (2015) showed that the authoritarian parenting style has a positive and significant relationship with self-handicapping while the authoritative and permissive parenting style has a negative and meaningful relationship with self-handicapping. Therefore, parenting styles can be considered as good predictor of academic self-handicapping. Peregrina, García, Casanov (2003) showed that the parental warmth is a source that helps children to look in their context and can trust others and have positive orientation towards them. The results of Dupree Shilelds (2007) study have shown that authoritative parenting style is associated with a reduction in the use of self-handicapping strategies. Hirabayashi (2005) showed that the children of the authoritarian parents are more likely to become self-handicapped due to high expectations of their parents. Esmaili (2014) showed that the authoritative parenting style positively affects the self-esteem of children of all ages and authoritarian parenting style negatively affects it. Regardless of the effect of contextual determinants, individual and cognitive determinants can also affect the students' self-handicapping (Want, Kleitman, 2006).

One of these determinants is perfectionism. Perfectionism plays an important role in the adaptive problems of individuals. Stoeber (2006), considered the perfectionism as a personality trait characterized by a person's striving for flawlessness and setting high performance standards, accompanied by critical self-evaluations of the behavior. The multidimensional approach to this construct consists of three components of self-oriented perfectionism which is the intrapersonal dimension characterized by high expectations of oneself; other-oriented perfectionism, the interpersonal dimension involves high expectations of others; and socially prescribed perfectionism which entails the tendency that others have high expectations of oneself (Hewitt, Flett, 1991). Researchers believe that normal perfectionists have realistic goals, they feel satisfied when they reach these goals, and their goal is to success and reach high level improvements in order to achieve a positive outcome, they derive pleasure from their effort for the excellence and perfection while accepting personal limitations. Neurotic perfectionists, on the other hand, demand of themselves unrealistic goals and their goal is to achieve improvements in order to avoid negative outcomes and due to their unrealistic expectations they are never satisfied with their performance. Recognizing positive and negative beliefs of perfectionism and its relationship with psychological and personality constructs is very important. Those with high levels of maladaptive perfectionism are likely to have more self-handicapping behaviors (Sherry, Flett, Hewitt, 2001).

Many studies have shown the relationship between perfectionism dimensions and student avoidance behavior. For example Ferrari & Thompson (2006); Pulford, Johnson, Awaida (2005) showed that there is a significant relationship between perfectionism and self-handicapping, as perfectionists want to complete a task in a best way and if they are in a situation where they cannot perform their task completely, they will predict the failure and subsequently use the self-handicapping strategy to avoid others' judgments of their performance. In any case, they attempt to protect their self-worth and self-esteem (Pulford, Johnson, Awaida, 2005). Also, findings of Harun, Engin (2017) & Firoozi (2016); research showed that there is a negative relationship between positive perfectionism and self-handicapping and there is a positive and significant relationship between negative perfectionism and self-handicapping. On the other hand, the perfectionism is influenced by parenting styles. Many empirical evidences have shown parenting style as a basic component in the growth of children, and acknowledged that this component has an impacts on important cognitive, social and behavioral consequences such as perfectionism (Driscoll, Russell, Crockett, 2008). Some psychoanalytic theorists believe that the root of perfectionism is in the early experiences of life, especially the parent-child relationship (Schultz, 1990, translated by Karimi, et.al, 2013). According to Horney, parental behavior plays an important role in creating a sense of security or insecurity in children. If this feeling of insecurity is institutionalized in the child, it will create the superiority or perfectionism that leads to an unstable personality. Findings of a study Farnoodian (2012) showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and negative aspects of perfectionism. Miller, Lambert, Speirs Neumeister (2012) showed a meaningful relationship between the authoritarian parenting styles and the socially prescribed perfectionism. The researchers found perfectionism as interpersonal personality type created in response to the interaction with the parents. Additionally, maladaptive perfectionism can be created as a result of communication with disturbing, controlling and punishing parents. One of the other determinants of learning is metacognitive skills which are associated with students' academic self-handicapping. The concept of metacognition has its roots in self-regulation theory of learning. According to the cognitive-social researchers Bandura (2006), self-regulating refers to predetermined behaviors, emotions and thoughts that are continually changing on the basis of feedback from individual performance in order to achieve the desired goals). In theory of self-regulation, metacognition is a multifaceted concept. This concept involves knowledge, processes, and strategies that assess, monitor, and control cognition (Wells, 2010).

Accordingly, the learner attempts to be aware of his cognitive system, explores the ways to overcome learning barriers, set up optimal learning methods, and set his own activities at all stages of thinking.

Therefore it is assumed that increasing metacognitive knowledge will be associated with a reduction in the use of self-handicapping strategies (McCrea, 2008). Many studies support the above-mentioned findings.

The findings Cai (1992) Dowson & Mcinerney (2004) showed that there is a relationship between meta-cognitive skills and academic self-handicapping. They suggested that low self-esteem and self-efficacy can lead students to self-handicapping. The results of a study conducted by Javidan, Khanzadeh, Abolghasemi (2018) showed that metacognitive skills training had a significant effect on decreasing students' self-handicapping.

Regardless of the impact of metacognitive skills on self-handicapping, these strategies themselves are influenced by environmental determinants, especially parenting styles. Family performance is more pronounced in adolescence. Each family uses their own ways in child rearing, which are called parenting styles (Hardy, Power, Jaedicke, s, 2008). Parents can influence the learning of adolescents and younger members of the family through modeling and verbal encouragement. Findings of the related studies carried out show that parents who determine their expectations for their children and who always teach their children how and why target, plan, monitor, evaluate and ask for other's help, are more regulating compared to their counterparts (Jakešová, Kalenda, Gavora, 2015).

Many findings and theories confirm this finding, one of the major related studies conducted by Bandura (2006) on the relationship between social context and self-regulation. According to Bandura, there is a relationship between contextual factor and self-regulation. Contextual and behavioral factors can provide the opportunity required to control the student's learning (Pirjavid, et all, 2014). Also, parents with authoritarian parenting style prevent the development of self-regulation in their children. Therefore, parenting styles is one of the most important predictors of learning the self-regulation, and its effect on the children's self-regulation is obvious (Heidari, 2009).

Many other studies support the above findings. Farnoodian (2012) showed that there is a correlation between parenting styles and student self-regulation strategies. In other words, there is a positive and meaningful relationship between authoritative parenting style and self-regulation and there is a negative relationship between authoritarian and permissive parenting styles and self-regulation. Therefore, the emotional interaction of parents with their children has a significant effect on the development of self-regulatory skills. Pirjavid, et all (2014) showed that there is a significant difference between parenting styles and self-regulation strategies in students' learning.

Therefore, the type of parent-child interaction, cognitive and personality characteristics of the students can be a good basis for minimizing children's self-handicapping. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and academic self-handicapping by the mediating role of meta-cognitive skills and perfectionism.

## 2. Methodology

This is a correlational study and more precisely a structural equation modeling. The statistical population consisted of all second-grade secondary school students who studied in Bojourn, Iran in the academic year of 97-96. As 12 predictor variables make up the regression analysis in this study, at least 20 samples were considered for each predictor variable (Bartlett, et all, 2001). The sample consisted of 350 students. Multistage random cluster sampling method was used for sampling. From different secondary schools of Bojourn, randomly six high schools and from each high school 2 classes (with the average of 30 students) were selected. To measure the variables of the present study, four standard questionnaires were used as follows:

A- Short form of Self-Handicapping Scale (SHS): this scale was developed by Schwinger, Stiensmeier-Pelster in 2011 to evaluate academic self-handicapping. This is a one-factor scale with 7 terms, which evaluates the self-handicapping of students in a five-point Likert scale (from totally agree to completely

disagree). The validity and reliability of the questionnaire are based on the internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha was reported 0.70 and 0.80, respectively. Also, Bordbar, Rastgar (2015) reported the reliability of this scale by Cronbach's alpha 0.77. The reliability of the scale in the present study was 0.89 by Cronbach's alpha, which shows the reliability of this tool.

B- Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) (Hewitt, Flett, 1991): it designed in 1991 and consists of 30 questions which is tool for measuring perfectionism traits. Besharat (2005) standardize and validate MPS in Iran. The first ten items, examine self-oriented perfectionism, the second ten items examine other-oriented perfectionism, and the last ten items examine society prescribed perfectionism. In the study conducted by Besharat (2005), the content validity of the scale was reported appropriate and the reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha was %89. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.80. Accordingly, the reliability of MPS is considered optimal.

C- A short form of metacognitive skills questionnaire: the questionnaire was developed by Dowson and Mcinerney in 2004 with three subcategories of planning, monitoring and self-regulation skills. The data were analyzed using statistical methods, factor analysis, correlation coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, Guttman split-half coefficient. The results showed that the correlation coefficient of the questionnaire with its total score was 0.36 to 0.62, which showed its content validity. The reliability coefficient of the whole questionnaire was measured by Cronbach's alpha as 0.92. In this study, the reliability was 0.86. Therefore, the reliability of this scale is good.

D- Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ): this questionnaire was developed by Frick in 1991. It consists of 45 items assessing six dimensions of parenting (positive parenting; corporal punishment; parental involvement, knowledge, authority; and poor monitoring). The participants should fill in the child form by selecting the items in a 5-point Likert scale that best describe their interaction with their parents. Samani (2009) standardized APQ on 350 high school students in Isfahan. He showed that the convergent validity, and the internal consistency coefficient of APQ was moderate and the reliability coefficient was 0.82. In this study, the reliability of APQ was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient as 0.80. Accordingly, the reliability of the Alabama Parental Questionnaire is desirable.

### 3. Findings

In the present study, the data were analyzed using SPSS25, Amose24, statistical methods, descriptive indices, Pearson correlation coefficient. Structural model of study was analyzed using structural equation modeling. Descriptive indices and correlation coefficients of variables are reported in Table (1).

**Table1.** Correlation coefficients of parental parenting practices, metacognitive skills, perfectionism and academic self-handicapping

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Parenting - Positive parenting	-												
2. Parenting - Corporal punishment	.38*	-											
3. Parenting – Father's involvement	.33*	.29*	-										
4. Parenting – Knowledge	.09	.12*	.15*	-									
5. Parenting - Authority	.22*	-.05	.19*	.29	-								
6. Parenting - Poor monitoring	.11*	-.04	.31*	.34	.23	-							
7. Metacognition-Planning	.03	-	.14*	-	.01	-.06	-						

		.12*	*	.09									
8 .Metacognition -Monitoring and assessment	.05	-	.19*	-	-	-	.63*	-					
		.18*	*	.11	.01	.14*	*						
		*		*		*							
9. Metacognition-Self-regulation	-.05	-.10	.14*	.02	-.02	-.09	.48*	.50*	-				
							*	*					
10. Self-oriented perfectionism	-	.09	-	-	-	-	-.03	.12*	-.03	-			
	.12*		.20*	.07	.03	.13*							
			*										
11. Other-oriented perfectionism	-.07	.19*	-	-	-	-	.04	.05	0.08	.25	-		
		*	.12*	.05	.01	.14*				**			
						*							
12. Society prescribed perfectionism	-.05	.03	-.02	-	-	-.06	.11*	.14*	.08	.11	.19	-	
				.10	.05			*		*	**		
13. Academic self-handicapping	-.03	.18*	-	.12	.06	.01	-	-	-	.11	.17	-	-
		*	.17*	*			.27*	.27*	.29*		**	0.0	-
							*	*	*			8	
Mean	8.50	5.95	5.96	6.4	5.7	8.74	14.6	12.6	10.6	31.	19.	12.	<b>19.</b>
				4	5		5	8	2	42	29	10	<b>91</b>
Std. Deviation	2.94	2.50	2.54	2.7	2.3	3.20	4.81	3.45	2.62	7.7	5.2	3.8	<b>6.9</b>
				6	1					9	9	2	<b>3</b>

\*\* Correlation is significant at the level 0.01 \* Correlation is significant at the level 0.50

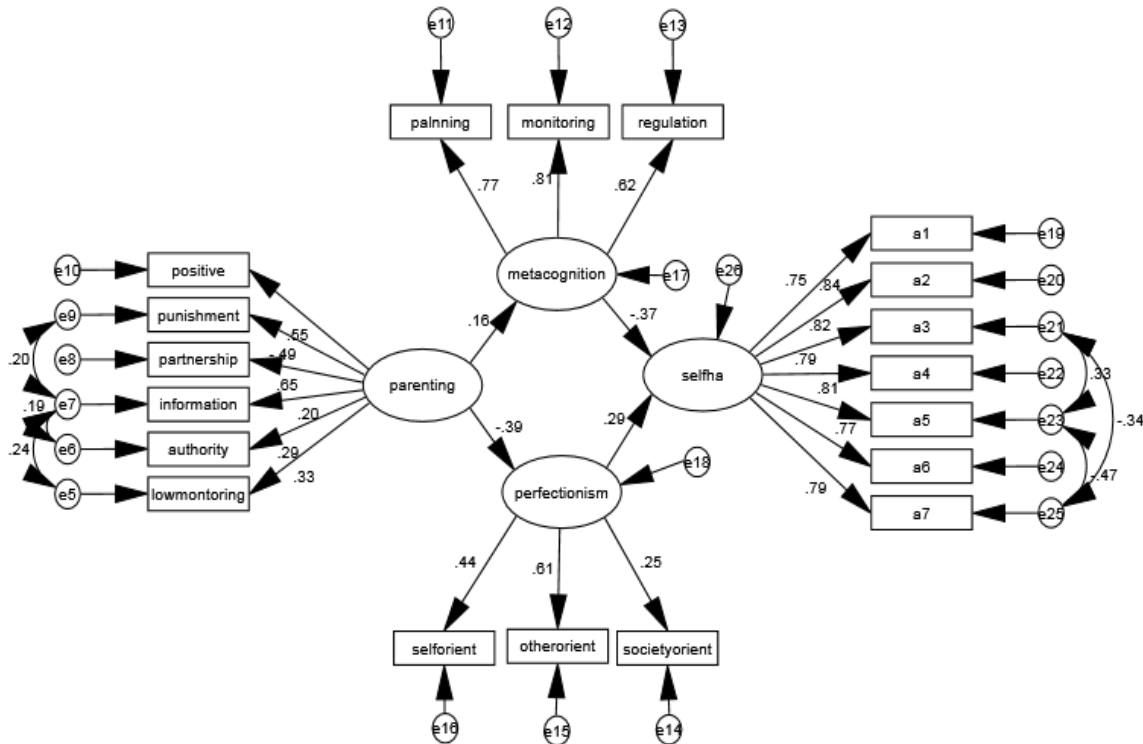
The results of Table 1 show that the dimensions of corporal punishment and knowledge of parenting styles are positive and fathers' involvement has a negative relationship with academic self-handicapping ( $P < 0.05$ ); all of the metacognitive skills have a negative and significant relationship with academic self-handicapping ( $P < 0.01$ ). Other-oriented perfectionism has a positive and significant relationship with self-handicapping ( $P < 0.01$ ). Other results regarding the relationship between parenting styles and metacognitive skills suggest that there is a negative and significant correlation between corporal punishment and planning, monitoring and evaluation ( $P \leq 0.05$ ); father's involvement has a positive and significant relationship with all three metacognitive skills ( $P \leq 0.05$ ); knowledge is negatively correlated with monitoring and evaluation ( $P < 0.05$ ), and poor monitoring has a negative and significant relationship with monitoring and evaluation ( $P < 0.01$ ). Finally, the results for the relationship between parenting and perfectionism show that positive parenting has a negative correlation with self-oriented perfectionism ( $P < 0.05$ ), corporal punishment is positively correlated with other-oriented perfectionism ( $P < 0.01$ ), and father's involvement has a negative relationship with self-oriented perfectionism ( $P < 0.05$ ).

After testing the assumptions, the conceptual model of the research was investigated. Estimation of the model was done by Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE). There are several indices for model fitting. The insignificance of the Chi-square is one of the model fitting indices. But this index is influenced by the sample size. Therefore, the significance often occurs. Hence, other indices for model fitting should also be used. The values between one to three for normalized Chi-square divided by degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2 / df$ ), values of 0.05 and less for Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and values of 0.90 and more for Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) show goodness of fit for structural equation models (Tabachnick, & Fidell Tabacnik and Fidel, 2007). The fit indices of the initial model (Table 2) showed that the initial model of the study did not have good fit (RMSEA=8%, TLI=.84, CFI=.86, AGFI=.84,  $\chi^2/df=3.21$ ). Investigating the standardized coefficients showed that the pathway of parenting styles to academic self-handicapping was not significant ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, the model was refined by deleting it. The fit indices of the refined model (Table 2) indicated that it had a good fit. Investigating the coefficients of the pathway showed the significant at  $\alpha = 0.01$ .

**Table2.** Structural model fitting indices

Model	$\chi^2$	df	P	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Initial	471.11	147	.0001	3.21	.88	.84	.86	.84	.08
Modified	318.13	142	.01	2.24	.91	.90	.93	.91	.06

The path diagram and standardized coefficients are shown in Fig. 1 & table 3:

**Fig1.** Path charts and standardized coefficients of the modified model for Academic self-handicapping.**Table3.** Estimation of the coefficients of direct and indirect effects as well as the whole modified predictive model of academic self-handicapping

Pathways	Directions	Effects	The indirect effects	total effects	R2
From parenting styles to:					
Metacognitive skills		.16 **	-	.16 **	.03
Perfectionism		-.39 **	-	-.39 **	.16
Academic self-handicapping		-	-.17 **	-.17 **	.24
From metacognitive skills to:					
Academic self-handicapping		-.37 **	-	-.37 **	-
From perfectionism to:					
Academic self-handicapping		.29 **	-	.29 **	-

\*\* Correlation is significant at the level 0.01

\* Correlation is significant at the level 0.50

The results of Table 3 show that all direct effects are significant ( $P \leq 0.01$ ). The direct effect of parenting styles on metacognitive skills is positive while its effect on perfectionism is negative. The direct effect of metacognitive skills on academic self-handicapping is negative and the effect of perfectionism on academic self-handicapping is positive. The indirect effect of parenting styles on academic self-handicapping is negative and significant due to meta-cognitive skills and perfectionism ( $P < 0.01$ ). The variance for

academic self-handicapping which is based on parenting styles, metacognitive skills and perfectionism is 0.24. This means that 24 percent of the changes in academic self-handicapping are affected by predictive variables.

#### 4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and academic self-handicapping by mediating role of meta-cognitive skills and perfectionism in secondary school students in Bojnourd in the academic year of 97-96.

The findings of the present study showed that parenting styles aren't directly predictor of the academic self-handicapping. This means that parenting styles have not a direct impact on academic self-handicapping. These findings are not similar to results of the studies conducted by Want, Kleitman (2006), Hirabayashi (2005), Peregrina, García, Casanov (2003), Pulford, Johnson, Awaida, (2005), Dupree Shilelds (2007), Esmacili (2014); Heidari (2009); Sultan Nezhad et al (2015). To explain the finding, it should be noted that Environmental and tissue factors are not a determinative factor in reducing cognitive and behavioral problems, including academic self-handicapping of students.

Also, metacognitive skills are a direct predictor of self-handicapping. This means that meta-cognitive skills have a significant negative effect on academic self-handicapping. And with increasing metacognitive skills, self-handicapping will reduce. Consistent with these findings Abafat (2015) Dowson & Mcinerney (2004), Thomas and Gadbois (2007); and Yousefi (2017), showed that meta-cognitive predictive strategies are negatively correlated with academic self-handicapping. A person who is aware of the content of meta-cognitive strategies and recognizes the position appropriate to each of the strategies, is capable of resolving the challenges ahead and sees no need to use the process of self-handicapping the situation. On the other hand, metacognitive planning and meta-cognitive skills refer to targeting, choosing the right strategy, and identifying resources. Hence, planning and designing the learning process facilitates the control over cognitive status and inhibit self-handicapping. In other words, when one recognizes the problem and knows the ways to solve it or know the resource management, will face the challenging situation and do not protect their self-esteem by hiding behind their mask of the situation (Zust, 2010).

Moreover, the findings showed that perfectionism has a direct positive effect on academic self-handicapping and the increasing in the students' perfectionism will increase their academic self-handicapping and vice versa. These findings are the same as the findings of the studies conducted by Hewitt & Flett (1991), Pulford, et al (2005), Ferrari & Thompson (2006), Firoozi (2016). They believe that each dimension of perfectionism has different personality traits and interpersonal and intrapersonal behavioral components, the positive kind of which helps one to perceive the context as supportive and non-threatening. On the other hand, negative perfectionism causes an individual to perceive the context as hostile and threatening, which makes the individual use self-protection strategies like self-handicapping (Hewitt, Flett, 1991).

On the other hand, there is a relationship between parenting styles and students' metacognitive skills. This means that parenting styles have a direct positive effect on meta-cognitive skills. And strengthening the parent-child relationship will increase the child's ability to meta-cognitive skills. This finding is on the same line as the findings of the researches conducted by Flavell (1979), Stranberg (1994), Farnoodian (2012); Pirjavid, et al (2014), showed that parent interactions and training play an important role in predicting children's self-regulated learning; and the parents' metacognitive and strategic teaching and their modeling helps children to learn meta-cognitive knowledge and, as a result, their self-regulation will improve.. This means that parenting styles is an opportunity in which the children can create a positive image of themselves in assessing their relationships with others. The more parents give their children independence and responsibility and ask them to decide on some of their affairs and do their tasks



individually, the more they will be responsible, self-dependent and independent in the future. The parent of an adolescent, who have not the necessary authority and constantly use corporal punishment while their monitoring is weak, may prevent their children from using their cognitive and metacognitive capacities appropriately and therefore the behavioral problems will arise.

Parenting styles can also be a good predictor of students' perfectionism. This means that parenting styles directly affect perfectionism. This effect is negative and with increasing scores in parenting styles, their perfectionism decreases and vice versa. This finding are in the same line with the results of the investigations conducted by Besharat, et al (2011), Farnoodian (2012), Driscoll et al (2008). This means that the parenting styles will play a decisive role in the future of adolescents, even in adults, in relation to the rational and true attitude to the facts. In families with over controlling parents, individual expression and individual decision making are humiliated and the children are required to meet their parent's expectations for their approval. And if these expectations are not met, children feel guilty and their performance will reduce. Children may respond to these pressures by adopting unrealistic and high standards of their parents, and may experience anxiety. Other findings of this study show that the indirect effect of parenting styles on academic self-handicapping is due to the mediating role of meaningful metacognitive skills. This means that metacognitive skills play a mediator role in the relationship between parenting styles and academic self-handicapping. This finding is in accordance with studies conducted by Farnoodian (2012), Yousefi (2017), Bordbar, Rastgar (2015). Contextual factors such as parenting styles can reduce the student's avoidance behavior and academic self-handicapping by planning, rehabilitation, and directing thinking and controlling their performance (Flavell, 1979).

Finally, the findings of this research show that the indirect effect of parenting styles on academic self-handicapping is significant due to the mediating role of perfectionism. This means that perfectionism has a mediator role in the relationship between parenting styles and academic self-handicapping. This finding is consistent with the results of the studies conducted by Hamachek (1998).

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