




Explaining the Structural Model of the Relationship Between Parental Stress Index and Democratic Parenting Style with the Mediating Role of Wisdom and Sense of Coherence

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aimed to examine the structural model of the relationship between parental stress and democratic parenting style with the mediating role of wisdom and sense of coherence.

Methods and Materials: The research method was correlational in terms of design. The statistical population consisted of parents of elementary school students in Tehran during the 2022–2023 academic year, from which 639 individuals were selected through cluster random sampling. Data were collected using the Parental Stress Index (Abidin, 1990), the Ardeli Wisdom Scale (Ardeli, 2003), the Antonovsky Sense of Coherence Scale (Antonovsky, 1993), and the Robinson Authoritative Parenting Questionnaire (Robinson et al., 2001). The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficients and structural equation modeling.

Findings: The results showed a negative relationship between parental stress and democratic parenting style ($p < .01$). The modeling results indicated that the model had a good fit, and wisdom and sense of coherence were able to mediate the relationship between the parental stress index and parenting style.

Conclusion: The results demonstrated that the variables of parental stress index, wisdom, and sense of coherence have an impact on democratic parenting style.

Keywords: Parental Stress, Parenting, Wisdom, Coherence.

1. Introduction

Despite the growing influence of new socialization factors such as social networks, peer groups, and the continuous process of modernization, especially in the domain of child socialization, the family still holds a unique position in psycho-social development. The family is the first institution that guides individuals in accepting social norms and facing future challenges. Inefficient parenting styles, marital instability, and the inability to provide a suitable environment will lead to delinquent behaviors throughout a child's life (Folorunsho et al., 2024). Among families, there is a great diversity in parenting practices, with each parent adopting a different approach to interacting with and guiding their children. This is because many factors influence parenting attitudes, and similarly, two parents together may also adopt a specific pattern in raising their children (Sanvictores & Mendez, 2022).

While we cannot deny the economic and social factors structurally embedded in the formation of human personality and family stability, and family capacity-building is an inseparable part of the effort to ensure children's rights and welfare, parenting style acts as a catalyst in the process of child development and socialization. Among the many parenting styles that psychologists have identified and interpreted, it has been shown that the democratic style, sometimes referred to as the authoritative style, should be given special attention as a cultural model for child well-being (Aprianti et al., 2024; Hidayatullah et al., 2023; Sarfika et al., 2024).

According to Baumrind, a set of attitudes towards the child, communication methods, caregiving styles, and the emotional atmosphere of the parents' behavior creates the parenting style. Among the parenting styles, including neglectful (permissive), authoritarian, and democratic (authoritative), democratic parents demonstrate more warmth and affection, positive control, assertiveness, and reasonable expectations in their parenting approach. Democratic parenting fosters interaction with children in an environment full of encouragement and based on an egalitarian attitude and mutual respect, allowing children to feel a sense of choice, participation, and unity with the family and society and to play an active role in achieving common goals (Festy et al., 2022).

Numerous studies indicate that democratic parenting is positively associated with increased independence, learning motivation, self-efficacy, healthy social interactions, emotional intelligence, and decreased addiction to virtual

spaces and smartphone use (Harahap & Sahputra, 2023; Hidayatullah et al., 2023; Lima-Quezada et al., 2024; Rambe et al., 2023; Sarfika et al., 2024).

Studies have shown that negative experiences within the family lead to problematic behaviors in children. More importantly, these negative experiences stem from mental health disorders, chronic stress due to social and economic problems, marital discord, feelings of parental incompetence, lack of knowledge about proper parenting, and inappropriate parenting styles (Işık, 2021; Liman & Köksoy, 2021). The development of the parental role within the family can present serious challenges and create stress. Parenting style and parental stress significantly affect children, with parental emotional health and effective stress management contributing to the child's psychological well-being (Aprianti et al., 2024).

Parental stress directly influences parenting styles, meaning that increased parental stress leads to greater use of authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. Indirectly, through the mediation of psychological flexibility, it leads to less use of democratic parenting and more use of authoritarian or permissive styles (Fonseca et al., 2020). Stress is one of the most critical issues of the modern era, attracting attention across various fields, including psychology, to the point where it is often called the "disease of civilization." Parental stress, as introduced by Abidin (1990), arises from certain child characteristics such as demandingness, inattentiveness, and hyperactivity, along with specific parental traits like depression and feelings of competence, or diverse situations directly related to the parental role, such as marital relationships and parental health. The new responsibility spouses take on as parents is inherently stressful and may lead to feelings of incompetence in the parental role, particularly when they feel they cannot control the situation, which increases their stress (Rollè et al., 2017).

It has been observed that increased parental stress significantly affects parenting styles, with parents experiencing high levels of stress tending to adopt authoritarian and permissive parenting styles regardless of their children's physical condition (Chang et al., 2023).

Studies on violence have shown that both exposure to parental violence and witnessing violence and aggression between parents lead to psychological trauma, including depression, anxiety, delinquency, and aggression later in life. Wisdom allows parents to overlook certain childish behaviors while focusing on appropriate conduct, ultimately leading to the adoption of correct parenting styles. The

general truth about the democratic style is that, first, discipline should be proportionate to the child's error, and second, parents should be aware of situational factors when enforcing rules and traits influencing the child's behavior. This is made possible through wisdom (Tippe, 2018).

Zare Mazloom et al. (2024) found that wise parents provide appropriate models for the emotional and social development of their same-gender children, and the promotion of wisdom in parents likely contributes to the psycho-social development of their children. Different definitions of wisdom share many commonalities. Wisdom is a complex, multifaceted structure consisting of interrelated cognitive and non-cognitive components that are important in parenting (Zare Mazloom et al., 2024). Cognitive components include deep, experience-based knowledge about the difficult and significant issues of human existence and a kind of reasoning characterized by self-reflection, relativism, and intellectual humility. Non-cognitive components include deep curiosity about human existence, openness to new ideas and experiences, emotion regulation, compassion, and self-transcendence. According to Ardel, wisdom comprises three dimensions: cognitive, representing the desire to know the truth and understand and accept the contradictory aspects of humanity and the unpredictability of life; reflective, representing the ability to evaluate life and relationships from different perspectives; and emotional, encompassing positive emotions and behaviors such as empathy and compassion toward oneself and others (Moghadam & Ghamarani, 2022).

Since it is essential to distinguish between "stressful parenting" and "parental stress" within the family system, wisdom can be a specialization in reducing suffering and increasing well-being for oneself and others. The characteristics derived from wisdom can influence understanding situations, flexibility in accepting responsibility in child-rearing, and reducing parental stress index (Crnic & Coburn, 2020). Wisdom is also an influential variable in mothers' thought regulation, future-oriented relationships with their children, and all dimensions of family relationships (Rejali & Yousefi, 2021).

Family functioning, based on the McMaster Behavioral Model, which includes seven components: problem-solving, communication, roles, emotional responsiveness, emotional involvement, behavior control, and general functioning, is strengthened by a high sense of coherence among members, impacting the quality of parenting and child development outcomes (Folorunsho et al., 2024).

A sense of coherence is a personality trait characterized by three dimensions: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness, which help an individual view life and its problems in a way that facilitates coping with difficulties (Fazeli et al., 2022). A sense of coherence, as a positive trait combined with authoritative parenting, provides an optimal background for children, protecting them from maladaptive development and externalizing problems (Konaszewski et al., 2021).

Resilience derived from a high sense of coherence moderates the cycle of violent behaviors toward children, providing support for reducing stress, breaking the vicious cycle of violence, and facilitating parenting retraining (Darbani & Parsakia, 2023; Sawada et al., 2021). Hartini (2020), in her research, showed a significant negative relationship between the parental stress index and sense of coherence due to elements of acceptance, situation comprehension, and feelings of control and manageability. Parents with low levels of stress have a high sense of coherence, whereas mothers with higher levels of stress, due to their mental and physiological conditions, experience a lower sense of coherence (Hartini, 2020).

Mack et al. (2007), in a study examining parental attitudes, stress, and coherence, reported that mothers with a high sense of coherence experience less stress, even when their children exhibit severe autism symptoms. Similarly, there is a negative correlation between a high sense of coherence and parental stress (Khatua, 2021). Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the structural model of the relationship between parental stress and democratic parenting style with the mediating role of wisdom and sense of coherence.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The research method was descriptive and correlational. The statistical population consisted of parents of elementary school students in Tehran during the 2022–2023 academic year. According to Kline's (2016) theory, which suggests that in structural equation modeling, the sample size can be determined as 5 to 15 observations per measured variable (Kline, 2016), considering an effect size of 0.19, a power of 0.80, seven latent variables, 73 items as observed variables, and an alpha of 0.05 to achieve a 95% confidence interval, the sample size was set at 742 individuals. The sampling method was cluster random sampling. Geographically, Tehran was divided into five regions: north, east, west,

south, and center. The 22 districts within these regions were identified, and a district was randomly selected from each region. The selected districts were as follows: from the north, district one; from the center, district ten; from the east, district thirteen; from the west, district five; and from the south, district twenty. In each district, a boys' and a girls' school were randomly selected. After visiting the schools, two classes were randomly selected, and the questionnaires were distributed to the parents. Parents were assured of confidentiality and informed consent. Ultimately, 658 individuals responded to the questionnaires, reflecting a response rate of 88%. After excluding 19 incomplete responses, 639 valid responses were included in the analysis. The data were collected using the following questionnaires:

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Parenting Styles

The Parenting Styles Questionnaire is a 32-item Likert-scale test with responses ranging from never, sometimes, almost (average), most of the time, and always. The questionnaire measures three parenting styles—authoritative (democratic), authoritarian, and permissive—based on Baumrind's parenting styles theory. In addition to the three parenting styles, the questionnaire includes seven communication dimensions. The democratic style comprises components of warm, supportive bonding, reasoning/induction, and independence. The authoritarian style includes three dimensions: physical coercion, verbal hostility, and non-reasoning/punitive. The permissive style consists of one dimension: permissiveness. The questionnaire is scored on a 5-point Likert scale (from never to always). A cutoff score of 38 is used for this parenting style, with higher scores indicating a greater inclination toward democratic parenting. The questionnaire was translated into Persian by Alizadeh (2000), who reported an internal consistency of 0.90 for the authoritative scale in a sample of typically developing children. In Alishiri's (2013) research, Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was calculated at 0.89 (Alishiri, 2013). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales of acceptance and warmth, independence, and reasoning/induction were 0.83, 0.75, and 0.77, respectively.

2.2.2. Parental Stress

The short form of this scale consists of 36 items and three subscales: parental distress, parent-child dysfunctional

interaction, and difficult child characteristics. It assesses parental stress on a Likert scale, with 12 items for each subscale. The parental distress subscale measures parental tension regarding child-rearing based on other personal stressors. The difficult child subscale reflects behaviors in children that make parenting easier or more difficult. The parent-child dysfunctional interaction subscale addresses parental expectations and how expected behavior affects parenting. Parents respond to the items on a 5-point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". A cutoff score of 90 is used, with higher scores indicating elevated stress in parents. Babakri et al. (2018) reported a reliability coefficient of 0.89 for the parental stress index, with correlations between 0.23 and 0.68, all significant at the 0.01 level (Babakri et al., 2018). In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales of parental distress, parent-child dysfunctional interaction, and difficult child were 0.877, 0.907, and 0.946, respectively.

2.2.3. Wisdom

This scale was developed by Ardel in 2003, with a 12-item short form later derived for research purposes. The scale measures three dimensions: reflective, cognitive, and affective, with four items for each dimension in the short form. The scale is scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" with statements about oneself. Three items are reverse-scored. The mean of the 12 items represents the overall level of wisdom, with a score of 4 indicating high wisdom in each dimension. A higher score indicates greater wisdom, while a score below 3 reflects low wisdom in each dimension. Thomas et al. (2017) examined the psychometric properties of the 12-item version and found acceptable content, face validity, and a correlation of 0.70 with the original 39-item version. In Pourtaheri and Azad-Disfani's (2020) study, the reliability coefficient for the shortened wisdom scale was 0.72 (PourTaheri & Azad Disfani, 2020). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the cognitive, reflective, and affective dimensions were 0.547, 0.587, and 0.577, respectively, with shared reliability above 0.7, indicating acceptable reliability.

2.2.4. Sense of Coherence

The sense of coherence is defined as a personal orientation toward life, controlled through three basic concepts: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. The questionnaire is scored on a Likert

scale, with each item rated on a seven-point scale. Items 1, 3, 7, and 10 are reverse-scored. The score for each item reflects the degree selected by the respondent. Scores between 13 and 26 indicate a low sense of coherence, scores between 26 and 52 reflect a moderate sense of coherence, and scores above 52 indicate a high sense of coherence, with a maximum score of 91. Antonovsky reported reliability coefficients ranging from 0.70 to 0.92. In Iran, Mohammadzadeh et al. found Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.75 and 0.78 for the 13-item questionnaire in male and female students, respectively, and a test-retest reliability of 0.66 (Eini et al., 2020). In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the dimensions of meaningfulness, comprehensibility, and manageability were 0.953, 0.907, and 0.944, respectively.

2.3. Data analysis

For the data analysis method, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the relationships among the study variables. SEM allows for the testing of complex models that involve multiple variables, both latent and observed, and accounts for measurement errors. First, descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis, were calculated to assess the normality of the data distribution. Pearson correlation coefficients were used to explore the relationships between variables. Path analysis within SEM was conducted to test the direct and indirect effects of parental stress, psychological capital, wisdom, and sense of coherence on democratic parenting. The model's goodness-of-fit was

evaluated using fit indices such as the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) index. Additionally, bootstrapping procedures were applied to assess the significance of direct, indirect, and total effects, ensuring the robustness of the findings. All analyses were conducted using statistical software such as AMOS or SmartPLS.

3. Findings and Results

The frequency of participants' ages in the study showed that 42 participants were aged 20 to 30, 304 participants were aged 30 to 40, 264 participants were aged 40 to 50, and 29 participants were aged 50 to 60. Additionally, 511 participants were mothers, and 128 were fathers. Regarding education, 202 participants had a high school diploma, 81 had an associate degree, 240 had a bachelor's degree, 92 had a master's degree, and 24 had a doctoral degree. Moreover, 240 participants had one child, 372 had two children, 26 had three children, and 1 had four or more children. In terms of residence, 165 participants lived in the north, 166 in the west, 193 in the east, and 115 in the center of the city. Furthermore, 174 participants were dissatisfied with their lives, 463 were satisfied, and 2 had no opinion regarding life satisfaction. Also, 498 participants were religious, 140 were non-religious, and 4 had religious differences with their spouses. Additionally, 253 participants were satisfied with their jobs, 125 were dissatisfied, and 261 were unemployed. Statistical tests indicated no significant differences between the demographic groups.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Warmth	21.02	2.987	1.50	1.27
Reasoning	19.76	3.653	1.10	0.795
Independence	18.59	3.633	0.639	0.209
Democratic	59.37	8.964	1.42	1.46
Distress	24.69	9.44	1.12	0.379
Interactions	21.53	8.99	0.587	2.422
Characteristics	23.3	10.834	1.23	1.36
Index	69.52	26.27	0.870	0.798
Cognitive	12.1	3.082	1.210	-0.069
Affective	10.97	3.415	0.104	0.072
Reflective	12.77	3.098	1.175	-0.156
Wisdom	35.84	7.69	1.259	0.214
Meaningfulness	16.74	3.879	0.816	0.416
Comprehensibility	22.79	4.427	-0.664	-0.464
Manageability	17.1	3.551	1.115	-0.193
Coherence	56.63	8.778	1.425	-0.434

In Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of the research variables are presented. The skewness and kurtosis of the research variables fall within the ± 2 range, indicating the normality of the variable distribution. The skewness

values were between -3 and +3, and the kurtosis values were between -5 and +5. Given that the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the indices were within acceptable limits, the requirement for normal data distribution was met.

Table 2

Correlation Results Between Research Constructs

Latent Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Parental Stress Index	1				
2. Psychological Capital	-0.540	1			
3. Sense of Coherence	-0.117	0.42	1		
4. Wisdom	0.324	-0.150	0.445	1	
5. Democratic Parenting	-0.362	0.257	0.252	0.338	1

The results in Table 2 show that the highest correlations with democratic parenting were parental stress index (-0.362), wisdom (0.338), psychological capital (0.257), and sense of coherence (0.252). To assess the significance of the

relationships between the research indices and corresponding constructs, the regression coefficient (path coefficient) parameter was used. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Significance Coefficients for Direct Effects

Direct Paths	Path Coefficients	T-Statistic	P-Values	Interpretation
Parental Stress Index → Democratic Parenting	-0.181	4.305	0.000	Significant
Parental Stress Index → Sense of Coherence	-0.359	4.733	0.000	Significant
Sense of Coherence → Democratic Parenting	0.206	5.547	0.000	Significant
Parental Stress Index → Wisdom	-0.266	3.715	0.000	Significant
Psychological Capital → Wisdom	0.581	16.368	0.000	Significant
Wisdom → Democratic Parenting	0.176	3.545	0.000	Significant

To assess the significance of the relationships between the research indices and constructs, the regression coefficient or path coefficient was used. Based on Table ..., it can be stated that paths with a T value greater than 1.96 indicate significance at a 95% confidence level. As shown in the table, all direct paths except for the path from Avoidance

(P = 0.29, T = 1.059) to Wisdom were significant. Table 4 shows the indirect effects model, which demonstrates the mediating roles of the assumed mediating variables. Table 4 is designed according to the research model, with relationships represented by arrows indicating exogenous, endogenous, mediating, and endogenous variables.

Table 4

Results of T-Value and Path Coefficient for the First Hypothesis

Hypothesis Title	T-Value Statistic	Significance Level	Total Effect	Variance Inclusion (VAF)	Mediation Status
Parental Stress Index → Sense of Coherence → Democratic Parenting	3.386	0.001	-0.26	0.28	Partial Mediation
Parental Stress Index → Wisdom → Democratic Parenting	2.636	0.009	-0.227	0.207	Partial Mediation
Psychological Capital → Sense of Coherence → Democratic Parenting	3.82	0.000	0.411	0.104	No Mediation
Psychological Capital → Wisdom → Democratic Parenting	3.341	0.001	0.47	0.21	Partial Mediation

According to [Table 4](#), the t-value and p-value for the research variables indicated that the variables had a significant relationship with democratic parenting through the mediation of sense of coherence and wisdom. Sense of coherence (0.28) and wisdom (0.21) partially mediated the relationship between the parental stress index and democratic parenting. Sense of coherence had a minimal mediating role between psychological capital and democratic parenting (0.104); however, since the variance inclusion was less than 0.20, it was not considered a mediator in this hypothesis. In terms of constructive interactions with democratic parenting, sense of coherence (0.38) and wisdom (0.27) played partial mediating roles. The SRMR index indicated the relative fit of the model, representing the difference between the observed and model-implied correlation matrices. When the SRMR value is less than or equal to 0.10, it indicates an approximate model fit, and in this study, after removing the nonsignificant path, the SRMR was 0.085, indicating that the study fell within the acceptable range and that the model had a good fit with the data.

D-ULS (squared Euclidean distance) and d_G (geometric distance) were two methods used to calculate the difference between the empirical covariance matrix and the model-implied covariance matrix. If the difference is small, it is attributed to sampling error, and since these values in bootstrapping were smaller than the upper confidence bound, the fit was deemed appropriate. Chi-square evaluates the overall fit and the difference between the sample and covariance matrices, but there is no defined cutoff point for these indices in this software. According to Hair et al. (2014), the SRMR value is the main criterion for assessing the goodness-of-fit of the overall model in PLS software.

According to Tenenhaus et al. (2005), another index known as GOF (goodness-of-fit) was used to evaluate the model. This criterion is the geometric mean of the average R-squared values for the endogenous variables and the average communalities of the research variables. Höck and Ringle (2006) introduced values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 as weak, moderate, and strong thresholds for the GOF index of overall model quality. In this study, the GOF value was 0.57. Since this value exceeds 0.36, it indicates that the modified model has a good fit, with the overall model demonstrating excellent quality and fit. When the GOF value exceeds 0.36, the predictive quality of the variance axes reaches 97% covariance alignment.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

To examine the causal relationships among the research variables, structural equation modeling was employed. In the first part, the findings indicated that the relationship between the parental stress index and democratic parenting was significant. Except for the variable of avoidance mediated by wisdom, the remaining variables showed significant relationships with democratic parenting through the mediation of sense of coherence and wisdom. The research variables were able to predict 75% of the variance in democratic parenting. According to the theoretical concepts of Robinson's Parenting Style, Abidin's Parental Stress Index, Luthans' Psychological Capital, Christensen and Salovey's Communication Patterns, Ardel's Wisdom, and Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence, the findings collectively suggest that a proper evaluation of stressful situations, optimism, resilience in the face of problems, constructive interactions and communication between spouses, the ability to reason deeply based on experience, an understanding of others, and having meaning and purpose in family life lead to correct behaviors in individuals, proper child-rearing, and ultimately, psychosocial growth of family members, family stability, and the adoption of democratic parenting styles. These results are consistent with previous studies ([Chang et al., 2023](#); [Khatua, 2021](#); [Rejali & Yousefi, 2021](#); [Tippe, 2018](#)).

According to Olson's (2000) family functioning approach, which emphasizes the flexibility of roles, rules, and discipline control in the family, in the dimension of flexibility and the emphasis on change versus stability, family management becomes more democratic, with less authoritarian tendencies, and all members participate in decision-making ([Rejali & Yousefi, 2021](#); [Zare Mazloom et al., 2024](#)). Based on the findings of the study, the structural relationships of a set of variables, both personal and interpersonal, help describe some factors that influence the development of democratic parenting—a style long recognized as an ideal for proper child-rearing. Most research on parenting styles has focused on the impact of these styles on the psychosocial development of children, with little attention paid to the relationship between attachment styles or schemas in the adoption of parenting styles. Therefore, there is a gap in studies that explore the personal capacities of parents today. It is evident that two individuals with independent thoughts, when brought together as a couple, face new challenges in reconciling their individuality. If they lack sufficient skills, they cannot provide a suitable environment for their own growth and the development of their children. Several characteristics act as

sources or triggers for thoughts and behaviors, such as how one faces stress, resilience, optimism, listening skills, attention to others' feelings, understanding situations from another's perspective, and the ability to feel in control of oneself and one's environment, despite difficulties. Psychological capital is one such capacity, which fosters confidence, purpose, and enthusiasm, allowing individuals to display greater perseverance. Thus, by recognizing and strengthening these characteristics, individuals who face the new and challenging role of parenting can develop the relative ability to engage in appropriate communication with their children and use the correct parenting style.

The impact of these variables is not necessarily simple, linear, or direct; they can influence outcomes indirectly through other variables. For example, the cognitive, reflective, and emotional dimensions of wisdom allow individuals to learn from various life experiences and apply them for personal and child growth, along with psychological capital, constructive communication patterns between spouses, and stress reduction, making it easier to adopt an authoritative (democratic) parenting style. Before stress arises from dealing with children's life issues, sense of coherence serves as a protective factor through comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness, equipping parents with the tools they need. Parental wisdom and a sense of psychological coherence establish correct communication between parents and children, creating a calm environment at home where all members can realize their potential.

The statistical results indicated that the parental stress index has a negative relationship with democratic parenting, which is consistent with prior studies (Aprianti et al., 2024; Chang et al., 2023; Fonseca et al., 2020; Hidayatullah et al., 2023). These studies have shown that an increase in parental stress leads parents toward using permissive and authoritarian parenting styles and reduces their use of democratic parenting. The development of the parental role in the family can be accompanied by serious challenges and create stress. Parenting style and parental stress significantly affect children, while parental emotional health and effective stress management contribute to children's psychological well-being (Aprianti et al., 2024). Parental stress directly influences parenting style. Some child characteristics, such as demandingness, inattentiveness, and hyperactivity, as well as parental traits like depression and feelings of competence, or diverse situations directly related to the parental role, such as marital relationships and parental health, contribute to stress. The new responsibility that

spouses take on as parents is inherently stressful and may lead to feelings of incompetence in the parental role. This feeling of a lack of control exacerbates stress, especially when they feel unable to manage the situation (Rollè et al., 2017).

Controlling stress and tension in the family is challenging today. In addition, each child's unique characteristics, even without psychological disorders, contribute to parental stress. Since stress directly negatively affects executive functions, these functions form a strong connection between brain structures in the prefrontal and frontal lobes and cognitive skills like problem-solving, abstract thinking, momentary self-awareness, creativity, monitoring, and behavioral inhibition (Chang et al., 2023). Given that child behavioral antecedents, such as demandingness and impulsivity, require conscious intervention and guidance to improve the family environment, a certain level of calm is necessary for parents. Thus, heightened stress leads to disproportionate responses to situations, ultimately resulting in incorrect parenting styles. For these reasons, assessing and controlling stress is essential for adopting a democratic parenting style.

The findings revealed that the parental stress index has a negative relationship with wisdom, meaning that a one-unit change in the exogenous variable (parental stress index) results in a negative change of 0.266 units in the endogenous variable (wisdom). Few studies have examined the relationship between wisdom and parental stress. This finding is consistent with prior research (Moghadam & Ghamarani, 2022; Rejali & Yousefi, 2021; Tippe, 2018). According to Ardel, wisdom consists of three dimensions: cognitive, which reflects the desire for truth and the acceptance of humanity's contradictory aspects and life's unpredictability; reflective, which represents the ability to evaluate life and relationships from different perspectives; and emotional, which includes positive emotions and behaviors such as empathy and compassion for oneself and others (Moghadam & Ghamarani, 2022). Since distinguishing between "stressful parenting" and "parental stress" within the family system is also essential, wisdom helps reduce suffering and enhance well-being for oneself and others. As a result, wisdom-related traits influence understanding situations, flexibility, and responsibility in child-rearing, reducing parental stress (Kernick & Coburn, 2020). Wise parents are not only good role models for their children but also more successful in the challenging task of parenting. Although brain function plays a significant role in reactions and actions, the power of human personality,

especially when characterized by wisdom, cannot be overlooked. For example, one of the most famous personality theories, the Big Five, which includes neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, provides a framework for explaining individual differences, sometimes based on chronic experiences. For instance, openness to experience involves a willingness to accept variety and ambiguity and the ability to cope with life's complexities, while agreeableness reflects empathy and care for others, and conscientiousness promotes responsibility—qualities that align with the cognitive dimensions of wisdom, which include deep, experience-based knowledge about human existence and reasoning characterized by reflection, relativism, and intellectual humility. Thus, personality, which is often influenced by inheritance and physiology, can certainly enhance wisdom. However, according to Trickle et al. (2022), studies have shown that psychosocial or behavioral interventions, with medium to large effect sizes, can improve individual components of wisdom, making the assessment and teaching of wisdom a hopeful prospect for improving child-rearing and reducing related stress. Strengthening this multifaceted structure, with its interconnected cognitive and non-cognitive components, is vital during stressful periods of life.

The statistical results indicated a positive relationship between wisdom and democratic parenting, meaning that higher wisdom levels lead to increased use of this parenting style. This finding aligns with the prior research (Moghadam & Ghamarani, 2022; Tippe, 2018). Few studies have investigated the relationship between wisdom and parenting styles, with most focusing on the relationship between wisdom and parenting quality or parental competence. Nevertheless, these studies acknowledge the increased warmth, acceptance, and reflection in dealing with children, characteristics that Robinson et al. attribute to the authoritative (democratic) style (Chang et al., 2023).

As studies have shown, the early years of life are particularly important for psychosocial development, and parents, through proper behavior, facilitate this process. Borya and Ardel (2018) defined wisdom as a combination of tendencies and psychological traits that contribute to individual and social well-being, playing an effective role in establishing and understanding family relationships through experience, reflection, and emotional and cognitive indicators (Rejali & Yousefi, 2021). Parental wisdom is primarily a form of personal wisdom, consisting of four interrelated dimensions: reflection, perspective-shifting,

emotional regulation, and learning from life experiences. While we consider parental wisdom a personality trait, relatively stable over time, it can grow throughout life. Furthermore, according to positive psychology, which suggests that moral personality traits can be cultivated and strengthened through effort and practice, wisdom can be developed (Moghadam & Ghamarani, 2022). Wisdom provides parents with the qualitative perspective to overlook some childish behaviors and focus on appropriate actions, ultimately leading to democratic parenting. The general idea of democratic parenting is that discipline should be proportional to the child's mistake, and parents must be aware of situational factors when enforcing rules and behaviors that influence their child's behavior. They should also respect their child's independence while making decisions firmly and based on established family rules, with cognitive and emotional dimensions of wisdom playing a key role.

The study's statistical findings demonstrated the partial mediating role of wisdom and the parental stress index in relation to democratic parenting. This means that wisdom can predict democratic parenting both independently and by reducing parental stress, leading to increased use of democratic parenting. No studies directly examining this indirect relationship were found, but findings that link parental stress indices with parenting styles and the relationship between wisdom and stress support this conclusion. For example, studies (Chang et al., 2023; Fonseca et al., 2020) have shown that the parental stress index has a negative relationship with democratic parenting, and increased stress drives parents toward permissive and authoritarian styles. Moreover, studies (Moghadam & Ghamarani, 2022; Tippe, 2018) indicate that higher wisdom levels promote the use of proper parenting styles. As Ardel pointed out, wisdom is a quality of personality that every human being requires to live an individual and social life. When a couple decides to have a child, this trait becomes even more important. People with high cognitive wisdom have a deep understanding of life and are aware of the contradictory aspects of humanity, the unpredictability of life, and the physiological limitations of individuals (especially their children). Individuals with reflective wisdom focus on self-awareness, mastering both the negative and positive aspects of their personalities, allowing them to be fully aware of themselves as parents. Emotional wisdom fosters empathy and compassion toward their children, enhancing warmth, acceptance, reasoning in family

situations, and the establishment of just rules, giving children the right to choose.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

The cross-sectional nature of the study and the respondents' environment and stress levels at the time of answering the questionnaire were important factors. There is a possibility that participants, due to temporary environmental or stress conditions, may have provided emotional or inaccurate responses, which could not be controlled or verified. The study was conducted only with parents from Tehran, and given the wide cultural and ethnic diversity in Iran, the results may not be generalizable to other cities or ethnic groups. Additionally, due to time constraints, it was not possible to examine and compare results across different cultures or ethnicities. The cluster sampling method resulted in selecting specific schools, and some parents were not cooperative in completing the questionnaires. Due to limited time and financial resources, it was not feasible to repeat the sampling. This study was conducted among parents of students in Tehran, and it is recommended that similar research be carried out in other cities with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. A review of the theoretical literature revealed that most research on parenting styles focuses on their effects on children's lives and characteristics, leaving a gap in the study of variables influencing parenting styles. Besides attachment styles and schemas, future research should also focus on personality variables that can be improved. Given the importance of family stability for mental and social health, educating parents about parenting styles and proper communication at home is essential. Developing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, communication skills, responsibility, and decision-making is crucial. Couple therapy and group training sessions in schools are recommended to cover a wide range of families. These educational programs should be integrated into marriage preparation, before and during pregnancy, as many couples avoid them due to lack of awareness or financial problems. This integration would enhance parental readiness and protect and stabilize the family.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed in this article.

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