

# The Parenting Values and Expectations among Low Socioeconomic Status Parents: A Phenomenological Study

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The relationship between parents and children is one of the important topics of psychology and sociology, and parenting methods are considered as one of the important topics in this field. The present research examined the values and expectations of parenting among the parents of the deprived class.

**Method:** The present qualitative research was conducted by phenomenological analysis method in 2019 in Tehran. To collect data, semi-structured interviews were used with 14 parents of the underprivileged class of Tehran until the data saturation stage. Data analysis was done using MAXQDA 20 software.

**Results:** Based on the findings of this research, five main themes (18 sub-themes) namely parent-centered values (compensation, support, forward-looking, positive communication), and child-centered values (getting an education, obeying the rules, respecting elders, religious values, courtesy, independence), parenting expectations (positive parenting, positive education, positive social role), harmful resources (current injuries, financial problems), and supportive resources (family of origin, wide network of relationships and society, available service providers) were obtained.

**Conclusion:** In summarizing the overall findings of this research, it can be elucidated that challenges arising from adverse economic and social conditions have disproportionately impacted parents facing economic disadvantages in the context of child-rearing.

**Keywords:** Parenting Values, Parenting Expectations, Socioeconomic Status, Qualitative, Phenomenological

## Introduction

The relationship between parents and children constitute one of the most important topics of psychology and sociology, and parenting styles are considered as one of the important topics in this field [1]. In all societies and cultures, parents expect their children to show a certain behavior at a certain age during the transformation process [2]. Every family uses certain methods in the individual and social education of their children, these methods, which are called parenting styles, are affected by various factors, including cultural, social, political, and economic factors [3]. Parenting styles refer to the overarching patterns of behavior, attitudes, and strategies that parents employ in raising their children. These styles are typically characterized by the combination of demandingness (control and expectations) and responsiveness (warmth and support) that parents exhibit [4]. The research conducted in the field of parenting focuses on behavioral aspects such as the relationship between a mother's interactive behaviors and a child's development [5], but researchers believe that the cognitive aspects of parenting are as important as their behavioral aspects and should be investigated [6]. One of the important components of these cognitions is parenting values defined as the most desirable characteristics that parents wish to cultivate in their

children [7]. Parenting values encompass the core beliefs, principles, and ideals that guide parents in their approach to raising and nurturing their children. These values serve as the foundation for the decisions parents make, the behaviors they model, and the overall atmosphere they create within the family [1].

Based on previous studies, parenting knowledge includes the values that parents are trying to cultivate in their children [8], based on cultural, economic, social, and age characteristics, which are probably related to parents' behaviors toward their children and, in turn, to the child's development [9]. Expectation refers to a situation in which the existing or current situation is far from the desired situation. Parents' expectations are parents' judgments and predictions about the child's future achievement of a goal [10]. Parental expectations provide the context for early socialization because they help organize parenting behaviors to achieve a specific goal [11]. Parenting expectations are one of the most important elements of parenting theories, which include cognitive, and cultural models, beliefs, and theories that parents have about their children, families, and themselves as parents [12, 13].

The nature of parents' expectations in traditional parenting patterns can have positive or negative effects on children's rights [14]. Parents' expectations in traditional parenting patterns are usually influenced by their grandmothers, grandfathers, and ancestors, which can in turn affect children's development [15]. In addition, children's participation in decision-making may be affected [16]. Culture is thought of as a set of specific patterns of beliefs and behaviors that are shared by a group of people that regulate their daily lives. These beliefs and behaviors shape the way of parenting [17]. Parental behaviors are significantly shaped by cultural influences and norms [18, 19]. The results of the research conducted in the cultures of different societies also show that the values that mothers want to transfer to their children have similarities and differences among different cultures [20]. For example, previous studies conducted on the desirable characteristics of children from the perspective of parents show that from the point of view of Japanese parents, kindness, empathy, sensitivity, and consideration are desirable characteristics of children [21]. From the point of view of Korean parents, having independent, pleasant, honest, and considerate children is very important [22]. From the point of view of Mongolian mothers, following the levels of social power and personal growth is of great importance [23].

As researchers have cited, social factors and the state of societies affect the values and expectations of parents. This means it is important to examine a factor such as socioeconomic status in this area ([24]. Socioeconomic Status (SES) is defined as a multifaceted factor that overlaps with the concept of social class, a sense of status characterized by the power and influence of hierarchical culture, and SES [25]. It is usually measured by determining education, income, occupation, or a combination of these dimensions [26, 27]. SES is divided into three categories: upper, middle, and lower [28]. The upper classes benefit the most from income, jobs,

education, and social status, and the lower class benefit the least from these factors [29]. The middle-class parents are more likely to attribute their success to values such as independence. In contrast, lower-class parents are more likely to attribute success to the ability to strictly follow the rules set by others. Considering that parents want their children to succeed, these views about what has caused success in their own lives affect their parenting styles [30].

Regarding the role of SES in parenting style and the values that are created in the family, extensive studies have been conducted at the global level, most of which have been qualitatively examined [20, 21]. The results obtained from the study of Lee et al. [31], indicated a high correlation between poor economic status and having favorable and suitable values for Chinese children. The findings of Poon et al. [32] revealed that the expectations and values of parents of low-income and decent-income families have a significant impact on their children's academic progress. The results of Li et al.'s study [33] pointed out that the values of parents of high-income families included increasing social support and children's well-being, while low-income families sought to increase order, strict rules, and the progress of their children.

Essential support in the form of resources tied to income, education, and employment plays a crucial role in fostering diverse coping strategies and motivational aspirations. These, in turn, contribute to a decreased likelihood of behavioral problems in children and adolescents. There is also evidence indicating that the interplay of SES components significantly impacts children's educational values and learning skills [34, 35]. However, it's important to note that research on parenting beliefs and values in Iran has been limited, with most studies focusing on individuals from the upper middle class of the society. Given this gap in the literature, as well as the diversity of parenting beliefs across different cultures and the influence of SES on parenting roles, this research aims to explore and understand parenting values and expectations within the deprived class of society.

## Method

The present qualitative research was conducted by phenomenological analysis method in 2019 in the 15th and 16th districts of Tehran. Qualitative research is more concerned about understanding the quality, texture, and structure of experiences than seeking to discover the cause-and-effect relationship and seeks to reach mentalities and experiences. In this method, what is important is how the participants experience certain phenomena, how they give meaning to this experience, how they talk about it, and how they understand it [36]. The qualitative method of phenomenology is the study of lived experience or the world of life. Phenomenology is concerned with the world as it is experienced by a person, not the world or a reality that is something separate from a human being. Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness that are experienced from a first-person perspective [37].

In research that is conducted with qualitative methods,

the goal is not to generalize the research findings. Therefore, the statistical population is not defined in the way that is proposed in quantitative research. The desired location was Parto Charitable Center in Tehran, where parents voluntarily participated in this research. To collect data, semi-structured interviews with 14 parents in Tehran were used until the data saturation stage (After that, the reported information was duplicated, so the sampling process was stopped). Data analysis was done using MAXQDA 20 software. The criteria for entering the research included having at least one child between the ages of 2 and 12, the presence of parents, being literate, having poor economic status, and being in the deprived class of society. Being a single parent or having parents' divorce, not suffering from severe physical problems (review of medical records), having a history of severe conflict and tension in the family, and interviews being semi-effective were considered as exclusion criteria.

Qualitative research, particularly phenomenological research, employs various data collection methods, including observation, interviews, documents, and field notes, often utilizing a combination of these approaches. In phenomenological research, interviews are considered a fundamental method for allowing participants to articulate their worldviews and experiences using their language and expressions. These interviews aim to delve into the depths of the subject matter, and participants are encouraged to discuss the topic based on their unique experiences. Researchers create an open and free atmosphere for participants to freely express their experiences by posing open-ended and general questions and then guide the interview process in alignment with the research objectives, using exploratory and stimulating language. In this study, the primary data collection method was semi-structured interviews [38]. The interview questions were developed based on a thorough understanding of the research background, and the topics and themes of the questions were determined accordingly. An outline and mental map were created to further specify the components of these topics, ensuring a comprehensive and structured approach to data collection.

The research process involved several steps. Initially, preliminary questions were developed for each subject and refined with input from psychological experts. These

questions were then finalized for use in the interviews.

What does family mean to you?

What does being a parent mean to you? What do you think is the difference between your parents and your child's parents?

What have been your goals of being a father/mother?

How are you currently achieving those goals?

During the interviews, the researcher aimed to create an empathetic and non-interfering atmosphere, allowing participants to freely share their experiences. Occasionally, the researcher summarized participants' statements to ensure mutual understanding and improve the interview process. The interviews each lasted between 40 to 60 minutes. After each interview, the audio recording was reviewed multiple times, and transcribed verbatim, and the analysis and coding of the written text began immediately after the first interview. The coding process involved identifying the smallest meaningful units in the text and assigning abbreviation codes to them. This coding system ensured transparency, transferability, and the ability to review and critique the research. Additionally, notes taken during the interviews were used as reminders during the analysis process.

In addition, in order to comply with the ethical points of the researchers of this article, some of the most important ethical issues, including obtaining the consent of the participants before conducting the interview, neutrality of the interviewer during the interview and avoiding judgment and bias, observing the principle of confidentiality and using pseudonyms to refer to the participants were considered. The research observed the non-distortion of the participants' sentences and the use of the same phrase used in writing the research findings.

## Results

In the current research, the themes of parenting values and expectations were investigated and findings related to each section were reported. At first, the brief information of the participants were coded, then the values and expectations of parenting, and the table of analysis of the interviews were discussed using Colizzi's method [39]. The results obtained in Table 1 show that the majority of participants were female, the average age of participants was around 33, and the range of the number of children was from 1 to 7 (Table 1).

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Parents**

Participant	Age	Sex	Number of children
1	29	Female	1
2	26	Female	2
3	32	Female	7
4	40	Female	2
5	44	Female	3
6	32	Female	3
7	29	Female	2
8	30	Female	2
9	37	Female	2
10	32	Female	3
11	31	Female	2
12	41	Male	4
13	31	Female	2
14	42	Male	4

To check the hypothesis of the research, 14 interviews were conducted with the parents of the underprivileged class and were analyzed by Colizzi's method. A summary of the process that led to the identification of semantic units as well as main and sub-themes to answer the research questions is presented in Table 2. In this research, the descriptive method introduced by Colizzi was used for the full emergence of the themes in the data. Colizzi's method includes seven steps as follows [39]:

- 1) All the descriptions provided by the participant in the study, which is conventionally called the protocol, are read to get a feeling and get familiar with them.
- 2) Referring to each of the protocols and extracting sentences and phrases that are directly related to the phenomenon under study.
- 3) Try to understand the meaning of each important sentence. This step is known as formulating meanings.
- 4) The above steps are repeated for each protocol and formulated and related meanings are placed in clusters of themes (main topics). A- By referring to the main protocols, the validity of the clusters is checked. B- At this stage, contradictions between or within multiple clusters may be noticed. The researcher should not ignore these seemingly inappropriate data or themes.
- 5) The results are combined in the form of a comprehensive description of the research subject.
- 6) Formulating a comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study is named as an explicit and clear statement of the basic structure of the phenomenon under study.
- 7) By returning to each of the participants and conducting a single interview or conducting multiple interview sessions, the participants' opinion is asked about the findings, and the final validation of the findings is carried out.

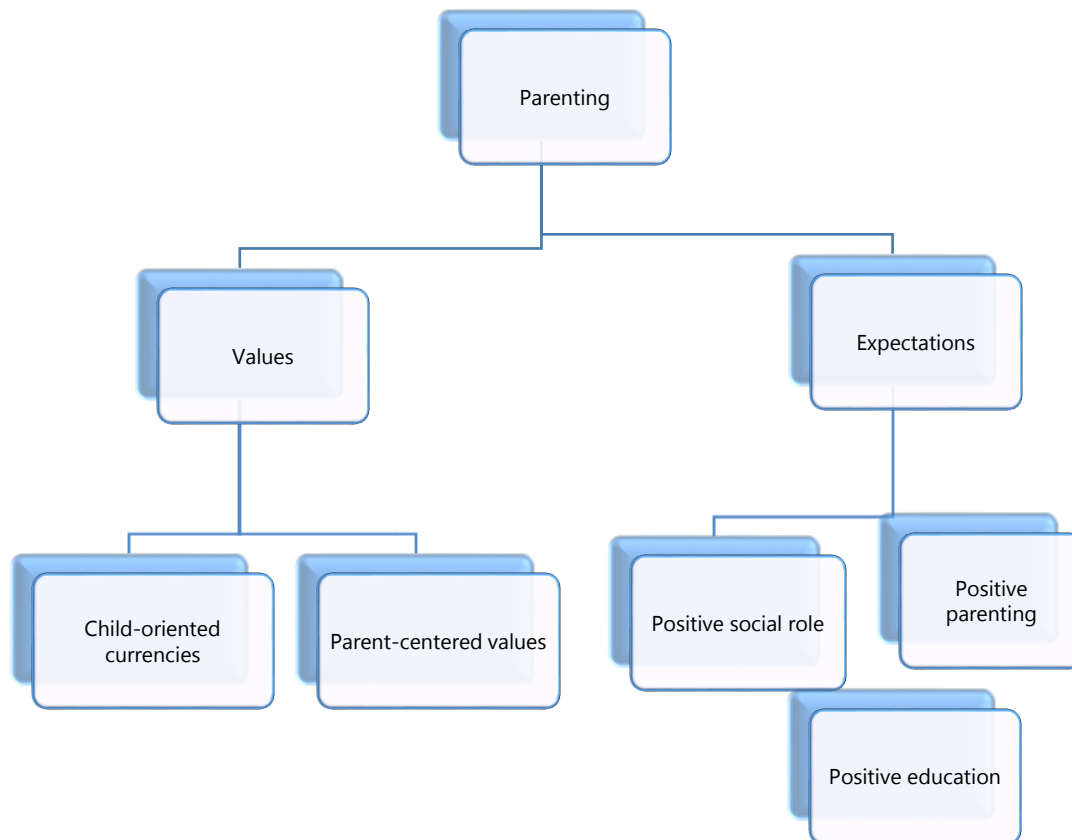
**Table 2. The Results of Colizzi's Analysis of the Conducted Interviews**

Semantic unit	Sub-topic	Main content
Whatever I did not achieve, they will achieve (code 11) I saw a lot of disrespect from my parents and brother...my family should not be like this (code 12) I just want them not to feel like us (code 13) I would like them to achieve their dreams (code 11) Not lacking (code 1)	Compensation	Parent-oriented values
I'm cooking to think about lessons and exercises (code 9) Being a friend (code 1) support (code 9) To make their wish come true, to show affection, to buy something they like (code 2)	Patronage	
Guide to the good path (code 1) develop and be proud (code 3) The mother must understand what she will do with the child's future (code 4) Be well educated (code 4) Speak respectfully, read his lesson (code 6) Be polite in the future (code 9)	Foresight	
Respect, patience, don't hesitate, love them (code 2) Value my children, and take care of them (code 3) We loved our children, I'm not violent, I don't curse, I don't beat (code 4) I don't fight or beat them at all (code 8) Have good behavior with children and husband, the husband should be good with his children (code 5) Let's be good together, take care of the house and life of the husband and children, and let the family be calm (code 6)	Positive communication	
Their lessons (code 9) Study (code 2) Become a teacher, become literate (code 4) Making the child literate (code 1) Study well (code 6) To be literate, I would like to become a teacher and one to become a doctor (code 8) Write his homework (code 1)	Having education	Child-centered values
Don't do anything wrong, don't look at anyone's property (code 6) I don't like my child to be friends with bad girls (code 11) Don't get addicted (code 8) They should be professional; their behavior and education should be good (code 2)	Obey the don'ts	
Respect parents (code 5) Listen to your parents (code 11) He should respect his elder (code 12) Treat parents with respect (code 13) Listen to their mother and father (code 6) Listen to me and their father (code 2) Listen well (code 1, 2) Love their mother and father (code 7) Don't ignore the words of their parents (code 14)	Respect for elders	

Semantic unit	Sub-topic	Main content
Listen to me (code 9)		
They should pray and don't lie (code 9) They should pray and fast (code 11) Read the Quran (code 12) Taking the path of God and Imam (code 14) Trust in God and prayer (code 14) Continue the path of religion (4)	Religious values	
Be good with friends, be a good person, polite, calm, and kind (code 1) Be polite, and talk together (code 3) Take care of me and their father, don't be disrespectful, don't swear (code 4) Do not speak badly, do not shout, do not curse (code 8)	Courtesy	
Whatever they say is good, do what he says (code 2) Do what I say, respect (code 7) Build the future without needing anyone's help (code 4) Be tidy (code 3)	Independent	
The great feeling of being a mother (code 1) Be a good father (code 12) Be a shadow over your children (code 14) For my children, I left my youth, everything (code 3) The dearest person in his family (code 4) It is the best blessing (code 7)	Positive parenting	Parenting expectations
Raising a child well (code 1) Good education (code 5) Raising a child (code 1) Guiding the children to the right path, preparing food, and washing their clothes (code 5) I give them breakfast, I make them lunch, and I bathe them (code 8) Taking care of them (code 6) To serve (code 7) They should not fight and should study well (code 10)	Positive education	
Raising them, educating them. Being a good person in the society (code 13) Deliver the right person to the society (code 14) May my children have a good destiny (code 9) Good life, good wishes for them (code 7) Becoming a good person (code 1)	Positive social role	
My husband has acted badly (code 1) Fighting in front of their father (code 1) When they go out, they learn bad words (code 8) When I come at night, I don't know what they are doing (code 3) I don't know how to help them (code 1)	Current injuries	Harmful sources
Not having money for a personal teacher (code 1) There were times when I didn't have money (code 4) Financially difficult (code 13) My problem is only finance (code 14) I don't have financial power (code 6) I can't get shoes and clothes (code 7) The demands that children have are too many (code 9) I don't have anything to read, we don't have a house, and my husband doesn't have a job (code 2) Financial incapacity (code 5)	Financial Problems	
They said that the girl should wear a hijab (code 3) They used to say that a child should be educated (code 3) My mom and dad (code 7) My family (code 9, 13) My sister (code 8)	Family of origin	Support resources
I saw my relatives (code 1) Relatives and neighbors (code 6) I saw from society (code 10) Cousin, family (8) I will tell my family and neighbors (code 10) I talk to acquaintances (code 2) If I had a friend, I would consult with him (code 3) I saw how they behave to neighbors and people (code 7) Sit with five people, you will learn five words (code 14)	Wide network of relationships and society	
I ask a wise elder (code 4) We studied, heard and saw (code 5) More than TV, children's school and their counselor (code 5) From networks (code 7) TV (code 9)	Available service providers	
108	18	5

The most identified code was for the main theme of child-oriented values (36 items) and the least was for harmful resources (14 items). Also, the highest frequency for the sub-theme was for respecting the elder with 11 items, and the lowest

frequency was for independence, respect for politeness, observing what should not be done, and support (four items each). Also, a total of 110 codes were identified, which were classified into five main themes and 18 sub-themes.



**Figure 1.** Flow diagram resulting from Colizzi's analysis of interviews with underprivileged parents to investigate parenting values and expectations.

**Discussion**

The present research examined the values and expectations of parenting among the parents of the deprived class. Based on the findings of this research, five main themes (18 sub-themes) namely parent-centered values (compensation, support, forward-looking, positive communication), child-centered values (getting an education, obeying the rules, respecting elders, religious values, courtesy, independence), parenting expectations (positive parenting, positive education, positive social role), harmful resources (current injuries, financial problems), and supportive resources (family of origin, wide network of relationships and society, available service providers) were obtained.

In response to the questions related to parenting values, parents paid attention to this group of values in their conversations, and the researcher in this research has introduced them as parent-oriented values related to parenting. These values include compensation, support, forward-looking, and positive communication. The parents participating in the present research wished to compensate for those problems for their children because they faced many difficulties in the growth stages and tried to provide an environment different from their growth environment for their children. Parents see their role in the

field as supporting their children and providing a safe and appropriate environment with peaceful mind. These parents believe that children need a calm environment to grow and progress, in which they love their children, be friends with them, and provide their needs so that the children can achieve their goals and dreams. These parents consider their role in their children's future important and believe that the parent should be aware of what he is doing with their child's future, guide him to the right path, and try to achieve the values they intend for their children. In addition to emphasizing the independence of their children, parents also want their children to be socialized, polite, and respectful to others. Another important issue for participating parents is positive communication. This means that parents should be patient, respect and affection should be felt at home, and parents should behave properly towards their children, avoid fighting and any disrespect and swearing at home.

Parenting expectations are one of the most important elements of parents' theories, which include cognitive, and cultural models, beliefs, and theories that parents have about their children, families, and themselves as parents [15]. Parenting expectations refer to parents' beliefs and their predictions and achievements of their



children [11]. According to the results obtained from the data analysis, the found parenting expectations were divided into three categories, the first category includes child-related parenting expectations, which include the demands and expectations that parents have from their children. The second category examines parenting expectations related to parenting, which includes the feelings that parents have specifically about their parenthood. The third category includes parenting expectations related to raising children, which include the manner of raising children and the duties of parents in this regard.

In the first category, which includes parenting expectations related to the child, the parents participating in the research put a lot of emphasis on the concept of the positive social role of their children. This case specifically refers to the child himself and his future achievements. Parents believe that they should raise their children in such a way that they become literate, choose the right path in the future, be useful to their society, be good people, and enjoy a good life. In general, parents tend to have initial expectations of their children that are affected by the stress of society [20]. The parents participating in the current research also wanted to raise good children and deliver good people to the society. They expected their children to treat people well, avoid fights, and live humanely in their own society. In the studies conducted in the upper middle classes of societies, parents emphasized the autonomy of their children, while in the present study, the parents of the deprived class emphasized the positive relationship of their children with the people in the society and their adaptation.

Parenting values encompass values expressed by parents both for their children and for themselves in the context of raising children [18]. These values fall into two categories: child-oriented values, representing the desirable traits parents wish to instill in their children, and parent-centered values, reflecting ideals and characteristics parents hold for themselves in their parenting role [22]. The study identifies six core themes within these values, which are rooted in Iran's cultural, religious, and historical context, emphasizing their importance in shaping children's lives.

Based on the results obtained from the interviews with parents with children aged 2 to 12, desirable values include six main themes (having higher education, observing what should not be done, respecting elders, having religious values, and observing politeness and independence). It is important for them that their child is kind, calm, polite, sociable, compatible with others, respectful and friendly, literate, and future-oriented. The results of the present research in the field of politeness, sociability, respect, and compatibility are consistent with the results of the research of Wang and Tamis-Lemonda [7], on mothers from Taiwan and America. Taiwanese and American mothers mostly referred to the values of appropriate behavior such as being polite, respecting others, and having good morals and habits, and they paid less attention to the value of competence. Considering

the culture of the two countries, American mothers mostly referred to individual values. However, they mentioned the value of communication more than Taiwanese mothers who have a collectivist culture. Achievement value was chosen more by Taiwanese mothers. Compared to the present study, American mothers, like Iranian parents, emphasized individual values such as boldness, self-esteem, curiosity, creativity, and enjoyment. Boldness is a sub-set of the sub-theme of having self-confidence and having self-esteem is a sub-set of the sub-theme of self-worth, which are both strong concepts of the theme of self-worth. Enjoyment, curiosity, and creativity are also a sub-set of the theme of the art of living in the current research. However, unlike American mothers, Iranian parents did not mention the value of connection such as love and attachment to parents and family, and only mentioned the value of affection, which meant expressing love and kindness in general and with others. The results of the present research in the field of kindness, sociability, politeness, and respect are consistent with the results of the research of Tulviste and Ahtonen [8], on Estonian parents. In addition, the results of the present research in the field of kindness and adaptability are consistent with the results of Cheah and Chirkov [9], with the sample group including European-Canadian and native-Canadian mothers. The results of this study show that both groups of mothers emphasized kindness, politeness, and compatibility.

The study identifies two major challenges faced by underprivileged parents in raising their children: current family problems and financial difficulties. Current family problems encompass issues such as parental conflicts, children's misbehavior in adult company, children learning inappropriate behavior from peers, parental illiteracy hindering homework assistance, and children being left alone for extended periods. Financial problems emerged as the most significant obstacle to achieving their parenting aspirations, with nearly all participants struggling to provide their children's needs, unlike middle to upper-class parents who prioritize meeting their children's needs without such financial constraints. On the other hand, the study also highlights the importance of supporting resources for parents. These resources include the family of origin, the broader social network, and service providers. Parents often sought guidance and assistance from their own families, drawing on their upbringing values and expectations. For instance, some parents emphasized the importance of hijab for girls, a value passed down from their family. It's essential to note that these findings are specific to underprivileged parents and may not be generalized to other social classes or cultural contexts. The study recommends further research to explore parenting behaviors across various cultures, considering parental values, life histories, attachment styles, and children's attachment styles.

The study highlights that parents benefit from various resources in parenting, including their social network, observing others in the society, seeking advice from friends and neighbors, consulting with service providers, using media and educational resources, and relying on

their community for help. The research was conducted in specific districts of Tehran, so generalizing the results should be done cautiously. The study focused on economically and socially deprived parents, limiting its applicability to different social classes. Some interviews had to be conducted over the phone due to COVID-19. Future research is suggested to explore parenting behaviors in various cultures, consider parenting values and expectations, and investigate how parents' life histories and attachment styles affect their parenting.

## Conclusion

This research has identified five main themes and 18 sub-themes related to parenting values, expectations, and available resources. The first main theme is parent-centered values, which include compensation, support, forward-looking attitudes, and positive communication. These values indicate the importance parents place on providing for their children, offering emotional support, having a positive outlook, and fostering effective communication within the family. The second main theme is child-centered values, which encompass getting an education, obeying the rules, respecting elders, adhering to religious values, showing courtesy, and promoting independence. These values reflect the emphasis parents place on their children's education, moral upbringing, and development of important life skills such as respect, courtesy, and independence.

The third main theme is parenting expectations, which involve positive parenting, positive education, and positive social roles. Parents have high expectations for themselves in terms of nurturing their children's well-being, providing them with quality education, and guiding them to become responsible members of society. The fourth main theme is harmful resources, which include current injuries and financial problems. These resources represent challenges and difficulties that parents may face, impacting their ability to provide a safe and stable environment for their children. The fifth main theme is supportive resources, which consist of the family of origin, a wide network of relationships and society, and available service providers. These resources serve as a support system for parents, offering assistance, guidance, and access to necessary services to help them fulfill their parenting responsibilities. Overall, these findings shed light on the various dimensions of parenting values, expectations, and available resources. Understanding these themes can inform the development of strategies and interventions aimed at supporting parents in their journey of raising healthy and well-rounded children.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## Ethical Approval

The current study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Shahid Beheshti University (Code: IR.SBU.REC.1399.062).

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