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The Relationship between Parenting Styles and Social Anxiety among Young Adults

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Abstract

Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health conditions. Social Anxiety is a type of Anxiety related with person's anticipation or perception of their personal evaluation in the social context in addition to their fear of others' evaluations being adequate. The present study attempts to comprehend the relationship between parenting style and social anxiety among the young adults. The data were gathered from 109 young adults by using standard instruments and analyzed by appropriate statistical techniques. As per the outcome, there was a noteworthy inverse correlation between Social Anxiety and Democratic Parenting Style and Permissive Parenting Style. There was a notable negative correlation between Interactions with strangers, speaking in public/Talking with people in authority, Criticism and embarrassment and Permissive Parenting Style. There was a significant negative correlation between Criticism and embarrassment and Democratic Parenting Style. The results are discussed in detail.

Keywords: Parenting Style, Social Anxiety, Young Adults.

Introduction

Young adulthood is a time of great change and development. It is an important time for lifelong decision making, and the shift from teenage years to adulthood exposes them to the challenges around the globe with new roles and responsibilities. However, this period is also marked by an increase in anxious and depressive symptoms related to personal, environmental and professional stressors (Blanco et al., 2008). And because of that many areas like career development, personal life, etc. will be affected. Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health conditions reported among college students (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007). Social anxiety is a specific type of anxiety characterized by a fear of social situations which is important as it is the ability to handle social situations. The present study is trying to uncover the relationship between social anxiety and Parenting styles.

Social Anxiety

In social contexts, anxiety appears as a person's anticipation or perception of their personal evaluation in addition to their fear of others' evaluations being adequate (Schkenkar and Leary, 1982) and the phenomenon is known as Social Anxiety. Social anxiety is the worry of being in social situations that might leave one feeling embarrassed or expose them to criticism from others. It is worrying about one's behavior, reputation, and place in society. It can be impacted by several internal and external causes. The threat that social interactions provide, the possibility that unpleasant events will occur, and the consequences of those outcomes are commonly exaggerated by those who experience social anxiety. Socially anxious individuals usually underestimate their ability to handle social situations. One typical social anxiety treatment targets these cognitive processes in addition to encouraging persons with social anxiety to practice social engagement.

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Parenting and Parenting style

The method by which fostering and assisting a child's emotional, social, intellectual, and physical growth from birth to maturity is known as child raising or parenting. Parenting style is "a constellation of parents' attitudes and behaviors toward children, as well as an emotional milieu in which the parents' behaviors are articulated." (Darling and Steinberg, 1993). Positive parenting style indicates a healthy and supportive atmosphere for children, and conversely negative parenting results in social anxiety in children that lead to even more psychological problems.

As to the research conducted by Hardaway, McIntyre, and Baldwin (2007), parenting styles are extensively researched factors in human development. These styles may be generically classified into four categories, Authoritative - provide their kids advice in a logical and problem-solving way. Although they are stern and in charge of their kids, authoritative parents are nevertheless understanding and accommodating. Authoritarian - combines strong demands (control) with poor acceptance and responsiveness. They establish harsh rules without providing a rationale for their children's compliance, and they frequently resort to physical punishment to get their kids to follow them. Permissive - have few guidelines and standards, empower their kids to express their emotions and whims, and exercise minimal control over their kids' behavior. And Uninvolved parenting styles - is a combination of low demandingness and poor responsiveness; parents seldom ever invest time and effort in raising their kids. They either reject or ignore their kids because they are preoccupied with their own issues.

The relationship between Parenting style and Social Anxiety

According to the attachment theory, social anxiety may be influenced by several factors, including the degree of attachment involving parents and their offspring (Vertue, 2003).

According to Bowlby (1969, 1973), securely attached children utilize their attachment figure as a refuge from which to explore and to retreat to during distress. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important to identify the factors that impact the development and onset of anxiety at this crucial moment of change and stress in young adults. A child's psychological issues are more likely to occur when their parents have poor parenting techniques, and social anxiety in children is more likely to rise when parents overprotect and meddle too much. A lack of affection from parents, overprotection, and harsh criticism or rejection are all major contributing factors in the educational practices of parents of children with social anxiety, based on the literature that is currently accessible.

Review of Literature

By recognising the importance of Parenting styles and social anxiety, a number of studies were conducted by various researchers. Majority of the studies explore the reasons for and effects of the variables and its connection to further psychological variables. In 2020, a study entitled young adults' perception of parenting style: A retrospective exploration was carried out by Rajan, Navaneetham, Philip, and Muralidhar. According to the study's findings, sociocultural background and culture appear to be among the most important factors in determining how young

individuals perceive parental practices. Lieb, Wittchen, Hofler, Fuetsch, Stein, and Merikangas (2000) found that perceived parenting style (overprotection and rejection), are linked to the development of social phobia in children. Additional research (Tahir, Akhtar., & Rana, 2013) has demonstrated a link between children's anxiety levels and dismissive, overly protective, and anxious parenting approaches.

Some studies explored how different groups different in terms of perceiving parenting during childhood and their perceived social anxiety. Azzopardi and Shanea researched the connection between parenting styles and young adults' social anxiety in 2020. The sample group as a whole demonstrated moderate levels of social anxiety, with noticeably higher scores among female participants. The results demonstrate a significant difference in self-esteem between the various perceived parenting styles; however, no significant difference in self-esteem was found between first- and last-born female young adults or between first- and last-born female young adults who thought of their parents as authoritative. A 2018 study undertaken by Dincy, Ananya and Rinju discovered that women had a more positive opinion of parenting than men do. In addition, participants between the ages of 23 and 25 felt the least autonomy support, while emerging adults ranging from 18 to and 20 turned out to perceive the most autonomy support.

Lately, a few research have concentrated on the relationship between Parenting Styles and Social Anxiety. Yousaf (2015) showed that having low self-esteem and an authoritative parenting style in girls will both contribute to social anxiety. Permissive parenting styles have a negative correlation with social anxiety. Adolescent social anxiety is, however, predicted by both pessimistic and authoritative parenting styles. According to Ahmad, Shazia, Tahir and Azam (2013), there is a significant connection between parenting styles and social anxiety.

Authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles of the mother and father were significant predictors of social anxiety, and girls experience social anxiety at a higher rate than boys. Gallagher and Cartwright-Hatton (2008) stated that harsh, punitive, or inconsistent ways in which parents punish their children correlate with elevated anxiety.

The Effect of Parenting Style of Parents on the Attachment Styles of Undergraduate Students was the focus of a study by Zarina in 2012. According to the findings, there is a substantial link between students' anxious attachment styles and parents' authoritarian parenting styles. Between the permissive parenting styles of the father and mother and the avoidant and anxious attachment styles, respectively, there existed a substantial link. No attachment type and the authoritative parenting style are notably correlated. The results indicated that social anxiety has negative correlation with parenting style. Agreeableness and openness correlated positively with social anxiety. Mishra and Kiran found (2017) that Social anxiety was adversely connected with permissive parenting style. However, both permissive and authoritative parenting styles affect social anxiety in adolescents.

Empirical evidence suggests the role of parenting and how it impacts the various psychological dimensions of adolescence and young adults. The present study seeks to

comprehend the relationship between parenting style and social anxiety among young adults.

Need and Significance of the Study

Social Anxiety can be defined as the fear of social settings that could cause shame or the possibility of receiving poor judgment from others. Anxiety about one's social role, status, and behavior is a sign of social anxiety. Social anxiety affects a person's emotional health, sense of anticipation, self-consciousness, and general well-being. A potential contributing component for Social anxiety is perception of the parenting style during their earlier days (Azam Tahir, M., Akhtar, S., & Ahmad Rana, S., in 2013; Azzopardi & Shanea, 2020). The present study to find out the relationship between parenting style and social anxiety in the current Indian context.

This study can help children, parents, and educators to understand the relationship between parenting style and social anxiety. The study result will be significant in the fields of social psychology and developmental psychology.

Objectives

- 1) To study the relationship between social anxiety and the approaches of parenting styles among young adults.
- 2) To study the relationship between the five dimensions of social anxiety and parenting styles among young adults.

Hypothesis

- 1) There is no significant relationship between social anxiety and parenting styles (democratic, autocratic, permissive, and uninvolved parenting style) among young adults.
- 2) There is no significant relationship between the five dimensions of social anxiety (Interactions with strangers, speaking in public/Talking with people in authority, Interactions with the opposite sex, Criticism and embarrassment and Assertive expression of annoyance, disgust or displeasure). and parenting styles (democratic, autocratic, permissive, and uninvolved parenting style) among young adults.

Method

Participants

The study's participants are Young Adults (18-25yrs) selected from Karnataka State, India. Out of 109 participants, 38 were male and 71 were Female. - 71. Simple Random Sampling was used to select the participants for the study.

Tools

Data was gathered using the following questionnaires: -

1. Demographic information sheet - The sheet of demographic data was utilized to collect demographic details of the participants, such as age, gender, and education, etc.
2. Parenting Style Scale (PSS-GMM) developed by Prof. (Dr) Madhu Gupta and Ms.Dimple Mehtani (2017) is an adult self-report questionnaire asking them to describe their childhood experiences with their parents' treatment of them. This scale has 44 statements, which assesses the parenting philosophies used by Indian

parents. The Psychometric Properties - Test-retest reliability of the scale is 0.71 to 0.79 and Split-Half reliability is 0.795. The scale has high construct validity which ranged from 0.508 to 0.819.

3. Social Anxiety Questionnaire for Adults (SAQ-A) developed by Caballo, Salazar, Arias, and CISO-A Research Team (2010) assesses uneasiness, stress or nervousness experienced by an individual in a series of social situations. The questionnaire includes 30 statements which have five dimensions. SAQ-A is a brief, empirically derived, and psychometrically supported instrument for the comprehensive measurement of social anxiety with clinical and nonclinical populations on situationally defined dimensions. The Cronbach's alpha for the whole questionnaire was .91 and split-halves reliability coefficient (Guttman) was .93.

Procedure for data collection and Analysis

Data was gathered from young adults (18 - 25yrs). Firstly, the participants were informed of the study's goal then they gave their consent. Participants were briefed about the confidentiality. The participants were given the questionnaires and demographic information after which the data was gathered. Appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

Parenting is both a biological process and a social process. The role of the parents is very important in children's life and especially in the earlier years of growth that is essential for children in all aspects like physical, social, and emotional growth. The goal of the current research was to examine the connection between Parenting Styles and Social Anxiety among young adults.

Preliminary statistical analysis for the variables were computed to understand the distribution of Parenting Styles, and its sub variables and SocialAnxiety and its sub variables. All of the chosen variables in the current study had a normal distribution, according to the analysis. Thus, the investigator decided to execute Pearson Correlation to know about the relationship between Parenting styles and social anxiety. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Presents the correlation (r) between Parenting styles and social anxiety.

Variables	Social Anxiety	Democratic Parenting Styles	Autocratic Parenting Style	Permissive Parenting Style	Uninvolved Parenting Style
Social Anxiety	1				
Democratic Parenting Styles	-.235 *	1			
Autocratic Parenting Style	.114	-.246 *	1		
Permissive Parenting Style	-.330 **	.626 **	-.237 *	1	
Uninvolved Parenting Style	-.040	-.309 **	.431 **	.113	1

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

The result presented in Table 1 indicates the relationship between Social Anxiety and Parenting Styles. The obtained “r” values of social anxiety with Democratic Parenting Style ($r = -.235$, $p < .01$) and Permissive Parenting Style ($r = -.330$, $p < .01$) indicates a noteworthy inverse correlation between these factors. This is because of the fact that parents that follow Democratic Parenting Style are warm but firm, more focused on ensuring their child knows the rules than penalizing them for not following instructions. Along with fostering their children's independence while enforcing rules and boundaries over their behavior, they involve their children in discussions and arguments and are ready to listen, entertain and consider their points of view. Similarly, parents who follow permissive parenting are very responsive and non-restrictive. These loving yet undemanding parents feel that the finest method to express their love is to cater to their child's desires. The child is free to make significant decisions without parental guidance since they are passive. Hence, social anxiety has less of an impact on young adults who were brought up under these two parenting styles.

However, the table also shows that Autocratic Parenting Style and Uninvolved Parenting Style are not related with Social anxiety of the participants. This might be linked to the fact that parents who choose an autocratic parenting style are, on the one hand, inflexible, extremely controlling,

demanding, and stern disciplinarians. They demand without questioning that their kids obey their instructions and directives. Conversely, parents who follow an uninvolved parenting style are less demanding and more receptive to their children. These parents lack warmth, spend minimal time engaging in their children, and in certain situations, are so detached as to be considered negligent. Despite the fact that the results of this study indicate that these two factors do not correlate. A 2013 study by Ahmad, Shazia, Tahir and Azam demonstrates the correlation between parenting styles and social anxiety, finding that the authoritarian and distant parenting philosophies of the mother and father were important predictors of social anxiety - Parenting Styles and Social Anxiety among Adolescents

As the correlation between Parenting style and Social anxiety showed significant relationship, the investigator executed separate analysis to understand the correlation between Parenting styles and Five dimensions of Social Anxiety - Interactions with strangers, Speaking in public/Talking with people in authority, Interactions with the opposite sex, Criticism and embarrassment, Assertive expression of annoyance, disgust or displeasure (define each dimension). The findings are presented in the following table.

Table 2: Presents the correlation (r) between Parenting styles and Five dimensions of social anxiety.

Variables	Interactions with strangers	Speaking in public/Talking with people in authority	Interactions with the opposite sex	Criticism and embarrassment	Assertive expression of annoyance, disgust or displeasure
Democratic Parenting Styles	-.127	-.248	-.124	-.318**	-.094
Autocratic Parenting Style	.130	.113	.076	.073	.052
Permissive Parenting Style	-.262**	-.346**	-.194	-.348**	-.129
Uninvolved Parenting Style	-.029	.015	-.062	-.050	-.030

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

When the dimension “Interactions with strangers” of Social Anxiety is taken into consideration, evidently it negatively correlates with Permissive Parenting Style ($r = -.262$, $p < .01$). It implies that young adults reared in a liberal parental environment do not experience fear or anxiety while dealing with strangers or new people. This is because, as children, they were allowed to make important decisions without the interference of their parents, and as a result, they are accustomed to socializing and meeting new people. However it can also be observed Interactions with

strangers dimension has no significant relationship with other parenting styles.

The dimension of Social Anxiety - Speaking in public/Talking with people in authority, also negatively correlates with Permissive Parenting Style ($r = -.346$, $p < .01$). It suggests that young adults raised in a permissive parenting environment were accustomed to speaking in public and interacting with authority figures since their parents were extremely receptive and did not impose any boundaries. However, it can also be seen that Speaking in

public/Talking with people in authority dimension has no significant relationship with other parenting styles.

The next dimension of Social Anxiety - Criticism and embarrassment, the obtained "r" values for Democratic Parenting Style ($r = -.318, p < .01$) and Permissive Parenting Style ($r =$

$.348, p < .01$) shows that it negatively correlates with this dimension. It implies that young adults raised by these two parenting philosophies frequently engage in discussions and arguments, are self-reliant and conscious of their behavior, have no restrictions, and constantly meet and engage with new people. As a result, they are unlikely to face criticism or shame, and even in the rare circumstance that they accomplish, they will be able to respond to it. However, it could be seen that the Criticism and embarrassment dimension has no significant relationship with other parenting styles.

The next dimensions of Social Anxiety - "Interactions with the opposite sex", and "Assertive expression of annoyance, disgust or displeasure" has no significant relationship with any of the parenting styles. This indicates that regardless of parenting style, young adults will either be comfortable interacting with people of the other gender or be reluctant to do so. They will also be able to voice their frustration, disgust, or dislike in an authoritative manner.

The finding suggests that there is a significant relationship between Parenting styles and social anxiety which supports the formulated hypotheses. The study result was supporting the findings of previous research (Yousaf, 2015; Ahmad, Shazia, Tahir., & Azam, 2013). The study conducted by Dong, Zhou, Case and Zhou (2024) suggested that social anxiety assessments, developmental stage, and gender moderated the association between parenting style and social anxiety. Hence it can also assume that other factors also contributed towards the relationship between Parenting style and social anxiety which needs to be investigated.

Significant Findings

- There is a significant negative relationship between Social Anxiety and Democratic, Permissive Parenting Style
- There is a significant negative correlation between Interactions with strangers, speaking in public/Talking with people in authority, Criticism and embarrassment and Permissive Parenting Style. And there is a significant negative correlation between Criticism and embarrassment and Democratic Parenting Style.

The present study's results underscore the importance of parents providing love, support, and good parenting from an early age, since this may have an impact on their child's social anxiety and ability to interact with others in later life. Therefore, it is important to support therapeutic programs designed to relieve social anxiety and to foster emotional warmth from parents toward their young adult children. The findings shed light on the relationship between parenting and social anxiety among Indian youth, pointing to specific consequences and future avenues for policy, practice, and study.

Conclusion

Parents frequently fail to consider the potential impact of their actions on their children's mental health, despite having a high level of parental awareness. Children are more vulnerable to the influence of others while they are

young. At this juncture, their course of action will be determined. Parenting practices have an effect on psychological well-being, which is among the most significant parameters in maintaining health, based on the findings of the present study.

Under these circumstances, parental education is crucial. Importance of using effective parenting techniques, given the significance of puberty. A person's identity is formed during this crucial time of their life. As per the outcome, there was a significant negative relationship between Social Anxiety and Democratic Parenting Style and Permissive Parenting Style. There was a significant negative correlation between Interactions with strangers, speaking in public/Talking with people in authority, Criticism and embarrassment and Permissive Parenting Style. There was a significant negative correlation between Criticism and embarrassment and Democratic Parenting Style.

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