



## Examining Fear of Negative Evaluation and Perceived Parenting Style among College Students

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**Abstract:** The present study tried to investigate the association of fear of negative evaluation (FNE) and perceived parenting styles—authoritarianism, authoritativeness, and permissiveness—of college students, and possible gender differences regarding these factors. 150 college students (75 males and 75 females) were chosen through convenient sampling. Standardized self-report and measures for each understood fear of negative evaluation and perceived parenting styles. Data processed was descriptive, Mann-Whitney U tests, and Spearman's rank-order. Results revealed that authoritarian parenting had a significant high correlation with fear of negative evaluation, which was also a slightly negative correlation with perceived authoritative parenting. Authoritative parenting was the most reported style, revealing that most students went through an upbringing full of support and structure. Interestingly, in terms of gender, no significant differences were discovered in fear of negative evaluation or perceiving parenting styles. The implication is that parenting, especially authoritarianism, can significantly affect arising fears in the social outcome of emerging adults.

**Keywords:** *Fear of Negative Evaluation, Parenting Styles, Gender, College Students, Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive*

## 1. Introduction

Young adults face unique moments in life where many would try on various identities, lose emotional infancy, and stand on their own. Important transitions into adulthood include finishing school, starting the first job, or beginning to create intimate relationships. Whereas this is a period for nurturing personal growth, it comes with stressors, including performance anxiety, acceptance, and body image, such that the entire gambit of life is, at one point or another, at least somewhat winded about these factors. These stressors may affect one's mental health and result in susceptibility to disorders such as anxiety and fear of evaluation.

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) is a variable of social anxiety, and it is usually consensually defined in research with intense fears of being judged or criticized by other people. Individuals with high FNE may find themselves excessively worrying about making an academic or social mistake-making that judgment of themselves-or about being judged themselves, which in turn leads to avoidance, low self-esteem, and dysfunctional living. Academics, public speaking, establishing relationships, and even decision-making have all been shown to be inhibited by fear of negative evaluation. Early interpersonal experiences and emotional climate in which the person was raised are seen more often as possible sources for exceptions in the presentation of fear of negative evaluation.

An important place for the emergence of fear of negative evaluation is the perception of parenting style-how people see their mother and father behaviors, attitudes, and teaching methods during their childhood. The methods of teaching are the fathers' emotion and social learning foundation for the child. According to Baumrind's study in 1966, there were three major types of parenting: authoritarian (strict, controlling, and low warmth), authoritative (supportive, communicative, and structures), and permissive (lenient and indulgent). Later, Maccoby and Martin added another one as in neglectful or uninvolved which was characterized as such because of emotional detachment and low responsiveness.

Each parenting style has unique consequences in psychological development for a child. In general, studies suggest that authoritative parenting has positive outcomes, such as resilience and emotional maturity, with possible applicability to self-esteem and social functioning. Authoritarian styles may promote insecurity, anxiety, and elevating sensitivity to criticism. That is, emotional warmth, but the permissive child-rearing incapacitates the individuals to learn self-regulation and coping skills through lack of sufficient boundaries. In this regard, first exposure will determine the way children come to see themselves and how such children respond later on to social evaluation.

It highlights, college students are more prone to academic and social pressure, and hence it is very important to understand the role of parenting in a college student's fear of negative evaluation. Thus, this explores a relationship that adds to the research in developmental psychology and mental health and holds immense practical significance in counselling, parent education, and various student well-being initiatives.

## **2. Methodology**

The aim of the study is to assess the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and perceived parenting style among college students.

### **2.1 Research Objectives**

- a) To assess the significant relationship between fear of negative evaluation and perceived parenting styles among college students.
- b) To assess the levels of fear of negative evaluation among college students.
- c) To identify the dominant perceived parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) among college students.
- d) To assess the significant difference of fear of negative evaluation in males and females among college students.
- e) To assess the significant difference of perceived parenting styles in males and females among college students.

### **2.2 Hypotheses**

1. There will be a significant relationship between fear of negative evaluation and perceived parenting styles among college students.
2. There will be a significant level of fear of negative evaluation among college students.
3. There will be a dominant perceived parenting style in authoritative among college students.
4. There will be a significant difference of fear of negative evaluation in males and females among college students.
5. There will be a significant difference of perceived parenting styles in males and females among college students.

### **2.3 Research Design**

The study used descriptive research and correlational research designs. Convenient sampling technique was used for data collection. The research sample is made up of 150 young adults comprising 75 males and females. The sample is within the age group of 18 to 25 years.

### **2.4 Procedure**

Data were collected as granted by the institution from the participating students from different colleges. The students were given assurance of confidentiality. The data collection was online and face to face, depending on the preference of the participant. Every query was answered during administration and all filled forms were collected for scoring.

### 2.5 Tools Used

**The Brief-FNE Scale** (Leary, 1983) is a 12-item contraction of the standard 30-item FNE Scale. It was given by Watson and Friend (1969) and meant to measure anxiety concerning negative evaluation. It uses a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all characteristics to 5 = extremely characteristic), from which total scores can be computed, ranging between 12-60. The new scale has been shown to produce good reliability and validity in undergraduate samples and permits rapid administration.

**Perceived Parenting Styles** (Divya and Manikandan 2013) would cover thirty statements for gauging response by the person by scoring 5-point range answers-ratings such as "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Neither Agree nor Disagree," "Agree," and "Strongly Agree." The scale reliability and internal consistency was noticed for all three styles-it was 0.86 for permissive, 0.81 for authoritarian, and 0.79 for authoritative.

## 3. Results

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics of the Variables According to Male and Female students

**Table1(a):** Descriptive Statistics of the Variables According to Male students

|                                                | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------------------------------|----|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| <b>Fear of Negative Evaluation</b>             | 75 | 14.00   | 60.00   | 32.4133 | 8.69311        |
| <b>Authoritarian Perceived Parenting Style</b> | 75 | 13.00   | 40.00   | 24.4000 | 6.34163        |
| <b>Authoritative Perceived Parenting Style</b> | 75 | 21.00   | 50.00   | 37.1333 | 6.59921        |
| <b>Permissive Perceived Parenting Style</b>    | 75 | 10.00   | 45.00   | 24.8267 | 8.45237        |
| <b>GENDER</b>                                  | 75 | 1.00    | 1.00    | 1.0000  | .00000         |

**Table1(b): Descriptive Statistics of the Variables According to Female students**

|                                                | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------------------------------|----|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| <b>Fear of Negative Evaluation</b>             | 75 | 13.00   | 50.00   | 32.6800 | 8.43762        |
| <b>Authoritarian Perceived Parenting Style</b> | 75 | 11.00   | 46.00   | 23.9467 | 7.30215        |
| <b>Authoritative Perceived Parenting Style</b> | 75 | 21.00   | 49.00   | 37.3200 | 7.06564        |
| <b>Permissive Perceived Parenting Style</b>    | 75 | 10.00   | 46.00   | 23.4533 | 9.02293        |
| <b>GENDER</b>                                  | 75 | 2.00    | 2.00    | 2.0000  | .00000         |

To analyse both Fear of Negative Evaluation and considered parenting styles among 75 male and 75 female participants, descriptive statistics were employed. Males recorded a mean score of Fear of Negative Evaluation (SD = 8.69) of 32.41, while the mean score for the females reportedly was slightly higher, being equal to 32.68 (SD = 8.43). The gender difference, therefore, is negligible.

For both genders, Authoritative Parenting is considered most prominent among all parenting styles, males scored 37.13(SD=6.59) while females scored 37.32(SD=7.07). In case of Authoritarian (M=24.40, SD=6.34) and Permissive (M = 24.83, SD = 8.45), males rated style levels somewhat higher than females do (Authoritarian M=23.95, SD=7.30; Permissive M=23.45, SD=9.02); however, females presented a higher range in response, which was particularly evident in the Permissive style. Hence, both groups have rated Authoritative parenting as the most well-rated.

**Table 2. Frequency table for the levels of fear of negative evaluation in college student**

|              |          | Frequency | Percent | Score Range |
|--------------|----------|-----------|---------|-------------|
| <b>Valid</b> | Low      | 57        | 38.0    | ≤30         |
|              | Moderate | 86        | 57.3    | 31 – 45     |
|              | High     | 7         | 4.7     | >46         |
|              | Total    | 150       | 100.0   |             |

From the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale results, 57.3% of the students reported feeling moderate fear of negative evaluation, which may be due to the social and academic pressures of college life. The low level of fear for 38% of the sample would suggest that these individuals were rather confident and could take criticism either way. There exists a very small stake of 4.7% in the high fear category, so really small yet possibly vulnerable social anxiety-related soft emotional disturbance carriers.

**Table 3:** *Frequency table to identify the dominant perceived parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) among college students.*

|                                                | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| <b>Authoritative Perceived Parenting Style</b> | 113       | 75.3    |
| <b>Authoritarian Perceived Parenting Style</b> | 18        | 12.0    |
| <b>Permissive Perceived Parenting Style</b>    | 12        | 8.0     |
| <b>No Clear Dominance</b>                      | 7         | 4.7     |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | 150       | 100.0   |

The analysis intended to determine the most dominant perceived parenting style among college students through the Perceived Parenting Styles Scale. Results showed that the most dominant perceived style was authoritative parenting, with 75.3% of students reporting this style. The authoritarian and permissive styles were seen as dominant by 12.0% and 8.0% of students, respectively. A small group of 4.7% could not be assigned to any one dominant style because of likely balanced or inconsistent responses. The implication of these results is that most of the students had experienced parenting that involves responsiveness and support and also reasonable control.

**Table 4:** *Mann – Whitney test used to compare fear of negative evaluation among males and females*

#### Test Statistics<sup>a</sup>

|                       | <b>Authoritarian Perceived Parenting Style</b> | <b>Authoritative Perceived Parenting Style</b> | <b>Permissive Perceived Parenting Style</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <b>Mann-Whitney U</b> | 2619.500                                       | 2743.500                                       | 2503.000                                    |

|                               |          |          |          |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Wilcoxon W</b>             | 5469.500 | 5593.500 | 5353.000 |
| <b>Z</b>                      | -.726    | -.260    | -1.164   |
| <b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b> | .468     | .795     | .244     |

No significant gender differences were also found regarding perceptions of the three different parental styles. It can be observed that Authoritarian Parenting practices, the results are  $U = 2619.50$ ,  $Z = -0.73$ , and  $p\text{-value} = .468$ ; for Authoritative Parenting,  $U = 2743.50$ ,  $Z = -0.26$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .795$ ; and for Permissive Parenting,  $U = 2503.00$ ,  $Z = -1.16$ , and  $p\text{-value} = .244$ . These outcomes infer that the perceptions of what their parents did would not differ between boys and girls according to the applicable parenting style. Overall, these findings suggest that gender did not influence parenting experiences in relation to the fear of negative evaluation among college students in this sample.

**Table 5** Compare perceived parenting style among males and females

|                               | <b>Authoritarian<br/>Perceived Parenting<br/>Style</b> | <b>Authoritative<br/>Perceived Parenting<br/>Style</b> | <b>Permissive<br/>Perceived<br/>Parenting Style</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Mann-Whitney U</b>         | 2619.500                                               | 2743.500                                               | 2503.000                                            |
| <b>Wilcoxon W</b>             | 5469.500                                               | 5593.500                                               | 5353.000                                            |
| <b>Z</b>                      | -.726                                                  | -.260                                                  | -1.164                                              |
| <b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b> | .468                                                   | .795                                                   | .244                                                |

Because of slight deviations from normality and for categorical nature of gender, the Mann-Whitney U test was performed to check for gender differences in Fear of Negative Evaluation and perceived parenting styles. Males and females did not differ significantly in Fear of Negative Evaluation scores ( $U = 2733.00$ ,  $Z = -0.30$ ,  $p = .765$ ), corroborating descriptive findings showing that both groups of participants had nearly identical mean scores indicating little effect of gender on the fear of negative evaluation in the young adult sample considered. It might have reflected certain developmental, academic, or social stresses affecting both the genders similarly at this stage of life.

**Table 6** Spearman's Rank – Order Correlation of the Variables for fear of negative evaluation

|  |  | <b>Authoritarian<br/>Perceived<br/>Parenting Style</b> | <b>Authoritative<br/>Perceived<br/>Parenting Style</b> | <b>Permissive<br/>Perceived</b> |
|--|--|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|--|--|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|

|                                    |                         |        |       | Parenting Style |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------|-------|-----------------|
| <b>Fear of Negative Evaluation</b> | Correlation Coefficient | .288** | -.132 | .149            |
|                                    | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .      | .000  | .107            |
|                                    | N                       | 150    | 150   | 150             |

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results indicated that Authoritarian Parenting is significantly positively associated with Fear of Negative Evaluation among the respondents ( $r_s = .288$ ,  $p < .001$ ) which means that individuals perceiving their parents as controlling or strict are more likely to develop higher fear in terms of being judged negatively by anyone, whereas no such relation was found for Fear of Negative Evaluation with Authoritative Parenting ( $r_s = -.132$ ,  $p = .107$ ), and for Permissive Parenting styles ( $r_s = .149$ ,  $p = .068$ ) although nearing significance.

Generally, results indicated that there is a positive association between authoritarian parenting and fear of negative evaluation in young adults, whereas other forms of parenting, such as authoritarian and permissive styles, fail to have any association with fear of negative evaluation.

#### 4. Discussion

The study was undertaken to study Fear of Negative Evaluation or FNE and the three styles of parenting, namely, authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive, and to study gender differences among college students. The sample was composed of 150 respondents, with 75 males and 75 females. The respondents were mostly 22-23 years old, belonged to the medium socioeconomic class, and were from semi-urban areas, with a fairly homogeneous family structure and socio-environmental background.

Results conveyed that both males and females experienced similar levels of fear of negative evaluation with females' levels being slightly higher, albeit the difference remains minimal. Both male and female participants rated their parents mostly in the authoritative category, depicting a balanced, supportive, and structured kind of rearing. There, however, should have been a moderate rating for authoritarian and permissive styles to make parents occasionally supportive, sometimes controlling, or at other times even encouraging.

The findings reported over half of the participants (57.3%) as having moderate levels of fear of being negatively evaluated, 38% falling under low levels, and the remaining 4.7% classified as high fear. In other words, social evaluation concerns bother many students, but intense fear is rarely experienced. This supports prior research outcomes (e.g., Acar Bulut, 2019) showing that moderate fear of negative evaluation is common among young adults, particularly in academic settings and situations where peers judge them.

Authoritative was also the most frequently perceived parenting style; 75.3% of the participants considered their parents as authoritative ones. Most students thus deemed their parents as supportive yet structured and responsive to the child's needs. Authoritarian parenting was considered dominant by 12% of the participants, and permissive parenting by 8%. These trends are consistent with the literature regarding the predominance of authoritative parenting in educated urban families and its linkage with emotional well-being and autonomy in emerging adulthood (Givertz & Segrin, 2012).

Mann-Whitney U tests applied to the current sample failed to reveal significant differences between males and females on either the fear of negative evaluation measure or in their perceptions of parenting styles, suggesting that both genders were equally affected by their parenting styles relative to sociocultural fears of evaluation. Shared pressures may account for the correlated experience of both genders during this stage in life.

A methodology utilizing Spearman's correlation analysis suggests an increase in fear of negative evaluation correlated with strictness in parenting and negative on fear of negative evaluation, indicating support and structure could lead to reduced fears of negative evaluation. In contrast, permissive parenting correlates positively, yet weakly and not significantly. This implies that, while permissive styles allow freedom, they could foster doubt or insecurity in terms of social evaluation.

Hence, the study finds that an authoritarian style of parenting increases fear of negative evaluation, while authoritative and permissive styles exert weaker or non-significant effects. As a result, gender might be considered unimportant, that is clearly, the competitive, societal pressures faced in young adulthood may reduce disparities in the fear of negative evaluation

## 5. Summary

This study examined whether fear of negative evaluations corresponded to perceived parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive), by additionally considering such differences by gender, in a sample of college students. Results showed that authoritarian parenting was positively related to fear of negative evaluation, indicating that controlling

parenting promotes social evaluative fears. Authoritative parenting showed slight association and lower fear of negative evaluation, though not statistically significant. Permissive parenting had a weak non-significant positive relationship to fear of negative evaluation. A majority of students reported having a moderate degree of fear of negative evaluation. Hence, it can be concluded that high evaluative fear is quite uncommon. Authoritative parenting was the most reported style, revealing that most students went through an upbringing full of support and structure. No significant gender differences were found, indicating a commonality in the emotional dynamics experienced by either males or females concerning parenting. In conclusion, the present study shows how different parenting styles, especially authoritarian parenting, can impact young adults in the formation of fear pertaining to social evaluations.

### ***Implications***

- a) Parenting suggestion: Promote authoritative parenting styles to mitigate fear of negative evaluation.
- b) Clinical considerations: Explore family dynamics within the context of social anxiety and self-esteem.
- c) Preventive interventions: Include parenting style education in school and college programs.
- d) Gender-neutral approach: Create interventions for fear of negative evaluation applicable to both genders.

### ***Limitations***

- a) Self-reporting bias: Responses may be susceptible to social desirability and recall.
- b) Cross-sectional design: This design limits any conclusions relative to causation; longitudinal studies are required.
- c) Sample characteristics: The findings may not be generalized to other populations or cultures.
- d) Single-informant data: The data gathered in this study consisted of students' only view.
- e) Mediators not accounted for: Emotional regulation and self-esteem were not measured.

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