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Parental Bonding and its relation on Personality Formation among Young Adults

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Abstract: Parenting styles are important in influencing the personality development of young adults. Supportive and warm parenting tends to be associated with positive emotional adjustment while overprotective or controlling parenting can limit autonomy and shape personality outcomes. The study's purpose was to determine the impact of different parenting styles-authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful on the developing personality of the young adults. The sample was collected of young adults from age group 18 to 25 years old. A quantitative research design was employed, using standardized questionnaires to collect data from 60 participants (31 females, 29 males). Only participants who had both parents present in the first 16 years of their life were taken for this study. Participants were measured on The Big Five Inventory-10 and The Parental Bonding Instrument. The study revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between Extraversion and Neuroticism. There is also a significant negative relationship between mother's care with mother's overprotection and father's overprotection. Additionally, a significant negative relationship between father's care and father's overprotection was found. And lastly, both mother's care and father's care have a significant positive relationship.

Keywords: *Parenting Styles, Personality Formation, Young Adults*

1. Introduction

"Parenting is a powerful force that molds the trajectory of personality development" (Baumrind, 1967). Personality development in young adulthood is heavily dependent on the quality of early relationships, especially with parents. Parenting styles that include care, warmth, and overprotection are significant contributors to emotional regulation, social

behavior, and overall personality outcomes in the long term. Nurturing and supportive parenting has been linked with greater self-esteem, emotional stability, and social competency, while overprotective or controlling parenting can interrupt autonomy and heighten the risk for maladaptive features. The Big Five personality system (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) is a complete system to research these individual differences.

The current study was set out to investigate the relationships between the Big Five personality factors and Perceived Parental Bonding (mother and father care and overprotection) in young adults.

The Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) places parenting styles in four quadrants on the care and overprotection axes. The quadrants are affectionate constraint (high care and high protection), affectionless control (low care and high protection), optimal parenting (high care and low protection), and neglectful parenting (low care and low protection). The parents are placed in the quadrants according to the application of some cut-off scores. The quadrant model is a helpful system to explore how different combinations of warmth and control influence long-term personality traits and adjustment in young adults.

A study was aimed to assess the relation between Perceived Parenting Style and Personality Factors. A sample of 185 post graduate students was taken (91 male and 94 female). The data was collected through Parenting Style Questionnaire and Big Five Personality Factor. The data collected was analyzed and it was found that there is a partial relationship between Perceived Parenting Style and Personality Factors. It was also found that there is no significant difference between male and female in their personality factors although a significant difference in perceived parenting style of mother and father was found (Savitha and Venkatachalam, 2016).

According to a study conducted by Huver et al. (2010) examined the relation between parental personality and parenting styles a sample of 688 Dutch parents of adolescents was taken. They were assessed on the big five personality traits, and the parenting styles were derived on the dimension of support and strict control. Regression analysis was used, and it was concluded that the two aspects of personality which reflected interpersonal interaction (extraversion and agreeableness) was related to supportiveness whereas on the other hand, emotional stability was associated with lower strict control. It was concluded that parenting styles, extraverted, agreeable and less emotionally stable individuals were most likely to be authoritative parents whereas conscientiousness and openness did not relate to general parenting, although might be associated with content specific acts.

Parenting Styles

Parenting style has been defined as “a global climate in which a family functions and in which childrearing takes place” (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Additionally, Baumrind (1991) defined parenting styles as “dimensions of parental responsiveness and demandingness.” Parenting practices can be defined as directly observable specific behaviors that parents use to socialize their children (Darling & Steinberg 1993).

Baumrind (1966, 1967, 1971) is commonly considered a pioneer of research into parenting styles. The researcher introduced a typology with three parenting styles to describe differences in normal parenting behaviors: the authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting style. Maccoby and Martin (1983) attempted to bridge Baumrind’s typology and parenting dimensions. Based on the combination of two dimensions, demandingness and responsiveness, they defined four parenting styles: a) authoritative (i.e., high demandingness and high responsiveness); b) authoritarian (i.e., high demandingness and low responsiveness); c) indulgent (i.e., low demandingness and high responsiveness); and d) neglectful (i.e., low demandingness and low responsiveness). These two parenting dimensions are similar, yet not identical to the dimensions ‘parental support’ and ‘parental behavioral control’. Based on Maccoby and Martin’s work, Baumrind (1989, 1991) expanded her typology with a fourth parenting style, namely the ‘neglectful’ parenting style

A study conducted by Aunola et al. (2000) was aimed to study how adolescents’ achievements are associated with parenting styles they experience in their families. A sample of 354, 14-year-olds was taken. The strategy and attribution questionnaire was filled by the adolescents along with the family parenting styles inventory, and parents were given analogous questionnaires. It was concluded that adolescents from authoritative families had the most adaptive achievement strategies along with lower levels of failure expectations, task irrelevant behavior and passivity, and the use of self-enhancing attributions. On the contrary, adolescents from neglectful families applied maladaptive strategies, along with high levels of task irrelevant behavior, passivity, and lack of self-enhancing attributions. The result provided a basis for understanding that parenting styles influences adolescents’ academic achievement and their performance.

A study, aiming to identify the relationship between parenting style and adolescents’ personality traits was conducted by Metwally (2018). A sample of 400 students from three secondary schools in Abo-Hamad city was taken. The socio-demographic data sheet, big five inventory and parental authority questionnaire were used for data collection. The result concluded that there was significant positive correlation between permissive parenting style

and openness personality trait. It also resulted that authoritarian parenting style was positively correlated with neuroticism and negatively correlated with agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness. Authoritative parenting style had significant positive correlation with agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness personality traits.

Personality Formation

“Personality is usually defined as individual's unique and relatively stable patterns of behaviour, thoughts and emotions” (Baron, 1993).

According to Allport (1961) personality is the “dynamic organization within the individual of those psycho-physical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment.” It means that personality resides within the individual, and these systems are woven into an organization.

The Big Five traits are thought to capture the core of personality; a) Neuroticism (i.e., the tendency to experience stress), b) Extraversion (i.e., the tendency toward positive emotionality and social dominance), c) Openness to Experience (i.e., curiosity, creativity, and imagination), d) Agreeableness (i.e., helpfulness, cooperativeness, and kindness), and e) Conscientiousness (i.e., orderliness, responsibility, and perseverance) (Caspi et al., 2005; McCrae & John, 1992).

A study was conducted to determine the relationship between parenting style, family types, personality disposition and academic achievement of young people. The sample was taken of 352 university students out of which 144 were male and 208 were female. The sample consisted of students from single parent, monogamous and polygamous families, they responded to measures of parenting style and personality variables and were scored on these along with their academic performance. It was obtained that the result supported the hypothesis of significant and positive correlation between parenting style and personality variable of self-esteem, need for achievement, locus of control, sense of competence and academic achievement. Further, it was also hypothesized that personality variable would predict academic achievement and young people from families where authoritative parenting was practiced, would have higher levels of personality variable studied and would obtain higher academic achievement. It was obtained that type of family is the strongest predictor of academic achievement. It was also concluded that authoritative parenting and single parent families implicated high academic achievement (Akinsola, 2011).

A meta-analysis was conducted using 5,853 parent child dyads which were included in 30 studies to investigate the association between big five personality factors and three dimensions of parenting (warmth, behavioral control, and autonomy support). It was found that

higher levels of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness and low levels of Neuroticism were related to warmth and behavioral control, on the other hand, high levels of Agreeableness and low levels of Neuroticism were related to autonomy support.

2. Purpose

The purpose is to study Parenting Styles and its relation on Personality Formation among young adults.

3. Hypothesis

H1: There will be a significant positive relationship between healthy personality traits of young adults and the care of parents.

H2: There will be a significant negative relationship between healthy personality traits of young adults and overprotection of parents.

4. Method

4.1 Sample

A total sample of 60 Young Adults in the age 18-25 was collected from Chandigarh, India.

4.2 Measures

Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10): The Big Five Inventory-10 is a measure of the big five personality traits i.e. Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness. The scale was developed by Rammstedt and John (2007). It is a 10-item short version of the Big Five Inventory. The scale consisted of 10 items and the rating scale included, Disagree Strongly (1), Disagree A Little (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Agree A Little (4), Agree Strongly (5). The Big Five Inventory uses a 5-point Likert scale for each item. Items 1 and 6 represent extraversion, 2 and 7 represent agreeableness, 3 and 8 represent conscientiousness, 4 and 9 represent emotional stability and 5 and 10 represent openness.

Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI): The Parental Bonding Instrument was developed by Parker, Tupling and Brown (1979). The scale measures parenting styles across the dimensions of “care” and “over protection” as perceived by the child during the first 16 years of their life. The scale consists of 25 items which have to be completed separately for mothers and fathers. The 25 items consist of 12 items for “care” and 13 items for “over protection”. The

Parental Bonding Instrument uses a 4-point Likert scale for each item. The rating scale for each item included, “Very Like”, "Moderately like”, “Moderately Unlike”, and “Very Unlike”.

4.3 Procedures

The participants were informed about the purpose of research, and the questionnaires were filled through google forms. Each participant was thanked for their co-operation and kind help.

5. Analysis of Data

Results

Table 1: *N, Mean and Standard deviation*

	Openness	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism	Mother's care	Mother's overprotection	Father's care	Father's overprotection
N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
Mean	6.47	6.03	6.67	7.08	6.05	27.7	14.9	24.5	13.8
Standard deviation	1.43	1.65	2.10	1.81	2.24	7.01	7.75	7.00	7.50

Table 2: *Correlation between Personality types and Parental Bonding*

	Openness	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism	Mother's care	Mother's overprotection	Father's care	Father's overprotection
Openness	—								
Conscientiousness	0.036	—							
Extraversion	0.160	0.116	—						
Agreeableness	-0.107	0.045	-0.122	—					
Neuroticism	0.103	-0.046	-0.375**	0.012	—				
Mother's care	-0.079	0.004	-0.037	0.064	0.170	—			
Mother's overprotection	0.137	0.065	0.130	-0.243	-0.169	-0.403**	—		
Father's care	-0.030	0.160	0.083	0.145	0.044	0.434***	-0.129	—	
Father's overprotection	-0.166	-0.061	-0.120	-0.127	0.027	-0.386**	0.247	-0.462***	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

6. Discussion of Results

The findings of the correlation matrix revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between Extraversion and Neuroticism ($r = -0.375$, $p < .01$), meaning that higher extraversion was linked with lower levels of neuroticism. The result also found out that there is a significant negative relationship between mother's care with mother's overprotection ($r = -0.403$, $p < .01$) and father's overprotection ($r = -0.386$, $p < .01$). Additionally, the result also found a significant negative relationship between father's care and father's overprotection ($r = -0.462$, $p < .001$). Finally, it was concluded that both mother's care and father's care have a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.434$, $p < .001$).

The first hypothesis (*H1*), which predicted a high positive correlation between young adults' healthy personality traits and parental care, was partially supported to a certain extent. The results showed that mother's care and father's care were significantly correlated, indicating that care from one of the parents is likely to be accompanied by the other. The correlation matrix, although did not show a direct high positive correlation on the care side and some healthy personality traits on the young adults' side, but partially supported H1.

The second hypothesis (*H2*), which examined a strong negative relationship between healthy personality traits and overprotection by parents, was not confirmed. Strong negative correlations were found instead between parental care and overprotection, and between mother's care and father's overprotection. These findings suggest that while care and overprotection operate inversely to one another in parenting, their direct effect on personality traits such as extraversion, agreeableness, or conscientiousness was not well supported in this research.

Past study conducted by Smith et al. (2007) show that maternal high neuroticism was related to low warmth and high intrusiveness. Higher agreeableness and conscientiousness were linked with more sensitive, and nurturant parenting styles and extraversion outcomes were conflicting, and some studies reported positive associations with responsive care, others with more power-assertive behavior.

Another study by Wertz et al. (2025) on 2,232 British twins was designed to measure maternal affection at 5–10 years and personality at age 18. It was found that more affectionate parenting in childhood also predicted more openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness in adulthood (even for identical twins) although no effects were present for extraversion or neuroticism.

7. Conclusion

The study's purpose was to determine the impact of different parenting styles on the developing personality of the young adults. The sample was collected of young adults ranging from age group 18 to 25 years old. A quantitative research design was employed, using standardized questionnaires to collect data from 60 participants (31 females, 29 males). Only participants who had both parents present in the first 16 years of their life were taken for this study. Participants were measured on The Big Five Inventory-10 and The Parental Bonding Instrument. The study revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between Extraversion and Neuroticism. There is also a significant negative relationship between mother's care with mother's overprotection and father's overprotection. Additionally, a

significant negative relationship between father's care and father's overprotection was found. And lastly, both mother's care and father's care have a significant positive relationship. While this study provides valuable insights into how parenting styles, particularly care and overprotection, influence the personality traits of young adults, there are certain limitations that must be kept in mind. The employment of self-report measures such as BFI-10 and PBI may introduce response biases and restrict the range of personality measurement in comparison to long questionnaires. Cross-sectional design also limits causal inferences since it cannot see changes over time in development. Environmental and cultural factors such as school environment, peer pressure, and socio-economic status were not controlled but could be equally significant in personality development. Future research could make it more reliable using longitudinal designs, multicultural samples, and environmental factors along with parental bonding to provide a more complex understanding of personality development. Extending the scope to include quantitative and qualitative approaches would also supplement the understanding of parent-child relationships and long-term consequences.

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