

Parenting Practices and Well Being Outcome in Young Adulthood

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This research investigated the consequences of early parenting practices on well-being during adulthood. We hypothesized: a) parental care would be correlated with psychological well-being variables of psychological strain and self-esteem; and b) parental over-protection would be correlated with the variables of psychological well-being (psychological strain and self-esteem). For this purpose, we solicited 67 men and 83 women within an age range of 18 to 25 ($M=21.20$, $SD = 1.90$). The Parental Bonding Instrument, (PBI: Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979), General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12; Goldberg, 1972) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE: Rosenberg 1965) were used to assess the early parenting practices, psychological strain and self-esteem, respectively. A Pearson Product Moment correlation of coefficient was calculated to assess the relationship among the variables. Results suggested that parental care was significantly negatively correlated with psychological strain ($r=-.26$, $p < .01$) and significantly positively correlated with self-esteem ($r = .38$, $p < .01$); whereas parental over- protection was significantly positively correlated with psychological strain ($r = .30$, $p < .01$) and significantly negatively correlated with self-esteem ($r = -.34$, $p < .01$). The findings indicated that parental affection, emotional warmth and empathy serve as a guard against psychological vulnerability for young adults and hence enhance their self-esteem, however, intrusion, and parental over-control develop a sense of worthlessness, low self-esteem and psychological strain among individuals.

Keywords: parenting, well-being, strain, self-esteem, young adults

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Parents are source of care and protection and are role model for their children. Early years are critical for children in terms of emotional, social, and physical growth; as they tend to explore and experience new things at every step. Parenting styles significantly affect such development. Researchers suggested that parental care is associated with positive well-being outcomes, while parental non-engagement or control are associated with negative well-being outcomes, likewise; it is also suggested that psychological well-being of adult women is strongly linked to the parenting style of their fathers as to that of their mothers, particularly in relation to the adverse effects of non-engagement and control (Huppert, Abbott, Ploubidis, Richard & Kuh, 2010).

Parents who consistently provide their children warmth and care with appropriate supervision and control can be the main source of positive well-being outcomes for their future life. Parental warmth and caring attitude contribute positively to young adult's self-esteem and psychological well-being (Yamawaki, Nelson, & Omori, 2011).

Parents can affect their children's well-being in two general ways; first, influencing well-being during childhood and, second, during adulthood (Bowlby, 1969). According to Bowlby (1977) parental projection of secure attachment style in early childhood can protect individuals from psychological vulnerability (stronger self-esteem) in their adulthood, and insecure attachment (low parental care) could cause in weak parent-child bond and poor consequences

in adult life (weak self-esteem etc).

Petrowski and colleagues (2009) identified that adults having quarrelsome and resentful attitude ascribed it to parental overprotective patterns, restrictiveness, and rejection. Those adults continued having problem in their interpersonal relationship. Thus their past parental experiences contribute to their current relationship difficulties.

Parker and colleagues (1979) gave two-dimensional theory of parental bonding; a) care/warmth versus unresponsiveness, and, b) facilitation of independence and autonomy versus control/overprotection. Hence, high parental control/overprotection, and lack of care/warmth relates to negative behaviors (Sonnak & Towell, 2001).

According to Bowlby (1988), adults' impaired affectional bonding capacities, are attributed to the disturbance during childhood. Parental failure in meeting child's need, refusals and rejections or inconsistency in providing child's needs for warmth and security, can put normal child development at risk (Bowlby, 1988). Children, adolescents and adults whose attachment has been less than optimal have greater proneness of psychological strain and disorders. A recently conducted research identified association of secure attachment styles with a decreased likelihood of reporting suicidal ideation, attempt, and any anxiety disorders; moreover, a strong association was present between Insecure attachment styles and greater reporting of suicidal ideations, attempts, and all mental disorder categories (Palitsky, Mota, Afifi, Downs, & Sareen, 2013). Hence, the psychological well-being of growing individual is dependent upon parenting practices (Van Wel, Linssen, & Abma, 2000). Parker found that lack of parental care and high maternal control was reported by individuals experiencing depression and nonclinical depressive symptoms (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979), anxiety (Parker, 1981), and hypochondriasis (Parker & Lipscombe, 1980).

Parenting has great influence on the self-esteem of children, as self-esteem of parents is projected in their parenting styles, and

subsequently in their children. Research suggests that there is a significant relationship of self-esteem with high parental overprotection and reduced acceptance for adolescents (Herz & Gullone, 1999). Moreover, these associations are continued with age into adult life compromising self-confidence, self-esteem, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. On the other hand, individuals having early positive experiences with primary caregivers, demonstrate greater ego-resilience (e.g., Howes, Matheson, & Hamilton, 1994), and trust in others (Larose & Bernier, 2001); which ultimately leads positive self-worth and high self-esteem.

Above-mentioned studies suggest a significant relationship between parenting styles, psychological strain and self-esteem. The purpose of the current study was to replicate and document the influence of parent-child relationships during the early life on the psychological well-being of young adults. Therefore this study focuses on young adults (age 18 to 25 years) living with their biological parents for at least first 16 years of their lives.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 67 men and 83 women which was selected from different academic departments of University of Karachi within age range of 18 to 25 ($M=21.20$, $SD=1.9$) years. To maintain homogeneity of sample participants from middle socioeconomic class were selected. SES was determined on the basis of demographic variables such as employment status of mother, employment status of father, monthly income of family, number of family members, earning members and residential area.

Measures

(a) Demographic Data Sheet.

This sheet documented age, gender, education, marital status, birth order, department, father's education and occupation, mother's education's and occupation, family structure, earning members, number of family members and residential area where the participant lived.

b) The Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI).

The parental bonding instrument (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979) assesses perceived parental bonding on the basis of two domains: "care" and "control/overprotection." Participants are required to rate each parent separately on 25 items; divided into two subscales of care (12 items), and overprotection (13 items). High scores care subscale suggest perceived parental warmth, where as, low scores reflect perceived parental coldness and rejection. For the overprotection subscale, higher scores reflect parent over-control or intrusion, whereas low scores suggest perceived parental allowance of autonomy. PBI highly correlated (criterion validity) with The Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI) and The Parenting Style Inventory (PSI). Likewise PBI is a reliable scale and showed stability for a period of three weeks interval (Kapçı & Küçüker, 2006).

c) The General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12).

General Health Questionnaire-12 (Goldberg, 1972) uses to screenout the prevalence of minor psychiatric symptoms among non-clinical population. The scale is developed to assess overall mental health over the last 4 weeks on a likert scale. Higher scores indicate high levels of psychological strain, while lower scores indicate lowered strain. The scale has good reliability as internal consistency was $\alpha = .94$ (Lesage, Resende, Deschamps, & Berjot, 2011) and has high validity (Doi & Minowa, 2003).

d) The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

The RSES (Rosenberg, 1965) is used to assess the level self-esteem consist of 10 items among them 5 are positively worded and 5 are negatively worded. Participants rate themselves on 5 point rating scale. Scores range from 10 to 40 and high scores indicate low self-esteem. It is viewed as a unidimensional measure and has been shown to be valid in the general population cross culturally (Schmitt & Allik, 2005).

Procedure

Initially letter of consent describing the research and inviting participation was provided to the concerned authorities of different departments of University of Karachi, and the purpose of study was described. Participants were asked to sign the consent form, and were ensured of confidentiality of their personal information, responses; and their right to withdraw without penalty of any kind. Each participant completed a packet that contained the demographic data sheet, PBI, GHQ-12 and RSES. It took 15 minutes to complete the whole packet.

Scoring and Data Analysis

Initially, demographic form was evaluated thoroughly, that was followed by evaluation of forms and incomplete and unclear forms were discarded. Scoring of PBI, GHQ-12, and RSES was done according to the standard procedures described by authors.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 17) was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of correlation were computed to infer the relationship between parental practices and psychological well-being.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

A total of 150 participants (45% male and 55% female) were included within the age range of 18 to 25 years ($M=21.02$; $SD=1.9$).

Results suggested that parental care has a significantly negative correlation with psychological strain ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$) and significantly positive correlation with self-esteem ($r = .38$, $p < .01$), and parental overprotection has positive correlation with psychological strain ($r=.30$, $p<.01$), and significantly negative correlation with self-esteem ($r=-.34$, $p<.01$).

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of sample (N=150)

| Variables | Frequency | Percentages | Variables | Frequency | Percentages |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Gender | | | Family Structure | | |
| Male | 67 | 45 | Joint | 43 | 29 |
| Female | 83 | 55 | Nuclear | 107 | 71 |
| Education | | | Birth Order | | |
| Intermediate | 31 | 20 | First | 60 | 40 |
| Graduate | 76 | 50 | Middle | 61 | 41 |
| Masters | 43 | 30 | Last | 29 | 19 |
| Age | <i>M</i> | | <i>SD</i> | | |
| | 21.02 | | 1.9 | | |

Table 2
Correlations (Pearson's *r*) of parental care and overprotection with the variables of Psychological well-being

| Parenting Practices | Psychological | Self Esteem |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Care | -.26** | .38** |
| Over Protection | .30** | -.34** |

Note. ** $p < .01$

Discussion

Results reflected that parental care was significantly negatively correlated with psychological strain ($r = -.26, p < .01$; table 2) and a positively correlated with self-esteem ($r = .38, p < .01$; table 2). Table 2 also suggests that parental overprotection was significantly positively correlated with psychological strain ($r = .30, p < .01$); and significantly negatively correlated with self-esteem ($r = -.34, p < .01$). Evidence has shown that optimal parenting (high care and low control) predicts most positive well-being for adolescents and children (e.g. Parker et. al, 1979). Previous and recent literature on child psychology and researches on adulthood, point out that well-being outcomes are associated with remembered parenting styles and can be seen into adulthood. (Parker, 1993; Steinberg, 1990; Huppert, Abbott, Ploubidis, et. al., 2010, Palitsky, Mota, Afifi, et.al., 2013).

Results of present study are supported by Bowlby's attachment theory which reinforces that children who experience parenting styles with appropriate levels of warmth, support, care control, protection, and security become socially adjusted young adults. Bowlby (1977) postulated that it is the prime responsibility of parents to provide their children a secure and affectionate base and motivate them in their later years of life to explore ahead. He further suggested that some parents, he named "pathogenic parents" develop anxious attachment style with their children. These parents lack care and warmth and are unresponsive of their child's need. As a result, such a child lacks opportunity to grow as a confident individual and tends to become anxious, apprehensive, and overly dependent. They are also prone to develop neurotic conditions (depression, phobias) and low self-esteem. Thus, low care and high overprotection lead to developing the feelings of loneliness, helplessness and worthlessness.

In the patriarchal societies like Pakistan, the role of parents is generally authoritative and demanding. Parents tend to expect their children to accept parental commands without any resistance or arguments; moreover, the difference of opinion is least encouraged. Children who are assertive and reactive are generally less appreciated and rather taken as offensive. This subsequently

develops negative feelings among children; affects their self-esteem and distorts their sense of self-worth. They grow up with psychological susceptibilities and disturbed interpersonal relationships. The vicious cycle continues in adulthood and may be transferred to next generation.

In summary, this research demonstrated the importance of parenting practices in childhood, in the adult life of those children. From the above discussion it is clear that parental child rearing styles has great influence on adult's life, in particular, their psychological well-being and self-esteem. Parental over protection and inadequate control in childhood results in psychological vulnerability in adult life whereas emotional warmth and high care contributes in lesser strain and higher self-esteem. Hence, all styles have positive or negative consequences, if provided in balance can contribute in the development of a healthy individual.

The findings of the research would be beneficial; for parental guidance regarding their child-rearing practices; for teachers guidance related to children's emotional, behavioral problems; for the mental health practitioners in their clinical practices; for researches by making further investigations on present study's subject matter. Moreover the study would be more comprehensive if variable of interpersonal relationships was also studied to investigate the effect of perceived parenting on overall relationships.

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