A STUDY ON PARENTING STYLES IN RELATION TO STRESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

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ABSTRACT

The present study has focused on identifying the parenting styles of parents and comparing the stress and self-esteem of the two different parenting styles. The main objective of the study was to identify the stress level and self-esteem among the parents and compare the level of stress and self-esteem between parents of authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles. The study considered a sample of 200 in which 120 men and 80 were women who were having adolescent children in Palakkad district. The tools used for the study were parenting style inventory, stress questionnaire by Preethi. C & Rosa M.C (2010) and self-esteem inventory by Pramod (2006). The results indicated that there was a difference in the stress and self-esteem between two different parenting styles and there was an inverse relation between stress and self-esteem among parents.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Authoritarian, Stress, Parenting style

INTRODUCTION

The child’s first and foremost developmental context happens within the family. Hence family plays a major role in the development of a child, where in the parents have the majority of responsibilities in bringing up the child. Hence parenting is an art of cherishing a child right through its life. There are different parenting styles adopted by parents according to circumstances. But there would be a dominant style followed by each and every parent irrespective of the situation. This dominant parenting style may be due to some parental factors like stress, self esteem, personality etc. Whatever may be the style of parenting it does have an adverse effect on the child’s overall development. Parents differ greatly in their styles, but still fall under 4 broad categories. In the 1960s, psychologist Diana Baumrind started investigating, researching different parenting styles. In her research she found that there are four important components to look at when determining a parenting style. They include: method and style of discipline, communication style, warmth and nurturance, expectations for control and maturity. First of the four parenting types are authoritarian. The authoritarian type is the kind of parent who says "it's my way or the highway." They have very strict,
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rigid rules. They're not very interested in what the child thinks or feels. They expect their expectations to be met, no conversation. There's not a whole lot in the way of warmth and nurturance there. They expect the child to be mature, and they expect to have total control over that child. The authoritarian parent does not like when children ask questions. They want compliance. They want control over their children. And they don't want to have a conversation about something that they want. The authoritative parent is willing to answer questions. They want their children to be assertive and self-regulating. The authoritative parent is assertive but not restrictive. They're more democratic in the way they deal with their children, and they're more forgiving, less punishing than the authoritarian parent. The authoritative parent has healthy expectations and goals for their children and if the goals aren't met, it's not the end of the world. They'll have a conversation, they'll work together to have their successes. Permissive parenting is the parent who is considered to be more overly-indulgent. They have an excessive amount of warmth and nurturance. They allow for a considerable amount of self-regulation and are lighter on the rules and regulations. They're more reactive in terms of placing demands on their children, it's really more "parenting when necessary." And the permissive parent has lower expectations for maturity and self-control in the child. Fourth is the uninvolved parent. In this parenting style the parent is somewhat neglectful, not aware of the child's needs whatsoever. There is very little communication. And this parent places few demands on the child. They're not involved in their life. And they are relatively detached from the child's needs, mental/emotional needs. They'll provide the basic needs, but after that, there's not much connection there.

The child-rearing practices and interactive behaviours which have been developed and implemented by parents are referred to as parenting style. Parent-child relationships are greatly affected by the parenting style the parent incorporates into parent-child interactions. Three main parenting styles have been observed by professionals. These three parenting styles are parental authoritativeness, parental authoritarianism and parental permissiveness (Schwartz & Scott, 2003). Kuczynski (2003) defines an authoritative parenting style as one in which a parent's attitudes and actions give priority to the child's needs and abilities, while implying age-appropriate maturity demands. Baumrind (1967) describes this style as one in which the parent supports the child's present qualities while also setting standards for appropriate future conduct. This parenting style recognizes the child's agency and attempts to maintain equal agency between the parent and child. The parent attempts to guide the child using warmth, respect, communication, shared control, appropriate power, and
reasonable expectations. The parent uses reason to achieve his/her parenting goals and does not base his/her behavior merely on the child’s desires or the parent’s desires. This parenting style fully accepts the concept of bi-directionality between the parent and child. Both are seen as equals who influence each other's behaviors and attitudes. The authoritarian parenting style is presented by Kuczynski (2003) as one in which interactions imply “relative neglect of the child’s needs in favor of the parent’s agenda, strong demands for child compliance, and forceful methods for gaining compliance and punishing infractions” (p. 58). Baumrind (1967) describes this style as one in which the parent attempts to control the behavior and attitudes of the child according to an absolute standard. This parenting style assumes a unilateral interaction between the parent and child where the parent is seen as the instigator who fully influences the child’s attitudes and behaviors yet remains unaffected by any influence by the child. Authoritarianism restricts the child’s autonomy in an attempt to gain total obedience from the child. This style shows little warmth, reason, respect or communication. The parent exerts excess power and control over the child and maintains high expectations which may or may not be reasonable. Baumrind (1967) describes the permissive parenting style as one in which the parent shares equal power with the child. The parent exerts no control over the child, sets no boundaries for the child, and displays no expectations. The parent may present himself or herself as a resource the child may use when desired but not as a model of appropriate conduct. Kuczynski (2003) defines this parenting style as one in which parents imply low demands “related to either child-centered indulgence toward the child’s self-direction or parent-centered inattentiveness and neglect of the child” (p. 58). When parents are neglectful rather than indulgent, the style is often referred to as a neglectful or uninvolved parenting style. The parent may be permissive by showing warmth and responsiveness or may be uninvolved by remaining cold and distant, depending on the nature of the parent.

The results of Strage’s 1998 study clearly show a positive impact of the authoritative parenting style and negative impact of the authoritarian parenting style on college students’ adjustment to and experiences with university life and academia. However, authoritative parenting may not be the more effective style for all student populations. Students of a particular gender or ethnic group may benefit more from parenting styles other than the authoritative parenting style. Evidence showed the effects of authoritative parenting on Chinese-Americans’ academic pursuits yielded the same results as authoritarian parenting. First generation students’ grades and overall academic abilities did not differ based on parenting style used by parents. Second generation students showed slightly higher grades
and academic abilities when reared in an authoritative household; however, the finding was not significant enough to suggest authoritative parenting is truly more effective than authoritarian parenting (Chao, 2001). Chao (2001) noted the generalization that an authoritative parenting style is superior to an authoritarian parenting style in its effects on academic success for university students is not true for all ethnic groups. This study implies the child’s perception of parenting style is culturally based and cultural perception largely impacts whether a parenting style is considered effective or positive by the child, family and society. Research conducted by Gonzalez (2001) also found it may be unwise to generalize authoritative parenting style as the most effective style resulting in student success. Data was collected from 311 undergraduate students at a Southeastern university to determine the relationship between perceived parenting style and college adjustment. The sample consisted of 234 female students and 77 male students; 236 were Caucasian, 30 were African-American, 24 were Hispanic, 11 were Asian-American and 10 were of mixed ethnicity. Participants completed a questionnaire which was a combination of the Goals Inventory, Parental Authority Questionnaire, and background information assessing demographics, parental educational achievement level, and parental involvement in the participant’s educational experience. Differences were noted between the relationship of authoritative and authoritarian parenting by gender and race. Gonzalez’s (2001) research indicated authoritarian parenting has negative consequences on Caucasian females’ perceptions of their academic abilities, independence, and self-assertiveness, whereas it results in positive consequences for African American females. Authoritarian parenting also showed less negative impact on males’ perceptions of their academic abilities, independence and self-assertiveness than on females’. Gonzalez notes females may be more susceptible to undesirable effects of authoritarian parenting than males. Due to her findings, Gonzalez (2001) theorized culture moderates the meaning of parenting style. An individual’s culturally driven perception of a parenting style will affect whether the style is seen as normal, nurturing, positive, or negative. This will, in turn, affect the individual’s reaction to that parenting style and affect skills necessary to excel in higher education. Mason (2005) noted differences related to ethnicity and parenting style in her study of 204 undergraduate university students from the New York City metropolitan area. Her sample included students who identified themselves as African-American, Asian-American, Latino, and Caucasian. Caucasian students who indicated being reared in an authoritative household reported more secure relationships with their parents, which was positively correlated with students’ academic abilities. However, the results for African-American, Asian-American, and Latino students were different. These
students reported more secure relationships with parents who implemented an authoritarian parenting style, which was positively correlated with academic abilities. Parenting style related to social and personal-emotional adjustment. Wintre and Yaffe (2000) studied a sample of 408 first-year students attending a large commuter university in a metropolitan city in Canada to determine the effect parenting style and parent-child relationships had on the child’s transition and adjustment to university life. The participants consisted of 116 males and 292 females and also represented a multicultural make-up. Participants were administered an array of measures to assess their relationship with their parent(s) as well as their personal-emotional and social adjustment to college. Relationship with parent(s) was evaluated through the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), the Perception of Parental Reciprocity Scale (POPRS), the Social Provisions Scale-Present Version (SPS-P), and parental interviews in which the participant indicates how often or how much information he or she relays to his or her parent(s). Personal-emotional and social adjustment were evaluated through the Autonomy Scale of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory, the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), the Self-Esteem Scale, the Perceived Stress Scale, and the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. The authoritative parenting style was shown to positively contribute to students’ ability to successfully adjust to university life, whereas the authoritarian parenting style negatively contributed to this transition (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). Furthermore, father authoritativeness resulted in slightly more positive effects on the child’s ability to adjust than mother authoritativeness. Wintre and Yaffe also discovered lack of authoritativeness from the father as well as mother authoritarianism resulted in increased depression and perceived stress within the sample group, resulting in more difficulty in adjusting to college. Cultural interpretation of parenting style may account for the findings by Hickman et al. (2001). These researchers studied first-year college students to investigate the relationship between the authoritative parenting style, gender, self-esteem, aptitude, academic success, and adjustment to university life. Authoritative parenting was found to be positively correlated with initial grade point averages of male students. However, there was no significant correlation with female students’ grade point averages.

OBJECTIVES

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1. To find out whether there exist any significant difference in the level of stress among authoritative and authoritarian style of parenting.

2. To find out whether there exist any significant difference in the level of self esteem among authoritarian and authoritative style of parenting.

3. To find out whether there exist any significant relationship between stress and self esteem among parents.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out on a sample of 120 men and 80 women of Palakkad district. The samples were fathers and mothers of adolescents.

TOOLS

Survey method was used to conduct the study. Three standardised questionnaires have been used for this study. Parenting style inventory and stress questionnaire by Preethi. C & Rosa M.C(2010), was used to assess the parenting style and level of stress which consists of 50 statements. Self-esteem inventory by Pramod (2006) was used to assess the self-esteem of parents which consists of 20 statements.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

The study was aimed to identify the stress level and self-esteem among the parents and compare the level of stress and self-esteem between parents of authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles, it was important to find out whether there was any significant difference between the two. Test of significance of difference between means and Carl Pearson’s coefficient of correlation were calculated for statistical analysis.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A Study on Parenting Styles in relation to Stress and Self-Esteem
TABLE- 1

Comparison of stress level among authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian style</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>30.06</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>8.02</td>
<td>p&gt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative style</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>18.92</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table reveals that the critical ratio is 8.02, which is significant at 0.01 levels. It is seen that there is significant difference between the stress level among authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles. The mean score of the authoritarian parenting style is much greater than that of the authoritative parenting style. The t value 8.02 is highly significant. So there exists significant difference in the level of stress among authoritarian and authoritative style of parenting. The stress among parents might be due to personal problems like low self-esteem, financial constraints, worry about the children’s future etc. The stress can also be due to the familial and social factors such as insecurity, poor social support, negligence by family members etc. This parental stress results in poor treatment towards the children by not showing their love and affection in an appropriate manner.
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**Graphical representation of the stress level among Authoritarian and Authoritative style of parenting.**

![Stress Level Graph](image)

**TABLE -2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>9.72</td>
<td>p&gt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>20.01</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table reveals that the critical ratio is 9.72, which is significant at 0.01 levels. It is seen that there is significant difference between the self-esteem level among authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles. The mean score of the authoritarian parenting style is much greater than that of the authoritative parenting style. The t value 9.72 is highly significant. So there exists significant difference in the level of self esteem among authoritarian and authoritative style of parenting. Parent’s self esteem and their use of mastery oriented strategy were found to be associated with authoritative parenting. If the people of low self esteem are being kicked around in life then it may fail to confer the kind of
benefits with which it is usually associated. People with low self esteem are more likely to view their behaviour as being dependent on the situation while people with high self esteem have a greater capacity to engage in a wide range of coping behaviours.

**Graphical representation of the self esteem level among Authoritarian and Authoritative style of parenting**

![Graphical representation of the self esteem level among Authoritarian and Authoritative style of parenting](image)

**Table 3**

**Correlation coefficient of self-esteem and stress of the parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Self-esteem and stress</td>
<td>-0.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows correlation coefficient for the relationship between stress and self-esteem, which proves the fact that stress and self-esteem are inversely correlated for parents. Self-esteem is the level of regard or value we have for ourselves and it is a complex phenomenon. If stress level increases self-esteem comes down and if stress level decreases self-esteem boosts up. Therefore, an individual with high level of stress will develop a low self-esteem, which makes them to tag on authoritarian style of parenting and an individual with low level of stress develop will develop a high self-esteem, which
makes them to tag on authoritative style of parenting. People with low self-esteem are usually externally oriented and have less ability to cope with stress. A person with healthy self-esteem is internal oriented. It helps one to take care of them and assume responsibility.

**CONCLUSION**

In this study a negative association is found between self-esteem and stress among parents this gives the indication that parents should be counselled in such a way that it reduces the parental stress through which the self-esteem of the parents can be enhanced. High self-esteem among parents will induce confidence among parents to bring up their children in a better and effective manner. It is also found that there exists significant difference in self-esteem and stress among parent’s following authoritarian style and authoritative style of parenting. Some parents expect their children to be very smart irrespective of their children’s smartness, hence they enforce strict discipline and some parents over protect their children. By being over protective and over strict the children are not safeguarded but get spoilt.

**REFERENCES:**

Abouserie, R. (1994). Sources and levels of stress in relation to locus of control and self esteem in university students [Electronic version]. *Educational Psychology*, 14, 323


