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Parenting Styles, Self Compassion and Unstable Relationships in University Students

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This study sets to explore out the relationship between parenting styles, self-compassion, and unstable relationship in university students.

Methodology: Data was collected by using a cross-sectional research design, which successfully catches a population at a particular point in time. By using the purposive sampling technique, data was collected from selected university students who met the specific criteria, and willing to provide relevant detail regarding parenting styles, self-compassion, and unstable relationships. By using cross-sectional research design and purposive sampling, the study enhanced the quality of the collected data.

Findings: The study's finding indicated the strong positive correlation between an authoritative parenting style and self-compassion. Other results showed the positive correlation between authoritarian parenting style and self-compassion. The connection between unstable relationships and authoritarian parenting was weakly positive. There was a weak positive association between self-compassion and permissive parenting. There was a weak positive association between unstable relationships and permissive parenting. Regression analysis results indicate that parenting practices were a significant predictor of unstable relationships and a significant positive predictor of self-compassion. Findings suggest a positive relationship between parenting styles, self-compassion, and relationships in university students.

Conclusion: Study concluded that authoritative parenting style was positively associated with self-compassion in university students. University students' self-compassion, authoritarian, permissive parenting, and unstable relationship were not negative correlate. It was found that parenting styles positively predict unstable relationships; they also positively predict self-compassion.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Self-Compassion, Unstable Relationships, University Students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The transition to adulthood can be challenging for university students who are confronted with a variety of stressors and responsibilities (Fisher and Hood 1987). Various factors, including parenting styles and self-compassion, play crucial roles in shaping an individual's ability to maintain stable and healthy relationships. Adolescence is a pivotal time for mental health development, positively influenced by diverse forms of social support (Blakemore 2019). Such challenges during childhood and adolescence can lead to enduring psychological and social problems in adulthood. Cultural differences further complicate the impact of parenting styles, as behaviors considered typical in one culture may be perceived as atypical in another (Asgharpour and Kashani 2022). The effects of parenting styles on psychological well-being and personal development have been well-documented, highlighting that positive parenting can enhance academic performance and goal achievement (Spera 2005).

Parenting styles plays an important role in influencing cognitive, emotional, and social development (Stan 2012). They impact a child's psychological health and social abilities, influence how university students establish and maintain stable relationship in university students. (Tahir and Jabeen 2022).

Parenting styles can affect the university student's ability to form and sustain relationship. Self-compassion is a psychological construct which included self-kindness, self-love, self -happiness. Self-compassion impacted by parenting styles (Liu, et al. 2024).

Self-compassion is a strong predictor of mental health and well-being, demonstrated in the research. (Hall, Row et al. 2013). Individual experience lower level of anxiety, depression, and stress who have high level of self-compassion. They show resilience when face any kind of challenges (Baumgartner and Schneider 2023).

Individuals who have high level of self-compassion almost maintain healthier relationship, they offer compassion to others and understand others without being overwhelmed by their own emotions (Yip and Tong MW 2021). Self-compassion and self-esteem are associated, are not the same Self-esteem focusing on positively assessing oneself on achievements, abilities and traits while self-compassion focus on treating oneself with kindness and understanding, regardless of success or failure (Sowmya 2025).

An increasing amount of research indicates a connection between parenting styles and quality of adult relationships, including romantic ones (Brennan and Shaver 1995). Findings suggest that children raise with warm, supportive, and responsive parents are more likely to develop positive and stable relationships as adults (Zhou, Eisenberg et al. 2002). In contrast, those who experiencing harsh, critical, or neglectful parenting may face difficulties in forming strong, lasting and fulfilling connections with others (Reyome 2010).

1.1 Study Objective

The study explores the relationship between parenting styles, self-compassion, and unstable relationships in university students. By examining these connections, it aims to highlight how different parenting styles can significantly impact the emotional and social well-being of young adults. Additionally, research includes various demographic factor such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status, and their influence on these relationships. This exploration seeks to predict levels of self-compassion and the likelihood of unstable relationships based on the identified parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Understanding these dynamics can offer valuable insights into developmental process of university students and enhance our understanding of how parenting styles shapes emotional health and interpersonal relationships.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Parenting styles, specifically authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive play an important role in child development. Authoritative parenting style known for its warmth and responsiveness, is associated with positive outcomes like higher self-compassion (Khanum, Mushtaq et al. 2023). In contrast, authoritarian

parenting styles focuses on control and discipline, is linked to lower self-compassion and weak relationship outcomes (Zareian, Tajikzadeh et al. 2017). Additionally, permissive parenting styles tends to result in unstable relationships, often marked by frequent breakups (Cutrona 1996). Cultural factors also influence parenting styles, with variations noted between different ethnic groups. Study indicates that self-compassion mediates the relationship between parenting styles and relationship satisfaction, suggesting that fostering self-compassion through positive parenting practices can improve relationship quality among university students (Elmasri, Lawend et al. 2021).

A parallel study focused on young adults and found similar results, with participants who reported higher self-compassion attributing it to warm and accepting parenting styles. The researchers emphasized that these parenting attributes were crucial for developing self-compassion during young adulthood, particularly for women (Temel and Atalay 2020). Another study involving college students reinforced these findings, indicating that self-compassion is significantly influenced by parenting styles characterized by warmth and emotional support. Again, the relationship was notably stronger among female participants (Troll and Fingerman 1996).

One study focused on the relationship between parenting styles and relationship stability among young adults. Researchers aimed to determine how different parenting approaches could influence the stability of romantic relationships, particularly considering the role of attachment styles (Cho, Ong et al. 2022). Another study examined the relationship between parenting styles and relationship quality in a broader adult sample. Results indicated that parenting styles are indeed associated with relationship quality. Individuals with avoidant attachment styles typically reported having parents who were less emotionally supportive and more controlling, which correlated with lower relationship quality (Çelik and Keskin 2024)

The relationship between parenting styles and relationship quality was found to be stronger for women than for men (Tavassolie, Dudding et al. 2016). The findings highlight the critical role of warmth, emotional support, and responsiveness in parenting, reinforcing the idea that interventions aimed at improving these parenting aspects could enhance both attachment styles and relationship quality in adulthood (Shah, Kennedy et al. 2016).

Parenting Styles, Self-Compassion, and Relationship Quality in College Students, the study examined the relationship between parenting styles, self-compassion, and relationship quality in college students (Zareian, Tajikzadeh et al. 2017). The study revealed that self-compassion mediated the relationship between parenting styles and relationship quality. It indicated that more positive parenting styles were linked to higher level of self-compassion, which correlated with improved relationship quality (Chen, He et al. 2020).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1   Ethical Approval

The study received approval from the ethics committee of the psychology department at the university. All participants provided written informed consent after being informed about the study's objective.

3.2   Tool

The demographic information was collected from sample such as each student's age, gender socioeconomic status measured by their parent income scale. In addition, the students were asked about their employment status (if applicable). The perceived parenting styles are measured using this scale. Abdul Gafoor and Abidha Kurakkan developed the draft scale based on the theories of Baumrind. On the test, 38 questions are presented to each parent to be answered, and the adolescents are asked to rate each question on a scale from one to five. The instructor gave the student a scale with five points and asked them to choose one of the following statements: "very wrong," "mostly wrong," "sometimes right, sometimes wrong," "mostly right," and "very right." One to five was the final score. There are no negative

items. The scale's elements are split evenly between responsiveness and control. The Short Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) is a 12-item self-report questionnaire that measures self-compassion, which involves treating oneself with kindness, understanding, and acceptance, developed by Kristin Neff. It assesses three components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Respondents rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating the extent to which it applies to them. The scale's total scores range from 26 to 130, with higher scores indicating greater levels of self-compassion. The SCS provides a standardized and reliable measure to quantitatively assess and compare self-compassion levels across individuals or groups, contributing to the understanding of its impact on psychological well-being, coping, and relationships. The newly developed IDS was used for measuring interpersonal difficulties among university students developed by Saadia Saleem. IDS comprised 61 difficulties as experienced and expressed by university students. High score represented more interpersonal difficulties an individual experienced. This scale has 6 factors subscales. The sixth factor of the scale comprised 7 items denotes to inability to form stable and sustained relationships with others and inability to form close bonding with others. Examples are difficulty in making friends; quick breakups; feeling easily angry with others; always in competition with others; and so on.

3.3   Research Design

Data was collected by Cross-Sectional Research design.

3.4   Population and Sample

A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was used to find out the relationship between variables among university students. 200 students were included. Purposive sampling technique was used for data collection. The ages of the respondents ranged from around 18 to 24 years' old, sample were selected from the university. Those students who did not have parents were excluded. Students who lived apart from their parents were excluded.

3.5   Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed as a fundamental method to summarize and illustrate the characteristics of the sample and the various measurements utilized throughout the study. To assess the reliability of the data collection instruments, Cronbach's alpha was calculated, which evaluates the internal consistency of the scales. This step is vital for ensuring that the measurements are dependable and yield consistent results. To explore the relationship between the different research variables, correlation analyses were conducted. This statistical approach enabled researchers to identify and quantify the extent of the relationships between variables, offering insights into potential associations. To further investigate the predictive relationships among the study variables, regression analyses were performed. This method allowed researchers to examine how effectively specific independent variables could predict the outcomes of dependent variables, thereby deepening the understanding of data dynamics. These statistical techniques provided the solid framework for an analysing the collected data and drawing meaningful conclusions from the results.

4. RESULTS

The results section will include a number of statistical analyses to help reach the study's goals. The characteristics of the sample and the measurements utilized in the study were summarized using descriptive statistics. The instruments' internal consistencies were calculated using alpha reliabilities. Correlations were used to look at the connections between the research variables. To investigate the prediction of the study variables, regression analysis was performed. The SPSS-22 edition was used to calculate all the above-mentioned statistics. It was determined whether there was an effect of parenting styles between the relationship of self-compassion and unstable relationship in university students.

Table 1: *Demographics Characteristics of the Sample*

Variables	*f*	%
Gender		
Males	85	42.3
Females	116	57.7
Family system		
Nuclear	100	49.8
Joint	101	50.2
Socio economic status		
Lower middle class	52	25.9
Middle class	85	42.3
Upper Middle Class	44	21.9
Upper Class	20	10.0
Are your parents alive?		
Yes	200	99.5
No	1	.5

Table 1 indicates the sample characteristics of our sample. It shows that less than half of the respondents were males (42.3%) and other half were females (57.7%) based on gender representation. More than half (50.2) of the respondents were living in the joint families and (49.8%) of them were living in the nuclear families. It shows that 25.9% respondents were lower middle class, 42.3% of the respondents were middle class, 21.9% of the respondents were upper middle class and 10.0% of the respondents were upper class. It shows that 99.5% of the respondent's parents were alive and .5% of respondent's parents were dead.

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, a measure of reliability, was used to calculate the internal consistency of the study's measures. Correlations between scales and their corresponding subscales were generated to establish the initial relationship patterns of the research variables. The tables below present the psychometric characteristics of the study variables.

Table 2: *Psychometric Properties of Scales Used for Study Variables*

Scale	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's a
Parenting Styles	203.00	32.90	132-294	.893
Self-Compassion	32.62	5.6	20-50	.633
Unstable relationship	19.30	3.8	11-29	.75

Table 2 displayed the descriptive statistics and the scales alpha reliability coefficient for the study variables. Parenting style scale (PSS) was used for measuring perceived parenting styles Mother, response with an alpha coefficient of .893. Short self-compassions scale was used to measure the worthiness of self with an alpha coefficient of .633. Unstable relationship scale was used to measure the relationships in students with an alpha coefficient of .75.

To find the patterns of relationship between the researched variables, zero order bivariate correlations were computed in the current study. Table 3 displays the pattern of relationship between the variables. Most of the variables have strong correlation, which indicates relationships.

Table 3: *Relationship between Study Variables*

Variables	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
1. **Authorita_Par**	.82**		.66**	.81**	.55**
2. **Authori_Par**	-	-	.78**	.65**	.29**
3. **Permis_Pare**	-	-	-	.43**	.19**
4. **T_SC**	-	-	-	-	.48
5. **T_UR**					-

Findings of table 3 indicate the relationship between authoritative, authoritarian, permissive parenting styles, self-compassion and unstable relationships. It shows that the results of correlation between authoritative parenting style and self-compassion is significant positive because (p= .000, r = .81). It also shows that there is a strong positive correlation between authoritarian parenting style and self-compassion because (p= .000, r = 0.65). It also shows that there is a weak positive correlation between authoritarian parenting style and unstable relationship because (p=.000, r =.029). Table shows that there is a weak positive correlation between Permissive parenting and self-compassion because (p= .000, r = 0.43). Table shows that there is a weak positive correlation between Permissive parenting style and unstable relationship because (p= .000, r = 0.19).

The current research has identified possible variables that may predict self-compassion and unstable relationships of students. Multiple Regression is used in the present study to examine the predictive significance of those variables. The link between a dependent variable and one independent variable was examined using the regression estimation (F-test, R2, and Beta values).

Table 4: *Predictive Relationship between Study variables*

Variables	B	95% Cl		SE	B	R²	ΔR²
		LL	UL				
Step 1							
Constant	4.288	1.387	7.070	1.411			
Parenting Styles	.140	.126	.154	.007	.817	.68	.68
Step 2							
Constant	6.354	3.542	9.166	1.426			
Parenting Styles	.064	.50	.077	.007	.546	.29	.29

Table 4 indicates the predictive relationship between parenting styles, self-compassion and unstable relationships. Results shows that model 1 is a significant positive predictor of self-compassion (β=.817, p<.05) that explains 81.7% of variance in self-compassion. Model 2 is also a significant predictor of unstable relationship (β=.546, p<.05) that explains 54.6% variance in unstable relationships.

5. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the intricate relationships among parenting styles, self-compassion, and unstable relationships in university students. Using various self-reported measures, such as the Short Self Compassion Scale, the Scale of Parenting Styles, and the Unstable Relationship Scale, the research offered important insights into how different parenting methods affect individuals self-image and interpersonal relationships. The analysis found a strong positive correlation (p=.000, r= .81) between authoritative parenting styles and self-compassion. This finding is consistent with existing research suggesting that students who view their parents as authoritative tend to have higher level of self-compassion (Doinita and Maria 2015). Conversely, findings related to authoritarian parenting presented a nuanced perspective. While some studies suggest that authoritarian parenting correlates with lower self-compassion due to its controlling nature, this research indicated a strong positive correlation (p= .000, r = 0.65) between authoritarian warmth and self-compassion. Individuals with warm, yet authoritative parents exhibited higher levels of self-compassion, challenging the notion that strict parenting solely leads to negative outcomes (Gouveia, Carona et al. 2016). The study also examined permissive parenting, noting a weak positive correlation (p= .000, r = 0.43) with self-compassion. Surprisingly, it suggested that children raised in permissive environments might develop higher levels of compassion, potentially due to their experiences of negative treatment. Findings of regression analysis shows that parenting styles were significant positive predictor of self-compassion (β=.817, p<.05) and parenting styles were also a significant predictor of unstable relationship (β=.546, p<.05). The results of the study showed a positive

relationship between parenting style, self-compassion, and unstable relationship among university students. The study has practical implications. This finding contrast with previous research indicating that permissive parenting may lead to instability and low self-confidence in children.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between parenting styles, self-compassion, and social relationships among university students. Authoritative parenting style was positively associated with self-compassion in university students. Notably, university students' self-compassion and unstable relationships were not negatively correlated with authoritarian or permissive parenting styles. While parenting styles were found to positively predict unstable relationships, they were also found to positively predict self-compassion, highlighting the multifaceted impact of parenting on emotional well-being.

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