

Relationship between Personality and Parenting Styles

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ABSTRACT

Parental personality traits play an important role in determining parenting behaviors. This paper intends to critically analyze the relationship between parental personality and parenting behavior. It explores the big five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness) and consequent parenting behaviors (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive). With regard to parenting styles, agreeable type individuals are most probable to be authoritative parents, which is also considered as the most favorable and balanced parenting style. Neuroticism and low conscientiousness types are associated with authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. Extraversion and openness did not relate to any general parenting style. Gender studies revealed that women are more likely to adopt authoritative style of parenting when compared to men but there are no significant differences seen in authoritarian or permissive parenting styles.

Keywords: Parenting style, Parenting dimensions, Personality, Personality Traits

Parenting style can be defined as a universal behavior that a parent follows in order to create an atmosphere for the rearing of a child (Darling & Steinberg, 1993)¹. Parenting styles play a key role in determining psychological wellbeing of both children and parents and influences the overall personality of the child (Richter, Eisemann, & Richter, 2000)².

There are mainly 3 parenting styles

- i. Authoritarian Style
- ii. Authoritative Style
- iii. Permissive Style (Baumrind, 1966)³.

Another type was added later on as the Neglectful type/ Uninvolved type (Maccoby & Martin, 1983)⁴.

The authoritarian parents are traditional, strict and rule-abiding. They are rigid, assertive and sometimes even harsh in nature, making them predictably controlling (Stattin & Kerr, 2000)⁵. Authoritative parents have their children in an egalitarian atmosphere, where there is a balance of strict control and support. Permissive parents are ones who lack the strict

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Received: October 15, 2022; Revision Received: February 20, 2023; Accepted: February 23, 2023

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boundaries set in an Authoritarian household and give the children more leeway to function. They have barely any ground rules set in the family. Authoritative Style of parenting is considered as the "ideal" standard for parenting among all the other styles (Baumrind, 1966)³.

There are many ways to classify the types of personality traits but in this study the NEO 5 or the 'Big Five' personality traits (e.g., Costa & McCrae)⁶ are taken into account for studying the relationship between personality and parenting. The five dimensions of personality are commonly called

- Extraversion
- Conscientiousness
- Agreeableness
- Emotional stability
- Openness

Extraversion embodies the regularity and quality of interpersonal connections, the ability to feel joy, the level of activity, and the nature of seeking constant stimulation. Conscientious people are best described by their ability to be obedient, meticulous, perseverant, prompt, and orderly. Agreeable people are kind, friendly, complying, and trusting. Emotional stability is the antithesis of neuroticism and hence these individuals are composed, impassive, and complacent, whereas neurotic people are anxious, irritable, apprehensive, disheartened, and self-doubting. Lastly, openness comprises traits such as flexibility, imagination, and novelty (Costa & McCrae, 1992)⁶.

This paper is an attempt to find the correlation between the parenting styles and personality traits of the parent on the basis of 3 parenting styles: Authoritarian, Authoritative and Permissive; and 5 personality traits: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness; with gender differences between these variables.

REVIEW OF OBSERVATIONS OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Parental personality characteristics are assumed to play a major role in parenting styles/behaviors, there was a study conducted to observe the relation between parental personality and parenting style among 688 Dutch parents of teenagers in the SMILE research study. The study measured the personality characteristics using the Big Five questionnaire and resulting parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, uninvolved and indulgent) from scores on the underlying dimensions of supportive and strict parenting. It was seen that the two aspects of personality showing interpersonal interactions (agreeableness and extraversion) were related to supportive parenting. Emotional stability was linked with lower strict control. The study also showed that extraverted, agreeable, and less emotionally stable individuals were most likely to be authoritative parents. Conscientiousness and openness did not speak about to general parenting, but might be connected with more content-specific acts of parenting (M.E.Huvera, Otten, Vriessa, & C.M.E.Engelsb, 2010)⁷.

A study was designed to track the possibility that atypical parenting effects a diathesis to depression by inducing a vulnerable cognitive approach rather than by disposing directly to depression. Probable mediating personality style variables were calculated in detail in a study of 123 depressed participants who assessed and scored their parents on the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI), as well as completing a state depression and several pertinent

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personality measures. Low self-worth and a linked dysfunctional cognitive approach were the personality traits most clearly linked with PBI results, with links persisting after inspecting out state levels of depression. Failure to find associations between PBI scores and depression levels limited explication of the diathesis stress model (Parker, 1993)⁸.

Another study explored relations between maternal personality traits, child temperament characteristics, and parenting styles connected to the display and regulation of emotions. Predominantly, they studied the moderating role of child temperament in the association between maternal personality (neuroticism, agreeableness) and parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian, and overprotective). Participants were the mothers of elementary children. The results showed that the relation between maternal neuroticism and overprotective parenting style increased among parents of shyer children. Also, maternal agreeableness was strongly and negatively associated with the use of a harsh/coercive parenting method among parents of more emotionally-deregulated children (Coplan, Reichel, & Rowan, 2009)⁹.

In a study conducted to compare the personality profiles of adolescent males with and without Internet addiction disorder (IAD), and to establish if IAD is linked with specific parental rearing behaviors. A sum of 304 participants finished three measures and it revealed moderately higher mean scores for all of the nine sub-areas, and significantly higher scores for obsessive-compulsive traits, interpersonal empathy, depression, anxiety, aggression, and paranoid traits. Adolescents with IAD constantly and consistently rated parental rearing behaviors as being over-intrusive, punitive, and lacking in responsiveness. These findings suggest that the influences of parenting style and family function are integral factors in the development of Internet addiction (Xiuqin, et al., 2010)¹⁰.

A research was conducted to explore the relationships between educational practices of parents and their estimated impact on the makeup of the child's personality and his/her moral outlook. The research method used was questionnaire. The research sample were students aged 12 to 17. The results show that an adolescent evaluates him/herself intensely and evaluates him/herself from a number of perspectives, has a highly critical attitude towards the educational approach of their parents and its impact on themselves. The respondents' outlooks of solving problems have brought information about and proof of the fact that adolescents express themselves quite independently and freely, regardless of the cost (Loudová & Lašek, 2015)¹¹.

The two primary objectives of another study were to firstly investigate the mothers' and fathers' reports of their own as well as their partner's parenting styles, and secondly assess how mothers' and fathers' parenting styles uniquely and jointly affected toddlers' externalizing, internalizing, and adaptive behaviors. 59 fathers and mothers separately completed the Parenting Styles and Dimension Questionnaire given by Robinson et al (2001) and the Behavior Assessment Scale by Reynolds & Kamphaus (2004). The parents' self-reports showed that their parenting styles were positively correlated with each other for all three parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive). Comparisons between parents' information of their partner's styles with that of the partner's self-reports were positively correlated for all three parenting styles. Findings discovered mothers' and fathers' self-reported parenting styles explained 44% of the discrepancy in youngsters' externalizing behaviors. It was observed that particularly permissive parenting by mothers and authoritarian parenting by fathers exclusively and considerably predicted toddlers' externalizing behaviors, while authoritative paternal parenting was predictive of adaptive behaviors (Rinaldia & Howeb, 2012)¹².

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In a study conducted to study the role of authoritative parenting style and other family variables in adolescents' indulging in gateway drugs (smoking and drinking). The sample consisted of Hungarian youth and regression analyses established that authoritative parenting style (mainly responsiveness) and identifying positively with parents may act as a protective factor, whereas negative family exchanges may operate as a risk factor. These relationships are predominantly important in case of monthly occurrence of drinking and in cooperation lifetime and existing prevalence of smoking (F.Piko & Á.Balázs, 2011)¹³.

A study investigated the relationship between parenting style and social support on psychological well-being. The sample consist of 398 female students in standard two from a public high school in Tehran. The participants completed measures of Baumrind's parenting style questionnaire (1991), Vaux's social support inventory (1988) and Ryff's psychological well-being scale (1998). The findings revealed that authoritarian and permissive parenting style showed significantly negative relationship with psychological wellbeing and social support showed significantly positive relationship with psychological well-being, however, although authoritative parenting style don't predict psychological well-being (Lavasani, Borhanzadeh, Afzali, & Hejazi, 2011)¹⁴.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to find the correlation between the parental personality and their parenting styles and also to find out whether there is significant difference in the parenting styles between the male and female groups. The study correlated each of the 3 parenting styles to the five personality traits of the subjects.

Extraversion seems to be connected with a parenting style that shows high levels of support and control i.e., authoritative parenting (Belsky & Barends, 2002)¹⁵. However, a different study among parents of grown-up twins failed to find such a connection (Kendler, Sham, & MacLean, 1997)¹⁶. Another research where the parents of children under the age of 8 were studied and the result found positive correlation between extraversion and positive support (Losoya, Callor, Rowe, & Goldsmith, 1997)¹⁷. It was also found that conscientiousness was associated to superior levels of supportive parenting and less destructive control.

Likewise, it was established that conscientious mothers of children have been found to be more amicable (Clark, Kochanska, & Ready, 2000)¹⁸. Even though agreeableness has not frequently been the topic of study, one would instinctively conclude that agreeable people are more approachable and compassionate parents (Belsky & Barends, 2002)¹⁵. Some studies have also found agreeableness to certainly be linked with positive support and not with pessimistic, controlling parenting. Furthermore, non-agreeableness along with adaptive parenting was found to be one aspect of authoritative parenting (Kochanska, Clark, & Goldman, 1997)¹⁹.

By distinction, an additional study (Prinz et al., 2004)²⁰ found higher levels of parental amicability to be linked with intimidation, a crucial part of parenting that is identified to be unproductive for eliciting long-lasting positive behavior from children.

Neuroticism, which is the opposite of emotional equilibrium, was the dimension that received more interest, perhaps because neuroticism is considered to be most predictive of personality and anxious/neurotic parents are thought to be less capable or capable of exerting dependable parenting, which in an ideal case is authoritative parenting (Kochanska et al., 1997)¹⁹. It was found that neuroticism was related to less parental affection (Kendler

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et al., 1997)¹⁹. Also, lesser emotional stability is connected with more strict control (Prinz et al., 2004)²⁰.

Openness and parental support have been said to correspond (Clark et al., 2000)¹⁸(Losoya et al., 1997)¹⁷. Majority of studies has looked into the influence of personality on interpersonal relationships be it friendships or intimate relationships, but few studies has focused on how personality may provide an outline for the style of parenting adopted (Caspi et al., 2005)²¹.

Majority of the studies conducted to explore the connection between personality and parenting focused on mothers of infants and young children rather than on teenagers. Yet, it is vital to concentrate on adolescence, because this is the period of time that rebellious and hazardous behaviors develop. Also, it has been revealed that parents are still significant socializing agents, for example through parenting style. Much of the information in this field is based on studies done on the relationship between parental psychopathology, such as depression, and parenting styles (Downey & Coyne, 1990)²².

Parenting styles may be passed on inter-generationally as numerous studies show (Ertem, Leventhal, & Dobbs, 2000)²³, that parents who emotionally and physically abuse their children were probably abused in their childhood as well, making it a vicious cycle of abuse (Dixon, Browne, & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005)²⁴.

There are also numerous studies wherein it is proved that parenting styles are genetically passed on to some degree. A few researchers show even a direct transfer of parenting styles from the parent to the child. A research was conducted wherein mothers of children with conduct issues and the mothers of children with normal behavior and control were studied. It was found that the mothers of the children with the conduct disorders also had childhood experiences of having some kind of behavioral issues. It was seen that these experiences were somehow transferred to the children and affected their behavior indirectly through their parenting styles (Jefferis & Oliver, 2006)²⁵.

Although there is adequate amount of research that shows that parenting styles are generationally transmitted, it cannot be concluded decisively due to the fact that there are various other factors that come into play in childrearing.

The development of the child also depends on the manner of parenting style that the parent opts for (Collins et al., 2000)²⁶. Among all styles of parenting, Authoritative parenting was found to be the most ideal type. Teenagers raised in an authoritative atmosphere are less likely to indulge in drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana and also have healthier eating habits than other teenagers (Henriksen, & Foshee, 1998)²⁷. They also have better mental health, psychosocial development, academic performance and overall development of the personality. They also tend to show less antisocial behavior, and smaller amount of somatic disorders (Steinberg et al., 1994)²⁸.

Since it has been established that parenting style affects the development of the child, it can also be said that the characteristics or traits of the parent as an individual could also affect the development of the child (Belsky & Barends, 2002)¹⁵. A speculative model by Belsky aimed to find the factors that determine the parenting style adopted by the parent. It said that there were three main factors that determined it, namely, the child's characteristics as an individual, the environment around them and finally, the parent's personality itself. He also stressed that of all the three factors, the parent's personality played the most important role

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in the development of their parenting style due to the fact that, their personality is affected by experiences of their past (childhood, adolescence and adulthood).

Studies done on parent's personality affecting their parenting style are not as many as one would think. This should not be the case as it can be said that personality traits influence certain aspects of parenting, such as the quality of marriage, the individual's career, and social support (Belsky & Barends, 2002)¹⁵. This research, therefore, mainly focuses on how the personality of the person determines the parenting style that they are likely to adopt.

A few investigators have alluded to parenting styles being influenced by certain personality traits. For example, have stated that people who experience anxiety and has high defensiveness are more liable to rate their interactions with their parents more positively. Research has established that maternal affection toward the child can be predicted by certain personality traits such as high optimism and wit, and low indirect hostility and doubt and that paternal affection can be predicted by high optimism, wit, and self-directedness and low indirect hostility.

Some have even reported that parental over-protectiveness was linked with low honesty and openness whereas parental neglect/rejection was linked with neuroticism. Since it is established that personality is a possible determinant of parenting styles and also that parenting style has an impact on the personality of the individual as well as the child, it is safe to say that personality plays an important role in also transferring parenting styles through generations, since personality is the product of one's heredity as well as their environment.

Personality too can be transferred from generation to generation as is mentioned above. A considerable number of studies have been published on the influence of environment in the earlier development of personality. It includes factors like divorce of the parent/parental separation (e.g., Kendler et al. 1993)¹⁶, rearing style (e.g., Benjaminsen et al. 1984)³⁰, physical, mental and emotional abuse of the child (e.g., Kitamura and Fujihara 2003)³¹, and others.

The repercussions of parenting styles on the child's personality may differ according to the child's age as shown in various studies that the genetic factors do have an effect on the child's personality, whereas in the adult personality, genetics play a very small role (Plomin and Nesselroade 1990)³². Nevertheless, these researches are typically based in a twin sample population and very few studies are based on non-twin populations.

Past research into the associations between parents' personalities and their parenting styles has discovered that there are certain patterns, and there is experimental evidence for these associations for each one of the five dimensions.

Correlation analysis

Correlational analysis was used to study the relationship between parent personality and parenting styles. Since the assumptions for normality were not met by the sample, Spearman rank correlation, a non-parametric test was used.

There was a significant positive correlation between Agreeableness and Authoritative style of parenting($r=.291$). A significant positive correlation was found between Neuroticism and Authoritative parenting style($r=.214$) and Permissive parenting style($r=.227$).

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There was a significant negative correlation between Agreeableness and Authoritarian parenting style ($r = -.379$). A significant negative correlation was found between Conscientiousness and Authoritarian style of parenting ($r = -.232$) and Permissive style of parenting ($r = -.361$).

Gender Differences

To find out whether there were any significant differences in the parenting styles between the male and female groups a T-test was done. There was significant mean difference between males and females in Authoritative parenting style, with women having higher means than men, showing that it is their preferred style of parenting. There were no significant mean differences seen in Authoritarian and Permissive parenting styles.

As authoritative parenting has shown to have positive effects on children's development (e.g., Jackson et al., 1998)²⁷, it is important to inspect factors relating to this parenting style. Results showed that one aspect of parent's personality, namely 'agreeableness' was connected to levels of supportiveness, whereas 'neuroticism' was linked to strict control. Individuals who scored high on Agreeableness were most likely to be authoritative parents.

In reference to conscientiousness, it has a negative correlation with both authoritarian as well as permissive parenting styles. As such, conscientiousness did not, however, directly relate to authoritative style in our sample of parents.

Additionally, agreeable parents were more accommodating and less likely to employ authoritarian or uninvolved parenting than in authoritative parenting. This supports the thought of agreeable persons as more pleasant parents (Kochanska et al., 2000)¹⁸ (Losoya et al., 1997)¹⁷. Lastly, openness and extraversion were not related to parenting dimensions or styles accounted for in the study in any significant way.

Parental support is linked with the agreeableness. Given that those high on these traits generally are more socially adept, they may also be more sociable/affable with respect to their children, and more accommodating as a result. People with high scores on agreeableness have more precise set of schemas for management of relationships in general, and these people also appear to have parenting schemas, which are generally considered sufficient. It should be also be made note of that what is adequate for one child is not necessarily favorable for another. What constitutes satisfactory parenting is situational and ethnically determined and depends on children's requirements.

Likewise, parents who are more likely to adopt authoritarian style of parenting were found to be associated with neuroticism. As it is known that neurotic individuals are unstable and are prone to personal distress and overall discontent and thus these parents might vent their negative feelings out on their children by ways of amplified strict control. Another likelihood is related to the thoughts and feelings of inadequacy that neurotic individuals experience (Costa & McCrae, 1992)⁶. If neurotic individuals feel inadequate as parents, exerting strict control over their children could be a way of making up for the insecurity.

CONCLUSION

The limitations observed are that the personalities and parenting styles that were chosen treat the dimensions very generally. There are other types of parenting styles and personality measures. Further studies can focus on sub-categories and dimensions that bring about the general dimensions. A third dimension of parenting style has recently been put

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forth called as uninvolved parenting, which was not taken into consideration in this. It is definitely believable that personality traits also correlate to this added parenting dimension. There could also have been a relationship between some dimensions within the study that did not show up in the results of this study and can be further explored with a different sample population in other cultures.

Also, it is essential to consider the biological basis for personality, which have been shown to underlie the stability of one's personality and therefore confirming the suggestion of personality precedes parenting.

It can be concluded that agreeable parents were most likely to display the favorable authoritative parenting style. Neuroticism and lack of conscientiousness can be linked with certain levels of strict control/ authoritarian and permissive parenting.

Women seem to adapt an authoritative style of parenting when compared to men. There were no gender differences seen in the authoritarian or permissive parenting styles. By and large, the outcome of these observations supports the proposal that parenting styles are partly, if not completely, determined by the personalities of the parents.

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Ramesh, R. & Ramana, GV (2023). Relationship between Personality and Parenting Styles. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(1), 935-943. DIP:18.01.095.20231101, DOI:10.25215/1101.095