Research Paper

Exploring the Experiences of Young Adults with Sociotropy: A Qualitative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

Scholars from a variety of schools of thought have attempted to understand the personality traits that precipitate and mediate depression and other maladaptive behavioural patterns and one of these traits is sociotropy, coined by Beck (1983). Therefore, the present study aims to explore the experiences of young adults with sociotropy using a qualitative methodology. The data from 12 in-depth interviews was analysed and presented in the article from participants belonging to the age group of 18-25 years including both males and females having different birth orders (firstborns and secondborns), chosen through convenient sampling who were screened for sociotropy and then shortlisted for interviews. There exist differences between the way sociotropic traits manifest in males and females and different birth orders in terms of involvement in decision-making, affiliative processes and need for feedback. It was also found that sociotropy can be traced back to aspects of parental authoritarianism and overprotection, and lack of emotional availability of the father. There were also perceived differences in the way participants from different birth orders sought validation from their parents and the expectations they had in terms of parents' responses to negative emotional expressions. The study has implications for parental counselling and the designing of sibling intervention programs.

Keywords: Birth Order, Perceived Parenting, Qualitative Methodology, Sociotropy, Young Adults

Scholars from different schools of thought have examined personality patterns that can precipitate and mediate depression. One such developmental theory by Beck et al. (1983), originating from a cognitive perspective, suggested that two relatively stable personality characteristics i.e., sociotropy and autonomy predispose individuals' cognitive distortions of and exaggerated emotional responses to environmental events. Sociotropy (social dependency) is described as an individual's engagement in positive interchange with others (p. 272). Highly sociotropic individuals tend to be dependent on others for social feedback gratification and support, are excessively preoccupied with the possibility of disapproval from others and act in ways that contribute to the maintenance and sustenance of relationships. According to Blatt (1974), dependency can be traced back to one's parenting but Beck et al. (1983; Beck & Haigh, 2014) offered no evidence for parenting practices that

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contribute to the sociotropic personality style. The importance of family dynamics, especially parenting practices in the development of a child's personality, necessitates understanding parenting in the context of different birth orders that may turn out to be contributors to different personality characteristics from the view of Alfred Adler. Even though he did not assert much about sociotropic personality development, scholars have reported that as far as dependency, relatedness, and desirability of the company are concerned, firstborn women are more vulnerable (Dittes, 1961; Schachter, 1964). Moreover, gender has also been linked with sociotropy, and dependency as it has been well documented in the feminist literature that females tend to primarily strive for relatedness and men have more inclination towards individualism (Gilbert, 1987). Empirical evidence also suggests that women tend to be more interpersonally dependent than men (Sanathara et al., 2003).

Links have also been found between dependency and sociotropy (Beck et al., 1990; Robins et al., 1994) and sociotropy is associated with fears of abandonment, desires to maintain close ties to caregivers and authority figures, engagement in help-seeking behaviours and portraying pleasing behaviours (Huprich et al., 2013; Robins et al. 1994). There is also active avoidance of disapproval from close ones and high investment in relationships (Gorski & Young 2002) while being sensitive to received feedback, others' verbal and nonverbal cues and perceived negative reactions (Bornstein, 1998; Cikara & Girgus 2010; Dasch et al. 2008; Huprich et al., 2013).

Tracing sociotropic traits to childhood is linked to infant-caregiver relationships and differences in parenting styles (Bhogle, 1983; Finney, 1961). Supporting this view, McCranie and Bass (1984) suggested a significant relationship between dependence and the mother's behaviour, primarily strict control, conformity, and dominance, while the father's child-rearing practices were insignificant. Moreover, both parental overprotectiveness and parental authoritarianism are associated with increased dependence in young adults (Bhogle, 1983; Ojha & Singh, 1988; Parker & Lipscombe, 1980; Vaillant, 1980) as they have low levels of trust and involvement with their kids, forbid open dialogue, and exercise tight control (McCoby, 1983). Krampe (2009) investigated the father-child relationships and suggested that affective, cognitive and physical dimensions contribute to the child's perceptions of the paternal bond and emotional closeness involves interpersonal elements of a sense of trust, the feeling of being accepted, favourably received, and welcome; and the experience of intimacy. In terms of family dynamics, evidence points to the greater vulnerability among the firstborns of both sexes to conform to social pressure, higher desirability of others' company among firstborn women in comparison to later-born women and being more responsive to others' suggestions (Dittes, 1961; Schachter, 1964; Staples & Walters, 1961). However, compelling evidence has been offered by Warren (1966) which suggests that firstborn males tend to conform more to social pressure than later-born males.

In the existing literature gender has been found to be one of the contributing factors to dependency and women being more dependent than men (Avcı Çayir & Kalkan, 2018; Bornstein, 1992). In terms of decision-making, females are more interpersonally oriented, especially in career decisions (Phillips et al., 1984) and males are self-reliant, individualistically inclined, logical and independent (Gilligan, 1982; Tannen, 1991).

While the existing literature is suggestive of the link between sociotropy and depression (Beck et al., 1983, Blatt, 1974) and other maladaptive outcomes, research is yet to explore the construct of sociotropy from a qualitative lens and its origins in parenting practices which go beyond parental authoritarianism and overprotectiveness. Past literature focusing

on dependency and not on sociotropy points paves the way for understanding the experiences of an individual with sociotropy and engaging in the resolution of maladaptive outcomes linked to it. The existing gap in the literature also points to the inclusion of Adlerian birth order as a demographic variable in understanding dependency traits and not being explored in the context of parenting practices while exploring the roots of sociotropy. No research investigated the link between parenting, birth order, and sociotropy together. Clearly, in terms of future research, extending the existing literature to explore the three dimensions of parenting, birth order, and sociotropy would be useful in having a comprehensive understanding of the origins of sociotropy.

Through the present study, the manifestation of these traits in males and females will also be explored which hasn't been studied widely by previous researchers in the area. These notions make the present study significant as its findings could be used by clinicians who are trained in the area of child psychology, family therapy or parental counselling to guide parents in terms of adopting more adaptive parenting styles. Moreover, the study is extremely relevant as it is important to identify the extent to which factors relevant to collectivistic cultures determine conditions wherein gender differences in sociotropy can be found.

With this background, the present study aims to explore the experiences of young adults with sociotropy through the following objectives:
- To explore if there is a contribution of parenting practices in the development of sociotropic traits.
- To explore if perceived parenting practices differ in terms of order of birth in the family.
- To understand how the sociotropic traits manifest differently in males and females.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
The present study is based on a phenomenological approach of qualitative methodology and data was collected from participants residing in India through semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of sociotropy.

Participants and procedure
For the present study, 25-30 participants between the age group of 18-25 years were screened for sociotropic traits through convenience and purposive sampling. 12 participants who scored more than 60% on the screening tool were chosen for the in-depth interview. Participants who are between the age range, with an elder or younger sibling, answered yes to at least 60% of the screening questions, have a nuclear family setup, and have lived with their parents till 18 years of age were included in the study. Participants who are middle or single children, have experienced parental divorce, have a diagnosis of any mental health conditions, and did not stay with their parents till 18 years of age were excluded from the study.

For the process, a screening tool was developed based on the existing definitions of sociotropy and the Sociotropy-Autonomy developed by Beck et al. (1983) which was validated by two subject matter experts. Post-screening of 30 participants, 12 participants were chosen for the interview. Sociodemographic details were obtained through a Google form, another section of which included the screening questions to be answered with "yes"

or no". In-depth interviews were scheduled with the shortlisted participants based on their availability over online mediums over one month.

Ethical Statement

The present research was conducted with meticulous adherence to ethical considerations. Firstly, the participants were apprised of their voluntary participation and consent was taken before subjecting them to the sociotropy screening. In addition, consent was also taken for the audio recording subsequent to providing a comprehensive briefing about study's nature and scope. Notably, no form of deception was practiced throughout the research process. Following the completion of the study, all the participants were debriefed about the study and were furnished with copies of transcripts for member checks to safeguard against any unethical practice. To ensure confidentiality, both the audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored on the researcher's password-protected laptop, access to which was strictly restricted to the researcher and the supervisor.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was done using the Thematic network analysis model (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The transcripts were prepared and participants' verbatims were coded using in-vivo and basic coding. After grouping the common codes, they were organized into an umbrella term known as themes, corresponding to the research questions and objectives. To ensure the trustworthiness of the interview guide and the data, the interview schedule as well as the screening questions were validated by two qualitative research experts and two subject matter experts. The validation process also involved member checks with each participant once the transcripts were prepared.

Results

Global theme	Organising theme	Basic theme	
1. Sociotropic Encounters in Past and Present		1.1.1.	Collaborative Decision Engagement
		1.1.2.	Conformity
		1.1.3.	Approval and Validation
	1.2. Subjective parental perceptions	1.2.1.	Parental Emotional Availability
		1.2.2.	Parental Expectations
		1.2.3.	Validation Seeking Tactics
		1.2.4.	Expression of Negative Emotions
	1.3. Birth order effects	1.3.1.	Interpersonal Competitiveness
		1.3.2.	Perceived Parenting Differences
		1.3.3.	Sibling's Emotional Expression
		1.3.4.	Moving Beyond Comparison

1.   Sociotropic Encounters in Past and Present
1.1.   Interpersonal Influences on Sociotropy
1.1.1.   Collaborative Decision Engagement. Even though most of the firstborn participants prefer independent decision-making in most situations, they reported their parents' involvement in times of career-related or academics-related decision-making. However, in terms of decisions related to social aspects, they prioritize others' views and opinions to maintain balance and peace in the relationship.

"*I feel mostly when I look at my decisions that I've taken till now in my life about, let's say, my career or the professional life, then I'd say that, yeah, mostly I have considered the opinions of let's say, my family, whereas if it comes to more of, like, social decision making in terms of, let's say, outings or saying yes to a party invitation or things like that, that time I feel I'm somebody who gets more swayed by things that others around me might say*" (P6, personal communication, 2023)

All second-born participants mostly turn to experienced people when they experience an ambivalence by asking them questions about the righteousness of a decision. However, they denied having a need to always agree with others when opinions are given. The male participants in contrast, reported being driven by logic in terms of taking decisions. They turn to others for informational support and deny requiring advice from them in terms of social decisions.

"*So it's mostly informational, information related opinions and advice that you require, the emotional part it's more over one's personal feelings are more personal…there is nothing informational in that scenario*" (P3, personal communication, 2023).

1.1.2. Conformity. It was reported by first born females that saying so to others brings in a lot of fear of disappointment and abandonment in addition to putting them in an awkward position. They also expressed a fear of lack of reciprocation of the effort they extended to others.

"*I just feel it puts me in a very awkward position. Like if I ever have to ask something from them, they would also say no or it's also like they would get upset about it. They would feel bad about it, disappointed in me. They would not talk to me*" (P5, personal communication, 2023).

A common trend was observed in both the second born females and all males in terms of being driven by a fear of offending others and eventually hurting their sentiments. They reported being concerned about the reciprocity part, namely about turning down offers of assistance and about others keeping them in their bad books.

1.1.3. Approval and Validation. When faced with a task that lacks clarity in terms of academics or work, first-born females look for validation which helps them to become more insightful and reduce likelihood of errors.

"*I'd say now it's more to do with me realizing…now validation, I seek in context where I know that I have limited knowledge about the topic, or I know where I might not be capable enough of making a decision myself.*" (P7, personal communication, 2023).

Similarly, for the purpose of growth and creativity, males seek approval and validation in academic related aspects which encourages them to do better.

Contrasting to both firstborn females and males, the majority of second-born participants reported preferring a self-based working style instead of seeking external validation in terms of academics or work.

"*No, when it comes to my work, especially work, I am very independent, because I believe that I can figure out my work on my own*" (P9, personal communication, 2023).

1.2.   Subjective Parental Perceptions
1.2.1.   Parental Emotional Availability. The female firstborns expressed a sense of disconnection from their parents about their emotional upbringing, highlighting in particular the low emotional availability of the fathers. They also described their parents as being stern, authoritarian, and closely monitoring them. Their lack of free space to share at home and the father's lack of availability were two reasons that led to their relative distance from their parents.

"*I'm sure I did share my problems with my mom whenever I had fights with my friends or something. But with my dad, he really was not there. Honestly, I just never felt that comfortable to share with him because he was just not a part of my daily life in general.*" (P6, communication, 2023).
"*I did not have an open space to talk and parents were overindulged.", "they have been very authoritarian in the past*" (P5, personal communication, 2023).

Parents' authoritarianism and lack of emotional availability of the father were acknowledged by second-born participants, just like by first-born females. They attribute it to the fathers' background, but even if they had an open space for communication connected to emotions, academic demands persisted from their end.

"*Very much, because…because my father has been raised like that. He was also asked to be very disciplined, do things at time and make sure that whatever you're doing is in a proper manner. That's what he has taught us as well*, (P9, personal communication, 2023).

In addition, male participants reported being object of their parents' intense scrutiny, and because of this discomfort, it was hard to talk to them about emotional problems. Males reported having a formal relationship with the father thereby acknowledging their physical and emotional absence during childhood.

1.2.2. Parental Expectations. First-born girls were expected to act in a socially acceptable manner and to prioritize their academic performance, which prompted comparison with other children. In contrast, as reported by second borns, academic related disappointment was conveyed nonverbally by their parents.

"*I felt like people expected me to score good or expected me to do good, and that's what put pressure on my mind. They didn't explicitly mention anything at any point that you have to score good or you score good, I could see it in their eyes that they were disappointed*" (P11, personal communication, 2023).

According to males, their fathers were very strict when it came to their studies and professional development.

1.2.3.   Validation Seeking Tactics. The majority of first-born females looked to their academic achievements and extracurricular activities for seeking parental validation. They connected their sense of worth to the subsequent affirmation from their parents following their academic success.

"*Academic mostly. Yeah, it has mostly been academic. It mostly academic. And I'd say also, even in extracurriculars, I feel it is mostly to do with scholastic activities, either academics or, like, extra cocurricular.*" (P7, personal communication, 2023).

Second-born participants reported that since their parents conveyed a lack of interest in the child's activities, seeking validation from them by throwing tantrums eventually lost importance and was followed by crying. Observing a similar pattern in males, it was reported that weeping was the primary source of seeking validation and it reduced with time as they grew older.

1.2.4.   Expression of Negative Emotions. First-born females reported feeling unable to communicate their unpleasant feelings to their parents, which was followed by a withdrawal from them. In the event that the parents answered, it was an endless circle, and the participants wished, in retrospect, that their parents had responded differently. In second born females, the presence of a pleasant place and parents were reported who were open to talking about emotions and made it simpler for them to communicate about their feelings. However, frequent absence of parents aggravated the issues and participants expressed their wish for parents being more accommodating.

"*I didn't talk about my problems, but I expressed my emotions.", I wish she would have been a little more responsive and asked me what is happening, It's not like she could have done anything, but her absence definitely made things worse.*" (P12, personal communication, 2023).

Because of the perceived discomfort and the parents' apparent lack of emotional acknowledgment, it was very difficult for male participants to communicate unpleasant emotions.

"*it was difficult. I never did it. I mean, every person feels it. I always felt it, I think. So once or twice in my whole life I would have said something, maybe.*" (P1, personal communication, 2023).

1.3.   Birth Order Effects
1.3.1.   Interpersonal Competitiveness. With the establishment of a common ground, the majority of first-born females currently share a positive relationship with their siblings, in contrast to the past. They, however, also experienced jealousy in the past when it comes to younger siblings receiving greater time, attention and leniency from their parents.

"*all the things that I have gone through in that teenage adolescent years and like when I see her going through as well, now we can talk about it. So I feel those things, that development of common ground has definitely improved the relationship.*" (P7, personal communication, 2023).

"*I think the environment at home right now is much better for him since they're also more lenient and although he is in his teenage years, but they are not being as hard on him as they were with me*" (P6, personal communication, 2023).

Second born participants view their older siblings as a source of social support rather than as rivals or sources of jealousy. However, in males, sibling relationships are more structured and although they are connected, they are not particularly close.

1.3.2. Perceived Differences in Parenting. First born females highlighted the disparities in the parenting style adopted by parents that differed greatly from that of their sibling in a variety of instances in terms of reduction. Two individuals also underlined the disparities in upbringing between genders and how the younger sibling being a male was provided with more freedom, autonomy and leniency.

"*So I wouldn't say that they've used the same parenting. Maybe they've reduced the level of strictness that they had with me for her*" (P8, personal communication, 2023).

"*If I tell my dad that I'm dating someone right now, I wouldn't say that he would be against it or something, but he would not react in the same way as he would react if my brother was dating someone.*" (P6, personal communication, 2023).

A common trend was observed in males like the first born females in terms of younger siblings being subject to greater love and affection from parents. In contrast, second born females reported their parents to provide them with more forgiving treatment in comparison to the elder sibling.

1.3.3. Sibling's Emotional Expression. First-born females expressed that their siblings were more vocal about their negative emotions, and that there are variations in how parents react to them—in general, they forgive their siblings' transgressions and lower their standards.

The majority of second-born participants expressed their siblings' difficulty in expressing negative emotions at home and the existence of discrepancies in emotional expression of two siblings. As a result, they made sure that their parents paid attention.

"*There were differences in how she expressed herself and how I expressed myself.*" (P9, personal communication, 2023).

Agreeing to the first born females, males added about the discrepancy in parental responses towards them and their siblings in terms of younger ones getting scolded less.

1.3.4. Moving beyond comparison. First-born females reported having sentiments of abandonment and dissatisfaction in response to various parental reactions in the past, but these emotions have now transformed and they have moved on from the subsequent resentment.

"*It's not about being envious. It's about me feeling neglected. It's about feeling disappointed with them. Just hurt.*" (P5, personal communication, 2023).

The second born females never experienced the need to make comparisons between their parents' responses towards them and their elder siblings as there was no discrepancy in the treatment that was provided to both children. Furthermore, the comparison of parental replies elicited no particular emotion in the males.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to explore the experiences of young adults with sociotropy and to fulfil this aim, three objectives were formulated i.e., to explore if there is a contribution of parenting practices in the development of sociotropic traits; to explore if perceived parenting practices differ in terms of order of birth in the family, and to understand how the sociotropic traits manifest differently in males and females.

The global theme highlighted corresponding to the aim of the study is sociotropic encounters in the past and present, implying that young adults with sociotropic traits, tend to maintain close ties to caregivers and peers and frequently seek reassurance from them, which is confirmed by prior research (Huprich et al., 2013). Supporting Robins et al. (1994) view, most of the participants reported being preoccupied with others' evaluation of them, depending on others for support and exhibiting pleasing behaviors by prioritizing the needs of others. In terms of gender differences, findings suggest that women are higher on sociotropy than men, indicating that gender is a contributing factor to dependency, which is also suggested by existing literature (Avcı Çayir & Kalkan, 2018; Beck, 1983).

The study highlights a subtheme "Interpersonal influences on sociotropy" relating to the social engagement and affiliative tendencies of young adults. It is found that in terms of decision-making, young adults mostly prefer independence. However, females are characterized as more interpersonally oriented and males as self-reliant and individualistically inclined which is supported by prior research (Gilligan, 1982; Tannen, 1991). In line with the findings of Phillips et al. (1984), females reported relying on parents for career-related decisions and men rely on logic and independence (Gilligan, 1982; Gray, 1992) suggesting that women are more open to seeking support as compared to men, especially in career-related decisions (Phillips et al., 1984). In addition, one of the prominent findings of the present study is that there exists birth order differences in the way they engage in collaborative decision making i.e., second-born females tend to be more autonomous while making decisions as compared to the first borns, and firstborns are more responsive to the suggestions of others than are later borns (Staples & Walters, 1961) and are more dependent (Warren, 1966) which contradicts the findings of Samson and Hancock (1967), suggesting a higher need of autonomy in the firstborns in comparison to secondborns.

The present research also suggests that sociotropic individuals tend to conform to social pressures and there is a need for approval and validation from closed ones. Supporting this view, Gorski and Young (2002) reported that people with sociotropic traits are very invested in their interpersonal relationships and engage in behaviours to avoid disapproval from others that contributes to conformity. These are linked to suggestibility, conformity, compliance and engagement in affiliative behaviour (Bornstein, 1998). It was also revealed that participants fear disappointment, and abandonment and possess a desire to have close, intimate relationships with their close ones which is consistent with the existing literature (Huprich et al., 2013). As an indication of the existing gender differences in sociotropy, the present study suggests that females are more preoccupied with the fear of disappointing others and males with a fear of hurting others' feelings. Differences in terms of conformity

were also found in different birth orders i.e., both first-born male and female participants have a higher tendency to conform to social pressures in comparison to second-born participants which supports the existing research (Dittes, 1961; Schachter, 1964) and there is a higher desire amongst firstborn females for emotional closeness as compared to second-born females (Dittes, 1961; Schachter, 1964) that also contradicts the evidence offered by Warren (1966).

Also suggested by previous researchers, sociotropy can also be traced back to the overall infant-caregiver relationships and differences in parenting styles (Bhogle, 1983; Finney, 1961; Sroufe et al., 1983). Most of the participants emphasized having a close bond with their mothers and highlighted their significance in the upbringing. These results contradict the findings by McCranie and Bass (1984) who suggested a significant relationship between dependence and the mother's behaviour, primarily strict control, conformity, and dominance, while the father's child-rearing practices being insignificant. However, one participant's description of her mother being controlling and authoritarian supports the evidence that the effects of parental overprotection on sociology-related personality development can be understood best from the mother and daughter relationships.

Differences were found in the subjective perceptions of firstborn and second-born participants towards the parental expectations. For the firstborns, the demands from parents were quite explicit and in contrast, the secondborns were more sensitive to the nonverbal cues of parents which also has evidence in the existing literature (Huprich et al., 2013). This adds to their sensitivity to perceived negative reactions of others (Bornstein, 1998).

Most of the participants irrespective of gender or birth order reported having a perceived emotional and psychological distance from the father. The affective, cognitive and physical dimensions contribute to the child's perceptions of the paternal bond (Krampe, 2009). Emotional closeness involves interpersonal elements of a sense of trust, the feeling of being accepted, favorably received, and welcome; and the experience of intimacy (Krampe, 2009) which wasn't experienced by most of the participants of the study. In terms of gender differences, males reported a formal relationship with fathers wherein they expressed ambivalence about the expectations of fathers. It supports the view that the sons' sense of being understood by their father was highly connected with their sentiments of connection to him. These emotions were intertwined with judgements of the father as being approachable, reasonable in his expectations of behaviour, and cognizant of his son's independence from him. However, there is no existing evidence for how fathers' lack of presence contributes to sociotropy.

In line with past literature, perceived parental authoritarianism and overprotection at some point in participants' childhood emerged as common trends in the present study (Parker & Lipscombe, 1980; Vaillant, 1980) and similar results have been suggested by researchers in the Indian context as well (Bhogle, 1983; Ojha & Singh, 1988). Authoritarian parents have low levels of trust and involvement with their kids, forbid open dialogue, and exercise tight control (McCoby, 1983). It was also found that it was extremely difficult for the firstborns (both males and females) to express negative emotions at home and there was a need for parents to be more accommodating and receptive towards participants' emotional exchanges and engage in more reassuring dialogue. These feelings led to them seeking validation through crying and throwing temper tantrums. In contrast, despite second-born participants being provided with an open space for emotional transactions, there was hesitance due to the emotional absence of parents. This is found to be consistent with Bornstein's (1993)

findings that parent-child relationships are critical to understanding later dependency. Differences were also reported in the way firstborns and secondborns sought validation. For the firstborns, academics and extracurricular achievements were the primary sources of seeking parents' approval in terms of positive feedback. This was eventually associated with their sense of worth and confidence (Yang & Girgus, 2018).

Corresponding to the third objective to the study, the third subtheme "Birth order effects" highlights that all the firstborns reported having some feelings of jealousy and envy towards their younger siblings in the past due to perceived differences in parenting. They reported discrepancies in adopted parenting styles, openness and leniency, space provided for the expression of negative emotions, and the responses towards the expression of negative emotions. However, apart from leniency, no other perceived parenting discrepancies were reported by the secondborns. In addition, despite experiencing feelings of resentment, neglect and hurt, first born participants have established a common ground with their younger siblings and have moved on from the feelings of jealousy.

Therefore, the current findings point to both parent-child relationships and birth order as contributing factors to sociotropy and how these sociotropic traits get manifested in common behaviours portrayed by young adults. Moreover, the prior literature targets only the Western, individualistic nations and the present research is important to understand the extent to which collectivism in India determines the conditions wherein gender differences in traits like sociotropy can be found (Gorski and Young 2002).

Implications

One of the implications of the present study is that it bridges the gap in the existing literature as most of the prior literature focuses on the aspect of dependency and not sociotropy in particular even though these concepts are related. In addition, the findings of the present study can be used to develop a theory that traces the roots of sociotropy in parenting practices and birth order through a grounded theory approach inculcating a larger sample. Moreover, the findings of the research can also be incorporated in family therapy or parenting guidance counseling to help parents adopt more adaptive parenting strategies. The findings of the present study can also be used to devise sibling program as birth order is an important dimension of family dynamics.

Limitations

The present study is the first of its kind to explore the experiences of young adults with sociotropy in India from a qualitative lens by incorporating two important dimensions of perceived parenting practices and birth order. However, the participants were interviewed over video calls due to constraints of time and distance wherein the nonverbal cues were missed out. Secondly, the study only included firstborns and secondborns and the experiences of middle children and single children couldn't be taken into consideration. Another limiting factor was the unequal number of males and females in the study due to which experiences of females were given more importance. Furthermore, the analysis was conducted by only one person even though the results were carefully interpreted. The literature available in the area is extremely outdated, which is another limitation of the present research.

CONCLUSION

Sociotropic traits manifest differently across different birth orders and genders, especially in terms of saying no and involving others in decision making. Females rely more on social

feedback and males are more autonomous in contrast. In addition, the roots of sociotropy can be traced back to parental authoritarianism, parental overprotection and overinvolvement. Despite most of the findings being backed by literature, the study addresses certain novel findings including the links between lack of emotional availability of the father and sociotropy. Differences were found in terms of firstborns and secondborns seeking validation from parents and subjective parenting differences. Firstborns expressed a need for parents' being more receptive and responsive towards their negative emotions and held some resentment towards the same. In addition, the study addresses how birth order, the views of siblings towards each other and the views of parenting practices adopted for different birth orders is associated with sociotropy.

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Conflict of Interest

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