

Research Paper

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Early environment and cognitive process are critical determinants of personality development, particularly in the emergence of maladaptive traits such as the Dark triad. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between perceived parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive), cognitive emotion regulation strategies (adaptive and maladaptive) and Dark Triad traits (Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism) among college students. A quantitative correlational research design was employed. Data were collected using standardized self-report instruments including the Perceived Parenting Styles Scale, Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ), and the Dirty Dozen Dark Triad Scale. Since the data violated normality assumptions, Spearman's rho correlation and linear regression were used. The findings concluded that authoritarian parenting and permissive parenting styles were positively associated with Dark Triad traits and negatively associated with authoritative parenting style. Adaptive cognitive emotion regulation was negatively correlated with Dark Triad traits, while maladaptive strategies were positively correlated. Additionally, parenting styles revealed significant relationship with both adaptive and maladaptive strategies. Regression analysis confirmed the parenting styles and cognitive emotion regulation predict Dark Triad traits. The study emphasizes on the importance of early parenting practices and cognitive processes in shaping socially aversive personality traits.

Keywords: *Parenting styles, Cognitive emotion regulation, Dark Triad traits*

Personality traits are influenced by a complex interaction of environmental factors and internal cognitive processes. Perceived parenting is individual's subjective interpretation of parental behavior. Parenting styles influences how individuals interpret and regulate emotional experiences, ultimately impacting their psychological functioning. Baumrind's parenting theory identifies three primary styles – authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. Authoritative parenting is characterized by warmth and structure, authoritarian parenting by control and rigidity, and permissive parenting by

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Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

leniency and lack of discipline. These styles influence emotional development and behavioral outcomes.

Cognitive emotion regulation are conscious mental strategies individuals use to manage emotionally arousing situations. Adaptive strategies promote emotional well being and include strategies like positive reappraisal, acceptance and refocusing on planning, whereas maladaptive strategies are linked to emotional dysregulation and include self-blame, rumination and catastrophizing.

The Dark Triad traits are socially aversive personality traits which include Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism which are characterized by manipulation, impulsivity and lack of empathy.

The present study integrates these constructs to examine how parenting and cognitive regulation contribute to maladaptive personality traits. This study creates a holistic approach by studying these constructs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived Parenting and Dark Triad Traits

Studies have shown that negative parenting environments characterized by rejection, overcontrol, and lack of emotion warmth are positively associated with Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism (Yendell et al.,2022). Similarly, Liu et al. (2021) found that lack of parental emotional warmth influences aggressive tendencies through Dark Triad traits, suggesting that parenting may indirectly shape antisocial behaviors. Authoritative parenting is generally considered protective, balanced, promoting healthier personality factors. In contrast, authoritarian parenting has been linked with higher levels of psychopathy and Machiavellianism, while permissive parenting has been associated with narcissistic tendencies due to lack of boundaries and discipline.

Perceived Parenting and Cognitive Emotion Regulation

Research suggests that supportive and responsive parenting fosters adaptive strategies, while harsh and controlling parenting leads to maladaptive strategies (Garnefski et al.,2002). Studies on parenting styles and cognitive emotion regulation have concluded that authoritarian parenting is associated with poor emotional regulation and increased reliance on maladaptive coping strategies (Sikander et al., 2025). Authoritative parenting has been linked to better emotional regulation and psychological functioning, as it is characterized by emotional support and structure. Permissive parenting, although emotionally warm and responsive, often lacks discipline which may result in weaker self-regulation abilities.

Cognitive Emotion Regulation and Dark Triad Traits

Cognitive emotion regulation has been identified to play a significant role in the development of Dark triad traits. Studies indicate that maladaptive emotion regulation strategies, such as rumination, self-blame and catastrophizing are positively associated with Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism (Garnefski et al., 2017). Milosevic et al. (2023) found that individuals high in Dark triad traits tend to rely more on maladaptive coping strategies than adaptive ones. Another study suggests that adaptive strategies such as positive reappraisal are negatively associated with antisocial traits, indicating their protective role. However, the relationship is complex, particularly for narcissism, where

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

some studies report inconsistencies in relationship with adaptive regulation strategies (Zhang et al., 2015).

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between perceived parenting styles and Dark Triad traits.
2. to examine the relationship between cognitive emotion regulation and Dark Triad traits.
3. To assess the relationship between parenting styles and cognitive emotion regulation.

Hypotheses

- H1 Authoritative parenting will be negatively correlated with Dark Triad traits.
- H2 Authoritative parenting will be positively correlated with adaptive cognitive emotion regulation.
- H3 Authoritative parenting will be negatively correlated with maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation.
- H4 Authoritarian parenting will be positive correlated with Dark Triad traits.
- H5 Authoritarian parenting will be negatively correlated with adaptive cognitive emotion regulation.
- H6 Authoritarian parenting will be positively correlated with maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation.
- H7 Permissive parenting will be positively correlated with Dark Triad traits.
- H8 Permissive parenting will be negatively correlated with adaptive cognitive emotion regulation.
- H9 Permissive parenting will be positively correlated with maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation.
- H10 Adaptive cognitive emotion regulation will be negatively correlated with Dark Triad traits.
- H11 Maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation will be positively correlated with Dark Triad traits.

Sample

The study consisted of 196 individuals aged between 18-25. The sample included both male and female population, with education level ranging from undergraduates, postgraduates and individuals enrolled in other full-time courses like diplomas. The inclusion criteria for the sample were college going students, aged between 18-25 and exclusion criteria was individuals diagnosed with psychological disorders. The sample was selected using convenience sampling method based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. Informed consent was taken from each participant.

Research Design

The design used for the study is qualitative correlational.

Tools

- **Perceived Parenting Styles Scale (Divya and Manikandan, 2013):** Perceived parenting scale was used to assessed three major perceived parenting style – authoritative, authoritarian and permissive – based on individual's perception of parental behavior. It is a self-repot instrument using a Likert-scale for response

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

format, where higher scores indicate a stronger presence of that respective parenting style. It is 30-item scale.

- **Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Garnefski et al., 2001):** Cognitive emotion regulation strategies were measured with Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ). The scale assesses nine cognitive strategies individuals use to manage emotional experiences, categorized into adaptive and maladaptive strategies. It consists of 36-items rated on Likert-scale, with higher scores reflecting greater use of specific regulation strategies.
- **Dirty Dozen Scale (Jonason and Webster, 2001):** Dark triad personality traits that is Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism were measured using the dirty dozen scale. It is a short 12-item self-report measure. Each trait is assessed through four items each rated on Likert-scale, with higher score indicating higher level of the socially aversive traits.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were conducted to understand the distribution of the data. The Shapiro-wilk test was conducted to assess the normality of the data, which indicated the data to be not normally distributed. Therefore, Spearman's rho correlation was used to examine the relationship between variables and linear regression analysis was computed to check the predictive role of parenting styles and cognitive emotion regulation and dark triad traits. All analyses were done using the SPSS statistical software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive statistical analysis

Table 1: descriptive statistics for perceived parenting styles, cognitive emotion regulation and dark triad traits

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Authoritative	35.03	8.078	16	50
Authoritarian	23.54	6.305	10	40
Permissive	23.67	7.227	10	45
Adaptive Coping	67.04	12.030	40	99
Maladaptive Coping	45.21	8.340	25	75
Machiavellianism	9.73	3.774	3	20
Psychopathy	9.78	3.401	4	20
Narcissism	11.42	3.419	4	20

The study included 196 valid cases, with no missing data across all variables. The mean score for authoritative parenting was 35.03 ($SD=8.08$), authoritarian parenting was 23.54 ($SD=6.31$), and permissive parenting was 23.67 ($SD=7.23$). This result indicates that the sample was higher on authoritative parenting compared to authoritarian and permissive parenting.

For coping styles, the mean score for adaptive coping was 67.04 ($SD=12.03$), while maladaptive coping had a mean of 45.21 ($SD=8.34$), this states tendency towards healthier cognitive emotion regulation as adaptive coping scored higher among coping strategies.

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

Among the dark triad traits, narcissism showed the highest mean of 11.42 (SD=3.42), followed by psychopathy with mean of 9.78 (SD=3.40) and Machiavellianism with mean of 9.73 (SD=3.77)

H1 Authoritative parenting will be negatively correlated with Dark triad traits.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2: correlation between authoritative parenting and dark triad traits.

Variables	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy	Narcissism
Authoritative parenting	0.85 (ns)	-.144*	.127 (ns)

P < .05, ns = non-significant

The correlation results indicate that authoritative parenting has significant negative correlation with psychopathy ($r = -.144$) at 0.05 level, suggesting that higher authoritative parenting is associated with lower psychopathic tendencies. However, relationship with Machiavellianism ($r = .085$) and narcissism ($r = .127$) was non-significant, indicating no meaningful association.

Regression Analysis

Table 3: regression analysis – authoritative parenting predicting dark triad traits.

Dependent variable	B	β	t	p	R ²
Psychopathy	-0.062	-0.147	-2.075	.039*	.022

Regression analysis concluded that authoritative parenting is a significant negative predictor of psychopathy ($\beta = -0.147$, $p = .039$), explaining the small proportion of variance ($R^2 = .022$).

This indicates that while authoritative parenting may help reduce impulsive and antisocial features, its predictive effect on other dark triad traits is limited.

These findings provide partial support for the hypothesis. Authoritative parenting was found to be negatively associated with psychopathy, but not significantly related to Machiavellianism or narcissism. This suggests that authoritative parenting may be effective in reducing impulsivity, aggression, and emotional detachment, which are the core features of psychopathy, but may not strongly influence on traits like manipulation or grandiosity. These results are consistent with previous research indicating that parental warmth and emotional support do not always show a direct relationship with dark triad traits. Yendell et al. (2022) concluded in their research that certain aspects of parenting, particularly emotional warmth, may have weak or non-significant associations with Dark triad traits. Similarly, Liu et al. (2021) reported that the effects of parental emotional warmth on maladaptive outcomes are often indirect rather than direct, with mediating variables.

Additionally, the non-significant relationship with narcissism aligns with literature suggesting that narcissism has complex developmental pathways. Brummelman and Sedikides (2020) argue that narcissism is more strongly influenced by parental overvaluation rather than general warmth, which may explain the reason behind why authoritative

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

parenting does not significantly predict narcissistic traits. Overall, the findings indicate that while authoritative parenting is generally considered protective, its influence on Dark triad traits is selective rather than universal, with stronger effects observed for psychopathy than for Machiavellianism or narcissism.

H2 Authoritative parenting will be positively correlated with adaptive cognitive emotion regulation.

Correlational Analysis

Table 4: correlation between authoritative parenting and adaptive cognitive emotion regulation

Variables	Adaptive coping
Authoritative parenting	.533***

***p < .001

The results show a strong positive correlation ($r = .533$) at 0.001 level between authoritative parenting and adaptive cognitive emotion regulation, which indicates that individual who perceive high authoritative parenting are more likely to use effective and constructive emotional regulation strategies. This result supports the hypothesis.

Regression analysis

Table 5: Regression analysis – Authoritative parenting predicting adaptive cognitive emotion regulation

Dependent Variable	B	β	t	p	R ²
Adaptive Coping	0.797	0.535	8.818	<.001***	.286

Regression analysis indicates that authoritative parenting is a strong and significant positive predictor of adaptive cognitive emotion regulation ($\beta = .535$, $p < .001$). The model explains 28.6% of the variance ($R^2 = .286$), which is substantial in psychological research. This suggests that authoritative parenting plays a major role in predicting adaptive coping strategies.

The finding demonstrates that authoritative parenting is positively associated with adaptive cognitive emotion regulation. Individuals who experience higher level of parental warmth, responsiveness and appropriate control are more likely to develop effective strategies like positive reappraisal, acceptance and refocus on planning.

The results are consistent with existing literature emphasizing the role of authoritative parenting in fostering emotional competence. For instance, Washington (2024) and A.J.P (2024) found that authoritative parenting is strongly correlated with better emotional regulation and psychological adjustment. Garnefski et al., (2002) highlighted that adaptive coping strategies are more relevant in people with healthier emotional functioning.

The present findings extend previous literature by demonstrating a strong direct relationship between authoritative parenting and adaptive cognitive emotion strategies within the same framework. Overall, the results suggest that authoritative parenting serves as a protective

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

and developmental factor, promoting healthier emotional regulation patterns that may contribute to better psychological outcomes.

H3 Authoritative parenting will be negatively correlated with maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation.

Correlational analysis

Table 6: Correlation between authoritative parenting and maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation.

Variables	Maladaptive coping
Authoritative parenting	-.148*
p < .05	

The results indicate a weak but statistically significant negative correlation ($r = -.148$) at .05 level between authoritative parenting and maladaptive coping. This suggests that higher levels of authoritative parenting are associated with slightly lower use of maladaptive emotional regulation strategies.

Regression analysis

Table 7: Regression analysis – authoritative parenting predicting maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation

Dependent Variable	B	β	t	p	R ²
Maladaptive Coping	-0.105	-0.101	-1.418	.158 (ns)	.010
ns = non-significant					

Regression analysis shows that authoritative parenting is not a significant predictor of maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation ($\beta = -0.101$, $p = .158$). The model explains only 1% of the variance ($R^2 = .010$), indicating a very weak predictive effect. This suggests that authoritative parenting does not substantially reduce maladaptive coping strategies when considered as predictor.

This finding provides partial support for the hypothesis. While the correlation analysis indicates a small negative relationship between authoritative parenting and maladaptive coping, the regression results show that this relationship is not statistically robust. This suggests that authoritative parenting may not directly reduce maladaptive strategies, but instead may primarily function by enhancing adaptive coping mechanisms.

These findings are consistent with existing literature emphasizing that positive parenting styles are more strongly linked to the development of adaptive emotional skills rather than the elimination of maladaptive ones. For instance, Garnefski et al. (2017) found that adaptive and maladaptive strategies operate somewhat independently, with adaptive strategies being more strongly influenced by supportive environments. Similarly, Washington (2024) highlighted that authoritative parenting promotes effective emotional regulation, but its influence on reducing negative strategies may be less direct.

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

Furthermore, research suggests that maladaptive coping strategies such as rumination and catastrophizing may be influenced by multiple factors, including personality traits and stress exposure, rather than parenting alone. This may explain the weak predictive effect observed in the present study.

Overall, the results indicate that while authoritative parenting is beneficial for emotional development, its role in reducing maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation is limited and indirect, leading to only partial support for hypothesis.

H4 Authoritarian parenting will be positive correlated with Dark Triad traits.

Correlational analysis

Table 8: Correlation between authoritarian parenting and dark triad traits.

Variables	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy	Narcissism
Authoritarian Parenting	.266***	.337***	.187**

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$

The results show significant positive correlations between authoritarian parenting and all three Dark Triad traits. The strongest relationship is observed with psychopathy ($r = .337$), followed by Machiavellianism ($r = .266$) and narcissism ($r = .187$). These findings indicate that higher levels of authoritarian parenting are associated with greater expression of manipulative, impulsive, and self-centred traits. Thus, the correlation analysis provides strong support for the hypothesis.

Regression analysis

Table 9: regression analysis - authoritarian parenting predicting dark triad traits.

Dependent Variable	B	β	T	p	R ²
Machiavellianism	0.161	0.270	3.899	<.001***	.073
Psychopathy	0.166	0.308	4.516	<.001***	.095
Narcissism	0.107	0.198	2.813	.005**	.039

Regression analysis indicates that authoritarian parenting is a significant positive predictor of all three Dark Triad traits. The strongest predictive effect is observed for psychopathy ($\beta = .308$), followed by Machiavellianism ($\beta = .270$) and narcissism ($\beta = .198$). Although the explained variance (R^2 values) is modest, the relationships are statistically robust.

This suggests that authoritarian parenting contributes meaningfully to the dark personality traits. The finding supports the hypothesis strongly, indicating that authoritarian parenting is positively associated with Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism. These results suggests that parenting characterized with strict control, low responsiveness and high punishment may foster maladaptive personality traits.

The findings are supported by existing literature indicating that harsh and controlling parenting practices are linked to antisocial, manipulative and emotionally detached behaviours. For instance, Yendell et al., (2022) found that parental rejection, punishment and control were positively associated with all three dark triad traits. In the same way,

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

Dhaval et al., (2024) highlighted that negative parenting environments are likely to contribute more to the development of dark personality characteristics.

Another research suggests that authoritarian parenting may impact emotional development by promoting suppression, fear-based compliance and reduced empathy, which are key features underlying the socially aversive traits. Nathania et al., (2022) reported that individuals raised in authoritarian environments tend to use maladaptive emotional strategies such as rumination more, which may further contribute to maladaptive personality. The finding reinforces the view on authoritarian parenting as a risk factor for the development of dark personality factors, providing strong empirical support for the hypothesis.

H5 Authoritarian parenting will be negatively correlated with adaptive cognitive emotion regulation

Correlation analysis

Table 10: correlation between authoritarian parenting and adaptive cognitive emotion regulation

Variables	Adaptive coping
Authoritarian parenting	-.108 (ns)

ns = non-significant

The correlation between authoritarian parenting and adaptive coping is negative but not statistically significant ($r = -.108, p > .05$). This indicates that higher authoritarian parenting is not meaningfully associated with lower adaptive emotional regulation strategies. Thus, the correlation analysis does not support the hypothesis.

The findings for this hypothesis do not support it. The relationship between authoritarian parenting and adaptive cognitive emotion regulation is in negative direction but it is not statistically significant. This suggest that authoritarian parenting does not have a strong or consistent influence on reducing adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies.

Raya Das’s research found that adaptive emotional regulation did not show a significant relationship with authoritarian parenting. Similarly, Sikander et al., (2025) reported that authoritarian parenting is associated with poor emotional outcomes, but its direct relationship with adaptive strategies such as cognitive reappraisal is not always statistically significant. The results suggest that authoritarian parenting is not a strong determinant of adaptive cognitive emotion regulation, leading to rejection of the hypothesis.

H6 Authoritarian parenting will be positive associated with maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation.

Correlation analysis

Table 11: correlation between authoritarian parenting and maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation.

Variables	Maladaptive Coping
Authoritarian Parenting	.398***

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

*** $p < .001$

There is strong positive correlation ($r = .398$) between authoritarian parenting and maladaptive coping strategies significant at .001 level. This indicates that individuals who report higher level of authoritarian parenting are more likely to engage in maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies like self-blame and rumination.

Regression analysis

Table 12: regression analysis – authoritarian parenting predicting maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation

Dependent Variable	B	β	t	P	R ²
Maladaptive Coping	0.553	0.418	6.405	<.001***	.175

Regression analysis indicates that authoritarian parenting is a significant positive predictor of maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation ($\beta = .418$, $p < .001$). The model explains 17.5% of the variance ($R^2 = .175$), which represents a meaningful effect size in psychological research.

This suggests that authoritarian parenting contributes to the development of maladaptive coping strategies. These findings support the hypothesis, demonstrating that individuals exposed to authoritarian parenting are more likely to rely on strategies such as rumination, self-blame and catastrophizing, which are considered ineffective and potentially harmful.

These finding are consistent with previous research highlighting the negative emotional consequences of authoritarian parenting. Nathania et al., (2022) found that individuals raised in authoritarian environments tend to use maladaptive strategies. Similarly, Sikander et al., (2025) reported that authoritarian parenting is associated with poorer emotional regulation and increased reliance on maladaptive coping strategies. Garnefski et al., (2017) emphasized that maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation is strongly linked to negative psychological outcomes including anxiety, depression and hostility.

The present findings extend the understanding that authoritarian parenting may act as key developmental factor contributing to these maladaptive patterns. The results support the hypothesis, that authoritarian parenting created environment characterized by high control and low emotional support, which may hinder the development of healthy emotional coping mechanism and promote maladaptive regulation strategies.

H7 Permissive parenting will be positively correlated with Dark triad traits.

Correlation analysis

Table 13: Correlation between permissive parenting and dark triad traits

Variables	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy	Narcissism
Permissive Parenting	.142*	.246***	(ns)

$p < .05$, *** $p < .001$, ns = non-significant

The results indicate that permissive parenting has significant positive correlations with Machiavellianism ($r = .142$, $p < .05$) and psychopathy ($r = .246$, $p < .001$), suggesting that

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

higher permissiveness is associated with greater manipulative and impulsive tendencies. However, the relationship with narcissism is non-significant, indicating no meaningful association.

Regression analysis

Table 14: regression analysis – permissive parenting predicting dark triad traits

Dependent Variable	B	β	t	P	R ²
Machiavellianism	0.074	0.142	2.004	.046*	.020
Psychopathy	0.116	0.246	3.533	<.001***	.060

Regression analysis shows that permissive parenting is a significant positive predictor of Machiavellianism and psychopathy, but not narcissism. The strongest effect is observed for psychopathy ($\beta = .246$), indicating that permissive parenting contributes to impulsive and antisocial tendencies more than to other dark traits.

The findings provide partial support for the hypothesis. Permissive parenting is significantly associated with higher level of Machiavellianism and psychopathy, but not with narcissism. This suggest that lack of parental control and structure can contribute to the development of manipulative and impulsive traits, while its influence on narcissistic tendencies may be limited. The non-significant relationship with narcissism aligns with the research suggesting that narcissism is influenced by specific parenting factors, such as parental overvaluation not just general permissive parenting (Brummelman & Seikidies, 2020).

These results are supported by previous studies on parenting styles and dark triad traits, indicating that permissive parenting is linked to poor behavioural regulation and increased impulsivity. A.J.P (2024) reported that permissive parenting is associated with weaker emotional regulation and self-control, which may contribute to maladaptive personality outcomes. Dhaval et al., (2024) emphasized that lenient or inconsistent parenting environments can foster traits related to manipulation and lack of discipline.

The findings indicate that permissive parenting contributes to certain aspects of the dark triad, particularly those related to impulsivity and manipulation, but does not uniformly predict all dark triad personality traits.

H8 Permissive parenting will be negatively correlated with adaptive cognitive emotion regulation.

Correlation analysis

Table 15: correlation between permissive parenting and adaptive cognitive emotion regulation.

Variables	Adaptive Coping
Permissive Parenting	-.240***

*** $p < .001$

The results show a significant negative correlation ($r = -.240$) at .001 level, between permissive parenting and adaptive coping. This indicates that higher levels of permissive

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

parenting are associated with lower use of adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies. Thus, the correlation analysis supports the hypothesis.

Regression analysis

Table 16: regression analysis - permissive parenting predicting adaptive cognitive emotion regulation

Dependent Variable	B	β	t	p	R ²
Adaptive Coping	-0.400	-0.240	-3.443	<.001***	.058

Regression analysis indicates that permissive parenting is a significant negative predictor of adaptive cognitive emotion regulation ($\beta = -0.240$, $p < .001$). The model explains 5.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .058$), suggesting a modest but meaningful effect. This means higher level of permissive parenting contributes to reduced use of adaptive coping regulation strategies. Permissive parenting is negatively associated with adaptive cognitive emotion regulation; this finding supports the hypothesis. In context with prior studies, A.J.P. (2024) found that permissive parenting is linked to poorer emotional regulation outcomes due to the absence of consistent boundaries and expectations. Washington (2024) reported that authoritative parenting fosters emotional regulation, whereas permissive parenting does not significantly support the development of these skills.

Individuals raised in permissive environments may receive limited guidance, structure and feedback which is essential for developing effective regulation of emotions and coping strategies like planning, positive reappraisal and acceptance. Furthermore, lack of structure may hinder the development of goal directed coping and problem-solving abilities, leading individuals to rely on less adaptive strategies. This aligns with broader literature suggesting that effective cognitive emotion regulation requires both emotional support and behavioural guidance, which are often lacking in permissive parenting environments.

The results indicate that permissive parenting may act as a risk factor reduced adaptive emotional functioning, thereby supporting hypothesis.

H9 Permissive parenting will be positively correlated with maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation.

Correlation analysis

Table 17: correlation between permissive parenting and maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation

Variables	Maladaptive Coping
Permissive Parenting	.250***

*** $p < .001$

The results show a significant positive correlation ($r = .250$, $p < .001$) between permissive parenting and maladaptive coping. This indicates that higher levels of permissive parenting are associated with greater use of maladaptive emotional regulation strategies. Thus, the correlation analysis provides support for the hypothesis.

Regression Analysis

Table 18: Regression Analysis – Permissive Parenting Predicting Maladaptive Cognitive Emotion Regulation

Dependent Variable	B	β	T	p	R ²
Maladaptive Coping	0.289	0.250	3.601	<.001***	.063

Regression analysis indicates that permissive parenting is a significant positive predictor of maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation ($\beta = .250$, $p < .001$). The model explains 6.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .063$), indicating a modest but meaningful effect. This suggests that higher permissive parenting contributes to the increased reliance on maladaptive coping strategies.

The hypothesis is supported by the result, indicating that maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation and permissive parenting are significantly associated. As permissive parenting lacks guidance, discipline and emotional boundaries, which can cause reliance on rumination, self-blame and avoidance such ineffective coping strategies.

These findings are consistent with existing literature indicating that permissive parenting is associated with poor emotional regulation and behavioural difficulties. A.J.P. (2024) found that permissive parenting is linked to weaker self-regulation and emotional instability due to the absence of consistent parental control. Similarly, research suggests that environments lacking structure may hinder the development of effective coping mechanisms, increasing the likelihood of maladaptive emotional responses.

Furthermore, Garnefski et al. (2017) highlighted that maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies are associated with negative psychological outcomes, and the present findings suggest that permissive parenting may contribute to the development of such strategies.

Overall, the results indicate that permissive parenting acts as a risk factor for maladaptive emotional functioning, thereby supporting the hypothesis.

H10 Adaptive cognitive emotion regulation will be negatively correlate with dark triad traits

Correlation analysis

Table 19: correlation between adaptive cognitive emotion regulation and dark triad traits

Variables	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy	Narcissism
Adaptive Coping	.157(ns)	-.142*	.161(ns)

* $p < .01$, ns = non-significant

Available results suggest that adaptive coping shows a negative relationship primarily with psychopathy, while relationships with Machiavellianism and narcissism appear non-significant or weak.

Regression Analysis

Table 20: Regression Analysis – Adaptive Coping Predicting Dark Triad Traits

Dependent Variable	B	B	t	P	R ²
Psychopathy	-0.043	-0.151	-2.126	.035*	.023

*p < .05

Regression analysis shows that adaptive coping is a significant negative predictor of psychopathy ($\beta = -0.151$, $p = .035$), explaining a small proportion of variance ($R^2 = .023$). However, it does not significantly predict Machiavellianism or narcissism. This indicates that adaptive coping may help reduce impulsivity and antisocial tendencies, but has limited influence on other Dark Triad traits.

Adaptive cognitive emotion regulation is significantly associated with lower psychopathy, but shows no significant relationship with Machiavellianism or narcissism. This suggests that adaptive coping strategies may be particularly effective in reducing impulsive, emotionally dysregulated behaviours, but may not strongly influence traits related to manipulation or self-enhancement.

These findings are consistent with existing literature highlighting the role of adaptive emotion regulation in reducing maladaptive psychological outcomes. Garnefski et al. (2017) found that adaptive strategies such as positive reappraisal are associated with lower levels of emotional distress and behavioural problems. Similarly, Mojsa-Kaja et al. (2020) reported that adaptive cognitive emotion regulation mediates the relationship between personality traits and emotional outcomes.

The lack of significant relationships with Machiavellianism and narcissism aligns with research suggesting that these traits are influenced by more complex cognitive and interpersonal mechanisms. For example, Zhang et al. (2015) noted that narcissism shows mixed associations with emotional regulation depending on its subtype, while Bereczkei et al. (2017) suggested that Machiavellianism involves strategic emotional processing rather than purely maladaptive regulation.

The findings indicate that adaptive cognitive emotion regulation plays a selective protective role, particularly in reducing psychopathy.

H11 Maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation will be positively correlated with dark triad traits.

Correlation analysis

Table 22: correlation between maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation and dark triad traits

Variables	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy	Narcissism
Maladaptive Coping	.142*	.183*	.271***

*p < .05, *** p < .001

Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

The results show significant positive correlations between maladaptive coping and all three Dark Triad traits. The strongest relationship is observed with narcissism ($r = .271$), followed by psychopathy ($r = .183$) and Machiavellianism ($r = .142$). These findings indicate that individuals who rely more on maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies tend to exhibit higher levels of manipulative, impulsive, and self-centred personality traits.

Thus, the correlation analysis provides strong support for the hypothesis.

Regression Analysis

Table 23: Regression Analysis – Maladaptive Coping Predicting Dark Triad Traits

Dependent Variable	B	B	t	p	R ²
Psychopathy	0.067	0.164	2.310	.022*	.027
Machiavellianism	0.062	0.138	1.941	.054 (ns)	.019

Regression analysis indicates that maladaptive coping is a significant positive predictor of psychopathy ($\beta = .164$, $p = .022$), but not Machiavellianism ($p = .054$) or narcissism. Although correlations were significant for all three traits, regression results suggest that maladaptive coping has a stronger predictive role for psychopathy than for other Dark Triad traits.

The findings for H11 provide strong support at the correlational level and partial support at the predictive level. Maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation is significantly associated with all three Dark Triad traits, indicating that individuals who frequently use maladaptive strategies such as rumination, catastrophizing, and self-blame are more likely to exhibit manipulative, impulsive, and self-focused personality characteristics.

These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the role of maladaptive emotional processes in the development of dark personality traits. Garnefski et al. (2017) found that maladaptive strategies are strongly linked to negative emotional and behavioural outcomes, including hostility and psychological distress. Similarly, Mojsa-Kaja et al. (2020) demonstrated that maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation plays a mediating role in the relationship between Dark Triad traits and emotional difficulties.

The stronger association with narcissism ($r = .271$) suggests that maladaptive coping may contribute to self-focused emotional processing and vulnerability-related aspects of narcissism, which is supported by research indicating that certain forms of narcissism are linked to emotional regulation difficulties (Zhang et al., 2015). At the same time, the significant prediction of psychopathy highlights the role of maladaptive coping in fostering impulsivity and emotional dysregulation, key features of psychopathic traits.

However, the lack of significant regression effects for Machiavellianism and narcissism suggests that these traits may be influenced by additional cognitive or interpersonal mechanisms, such as strategic emotional control, rather than purely maladaptive regulation (Bereczkei et al., 2017).

Overall, the results indicate that maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation is an important factor associated with Dark Triad traits, particularly at the correlational level, thereby supporting hypothesis.

SUMMARY

The present study provides evidence that both perceived parenting styles and cognitive emotion regulation strategies play significant, independent roles in the development of Dark Triad personality traits. The association between authoritarian parenting and psychopathy may reflect the impact of harsh discipline on emotional detachment and reduced empathy. Similarly, permissive parenting may contribute to narcissistic traits by failing to establish appropriate behavioural limits. The findings of this study reinforce the importance of both environmental and cognitive factors in personality development. Authoritarian and permissive parenting styles appear to create conditions that foster maladaptive personality traits, whereas authoritative parenting provides a protective effect. The role of cognitive emotion regulation further highlights the importance of internal psychological processes. Individuals who rely on maladaptive strategies may struggle to manage emotions effectively, increasing the likelihood of antisocial tendencies. By employing Spearman correlation, the study provides a more robust analysis of relationships that may not meet parametric assumptions. The regression results further confirm that parenting and emotion regulation contribute independently to the development of Dark Triad traits.

Implication

- Useful for parental training programs to promote balanced parenting practices.
- Important for family counselling and guidance interventions.
- In clinical setting, helps understand client's coping patterns and personality traits through parenting background.
- Supports interventions focusing on emotional awareness and cognitive restructuring.
- In educational setting, it can be used to design emotional intelligence and stress management programs catered to college students.
- Helps in early identification of at-risk students.
- Promotes prosocial behaviour and psychological well-being.
- Preventive significance in early modification of parenting and coping can reduce maladaptive personality development.

Limitations

- Specific sample of college going students aged 18-25 years, this cause low generalizability as findings may not apply to other age groups or diverse populations.
- Relationship observed may be influenced by other factors.
- Use of self-report measures which creates a risk of social desirability bias.
- Subjective perception of parenting (recall bias).
- Cultural diversity not deeply explored.

Future direction for the study

- To conduct longitudinal study to understand developmental patterns over time.
- Include culturally diverse sample.
- Use multi-method approach including self-report instruments, interviews and observational methods.
- Explore additional variables like attachment styles, resilience, emotional intelligence and biological/genetic factors.
- Study bi-directional relationship, that is child's temperament influencing parenting styles.
- Expand to broader personality framework
- Conduct qualitative research for deeper insights

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Shadows of Upbringing: Linking Perceived Parenting Styles, Cognitive Emotion Regulation, and Dark Triad Traits among College Students

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Conflict of Interest

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