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Research Paper

Perceived Parenting Styles, Attachment Styles, and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation among Young Adults: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

Parenting plays a crucial role in shaping individuals attachment patterns and emotional functioning throughout development. The present study examined the relationship between perceived parenting styles, attachment styles and difficulties in emotion regulation among young adults. A correlational research design was conducted with a purposive sample of 100 college students age 18-25 years from Pune, India. Participants filled out The Perceived Parenting Style Scale, The Attachment Style Questionnaire-Short form and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale. Because of the Non-Normal Distribution of most variables, Spearman' rho correlation and simple linear regression analyses were conducted. The study found that authoritarian parenting was positively associated with avoidant attachment (*rs* = .336, p < .001) and difficulties in emotion regulation (*rs* = .359, p < .001). Permissive parenting also showed a modest positive association with emotion regulation difficulties (*rs* = .218, p - .030). In addition, both avoidant attachment (*rs* = .537, p < .001) and anxious attachment (Rs = .426, p < .001) were related to higher levels of emotion regulation difficulties. Regression analysis further revealed that authoritarian parenting significantly predicted avoidant attachment (β = .302, p = .002). These findings indicate that parenting styles perceived during childhood, especially authoritarian parenting, may play an important role in shaping attachment patterns and emotion regulation capacities in young adulthood. The results emphasize the lasting impact of early parent- child interactions on emotional functioning and highlight the value of supportive and responsive parenting practices in promoting psychological well-being.

Keywords: *Perceived Parenting Styles, Attachment Styles, Difficulties in Emotion Regulation, Young Adults, Authoritarian Parenting*

Family plays an important role in shaping an individual's development. The experiences people have with their parents and caregivers during childhood often influence how they think, feel and interact with others later in life. These early experiences can affect the way individuals form relationships, manage emotions and seek support from others. Therefore, understanding the influence of the family environment remains an important area of psychological research. The present study focuses on how

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perceived parenting styles maybe associated with attachment styles and difficulties in emotion regulation in young adults.

Parenting Styles, Attachment Styles, and emotion regulation have each been widely studied in psychology. Baumrind (1967) identified different parenting styles based on the dimensions of warmth and control, which laid the foundation for extensive research in this area. Attachment theory, proposed by Bowlby (1969) and further developed by Ainsworth et al. (1978), explains how early interactions with care givers influence patterns of relationships across the lifespan. Emotion Regulation has also received considerable attention due to its importance for psychological adjustment and mental (Gross, 1998; Gratz & Roemer, 2004).

Although these variables have been studied individually, fewer studies have examined their relationship with one another, particularly among young adults in the Indian context.

Young adulthood, typically between the ages of 18-25 years, is a period marked by several important life changes. Individuals often face academic pressures, career-related decisions, increasing responsibilities, and changes in personal relationships. During this stage, the ability to regulate emotions becomes especially well-being. Stronger interpersonal relationships, and improved academic functioning (Bahtiyar & Gençöz, 2021). Identifying factors that contribute to emotion regulation difficulties may therefore help in understanding the challenges experienced by young adults.

The Indian context is particularly relevant when examining these variables. Indian families often place a strong emphasis on close family relationships, parental involvement, and respect for authority. Cultural values may also influence the expression and management of emotions. As a result, parenting experiences and attachment patterns may differ from those reported in western populations. Examining these relationships within an Indian sample can contribute to a better understanding of how family experiences influence emotional and interpersonal functioning among young adults.

Parenting Styles: Background and Conceptual Framework

Parenting style refers to the way parents interact with and raise their children. One of the most widely used theories of parenting styles was developed by Baumrind (1967, 1971). According to this theory, parenting can be understood through two important dimensions: responsiveness and demandingness. Responsiveness refers to the warmth, support, and care shown by parents, while demandingness refers to the rules, expectations, and discipline set by parents (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Based on these dimensions, four parenting styles have been identified. Authoritative parents are warm, supportive, and set clear rules. Authoritarian parents are strict and controlling but show less warmth. Permissive parents are caring and accepting but provide little discipline or structure. Uninvolved or neglectful parents show low levels of both warmth and control (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Researchers have suggested that children's perceptions of parenting may be more important than parents' actual behaviour. Darling and Steinberg (1993) explained that children from the same family may experience and interpret parenting differently. Therefore, studying

perceived parenting styles can help in understanding later emotional and psychological outcomes.

Attachment Theory and Adult Attachment Styles

Attachment theory was developed by Bowlby (1969, 1973). He suggested that the emotional bond between a child and caregiver is important for healthy development. Through repeated interactions with caregivers, children develop beliefs and expectations about themselves and others. These beliefs often continue to influence relationships throughout life.

Ainsworth et al. (1978) identified three main attachment styles: secure, anxious, and avoidant. Children with secure attachment feel comfortable exploring their environment while using their caregiver as a source of support. Anxiously attached children often become highly distressed during separation and have difficulty calming down. Avoidantly attached children tend to avoid emotional closeness and appear emotionally distant.

Hazan and Shaver (1987) later applied attachment theory to adult relationships. Adults with secure attachment are generally comfortable with intimacy and trust. Individuals with anxious attachment often fear rejection and seek reassurance from others. Those with avoidant attachment usually prefer emotional distance and independence. These attachment styles can affect emotional well-being and relationship quality.

Emotion Regulation and Its Difficulties

Emotion regulation refers to the ability to understand, manage, and respond to emotions effectively (Gross, 1998). It involves handling emotions in a healthy and appropriate way rather than ignoring or suppressing them.

According to Thompson (1994), effective emotion regulation requires awareness and understanding of emotional experiences. Gratz and Roemer (2004) described emotion regulation difficulties as problems in understanding emotions, controlling impulses, accepting emotional experiences, and using effective coping strategies. They developed the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) to measure these difficulties. Research has shown that difficulties in emotion regulation are linked to various psychological problems, including anxiety and depression (Gratz & Roemer, 2004).

Relationship Between Parenting Styles, Attachment Styles, and Emotion Regulation

Parenting styles, attachment styles, and emotion regulation are closely related. Parenting provides the first environment in which children learn about relationships and emotions. Warm and supportive parenting is often linked to secure attachment, while harsh or emotionally distant parenting is more likely to be associated with insecure attachment (Betts et al., 2013; Bowlby, 1969).

Attachment styles also influence the way individuals manage their emotions. People with secure attachment are generally better at coping with emotional situations. In contrast, individuals with insecure attachment may struggle with emotion regulation and experience greater emotional difficulties (Burgkart et al., 2022).

Several studies support these relationships. Tani et al. (2018) found that authoritative parenting was related to better emotion regulation abilities, whereas authoritarian parenting was associated with greater emotional difficulties. Bahtiyar and Gençöz (2021) reported that

perceived parenting was related to emotional functioning in adulthood. Ang and Sin (2021) found that parenting practices in collectivistic cultures were associated with attachment styles and emotion regulation.

Although these variables have been studied separately, fewer studies have examined all three together, especially among Indian young adults. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationships among perceived parenting styles, attachment styles, and difficulties in emotion regulation among young adults.

Objectives and Hypotheses

Objective of the Study

To investigate the relationship among perceived parenting styles, attachment styles, and difficulties in emotion regulation among young adults, and to examine whether perceived parenting styles predict attachment styles and difficulties in emotion regulation**.**

Hypotheses

- **H1:** There will be a significant negative relationship between authoritative parenting style and difficulties in emotion regulation among young adults.
- **H2:** There will be a significant positive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and difficulties in emotion regulation among young adults.
- **H3:** There will be a significant positive relationship between permissive parenting style and difficulties in emotion regulation among young adults.
- **H4:** There will be a significant positive relationship between anxious attachment style and difficulties in emotion regulation among young adults.
- **H5:** There will be a significant positive relationship between avoidant attachment style and difficulties in emotion regulation among young adults.
- **H6:** There will be a significant negative relationship between authoritative parenting style and anxious attachment style among young adults.
- **H7:** There will be a significant negative relationship between authoritative parenting style and avoidant attachment style among young adults.
- **H8:** There will be a significant positive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and anxious attachment style among young adults.
- **H9:** There will be a significant positive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and avoidant attachment style among young adults.
- **H10:** There will be a significant positive relationship between permissive parenting style and anxious attachment style among young adults.
- **H11:** There will be a significant positive relationship between permissive parenting style and avoidant attachment style among young adults.

METHOD

Research Design

A correlational research design was employed. This design is appropriate for examining the nature and strength of relationships between variables without experimental manipulation. No causal conclusions are drawn from the findings.

Participants

The sample consisted of 100 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years (N = 100), recruited using purposive sampling from Pune, Maharashtra, India. Participants were young adults currently enrolled in educational institutions or residing in Pune. Inclusion criteria required participants to be within the specified age range, to be residing in Pune at the time of data collection, and to provide informed consent. Individuals with a diagnosed severe mental disorder or those lacking consistent contact with primary caregivers during formative years were excluded. Demographic information collected included age, gender, educational level, family type, living arrangement, parents' education and occupation, family income, relationship status, and details of early caregiving arrangements.

Measures

Perceived Parenting Style Scale (Divya & Manikandan, 2013). This instrument assesses individuals' subjective perceptions of their parents' behaviour across three dimensions: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. It consists of 30 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Cronbach's alpha values have been reported as 0.79 for the authoritative subscale, 0.81 for authoritarian, and 0.86 for permissive, indicating acceptable to good reliability.

Attachment Style Questionnaire – Short Form (Alexander, Feeney, Hohaus, & Noller, 2001). The Scale assesses adult attachment orientations across anxious and avoidant dimensions using 29 items on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree). The Tool measures how individuals characteristically think, feel, and behave in close relationships.

Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). The DERS is a 36-item self-report measure assessing difficulties in six domains of emotional regulation: non-awareness of emotional responses, lack of emotional clarity, difficulty engaging in goal-directed behaviour when distressed, impulse control difficulties, limited access to regulation strategies, and non-acceptance of emotional experience. Items are rated on a 5-point scale (1 = Almost Never to 5 = Almost Always). Higher total scores indicate greater difficulties in regulating emotions.

Procedure

Data were collected using a questionnaire packet distributed to young adults in Pune. The packet included a demographic information sheet, the Perceived Parenting Style Scale (PPSS), the Attachment Style Questionnaire–Short Form (ASQ-SF), and the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS). Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. Written informed consent was obtained before participation. All responses were kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated for all study variables. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to assess the normality of the data. As most variables were not normally distributed, Spearman's rho correlation was used to examine the relationships among perceived parenting styles, attachment styles, and difficulties in emotion regulation. Simple linear regression analysis was also conducted to examine whether perceived parenting styles predicted attachment styles. The level of significance was set at $p < .05$.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all study variables. The mean score for authoritative parenting (M = 38.49, SD = 6.80) was higher than the mean scores for authoritarian parenting (M = 23.77, SD = 7.55) and permissive parenting (M = 23.84, SD = 8.71). The mean score for avoidant attachment was 60.22 (SD = 14.90), while the mean score for anxious attachment was 2.49 (SD = 3.58). The mean score for difficulties in emotion regulation was 43.99 (SD = 14.17).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 100)

Variable	M	SD	Range
Authoritative Parenting (PPSS)	38.49	6.80	20–50
Authoritarian Parenting (PPSS)	23.77	7.55	12–48
Permissive Parenting (PPSS)	23.84	8.71	10–46
Avoidant Attachment (ASQ-SF)	60.22	14.90	22–96
Anxious Attachment (ASQ-SF)	2.49	3.58	-8–13
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (DERS)	43.99	14.17	0–85

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Tests of Normality

The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to assess the normality of the data. Significant departures from normality were found for authoritative parenting (W = .954, p = .002), authoritarian parenting (W = .955, p = .002), permissive parenting (W = .959, p = .004), and anxious attachment (W = .956, p = .002). Avoidant attachment (W = .976, p = .067) and difficulties in emotion regulation (W = .987, p = .413) were approximately normally distributed. Since most variables did not meet the assumption of normality, Spearman's rho correlation was used for further analyses.

Table 2 Tests of Normality (Shapiro–Wilk)

Variable	W	p	Interpretation
Authoritative Parenting (PPSS)	.954	.002	Significant departure from normality
Authoritarian Parenting (PPSS)	.955	.002	Significant departure from normality
Permissive Parenting (PPSS)	.959	.004	Significant departure from normality
Avoidant Attachment (ASQ-SF)	.976	.067	Approximately normal
Anxious Attachment (ASQ-SF)	.956	.002	Significant departure from normality
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (DERS)	.987	.413	Approximately normal

Note. $p < .05$ indicates significant deviation from normality.

Correlation Analysis

Spearman's rho correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among perceived parenting styles, attachment styles, and difficulties in emotion regulation.

Authoritarian parenting showed a significant positive relationship with avoidant attachment (*rs* = .336, p < .001) and difficulties in emotion regulation (*rs* = .359, p < .001). Permissive parenting was also positively related to difficulties in emotion regulation (*rs* = .218, p = .030). However, permissive parenting was not significantly related to avoidant attachment (*rs* = .145, p = .151) or anxious attachment (*rs* = -.002, p = .984).

Authoritative parenting was negatively related to difficulties in emotion regulation (rs = -.130, p = .196), avoidant attachment (*rs* = -.113, p = .263), and anxious attachment (rs = -.141, p = .162), although these relationships were not statistically significant.

Avoidant attachment showed a significant positive relationship with difficulties in emotion regulation (*rs* = .537, p < .001). Similarly, anxious attachment was significantly positively related to difficulties in emotion regulation (rs = .426, p < .001). A significant positive relationship was also found between avoidant and anxious attachment (*rs* = .492, p < .001).

Table 3 Spearman's Rho Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Authoritative Parenting	—					
2. Authoritarian Parenting	-.462***	—				
3. Permissive Parenting	-.411***	.640***	—			
4. Avoidant Attachment	-.113	.336***	.145	—		
5. Anxious Attachment	-.141	.192	-.002	.492***	—	
6. Difficulties in Emotion Regulation	-.130	.359***	.218*	.537***	.426***	—

Note. *p < .05. ***p < .001.

Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether authoritarian parenting predicted avoidant attachment. The regression model was statistically significant, F(1, 98) = 9.842, p = .002. Authoritarian parenting explained 9.1% of the variance in avoidant attachment scores (R^2 = .091, Adjusted R^2 = .082).

The standardized regression coefficient indicated that higher levels of perceived authoritarian parenting significantly predicted higher levels of avoidant attachment (β = .302, t = 3.137, p = .002).

Table 4 Simple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Avoidant Attachment from Authoritarian Parenting

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	46.045	4.739	—	9.717	< .001
Authoritarian Parenting	.596	.190	.302	3.137	.002

Note. Dependent Variable = Avoidant Attachment (ASQ-SF). R^2 = .091, Adjusted R^2 = .082, F(1, 98) = 9.842, p = .002.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship among perceived parenting styles, attachment styles, and difficulties in emotion regulation among young adults. The findings indicate that parenting experiences and attachment orientations are associated with emotion regulation difficulties in young adulthood.

Among the three parenting styles, authoritarian parenting showed the strongest associations with the study variables. It was significantly positively related to avoidant attachment and difficulties in emotion regulation. The regression analysis also indicated that authoritarian parenting significantly predicted avoidant attachment. These findings suggest that young adults who perceive their parents as highly controlling and less emotionally responsive are more likely to develop avoidant attachment patterns and experience difficulties in regulating their emotions.

These findings are consistent with attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), which suggests that early interactions with caregivers influence the development of attachment orientations. Children raised in environments characterised by high control and low emotional warmth may learn to avoid emotional dependence on others, leading to avoidant attachment patterns. Such experiences may also limit opportunities to learn healthy emotion regulation skills.

Authoritarian parenting was not significantly related to anxious attachment. Although a positive relationship was observed, it did not reach statistical significance. This finding suggests that avoidant attachment may be more strongly associated with authoritarian parenting than anxious attachment in the present sample.

Permissive parenting showed a weak but significant positive relationship with difficulties in emotion regulation. This finding suggests that although warmth and acceptance are important, the absence of appropriate structure and guidance may make it difficult for individuals to develop effective emotion regulation skills. However, permissive parenting was not significantly associated with either anxious or avoidant attachment.

The strongest findings of the study involved attachment styles and difficulties in emotion regulation. Both avoidant and anxious attachment styles were significantly positively associated with difficulties in emotion regulation. Avoidant attachment showed the strongest relationship with emotion regulation difficulties. Individuals with avoidant attachment may rely on emotional suppression and avoid seeking support from others, which can contribute to difficulties in managing emotional experiences. Similarly, individuals with anxious attachment may experience heightened emotional reactions and difficulty regulating distress, leading to greater emotion regulation difficulties.

The findings support previous research suggesting that insecure attachment styles are associated with poorer emotional functioning (Burgkart et al., 2022). Attachment orientations appear to play an important role in how individuals understand, express, and regulate their emotions.

The findings can also be understood within the Indian cultural context. Family relationships and parental involvement play a central role in Indian society. Parenting practices may therefore have a lasting influence on emotional development and interpersonal functioning.

The significant associations found in this study suggest that parenting experiences continue to influence emotional and relational outcomes even during young adulthood.

Overall, the findings indicate that perceived parenting styles, particularly authoritarian parenting, are associated with attachment styles and difficulties in emotion regulation. The results highlight the importance of supportive parenting practices and secure attachment relationships in promoting healthy emotional development.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationship among perceived parenting styles, attachment styles, and difficulties in emotion regulation among young adults. The findings revealed that authoritarian parenting was significantly associated with avoidant attachment and difficulties in emotion regulation. Permissive parenting was also positively related to difficulties in emotion regulation. Furthermore, both avoidant and anxious attachment styles showed significant positive relationships with difficulties in emotion regulation. Regression analysis indicated that authoritarian parenting significantly predicted avoidant attachment. Overall, the findings suggest that parenting experiences and attachment orientations play an important role in the emotional functioning of young adults.

Practical Implications

The findings of the study have several practical implications. Mental health professionals can consider early parenting experiences and attachment patterns while working with young adults experiencing emotional difficulties. Educational institutions may benefit from providing programs that promote emotional awareness, coping skills, and emotional regulation. The findings also highlight the importance of supportive parenting practices that balance warmth with appropriate guidance and discipline. Promoting healthy parent-child relationships may contribute to better emotional adjustment and well-being in later life.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered while interpreting the findings of the study. The sample consisted of only 100 participants from Pune and was selected using purposive sampling, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The study relied on self-report measures, which may be influenced by social desirability and response bias. The cross-sectional and correlational nature of the study does not allow causal conclusions to be drawn. Additionally, other factors that may influence attachment styles and emotion regulation, such as personality traits, peer relationships, and mental health status, were not examined.

Future Directions

Future research may include larger and more diverse samples from different regions of India to improve the generalizability of findings. Longitudinal studies could help examine how parenting experiences influence attachment and emotion regulation over time. Future studies may also investigate the mediating role of attachment styles in the relationship between parenting styles and emotion regulation difficulties. Including additional variables such as personality traits, social support, and mental health indicators may provide a more comprehensive understanding of emotional development in young adults.

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Conflict of Interest
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