

Differential Impact of Mothers' and Fathers' Parenting Style on the Personal Growth of Emerging Adults: A Retrospective Investigation

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ABSTRACT:

The present study investigated the contribution of parents, especially fathers, in personal growth of young adults. The sample consisted of a total of 200 participants, from which 50% were women. The mean age of the participants was 22 (SD = 1.8). Urdu translated version of Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) was employed to assess the three modes of mothers and fathers' parenting styles, which included authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles, while Index of Personal Growth was utilized to measure personal growth among participants. The study hypothesized that a) mothers' and fathers' authoritative parenting styles will be positively while mothers' and fathers' authoritarian and permissive parenting styles will be negatively related with personal growth in emerging adults, b) fathers' authoritative parenting style will be more strongly related with emerging adults' personal growth as compared to mothers' authoritative parenting style, and c) authoritarian mothers and fathers and permissive fathers are least likely to contribute to their off springs' personal growth.

The findings indicated a significant and positive correlation between authoritative fathers and mothers with personal growth, while negative correlation was observed between authoritarian fathers and mothers and personal growth. As anticipated, Multiple regression analysis with slope tests showed a stronger contribution of authoritative fathers in personal growth of emerging adults relative their mothers. Whereas, the results yielded a non-significant effect for authoritarian fathers and mothers. The study suggests the role of fathers' parenting in the personal growth of young adults.

INTRODUCTION

Parenting is considered as a key determinant in the personal well-being, functional competence (Schofield et al., 2012), personal growth initiative (Hirata & Kamakura, 2017), and emotional stability (Liem, Cavell, & Lustig, 2010) of children and adolescents. Previous researches have primarily emphasized on the mothers' role in the personality development of their off springs, whereas, there is a dearth in literature on fathers' contribution (Laible & Carlo, 2004). Findings indicate that in order to promote optimal self-development of their off springs, investigations should independently assess the unique contribution of mothers and fathers parenting styles (McKinney & Renk, 2008; Sim, 2003). In addition, researches have examined parental influences in children and adolescents' psychosocial development, whether this influence extends to emerging adulthood has as yet to be explored. The present study, therefore, addressed three research questions: Does parenting styles impact personal growth of emerging adults? Is

there a differential impact of mothers and fathers parenting styles on the personal growth of emerging adults? Does the influence of parenting styles extend to emerging adults?

The present investigation focused on emerging adults as its target population for multiple reasons. The term 'emerging adulthood, was first used by Arnett (2000) to refer to individuals belonging to an age group of 18 to 25. It is a time period when individuals have grown out of adolescent phase but are not autonomous or self-sufficient enough to be called as adults (Arnett, 2000). According to Liem et al. (2010), emerging adulthood is a developmental phase in which the individuals are in a continuous process of self-development tied inextricably to parental behaviors. On the other hand, not many studies have examined the impact of parenting on the personal growth of emerging adults, especially in Pakistan. We expected that this study will fill the gap while also establishing that parental behaviors impact beyond

adolescence age and provide recommendations for future research.

Literature Review

Parental practices are generally conceptualized along the dimensions of warmth and control exercised on children by parents. Baumrind's typological framework of parenting styles capture both dimensions nested within behavioral and belief systems of parents (1991). On the basis of these two dimensions, the model advocate three parenting styles. The authoritative parenting style incorporates a healthy balance between warmth and control with a strong emphasis on providing a well-structured environment and democratic disciplinary tactics for the maximum nurturance of the self of their off springs (Baumrind, 1991). This parenting style has been found to reap most favorable benefits for children as well as adolescents. For instance, studies have yielded a positive association of authoritative parenting with academic achievement (Rego, 2015), self-esteem (Milevsky et al., 2007), and emotional adjustment (McKinney & Renk, 2008) and as an inhibitory factor for the development of depression and psychological dysfunction (Liem et al., 2010; Liu, 2003) in this age group. On the other hand, authoritarian parenting is marked by strict control, punitive disciplinary methods and is devoid of warmth and affection while permissive parenting is extremely flexible: the parents set no limits and extend acceptance without any demands (Baumrind, 1991). In support of the theory, few positive consequences for the off springs of authoritarian and permissive parents have been observed. In fact, studies have found significant association of authoritarian parenting with depression (King et al., 2016), low academic achievement (Rauf & Ahmed, 2017), neuroticism (McKinney & Renk, 2008) etc. Similarly, permissive parenting has been linked with impulsive, immature, socially inept off springs (Alarcon, 1997; Hawkins et al., 2000).

Research, further, indicate that the parenting styles adopted by mothers and fathers may differentially affect the personality development of their off springs. For instance, McKinney and Renk (2008) examined the congruent and incongruent maternal and paternal parenting styles in the emotional adjustment of adolescents. Their findings indicated that adolescents reported high

emotional adjustment if both parents were perceived as authoritative in their parenting whereas, moderate emotional adjustment resulted when at least one parent especially mother was authoritative. In contrast, authoritarian fathers and mothers and permissive fathers were more likely to have youngsters with low emotional adjustment. Similar observations were presented by Fletcher and his colleagues (1999), however, their participants included pre-school children only. In another study, Steinberg (2003) examined 25 years of research on parents' influence on adolescent development. Based on his findings, he concluded that adolescents need at least one authoritative parent to develop the tendency for psychological autonomy. These differences in mothers and fathers' parenting styles and related outcomes are generally explained on the basis of contemporary sex-role theory. The sex-role theory proposes that fathers are traditionally socialized to play the role of a provider, disciplinarian, and goal-oriented in their parenting while mothers are encouraged to be warm, expressive, and are assigned the role of caregivers (Hosely & Montemayor, 1997). McKinnely and Kent (2008) noted that these expected roles of fathers and mothers have a varying impact on the adjustment of children and adolescents.

Considering the many positive and negative outcomes associated with parenting styles, we assumed that personal growth would also be one of the tendencies affected by different patterns of parenting. Personal growth is defined as a dynamic capacity for the positive development of self and its' attributes. Carl Rogers used the term 'actualizing tendency' to refer to innate ability for personal development present in all living organisms. He believed that this tendency was so powerful that even under most hostile circumstances, organisms will find a way to express and realize their real selves (Feldman, 2018). Abraham Maslow equated personal growth with self-actualization. He maintained that personal growth is an inborn need 'to become more and more what one is capable of becoming' and any interference with this need results in psychopathology (Feldman, 2018). Accordingly, research has found that personal growth is positively related with psychological well-being, personal agency (Weigold, Porfeli, & Weigold, 2013), academic and social competence (Goldrick, 2000), autonomy, and purpose in life (Hidlago,

2003) and exerts an inhibitory impact on the development of psychological distress (Hirata & Kamakura, 2017; Robitschek & Keyes, 2009). Hirata and Kamakura (2017) explored the impact of parenting styles on personal growth initiative and self-esteem among university students in Japan. Their findings suggested that personal growth initiative and self-esteem were positively and significantly predicted by authoritative parent style, while permissive and authoritarian parenting styles were found to be non-significantly related with the dependent variables. In an earlier investigation, Dominguez and Carton (1997) found that authoritative parenting was positively while authoritarian parenting style was negatively correlated with self-actualization in adolescents. Permissive parenting was found to be non-significantly related with self-actualization in this segment of population. In view of this data, we proposed that maternal and paternal authoritative parenting styles will be positively while maternal and paternal authoritarian and permissive parenting styles will be negatively related with personal growth in emerging adults.

Secondly, we proposed that fathers' authoritative parenting style will be more strongly related with emerging adults' personal growth as compared to mothers' authoritative parenting style. This hypothesis originated from sex-role theory (Hosely & Montemayor, 1997), which contends that fathers are predominantly socialized to discipline their off springs in a democratic but well-structured environment to potentiate their personal development as compared to mothers who are expected to play the role of caregiver solely. Lastly, we hypothesized authoritarian mothers and fathers and permissive fathers are least likely to contribute to their off springs' personal growth.

Method

Procedure and Participants

The data were collected from public universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad through convenient sampling procedure. Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from the concerned authorities of the administration departments. After taking informed consent, each participant was approached individually and the instructions for filling the questionnaires were explained to

them. The participants for the present study comprised of 200 university students, among which 50% were women. The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 24 years ($M = 22$, $SD = 1.8$). 70% participants belonged to natural sciences and 30% belonged to social sciences faculties. Initial analysis also indicated that 80% sample was from urban areas.

Instruments

In order to answer the research questions of the present study, two questionnaires were utilized. Urdu-translated Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) (Babree & Tariq, 1998) was used to assess three dimensions of parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. The total scale consists of 30 items anchored on a 5-point Likert type scale. Each dimension is measured through 10 items, yielding a separate score for mother and father. The respondents were required to recall their early childhood memories of their parents' attitude towards them before replying to the items. PAQ is applicable for adolescents and young adults. The second variable of interest was ascertained through multidimensional Index of personal growth (IPG) (Khalid & Tariq, 2007) designed specifically to assess personal growth of young adults in Urdu language. IPG comprises of 35 items and includes four dimensions: acceptance of self & others, purpose in life, spontaneity, and autonomy. The scale uses 5-point response option and has 17 negatively worded items to control acquiescence bias. Information about the demographics of participants was acquired with the help of Information Proforma.

Data Analysis Plan

After initial scrutiny, the data were entered into SPSS 20 for statistical analysis. Keeping in view the research questions, zero-order correlations and Multiple Regression analysis were performed on the data. In order to compute differential impact of mothers and fathers parenting styles on personal growth, online calculator for tests of slopes were used (Soper, 2021).

Results

Results of the present study are presented below. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 200)

Variables	Groups	f(%)
Age	20-24	200 (100%)
Gender	Men	100 (50%)
	Women	100 (50%)
Education	MSc	180 (90%)
	MPhil	20 (10%)
Faculty	Natural Sciences	60 (30%)
	Social Sciences	140 (70%)
Family Income	PKR 50,000-100,000	120 (60%)
	Above 100,000	80 (40%)
Area	Urban	160 (80%)
	Rural	40 (20%)

Table 2 present the descriptive statistics and reliability indices for the scales of the study variables. The results indicate that Index of Personal Growth (IPG) is highly reliable measure

of personal growth while the reliability analysis for maternal and paternal parenting styles were found to be satisfactory.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Estimates of Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and Index of Personal Growth (IPG) (N = 200)

Scales	No. of Items	Alpha Coefficient	M	SD	95% CI	
					LL	UL
Index of Personal Growth	35	.82	132.69	18.79	130.1	135.3
Paternal Parental Authority Questionnaire	30	.75	103.33	11.05	101.8	104.9
Maternal Parental Authority Questionnaire	30	.75	101.45	12.06	99.78	103.1

In order to test the first hypothesis, zero-order correlations between study variables were computed (Table 3). As anticipated, mothers and fathers employing authoritative parenting styles were found to be positively and significantly related with personal growth in emerging adults. Results also revealed significant negative

correlations between authoritarian mothers and fathers and personal growth, while contrary to expectations, non-significant results were obtained for permissive parenting styles and personal growth.

Table 3

Zero-order correlations between Study Variables (N = 200)

	Constructs	I	II	III	IV	V
I	Personal Growth	-	.17*	.43***	-.15*	-.06
II	Parental Authority	.15*	-	.66***	.35***	.49***
III	Authoritative	.32***	.56***	-	-.24**	.25**
IV	Authoritarian	-.16*	.42***	-.20**	-	-.28**
V	Permissive	.05	.52***	.23**	-.28**	-

Note. Correlation Coefficients for mothers are presented below the diagonal and above for fathers; *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

The second hypothesis of the present study postulated that authoritative fathers' contribution will be significantly greater than authoritative mothers and that authoritarian fathers and mothers and permissive fathers will play an inhibitory role in the personal growth of emerging adults. Keeping in view the insignificant zero-order correlations for permissive parenting styles, further statistical analyses were restricted to

authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles. Two separate Multiple Regression analyses were carried out by entering mothers and fathers authoritative parenting styles simultaneously followed by mothers and fathers authoritarian parenting styles with personal growth as dependent variable. As predicted the findings indicated that authoritative fathers' contributions in personal growth of emerging adults is higher compared to mothers [$t(196) = 3.16$; $p < .001$]. On the other hand, no difference was observed between authoritarian parents in the personal growth of emerging adults.

Table 4

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Personal Growth from Paternal Authority (N =200)

Predictors	Father			Mother			Slope Test
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	VIF	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	VIF	<i>t-value</i>
Authoritative	1.80***	.16	1.12	.99**	.20	1.12	3.16***
Authoritarian	-.67*	.16	1.22	-.76*	.18	1.33	.37
R²	.22			.10			
F-value	18.90***			7.79*			

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Discussion

The present study is unique in several ways. It is the first study that examined impact of parenting styles on the personal growth of emerging adults. Previous studies had focused only on the children or adolescents. The findings of the present investigation imply that recall of early parenting continues to impact the personal development of emerging adults despite the fact that other factors such as peer influence may supersede early childhood experiences. Several studies have also criticized using retrospective method to examine impact of parenting on adults. In response to these

observations, Schlichting and Preston (2015) have presented neurological evidence for the continual impact of early experiences in life-long manner. They found that hippocampus-medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) circuit plays a pivotal role in continuous impact of old memories on our present behavior.

One of the objectives of the study was to explore correlation between parenting styles and personal growth. The study demonstrated that authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles exert a significant impact on the personal growth of this age group. This is consonance with earlier studies which have observed that disciplined and nurturing parenting potentiate the development of self in the off springs while harsh and strict

parenting inhibits the process of self-discovery and actualization (Hirata & Kamakura, 2017). Similar to the study conducted by Dominguez and Carton (1997), the present study also found non-significant association between permissive parenting and personal growth. Researches have shown that permissive parenting involves unmonitored and unstructured childrearing practices. Since, personal growth requires a structured and disciplined environment, perhaps that's why personal growth is not related with permissive parenting.

The present study was significant also as it is the first investigation which has attempted to differentiate between mothers and fathers' contribution to personal growth of emerging adults.

The results of *t*-value computed to test the difference between slopes indicated that fathers and mothers' contribution in personal growth of emerging adults is significantly different. As predicted, the results show that fathers who are traditionally assigned the role of creating disciplinary and structured family environment contribute more to the personal growth of their off springs as compared to mothers. In one of the earlier studies, Nystul (1984) had found that parents who are responsive to needs of their children and establish steady guidelines for suitable behavior are more likely to craft an environment for personal growth and self-actualization for their off springs.

Limitations and Recommendations

The limitations of the present study provide directions for future researches. For instance, the sub-dimensions were not in scope of this investigation. Other studies may include the dimensions of personal growth while examining parenting practices as its predictors. In addition, the gender of emerging adults can also be taken into account to understand the differential impact of mothers vs. fathers on the personal growth of boys and girls. Moreover, the intervening variables connecting parenting styles and personal growth such as self-esteem might also be examined.

Conclusion

In summary, the present study provides clear support for authoritative parenting styles and potential for training parents for beneficial childrearing practices. The study adds to the existing literature by highlighting authoritative fathers' role for the personal development of emerging adults, which had been ignored in previous researches. The study also shows that authoritarian parenting style negatively impacts personal growth of emerging adults.

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