

PARENTING STYLES AND ANXIETY AMONG ADULTS LIVING WITH THEIR PARENTS

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Abstract: The prolonged co-residence of adult children with their parents has become an increasingly pronounced social and psychological phenomenon in contemporary society, influenced by economic, educational, and cultural factors. In this context, parenting styles gain particular importance as potential protective or risk factors for the mental health of young adults. Anxiety, as one of the most common psychological difficulties in early adulthood, can significantly hinder the process of becoming independent, decision-making, and the development of an autonomous identity. The aim of the study was to examine whether, and to what extent, different parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive), measured using the PSI-II, affect the level of anxiety among adults living with their parents, assessed through the anxiety subscale of the DASS. The study was conducted on a convenience cluster sample of 116 participants aged 18 to 30 years. Most participants lived with both parents and were active students or young employees, placing them in a sensitive developmental phase between dependence and the pursuit of independence.

The results confirmed the general hypothesis that parenting styles are significantly associated with anxiety levels. The authoritative parenting style showed a moderate negative correlation with anxiety ($r = -0.42$, $p < .01$), indicating that warm, supportive, and structured parental interaction represents a protective factor for the psychological well-being of young adults. In contrast, the authoritarian parenting style emerged as the strongest risk factor, demonstrating a moderately strong positive correlation with anxiety ($r = +0.47$, $p < .01$), suggesting that excessive control, rigid rules, and a lack of emotional support increase feelings of insecurity and psychological pressure among young adults. The permissive parenting style, although with a weaker effect, was also significantly positively associated with anxiety ($r = +0.21$, $p < .05$), indicating that the absence of clear boundaries and structure may contribute to increased emotional instability. Furthermore, multiple linear regression analysis confirmed that parenting styles jointly explained 41% of the variance in anxiety ($R^2 = 0.41$, $p < .001$), with the authoritarian style emerging as the strongest positive predictor and the authoritative style as the most significant protective factor. The high mean level of anxiety among participants ($M = 27.95$ on the DASS anxiety subscale) suggests that adults who continue to live with their parents represent a potentially at-risk group, particularly in the context of dysfunctional or inflexible family relationships. In conclusion, the findings confirm that the quality of parent–child interaction plays a crucial role in the psychological well-being of young adults. It is therefore recommended to promote parental psychoeducation, encourage the adoption of an authoritative parenting style, and develop counseling and psychological support programs aimed at assisting young adults in the processes of autonomy development and emotional regulation.

Keywords: parenting styles, anxiety, young adults, psychological well-being, family relationships.

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, an increasing number of young adults continue to live with their parents even after formally reaching adulthood. This phenomenon is influenced by economic instability, prolonged education, and delayed transitions to independent living. The family environment, and particularly parenting styles, plays a crucial role in the emotional and psychological adaptation of young people. Research indicates that the quality of parent–child interaction is a significant factor for psychological well-being and emotional stability during emerging adulthood (Wang, Liu, & Xing, 2020). Anxiety represents one of the most common emotional difficulties among young adults and can substantially affect emotional regulation, autonomy, and overall functioning. Previous studies suggest that parenting styles are significantly associated with anxiety levels in young people, with the authoritative style being linked to lower anxiety, and the authoritarian and permissive styles to higher levels of anxiety (Jain & Sharma, 2024). Given the increasing prevalence of prolonged co-residence with parents, it is important to examine how perceived parenting styles are related to anxiety among young adults. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between parenting styles and anxiety levels among adults who live with their parents, and to identify which styles function as protective factors and which represent risk factors for mental well-being.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted on a convenience sample of 116 participants aged between 18 and 30 years who, at the time of the research, were living with their parents. The majority of participants lived with both parents and were students or young employees, placing them in a developmental phase characterized by partial dependence and gradual construction of autonomy. The following instruments were used in the study: the Parenting Style Inventory (PSI-II), which assesses three parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive; and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21), with the anxiety subscale used to measure the level of anxiety symptoms. Data were analyzed using the statistical software SPSS. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine the relationship between parenting styles and anxiety, while multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive value of parenting styles.

3. RESULTS

The main hypothesis—that perceived parenting style is significantly related to anxiety levels among adults living with their parents—was confirmed. The results showed that the authoritative parenting style was moderately and negatively correlated with anxiety ($r = -0.42$, $p < 0.01$). The authoritarian parenting style demonstrated a moderate to strong positive correlation with anxiety ($r = +0.47$, $p < 0.01$). The permissive parenting style was weakly but statistically significantly positively correlated with anxiety ($r = +0.21$, $p < 0.05$). Multiple regression analysis indicated that parenting styles together explained 41% of the variance in anxiety ($R^2 = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$). Within the model, the authoritarian style emerged as the strongest positive predictor of anxiety, the authoritative style functioned as a negative (protective) predictor, while the permissive style showed a weaker but significant effect. Descriptive analysis revealed a high mean level of anxiety among participants ($M = 27.95$ on the DASS anxiety subscale), indicating that the studied population represents a risk group. Qualitative responses suggested that excessive parental control, lack of dialogue, and unclear expectations were experienced as major sources of stress, whereas empathetic communication, support, and clear boundaries were perceived as protective factors.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that parenting style plays a significant role in the development of anxiety among young adults, which is consistent with previous research in the field of family and developmental psychology. The authoritative parenting style emerged as the strongest protective factor, corresponding with findings that highlight warmth, clear boundaries, and support for autonomy as contributors to psychological stability. In contrast, the authoritarian style—characterized by high control and low emotional support—was identified as the most significant risk factor for anxiety. This finding supports the assumption that excessive parental strictness and limited dialogue may hinder the process of individuation and generate internal tension. Although less pronounced, the permissive parenting style was also associated with anxiety, suggesting that the absence of structure and clear boundaries may lead to feelings of insecurity. The relatively high proportion of explained variance ($R^2 = 0.41$) indicates that parenting styles represent a stable framework for predicting anxiety in this population. Despite the limitations of the sample size, the results emphasize the importance of functional parental communication and balanced parenting approaches. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples and apply mixed-method approaches for more in-depth analysis.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study confirms that parenting styles are significantly related to the psychological well-being of adults who live with their parents. The authoritative parenting style contributes to lower levels of anxiety, whereas the authoritarian and permissive styles represent risk factors. Key recommendations derived from the findings include promoting authoritative parenting through psychoeducation, fostering open and empathetic family communication, establishing clear yet flexible boundaries that support autonomy, and providing psychological support for young adults living with their parents. Such interventions may help transform the family environment into a protective rather than a stress-inducing factor during emerging adulthood.

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