Perceived parenting styles and self-esteem among university students in a collectivist culture, Malaysia

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Abstract

Introduction: Parenting styles are highly correlated with adolescent development including the self-esteem development. This study demonstrates the association of perceived parenting styles with self-esteem among private university students in ages ranging from 18 to 25 years old. Another aim was to identify gender differences in perceiving parenting styles. The types of parenting styles that were examined included authoritarian, authoritative and permissive.

Methodology: A cross sectional survey was conducted involving 180 students from a private university in Malaysia comprising 57 male and 123 female students through simple random sampling. The Parental Authority Questionnaire was used to determine the different types of perceived maternal and paternal parenting style. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure self-esteem. The data analysis revealed negative relationships for both perceived authoritarian maternal and paternal parenting styles on adolescents’ self-esteem. SPSS version 23 was used to analyze the data to determine the relationship between perceived parenting styles and adolescents’ self-esteem. The independent sample T-test was used to determine the difference between perceived parenting styles and self-esteem between genders.

Results and discussions: There was a positive relationship between perceived authoritative and permissive paternal and maternal parenting style. Gender differences were absent as both male and female participants perceived somewhat similar parenting styles for both their mothers and fathers.

Conclusions: It can be concluded that perceived fathers’ and mothers’ authoritarian parenting styles tend to lower adolescents’ levels of self-esteem. Perceived authoritative and permissive parenting styles boost adolescents’ self-esteem which contributes to academic achievement and lowers the risk of developing psychological impairment and aggressive attributes.

Keywords: Perceived parenting styles, self-esteem, authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, collectivist culture.
1. Introduction

Parenting styles are the strategies used by parents in their child rearing. Parenting styles manifest the manner in which parents respond to and make demands on their children. Parenting practices are behavioral, while parenting styles represent broader patterns of parenting practices (Spera, 2005). Parenting, while being demanding and taxing, is also satisfying, pleasing and a valuable experience which is rewarding in its own perplexing ways (Sharma & Pandey, 2015). Parents play a crucial role in the healthy development of a child by serving as a secure base and safe haven (Howe, 2011). Parenting is the way towards advancing and supporting the physical, enthusiastic, social and scholarly advancement of a youngster from the outset to adulthood. Child rearing alludes to the parts of bringing up a child besides the natural biological relationship (Yousaf, 2015).

Self-esteem is a basic part of sound advancement from youth through adulthood. Self-esteem was defined by Rosenberg (1965), as the individual’s overall positive evaluation of the self. Rosenberg (1965) also stated that high self-esteem consists of an individual respecting himself and considering himself worthy. Self-esteem is the manner by which people value themselves, the manner by which they view their worth to the world and their significance to other people. Self-esteem influences people’s trust in others, their connections, their work and all aspects of their lives (Yousaf, 2015). Self-esteem can also refer to an individual’s subjective perception of his or her worth as a person (MacDonald & Leary, 2012). However, self-esteem does not necessarily reflect a person’s objective talent and abilities, or even how an individual is being evaluated by others (Orth & Robins, 2014). Prior studies have recognized self-esteem as a versatile identity measurement that can be related to emotional prosperity, viable biological regulation and physical wellbeing (Galanakis, Palaiologou, Patsi, Velegraki & Darviri, 2016).

This paper presents the findings of a study on the authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles. It had two aims and the first was to examine the association of perceived parenting styles with self-esteem in a collectivistic culture. The second, to identify gender differences in perceiving parenting styles. For these purposes, a Malaysian private university was used as a case study data collection technique (Perry & Coote, 1994) to obtain responses from male and female university students.

2. Literature review

Parenting is often referred to the activity of developing and educating the child without focusing on who does it (Clarke-Stewart, 2010). Parenting style can be defined as a constellation of attitudes toward a child that are communicated to the child, which taken together, creates an emotional climate in which parents’ behaviors are expressed (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Perceived parenting styles are opinions given by children on how their parents took care of them during their childhood days and their growing up period. Parenting styles contribute to the
overall good and poor development of children (Mohammadi, Samavi & Azadi, 2013). Parents have their own particular styles parenting their young children (Nayak & Kochar, 2016). Baumrind (1971) identified three main and different parenting styles, namely, authoritarian, neglectful, permissive and authoritative.

The authoritarian parenting style is a strict parenting style as parents who practice this style expect complete obedience from their children. They try to shape, control and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of their child in conformity with a set standard of conduct, which is usually an absolute standard, theologically motivated and formulated by a higher authority (Baumrind, 1967). Children with parents who practice the authoritarian parenting style tend to be mistrusting, withdrawn and unhappy which may cause them to have low self-esteem and lacks spontaneity (Jadon & Tripathi, 2017).

The permissive parenting style refers to parents who are very lenient towards their child and highly supportive of their child (Sarwar, 2016). The permissive parenting style, also known as the indulgent parenting style, relates to parents who are responsive, but not demanding towards their children. They provide a fair amount of love and care but at the same time, they tend to avoid confrontation with their children (Baumrind, 1966).

The authoritative parenting style is an effective parenting style because it involves an understanding of the parent-child relationship (Lazerlere, Morris & Harrist, 2013). Parents not only have and develop high expectations for their child, they also provide continuing love, care and support for their child to succeed. Authoritative parents make appropriate developmental demands and while they maintain control of their children when required, they are responsive, affectionate and communicate effectively with them (Alegre, 2010).

Maccoby and Murray (1983) contended that permissive and authoritative child-rearing styles rank highly on the component of responsiveness. Guardians who are high on the component of responsiveness, dependably give love and support to the kids' choice (Wang, Do, Bao, Xia & Wu, 2017). This circumstance enables youngsters to create trust in settling on choices and by implication gain greater confidence. High responsiveness is related to a greater level of self-esteem (Sigelman & Rider, 2009) and university students who grew up experiencing either permissive or authoritative child-rearing style tend to have greater levels of self-esteem (Hong, Long & Rahman, 2015).

Much prior research had been conducted on the differences in perceived maternal and paternal parenting styles (Berkien, Louwerse, Verhulst & Ende, 2012; Chiew, 2011; Hong et al., 2015). However, the differences in the perceptions of male and female children on the parenting that they experienced have not been widely studied (Barnhart, Raval, Jansari & Raval, 2012). Studying gender differences in perceiving child rearing style helps in understanding the female and male children’s perceptions of their parents.
The dependent variable for this study was self-esteem, which is a psychological factor that is a continuum starting from low self-esteem to moderate and then high self-esteem (Eromo & Levy, 2017). Both low and high self-esteem may leave certain impacts on the individual’s life. People with low self-esteem often over think about failure and tend to easily exaggerate events negatively (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2011). Individuals with low self-esteem are highly prone to depression (Manna, Falgares, Ingoglia & Como, 2016), while those with high self-esteem are much more focused on growth and improvement in life and tend to become more tensed if their expectations are not achieved (Artino, 2012). While people who are high in self-esteem claim to be more likable, attractive, to have better relationships and to make better impressions on others, as compared to people with low self-esteem, objective measures disconfirm most of these beliefs (Arshad, Zaidi & Mahmood, 2015). Self-esteem has been the most studied term, especially in the psychology field by researchers (Vogel, Rose, Okdie, Eckles & Franz, 2015).

Hofstede (1980) conceptualized the culture differences by using the two terms of individualism and collectivism. The organization often becomes the family or in-group to which members have a strong affiliation and loyalty and, leaders are expected to show strong feelings of obligation to the in-group in a collectivist culture. Members of a collectivist culture expect other in-group members to look after them and protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Orji, 2014). They look for individual freedom and recognition but only after they have benefitted from the group. Individualism refers to people who emphasize independence from others and are self-orientated rather than having a group mentality. There are loose ties between members of individualism and people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate families at the very most (Orji, 2014).

Malaysia is a multiracial country with three major ethnic groups. They are the Malays, Chinese and Indians with their percentage shares of the population being 50.1%, 22.6% and 6.7% respectively (Sawe, 2016). It follows that since Malaysia benefits from a collectivist culture, this indirectly influences the parenting styles that are practiced by Malaysian parents. Parenting styles have been greatly influenced by the cultural milieus societies (Uba, Aishah, Mofrad, Rohani & Siti Nor, 2012). Parenting styles are not universal typologies but instead are socially constructed (Mofrad, 2014). Parental styles, such as authoritative and permissive, have been found in individualistic countries which value self-expression, egalitarian relationships and independence. In contrast, the parental styles of authoritarian and neglectful, which foster the highest degree of dependence and obedience, are more consistent with collectivist countries (Gentina & Singh, 2015). Therefore, understanding cultural differences is important for correctly associating parenting style with each culture.

Prior research has been conducted in Malaysia on the relationships between perceived paternal parenting styles and self-esteem. A study conducted by Chiew (2011), involving 100 students from University Tunku Abdul Rahman, found a positive correlation between authoritative
parenting and self-esteem while a negative correlation was found for authoritarian parenting style. Hong et al. (2015) also examined the relationship between parenting style and self-esteem involving 120 public university students. They found a positive relationship between authoritative and permissive parenting styles with students’ self-esteem while there was a significant negative correlation between authoritarian parenting styles with self-esteem. A study conducted by Garcia and Santiago (2017) involving 66 participants also concluded that children who experienced authoritative parenting styles had higher levels of self-esteem as compared to those who experienced authoritarian parenting style.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a positivist approach and data was collected through a cross-sectional self-administered questionnaire survey conducted in a Malaysian private university. The survey involved 180 students comprising 57 male and 123 female students. The Parental Authority Questionnaire was used to determine the different types of perceived maternal and paternal parenting style. There was a total of 30 items for each father and mother’s parenting style and the responses were measured by using a 5-point Likert scale. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure self-esteem. The collected data was analyzed by using SPSS version 23 to determine the relationship between perceived parenting styles and adolescents’ self-esteem. The independent sample T-test was used to determine the difference between perceived parenting styles and self-esteem between genders.

4. Results

Demographic profile

Table 1 presents the demographic information on the participants. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 years old to 25 years old. There were a total of 21 males (11.7%) and 54 females (30.0%) between the ages of 18 and 19, 19 males (11.0%) and 53 females (29.0%) between the ages of 20 and 21, 16 males (8.9%) and 11 females (6.1%) between the ages of 22 and 23 while there were 1 male (0.5%) and 5 females (2.8%) between the ages of 24 and 25.

Table 1: Demographic of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>21 (11.7%)</td>
<td>54 (30.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>19 (11.0%)</td>
<td>53 (29.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-23</td>
<td>16 (8.9%)</td>
<td>11 (6.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-25</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
<td>5 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57 (31.7%)</td>
<td>123 (68.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Developed from survey data.
Correlation between perceived parenting styles and self-esteem

The relationship between the perceived parenting styles of authoritarian, authoritative and permissiveness in relation to self-esteem are shown in Table 2 and the relationship among the key variables were significant at the .05 level. The results also show that perceived authoritarian paternal parenting style is negatively associated with self-esteem; while perceived authoritative and permissive paternal parenting styles are positively associated with self-esteem.

Table 2: Relationship between perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles and self-esteem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Self-esteem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Paternal Parenting Styles</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>-.407**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>.544**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>.228**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>NIL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Maternal Parenting Styles</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>-.411**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>.449**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>.207**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>NIL.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .01

Source: Developed from survey data.

Gender differences in Perceived Parenting Styles

The t-test can be used for various purposes including analyzing the difference in means of two groups. The t-test was used to compute the mean difference of gender differences on parenting styles with regard to gender of child differences in perceived parenting styles. Table 3 shows that there is no significant mean difference between male and female on authoritative, authoritarian and permissive paternal and maternal parenting styles. Overall, both the males and females found that their parents adopted more authoritative parenting styles, followed by permissiveness parenting styles and authoritarian parenting styles, for both their fathers and mothers.
Table 3: Gender differences between means of perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Parenting Styles</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>95% CI for Mean Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Authoritarian</td>
<td>29.82</td>
<td>7.99</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>29.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Authoritative</td>
<td>36.81</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>36.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Permissiveness</td>
<td>32.53</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>31.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Authoritarian</td>
<td>30.37</td>
<td>8.71</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Authoritative</td>
<td>35.58</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Permissiveness</td>
<td>31.89</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.

Source: Developed from survey data.

Discussion

The results revealed a significant positive relationship between authoritative and permissive paternal and maternal parenting style with self-esteem. However, there was a negative relationship between authoritarian paternal and maternal parenting style with self-esteem. This indicates that a less authoritarian style contributes to greater self-esteem among adolescents and that parents who allow their children to experience greater levels of freedom and empowerment can boost their self-esteem. The findings of this study support the findings of prior pertinent research in Malaysia (Chiew, 2011; Garcia & Santiago, 2017; Hong et al., 2015).
The results also show that the authoritative parenting style is positively associated with adolescents’ self-esteem. This implies the authoritative style utilized by the guardians positively affects the improvement of teenagers’ confidence (Hong et al., 2015). A healthy child development environment often stems out from parents practicing authoritative parenting style towards their child (Jas, 2010). This influences the youngsters to create and accept their very own capacity and think about the confinements of the set of principles.

The positive relationship between permissive child-rearing style and youthful confidence demonstrates that the higher the responsiveness of guardians on youngsters, the higher the dimension of confidence of teenagers. As indicated by Baumrind (1991) guardians who embrace a lenient child-rearing style, acknowledge and satisfy the majority of the youngsters' needs. Such guardians explain to their kids the consequences of the strategy, clarify family standards and make the demand to youngsters that might be relevant to their duties and guidelines of direct. Additionally, permissive child-rearing style are an asset to the kids to enable them to design every movement that intrigues them and dodge usage of control (Baumrind, 1991).

The findings of this study did not reveal significant gender differences in all the perceived paternal parenting style scores. This result supports the findings of other studies (Sharma & Pandey, 2015). Gender differences in perceiving paternal parenting style is mostly insignificant especially in the Asian context (Khan, Tufail & Hussain, 2014) as both males and females in a collectivist culture view their fathers and mothers as important figures in their life (Chi, Rozumah & Ziarat, 2011). This finding is further supported by Akinsola (2013) where male and female youths perceived somewhat similar types of maternal and paternal parenting style that indicates their level of confidence and life adjustment. Therefore, the contextual factor can be an influencing factor affecting the gender differences in perceiving parenting styles.

5. Conclusion

The present study obtained results indicating that perceived father’s and mother’s authoritarian parenting style lower adolescents’ level of self-esteem. This finding is clearly associated with Baumrind’s (1967) explanation on authoritarian parenting style as it is the only parenting style that forces the child to comply with their parents’ requirements and gives less attention on the child’s freedom in almost various aspects of their life. This gives an effective insight to parents that parenting style which is high with demandingness and lack with responsiveness is a form of unhealthy parenting style that is not advisable to be practiced by parents in order to avoid negatively affecting the development and the psychological wellbeing of their child.
Additionally, this research revealed that perceived authoritative and permissive parenting styles boost the adolescents’ self-esteem. This finding suggests that both the perceived authoritative and permissive are the expected parenting style that our children would like to experience as it contributes to them developing high self-esteem and also generates other benefits including academic achievement, lower risk of developing psychological impairment and aggression. The findings of this study did not reveal significant gender differences in all the perceived paternal parenting style scores, however, further studies should be conducted on gender differences taking into account other factors to extend the body of knowledge on this issue.
References


