



Introduction

Along with socioeconomic status and heredity, family structure and environment has long been linked to the overall development of individuals, including emotional health. In past research, for instance, parental attitudes specified as "rejection" and "over-protection" produced significantly more psychological distress and a higher risk of depression among children than parents who were perceived as "emotionally warm" (Anli & Karsli, 2007). Thus, in an effort to offer potential guidance on preventing mental illness within a familial context, this study closely evaluated how various parenting styles have influenced adult offspring and their mental wellbeing. We examined the three parenting styles coined by Baumrind (1971), permissive, authoritative, and authoritarian, on the prevalence of several mental disorder symptoms in adult participants.

Hypotheses

We predicted that an authoritative parenting style (i.e. balanced assertiveness) would have the most statistically significant negative correlation on mental disorders in adult offspring, while an authoritarian parenting style (I.e. power assertive) would have the most significant positive correlation on mental disorders, specifically, depression and anxiety.

Method

Participants

Parenting style perceptions and mental disorder scores were retrieved from 54 participants, 57% female and 43% male, ranging from 18 to 52 years of age ($M = 20$). In regards to ethnicity and/or racial background, 37% of participants reported they were of Asian descent, 24% Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish, 4% Middle Eastern or North African, 19% White, and 16% of mixed race/ethnicity.

Measures

The Outcome Questionnaire 45.2 (OQ-45.2; Wells et al. 1996) contains 45 self-report items that evaluated participants' functioning across a broad range of mental disorders. Internal reliability of the OQ-45.2 is high, with a coefficient alpha value of 0.93. The Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) contains 21 self-report items that helped distinguish mental disorder levels between depression, anxiety, and stress. DASS-21 has proven to be a reliable measure, with strong Cronbach alpha values for all three subscales: 0.81, 0.89, 0.78, respectively. When compared to widely used clinical measures of mental health, both the OQ-45.2 and DASS-21 showed good validity, $p = 0.01$ and $p < 0.001$, respectively (Beckstead et al. 2003; Ng et al. 2007).

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991) contains 30 self-report items used to measure parental authority levels/styles perceived by participants. Previous study revealed that the PAQ has good internal reliability with an average Cronbach coefficient alpha value of 0.81 for all six subscales. Additionally, several professionals evaluated the items in the PAQ and their authenticity to Baumrind's parenting style prototypes. They accepted 30 items which was concluded to have high content validity, thus accurately epitomizing the definitions of authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive (Buri, 1991).

Procedure

Participants completed the study alone through a weblink. Upon entering the online form, participants were briefed about potential risks and discomforts and the handling of confidential material. Then, age was validated (18+) and informed consent was acquired by means of an acknowledgement checkbox. Demographic information was then collected and finally participants were asked to fill out the three questionnaires in the following order: OQ-45.2, DASS-21, and PAQ. Participants were informed that there was no time limit, were given unique instructions for each measure, as well as the opportunity to refuse to answer items at any time during the questionnaire sections. All participants were given the same questions and answer options and were not compensated for their participation.

Results

Table 3

Regression Coefficients, Correlations and Significance Test of Regression for Independent Variables on Mental Disorder

Independent Variables	β	t	p	R	R^2	R^2_{adj}	SE	F	df
Authoritarian	.187	1.37	.176	1.87	.035	.016	30.2	1.89	1,53
Authoritative	-.295	-2.23	.030	.295	.087	.07	29.36	4.97	1,53
Permissive	-.212	-1.57	.123	.212	.045	.027	30.03	2.46	1,53

Note. Based on the standardized regression coefficients, β , only one independent variable, Authoritative, was a significant predictor of Mental Disorder. The significance of the regression was measured with F , $p = .030$. Authoritative explained 7%, R^2_{adj} , of the variance in Mental Disorder.

Table 4

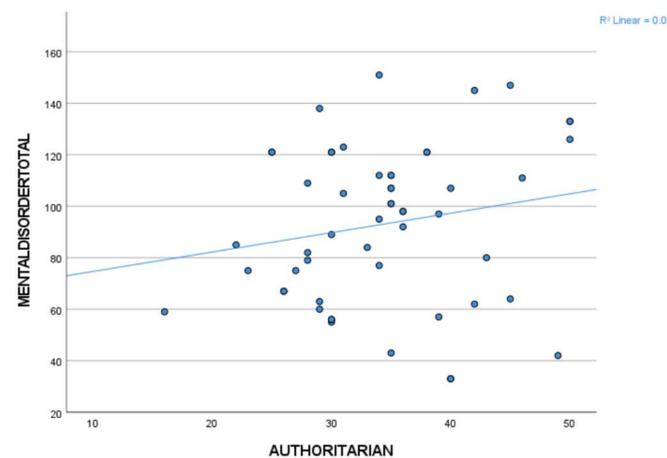
Regression Coefficients, Correlations and Significance Test of Regression for Authoritative on Symptom Distress (SD), Interpersonal Relations (IR), Social Role (SR), Stress, Depression, and Anxiety

Dependent Variables	β	t	p	R	R^2	R^2_{adj}	SE	F	df
Symptom Distress	-.267	-2.0	.051	.267	.071	.054	13.22	4.0	1,53
Interpersonal Relations	-.311	-2.361	.022	.311	.097	.079	5.671	5.575	1,53
Social Role	-.070	-.509	.613	.07	.005	-.014	3.381	.259	1,53
Stress	-.233	-1.728	.09	.233	.054	.036	3.896	2.987	1,53
Depression	-.196	-1.444	.155	.196	.039	.020	4.627	2.084	1,53
Anxiety	-.064	-.464	.644	.064	.004	-.015	4.707	0.215	1,53

Note. Authoritative was a significant predictor for Interpersonal Relations. The significance of regression was measured with F , $p = .022$.

Figure 1

Simple Scatterplot Mental Disorder Total by Authoritarian Parenting Style



Note. Although Authoritarian was not a significant predictor of mental disorder, there is a positive and weak correlation between Mental Disorder Total and Authoritarian Parenting Style.

Discussion

Our results only partially supported our hypothesis, as it did conclude that authoritative was a significant predictor for mental disorder ($p < 0.05$) with a negative correlation. Thus, a high score for an authoritative parenting style was associated with a lower presence of mental disorders in adult participants. However, the correlation between authoritarian and the presence of mental disorders in adult offspring was in fact non-significant, albeit still positive, meaning mental disorders increased only slightly in participants the stronger they perceived their parents as authoritarian. Similarly, the correlations between authoritarian and our mental disorder subscales, depression and anxiety, were also non-significant, though positive.

In contrast to our work, a previous set of studies also focused on the various parenting styles identified by Baumrind (1971) and its repercussions on adolescents and discovered that authoritarian parenting styles were significant predictors of depression and anxiety, with adolescents showing more internalized and externalized mental disorders (Khalid & Aslam, 2012). Meanwhile, other studies have steadily indicated that children and adolescent offspring who perceive their parents as authoritative scored as more socially adjusted and beneficially competent than those who perceived their parents as nonauthoritative (Weiss & Schwarz, 1996; Miller et al., 1993). Equally, our study found that the authoritative parenting style was not only a significant negative predictor for mental disorder, but also problems in interpersonal relations.

Limitations

Possible flaws within this research can be focused on the design of the research methods and the presence of confounding variables. There could have been one questionnaire, instead of two, that measured mental disorder, so participants wouldn't feel "bored" at repetitive items during the study and instead, would take more time to thoroughly evaluate questions. As for potentially confounding variables, the majority of the participants were collected from college students with similar geographical locations and ethnicity, which is problematic as other studies have shown that parenting styles within different cultures and communities predict different psychological, academic, and social consequences (Steinberg, Darling, & Brown 1992). If conducting more research on this topic, more concise questionnaires/measures should be utilized and additional independent variables may be included or thoroughly studied on their own in order to understand other potential causes of mental health issues apart from parenting style.

Implications

The research conducted in this study correlates to behaviorism theories in psychology. That is, behavior is shown to be learned from the environment rather than being biologically inherent. In this case, mental disorders may be a result of maladaptive behaviors learned from parents or as a response to parents. Although our initial hypothesis was not entirely supported, this study is still meaningful because it provides an understanding of various parenting attributes that may be predictors, albeit slight, of an individual's mental health into adulthood. Parents who are aware of this relationship may take this into consideration in order to cushion the presence of mental illness in offspring. Additionally, the fact that only one correlation between parenting style and mental disorder was significant implies that parenting style is not the only predictor of an individual's mental health, and efforts spent studying the causes of mental illness should be from a multivariate standpoint.

References

Available on Request.