
Parenting Styles and Psychological Well-Being: The Role of Emotional Intelligence

Rameen Tahir¹, Shaista Jabeen²**Abstract**

Parents are one of the most important relations in a child's life. Other relationships, experiences and skills can also significantly impact children. One of these is ability of emotional intelligence, a learned skill. This research aimed to investigate whether emotional intelligence predicts psychological well-being in young adults better than their perceived parenting styles. In a survey of 240 undergraduate students of Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore (having both parents alive in their childhood) were included in the sample. Parental Authority Questionnaire, Schutte's Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale, were used to assess the parenting styles, ability of emotional intelligence and psychological well-being respectively. Although maternal ($r = -.271$) and paternal ($r = -.230$) authoritarianism and maternal authoritativeness ($r = .145$) significantly correlated with psychological well-being, emotional intelligence ($r = .336$) was the only significant predictor of psychological well-being and contributed to 10.5% unique variance. This has significant implications for researchers and practitioners planning interventions to improve psychological well-being of young adults. Further, recommendations and future directions have been discussed.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Parenting, Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Well-being

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Introduction

Patterns of early parenting can enormously affect the social, emotional and psychological development of the child. The child comes to view the world and their own abilities or strengths from the eyes of the parents, thereby making this relationship of vital importance (Horstman et al., 2016). This, in turn, could have lasting impacts on the child's future well-being (Ryan et al.,

2017). Research has shown that enhanced well-being has could be a huge asset for humans as it further enhances multiple areas of their lives. These include the biological, mental and social domains of a person's life. Higher well-being is linked to better physical well-being, enhanced levels of creative thinking and more positive emotions. This leads to greater productivity, more social engagement and a better quality of life (Huppert, 2009).

Psychological well-being has been defined loosely in terms of life satisfaction and happiness in the past, but Ryff (1989) defines it more holistically. According to this theory, psychological well-being is a multi-dimensional construct with six components which are self-acceptance; viewing oneself and their past positively, personal growth; being in a state of continuous development, purpose in life; having a sense that life has meaning and purpose, positive relations with others; being able to maintain relationships in

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a healthy manner, environmental mastery; being able to manage the surroundings, autonomy; having the belief that one is in charge of their own life and circumstances.

Baumrind (1971) found three parenting styles to be most prevalent, namely authoritative (democratic), authoritarian (autocratic) and permissive (Baumrind, 1971). In a systematic literature review of research on the effects of parenting styles in the West and in India, Sahithya et al. (2019) found that in both Western and Indian culture, authoritative or democratic parenting yielded the best outcomes in the fields of social, emotional and mental health and that there was no difference in the effects of parenting styles across cultures. Therefore, Baumrind's theory was adopted for the current research.

Interestingly, there are constructs like emotional intelligence that can influence our well-being even in later life. Emotional intelligence may also be impacted by the home environment that one was brought up in, but if seen as an ability, it can be nourished later in life through training (Gilar-Corbi et al., 2019) and possibly through relationships other than with their parents. Therefore, emotional intelligence could play a greater role in a person's psychological well-being as an adult. The following sections outline literature that has explored these constructs.

Parenting Styles and Psychological Well-being

Types of parenting style that adolescents and young adults perceive as employed by their parents during childhood have been linked to their psychological well-being. There are two dimensions of parenting styles, demandingness and responsiveness. Authoritative parents are high on both demandingness and responsiveness. Authoritarian parenting style means being high on demandingness and low on responsiveness. Permissive parenting style means the parents are low on demandingness and high on responsiveness (Baumrind,

1971). The varying levels of demandingness and responsiveness affect various dimensions of well-being such as growth, ability to build and maintain relationships and mastering autonomy. Therefore, all parenting styles have different effects on psychological well-being. Parenting styles more congruent with authoritative have been found to be correlated with fewer psychiatric and somatic complaints e.g., depression (Shek, 1989; Taris & Bok, 1997), anxiety, internalized distress (Fletcher et al., 1999), a greater purpose in life (Shek, 1989) and hope (Shahimi et al., 2013). Other studies also show that authoritative parenting style leads to the best results on psychological well-being measures (Abubakar et al., 2015; Cripps & Zyronski, 2009; Milevsky et al., 2008; Shucksmith et al., 1995). While both parents practicing authoritative yields the best outcomes, significant differences in the scores on self-esteem, life satisfaction and depression (Milevsky et al., 2008) as well as internalized distress (Fletcher et al., 1999) were found in adolescents who had at least one parent with authoritative parenting style. The authoritarian parenting style has been found to be related to lower psychological well-being as it was negatively correlated with hope (Shahimi et al., 2013) and positively correlated with externalized behavior problems (Akhtar et al., 2011). The literature on permissiveness is inconclusive because it has been found to be negatively related to hope and positively related to self-esteem (Shahimi et al., 2013). In a study in Pakistan, paternal permissive parenting style was associated with more behavioral problems, which can be explained in terms of cultural expectations. Fathers in Pakistan are usually expected to be strict, but if they become permissive, the reduced control can make children, especially boys, lose control and exhibit behavioral problems (Akhtar et al., 2011).

Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being

Prior studies indicate that emotional intelligence can predict many aspects of psychological well-being. These include optimism, and collaboration (Ugoani & Ewuzie, 2013), life satisfaction (Carmeli et al., 2009; Extremera & Rey, 2016), happiness (Guerra-Bustamante et al., 2019; Ugoani & Ewuzie, 2013;), self-acceptance (Carmeli et al., 2009), self-esteem, social involvement, sociability and control of self and events (Shaheen & Shaheen, 2016). A positive and significant correlation exists between constructs of emotional intelligence and psychological well-being (Burrus et al., 2012; Landa et al., 2010; Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2020; Shaheen & Shaheen, 2016). Landa and colleagues (2010) also found emotional attention to be negatively related to psychological well-being, because being too attentive towards your emotions leads to rumination and catastrophizing which reduces psychological well-being. This is also true for workplace where emotional intelligence has been used as an effective tool to increase team performance, motivation and well-being (Reilly, 2022). Moreover, a recent meta-analysis of 37 studies reports a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and well-being in adolescents (Llamas-Díaz, et al., 2022).

Research findings conclusively suggest a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being at all ages, and some even postulate the latter is predicted by the former. While parenting plays an important part in a child's life and would have a significant impact on their psychological well-being, the effect may not continue throughout the lifetime. On the other hand, emotional intelligence is an ability that can be nourished through other interactions in an adult's life. This can also be

backed up by the theoretical framework of the current study.

Kohlberg et al. (1984) posit that the idea of continuity of emotional and psychological problems (other than disorders with genetic predispositions) from childhood to adulthood is not supported by research. In fact, even longitudinal research has not been able to establish that these problems in childhood predict mental health of adults. They believe it is an unwarranted extension of Freudian concepts as he himself said adult problems can be traced back to some childhood issues, but everyone who has issues in their early years do not go on to have compromised mental health (Kohlberg et al., 1984). Moreover, the studies outlined below show how emotional intelligence may take precedence in one's psychological well-being.

Wischerth et al. (2016) found permissive parenting style was negatively correlated with emotional intelligence and personal growth, a component of the psychological well-being construct in young adults. However, the relationship of personal growth with permissive parenting became non-significant in the current study when emotional intelligence was added as a mediating variable while controlling for other demographic factors. Arulsubila and Subasree (2017) also render support to this claim. They used an intervention to teach parents better parenting practices that included teaching life skills to children, some of which were based on building emotional understanding. They saw a small but significant difference in scores of adolescents in the control and experimental group, on the subscales of the Ryff's psychological well-being scale. This means that teaching emotional abilities can help improve lives of children even at a later age. This indicates that the development of emotional intelligence can reduce the negative effects of parenting.

Overall, this study proposes that psychological well-being is impacted by both emotional intelligence and parenting styles. However, emotional intelligence takes precedence over how a child is treated during his/her childhood because it is learnt and improved with the progression of the person's maturity. Hence, the current study hypothesized that emotional intelligence would be a greater predictor of psychological well-being than parenting styles.

This study has deep social implications because parenting style is seen as relatively stable phenomenon and its relationship with psychological well-being points towards determinism. This indicates that the effect of parenting is quite stable and permanent. Therefore, we intended to investigate whether the ability of emotional intelligence (which can be developed throughout life) can influence our psychological well-being later in life. This would be specifically useful in those cases where the parenting style was related with adverse life outcomes.

This study would empower researchers and practitioners to understand the extent to which the ability of emotional intelligence can affect our lives. It would also be beneficial in designing intervention plans to improve psychological well-being of young adults because the study would highlight those constructs which can contribute to the same.

Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that there are significant relationships between parenting styles (maternal and paternal) e.g., (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) and psychological well-being and emotional intelligence. It was also hypothesized that there was a significant relationship between

emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing and they are positively related. Further, emotional intelligence is a better predictor of psychological wellbeing than parenting styles (maternal and paternal).

Methodology

Correlational research design was used for the current study. Population of the study was students of all years of Forman Christian College (A Chartered University) (FCCU) Lahore.

Sample

A sample of 249 undergraduate students (male and female) of all years from FCCU, Lahore was selected to participate in the study. Convenience snowball sampling technique was used to recruit participants. Students who had their both parents alive in their childhood were included in the sample. To determine the sample size, G power analysis was carried out. The outcome of the analysis was that with 95% power, a sample of 111 participants was enough to estimate the medium effect size (i.e., 0.3). Data of nine respondents was discarded due to missing information.

Descriptive statistics was carried out to ascertain the values of demographic variables of the sample (see Table 1). Age range of the participants was 18-26 years ($M= 21.72$; $SD= 1.81$). Sample was predominantly represented by female participants i.e., 59 males (24.6 %) vs. 181 females (76.4%). Students from all years of studies took part in the study. Marital status of a large part of participants was single. Number of siblings of the participants ranged from 0 to 6. Table 1 presented below gives demographic characteristics of the sample:

Table 1*Demographics of the Sample (N=240)*

| Variables | M (SD) | Frequency (%) |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Age | 21.72 (1.81) | |
| Number of siblings | 2.33 (1.21) | |
| Sex | | |
| Male | | 59 (24.6) |
| Female | | 181 (75.4) |
| Year | | |
| Freshmen | | 48 (20.0) |
| Sophomore | | 46 (19.2) |
| Junior | | 36 (15.0) |
| Senior | | 110 (45.8) |
| Marital Status | | |
| Single | | 186 (77.5) |
| In a relationship | | 36 (15.0) |
| Married | | 16 (6.7) |
| Other | | 2 (0.8) |

Instruments**Demographics Questionnaire**

Information regarding their age, gender, marital status, number of siblings, subject in which they were majoring and year of undergraduate education (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior or Senior) using a self-designed demographic questionnaire was sought.

Parental Authority Questionnaire - PAQ (Buri, 1991)

This questionnaire has been designed to identify perceived parenting styles of both parents, namely authoritative, authoritarian and permissive styles. It has 30 items, all of which require answers about the mother and the father separately. Each of the question requires an answer on a 5-point Likert type scale, where 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree. The three subscales for the three types of parenting style have 10 items each. Total scores for each subscale are calculated separately, the minimum score for each is 10 and the maximum is 50. The Cronbach Alpha values for this study were also calculated and were found to be satisfactory: Mother's authoritative parenting

style, $\alpha=0.80$, mother's authoritarian parenting style, $\alpha=0.80$, mother's permissive parenting style, $\alpha=0.75$, father's authoritative parenting style, $\alpha=0.82$, father's authoritarian parenting style, $\alpha=0.83$, father's permissive parenting style, $\alpha=0.74$.

Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test - SSEIT (Schutte et al., 1998)

This scale assesses emotional intelligence based on the original model of Salovey and Mayer (1990) and consists of 33 items. These items require responses on a 5-point Likert type scale, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. The sum of scores on all items is calculated as the total score and higher scores indicate higher emotional intelligence. It assesses the appraisal and expression of emotions, regulation of emotions and utilization of emotions. The Cronbach's Alpha value for this study was calculated and was found to be 0.85.

Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale – PWB (Ryff & Keyes, 1995)

This scale consists of 18 items and has 6 subscales which measure six dimensions of psychological well-being as given by Ryff and Keyes (1995). These subscales are

autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life and self-acceptance. All items require responses on a 6-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This study used the total scores of the scale and did not use scores on subscales. The internal consistency of the Psychological Well-being Scale was found to be high, $\alpha=0.77$.

Procedure

Responses were collected through an online link that was forwarded to students of FCCU using the social media platforms of WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram. Students were asked to forward the link and request other students to participate in the study. The first section of the Google form was the informed consent that the participants had to agree to before proceeding. The demographics questionnaire appeared first, after which the PAQ, SSEIT and PWB scales followed in the respective order.

Table 3

Bivariate Correlations of the Study Variables (N=240)

| Variables | M (SD) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|-----------|-------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|---|
| PP | 30.20 (6.41) | - | | | | | | | |
| PAR | 32.02 (7.26) | -.20** | | | | | | | |
| PAT | 33.41 (6.97) | .65** | -.34** | | | | | | |
| MP | 30.34 (6.37) | .77** | -.04 | .45** | | | | | |
| MAR | 31.88 (6.76) | -.03 | .68** | -.13* | -.16* | | | | |
| MAT | 34.49 (6.36) | .46** | -.21** | .69** | .57** | -.35** | | | |
| EI | 121.69 (14.60) | .20** | .03 | .26** | .22** | -.08 | .32** | | |
| PWB | 84.12 (14.53) | -.07 | -.23** | .08 | -.07 | -.27** | .14* | .33** | |

Ethical Considerations

The research proposal was approved by the departmental ethical committee before its final approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Forman Christian College University Lahore (IRB Letter No: IRB-209/02-2020). Permission from authors of the instruments used in the study was taken before using them for study. All ethical considerations were taken care of including confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Data was collected online. No identifying information was collected. The participations were voluntary, and they were informed about having the right to withdraw at any point.

Results

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze characteristics of the sample and the study variables. Inferential statistics such as bivariate correlations and multiple regression, were run to test the hypotheses.

Descriptive statistics of the study variables are presented in Table 3.

Note. PP= Paternal Permissiveness, PAR Paternal Authoritarianism, PAT= Paternal Authoritativeness, MP= Maternal Permissiveness, MAR= Maternal Authoritarianism, MAT= Maternal Authoritativeness, EI= Emotional Intelligence, PWB=Psychological Well-being

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Bivariate correlations between the study variables were found and are reported in Table 3. A significant positive relationship between maternal authoritativeness and psychological well-being was found. The relationship between paternal authoritativeness and psychological well-being was positive but did not reach to the level of significance. The relationships of

paternal authoritarianism and maternal authoritarianism with psychological well-being were both negative and significant. Paternal and maternal permissiveness were negatively related to well-being with nonsignificant correlations.

Further, the study found a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors of Psychological Well-Being (N=240)

| Variables | Psychological Well-Being | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------|----------|
| | <i>B</i> | <i>SE B</i> | β | <i>t</i> |
| (Intercept) | 66.92 | 9.56 | | 7.00 |
| Total Paternal Authoritarianism | -.27 | .16 | -.13 | -1.67 |
| Total Maternal Authoritarianism | -.36 | .18 | -.17 | -2.02* |
| Total Maternal Authoritativeness | -.12 | .15 | -.05 | -.79 |
| Emotional Intelligence | .34 | .06 | .34 | 5.50** |

Note. $R = .43$, $R^2 = .18$, $F(4, 235) = 13.36$, $p < .001$

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

Furthermore, standard multiple regression was run to test which of the variables significantly predicted psychological well-being (Table 4). Four variables that had a significant correlation with psychological well-being were included in the model; paternal authoritarianism, maternal authoritarianism, maternal authoritativeness and emotional intelligence. Results were interpreted according to Pallant (2005). Tests of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity showed that these assumptions were not violated.

A significant regression equation was found, [$R = .43$, $R^2 = .18$, $F(4, 235) = 13.36$, $p < .001$].

Emotional intelligence was the greatest significant predictor of psychological well-being ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$). Emotional intelligence uniquely explains 10.5% (as indicated by the Part value) of the variance in psychological well-being. Maternal authoritarianism was also a significant predictor ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .05$), but its unique contribution to the variance is only 1.41%. This means that if the score of emotional intelligence is increased by one standard deviation ($SD = 14.6$), the psychological well-being score would increase .34 standard deviation units or 5 points on the Likert scale.

Discussion

This study explored the relationships between parenting styles, emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. It further explored which of the variables were able to predict psychological well-being in a sample of undergraduate students in Lahore aged 18-26. There is limited research on these variables in this age group, and, to the authors' best knowledge, they have not been studied together in a Pakistani setting before. Psychological well-being was found to be significantly linked with authoritative parenting of mothers but not fathers. However, the relationships with both, mothers and fathers were positive, which is supported by previous literature (Abubakar et al., 2015; Cripps & Zyronski, 2009; Milevsky et al., 2008; Shek, 1989; Shucksmith et al., 1995). As authoritative parents are democrats who are reasonable in their expectations from their children and consider their input and feelings on important matters, it is likely that these children would become accepting of themselves, feel more in control of their surroundings and more autonomous. Baumrind (1971) also found that children with authoritative parents are more creative and self-reliant. As self-acceptance and autonomy are parts of the psychological well-being construct, their score would be inevitably higher on it.

The non-significant association with paternal authoritative is different from what was found in prior research. It could be explained by cultural expectations from fathers in Pakistan. Their strictness is interpreted as a sign of strength and the capacity to lead. Therefore, authoritative fathers may be traditionally strong (Akhtar et al., 2011). This explanation can be further supported by the negative relationship between paternal permissiveness and psychological well-being. Although this is not a statistically significant result, the direction of the correlations indicates that a father's

permissiveness, (which might show, in this culture, that the father is not in control) is linked to low psychological well-being of children.

The relationship between permissiveness and psychological well-being was negative both for fathers and mothers but statistically nonsignificant. The results on this style of parenting are inconclusive in literature. Milevsky et al. (2008) found a positive effect of permissiveness on well-being and others found negative impacts (Akhtar et al., 2011; Shahimi et al., 2013). It should be noted that none of these studies defined psychological well-being using Ryff's (1989) definition, as used in this study. Further research using this scale could lead to better understanding of this relationship and more conclusive results. The results related to authoritarian parenting style and well-being were as predicted in this research and as shown by previous research (Akhtar et al., 2011; Milevsky et al., 2008). Significant negative relationships were found for both, maternal and paternal authoritarian styles. This shows that the negative impacts of a high demanding and low responsive parenting style remain constant despite the cultural differences. As personal growth, autonomy and positive relations with others are a part of the construct of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989), a lasting impact of this could be lower scores on this scale even in adulthood. In a highly controlled environment, children would not be able to find their own voice and express themselves fully, hindering their development as a person and the ability to have proper relationships.

Further analysis showed that emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of psychological wellbeing, while parenting styles were not. This is also supported by the theory. Although parenting styles were significantly correlated with the psychological well-being of young adults in Pakistan, they are not the predictors. The past

may be an important factor in our lives, but it does not always determine our experiences in the present (Kohlberg et al., 1984). Even if our emotional capacities are affected by the styles of parenting adopted by our parents, there are other ways to relearn them and through life experiences, we develop them later in life even if they were not as developed earlier in life. Appraisal of our own and others' emotions which is a part of emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayers, 1990) could improve our relationships with others and help us view our own selves positively. Learning to manage emotions and utilize them effectively increases our well-being by making us be in control of our surroundings and getting the best out of them.

This study would greatly benefit the research community because it went beyond a correlational method unlike previous studies (Burrus et al., 2012; Gallagher & Vella-Brodick, 2008; Shaheen & Shaheen, 2016) and found what predicts psychological well-being more. Landa and colleagues (2010) and Tekin (2021) found similar predictions but did not use the same scales and studied these effects in different cultures. However, the current study examined psychological well-being as a whole and our results confirmed that this phenomenon transcends cultural barriers.

Moreover, another way that this study contributes significantly to the existing literature is by using an ability model of emotional intelligence. Most research use a trait model, which defines emotional intelligence as a personality trait. The benefit of studying emotional intelligence as an ability is that it provides an optimistic outlook towards psychological well-being. This indicates that if ability emotional intelligence can predict psychological well-being, then enhancing your emotional intelligence ability could improve psychological well-being. This finding could impact our society at large as it gives hope

and a direction towards what could increase our level of well-being.

Recommendations

- Study used the overall scores of emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. However, investigating the relationships and predictions of each component of these constructs is recommended.
- Future research can focus on how the positive impact of emotional intelligence on psychological well-being could be translated into better lives.
- Findings of the study suggest that emotional intelligence can predict psychological well-being of young adults. Therefore, teaching emotional intelligence skills can be integrated in educational and therapeutic settings to improve psychological well-being. These skills include self-awareness, self-motivation, showing empathy and skill to manage own and others' emotions. This could help young adults build better interpersonal relationships and have fulfilling academics, personal and professional lives leading to experience better psychological wellbeing.

Limitations

- A self-report measure of ability emotional intelligence was used. Therefore, the impact of social desirability cannot be ruled out.
- Study gathered data only from undergraduate students from a private university in Lahore, hence, results cannot be generalized.

Conclusion

Overall, this study found that in a Pakistani sample of undergraduate students, maternal authoritativeness and emotional intelligence showed a positive relationship with psychological well-being, while maternal and paternal authoritarianism were negatively

related to it. Emotional intelligence also showed a significant positive relation with maternal and paternal authoritative and permissiveness. More importantly this study confirmed the theory that parenting styles as measured by the Parental Authority Questionnaire do not predict psychological well-being in adulthood and the deterministic notion that our past is in control of our lives can be expunged. Moreover, a hopeful outlook is given by the finding that ability emotional intelligence, that can be developed throughout life, is a greater predictor of psychological well-being in adulthood.

Contribution of Authors

Rameen Tahir: Conceptualization, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing - Original draft

Shaista Jabeen: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Writing- Reviewing & Editing

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by authors.

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