

# PARENTING STYLES, PEER RELATIONSHIP AND MENTAL HEALTH

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**ABSTRACT:** Parenting styles are said to have impact on interpersonal skill and mental health of young adults. Disorganized parenting style can influence parent child relationship and cause increased level of stress and anxiety in the family surroundings. This present study is conducted to investigate the relationship between parenting styles, peer relationship, and mental health among young adults in Malaysia. One hundred and thirty students were selected through random sampling from a total population of 5216 students at a private university. They are given Parental Authority Questionnaire-Revised (PAQ-R), McGill Friendship Questionnaire Respondent's Affection (MFQ-RA), and Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS 21). The results of the study demonstrated a significant relationship between parenting styles and peer relationship respectively. On the other hand, there was no significant difference in mental health by peer relationship. Despite that, there was significant relationship between parenting style and mental health where children who were raised by parents who adopted an authoritarian parenting style have higher tendency to experience mental health problem. In brief, this study suggested that authoritative parenting style promoted good relationship between peers among young adults and their mental health. Further research on the strategies for awareness, prevention and intervention programs should be conducted to help improve Malaysian young adults' mental health in the future.

**KEYWORDS:** Parenting styles, Peer relationship, Mental health, Student.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Parents are known as significant people in their children's life. They play an important role in shaping children's emotional health, temperament, and the way they perceived themselves to the society. Children characters in the present is a reflection of their parents' either in the past or present time. In this context children is said to learn on how to behave and perceive themselves to the society through their observation towards their parent's behaviour. According to Bibi, Chaundry, Awan, and Tariq (2013) all parents in the world inhibit different attitudes, manners, values, believes and family background and these characteristics are the core elements used in shaping their children's life. Every parent prefers certain style in rearing children of their own from birth to adulthood period and this has contributed to the children's personality development, peer relationship, and social integration when in public institutions such as schools or universities.

Baumrind (1971) mentioned in a study, that there are three parenting styles most commonly used in the society, which are authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style, and permissive parenting style. Authoritative parenting style is defined as parents who have showed high degree level of warmth and responsiveness to their children (Kelly & Rubin, 2015). Through this style parent set limits, makes logical demands and insists on children's obedience. However, a study by Bibi et al. (2013), showed that parents who uses authoritative parenting style are usually warm, receptive towards their children's opinions and would give the autonomy to their children in making decision. Most often they would welcome their children's point of views in family matters and decision-making events. In short, parents that adopt this style in their children's upbringing will usually practise negotiation with their children in determining some important matters or deciding of what that would influence the children's lives.

Authoritarian parenting styles on the other hand, describes a less responsive style. Although it implies warmth, this approach emphasized more on restrictiveness, disciplinary, and control. (Kelly & Rubin, 2015). Parents who exercise this approach would punish and threaten their children for unacceptable behaviours or wrongdoings. This was proven in a study by Mahanesh, Al-Zhoubi, Batayneh, & Jawarneh (2013). In another study by Bibi et al. (2013), through this style, parents actually engage in little mutual interaction with their children and they expect their children to follow their rules without any exception and questions. Additionally, Zupancic, Podlesek & Kavcic (2004) stated that, these parents use the power-assertive techniques of socialization which includes the threats, orders, physical force, as well as love withdrawal. These actions by parents can produce negative emotion which influence and jeopardize the psychological wellbeing of the children (Rahman & Keat, 2017). In accordance to that, parents do not realise that this style of upbringing has blocked the opportunities for the children to shine and express themselves to the society. In placing more emphasis, Bibi et al. (2013) claimed that these parents are likely to set high standards for the children's achievement academic and curricular activities. Concisely, this shows that authoritarian parents connect love with success which also means that failures or mistakes made by their children in any significant areas such as academic and curricular activities is purely unacceptable.

The third parenting style is permissive style where the parents establish few clear and predictable rules in the house (Bibi et al., 2013). Similarly, Rossman & Rea (2005) indicated that these parents do not emphasize much on rules to their children and they give the children the freedom to do whatever they want and frequently misconduct behaviours are ignored unless it involves physical harm. This approach of upbringings eventually will cause the children to have lack of responsibilities in any role or positions that they take later in life. Permissive parents tend to let their children see them as a friend not a parent which sometimes lead the children to become disrespectful to their parents. Hence, parents who adopt permissive style of parenting are more responsive than demanding as they are non-traditional, lenient toward their children's request and ultimately would avoid confrontation with their children.

Generically, choices of parenting styles can also influence peer relationship as well as mental health of children who are growing up to become adolescents and going through other growing phases of life. Young adulthood is known as the phase of life where they get to learn different number of roles such as a student, daughter or son of a family, an important committee member in the school and any other related roles which can affect their stress and anxiety level (Kaswadi, Malik & Keat, 2018). In another article, Slavin-Williams and Berndt (1990), Youniss and Smollar (1985) mentioned that this is the transactional period where they turn their primary sources of support from parents to their peers as they spend more time with their peers at the school as compared to their parents at home (as cited in Colarossi & Eccles, 2000). This has caused them to depend more on their peers in decision making or seeking opinions about important things in their life. In this connection, it had been proven that parenting styles is one of the factor that determine whether the adolescents will experience successful or futile friendships in their life (Ghazwani, Khalil & Ahmed, 2016). Rubin and Kelly (2015) revealed in their study that children who are growing from family who are high in warmth and responsiveness predicts better social, academic, and personal-emotional adjustment at university level which lead them to have best quality of friendship with their peers.

Previous studies found that mental health or psychological well-being of an individual is determined by the factors such as parenting styles and peer relationship (Smokowski, Bacallao, Cotter & Evans, 2015; Ghazwani, Khalil & Ahmed, 2016). Children who grows up in a stressful environment where the parents practices criticism and demandingness, would not have a good relationship with their peers and this eventually would lead them to experience stress and mental health issues such as depression, and anxiety. In example, authoritarian parenting style is an approach where parents set high standard of guidelines or rules and expectations which then would cause their children to experience social withdrawal and depression. Similarly, Baumrind (1972) indicated that authoritarian parenting style instigate fearful timid behaviour and behavioural compliance among European-American children whereas assertiveness among African-American girls in later stage of their lives (as cited in Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 487). Henceforward, parents should inhibit characteristics such as high in warmth and responsiveness to give their children the freedom in choosing their friends and develop better friendship in life. This will eventually lead them to experience well balanced physical and psychological life.

A report by the Health Ministry of Malaysia in 2015, stated that the quantity of mental illness cases among Malaysian young adults is 29.2%, which is evaluated at 4.2 million individuals (Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia, 2016). This number makes psychological instability the second most elevated medical issue in Malaysia. The developmental stage with highest suicidal risks in Malaysia is also identified to be amongst young adults (Lim, Peh & Kim, 2017; Raman, Sriperumbudur, Ghazi, Saleem & Dalayi, 2019). However, factors affecting their wellbeing found from previous literatures mostly were based on Western population. There is a research gap to further understand this issue in a non-Western culture including in Malaysia (Yahya, Zulkefly &

Baharudin, 2018; Kamarulzaman & Jodi, 2018). Therefore, this study focused on the relationship between parenting styles, peer relationship and mental health among young adults in Malaysia. This study would explain how parenting styles significantly impacts peer relationship; that involves the satisfaction and positive feelings toward their friends and mental health; which includes the tendency to have depression, anxiety, and stress in their life.

**II. METHODS**

This study uses the quantitative research design that involves survey and correlational technique to investigate the relationship between parenting styles, peer relationship and mental health among young adults (Affandee, Rehman & Keat, 2018). A total of 130 students were randomly selected from a population of 5216 male and female students at a private university using the database from the registrar. The sample consisting of 65 male and 65 female students were given a set of questionnaire consisting of established instruments which are Parental Authority Questionnaire-Revised (PAQ-R) (Buri, 1991), McGill Friendship Questionnaire Respondent’s Affection (MFQ-RA) (Mendelson & Aboud, 2012), and Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS 21) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

PAQ-R instrument was used to measure the student’s perspectives of the parenting styles used by their parents. This questionnaire consist of 30 items rated based on a 5-point scale which included three of 10-item scales that demonstrate authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles. The scales are demonstrated to have good discriminant-related validity, criterion-related validity, high values of Cronbach alpha statistics (more than .7) for each subscale in the instrument and do not seem to be susceptible to socially desirability response bias (Schunk & Handal, 2011). The second instrument; MFQ-RA was used to measure affection and satisfaction with the friendship. The respondents need to indicate degree of agreement on a 9-point scales to 16 items in two significant subscales which are Positive Feeling scale and Satisfaction scale. Mendelson & Aboud (2012) stated that the reliability of this instrument was analysed according to the subscales gave Cronbach’s alpha values of .96 and .92 for the Positive Feeling subscale and Satisfaction subscale respectively. The third instrument used to measure the mental health status was DASS 21. This questionnaire has four points of Likert scales, consisting of 42 items that analysed the degree of depression, anxiety, and stress of the respondents. The Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficients had been determined for depression, anxiety, and stress scale respectively .96, .89, and .93 (Basha and Kaya, 2006).

Data collected was analysed using Pearson correlation to examine the relationship between parenting styles and peer relationship; and the relationship between parenting style and mental health. Next, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the difference in mental health by peer relationship.

**III.RESULTS**

In order to see the relationship between parenting style and peer relationship; and relationship between parenting style and mental health, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was employed.

**Table 1:** Shows the Relationship between Parenting Styles and Peer Relationship

Variables	Peer Relationship
Permissive	.181*
Authoritarian	.150
Authoritative	.195*

Note: \* p < .05

The analysis showed that there is a significant relationship between Permissive Parenting Style and Peer Relationship ( $r = .181, p < .05$ ), no significant relationship between Authoritarian Parenting Style and Peer Relationship ( $r = .150, p > .05$ ), and a significant relationship between Authoritative Parenting Style and Peer Relationship ( $r = .195, p < .05$ ). The outcome was a result from respondents who were raised by parents who adopted an authoritative and permissive parenting style whom were discovered to have a good relationship with their peers.

**Table 2:** Shows the Relationship between Parenting Styles and Mental Health

Variables	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
Permissive	.172	.232**	.178*
Authoritarian	.282**	.242**	.230**
Authoritative	-.044	.039	-.005

Note: \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01

Analysis from table 2, showed that there is a significant relationship between Permissive Parenting Style and Depression ( $r = .172, p \leq .05$ ), Anxiety ( $r = .232, p < .01$ ), and Stress ( $r = .178, p < .05$ ). This resulted from young adults who were raised using permissive parenting style that had higher tendency to experience depression problem, anxiety and stress.

The analysis also showed that there is a significant relationship between Authoritarian Parenting Style and Depression ( $r = .282, p < .01$ ), Anxiety ( $r = .242, p < .01$ ) and Stress ( $r = .230, p < .01$ ). Thus, the findings shows that young adults raised by parents who adopted an authoritarian parenting style had higher tendency to experience depression, anxiety and stress problem.

Albeit, the finding showed that there is no significant relationship between Authoritative Parenting Style and Depression ( $r = -.044, p > .05$ ), Anxiety ( $r = .039, p > .05$ ) and Stress ( $r = -.005, p < .01$ ).

In the interest of this study, it is significant to determine the relationship between peer relationship and mental health. Henceforth, ANOVA technique was implemented.

**Table 3:** Shows the Difference in Depression by Peer Relationship

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	.650	4	.163	.430	.787
Within Groups	47.215	125	.378		
Total	47.866	129			

Note: \*p < .05

The analysis in Table 3 shows that there is no significant different in Depression by Peer Relationship ( $F = .430, p > .05$ ). Thus, it was concluded that the hypothesized difference is **not supported**.

**Table 4:** Shows the difference in Anxiety by Peer Relationship

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	1.237	4	.309	.829	.509
Within Groups	46.628	125	.373		
Total	47.866	129			

Note: \*p < .05

The analysis in table 4 shows that there is no significant different in Anxiety by Peer Relationship ( $F = .829, p < .05$ ).

**Table 5:** Shows the difference in Stress by Peer Relationship

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	.596	4	.149	.394	.812
Within Groups	47.269	125	.378		
Total	47.866	129			

Note: \*p < .05

The finding in table 5 showed that there is no significant different in Stress by Peer Relationship, ( $F = .394, p > .05$ ). Therefore, there is no significant difference in mental health by peer relationship.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION**

Based on the results, the current study had found that there is significant relationship between parenting styles and peer relationship. For example, the results stated that there is a significant relationship between parents' authoritative parenting style and peer relationship ( $r = .195, p < .05$ ). In support to that, previous study reported similar results where Brown and Bakken (2011) revealed, adolescents whose parents adopted an authoritative parenting style; which emphasized on high levels of support and warmth toward the child and high level of awareness of the child's activities, had the best friend quality which were significantly not associated with externalizing behaviours such as delinquency or drug use. This claim can also be supported by similar research done by Lieberman, Doyle and Markiewicz (1999) where they stated that adolescents from warm, supportive families are more socially competent and declared to have positive relationship with peers (as cited in Liem, Cavell, & Lustig, 2010).

Likewise, Rubin and Kelly (2015) mentioned in their study that authoritative parenting style advocates greater self-management, promotion-focused self-regulation, social competence, optimism, theory of mind, and successful interpersonal relations which are beneficial for developing friendships and conforming in social groups. Hence, this showed that authoritative parenting style has a beneficial impact in the adolescent's life; where it helps the adolescents to develop sense of responsible, honest, loyal and friendly. This would lead them to have greater friendship with their peers and better mental health in the future.

In addition, the current study reported that there is a significant relationship between parenting styles and mental health. For instance, the results showed that there is a significant relationship between parents' permissive parenting style and mental health ( $r = .172, p \leq .05$ ). Bibi et al. (2013) indicated that children adapted with permissive parenting style have higher tendency to experience anxiety and higher internalising problems such as depression and social withdrawal. The results also showed that there is a significant relationship between parents' authoritarian parenting style and mental health and this statement was supported by the similar study done by Silva, Dorso, Azhar, and Renk (2007). Correspondingly, Rubin and Kelly (2015) mentioned in their study that authoritarian parenting style predicted negative relation towards self-esteem, and emotional well-being, and positive relation towards anxiety, depression, sense of inadequacy, symptomatic problems, risk to self and others, including suicidal intention. However, the results indicated that there is no significant relationship between parents' authoritative parenting style and mental health. Similarly, in another study, Liem et al. (2010) stated that children whose parents adopted an authoritative parenting style would less likely to be reported depressed as their parents inhibit characteristics such as warmth and open stance while maintaining the clear limit boundaries in taking care of them. Therefore, these recent and previous studies have given clear explanation that permissive and authoritarian parenting styles lead the young adults to have higher level of depression, anxiety, and stress than young adults who experience an authoritative parenting style of upbringing.

Lastly, the recent study analysed that there is no significant difference in mental health by peer relationship. In contrast, Rubin and Kelly (2015) mentioned that general friendships and social integration at the university, displayed medium-to-large size positive relations with mental health and well-being. This means that greater friendships and support from peers as well as better social integration at the university leads to better mental health and greater satisfaction with life. In placing more emphasis, Liem et. al., (2010) stated that peer support and positive self-development; which is similar to parenting styles, are significant in determining whether an adolescent becomes depressed. Thus, this simplified that, support and satisfaction of feelings toward friends are among the factors that lead adolescents to develop mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, parenting actually has a significant impact to the peer relationship and mental health of young adults. The characteristics of parent and how they raise their children would be among the significant factors that affects children's interpersonal relationship and psychological development. Parents who are warmth, responsive, caring, and not too strict in taking care of their children would help to enhance their children's self-esteem, they would not be afraid to socialise and meet new people. They would not feel timid to make the first move in making friends with others. Eventually, this would lead them to have a good relationship with their peers and have better mental health in the future. In a nutshell, this study has proven that parenting style which synchronises with the children's need not only promotes a better relationship with their parents and peers, but also produces healthy young adults psychologically and mentally. In line with this article, further research on strategies for awareness, prevention and intervention programs related to parenting style and peer relationship should be conducted to help improve Malaysian young adults' mental health.

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