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(IJEPC)**www.ijepec.com**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED PARENTING STYLES
AND ANXIETY LEVEL AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN KUALA
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DOI: 10.35631/IJEPC.1060031This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

Parenting styles shape an individual's psychological development and mental well-being. This study explores the relationship between perceived parenting styles and anxiety levels among young adults in Kuala Lumpur, focusing on Baumrind's parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) and their correlation with anxiety measured through the Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7 (GAD-7). Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 112 participants aged 18 to 25. Findings revealed significant gender differences in anxiety levels, maternal tendencies toward permissive parenting, and the protective role of authoritative parenting in reducing anxiety. These findings affect family dynamics, mental health interventions, and parenting education initiatives.

Keywords:

Parenting Styles, Mental Well-Being, Anxiety, Family Dynamics, Parenting Education

Introduction

Parenting has long been recognized as a key factor in shaping the emotional and psychological development of children, influencing their ability to manage stress and anxiety. In recent years, the impact of parenting styles on mental health, particularly among young adults, has garnered

increasing attention. This research focuses on young adults in Kuala Lumpur, examining how perceived parenting styles affect anxiety levels. Notably, the significance of this study lies in its exploration of the role of parenting in young adult mental health, particularly in a culturally diverse and rapidly urbanizing context such as Kuala Lumpur. The theoretical framework for this research is based on Baumrind's (1966) classification of parenting styles, which categorizes parental behavior into three primary types: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Accordingly, previous studies have demonstrated that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and high expectations, tends to be associated with better emotional regulation and lower anxiety levels (Rezaei et al., 2018). It was determined that authoritarian and permissive parenting styles emphasize control and leniency, respectively, and have been linked to higher anxiety and emotional challenges in children (Yang, 2024; Louis, 2022).

Other than that, anxiety among young adults has been rising (Goodwin et al., 2020). A significant percentage of 20% of young adults in 2019 reported having anxiety symptoms, indicating a rising concern for mental health in this age group (Adams et al., 2022). In the United States, a considerable percentage of young adults, that is, those who are between the ages of 18 and 25 (Scales et al., 2015), have reported anxiety, with a prevalence rate of 36% (Lewis, 2023). Moreover, it was reported that anxiety in females is higher than in males in Malaysia (Hassan et al., 2023). These results indicate the significance of addressing young adults' mental health and the requirement for more resources and support to enable them to manage these difficulties successfully.

Generally, parenting nurtures an individual's intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development from birth to adulthood (Joseph et al., 2022). Parenting styles are influenced by a child's dispositions, parental upbringing, observations of other families, and cultural ideals (Joseph et al., 2022). Multiple studies have indicated that there is a relationship between parenting style and anxiety (Tandon & Bhatnagar, 2021; Joseph et al., 2022; Yan, 2023). Correspondingly, anxiety-related issues among young people continue to be underdiagnosed and untreated despite advancements in understanding and awareness (Bertie et al., 2020). This is particularly concerning considering the high prevalence of anxiety observed among young adults in recent research (Goodwin et al., 2020). In addition, young adulthood, characterized as a phase of transition and significant life pressures, is often accompanied by unique challenges that can exacerbate mental health concerns (Tandon & Bhatnagar, 2021).

Authoritarian parenting, which is defined by harsh and punishing behaviors, can have a range of adverse effects on youths (Yan, 2023). Note that parenting styles can play a potentially long-term role in developing emotional distress in young adults and significantly influence an individual's emotional well-being and social development (Tandon & Bhatnagar, 2021). While earlier studies have examined specific aspects of this connection, an in-depth study that considers the intricate interplay between diverse parenting styles and young adults' anxiety levels still needs additional, comprehensive studies in this area for a better understanding (Bahtiyar & Gençöz, 2021). Considering factors such as bonding patterns and perceived parental support, this study aims to evaluate the relationship between parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) and anxiety levels among young adults in Kuala Lumpur.

Consequently, the study explores the complex and critical impact of early parental experiences on developing young adults' mental health outcomes. It also underlines the need to understand how different parenting methods may significantly impact anxiety levels within this demographic (Jain & Sharma, 2024). Hence, a comprehensive framework adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, sets out a shared vision for promoting peace and prosperity for people and the environment, both now and in the future (United Nations, 2024). Correspondingly, this study contributes to the global agenda's overarching goal of creating a more sustainable and inclusive world that prioritizes the health and happiness of all its inhabitants by focusing on improving the general well-being and quality of life of young adults and parents.

This study aims to (1) investigate the correlation between perceived parenting styles and anxiety levels among young adults in Kuala Lumpur. It also seeks to (2) examine the differences in the three types of perceived parenting styles, namely authoritarian, authoritative and permissive, between paternal (father) and maternal (mother) figures as perceived by young adults. Additionally, the study (3) explores whether there are significant differences in anxiety levels between male and female young adults in Kuala Lumpur.

Research Hypothesis

H1: There is a correlation between perceived parenting styles and anxiety levels among young adults in Kuala Lumpur.

H2: There is a difference between the three perceived parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive) of paternal and maternal among young adults.

H3: There is a difference in anxiety levels between male and female young adults in Kuala Lumpur.

Literature Review

Parenting Styles and Anxiety

The parenting style known as "authoritative parenting" provides an affectionate environment in which parents are warm and attentive and provide clear guidelines for their young children. Baumrind's comprehensive research has suggested numerous beneficial outcomes for children as they grow and develop with an authoritative parenting style (Rezaei et al., 2018; Yang, 2024; Z. P. Li, 2024). Notably, authoritarian parents are well known for their strict and demanding approaches to child-rearing, prioritizing discipline and obedience over warmth and response. As a result, this strict parenting approach, which emphasizes the value of structure and regulations, can lead to a household that lacks emotional support and closeness. Studies have reported that there was a considerable correlation between various parenting approaches and anxiety levels in individuals (Jain & Sharma, 2024). Additionally, studies have indicated that the absence of attachment and positive reinforcement commonly associated with certain parenting styles may contribute to higher levels of anxiety and lower self-esteem among individuals raised in such environments (Rezaei et al., 2018). In terms of the correlation between parenting styles and anxiety levels, studies have also discovered that various parenting styles have varying impacts on children's and youths' anxiety levels. Permissive and authoritarian parenting is associated with higher anxiety, while authoritative parenting is associated with reduced anxiety (Yang, 2024). In essence, parental behavior significantly

impacts an individual's development since individuals often mimic and take on the behaviors and attitudes they observe in their parents while growing up. Hence, people who observed their parents' clear displays of calmness and security as children are likelier to express these traits.

Perception of Young Adults Toward Parenting Styles

Young adults' perspectives on parenting styles offer valuable insights into how early upbringing influences emotional, social, and psychological development. Based on Baumrind's (1971) widely recognized framework of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles, it is evident that these approaches significantly shape individuals' lives. Specifically, authoritative parenting, which balances warmth and discipline, is often viewed by young adults as highly positive. This parenting style is associated with better emotional intelligence and stronger conflict-resolution skills, as it promotes emotional regulation and adaptive problem-solving (Rezaei et al., 2018). On the other hand, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are generally perceived more negatively. Authoritarian parenting, known for its strict rules and limited emotional support, is often linked to higher anxiety levels and reduced emotional intelligence. Consequently, young adults raised under this style report greater difficulties in managing interpersonal relationships and conflicts, reflecting findings by Yang (2024). Similarly, permissive parenting, which offers warmth but lacks structure, is perceived as leading to challenges in emotional regulation and decision-making (Louis, 2022).

Parenting Style Differences Between Father and Mother

Both parents can exhibit authoritative parenting, fostering healthy development and strong parent-child bonds (Jain & Sharma, 2024). However, differences in communication styles affect children's behavior and anxiety levels (Jain & Sharma, 2024). One parent may be comforting, while the other takes a direct approach, shaping children's coping mechanisms (Jain & Sharma, 2024). Concurrently, mothers are typically more responsive and supportive, while fathers tend to be more controlling and demanding, granting less autonomy (Yaffe, 2020). These differences, influenced by traditional gender roles, shape children's perceptions of authority and obedience (Yaffe, 2020).

Anxiety Differences Between Father and Mother

According to research, there may be differences in anxiety levels between males and females, with numerous studies revealing that gender-related factors can play a vital role in the onset and prevalence of anxiety symptoms (Jain & Sharma, 2024). Female anxiety is more common than male anxiety, and this is mostly due to biological causes (Hassan et al., 2023). As such, hormone changes (progesterone and estrogen, in particular) have been directly associated with a higher risk of anxiety-related conditions in females (Jain & Sharma, 2024). On the other hand, men may be trained from an early age to repress feelings and display endurance, which frequently results in the internalization of anxiety symptoms and puts obstacles in the way of getting support (Hassan et al., 2023). Moreover, male's experiences and expressions of anxiety can be profoundly impacted by the pressure from society to live up to traditional ideas of masculinity, which in turn affects how willingly they report symptoms (Hassan et al., 2023).

Research Design and Method

This study is aimed at investigating the correlation between parenting styles and anxiety levels in young adults using a quantitative method. In addition, this study aims to investigate the correlation between two continuous variables: perceived parenting styles and anxiety levels of young adults. Correlation analysis determines the strength and direction of a relationship

between two variables. It also investigates whether changes in one variable are connected with changes in another, which aligns with this research's aims. At the same time, convenience sampling techniques were used in the research to collect participants from the state of Kuala Lumpur. To determine the appropriate sample size for this study, the researcher used G*Power, a statistical software widely employed for power analysis. After conducting the analysis, the recommended sample size for this research was determined to be 112 participants, ensuring sufficient statistical power to detect meaningful relationships and differences in the data.

Sample and Location

This study investigates the relationship between parenting styles and anxiety among young adults in Kuala Lumpur using a convenience sampling technique. This method allows for selecting individuals who are conveniently accessible and willing to participate, making it feasible given potential time and resource constraints. The target population comprises young adults aged 18 to 25 years residing in Kuala Lumpur (Scales et al., 2015), with a required sample size of 112, as determined by G*power analysis.

Inclusion criteria: Participants must be aged 18 to 25 and raised by parents or guardians. Exclusion criteria: Participants diagnosed with any anxiety disorder are excluded.

Procedure

Participants for this study were selected through a convenience sampling method from a population of young adults aged 18 to 25 years. Consequently, an online Google form was distributed via email distribution lists and social media groups. This online form included extensive questions intended to assess parenting style through the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and determine participants' anxiety levels through the Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7 (GAD-7) Questionnaire. Participants were provided with an informed consent form that outlined the study's objectives, emphasized the voluntary nature of participation through Google Forms, ensured confidentiality was protected, and included demographic information for the researcher before beginning to fill out the questionnaire. Note that it took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete the Google Form, and the data collected was securely saved by the researcher and used for statistical analysis.

A pilot study was conducted with a sample of 11 participants two weeks prior to the main research. Table 1 presents the reliability of the instruments used in the study was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 1: Reliability

	Scale Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
GAD-7 (Anxiety)	.876	7
PAQ	.963	60

The results indicate that all scales used in the study had high reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from .876 to .963. These findings suggest that the instruments are reliable and suitable for assessing the variables in the study.

Instrument***Parental Authority Questionnaire***

The Parenting Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), developed by Diana Baumrind, measures three parenting styles: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. This self-report tool consists of 30 statements rated on a 5-point Likert Scale: (1) Strongly Agree to (5) Strongly Disagree. The PAQ, outlined by Buri (1991), is widely employed to assess parenting styles. Buri (1991) confirmed its validity and reliability, with strong Alpha coefficients indicating high internal consistency, particularly in fathers' parenting style evaluations. Note that the questionnaire comprises three subscales, each with ten items.

Table 2: Reliability of the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) of The Mother

Parenting Style	Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha α)	Test-Retest Reliability (r)
Authoritative	0.82	0.78
Authoritarian	0.85	0.86
Permissive	0.75	0.81

Table 3: Reliability of the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) of The Father

Parenting Style	Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha α)	Test-Retest Reliability (r)
Authoritative	0.85	0.83
Authoritarian	0.87	0.85
Permissive	0.74	0.77

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

The GAD-7 is a widely utilized self-report questionnaire designed to assess the severity of GAD symptoms in individuals. Developed by Spitzer et al. (2006), the GAD-7 is a seven-item scale that measures anxiety symptoms experienced. The items focus on the frequency of symptoms such as excessive worry, restlessness, and difficulty relaxing, among others. Respondents rate the severity of each symptom on a 4-point Likert scale (0 = Not at all, 3 = Nearly every day). The tool is especially useful in identifying individuals at risk for GAD, providing a simple, reliable measure of anxiety levels. Remarkably, the GAD-7 has demonstrated strong reliability and validity, with a high internal consistency and moderate to strong test-retest reliability across various populations.

Table 4: Reliability Coefficients for the GAD-7

Measure	Reliability Coefficient (r)
GAD-7 Total Scale	0.89

Results

Distributions of respondent's profile by selected demographic characteristics are presented in Table 5-7. A total of 112 young adults in Kuala Lumpur who are studying at university or working completed the online Google survey. Consequently, the students include both from

the local and private universities in Kuala Lumpur. A summary of every variable in demographics, along with the percentage, is summarized in Tables 5-7 below.

Table 5: Summary of Sample by Gender

Variable	N = 112	Percentage (%)
Male (1)	69	61.6
Female (2)	43	38.4

Table 6: Summary of Sample by Age

Variable	N = 112	Percentage (%)
18	3	2.7
19	13	11.6
20	39	34.8
21	15	13.4
25	13	11.6
23	8	7.1
24	4	3.6
25	17	15.2

Based on the demographic information, the age of respondents ranged from 18 to 25 years old. Most respondents were 20 years old, with 39 participants (34.8%), followed by 25-year-olds, with 17 participants (15.2%). Meanwhile, respondents aged 21 and 19 years old accounted for 13.4% (15 participants) and 11.6% (13 participants), respectively. At the same time, smaller proportions were observed among respondents aged 23 years old (7.1%, 8 participants), 24 years old (3.6%, 4 participants), and 18 years old (2.7%, 3 participants). Regarding gender distribution, the majority of respondents were males, with 69 participants (61.6%), while 43 participants (38.4%) were females.

Table 7: Summary of Sample by Occupation

Variable	N = 112	Percentage (%)
Other occupation	6	5.4
Studying	41	36.6
Working	65	58.0

The analysis of participants' occupations reveals that most respondents were working professionals, comprising 65 individuals (58.0%). This was followed by students, with 41 participants (36.6%). A small proportion of the respondents, six individuals (5.4%), reported their occupations as "Other." The findings indicate that most participants were actively engaged in either employment or education, representing 94.6% of the total sample.

The Correlation Between Perceived Parenting Styles And Anxiety Levels Among Young Adults In Kuala Lumpur.**Table 8: Correlation Between Perceived Parenting Styles and Anxiety Levels**

Parenting Style	Pearson Correlation (r)	Significance (p-value)	Strength of Correlation
Authoritative	0.305	0.001	Weak
Authoritarian	0.420	0.05	Moderate
Permissive	0.334	0.05	Weak

N = 112. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A Pearson correlation test (N = 112) revealed a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.305$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that higher authoritative parenting scores slightly increase anxiety levels among young adults in Kuala Lumpur. On the other hand, a Pearson correlation test (N = 112) demonstrated a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.420$, $p = 0.05$), suggesting a moderate association between higher authoritarian parenting scores and increased anxiety levels. Meanwhile, a Pearson correlation test (N = 112) reported a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.334$, $p = 0.05$), indicating a slight yet significant link between permissive parenting and higher anxiety levels. The findings support the hypothesis that all three parenting styles are significantly correlated with anxiety. In addition, authoritarian parenting exhibited the strongest correlation, while authoritative and permissive parenting exhibited weaker associations, with authoritative parenting having the weakest link.

The Differences In The Three Types Of Perceived Parenting Styles (Authoritarian, Authoritative, And Permissive) Among Paternal (Father) And Maternal (Mother) Young Adults In Kuala Lumpur.

Table 9 presents the results of the paired sample t-tests conducted to determine whether fathers and mothers differ significantly in their parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive).

Table 9: Paired Sample T-Test Results for Perceived Parenting Styles

Parenting Style	Mean Difference (Father-Mother)	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (Two-Tailed)	Interpretation
Authoritative Parenting	-0.134	6.072	-0.233	111	0.816	No significant difference
Authoritarian Parenting	0.063	6.483	0.102	111	0.919	No significant difference
Permissive Parenting	-1.589	5.788	-2.906	111	0.004	Significant difference

Authoritative Parenting Styles

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare authoritative parenting scores between fathers and mothers. The results revealed no significant difference between fathers ($M = 26.20$, $SD = 5.48$) and mothers ($M = 26.33$, $SD = 5.60$), $t(111) = -0.233$, $p = 0.816$. The mean difference was -0.134 ($SD = 6.072$). These findings suggest that fathers and mothers exhibit similar levels of authoritative parenting.

Authoritarian Parenting Styles

The analysis revealed no significant difference in authoritarian parenting scores between fathers ($M = 28.85$, $SD = 6.34$) and mothers ($M = 28.79$, $SD = 5.60$), $t(111) = 0.102$, $p = 0.919$. The mean difference was 0.063 ($SD = 6.483$). This indicates that both fathers and mothers have comparable levels of authoritarian parenting.

Permissive Parenting Styles

A significant difference was observed in permissive parenting scores, with fathers ($M = 28.95$, $SD = 5.60$) scoring significantly higher than mothers ($M = 27.36$, $SD = 5.63$), $t(111) = -2.906$, $p = 0.004$. The mean difference was -1.589 ($SD = 5.788$), proposing that fathers are more likely to adopt a permissive parenting style compared to mothers.

From the paired t-test analysis, it was discovered that fathers and mothers did not significantly differ in their authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles. However, a significant difference was noted for permissive parenting, where fathers demonstrated a higher tendency toward permissiveness than mothers. This result highlights the significance of considering paternal and maternal differences in specific parenting styles when examining their relationship to young adults' experiences.

The Differences In Anxiety Levels Between Male And Female Young Adults In Kuala Lumpur.

Table 10: Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Anxiety Levels Between Males and Females

Variable	t	df	p (Two Tailed)	Mean Diff.	95 CI for diff.	Std. Error Mean
Anxiety	0.606	110	0.546	0.434	-0.986 to 1.855	0.717

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the anxiety scores for males and females. There was no significant difference in scores for males ($M = 9.67$, $SD = 3.837$) and females ($M = 9.23$, $SD = 3.435$); $t(110) = 0.606$, $p = 0.546$, two-tailed). Hence, there is no significant difference between males and females.

Discussion

A weak positive correlation was reported between authoritative parenting and anxiety. While authoritative parenting is linked to positive mental health outcomes, the slight increase in anxiety may stem from the pressure to meet high expectations (Lucy Ruffle, 2020). In addition, a moderate positive correlation supports existing research linking authoritarian parenting to adverse mental health outcomes (Rezaei et al., 2018; Jain & Sharma, 2024). Notably, strict control and low emotional warmth may contribute to stress and anxiety (Rezaei et al., 2018). A weak positive correlation suggests that permissive parenting slightly increases anxiety. While providing warmth, its lack of structure may leave children unprepared for challenges, heightening stress (Yang, 2024).

The Different Types Of Parenting Styles Among Paternal (Father) And Maternal (Mother) Young Adults In Kuala Lumpur.

No significant difference was observed between fathers and mothers, suggesting both equally demonstrate warmth, responsiveness, and guidance (Jain & Sharma, 2024). Furthermore, no significant difference was observed in authoritarian parenting, indicating both parents apply similar levels of strictness and control, consistent with cultural norms emphasizing respect for authority. Specifically, fathers scored higher than mothers suggesting they exhibit more permissive behavior. In other words, fathers may adopt a more lenient approach, while mothers focus on structure (Gugliandolo et al., 2019; Yaffe, 2020).

The Levels Of Anxiety Experienced By Males And Females Among Young Adults In Kuala Lumpur.

We recorded insignificant gender differences in anxiety, contrasting studies suggesting females are more prone to biological and social factors. Shared stressors in Kuala Lumpur's urban environment and shifting gender roles may contribute to similar anxiety levels. While women report more symptoms, men may internalize or underreport anxiety due to societal expectations (Hassan et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The findings provide insights into parenting styles, anxiety levels, and gender differences among young adults in Kuala Lumpur, with key implications for theory and practice. Note that authoritarian and permissive parenting were linked to higher anxiety, while authoritative parenting was associated with lower anxiety. This highlights the need for a balanced approach that combines structure, warmth, and open communication. Thus, parents should be encouraged to adopt authoritative practices to support mental well-being. Moreover, understanding parenting's role in anxiety can aid mental health practitioners in designing targeted interventions, such as family-based therapy and parental guidance programs, to address anxiety in young adults.

The limitation of this study is that while the study involved 112 participants, the sample size may not be sufficiently substantial to fully represent the diverse population of young adults in Kuala Lumpur. Thus, the findings may not generalize to other regions or cultural contexts. In addition, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, which captures data at a single point in time. As a result, causal relationships between parenting styles and anxiety levels cannot be established, limiting the study's ability to determine long-term effects. Other factors influencing anxiety levels, such as socioeconomic status, peer relationships, and genetic predisposition, were not controlled or examined in this study. These variables could potentially confound the relationship between parenting styles and anxiety.

Future studies should aim to include a larger and more diverse sample that represents a broader demographic to improve the generalizability of the findings. For instance, expanding the study beyond Kuala Lumpur could provide insights into how cultural and regional differences influence parenting styles and anxiety levels. Other than that, conducting longitudinal research would allow for the examination of how parenting styles affect anxiety over time, providing deeper insights into causal relationships and long-term effects on mental health. Additionally, studies could explore potential mediators such as self-esteem, coping skills or moderators as age, sibling relationships in the relationship between parenting styles and anxiety to better understand the mechanisms at play.

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