

How Parenting Styles Influence Adults' Social Anxiety

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Abstract. Causes of social anxiety come from a variety of sources, and one of the earliest causes is parenting styles. Children's consistent development of social anxiety may result from the use of different parenting styles by parents and social anxiety can persist into adulthood and even affect a person's whole life. In this paper, the author uses a questionnaire consisting of the s-EMBU-C scale and the Shyness Scale to examine the interaction between parenting styles and social anxiety in adults. A total of 420 effective data were collected in this study, after analysis, it was found that the age group of the respondents in this survey was still concentrated in their 20s overall, although some were individually higher. In the s-EMBU-C, no significant difference was found between the scores of the paternal factors and the maternal factors in the same dimension. In the Shyness Scale, more respondents selected low-scoring items, but the number of extremely high scores was high, so the overall scores were moderately high. Age was significantly associated with all factors in both s-EMBU-C and Shyness Scale. s-EMBU-C was significantly correlated with several factors in Shyness Scales. No clear regression prediction was found for the present survey data after regression prediction by SPSS. Although the findings of this study show a correlation between Parenting Styles and adult social anxiety, the author concludes that there are many other factors may influence adult social anxiety. Parenting Styles only partially affect adults' social anxiety levels.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Social Anxiety, Questionnaire.

1. Introduction

It is indispensable and inevitable for individuals to socialize in society. However, some individuals are unable to socialize as normally as others. These people experience anxiety when faced with social interactions, which is referred to as social anxiety. Social anxiety usually appears during adolescence and in some cases, it actually affects people's mental health and social functioning, but it does not reach pathological levels according to clinical diagnostic criteria. Whether it is taken over or acquired, parenting is a specific behaviour that a parent chooses to use in his/her child's care, raising, and education [1]. Although the Parenting Styles that parents use have different effects on their children the effects are long-lasting which the children cannot escape until they become adults.

At present, within the field of social anxiety studies, the student population is currently a popular subject of study, ranging from preschoolers to college students. Few scholars have studied both Parenting Styles and social anxiety and the relationship between them, even fewer studies have included adults as subjects, meaning that adults are a gap in the field of social anxiety research. The author's goal is to fill a gap in the field and hopefully, future scholars will have evidence to refer to in the literature. The research topic of this paper is how Parenting Styles influence adults' social anxiety, using the s-EMBU-C and Shyness Scale questionnaire.

2. Literature Review

Parenting Styles refers to the way parents treat their children in their growth stage and the way they deal with educational issues. Parenting Styles are very stable and do not change much with the environment. Parenting refers to the aspects of raising a child aside from the biological relationship [2]. Parenting Styles can predict children's academic achievement, social development, mental health and behavioral problems, as well as numerous aspects of individual adjustment and development such as personality, self-esteem, self-efficacy, psychological symptoms, behavioral problems, and so on in adults' children.

Parenting Styles have been one of the most important topics for educationalists and psychologists. Since Baumrin first proposed Parenting Styles, there has not been a unified and clear consensus, but Darling's concept is currently the most widely cited in the world [3]. In the 1930s, national research began to explore the influence of fathers and mothers on child development. In the 1940s, numerous empirical studies were used to explore the influence of Parenting Styles on child development. International scholars such as Baumrin, Darling, and Frances, and Chinese scholars such as Wenxin Zhang and Chen Chen, have classified the dimensions of Parenting Styles differently, but they are all classified in terms of the degree of parental severity and control over the child.

According to a reference of domestic and international literature, research scholars are relatively consistent in their explanations of social anxiety, most of them believe that social anxiety is related to situations, emotions, and negative evaluations of others. Social anxiety (SA) is a common human experience characterized by an intense fear of evaluation from others in social situations. When it reaches a pinnacle of severity such that functioning is impaired, it will be referred as the social anxiety disorder (SAD) or social phobia [4]. Some Chinese scholars believe that social anxiety is a nervous and shameful emotion that arises from a lack of confidence in oneself in the process of social interaction. Some studies have shown that negative events experienced during an individual's upbringing are one of the factors that induce social anxiety. Zimbardo and Radl suggested that children who experience excessive discipline in the parent-child relationship or who experience their parents as excessively judgmental may learn to be anxious and shy around others [5].

In this paper, the author used the Revision of the Short-form Egna Minnen av Barndoms Uppfostran for Chinese by Jiang et al. to calculate Parenting Styles into six factors: father rejection, father emotional warmth, father overprotection, mother rejection, mother emotional warmth and mother overprotection, and calculated the factor scores separately, using a 4-point scale, with 1 meaning "never" and 4 meaning "always" [6]. Children's social anxiety levels vary under different parenting styles, with children under the parenting style of attention, approval, and warmth having lower levels of social anxiety.

3. Method

3.1. Data collection

The research method used in this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed online using the Sojump, targeting adults. 473 questionnaires were returned, with 420 effective questionnaires. The independent variable of the study was Parenting Styles and the dependent variable was Social Anxiety. There is no specific questionnaire within the current academic community that measures the relationship between these two variables simultaneously, so the author used the s-EMBU-C and Shyness Scale.

The EMBU, which is widely used in the world today, was developed by C. Perris, Jacobsson, Lindstrom, von Knorin, H. Perris and has been translated and simplified by Chinese scholars to form the s-EMBU-C used in this paper. The questionnaire is self-administered, with 23 questions for fathers and 23 questions for mothers. It is divided into three dimensions: Rejection, Emotional Warmth, and Over Protection. The study showed that the s-EMBU-C has good internal consistency, reliability and ease of administration.

It is clear from beyond social withdrawal that the shyness scale evaluating shyness, unsociability, and peer avoidance can also be applied to the study of anxiety [7]. So this scale is used in this study. The original Shyness Scale has 9 entries, however, a revised scale with 13 items is now widely used. Shyness is a condition rather stable over time, especially in its extreme form, but its maladaptive significance may vary according to age [8]. Shyness Scale scores are highly correlated with other questionnaires measuring shyness and social anxiety, in terms of behavior: those with higher scores speak less and rarely make eye contact with each other during communication and they are more nervous, unfriendly, and inhibited than those with lower scores.

3.2. Data Screening

The author included screening questions in the questionnaire in order to collect real and valid data. The data submitted by respondents who did not select the specified answers were invalidated. Two age questions were set at the beginning and the end of the questionnaire, the questionnaire data were invalidated if the difference between the two age questions was greater than 1.

3.3. Data analysis

The data analysis tool directed at this study was SPSS.

3.4. Research hypothesis

1. Father Rejection, Father Emotional Warmth and Father Over Protection were significantly associated with shyness in Parenting Styles.
2. Mother Rejection, Mother Emotional Warmth and Mother Over Protection in Parenting Style were significantly associated with Shyness.
3. Age is significantly related to Shyness.
4. Father Over Protection is a predictor of Shyness.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were made for 420 valid questionnaires, the distribution is shown in table 1:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Descriptive Statistics (N=420)						
	Min	Max	M±SD	ME	ANOVA	
Age	18.0	60.0	21.15±4.31	20.00	18.60	
Fathers' Rejection	6.0	24.0	11.17±3.93	12.00	15.46	
Fathers' Emotional Warmth	7.0	28.0	19.12±4.44	20.00	19.71	
Fathers' Over Protection	9.0	33.0	18.43±3.79	18.50	14.38	
Mothers' Rejection	6.0	24.0	11.32±3.89	12.00	15.16	
Mothers' Emotional Warmth	7.0	28.0	19.68±4.08	20.00	16.64	
Mothers' Over Protection	9.0	33.0	18.91±3.95	19.00	15.63	
Shyness	14.0	63.0	41.82±8.56	44.00	73.28	

The maximum value of age was 60, but the median was 20 and the average was 21.15, which shows that the age group of the surveyed population in this survey is still concentrated in the 20s as a whole, although some individuals are higher.

The maximum value of Father Rejection score is 24, the minimum value is 6, the median value is 12, therefore, the high and low scores are distributed more evenly.

Father Emotional Warmth scored the maximum value of 28, the minimum value of 7, and the median value of 20, which shows that the overall score of Father Emotional Warmth in this survey is high, but there are still some low scores.

The maximum value of Father Over Protection score is 33, the minimum value is 9, and the median value is 18.5, therefore, the overall score of Father Over Protection is low, but there are some extremely high scores.

Mother Rejection had a maximum score of 24, a minimum score of 6, a median score of 12, which showed that the high and low scores were relatively even.

Mother Emotional Warmth had a maximum score of 28, a minimum score of 7, and a median score of 20, which shows that the overall score of this factor is high, but there are still some extreme cases

of low scores; when compared with Emotional Warmth, the difference between the scores of fathers' and mothers' for this factor in the same dimension is small.

The maximum score for Mother Over Protection is 33, and the minimum score is 9, the median score is 19, which shows that the overall score for this factor is low, but there are some extreme cases of low scores; when compared with the score for Father Over Protection, the difference is small.

The maximum value of Shyness score is 63, the minimum value is 14, and the median value is 44. Therefore, in this questionnaire, more respondents choose low scores, but the number of extremely high scores is high, so the overall score is relatively moderate to high.

4.2. Correlations

Table 2. Correlations.

Correlations								
	Age	Father Rejection	Father Emotional Warmth	Father Over Protection	Mother Rejection	Mother Emotional Warmth	Mother Over Protection	Shyness
Age	1							
Father Rejection	0.27**	1						
Father Emotional Warmth	0.13**	-0.05	1					
Father Over Protection	0.15**	0.60**	-0.01	1				
Mother Rejection	0.24**	0.77**	0	0.57**	1			
Mother Emotional Warmth	0.11*	-0.05	0.77**	-0.03	-0.09	1		
Mother Over Protection	0.10*	0.51**	-0.08	0.74**	0.61**	-0.09	1	
Shyness	0.20**	0.36**	-0.02	0.21**	0.36**	-0.03	0.21**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In terms of age, age is significantly correlated with all dimensions of Parenting Styles and age is significantly correlated with shyness. When correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), age is significantly correlated with father rejection, father emotional warmth, father over protection and mother rejection; when correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), age is significantly correlated with mother emotional warmth and mother over protection (see Table 2).

From Parenting Styles, when the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), Father Rejection is significantly correlated with Father Over Protection, Mother Rejection and Mother Over Protection; Father Emotional Warmth is significantly correlated with Mother Emotional Warmth; Father Over Protection is significantly correlated with Mother Rejection and Mother Over Protection; Mother Rejection was significantly correlated with Mother Over Protection.

In terms of Shyness, Shyness was significantly correlated with Age, Father Rejection, Father Over Protection, Mother Rejection and Mother Over Protection.

After regression prediction by SPSS for each factor of this survey data, no clear regression prediction was found for the time being.

5. Discussion

In the above data analysis, firstly, the median rating of Parenting Styles in this survey is close to the average, but there are some samples with very low ratings, which are known to be single-parent families or those who have experienced family break-ups. Most of the subjects rated their Parenting Styles as relatively fair, which also proved that most of the subjects were able to view Parenting Styles in a more rational way. Finally, shyness is clearly and significantly correlated with Parenting Styles. The effect of shyness on the subject group generally has no clear symptomatic manifestation, but some cases show clear somatization, mainly in the form of restlessness, fever, insomnia, and fatigue in the presence of shyness. Although shyness does not directly affect the subject's family situation, life situation or Parenting Styles, the situation and its effects may negatively influence the subject's social image and subjective perception of others' evaluation of the subject, leading to anxiety and scare about the occurrence of the next time shyness. The anxiety and scare and their possible somatization may lead to more severe shyness the next time it occurs, thus forming a vicious circle of "shyness-anxiety/scare-more shyness". The family is the first micro-ecological environment that influences children's growth and development. Children who grow up with different Parenting Styles and family environments have very different personalities. The present study showed that Parenting Styles did not have predictive validity for shyness and since the shyness scale applied in this study also measured anxiety, it can be inferred that Parenting Styles did not have predictive validity for social anxiety either. However, all the factors of Parenting Styles except Father Emotional warmth and Mother Emotional warmth were found to have significant effects on shyness. The findings of this study revealed that the first teachers in life are the members of the family of origin, especially the parents, and the importance of family factors in the formation and upbringing of people is much more influential than one can imagine.

According to the results, the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) between shyness and age, the correlation coefficient is -0.20, which means that shyness scores get lower with age. Nonetheless, because the correlation coefficient is not large, the actual performance may not be obvious. This situation is contrary to the findings of Xin Yu and most previous studies which claimed that the older the shyness score, the higher the shyness score [9]. This situation in this research may be due to the fact that the subject group not only includes the student group, but also the group that is already involved in work and needs to be self-reliant. The shyness of people at the workplace may be hindered. If these people keep their shyness at a level high at work, they will keep raising the threshold of shyness. Secondly, the inconspicuous result may also be due to the fact that the questionnaire collection time is short, the number of effective questionnaires is small. Accordingly, there is a natural bias.

The results of this study were consistent with the hypothesis that the independent variables were prominently correlated with the dependent variable, but no clear regression predictions were found at this time. This shows that adults' social anxiety is not only influenced by parenting styles but there may be other factors that can contribute to adult social anxiety, such as self-acceptance [10]. The results of the study can be applied to the application of better parenting styles. The results of the study can also shed light on the connection between parenting styles and adults' social anxiety.

This research's subject is the adult group, the division of age groups is not detailed, the age groups of the recovered samples are mainly focused on college students and people who partially participate in the workforce, so this research's result cannot provide more practical suggestions to the whole group of adults.

Due to the time limitation, the sample size of this study was only 420 effective data. With the study subject being adults, 420 samples can hardly be too representative. The sample collected in this study

was rich in regional sources, but the sample size collected in each region was not sufficient to represent the overall situation in that region.

Further restriction of the subject for the study to make the surveyed group more refined, such as restricting it to college students or young people within two years of graduation to work, could make the results more representative.

According to social perceptions and previous studies, Father Rejection, Father Emotional Warmth, Father Over Protection, Mother Rejection, Mother Emotional Warmth and Mother Over Protection should have some predictive effect on shyness. It is hoped that further studies by future researchers will seek to collect samples for a longer period of time and collect sufficient sample sizes for each age group to promote research reliability of validity.

It is hoped that the follow-up study can also refine the sampling method based on area differences. If the sample can be collected in a certain area and discussed in conjunction with the existing relevant analysis in a certain area, the results of the study can be closer to reality than the present study.

6. Conclusion

This study was devoted to investigating how parenting styles influence adults' social anxiety. Although the author read a lot of literature, it is learned that more previous studies used anxiety-specific scales such as the TAS. The author hopes to update and supplement the results of past studies through a new direction of analysis.

The recovered data were analyzed by SPSS and the following results were obtained: Father Rejection, Father Emotional Warmth and Father Over Protection in Parenting Styles were significantly correlated with shyness (social anxiety). Mother Rejection, Mother Emotional Warmth and Mother Over Protection were significantly correlated with adult shyness. Age is negatively correlated with shyness, which means that shyness scores become lower as age increases. However, the correlation coefficients were not large, so the actual performance of the older shyness was not significant.

In summary, the study concludes that Parenting Styles does have a significant effect on adult social anxiety and this research's result is in accordance with the research hypothesis. However, Parenting Styles is not the only factor that influences adults' social anxiety, adults' social anxiety is also influenced by other factors such as self-acceptance. Although the sample size of this study was not sufficient due to time constraints and the age group of the study participants was not detailed enough, this study successfully inspires more people to realize that Parenting Styles affect more than just a person's childhood and adolescence; rather, the effects of Parenting Styles are long-lasting and multifaceted. The author hopes that more researchers will study the effects of Parenting Styles on adults in areas other than social anxiety in the future. The author hopes that more parents will realize the importance of Parenting Styles to their children and that they will be willing to improve their education style in order to make their children become better people or have a better future.

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