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Research Article

The Relationship between Parental Approach and Anxiety

Abstract

Background and aim of the work: Parental approach with children has a considerable impact on this personality development process. The father/mother treatment of the child is the first human contact children experience, and will certainly leave an impact on their personality later on in life. This study came to emphasize the importance of parental approaches and their role in causing anxiety to female university students. It investigated the relationship between various developmental parental approaches and their psychological impact on female university students.

Methodology and results: This study was conducted on 341 female students at Majmaah University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. A Questionnaire with 57 statements was used. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed separately for approaches employed by the father and mother. It was seen that the correlation coefficient between anxiety level and father's aggression is 0.274, which indicated direct proportionality, demonstrating the relationship between those factors. This was with statistical significance of 0.013. The correlation coefficient between anxiety level and fathers' adequacy is -0.313, which indicates indirect proportionality indicating the negative relationship between those factors. This was with statistical significance of 0.016. When the same approaches followed by the mothers were considered the results obtained were very similar.

Conclusion and recommendations: The study results indicated that the family is the first and most important social organization and has a huge impact on the personality of students. Therefore, parental approaches represent an important factor in the social, psychological, physical and mental development of children. The researcher recommends the offering of awareness and mentoring program to parents, to educate them of the risks associated with inadequate approaches and their potential to increase anxiety levels and behavioral disorders among students.

Introduction

Scientists in psychology and sociology, consider the family unit, as being the first and most important social organization in society. Researches focused on its impact on developing the personalities of children in various aspects. Parental approach with children has a considerable impact on this personality development process [1,2]. The father/mother treatment of the child is the first human contact children experience, and will certainly leave an impact on their personality later on in life. In this context, many researchers confirmed that the essence of an individual develops and forms as a result of what he called reciprocal interpersonal relationships. The child's relationship with their mother and father is the foundation of this [2].

There is no doubt that anxiety is one of those psychological factors, which is related to parental approaches. Anxiety is one of the known concepts in personality psychology and represents a central building block in the science of mental disorders [1,3]. Anxiety is also considered as one of the most widespread psychological disorders in our modern society. Statistics indicate the increases in these cases are among individuals of various backgrounds, social class, age and occupations [1,4]. Anxiety disorders appear among the most common psychiatric problems experienced by children and remain stable and problematic for many youths throughout childhood and adolescence [1,4,5]. Anxiety is one of the basic concepts in psychopathology, and exhibits common symptoms with other mental and behavioral

disorders. It is also considered to be an interpretation concept in many personality theories [6]. Theoretical models of anxiety disorders have emphasized the influence of parenting on the development, maintenance, and amelioration of anxiety [7,8]. Furthermore, Ribble [9], emphasized the importance of parental approaches towards their children, constituting a key factor in shaping their personality, which can often suffer anxiety and lead to consequences as the children grow [9].

However, previous researches of the evidence linking parenting to anxiety have provided mixed support for existing theories and have failed to resolve a fundamental question: Are parenting practices substantially associated with childhood anxiety? [1,10]. As such, this study came to investigate the importance of parental approaches and their role in causing anxiety to female university students. It emphasizes the relationship between various developmental parental approaches and their psychological impact on female university students. In this study, anxiety is defined as a stable level of preparedness among female students of Majmaah University acquired during childhood. This may be different from one student to another. This state of preparedness allows students to perceive the world as a source of threat, which is always potential but can be triggered by a situation and lead to anxiety. Anxiety can be a reason or symptom of a situation, but in both cases lead to deficit, distraction and physiological disorder, which can be measured by the anxiety measures used in this research.

Materials and Methods

The study was approved by the ethical committee of Majmaah University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. An informed consent was obtained from each student before enrollment in the study.

Participants

In the study, the data were collected by randomly selected one 1st, one 2nd, one 3rd, and one 4th grade class from each different faculty in Majmaah University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The research was carried out with the data gathered from 341 female students. The students were in 18-23 age range and, mean age was 19.43 years with a standard deviation of 1.60. 24.3% of the participants were 1st grade students, 25.2% of them was 2nd grade students, 26.2% of them was 3rd grade students, and 24.3% of them were 4th grade students. All the participants were university students and could easily comprehend and complete the questionnaire.

Methodology

A self-rated survey with 57 statements was used; this was adopted from the tool developed by Al-Qarni [11]: “Parental Treatment Styles Scale” which was implemented on Saudi population. The questionnaire has four subscales:

1. Aggression (Cruelty): It consists of 14 items.
2. Excessive-care (Extra protection, Overprotection): It consists of 15 items.
3. Negligence: It consists of 15 items.
4. Normality (Adequate): It consists of 13 items.

The researcher placed three grades for the measurement tool:

Never: This means the assessed statement is not applicable at all to the participant that is, parents do not employ the present approach in dealing with the participating student.

Occasionally: this means the assessed statement is sometimes applied to the participant; that is, parents occasionally employ the present approach in dealing with the participating student, but not always.

Always: this means the assessed statement is always applicable to the participant; that is, parents always employ the present approach in dealing with the participating student.

The grades are then assessed through a scale of “0” indicating “Never” and a scale of “1” indicating “Occasionally” then a scale of “2” for “Always”. The scales of all statements are then totaled to reach the final grade. The total for each partial measure range as follows:

Aggression (Cruelty): 0-28 points.

Excessive-care (Extra protection, Overprotection): 0-30 points.

Negligence: 0-30 points.

Normality (Adequate): 0-26 points.

The data collection procedure was carried out by providing students with the appropriate environment and sufficient time for

answering the questions in groups in the university. The researcher explained to the participants the purpose and the importance of their participation in this study. In addition, the researcher assured the participants of the confidentiality of their response and that their response would be used only for research purposes. Then, the question booklets were distributed and instructions were given to the participants on how to answer them. The participants’ responses were scored by the researcher and were entered into the computer for statistical analysis.

Statistical analysis

Data analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 22). Simple statistics such as frequency and arithmetic mean were used. Linear correlations were performed by Pearson’s test. For all analyses, $p < 0.05$ provided statistical significance.

Results

Table 1 showed the demographic data of the study populations. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed separately for approaches employed by the father and mother.

To know the relationship between anxiety and various fathers’ approaches as perceived by students, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated and the results were given in the Table 1. It was seen that the correlation coefficient between anxiety level and father’s aggression is 0.274, which indicated direct proportionality, demonstrating the relationship between those factors. This was with statistical significance of 0.013.

The correlation coefficient between anxiety level and fathers’ adequacy is -0.313, which indicates indirect proportionality indicating the negative relationship between those factors. This was with statistical significance of 0.016.

When the same approaches followed by the mothers were considered the results obtained were very similar (Table 2).

As regards the correlation between anxiety level and age; Table 3 showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the level of anxiety and age. Table 4 showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the level of anxiety and number of family members. Tables 5, 6 showed that there was

Table 1: Demographic data of the study populations.

Item	Number	%
Sex	341	100
Age (year)		
Range:	18 – 23	-
Mean ± SD	19. 43 ± 1.60	-
Marital status		
Single	283	83
Married	58	17
University Grade		
First year	83	24.3
Second year	86	25.2
Third year	89	26.2
Fourth year	83	24.3

Table 2: Correlation coefficients between anxiety and various approaches by fathers.

Anxiety level	Aggression by father	Excessive care by father	Negligence by father	Adequacy by father
	r = 0.274 p = 0.013*	r = 0.340 p = 0.061	r = 0.321 p = 0.090	r = -0.313 p = 0.016 *

*Significant values.

Table 3: Correlation coefficients between anxiety and various approaches by mothers.

Anxiety level	Aggression by mother	Excessive care by mother	Negligence by mother	Adequacy by mother
	r = 0.252 p = 0.017*	r = 0.310 p = 0.081	r = 0.341 p = 0.060	r = -0.342 p = 0.014*

*Significant values.

Table 4: Correlation coefficients between anxiety and age.

Anxiety level	r	p	Significance
Age	-0,090	0,098	Not significant

Table 5: Correlation coefficients between anxiety and number of family members.

Anxiety level	r	p	Significance
Number of family members	0,028	0,608	Not significant

Table 6: Correlation coefficients between anxiety and marital status.

Anxiety level	Number	r	p	Significance
Single	283	-0,303	0,762	Not significant
Married	58			

no statistically significant difference between the study sample of married and unmarried individuals as regards the level of anxiety.

Discussion

Anxiety is one of the basic concepts in psychopathology, and exhibits common symptoms with other mental and behavioral disorders. It is also considered to be an interpretation concept in many personality theories [6].

The heritage of psychology literature is rich with various definitions. Anxiety can, for instance, be defined as an unpleasant situation, the feeling of potential threat, and feeling of insecurity and lack of security. Also, it is a personal experience, which is characterized by uncertainty, deficiency, and fear of anticipated evil with no justification. This fear is usually associated with the future and uncertainty and being overactive in situations that do not represent a realistic threat [1,3,12]. Also, anxiety is a natural reaction exhibited by humans when facing certain situations and can be leveraged to prepare a human to face threats. Anxiety is natural when experienced due to a realistic situation causing it [13].

The results of this study showed that there was a negative relationship between adequate approaches and anxiety levels. On the other hand, inadequate approaches such as aggressions, negligence

and excessive care relate positively with anxiety levels. In agreement of our results Erozakan [14] investigated the relationships between anxiety sensitivity and perceived parenting styles of adolescents and the predictive role of perceived parenting styles on anxiety sensitivity. His study group was composed by 545 students studying in different high schools in Turkey. The data were collected using the Anxiety Sensitivity Index-R, and Parental Attitudes Scale. Erozakan reported that the democratic, protective-demanding, and authoritarian parenting styles were found to be significantly correlated to anxiety sensitivity and democratic, protective-demanding, and authoritarian parenting styles important predictors of anxiety sensitivity in adolescents [14]. Mannuzza et al. [15] found that perceived parental pressure correlated positively with trait anxiety and with anxiety sensitivity. Conversely, parental warmth was positively associated with active coping and negatively with anxiety [15].

Reitman and Asseff [16] studied two-hundred students and their parents. They used student perceptions of parenting. The study replicated the previous researches on the relation between parental control/autonomy granting, rejection/acceptance, and trait anxiety. The study indicated that for both females and males, perceptions of maternal control and paternal acceptance proved to have the strongest relations with student anxiety. However, large differences between males and females emerged in their study, with maternal control and paternal acceptance proving to be significant correlates only for female undergraduates. Maternal, but not paternal, self-reports of trait anxiety were related to student trait anxiety, but the relation was marginally significant [16]. Ribble [9], emphasized the importance of parental approaches, because they represent a key influence on child personality and can lead to dire consequences. Wright et al. [17], highlighted the relationship between emotional inadequate and negligent parental approaches with symptoms of anxiety and depression in children.

The results of this study also indicate that the family is the first and most important social organization and has a huge impact on the personality of children. Therefore, parental approaches represent an important factor in the social, psychological, physical and mental development of children. The contrast in children personality is strongly and directly related to those approaches. If these approaches lack passion and kids are treated with rejection and discrimination, or treated with excessive care, then that would certainly leave a negative impact on their personality.

Anxiety, as one of the most important psychological disorders and is related to the nature of child-parent relationships, especially during early childhood [1,3]. Eysenck [18] asserted that the individual personality is the overall result of environmental nurturing and genetic physiology. Most of the reactions between these factors occur during early childhood, and anxiety is a psychological result, which relates to early childhood fostering approaches by parents [18].

Although this study adds to the existing literature, several limitations must be considered. Importantly, the sample was composed of university recruited female and thus findings may not be generalizable to clinical Saudi populations.

Study recommendations and suggestions

1. As a preventative measure, the researcher recommends the offering of awareness and mentoring program to parents, to educate them of the risks associated with inadequate approaches and their potential to increase anxiety levels and behavioral disorders among students.
2. As for treatment, the researcher calls on specialists in psychology and sociology in the area of education to involve partners in treating anxiety levels among students through family-oriented programming and guidance.
3. We need to view anxiety as a social problem, as many university students suffer from it at various levels; Saudi youths in general, and those in university in specific, suffer from anxiety which impacts their participation in society. It also limits their contributions at economic, political and social levels and deprives them from the ability to envision their future and career goals.

Future Work Recommendations

1. We recommend conducting similar studies over more samples of male and female students inflicted with anxiety, personality disorders and violent students due to their parents' approaches.
2. We recommend studying the relationship between parental approaches and personal and social responsibility of university students.

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