

# Role of Parenting Style in Impulsivity and Perception of Stress among First Year College Students

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## ABSTRACT

As a psychological construct parenting style represents some standard strategies which are used by parents for their child rearing practices. The aim of the study is to examine the role of parenting style in the development of impulsivity and perception of stress among the first year college students. The selected participants were Bengali male and female first year college students of Kolkata with their age ranged from 18 to 20 years and monthly family income Rs. 10,000 to 50,000 per month. The total number of respondents were about 200 people (100 males and 100 females) and it was ensured that these respondents did not suffer from chronic physical and mental disturbances as well as for those candidates whose highest scores had fallen in below and above the range of prototypes of PAQ scale (permissiveness, authoritarianism and authoritativeness) as well as in the range of more than one prototype (permissiveness, authoritarianism and authoritativeness) in respect of father and mother, were not considered for the present study. Results of this study indicated that the difference between male and female was significant for both impulsivity and perception of stress. Results further indicated that college students differed significantly in impulsivity and perception of stress with the variation in parenting styles.

**Keywords:** Parenting styles, perception of stress, impulsivity.

## INTRODUCTION

The standard strategy that parents use to rear up their children is known as parenting style. The quality of parenting that parents provide to their child is more important than the quality time that they spent. "Parenting styles are the representation of how parents respond and demand to their children. Parenting practices are specific behaviors, while parenting styles represent broader patterns of parenting practices."<sup>[1]</sup> "A child's temperament and parents' cultural patterns have an influence on the kind of parenting style a child may receive."<sup>[2]</sup> Previous studies in parenting and child development found that children who develop higher levels of competence and

social skill as their parents provide them with proper nurture, independence and firm control.<sup>[1]</sup>

Diana Baumrind is a researcher who initially provided classification of parenting styles as Authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting and permissive parenting. Authoritative parenting is a child-centered approach which holds high expectations of maturity. In such parenting style parents understanding of their child's feeling is prioritized and teaches them how to regulate their feelings. "Even with high expectations of maturity, authoritative parents are usually forgiving of any possible shortcomings. They often help their children to find appropriate outlets to solve problems. Authoritative parents encourage

children to be independent but still place limits on their actions.” [2] In Authoritarian parenting, the parents in spite of being so demanding are not responsive. “Authoritarian parenting is a restrictive, punishment-heavy parenting style in which parents make their children follow their directions with little to no explanation or feedback and focus on the child's and family's perception and status. Corporal punishment, such as spanking, and shouting are forms of discipline frequently preferred by authoritarian parents.” [3] In indulgent parenting, the parent is responsive but not demanding. In indulgent parenting, parents set few behavioral expectations for the child but do not take initiative to place control on them. This style is also called as permissive, non-directive and lenient. [3] In neglectful parenting the parents are not demanding as well as responsive, low in warmth and control and do not set limits. In neglectful parenting parents usually disregard children's emotions and opinions though they provide their basic needs such as food, housing, and toiletries or money for the livelihood. “Neglectful parenting can stem from a variety of reasons, including the parents prioritizing themselves, lack of encouragement on the parents' parts, financial stresses, lack of support and addiction to harmful substances.” [4]

“Impulsivity (or impulsiveness) is a multifactorial construct [5] that involves a tendency to act on a whim, displaying behavior characterized by little or no forethought, reflection, or consideration of the consequences.” [6] A functional variation of impulsivity involves action without much prior thought in proper situations which can result in expected consequences. Thus, of impulsivity incorporates at least two unconventional components: first, actions which are not taken by careful consideration and second, in impulsive action individuals prefer short-term gains over long-term ones. [7]

In psychology, a person is in stress when he is in strain and pressure. Small amounts of stress may be favorable, and

even helpful. Positive stress plays important factor in motivation, adjustment, and response to the environment. Excessive amounts of stress may raise the risk of strokes, heart attacks, ulcers, dwarfism, and mental illnesses such as depression. [8] Stress may be external and associated to the environment but can also be internal which result in developing anxiety or other different negative emotions. [9] “Perceived stress is the feelings or thoughts that an individual has about how much stress they are under at a given point in time or over a given time period.” [10] In perceived stress person feels uncontrollable and unpredictable about his or her life, they keep on thinking about the issues such as how many times they have to deal with irritating issues, whether their life is going to change or not and whether they can confidently deal with problems or difficulties. Humans perceive things as dangerous, when they believe that they are not much resourceful to cope with the difficulties that reality demands. People perceive stress when they consider that the demands which are being placed, is surely going to disable their available resources to cope with them. [10]

### **Relationship between impulsivity and parenting style and development of perception of stress**

The parenting style that people adopt may sometimes lead to the development impulsivity as well as other psychological disturbances. Callaway, Lutes, and Schlatter (2007) conducted a study to show the relationship between homeschoolers' ability to delay gratification and the style of parenting they experience in the home. Results indicated that the relationship between authoritarianism in parents and impulsivity in children was not significant. [11] Terry (2004) conducted another study on the relationship between parenting styles and delinquent behavior by including 38 college students and examined the relationship between parenting styles such as authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and uninvolved. It was predicted that authoritarian parenting practices would be

highly correlated with delinquent behavior. [12] In recent years a study conducted by Preethi (2012) to show the stress level and self esteem among the parents and compare the level of stress and self esteem between the parents of authoritarian and authoritative parenting style. The results showed that there was a difference in the stress and self-esteem between two different parenting styles the study further showed that with the increase in stress self-esteem among parent decreases. [4]

This study has been undertaken because as we know parents are key factors for developing various physical as well as psychological aspects i.e. what individuals learn from them are actually the building blocks of their personality. During a child's development what attitude their parents hold for their upbringing acts as the major deciding factors in person's life. Unfortunately such experiences do not always come up with fruitful results and eventually may result in developing various psychological disturbances. [12]

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Hypotheses

*Hypothesis1:* There would be significant difference in impulsivity between males and females first year college students.

*Hypothesis2:* There would be significant difference in perception of stress between

males and females first year college students.

*Hypothesis3:* There would be significant difference in impulsivity due to the variation in parenting style.

*Hypothesis4:* There would be significant difference in perception of stress due to the variation in parenting style.

### The sampling technique

The purposive sampling technique was used for the present study.

### Sample

For selection of sample the researcher contacted with undergraduate, male and female first year college students of Bengali families in Kolkata city, with their age ranged from 18-20 years and their monthly family income was 10,000-50,000 per month. The total number of respondents were about 200 people (100 males and 100 females) and it was ensured that these respondents did not suffer from chronic physical and mental disturbances as well as for those candidates whose highest scores had fallen in below and above the range of prototypes of PAQ scale (permissiveness, authoritarianism and authoritative) as well as in the range of more than one prototype (permissiveness, authoritarianism and authoritative) in respect of father and mother, was not considered for the present study.

### The Sampling Criteria:

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age of the Subject : 18-20 Years</li> <li>• Medium of education &amp; grade : Bengali and English medium &amp; undergraduate first year college students</li> <li>• Marital status: Unmarried</li> <li>• Parental education : Minimum Secondary level</li> <li>• Parental Income: Rs (10000-50000)/month</li> <li>• Condition: Willing to cooperate with the Author`</li> <li>• Parental occupation: Business or service but at least, one of the parents was employed</li> <li>• Mother tongue: Bengali speaking</li> <li>• Occupation : Not working</li> <li>• Residence: Residing in and around Kolkata</li> <li>• Having Consistency in academic Record</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of failure in examination</li> <li>• Marital status: Married</li> <li>• Occupation: Working</li> <li>• Suffering from severe physical disability.</li> <li>• Suffering from any chronic disease</li> <li>• History of referral to psychiatrist or psychotherapist for psychological problems</li> <li>• Uncooperative with the Author</li> <li>• Both parents were unemployed</li> <li>• Both parents were not alive</li> <li>• Candidates who had variation in score with respect to the different category of parenting style (which ever type had highest score) in their perception regarding father and mother.</li> </ul>

### Tools

#### An information schedule

An information schedule was prepared containing the name, age, sex, educational qualification, academic record,

marital status, occupation, number of family members, monthly family income, relationship with the parents, present and past history of alcohol and drug addiction,

mental and physical health and history of parental separation.

### **Parental Authority Questionnaire** <sup>[13]</sup>

Parental Authority Questionnaire was developed in short version for the purpose of measuring parental authority such as permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritativeness; as originated by Baumrind. The questionnaire made up of 30 items and yielded permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative scores for both the mother and the father. This scale is a valuable tool in the investigation of correlates of parental permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritativeness, as supported by Psychometric measures. To each item, responses are made on a 5-point Likert scale which extended from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The short version revealed appropriate validity and internal consistency which are consistent with previous literature. <sup>[14]</sup>

In scoring, each item was evaluated on a five point scale extended from strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5). PAQ thus provides six separate scores for each participant such mother's permissiveness, mother's authoritarianism, mother's authoritativeness, father's permissiveness, father's authoritarianism, and father's authoritativeness. The scores on each of these variables can range from 10 to 50; the higher the score, greater the participant's perceived presence of the parental prototype measured. Range of scores for each category of PAQ scale are- 1) Mother's permissiveness=20.07-30.69, 2) Father's permissiveness=17.84-29.12, 3) Mother's authoritarianism= 20.08-34.32, 4) Father's authoritarianism= 20.49-37.57, 5) Mother's authoritativeness= 31.70-41.94, 6) Father's authoritativeness= 24.96-41.44.

### **The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)** <sup>[15]</sup>

PSS-10 is a psychological instrument which is extensively used for measuring the perception of stress. This scale measures the degree of stressfulness of the different situations that individuals face in his or her life. To assess items of this test,

4-point scale is used, range from 0 (never) to 4 (very often), with higher scores indicate greater perceived stress. The PSS-10 has sufficient internal consistency ( $\alpha = .75$ ), test-retest reliability, and construct validity <sup>[15]</sup> and correlates well with other measures of perceived stress. <sup>[16]</sup>

In scoring, each item was assessed on a five point scale that range from never (0) to almost always (4). PSS-10 consists of four positive items such as 4, 5, 7, and 8 which have reverse score, for example, 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, etc. After the test was administered, all 10 items were summed up to obtain total score.

### **Barratt Impulsiveness Scale-15** <sup>[17]</sup>

The BIS-15 is a short form of the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11), in which, three types of impulsivity are measured namely attention impulsivity, motor impulsivity and non planning impulsivity. Items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 are for attentional impulsivity, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 for motor impulsivity and 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 for nonplanning impulsivity. Items which are having reversed score are 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 13. To assess items of this test, 4-point scale is used as range from 1 (Rarely/never) to 4 (Almost always), with higher scores indicate greater impulsivity. Internal consistency and test-retest reliability were 0.793 and 0.80 respectively. A three-factor structure (attention, motor, non-planning) accounting for 47.87% of the total variance in BIS-15S total scores as confirmed in factor analysis test <sup>[18]</sup>

In scoring, each item is evaluated on a four point scale ranging from rarely/never (1) to almost always (4). Scores for each type of impulsivity are determined and then summed up to obtain the total score and higher the score more impulsive the individual is.

### **Statistical analysis**

The various statistical techniques that were used in this study to analyze the data are descriptive (frequency, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-test and ANOVA). The levels of

significance used were 0.05 and 0.01. SPSS 23 was used for calculations.

## RESULTS

In the analysis of result section Descriptive Statistics and Inferential statistics for hypotheses testing are presented.

### Results from Descriptive and Inferential Statistics: Hypotheses testing

To understand the gender difference in impulsivity and perception of stress, hypotheses one and two have been tested.

*Hypothesis1:* There would be significant difference in impulsivity between males and females first year college students.

*Hypothesis2:* There would be significant difference in perception of stress between males and females first year college students.

To test hypotheses 1 and 2, t-test was conducted. Results are presented in Table -1 Results reveal that the difference between male and female was significant for both impulsivity and perception of stress

Thus hypothesis 1 and 2 were accepted.

**Table – 1: Mean and SDs and t Values of males and females college students for impulsivity and perception of stress**

Variables	Group	Mean	SD	t
Impulsivity	Male (N-80)	28.47	7.19	3.00**
	Female (N-70)	25.27	5.62	
Perception of stress	Male (N-80)	16.16	4.88	3.15**
	Female (N-70)	13.87	3.85	

df=148, \*P<.05, \*\*P<.01

To understand variation in impulsivity and perception of stress due to the variation in parenting style, hypotheses 3 and 4 have been tested.

*Hypothesis3:* There would be significant difference in impulsivity due to the variation in parenting style.

*Hypothesis4:* There would be significant difference in perception of stress due to the variation in parenting style.

To test hypothesis 3 and 4, Analysis of Variance (one way) was conducted with impulsivity and perception of stress as dependent variable and parenting style as independent variable. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Results of ANOVA (one way) to determine the effect of perceived social support on depression (df 2, 147)**

Independent variable	Levels	No. of individuals(N)		Dependent Variable	F
		Impulsivity	Perception of stress		
Parenting styles	Permissive	30	37	Impulsivity	128.02**
	Authoritarian	52	45		
	Authoritative	68	68	Perception of stress	208.41**

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

Results reveal that college students differed significantly in impulsivity and perception of stress with the variation in parenting styles

Thus, hypothesis 3 and 4 were accepted.

## DISCUSSION

The essential findings that have revealed from the study are discussed in the light of the previous literature and important theoretical constructs. Overall the findings indicated that males and females significantly differed in impulsivity and perception of stress. The discussions for this study may be preceded through the following headings-

### Significant sex difference obtained in terms of impulsivity and perception of stress

In terms of impulsivity and perception of stress, males and females college students significantly differed. In analyzing the study findings it is revealed that in case of both impulsivity and perception of stress, male candidates scored comparatively higher than females. In support of this research finding a neurobiological theory may be highlighted where the authors stated that “men and women display different brain connectivity patterns, both in adolescence and adulthood.” [19] This statement was analyzed in his study whether Ingalhalikar (2014)

found that “men show greater within-hemispheric connectivity and women show greater across-hemispheric activity, suggesting that male brains may be better suited to facilitate connectivity between perception and coordinated action, whereas female brains may be better suited to facilitate communication between analytical and intuitive processes.” [19]

Multiple earlier studies have indicated that “men may be more impulsive than women, careful investigation of specific facets suggest otherwise. Women may display greater discounting rates than men (i.e., greater choice impulsivity); however, reward type is relevant as men have been found to discount real money more rapidly than women, with women discounting hypothetical rewards more rapidly than men.” [20] In analyzing another essential factor such as perception of stress on which significant gender difference revealed in the present study, findings of the previous researches may be highlighted. Misigo (2015) conducted a study on gender difference in the perceived level of stress and coping strategies among university students in Kenya. The study delineated the fact that female students experienced higher stress levels ( $M = 42.23$ ,  $Sd = 5.90$ ) than males ( $M = 40.13$ ,  $Sd = 6.45$ ). But interestingly the study findings indicated that female participants reported positive stress coping skills such as looking about help from counsellors and friends. Whereas male participants reported negative coping strategies such as taking alcohol and drug use. [21] More or less similar findings as indicated in another study conducted by Brougham, Zail, Mendoza and Miller (2009) on stress, sex differences, and coping strategies among college students. Findings showed that college women reported a higher overall level of stress and greater use of coping strategies which are emotion focused, than college men. Though in some occasions the present study findings differed from other allied studies but still the present study is more or less in favor with these as in the same line the findings also revealed

significant sex difference in impulsivity and perception of stress. [22]

### **Significant difference obtained among college students in impulsivity and perception of stress with the variation in parenting styles**

The present study indicated that with the variation in parenting styles, college students significantly differed in respect of impulsivity. Study findings further indicated that in respect of other parenting styles, authoritative style was most suited to the present participants. In discussing the present study findings in respect of previous researches, findings of some other related studies may be analyzed. Calaway (2007) conducted a study to examine authoritarian parenting and its effects on the impulsivity of children. Divination of this study was that the likelihood of the child to be impulsive is directly proportional to the authoritarianism of their parents. But the findings did not support their hypothesis as obtained results indicated that relationship between authoritarianism in parents and impulsivity in children was not significant. [11] In another study conducted by Terry (2004) to examine the relationship between delinquent behaviors and parenting styles in children and adolescents. The results of the study showed that student's perception of parenting style is related to the student's self-report of psychological problems and acting out behavior in college. More problems were reported by those students who experience an authoritarian parenting style. These students further reported of having more grueling temperaments. [12]

The present study findings furthermore pointed out that authoritative parenting style enhanced the student's perception in favor reduction of stress among the college students. In discussing the present study findings some recent studies were evaluated. One of such studies was conducted by Kopko (2007) on parenting style and adolescents, showed that adolescent behavior influences parenting style. This study further showed that the likelihood of the teen to be cooperative,

motivated, and responsible increases for those whose parents provided authoritative parenting whereas those teen who were found to be provided with authoritarian or uninvolved parenting, come out to be an uncooperative, immature, and irresponsible being. [23] Sharma, Sharma & Yadava (2011) conducted another study on parenting styles and depression among adolescents. Results indicated that adolescents, who are being exercised with highly authoritarian parenting styles, suffer from depression in comparison to other parenting styles. [24] An interesting study about the relationship of parenting styles with stress and self esteem was conducted by Preethi (2012) exhibited significant difference in stress level of those children who are provided with authoritarian parenting styles and those who are provided with authoritative parenting styles. Therefore, discussing the findings of these recent studies which corroborate the present study findings can clearly be established. [4]

#### **Weaknesses of the study**

There were a few limitations in the present study: –

- 1) The sample size was not so large which reduces the generalizability of the study.
- 2) Sample was biased because majority of the candidates were selected from north Kolkata which restricted the zone wise mapping.
- 3) The tools used for the study were self report inventory which may include self reporting biases.
- 4) Among a total of 200 data, only 150 fulfilled the necessary study conditions and could finally be retained for further analysis.
- 5) Only candidates having age group of 18 to 20 and studying in first year undergraduate colleges were selected for this study which restricted age wise as well as education wise variations.
- 6) Candidates obtained highest score in more than one prototype (permissiveness, authoritarianism and authoritativeness) could not be considered for the present study.

#### **Recommendations for future study**

The major significance of the study was that it revealed an important issue like, parenting style as most significant moderator of personality; grossly influences behavior as well as different psychological functioning that may be a significant determiner for current as well as further life. Following recommendations or suggestions for the future studies are stated below-

- 1) For the present study sample size was small, future study may be conducted with larger sample, so that proper generalizations may be drawn.
- 2) Future study may be conducted with well planned controlled mechanisms by covering properly all the zones of Kolkata city.
- 3) A comparison could be made among large number of psychological traits by using different parenting styles.
- 4) Future study may be conducted with the people of different developmental phases, so that impact of parenting style on different age group could be assessed.
- 5) In future a comparative study may be conducted covering both parents and their children and its impact may be assessed separately as well as conjoining it with other essential variables.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

From the present study, it may be concluded that, significant difference between males and females first year college students was observed in impulsivity and perception of stress. Again college students differed significantly in impulsivity and perception of stress with the variation in parenting styles.

From the above conclusions it can be stated that parenting styles not necessarily influence participants only at their childhood and adolescence phase, but it do significantly influences participants even at their early adulthood phase, the parenting style, a psychological facet has revealed to have gross psychological impact over personality and different behavior patterns.

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