

COPING STRATEGIES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTING STYLES



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ABSTRACT

Background

There is a strong correlation between parenting styles and the outcomes of adults; the most common coping mechanism was a spiritual connection.

Objectives

The present study aimed mainly at finding out the correlation between parenting styles and coping mechanisms and also to find out the most used parenting styles and coping mechanisms among the study sample. The study had a sub-aim of knowing the difference between the parenting styles perceived by the study sample compared with what has been found in the literature around the globe.

Methods

The study used a convenient sample of Koya University students who lived in the dormitories of the university campus. The sample comprised 411 students, 191 males and 220 females. For measuring the different styles of parenting and for measuring the different mechanisms of coping used by the study sample, a coping questionnaire was used. In addition, T-test and Pearson correlation techniques in Statistical Package for Social Sciences were also used to analyze the data frequency percentage.

Results

The study results showed a significant correlation between parenting styles and coping mechanisms; the passivity coping mechanism was positively correlated to the authoritative and permissive mothers' parenting styles and positively correlated with the authoritative fathers' parenting style. The population perceived the authoritarian parenting style to be the most used parenting style by both mothers and fathers. The most common coping mechanism among Koya University students was passivity.

Conclusion

The study findings indicated that the most used coping mechanisms by the study sample were passivity coping mechanisms, and the most common parenting style appraised by the study sample was the authoritarian parenting style.

Keywords: *Coping strategies, Parenting Styles.*

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INTRODUCTION

Because of the importance of the parent-child relationship and its inevitable impact on the individual, researchers have examined its relationship with different psychological variables. For example, there is a strong correlation between parenting styles and the outcomes of adults, like subjective well-being, self-esteem, healthy and risky behaviour, and school results and enrolment ⁽¹⁾.

Parental behaviour does not only affect the individual as a child, but its effects are carried with her/him across their lives, as a study had shown that parents' educational level when their children were eight years old significantly predicted educational and occupational success for the child 40 years later ⁽²⁾. In addition, maternal warmth is associated with quality of life in adulthood, especially in the psychological and social domains ⁽³⁾.

College life is a significant time in the individual's life, for its being a transition period in many aspects, it is a transition time from being a high school teenager to an adult, and there are many changes associated with that, living away from home, having to be responsible for everything, being more independent, managing finance, a start of a romantic relationship, all that can be stressful for the young adult, it is the time for the learned coping mechanisms to be enacted. In the current study, the researcher will try to address the relationship between students' ways of coping with stress and how they have been parented; the general aim of the study is to find the correlation between parenting styles and coping mechanisms.

METHODS

Research Design

This research has been designed to examine the correlation between perceived parenting styles and coping mechanisms to determine the study sample's most used coping mechanism and parenting style. This study is quantitative since numerical data were gathered via questionnaires to achieve the study objectives.

Sample and Sample Size

The study sample was Koya University students living in the dormitories; participants should have been raised by their parents as children; the sample of this study is (341) participants selected purposely and according

to the study's inclusion criteria ⁽⁴⁾. To recruit the study sample, the researcher distributed (450) questionnaires. Unfortunately, only (411) questionnaires (191) males and (220) females were given back.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure

After the data collection process, all the data were keyed into and analysed by SPSS version 18.0

Instruments

To answer the study questions, two different questionnaires have been used in this study;

1. Coping Mechanisms Scale: This questionnaire has been designed and developed by Azad Ali Ismael, PhD at Koya University, Iraq (2009), to find out how Muslims cope with problems, the study has used a sample of Kurdish Muslim university students and it was originated in Kurdish.

It consists of 44 items, with 5 Likert options (always, most of the time, sometimes, rarely and never), factor analysis showed six factors, and they are (Spiritual Connection, Passivity, Positive Attitude, Avoidance, Seeking Social Support and Mixed Factors) (5).

2. Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ): This questionnaire was developed by Buri (1991) to examine Baumrind's (1971) parenting authority prototypes, authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. It consists of 30 items for mothers and 30 for fathers' parental authority appraisal by their children ⁽⁶⁾.

The questions are the same for both mothers and fathers, and it is on a 5-point Likert (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree); the questionnaire has been translated into Kurdish from English by a linguistic and then translated back to English by another linguistic, another two linguistics made a comparison between the two English versions of the questionnaire and the two translations were quite similar. To validate the questionnaire on Kurdish culture the opinion of 4 experts has been sought. For the reliability of the questionnaires, the study used Cronbach's Alpha technique in the SPSS package through the pilot study.

RESULTS

The study results showed a significant correlation between parenting styles and coping mechanisms; passivity coping mechanism was found to be positively correlated to the authoritative and permissive mothers

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parenting styles and also positively correlated with fathers and the most common coping mechanism among Koya University students was passivity. the authoritative fathers parenting style. Authoritarian parenting style was perceived by the population to be the most used parenting style by both mothers and

Table 1. Sample characteristics of the final study

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	220	53.6
Male	191	46.4
Total	411	100

Table 2 . Most common parenting styles.

Parenting Styles	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mother	Authoritarian	29.9051
	Permissive	29.1436
	Authoritative	29.1241
Father	Authoritarian	29.7810
	Permissive	29.1484
	Authoritative	28.0949

Table 3. Most Common Coping Mechanism used by the sample.

Coping Mechanisms	Mean	Std. Deviation
Passivity	18.9538	3.83505
Positive Attitude	11.7372	3.80360
Avoidance	9.4453	2.86165
Spiritual Connection	8.7494	3.69680
Seeking Social Support	8.2579	2.48147
Mixed Efforts	7.5353	2.40134

Table 4. Gender differences in coping mechanisms.

Coping mechanisms	Gender	Std. Deviation	T	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Spiritual connection	Female	8.2136	-3.200	.001*
	Male	9.3737		
Passivity	Female	17.4864	-9.144	.000**
	Male	20.6579		
Positive attitude	Female	11.8591	.757	.449
	Male	11.5737		
Avoidance	Female	9.2000	-1.898	.058
	Male	9.7368		
Seeking social support	Female	8.2818	.204	.839
	Male	8.2316		
Mixed efforts	Female	7.3818	-1.279	.202
	Male	7.6842		

* Significant at .005, ** Significant at .001

Table 5. Gender differences in perceived parenting style.

Parenting Styles	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig. (2-Tailed)	
Mother	Permissive	Female	29.1364	5.40586	-.001	.999
		Male	29.1368	5.18975		
	Authoritarian	Female	29.2182	6.79764	-2.354	.019
		Male	30.7105	5.91164		
	Authoritative	Female	29.6045	6.33631	1.846	.066
		Male	28.5316	5.27814		
Father	Permissive	Female	29.2045	6.78293	.218	.827
		Male	29.0684	5.69234		
	Authoritarian	Female	29.3500	7.79534	-1.276	.203
		Male	30.2737	6.70062		
	Authoritative	Female	28.5864	6.08740	1.926	.055
		Male	27.4789	5.46146		

* Significant at .005, ** Significant at .001

Table 6. Shows the correlation between perceived parenting styles and coping strategies.

Coping Strategies	Parenting styles					
	Mother			Father		
	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive
Spiritual connection	-.240**	-.111*	-.025	-.165**	.082	-.067
Passivity	.112*	.038	.115*	.135**	.020	.067
Positive attitude	-.151**	-.010	-.073	-.186**	.057	-.073
Avoidance	.078	-.014	-.039	.035	.009	.006
Seeking social support	.046	-.012	.029	.046	.046	.046
Mixed efforts	-.039	.055	.035	.003	-.014	-.027

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study have shown that the study sample perceived the authoritarian parenting style to be the most used by both mothers and fathers. This result is similar to what has been found in Arab countries (7,8). It is also similar to what has been found by Keshavarz & Baharudin in Malaysia (9). Moreover, this result differs from what has been found in the west, where the authoritative parenting style is the most common (10); when comparing Asian American to their Caucasian counterparts, Asian American was more authoritarian (11); this could be due to the authoritarian atmosphere of the overall society. Especially in Iraq and Kurdistan, with all the wars and insecurity the

country went through, it has affected society greatly.

People were not feeling secure anymore, leading parents to over-monitor and protect their children. That is why their main goal is to protect their children from harm, even if they control their children and deprive them of their freedom. Adding to it that the overall governmental system is authoritarian, and that leads to producing authoritarian individuals.

As for the most common coping mechanism among Koya University students, the study results have shown that it was a passivity coping mechanism. When comparing this result with other studies, there are some differences; in a study done by Ali (2009) (5), the most

common coping mechanism was a spiritual connection, although the same coping scale was administered with a sample that had similar features, both samples were university students and were Kurdish; this could be due to the effects of globalization and the invasion of technology into the modern life, especially in the past couple of years in Kurdistan, people got more familiar with internet in particular, in which almost every house has some internet coverage now. That had changed people's lifestyles in some ways, before people were occupying themselves with praying, going to mosques, and reciting Qur'an in their free time, now with the wide use of the internet in particular, people are occupying themselves with Facebook and other social websites, which has also contributed to the change of the social connections people used to have before. As the literature has shown, globalization and technology play a great role in modern life. That, in some ways, changed peoples' norms and culture in the Muslim world, especially starting from how people dress, interact socially, and spend their everyday lives⁽¹²⁻¹⁶⁾.

There were no significant gender differences in terms of parenting styles. This is different from what has been found in the literature; as Dwairy (2006) found, males tend to report that their parents are more authoritarian than females⁽⁸⁾. Russell et al. (1998) also reported that authoritative parenting is used with females, whereas authoritarian parenting is used with males⁽¹⁷⁾. One interpretation of this difference could be that the role of females has been noticeably changed and empowered over the last two decades when comparing it to the past. Women are now taking up more political positions; they are parliament members. Moreover, there have been some changes in the roles and regulations regarding women's rights in Kurdistan.

Regarding coping mechanisms, there was a significant difference between females and males regarding spiritual connection and passivity; males reported higher on both, which is different from the findings of Ali (2009)⁽⁵⁾, where females reported higher in both spiritual connection and passivity; this could be due to the changes in the political status in the Kurdistan region affected young adults mostly, with the protests and political violence and instability that the region was going through the last couple of years when studies have shown that political instability and violence affect people's well-being in general⁽¹⁸⁻²¹⁾.

There was a significant correlation between parenting styles and coping mechanisms; the passivity coping

mechanism was positively correlated to the authoritative and permissive mothers' parenting styles and positively correlated with the authoritative fathers' parenting style. This differs from what has been found in the literature; authoritative parenting styles are associated with better children's outcomes in general and better-coping mechanisms and capacity⁽²²⁻²⁴⁾.

Positive attitude coping mechanism was correlated with authoritative fathers and mothers' parenting styles. The spiritual connection correlated with authoritative and authoritarian fathers' and mothers' parenting styles.

In conclusion, the study findings indicated that the study sample's most used coping mechanisms were passivity coping mechanisms. In addition, the most common parenting style appraised by the study sample was the authoritarian parenting style.

Males reported higher on both spiritual connection and passivity coping mechanisms. There were no gender differences in terms of perceived parenting styles. However, a significant correlation was found between some parenting styles and some of the coping mechanisms; namely, the passivity coping mechanism was found to be correlated with both fathers and mothers' perceived authoritative style and with mothers' perceived permissive style, positive attitude was correlated with authoritative fathers and mothers' parenting style, and spiritual connection was correlated with fathers' authoritative parenting style and mothers' and fathers' authoritarian parenting style.

Limitations

1. The absence of scales that study parenting styles in Kurdish society, so as mentioned in chapter three Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) was administered; this questionnaire is widely used around the globe, it has been developed into a western society and in the English language, and it had to be translated into Kurdish, and was validated and reliable for us.
2. There might have been some biases in the participant's responses to the questionnaires due to what they really can remember from how their parents used to rear them.
3. Unfortunately, there were literature restrictions in studying parenting styles and coping mechanisms; the researcher had to try hard to find studies on the topic, especially studies done in eastern societies; having such studies could lighten the way in front of this current study.

4. The study was at the time of final exams, which was quite a challenge in the way of the study, students were all stressed out, and it needed more time and effort.

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