

The impact of parenting styles on students' mental health and self-esteem.

Parents play an important role in the life of a child, as the parent is the one responsible for teaching the child how to socialise and behave, while providing care and promoting development. How a child is raised and the level of care they receive can have an effect throughout their lifespan. Parenting styles are a psychological construct used to define how a child is raised. There are four types of parenting styles defined by the level of warmth and control displayed by the parent. These are authoritative (high warmth, high control), authoritarian (low warmth, high control), permissive (high warmth, low control) and neglectful (low warmth, low control).

Previous studies have shown that a relationship exists between parenting styles and symptoms of depression and anxiety, with authoritarian parenting having a positive effect on both. Parenting styles also have an effect on levels of self-esteem, with authoritative parenting having a positive effect on self-esteem. As these studies were conducted predominantly on children and adolescents it is difficult to determine if parenting styles would have this effect on adults over the age of 17.

This research is important as it is not clear if parenting styles would have an effect in adults in the same way they do children and adolescents. This research is also important as mental health services have reported a high number of individuals presenting with either depression and anxiety, with cases rising year by year. Depression and anxiety can lead to problems with physical health, issues in family life, substance misuse and suicide. High levels of self-esteem are beneficial as individuals with high self-esteem have a good appreciation for themselves, leading to greater levels of happiness and less negative experiences, resulting in a better quality of life.

The aim of this study was to find out if a relationship existed between parenting styles, depression, anxiety and self-esteem in adults. This study was carried out using a sample of students from the University of Glasgow, measuring the type of parenting received as a child and levels of depression, anxiety and self-esteem through self-report.

The Results

This study did find that a relationship existed between authoritarian parenting and levels of anxiety, however, no relationship with found between authoritarian parenting, depression and self-esteem. A relationship was not found between the remaining parenting styles, depression, anxiety and self-esteem either.

Future studies could look at why this may be the case, examining if parenting styles stop having an impact on an individual’s life at a certain age, while looking at other factors that may start to influence these levels i.e. relationships, friendships, work.

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