

Examining the Difference in Perception of Parenting Styles among Young Adults

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### **Abstract**

Parenting contributes greatly towards child development. But more specifically, parenting styles plays a part in parental beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour. The aim of the study is to examine the differences in perception of parenting styles among young adults – controlling for gender and parental status. The study consisted of 108 participants between the ages of 18-33 years old – there was 27 male participants and 81 female participants. There was 102 non-parent participants and 6 participants who are parents. Results found that there was no significant difference in perception of parenting styles between males and females – however, there was a significant difference in perception of affection and attachment between males and females. There was a significant difference in perception of parenting styles between parents and non-parents.

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Parenting is the determining factor of a child's development (Bornstein, 2013). The ability to care for a child has a significant effect on children's mental well-being as it forms the basis of majority of interactions they will have and aids in their adjustments. It also helps form behaviour and academic skills as well as laboring market participation over a lifetime. However, this is influenced by parenting styles and for decades, parenting has been categorized by these styles of parenting that has been considered 'global', 'consistent' and 'stable' (Smetana, 2017). Parenting styles can be defined as when families have a specific way that they rear their children (Shahsavari, 2012). These styles of parenting are usually influenced by the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour of the parents and majority of the time, it is passed down to the children. Parenting styles are divided into two dimensions – demandingness, which is the idea in which the parents display control and maturity demands and supervision in the way that they parent, and responsiveness, and this is the way affective warmth is displayed, receptiveness, and involvement towards their children (Baumrind, 1971, 1989, Maccoby and Martin, 1983, as cited in Aunola et al., 2000).

Baumrind, who contributed greatly to research relating to child development, conceptualized the theory of parenting which included four styles - authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved. The authoritarian style of parenting occurs when the parent to control or monitor their children's behaviour or they attempt to form them based off a complete set of standards they place on them (Baumrind, 1971, as cited in Kuppen & Ceulemans, 2019; Baumrind, 1991, as cited in Darling, 1999). Permissive parenting is a way of parenting that allows more independence for children and the parents would be less controlling. Authoritative parenting would be a balance between both authoritarian and permissive parenting. Finally, uninvolved parents would be neglectful and self-absorbed, and they do not pay any attention to

their children, and this often leaves children with feelings of being unloved and unwanted (Shahsavari, 2012). Uninvolved parenting is the type of parenting that allows the child to have a lot of freedom children (Mendez & Sanvictores, 2022). The child's basic needs would be met but the parent but can be detached from their child's life. A parent that is uninvolved does not have a disciplined approach to parenting and the parent would reduce the level of communication with their child. Uninvolved parents provide little nurturing, and they have very minimal expectations of their children. Children of uninvolved parenting turn out to have difficulties managing their emotions, good coping mechanisms, academic challenges and trouble maintaining social relationships. Authoritarian parenting often results to obedient and capable children, but frequently, these children show low levels of happiness, social skills, and self-esteem (Joseph & John, 2008). Children with authoritative parenting would report to have high levels of happiness and they turn out to be successful in life (Bolghan-Abadi et al., 2011) and permissive parenting results in unhappy children who are more likely to experience problems in some areas of their life. Clearly, one of the consequences of uninvolved parenting is that children end up struggling immensely in all aspect of life (Joseph & John, 2008). Consistently, Singh et al. (2021) examined parenting styles and mental health of adolescents and the findings were that adolescents with permissive parents have poor mental health compared to adolescents with authoritative and authoritarian parents. In relation to the study in question, looking at parenting styles and the attitudes that are held about them is relevant because it is the basis of how attitudes towards parenting styles are formed.

While having a full appreciation to Baumrind's theory, many research studies have challenged this model as there was little research involving other cultures (Arafat et al., 2020; Abundis-Gutierrez & Checa, 2018; Kang & Moore, 2011; Smetana, 2017). These studies argue

that in some cultures, such as the Asian and Arab cultures, the authoritarian style of parenting may have protective effects and does not necessarily have a negative connotation. For instance, Chao (1994) suggested that another parenting style called 'chiao shun' should be considered. This style of parenting involves training children through guidance and continuously monitoring their behaviour, while simultaneously, being involved, concerned and supportive parents. This concept overlaps with the authoritarian style and therefore, the authoritarian style is prevalent among various cultures (Chao, 2000). Also, some research found that the authoritarian parenting style had positive outcomes for children in Latino families (Carlson et al., 2000, Dornbush et al., 1987, Dornbush et al., 1992; Radziszewka et al., 1996, Steinberg, Steinberg, Lamborn et al., 1992 as cited in Rodriguez et al., 2009). In addition to that, it is worth mentioning that in Baumrind's third study, a sample of 134 families, 16 African American families were not included because when Baumrind tried to describe the prototypes, it displayed different patterns compared to the other families – the authoritarian African American parents had girls who were independent and assertive (Power, 2013). This reveals that parenting styles are influenced by the society parents and this instills values, expectations, beliefs, behavioural patterns, and guidelines concerning optimal parenting into them. It also shows that culture plays an important role in parenting styles, but it is not certain that parenting styles work effectively, appropriately and are of validity in every culture (Abundis-Gutierrez & Checa, 2018). Culture can also affect the way people feel towards parenting styles. Males and females are reared differently, and parents frequently employ a different style of parenting for their sons and another style of parenting for their daughters. This is taken into consideration for this study as it looks at the gender differences in perception of parenting styles.



## **Parenting Styles, Adolescence and Young Adulthood**

Meanwhile, adolescence is not a focus in the study, it is a huge factor and often during this period, adolescents seek to find their identity by disengaging from family and forming attachments to friends (Baumrind, 1991). Although parenting styles can influence whether a child engages in risky behavior (Berndt, 1999), the role that the peer group plays should not be overlooked (Newman et al., 2008). Zuquette et al. (2019) looked at the contributions of parenting styles and parental drunkenness to adolescent drinking. The results of that study showed that authoritarian, indulgent and negligent parenting styles largely contributed to adolescent binge drinking and parental drunkenness. Inconsistent to this study, Benchaya et al. (2019) found that authoritative and permissive parenting styles are associated with adolescent substance use.

Arnett (2000) proposed a theory of development from late adolescence through the twenties, with an emphasis on ages 18 to 25. The researcher referred to it as 'emerging adulthood', which is now commonly known as young adulthood. Arnett's theory generated great interest among researchers, but it also received a lot of strong criticism (Syed, 2015). This is because prior to Arnett's theory, a noticeable pattern in research relating to the topic of young adulthood was identified and this is the confusion about the age ranges of a young adult. For instance, Laufer (1976) considered a young adult to be between ages 22 to 25. Colarusso (1995) suggested young adulthood covers the years between twenty to forty. Erikson even considered young adulthood to be between the ages 19 to 40 (Erikson, 1982 as cited in Sacco, 2013). Arnett (2011) later goes on to propose that young adulthood would be best suited to ages 30s to early 40s as it would imply that the transition to adulthood is complete, and this is not the situation for majority of people between 18–24-year-olds. Hence, people between the ages of 18 to 24 years old would be referred to as emerging adults. Emerging adulthood is supposed to describe a new

stage of life between adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 2011). However, this is not a common opinion people share and therefore this topic remains complex and challenging (Tanner & Yabiku, 1999 as cited in Konstam, 2007).

This stage usually consists of developmental tasks that gives the young adult the ability to explore themselves to form a personal identity and a belief system, whilst gaining independence and autonomy. Young adulthood commonly involves an increase in well-being and a reduction of internalizing problems (Galambos et al., 2006). However, during these years, there is also an increase of alcohol misuse (Chakroun-Baggioni et al., 2021; Windle, 2003), illegal drug use (Kertesz et al., 2007) and risky sexual behaviour (Jackson et al., 2011). Engaging in such behaviour can lead to lasting health consequences later in life (Higley, 2019). Parenting styles can dictate whether young adults would engage in such behaviour patterns. For instance, Changalwa et al. (2012) investigated the relationship between parenting styles and alcohol abuse among college students in Kenya. The researchers used a sample of 32 participants, and they used the purposive sample. The findings of this study showed that there was a strong connection between authoritative parenting style and alcohol abuse among college students; however, a few limitations can be identified in the study. The sample size was small and the sampling method that was used was to target people with specific characteristics - consequently, there is a lack of generalization. Additionally, the findings of this study are inconsistent with previous research. Whitney and Froiland (2015) found that permissive parenting had a strong relationship with more alcohol related problems, whereas Mathialagan and Yen Teng (2017) found that there was more alcohol consumption among college students who had authoritarian parents. The contrast in these studies suggests that parenting styles can differ depending on the culture and the sex of the parent (Hartman et al., 2015; Patock-Peckham & Morgan-Lopez, 2007).

## Parents and Parenting Styles

There has been little research surrounding parents' perception of parenting styles but from what can be drawn from existing literature is that parents, perception of parenting styles and how they parent is completely different from their child/children's perception of how they would parent them. This can often lead to parent-child conflict. A study by Cohen and Rice (1997) supports this point and they found the students perceived their parents as more authoritarian than they were authoritative and permissive than the parents perceived themselves. The results were also very similar in Mayuri et al.'s (2017) study as well as Paulson's study (1992). The results of all three of these studies being consistent demonstrates the need for parents to have a perspective other than themselves – to try and take on the child's perspective. This will enable parents to have more of an understanding of their children's point of view and in some cases, this can be a solution to parent-child conflict.

While all the literature discussed above is relevant to the topic in question, there is still a lot of research to be done. It has been observed that researchers approached this topic by asking questions pertaining to parenting styles but there has been little research done to look at the perception and attitudes people hold towards parenting styles – which has been a drawback in the literature. Taking that approach is crucial as it is more likely these perceptions and attitudes are formed by personal experiences. Consequently, it influences how they would raise their children or how they would parent if they had children in the future. In some cases, some people may opt not to have children. The purpose of this study is to look at the attitudes and perceptions people have relating to parenting styles and if they differ depending on sex. The study hypothesizes that 1) there is a difference in how males perceive parenting styles in comparison to how females perceive parenting styles and, 2) there is a difference in how parents perceive parenting styles in

comparison to how non-parents perceive parenting styles. This study will also look at how views vary depending on whether a person is a parent or not. Parental attitudes have significance as they are influenced by what a person's childhood experiences and therefore, it can affect someone's view on parenting. Levy (1931, 1943, as cited in Edwards and Holden, 1989) theorized that if a parent's emotional needs are addressed, this can affect the parent's parenting behaviour and as a result, can lead the parent to either over-protect the child or rejecting them. This is where the parent now begins to develop a style of parenting and whether they are aware or not, it is influenced by their own experiences.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants and Recruitment**

There was a total of 108 participants (males:  $n = 27$ ; females:  $n = 81$ ) in the study. The participants were young people between the ages of 18-33 (mean age = 21.32, SD = 3.09). Out of all the participants that were recruited for the study, 102 (93.6%) of them reported to not have children and 6 (6.4%) of them reported to have children. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants for this study as the participants were recruited across all social media platform including Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp and TikTok.

### **Materials**

The questionnaire (appendix A) used for this study consisted of demographic questions and one scale and these were merged into Google Form. Questions related to age, gender and whether the participants were parents or not were included.

**Early Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire (EPAQ):** ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ) The EPAQ was developed by Hembacher and Frank (2020) and this scale measures attitudes about parenting and child development – it measures three subscales; rules and respect, affection and attachment and early learning. Initially, there was 54 items that were created to describe a variety of attitudes relating to parenting and child development that the authors might predict might vary on. The items were selected based off a literature review of previous research that has been conducted related to parenting such as the Knowledge of Infant Development Inventory and Baumrind's parenting framework (KIDI & MacPhee, 2002; Baumrind, 1970 as cited in Frank & Hembacher, 2020) as well as theories of attachment parenting (Jones et al., 2014). Subsequently, items that

had factor loadings of less than .40 that were on the relevant factor were dropped as well as any items that were more than .40 on another factor. After constructing the three subscales, Frank & Hembacher dropped any item from the three subscales based off the factor loadings and if the Cronbach's alpha of each group would increase by dropping an item. There were also additional items that were theoretically consistent with the scales added. These changes made therefore formed the new 24-item scale. The questionnaire utilizes a 7-point Likert scale to indicate the degree to which they agree with each statement from 0 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). The researchers wanted to estimate the validity of the scale by conducting two studies with groups of parents to evaluate whether parenting attitudes, which were assessed by the EPAQ, differed based on demographic factors and whether attitudes were linked to self-reported parenting behaviors. The results of those studies implies that parenting attitudes assessed by the EPAQ has a significant relationship with the parenting behaviors they engage in with their children. The Cronbach's alpha for this study is .69.

### **Design**

The study employed an experimental, within subjects' design and implemented a quantitative approach. The independent variables of the study were sex – male and female, and parents and non-parents. The dependent variables would be attitudes towards parenting styles.

### **Procedure**

Participants were recruited through online engagement. The link to the survey which included a brief description of the survey, and a consent form was sent out to a few social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and Facebook. Some of the participants were even recruited in-person. Participants were encouraged to share survey link with other people that were willing to participate in the study and some participants were recruited by mutual

friends. Consent was gained through the consent form (appendix B) and the information sheet that was provided before the survey (see appendix C). The information sheet contained a brief description of the study and the aims along with the estimated time frame it would take to complete the survey – which took about 5-10 minutes. Additionally, it was emphasized in the information sheet that participants can withdraw from the study at any time during the survey. Before participants were able to proceed to the survey, they were asked to click the ‘yes’ to confirm that they were consenting to participate in the study. After that, participants were then asked to complete the two sections of the questionnaire – the demographic questions and the EPAQ. Once they complete these sections, there was a debriefing form (appendix D) in the end that contained the supervisor and the researcher’s contact information, along with helpline numbers if distress may have arisen because they participated in the study. Responses were recorded once the participants clicked submit.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for demographic variables are displayed in Table 1 for gender and parental status. 24.8% of the participants were males (n= 27) and 75.2% of the remaining participants were females (n= 82). 6.4% of the participants were parents and 93.6% of the remaining participants did not have a child or have children. Descriptive statistics for three continuous variables – rules and respect, affection and attachment and early learning. Mean, standard deviation, and median are shown in Table 2.

**Table 1**

*Frequencies for demographic variables (n = 108), which includes frequencies and valid percentages for gender and parental status.*

| Variable               | Frequency | Valid % |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|
| <b>Gender</b>          |           |         |
| Male                   | 27        | 25.0    |
| Female                 | 81        | 75.0    |
| <b>Parental Status</b> |           |         |
| Yes                    | 6         | 5.6     |
| No                     | 102       | 94.4    |

**Table 2**



*Descriptive statistics for all continuous variables, reporting mean (95% CI), median, standard deviation and range.*

|                      | M [95% Confidence Interval] | Median | SD  |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------|-----|
| Age                  | 21.32 (20.87-21.78)         | 21.0   | 2.4 |
| Rules&Respect        | 34.00 (32.84-35.16)         | 33.0   | 6.0 |
| Affection&Attachment | 38.35 (37.37-39.33)         | 39.0   | 5.1 |
| Early Learning       | 40.16 (39.19-41.13)         | 41.0   | 5.1 |

### **Inferential Statistics**

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the perception of rules and respect in parenting between males and females. Preliminary analyses were performed to make sure that there was no violation of the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance. There was no statistically significant difference in rules and respect scores between males (M=36.29, SD = 5.51) and females (M= 33.21, SD= 6.03),  $t(104) = 2.34, p < .011$ , one tailed. The magnitude of the mean differences in the means (mean difference = 3.08, 95% CI: .47 to 5.69) was very small (Cohen's  $d = 0.05$ ).

A second independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the differences in perception of rules and respect in parenting between parents and non-parents. There was statistically significant difference in rules and respect scores between parents (M = 30.66, SD = 2.58) and non-parents (M= 34.20, SD = 6.12),  $t(104) = 2.89, p < .164$ , two-tailed. The magnitude of the mean differences in the means (mean difference = 3.53, 95% CI: .77 to 6.29) was small (Cohen's  $D = 0.08$ ).

A non-parametric Mann Whitney U Test was conducted to compare the difference in perception of affection and attachment in parenting between males and females. It revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in perception of affection and attachment between males ( $M = 52.50$ ) and females ( $M = 55.07$ ),  $U = 1577$ ,  $p = <.001$ . This test indicated that affection and attachment scores were much higher for females than males.

A second Mann Whitney U Test was conducted to compare differences in perception of affection and attachment in parenting between parents and non-parents. The test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in perceptions between parents ( $M = 94$ ) and non-parents ( $M = 50.52$ ),  $U = 428$ ,  $p = <.001$ . This test showed that affection and attachment scores were much higher for parents than non-parents.

Another Mann Whitney U Test was conducted to compare differences in perception of early learning in parenting between males and females. The test found that there was no statistically significant difference in perceptions between males ( $M = 33.57$ ) and females ( $M = 59.72$ ),  $U = 1139$ ,  $p = .743$ . This test showed that early learning scores were much higher for males than females.

An additional Mann Whitney U Test was conducted to compare differences in perception of early learning in parenting between parents and non-parents. It was found that there was no statistically significant difference in perceptions between parents ( $M = 74.92$ ) and non-parents ( $M = 53.30$ ),  $U = 428$ ,  $p = .099$ .

## Discussion

### Findings

Curious to gain a greater understanding of the effects parenting styles had on young adults in their upbringing and throughout their adolescence, the researcher wanted to take on a different lens and examine the differences in perception of parenting styles among young adults. It also aimed to look at the differences in gender and parental attitude. Most of the literature relating to parenting styles looked at the relationship between parenting styles and another variable, for example, the relationship between parenting styles and alcohol abuse or the relationship between parenting styles and child behaviour (Changalwa et al, 2012; Querido et al, 2002). Findings of these studies indicated that a type of behaviour a person displays would be more likely to occur depending on the type of parenting style their parents use to rear them. Another angle this was looked at was how parenting styles differed depending on the gender of the parent (Conrade & Ho, 2001). A common angle researchers take on is how people would perceive their parents to be regarding parenting styles. For example, Antonopoulou et al. (2015) found that boys perceived their parents as authoritarian and more permissive compared to girls.

In contrast to these studies mentioned above, this study looks at the differences in attitudes people have concerning parenting styles, which is a component of parenting styles research that has not received a lot of attention. It was also explored using three of the subscales – Rules and Respect, Affection and Attachment and Early Learning, which were in the scale that was used. The roles of the subscales display what group scored higher/lower than the other in a subscale. Therefore, the disparities in perception of attitudes can be shown between the two groups.

### Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis was that there is a difference in how males perceive parenting styles compared to how females perceive parenting styles. This was investigated using an independent samples t-test as well as two non-parametric Mann Whitney U Test. Regarding the Rules and Respect subscale, it was found that there is no statistically significant difference in scores between males and females. This suggests that males and females did not differ in perception of rules and respect in parenting. There is a lack of literature that considers perception of parenting styles or even different aspects of parenting among non-parents. There is also an inadequate amount of research that have similar findings to what was found in this study. Gorman (1998) looked at immigrant Chinese mothers of adolescents' and their parenting attitudes and practices and found very little rule-setting among Chinese mothers. Gorman suggested that the reason for this is because these mothers did not view their role as parents to be regarded as dominant and controlling. But a study by Madsen & College (2008) found that mothers were more likely to set rules in dating for their adolescent children and mother were more involved in the rule setting process compared to fathers. Similarly, Gevers et al. (2015) discovered that mothers scored higher in employing restrictive snacking rules than scores for fathers. Again, there is not enough literature pertaining to the aspect of respect but what can be found, especially among ethnic families is that respect is valued in their culture, irrespective of gender (Alampay and Jocson, 2011; Burkett et al, 2017). The contrast in these studies' findings indicates that there is a distinction in how males and females perceive rules and respect in parenting. A reason may be because of the differences in cultures and how depending on gender, some aspects of parenting are emphasized more than the other.

There was a statistically significant difference in males and females' perception of affection and attachment in parenting, with females scoring higher than males. This shows that

males and females differed in perception of affection and attachment. Despite the lack of literature concerning the gender differences in perception of attachment and attachment and just viewing perception from a parents' perspective, findings from a study carried out by Bengtson et al. (1994) showed that there was a mutual influence between contact and affection in mother-child relationships but not for father-child relationships. This finding is linked back to the females scoring higher in perception of affection and attachment in this study and can mean that females value affection and attachment in parenting more than males. Likewise, Chang et al. (2013) found that children with ADHD receive less affection from their fathers. Additionally, Frodi et al. (1982) found that mothers were more likely to display affection to their child than were fathers. In relation to attachment, Courtney et al. (1999) found that sons in dual-earner households had an insecure attachment with their fathers. Also, Erdem (2017) found that a mother-child attachment had the highest contribution to resilience, compared to fathers. The consistency in the findings of these studies is no surprise as across many cultures, children interact more with the mother than the father. When we relate these findings back to this study, it makes a lot of sense as to why females scored higher in affection and attachment compared to males. Females scoring higher in perception of affection and attachment can imply that females are more likely to be affectionate towards their children and they are more likely to be more attached to their children, compared to males.

Lastly, there was no statistically significant difference in perception of early learning in parenting between males and females, therefore indicating that males and females did not differ in perception of early learning in parenting. Considering the paucity of research on how gender affects how people view early learning and viewpoints of people who are not parents, studies on parents' perspective can only be discussed and ultimately, related back to the study. Yet, this

finding is in line with findings from a study by Hui Li et al. (2018) which found that both mothers and fathers engage more in toddler's educational play than any other type of play. This corresponds with another study carried out by Bracaliello & Manz (2016) who found that parents' play beliefs and their involvement in early learning shows how much they value play in the way that will encourage children's development. While the findings are similar for these two studies, Hui Li et al. (2018) took on a quantitative approach, while Bracaliello & Manz (2016) used a mixed method approach. These findings suggests that males and females equally view early learning just as important with none of the groups scoring higher in perception of early learning than the other. Overall, based off the above findings, hypothesis 1 was partly rejected.

## **Hypothesis 2**

The second hypothesis is that there is a difference in how parents perceive parenting styles compared to how non-parents perceive parenting styles. In the area of rules and respect, there was a statistically significant difference in perception of rules and respect in parenting between parents and non-parents. Interestingly, non-parents scored higher in perception than parents did. There is a lack of literature that considers perception of rules and respect in parenting, especially among non-parents, as already mentioned above. However, what can be found in literature is perspectives of parents and children and in this case, children can be non-parents. For instance, Baxter et al. (2009) looked at parent-child perception of parenting behavioural control through rule setting and the findings of that study showed that parents perceived that they communicated rules more clearly and they perceived the rules to be more justified than their adolescents reported. Another study by Burg et al. (2007) found that perceptions of family food rules and availability differed between parent and child, and they disagreed on availability and accessibility of fruits, snacks, and breakfast. There is insufficient

evidence of literature pertaining to the aspect of respect in parenting, respect especially among ethnic parents is valued in their culture and therefore, there is an expectation for children to be respectful not only towards their parents, but elders too. (Alampay and Jocson, 2011; Burkett et al, 2017). However, children being respectful towards parents depended on parental behaviour (Chang & Liu, 2016; Cumsille et al, 2008). These findings support the statistically significant difference in perception found in rules and respect among parents and non-parents. This is predictable as parents' perception are more traditional and suited to the era they were raised in where perceptions of parenting were black or white. Whereas parenting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has changed a lot and people, especially non-parents, are becoming more aware and interested in different aspects of parenting and this could be the reason why non-parents scored higher in perception than parents (Ulferts, 2020)

A statistically significant difference in perception of affection and attachment between parents and non-parents were found. Parents scored higher in perception of affection and attachment than non-parents. The lack of research in the area relating to perception of attachment among both parents and non-parents does not support the statistically significant difference in perception of affection. Alternatively, parents and adolescent differences in perception was looked at in a study by Gershoff et al. (2012) and they found that adolescents rated their parents higher on affection than the parents did themselves. Regarding attachment, there hasn't been much research concerning perception of attachment among parents and non-parents. However, parents scoring higher in perception of affection and attachment is reasonable as affection and attachment is more likely to be experienced in a parent-infant relationship (Bowlby, 1969 as cited in Davila & Levy, 2006). Existing research mentioned above is in support with the

statistically significant difference in perception of affection and attachment among non-parents and parents and, parents scoring higher in the subscale.

Like affection and attachment, there was no statistically significant difference in perception of early learning between parents and non-parents. Expectedly, research in perception of early learning, specifically relating to parents and non-parents is seldom. But findings from a study, which already mentioned, by Hui Li et al. (2018) which found that that both mothers and fathers engage more in toddler's educational play than any other type of play. Another study that was also already mentioned is Bracaliello & Manz (2016) study, who found that parents' play beliefs and their involvement in early learning shows how much they value play in the way that will encourage children's development. Although there is no research pertaining to non-parents' perception of early learning, a study by Nawangsari et al. (2018) found that teachers and parents share the same view on factors that influence children's school readiness. These findings strengthen the finding of this study. The findings of these studies can point to the fact that early learning is importance universally, as the studies displayed above. Therefore, hypothesis 2 failed to reject.

### **Limitations**

Even though this study not being done before is a strength, there has been very little literature that focused on the area of perception of parenting styles – this was mentioned all throughout the discussion. A reason for this can be because the hypotheses only focused on differences in perception in groups, rather than what contributes to the differences in perception in the groups. Another reason is that this study took a quantitative approach. If this study was qualitative, perception of parenting styles would've been analyzed in much more detail as participants would discuss their attitudes towards parenting styles in much more detail.



Another limitation in this study is that it was conducted on young adults, those who were between the ages of 18 to 33 years old. Whereas a lot of studies pertaining to parenting styles in general did not focus on a particular age group, but they focused on participants that were simply over the age of 18. Had there not been much of a focus on young adults, an increase in sample size would have occurred. Also, there would have possibly been a variation of differences in perception of parenting styles in the groups because of the different life experiences.

The sample size of this study was also a huge limitation of the study. There was a sample size of 108 participants and only 27 out of 81 of them were males – this displayed an overrepresentation of females in the study. The difference between the sample sizes could have been a major contribution to the findings of the study. Perhaps, if there were more male participants in the study, findings could have shown up differently. As well as that, there was only 6 parents out of 102 participants. This uneven sample size could have contributed to non-parents scoring higher in perception of rules and respect in parenting than parents, though it was an interesting finding. Additionally, if there was a lot more participants in the study, it would have been easier to examine perception of parenting styles among two age groups seeing that according to research, young adulthood age ranges differ from one researcher to another, as previously discussed in the literature review section of this study.

The EPAQ scale that was used for this study was a weakness to the study and that being the only scale that was used in the study was a disadvantage to the study. Although the relatively new scale assesses parental attitudes, it did not assess parenting attitudes towards parenting styles, but rather, they assessed attitudes based off an aspect of parenting – hence the three subscales: rules and respect, affection and attachment and early learning. Therefore, the hypotheses of this study were not answered directly without going through the three subscales. A

problem with the scale was that it focused more on parental attitudes, rather than also looking at how non-parents might perceive certain aspects of parenting and even parenting styles in general. The non-parent attitudes are relevant because their attitudes always relate back to their own experiences of upbringing and how they were raised. Despite the many limitations, this study brings a lot of awareness about the lack of literature surrounding of parenting styles and this can be considered a strength in the study as there is a lot more room for more research to be done.

### **Future Implications**

A recommendation for future researchers that are interested in parenting should look more into perception of parenting – not only focusing on how parents perceive parenting but how non-parents perceive parenting styles as people from all walks of life, regardless of whether one is a parent or not, have a perception of parenting and these attitudes that people have are often formed by their experiences or upbringing. Not only should perception be considered, but why people might perceive parenting to be a certain way – in other words, finding mediators that contribute to the perception someone might have about parenting. Demographics, such as age and ethnicity, should also be considered and controlled. Controlling for age and ethnicity would enable the researchers to group participants and this way, correlations can be checked among certain groups. Another suggestion for future researchers is study different communities within an Irish context, for example, studying the Travelers' community in Ireland and how they perceive parenting. Prior research has studied different cultures as perception of parenting can also differ depending on culture so studying different communities within an Irish context can allow researchers to check for correlations and differences in groups. Lastly, future researchers should try and strive for a more even sample size between males and females as this would allow the researcher to test for correlations and differences in perception.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there were differences in perception of parenting styles found among males and females and parents and non-parents. Although the literature surrounding the topic of perception of parenting styles is very limited, the findings mentioned were supported by the findings of this study. More studies relating to perception of parenting and more specifically, parenting styles need to be conducted and use different statistical tests to check if perceptions of parenting would change depending on the statistical testing that is used. Overall, there is room for improvement for the body of literature pertaining to perception of parenting and parenting styles.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Early Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire (EPAQ)

How much do you agree with the following statements regarding infants and young children?

**Do Not Agree 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Strongly Agree**

1. Parents do not need to worry if their child misbehaves a lot.
2. Too much affection, such as hugging and kissing, can make a child weak.
3. It is good to let children explore and experiment.
4. It is very important that there are consequences when a child breaks a rule, big or small.
5. Parents can prepare young children to succeed in school by teaching them things, such as shapes and numbers.
6. It is okay if young children boss around their caregivers.
7. It's important for parents to help children learn to deal with their emotions.
8. A child who has close bonds with his or her parents will have better relationships later on in life.
9. Parents can help babies learn language by talking to them.
10. Children don't need to learn about numbers and math until they go to school.
11. Parents should not try to calm a child who is upset, it is better to let children calm themselves.

12. Children and parents do not need to feel emotionally close as long as children are kept safe.

13. Reading books to children is not helpful if they have not yet learned to speak.

14. It is not helpful to explain the reasons for rules to young children because they won't understand.

15. It is very important that children learn to respect adults, such as parents and teachers.

16. Children should be comforted when they are scared or unhappy.

17. Young children should be allowed to make their own decisions, like what to play with and when to eat.

18. It is okay if children see adults as equals rather than viewing them with respect.

19. Children who receive too much attention from their parents become spoiled.

20. Children should be grateful to their parents.

21. Babies can learn a lot just by playing.

22. Babies can't learn about the world until they learn to speak.

23. It is very important for young children to do as they are told, for example, waiting when they are told to wait.

24. Parents should pay attention to what their child likes and dislikes.

## **Appendix B**



## Consent Form

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I have an understanding that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study clarified to me in the information sheet and I have had the chance to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves answering questions related to personal details and attitudes towards parenting styles,
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from taking part in the study.
- I understand that all information I give will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.
- I understand that if I tell the researcher that someone else or myself is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation I have the right to access the information I have given any time I want while it is in storage.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the study to try to find further explanation and information.

## Appendix C

### Participant Information Leaflet

#### Perception of parenting styles among young adults.

You are being invited to take part in a research study on the sex differences in attitudes young adults hold of parenting styles. Please take the time to read this document before considering taking part in the study. This document will explain why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. If you have any questions about the information provided, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details at the end of this sheet.

I am a final year student in the BA in Psychology programme at National College of Ireland. As part of our degree we must carry out an independent research project.

You must be OVER the age of 18 to participate in the study.

This study has also been approved by the Psychology Research Ethics Committee.

#### What will happen?

In this study, you will be asked to complete all the questions that will be presented to you. The survey is divided into two sections - it will ask you to provide some details about yourself and it will also contain some questions about your attitudes towards parenting styles. You will be shown a consent form before you proceed with the survey. It will show you 'I CONSENT' and you must click onto it to start the survey.

#### How long will it take?

The study usually takes 10-15 minutes to complete the survey. There is no time limit so you can take any breaks and take as much time on the survey as you want.

#### Who can take part?

You must be OVER the age of 18 to partake in the study. You must also be a college/university student. If you are under the age of 18 and you are in secondary school, you cannot partake in the study. However, if you are over 18 but you are not in college or university, you are also eligible to partake in the study.

### Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part. In under no circumstances should you feel forced or pressured to partake in the study. If you decide to withdraw from the study any time, feel free to do so. However, it is important to note that if you want to withdraw your results after you have completed and submitted the survey, I cannot do this as all the information given is anonymous. If you have any questions about the procedures and this information sheet, do not hesitate to ask the researcher before beginning the study.

### What are the risks and benefits of partaking in the study?

There is very little risk of partaking and no benefits to taking part in the study. A little risk that might occur is you may experience slight distress when answering some of the questions. I have made sure to include some support services that are available in the debriefing sheet, which you will receive at the end of the survey. If you feel any kind of distress or discomfort during the study, you have a right to withdraw any time you wish before completing the survey.

### Will taking part be confidential and what will happen to my data?

The data that will be collected does not have any personal information, just gender and age. Because of this, no one will be able identify who you are. The data will be kept in my laptop and no other person can have access to the data. It will be included in my final year dissertation, which will be available to access online. It will also be printed out for me to keep for myself.

### Who should I contact for further information?

I, Angela Sombete, will be more than happy to answer any questions you have about this study at any time. You may contact me my (email) or contact my (supervisor). Do not hesitate to email me if you wish to also find out about the results of this study. Thank you for your participation.

## Appendix D

### Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in this study, which looks into sex differences in attitudes towards parenting styles. I would really appreciate if you can share this survey to friends and family (over 18) that will be willing to partake in the study too.

I would like to communicate and make you aware of the fact that all information and results from the study cannot be withdrawn because the results are unidentifiable. If you have any questions about the study or the results, please feel free to email me or my supervisor. If you feel distress or discomfort as a result of participating in the study, please contact Aware at 1800 80 4848 or Pieta House at 01 4585490.

If you know anyone that is also taking part in the study, please do not discuss the study with them until they participate in the study themselves. I would greatly appreciate that.

Thank you again for your participation.


Angela Sombete

## Appendix E

### SPSS Dataset and Output

OfficialDataSet.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

File Edit View Data Transform Analyze Graphs Utilities Extensions Window Help



|    | Name             | Type    | Width | Decimals | Label                 | Values       | Missing | Columns | Align | Measure | Role  |
|----|------------------|---------|-------|----------|-----------------------|--------------|---------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| 1  | ID               | Numeric | 8     | 2        |                       | None         | None    | 10      | Right | Scale   | Input |
| 2  | Age              | Numeric | 3     | 0        | Please state yo...    | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Scale   | Input |
| 3  | Gender           | Numeric | 6     | 0        | What gender d...      | {0, Male}... | None    | 16      | Right | Nominal | Input |
| 4  | Parent           | Numeric | 3     | 0        | Are you a pare...     | {0, No}...   | None    | 17      | Right | Nominal | Input |
| 5  | RulesResp1       | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Parents do not ...    | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 6  | RulesResp...     | Numeric | 2     | 0        | It is very import...  | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 7  | RulesResp...     | Numeric | 2     | 0        | It is okay if you...  | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 8  | RulesResp...     | Numeric | 2     | 0        | It is very import...  | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 9  | RulesResp...     | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Young children...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 10 | RulesResp...     | Numeric | 2     | 0        | It is okay if chil... | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 11 | RulesResp...     | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Children shoul...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 12 | RulesResp...     | Numeric | 2     | 0        | It is very import...  | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 13 | AffectAttach1    | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Too much affec...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 14 | AffectAttach2    | Numeric | 2     | 0        | It's important fo...  | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 15 | AffectAttach3    | Numeric | 2     | 0        | A child who ha...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 16 | AffectAttach4    | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Parents should...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 17 | AffectAttach5    | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Children and p...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 18 | AffectionAtta... | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Children shoul...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 19 | AffectAttach7    | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Children who r...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 20 | AffectAttach8    | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Parents should...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 21 | EarlyLearn1      | Numeric | 2     | 0        | It is good to let ... | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 22 | EarlyLearn2      | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Parents can pr...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 23 | EarlyLearn3      | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Parents can he...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 24 | EarlyLearn4      | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Children don't ...    | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 25 | EarlyLearn5      | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Reading books...      | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 26 | EarlyLearn6      | Numeric | 2     | 0        | It is not helpful ... | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |
| 27 | EarlyLearn7      | Numeric | 2     | 0        | Babies can lea...     | None         | None    | 12      | Right | Ordinal | Input |

TTest&Mann Whitneys.spv [Document1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Viewer

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Output

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  - Independent Sa
- T-Test
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  - Independent Sa
- Frequencies
  - Title
  - Notes
  - Statistics
- Nonparametric Test:
  - Title
  - Hypothesis Tes
  - Independent-Sa
  - AffectAttach
    - Title
    - Indepe
  - EarlyLearn
    - Title
    - Indepe
  - Continuous Fiel
    - Continuous Fiel
    - Categorical Fiel
  - Nonparametric Test

**T-Test**

**Group Statistics**

| What gender do you identify as? |        | N  | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---------------------------------|--------|----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| RulesRespect                    | Male   | 27 | 36.2963 | 5.51093        | 1.06058         |
|                                 | Female | 79 | 33.2152 | 6.03127        | .67857          |

**Independent Samples Test**

|              |                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |        |                          |             | 95% Confidence Interval of t Difference |                       |        |       |
|--------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|-------------|---|-----------------------|--------|-------|
|              |                             | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df     | Significance One-Sided p | Two-Sided p | Mean Difference                         | Std. Error Difference | Lower  | Upper |
| RulesRespect | Equal variances assumed     | .058                                    | .810 | 2.340                        | 104    | .011                     | .021        | 3.08111                                 | 1.31648               | .47049 | 5.69  |
|              | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | 2.447                        | 48.911 | .009                     | .018        | 3.08111                                 | 1.25908               | .55077 | 5.61  |

**Independent Samples Effect Sizes**

|              |                    | Standardizer <sup>a</sup> | Point Estimate | 95% Confidence Interval |       |
|--------------|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------|
|              |                    |                           |                | Lower                   | Upper |
| RulesRespect | Cohen's d          | 5.90548                   | .522           | .078                    | .963  |
|              | Hedges' correction | 5.94850                   | .518           | .077                    | .956  |
|              | Glass's delta      | 6.03127                   | .511           | .065                    | .953  |

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.  
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.  
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.  
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control group.

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