

# Perceived Parenting Styles and Social Anxiety Among Young Adults

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## Abstract

The dissertation investigates the relationship between perceived parenting style and levels of social anxiety among young adults. Parents play a key role in shaping the child's emotional and well-being, especially in an Indian context. The research explores how different parenting styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive—impact the social anxiety levels of individuals aged 18 to 25. The research also aims to find the significant differences in the prevalence of social anxiety and parenting styles based on age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Data was collected from a sample of young adults through Parental Authority Questionnaire and Social Interaction Anxiety Scale. The results indicate there is no significant correlation between parenting styles and social anxiety among young adults. This is because there are many different factors such as cultural, environmental, or personal factors which contribute to a person's social anxiety levels along with parenting style of the parent. One significant finding was that father's parenting style depends on the gender of the child. The findings may help in developing interventions for children with anxiety and designing training programs for parents of vulnerable children in India as we now know that parental contribution is not the only factor. The findings encourage further exploration into this area with more nuanced methodologies or larger sample sizes to better understand the factors contributing to social anxiety in young adults.

**Keywords:** Perceived Parenting Styles, Social Anxiety, Young-adults

## Introduction

Parenting styles represent the overall environment of a parent and child relationship. "The term parenting has been defined as the process or the state of being a parent, and includes nourishing, protecting, and guiding a child through the course of development" (Brooks, 1991). It refers to a set of parental attitudes and behaviours that are used constantly across contexts to manage their children's behaviour, and are regulated by control, responsiveness, warmth, and punishment patterns. The root cause of many of the mental health problems that happen in adolescents and children are connected to parenting styles. But the whole burden of responsibility does not lay on their shoulders. Therefore, in-depth research is needed to understand the mechanisms underlying parents' roles in raising children to be proactive individuals. One's own parents largely affect the parenting style of an individual. Culture, socioeconomic status, temperament, educational achievement, and partner influence also affects parenting style. Parent-child relationships change as children enter school, peers, and society. The amount of time children spend with parents declines dramatically in middle childhood. But it may vary according to culture and societal changes (Myers-Walls et al., 2006).

The concept was first introduced by developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind in the early 1960s, and it has since become a cornerstone of understanding the impact of parenting on child development. It is also the theoretical framework guiding the current research. Baumrind's pioneering work identified three primary parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive, to which Maccoby and Martin (1983) later added a fourth style, neglectful or uninvolved parenting.

She identified the distinct parenting styles based on the levels of two key dimensions: parental responsiveness that is parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands" and parental demandingness which "the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys" (Baumrind,1991). Her study highlighted the critical role of parenting in shaping a child's emotional, social, and cognitive development.

Social anxiety disorder is a type of anxiety disorder. It is an intense, persistent fear of being watched and judged by others. Individuals fear a variety of social interactions, including talking with strangers, joining in groups or talking on the telephone; most things that involve being observed by others are difficult. Sufferers fear saying or doing anything that may be deemed humiliating or embarrassing (Leigh & Clark, 2018). The most common symptoms of social anxiety include the fear of sweating, shaking, blushing, stumbling over words, looking anxious, or appearing boring, stupid, or incompetent (Stein & Stein, 2008). People with social anxiety may avoid important activities, such as attending classes or meetings, or taking active participation in meetings.

Theoretical perspectives suggest that a combination of genetic, biological, and environmental factors influence the development of social anxiety. Traumatic events like abuse, bullying, or negative home environments further influence social anxiety disorder (SAD). In developing countries, socioeconomic status strongly impacts SAD, with poverty-alleviation programs showing potential for improvement. While cultural differences shape anxiety expressions, core symptoms of SAD remain consistent across societies.

Ollendick and Hirshfeld-Becker (2002) suggest that parental influences on SAD development include behavioural models, parenting style, and attachment quality. Parents shape children's emotional health, especially in early years, their behaviours play a key role in childhood disorders (Gar, Hudson, & Rapee, 2005). Observational studies show that parents of socially anxious children exhibit more controlling behaviours, while SAD individuals recall their parents as less warm and more critical (Norton & Abbott, 2017). Parents may transmit anxiety genetically or through modelling avoidant behavior.

The study on parenting styles and its psychological effects on children has only been done in Western countries that promote individualistic culture. There is a need for research to determine the utility of parenting styles in third-world countries that emphasise on collectivistic culture. In India, the effects of parenting on young adults have not been adequately researched. This research is also crucial for improving mental health interventions, and guiding effective parenting and educational programs. This research contributes to the broader field of developmental and clinical psychology by adding knowledge about the impact of parenting on mental health in India. It can also provide insights for other disciplines such as sociology, education, and public health. In exploring social anxiety, it is essential to consider demographic variations, including gender, age, and socioeconomic status.

## Review of Literature

In an exploratory study, Jain and Sharma (2024) looked at the relationship between different parenting styles and young people's anxiety levels. They talked about the problems faced in early childhood due to parenting styles as the brain grows. This correlational research approach found a highly positive correlation between authoritarian parenting styles and anxiety.

Baruah and Sinha (2023) conducted a qualitative study to understand the prevalence of generalised anxiety disorder among college students. Four main themes were identified i.e., Academic pressure, Degrading health, Support from family and friends and Art and music: a saviour. It was found that academic pressure and lifestyle changes were major stressors, while family support and creative activities helped reduce anxiety.

Navadian (2023) conducted a study in Iran to predict social anxiety based on parents' parenting styles. Baumrind's parenting style surveys (1973) and Leibovitz's social anxiety questionnaire (2003) were used to conduct the study. Permissive parenting was found to have a favourable and substantial link with performance anxiety, as was authoritarian parenting with performance anxiety and situational anxiety. Furthermore, authoritative parenting was a negative predictor of social anxiety. Similarly, Sunita, Singh and Sihag (2022) found that authoritative parenting was associated with positive traits like self-esteem and competence. Sahithya and Raman (2021) also proposed that authoritative mothers reduced anxiety risks.

He (2023) did a cross-sectional observational study among adults examining the relationship between parenting styles and social anxiety. They used shyness scale evaluating shyness, unsociability, and peer avoidance. It was found that parenting styles were significantly correlated with adult social anxiety, but other factors, such as self-acceptance, may also contribute to adult social anxiety. They found that even though effects of parenting styles are multifaceted and long lasting, they are not predictors for anxiety. These results consistent those found by Cong et al. (2020) who measured the effect of parenting styles on Malaysian adolescents.

Garcia, Carlton and Richey (2021) conducted a study on the parents who have social anxiety which may increase risk among their offspring. Low warmth and transfer of threat information have been further associated with negative effects in children such as increased peer victimization, lower autonomy and emotional issues.

A cross-cultural review was conducted by Sahithya et al. (2019) with a focus on India. It was found that the impact of parenting styles on children seemed to be consistent across culture, and culture did not act as a moderator for parenting style and child outcome. In both Western countries and India, it was found that authoritarian and neglectful/uninvolved parenting styles were connected with poorer outcomes than authoritative parenting style. Sandhu and Sharma (2015) found that warmth and control reduced social anxiety, while neglectful parenting increased it. Authoritarian parenting had mixed effects, reflecting cultural influences.

Mishra & Kiran (2018) conducted a study in Lucknow and discovered that adolescents with authoritarian fathers demonstrated low social anxiety than adolescents with authoritative and permissive fathers. Also, social anxiety of the adolescents of authoritative mothers were found to be lower in comparison to the adolescents of mothers adopting permissive and authoritarian parenting style.

Norton and Abbott (2017) found that SAD likely develops through a complex interplay of biological and environmental factors, suggesting there are multiple pathways to its development.

Yousaf (2015) conducted a study to investigate the connection between self-esteem, parenting style and

social anxiety in girls. The major findings elicited that low self-esteem is a predictor of social anxiety but not significant. Authoritarian parenting style is a predictor for social anxiety but not significant. The social desirability and the cultural norms in Pakistan influence perceptions of parental control.

Rana et al. (2013) did a study to find the relationship between parenting styles and social anxiety among adolescents in Pakistan. They found a positive correlation between authoritarian and uninvolved fathers and social anxiety in adolescents. They also found the same results for mothers' parenting styles and social anxiety in adolescents. This study also shows that girls have more social anxiety than boys. It is also observed that mother's parenting styles like authoritarian and overprotectiveness are significantly linked to adolescent's social anxiety as mothers spend more time taking care of children than fathers.

## Methodology

### Statement of the Problem

The study seeks to address the problem of understanding how different parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive) are related to social anxiety in young adults. It aims to identify which specific parenting styles may predict higher levels of social anxiety and to explore how demographic factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status influence both parenting practices and the prevalence of social anxiety.

### Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aims to explore the relationship between parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian or permissive) and social anxiety and to identify which type of parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian or permissive) are predictors for social anxiety.

The objective of the study is to explore the perceptions of young adults regarding their parents' parenting styles and examine how these parenting styles correlate with levels of social anxiety among young adults. Additionally, the study seeks to investigate whether there are significant differences in the prevalence of social anxiety and parenting styles based on age, gender, and socioeconomic status.

### Research questions:

1. How do young adults perceive their parents' parenting style?
2. How do different parenting styles correlate with levels of social anxiety young adults?
3. Are there significant differences in the prevalence of social anxiety based on age, gender, or socioeconomic status?
4. Are there significant differences in parenting style based on age, gender, or socioeconomic status?

### Hypothesis:

1. There is no significant difference in the occurrence of social anxiety among young adults across the parenting style.
2. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of social anxiety based on age, gender, or socioeconomic status.
3. There is no significant difference in parenting style based on age, gender, or socioeconomic status.

### Operational Definitions of Key Terms

- Perceived Parenting style- Parenting style is defined as parents' attitudes and behaviours toward chi-

Children There are three types of parenting styles i.e., authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. Perceived Parenting style reflects the subjective experience of the child or young adult regarding their parents' methods of discipline, warmth, communication, and overall interaction.

- Social Anxiety- Social anxiety is an intense, persistent fear of being watched and judged by others.

### **Research design:**

The research design used in this study is a correlational research design to find the relationship between perceived parenting styles and social anxiety among young adults and identify demographic factors that may influence both parenting practices and social anxiety.

### **Participants:**

The population for this study is young adults who have grown up in South India. The participants' age ranges from 18 to 25 years. The participants belong to different socio-economic status i.e. Lower class, Lower middle class, Upper middle class, and Upper class. The South Indian states the participants belong to are Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, or Telangana.

### **Sampling:**

Data is collected through purposive sampling since the sample is specific group of individuals.

### **Tools:**

Parental Authority Questionnaire is developed by Buri, J. R. in 1991. It is a widely used tool for the purpose of measuring Baumrind's (1971) permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parental authority prototypes. It consists of 30 items per parent and yields permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative scores for both the mother and the father. The reliability for Authoritative Subscale is around 0.80 - 0.85. The reliability for Authoritarian Subscale is around 0.70 - 0.80. The reliability for Permissive Subscale is around 0.65 - 0.75. The convergent validity of the scale ranges from 0.40 to 0.70.

Mattick, R. P., & Clarke, J. C. (1998) developed Social Interaction Anxiety Scale to evaluate social anxiety, particularly the fear of social interactions. It contains 20 statements rated on a 5-point system regarding how characteristic they are of the person. The SIAS has demonstrated high internal consistency, often with Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.90. The test has good construct validity as SIAS scores correlate highly with other measures of social anxiety, such as the Social Phobia Scale (SPS) and the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS)

### **Procedure:**

The scales used were – Parental Authority Questionnaire and Social Interaction Anxiety Scale – which were circulated online via google forms. The researcher personally went around and asked participants to fill the form, The collected data was coded using excel and analysed using jamovi for Pearson's correlation coefficient.

### **Data analysis:**

#### **Descriptive statistics:**

Descriptive statistics were used to determine the characteristics (age, gender, socioeconomic background) of the sample.

**Inferential Statistics:**

ANOVA was used to find if there is a significant relationship between perceived parenting styles and social anxiety. Chi-square was used to find there is a relationship between perceived parenting styles and age, gender and socioeconomic status. Chi-square and t-test were used to find if there is relationship between social anxiety and age, gender and socioeconomic status.

**Research Ethics:**

I will prioritize ethical considerations by ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and minimizing harm to participants. I will obtain written consent from participants after providing them with clear information about the study. I will protect their privacy by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of the data collected. Cultural sensitivity will be considered by adapting methods to be culturally appropriate.

**RESULTS**

The aim of the study is to explore the relationship between parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian or permissive) and social anxiety and to identify which type of parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian or permissive) are predictors for social anxiety.

A total of 170 responses were collected from young adults on their parent's perceived parenting style and social anxiety. Parental Authority Questionnaire and Social Interaction Anxiety Scale were used. Responses to items are made on a 5-point Likert scale. The objectives were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as ANOVA, t-test, and chi-square test of independence. The tables and figures are given below.

**Sociodemographic Details of the participants**

The total sample size (N=170) consisted of 117 females and 53 males with mean age of 20.3 years, indicating that the population skews towards younger adults. The standard deviation of 1.69 suggests a moderate spread of ages around the mean, with ages ranging from 18 to 25. The total sample(N=170) consists of 18 participants from Tamil Nadu, 80 participants from Karnataka, 9 participants from Telangana, 58 participants from Kerala and 5 participants from Andhra Pradesh. The highest number of participants are from Karnataka followed by Kerala. The total sample(N=170) consists of 49 participants from Lower middle class, 112 participants from Upper middle class, 7 participants from Upper class and 2 participants from Lower class.

**Objective 1:** To explore the perceptions of young adults regarding their parents' parenting styles

**Table 1: Frequencies of Mother's style**

Mother's style	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
A	57	34.5 %	34.5 %
A/F	5	3.0 %	37.6 %
A/P	5	3.0%	40.6 %
F	74	44.8 %	85.5 %
F/P	3	1.8 %	87.3 %
P	21	12.7 %	100.0 %

According to Table 4.1, different participants perceive their mother’s parenting style differently. The number of participants who perceive their mother’s parenting as Authoritarian are 57. The number of participants who perceive their mother’s parenting as a mix of Authoritarian and Authoritative are 5. The number of participants who perceive their mother’s parenting as a mix of Authoritarian and Permissive are 5. The number of participants who perceive their mother’s parenting as a mix of Permissive and Authoritative are 3. The number of participants who perceive their mother’s parenting as Authoritative are 74. The number of participants who perceive their mother’s parenting as Permissive are 21.

**Table 2: Frequencies of Father's style**

Father's style	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
A	52	32.1 %	32.1 %
A/F	6	3.7 %	35.8 %
F	59	36.4 %	72.2 %
P	29	17.9 %	90.1 %
P/A	7	4.3 %	94.4 %
P/F	9	5.6 %	100.0 %

According to Table 4.2, different participants perceive their father’s parenting style differently. The number of participants who perceive their father’s parenting as Authoritarian are 52. The number of participants who perceive their father’s parenting as a mix of Authoritarian and Authoritative are 6. The number of participants who perceive their father’s parenting as a mix of Authoritarian and Permissive are 7. The number of participants who perceive their father’s parenting as a mix of Permissive and Authoritative are 7. The number of participants who perceive their father’s parenting as Authoritative are 59. The number of participants who perceive their father’s parenting as Permissive are 29.

**Objective 2:** To examine the influence of parenting style on social anxiety

**Null Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the occurrence of social anxiety among young adults across the parenting style.

**Table 3: ANOVA Results for the Impact of Parenting Styles on Social Anxiety in Young Adults**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
<b>Overall model</b>	4182	22	190	1.42	0.115
<b>Mother's style</b>	0	NaN			
<b>Father's style</b>	3.64e-12	0			
<b>Mother's style * Father's style</b>	4182	12	349		0.086
<b>Residuals</b>	28371	134	212		

Table 4.3 shows that the overall model has a p-value of 0.115, which is greater than the standard alpha level of 0.05. This suggests that the model as a whole is not statistically significant in predicting social anxiety across different parenting styles. The p-value the interaction between mother’s and father’s styles is 0.086. Since the p-values are greater than 0.05 in the ANOVA, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

**Objective 3:** To investigate whether there are significant differences in the prevalence of social anxiety and parenting styles based on age, gender, and socioeconomic status.

**Null Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the prevalence of social anxiety based on age, gender, or socioeconomic status.

**Table 4: t-test for Gender and Social**

		Statistic	df	P
<b>Total SA</b>	<b>Student's t</b>	0.386	168	0.700

**Table 5: One-Way ANOVA (Fisher's) for Socioeconomic status and Social anxiety**

	F	df1	df2	P
<b>Total SA</b>	0.664	3	166	0.575

Table 4.4 and 4.5 shows that the p-value of 0.700 and 0.575, respectively, are above the conventional significance levels (0.05). This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the levels of social anxiety among the different groups being compared. The null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the prevalence of social anxiety based on age, gender, or socioeconomic status cannot be rejected.

**Objective 4:** To find whether there are differences in parenting style based on age, gender, or socioeconomic status

**Null Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in parenting style based on age, gender, or socioeconomic status.

**Table 6:  $\chi^2$  Tests for Mother's Parenting Style and Age**

	Value	df	p
$\chi^2$	18.9	35	0.988
N	165		

**Table 7:  $\chi^2$  Tests for Mother's Parenting Style and Gender**

	Value	df	p
$\chi^2$	3.93	5	0.559
N	165		

**Table 8:  $\chi^2$  Tests for Mother's Parenting Style and Socioeconomic status**

	Value	df	p
$\chi^2$	23.2	15	0.080
N	165		

Table 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 shows the results of chi-square test of independence between Mother's Parenting Style and Age, Gender and, Socioeconomic status. The p-value is greater than 0.05 but less than 0.1, meaning that the result is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the mother's parenting style based on age, gender and socioeconomic status cannot be rejected.



**Table 9:  $\chi^2$  Tests for Father’s Parenting Style and Age**

	Value	df	P
$\chi^2$	44.1	35	0.139
N	162		

**Table 10:  $\chi^2$  Tests for Father’s Parenting Style and Gender**

	Value	df	P
$\chi^2$	12.4	5	0.030
N	162		

**Table 11:  $\chi^2$  Tests for Father’s Parenting Style and Socioeconomic status**

	Value	df	P
$\chi^2$	22.9	15	0.086
N	162		

Table 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11 shows the results of chi-square test of independence between Father’s Parenting Style and Age, Gender and, Socioeconomic status. The p-value is greater than 0.05, meaning that while the result is not statistically significant at the conventional 0.05 level. At a 0.05 significance level, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Except for the p-value for Gender which is 0.030. The null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the father’s parenting style based on socioeconomic status is rejected.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, the statistical analysis indicated that the overall model did not achieve significance at the 0.05 level, as the p-value of 0.115 is above the conventional threshold. This implies that different parenting styles may not have a strong predictive influence on social anxiety levels in young adults. Specifically, when examining the mother’s parenting style, the results were inconclusive due to insufficient data, represented by a p-value of "NaN." Additionally, the interaction between both parents' styles presented a p-value of 0.086, which, while not reaching the 0.05 level, would be considered significant at a more lenient 0.10 threshold. This finding suggests that the interaction between mother’s and father’s parenting styles might still play a role in influencing social anxiety, albeit weakly, warranting future research to explore this potential relationship further.

The singular fit issue encountered in the model signals that one or more variables might be highly correlated or linearly related to others, making it challenging to isolate each variable’s unique contribution. This multicollinearity suggests that parenting styles may overlap in ways that impact young adults’ social anxiety, making it difficult to analyse them independently in the model. Since the p-values are greater than 0.05 in the ANOVA, we cannot reject the null hypothesis, indicating no statistically significant difference in social anxiety based on parenting styles.

This study offers a distinct perspective on the connection between parenting styles and social anxiety, especially within the Indian cultural context. While Mishra and Kiran (2018) found that authoritative parenting, marked by warmth and responsiveness, correlates with lower social anxiety in adolescents, the current study did not reveal a statistically significant link between parenting styles and social anxiety in young adults. Age-related factors, such as peer influence and personal coping strategies, may account for

this difference. Additionally, Sahithya and Raman (2021) highlighted that parental personality and child temperament could mediate the influence of parenting style on anxiety, supporting the idea that overlapping factors, particularly in collectivist cultures, complicate isolating parenting styles' effects. Sandhu and Sharma (2015) connected authoritarian parenting with social withdrawal and anxiety in adolescents; similarly, the slight interaction effect in the current study suggests that combined maternal and paternal influences could subtly impact social anxiety in young adults, though not significantly. In Indian families, where parental roles often balance each other, such dynamics may affect social anxiety differently over time, warranting further investigation.

The study finds no significant differences in social anxiety levels based on gender or socioeconomic status, highlighting parenting styles and familial relational dynamics as more influential factors. Gender appears to play a limited role in shaping social anxiety compared to parenting and environmental influences. While socioeconomic status has minimal impact on anxiety outcomes, parenting approaches, particularly fathers' styles, show variations based on the child's gender. Fathers tend to adopt more protective or authoritarian behaviors toward daughters, influenced by sociocultural norms and expectations, whereas mothers' parenting styles remain stable across demographic factors. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of understanding social anxiety through parenting dynamics rather than demographic variables.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributes to understanding the relationship between parenting styles and social anxiety in young adults, particularly within the Indian cultural context. The findings indicate that parenting styles, individually or in combination, do not have a statistically significant influence on social anxiety levels in this population, unlike previous studies. The statistical analysis did reveal a weak interaction between mothers' and fathers' parenting styles, hinting at the possibility that combined parental influences may impact social anxiety subtly, though not significantly. Additionally, demographic factors like age, socioeconomic status, and gender did not significantly affect parenting style perceptions or social anxiety levels, except for a notable association between gender and fathers' parenting approaches. This may reflect sociocultural expectations in Indian families, where fathers often adjust their parenting style based on the gender of their child.

## Limitations

The sample size may still be insufficient to capture subtle but potentially meaningful correlations between parenting styles and social anxiety levels. Future researchers should ensure a larger sample size. Secondly, most of the participants were from the same college with similar backgrounds, this lack of diversity may limit the applicability of results across different groups. Future research should be done across India to include people from all cultures or background. Thirdly, the study relied on self-reported measures for both perceived parenting style and social anxiety, which can be prone to biases. The perception of parenting style is also subjective and may not accurately reflect the parents' actual behaviours. Lastly, factors, such as genetic predispositions, peer influences, or individual personality traits, might also play a role in developing social anxiety. Without controlling for these confounders, the study's findings on the relationship between parenting style and social anxiety could be limited.

## Implications and Future Research

While this study does not establish a significant relationship between parenting styles and social anxiety

in young adults, the slight significance of the interaction effect suggests a need to investigate the combined impact of maternal and paternal styles further. Future research could benefit from examining additional factors like the child's temperament, parental personality. Furthermore, larger sample sizes and measures to address multicollinearity can improve model strength. This would also help clarify how evolving family structures and roles influence mental health outcomes in young adults, particularly within culturally specific contexts such as India.

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