

The Relationship Between Parenting Styles, Psychological Flexibility, and Self-Esteem on Mental Health among Malaysian Young Adults

Isnafatihah Ismail², Aini Azeqa Ma'rof^{1,2}, Mohd Roslan Rosnon²

¹Institute for Social Science Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia, ²Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: azeqa@upm.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i8/22565>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i8/22565

Published Date: 17 August 2024

Abstract

This study examines the role of parenting techniques and psychological qualities on prosocial behavior. It analyzes data from 428 participants to assess the impact of environmental and personal factors on these behaviors. The main emphasis is placed on three distinct parenting styles, namely authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive, as well as individual psychological attributes like as self-esteem and psychological flexibility. The research employs multiple regression analysis to measure the impact of these variables on prosocial behavior, explaining 61.5% of the variability. The findings indicate that authoritative parenting has a favorable impact on prosocial behavior, indicating that a caring yet organized approach encourages the development of prosocial tendencies. Authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, in contrast, have a negative correlation with prosocial conduct. This suggests that excessively severe or tolerant approaches may hinder the development of socially advantageous behaviors. Psychological characteristics also have a substantial impact. Self-esteem is identified as the most influential factor, highlighting the significance of an individual's belief in their social talents. Psychological flexibility has a beneficial effect, indicating that being adaptable in social contexts improves prosocial conduct. These findings emphasize the crucial importance of psychological well-being and flexibility in encouraging behaviors that are advantageous to others. This study enhances our comprehension of the elements that promote prosocial conduct, highlighting the necessity for educational and community initiatives that improve psychological characteristics and promote successful parenting methods. By gaining a deeper comprehension of the factors that influence prosocial conduct, policymakers and educators can create tactics to improve cooperative and supportive relationships within communities, thus enhancing the social structure of our surroundings.

Keywords: Prosocial Behavior, Parenting Styles, Psychological Flexibility, Self-esteem, Social Development

Introduction

The psychological well-being of college students is a pressing issue, especially in terms of their academic achievements and overall welfare. It is crucial to identify the causative elements that can be targeted through specific interventions in Malaysia, where there is growing recognition of mental health problems among students. This study investigates the correlation of different parenting styles, psychological flexibility, and self-esteem on the mental well-being of students attending public universities in the Klang Valley region of Malaysia. Prior studies have highlighted the impact of these factors on mental well-being in other groups, indicating the need for a comparable examination in this particular setting (Klimstra et al., 2010).

The impact of different parenting styles on children's psychological well-being has been well researched. Authoritative parenting, which is defined as being both responsive and demanding, has been found to have a favorable association with improved mental health. This includes lower levels of depression and anxiety, as stated by Steinberg (2001). On the other hand, parenting styles that are dictatorial or permissive are frequently linked to negative mental health outcomes in teenagers and young adults. This study seeks to expand on these findings by examining the impact of these parenting styles on the mental well-being of university students in Malaysia, taking into account the cultural environment that may influence these associations (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Psychological flexibility, which refers to the capacity to adjust one's ideas and actions in response to situational requirements, has become a crucial concept in mental health research. Research has demonstrated that individuals with greater psychological flexibility tend to exhibit improved emotional regulation, reduced anxiety, and a decreased likelihood of experiencing mental health issues (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). University students, who frequently encounter challenging transitions and academic demands, might experience substantial improvements in their mental well-being by developing psychological flexibility. This study investigates the degree to which psychological flexibility acts as a mediator in the correlation between parenting styles and mental health in students.

Self-esteem is a vital factor in a person's mental well-being, as multiple studies have shown a strong connection between high self-esteem and improved psychological health and ability to cope with stress (Orth & Robins, 2014). Self-esteem among university students can serve as a protective factor against the detrimental impacts of academic stress and social obstacles. It has the capacity to mitigate the influence of unfavorable parenting methods on mental well-being. This study evaluates the immediate impacts of self-esteem on mental health and investigates its function as a safeguarding element within various parenting methods.

In light of the above concerns, this study aims to look at parenting styles, psychological flexibility, self-esteem and prosocial behavior with specific research questions as follows:

1. What is the level of parenting styles, psychological flexibility, self-esteem and mental health among young adults in Klang Valley, Malaysia?

2. Is there any relationship between parenting styles, psychological flexibility, self-esteem and mental health among young adults in Klang Valley, Malaysia?
3. What are the unique predictors of mental health among young adults in Klang Valley, Malaysia?

Parenting Styles and Mental Health Outcomes

Parenting styles have been a significant focus in developmental psychology because they have a profound influence on the emotional and psychological development of children. Baumrind's influential research on parenting typologies, including authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles, establishes a fundamental framework for examining their effects on mental well-being throughout different stages of development (Baumrind, 1966). This section of the literature review explores the impact of different parenting methods on mental health from childhood to young adulthood, specifically looking at emotional regulation, anxiety, depression, and overall psychological resilience.

Authoritative parenting, which is defined by a harmonious combination of affection and discipline, is consistently associated with the most favorable mental health results. Studies indicate that children and adolescents who are raised with this type of parenting demonstrate elevated levels of self-confidence, improved academic achievement, and enhanced social skills (Steinberg, 2001). These individuals usually have exceptional emotional regulation skills, which are essential for dealing with stress and adversity, therefore decreasing the chances of experiencing anxiety and depression symptoms. On the other hand, authoritarian parenting, characterized by high demands and inadequate responsiveness, is frequently linked to negative mental health outcomes. The parenting style described can result in elevated levels of anxiety and sadness in young adults, as it may impede their emotional independence and self-assertion (Chorpita & Barlow, 1998). Young adults who have been brought up in authoritarian regimes frequently experience increased psychological suffering as a result of the burden of rigid expectations and a lack of emotional support.

Permissive parenting, characterized by being highly responsive but having low expectations, is also associated with numerous mental health difficulties. Although these parents are usually caring and expressive, their insufficient enforcement of rules can result in challenges in managing conduct among young adults. Research has indicated that persons who come from permissive environments are more likely to engage in substance misuse and other risky activities. They may also face problems with anxiety and self-esteem (Lamborn et al., 1991). The synthesis of the evidence highlights a distinct pattern: the manner in which parents raise their children significantly impacts their mental health outcomes well into early adulthood. Authoritative parenting is highly advantageous, as it fosters a range of psychological attributes such as resilience, emotional control, and reduced levels of anxiety and despair. Conversely, parenting styles characterized by authoritarianism and permissiveness are frequently associated with less desirable results. These findings are essential for creating focused treatments and educational programs that promote good parenting behaviors, with the goal of enhancing mental health and well-being among young adults.

Psychological Flexibility as Underlying Mechanism of Mental Health

Psychological flexibility is the ability to completely engage with the current moment as an aware individual and to adapt or continue with conduct that aligns with one's important goals. The core principle of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is to effectively respond to situational demands by being mindful, receptive, and prioritizing long-term values (Hayes,

Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999). The importance of psychological flexibility is becoming more widely acknowledged due to its ability to improve general well-being and serve as a safeguard against various mental health difficulties.

Psychological flexibility, within the realm of stress management, enables individuals to effectively handle intricate life circumstances without being overpowered by fleeting ideas and emotions. Kashdan and Rottenberg (2010) demonstrate that individuals with a strong capacity for psychological flexibility are prone to experiencing reduced stress levels when faced with life changes or challenges. This is because they are able to adjust their coping mechanisms more efficiently to align with their fundamental values and the requirements of the situation. The ability to adjust to stressful situations is associated with improved psychological well-being and increased overall life contentment.

Additionally, research suggests that the ability to adapt and respond to psychological challenges might greatly reduce mental suffering in young people. Individuals can effectively address and handle their problems in a more constructive manner by acknowledging and accepting their emotional experiences instead of resorting to avoidant coping techniques (Bond et al., 2011). This method aids in reducing the impact of anxiety, depression, and similar disorders, emphasizing the therapeutic possibilities of improving psychological adaptability in mental health treatments.

Psychological flexibility exhibits a robust correlation with heightened life satisfaction. Adopting an adaptable mindset towards personal obstacles and life occurrences enables individuals to align more consistently with their core principles, regardless of their current emotional states. The alignment of values and activities leads to a continuous feeling of satisfaction and overall well-being (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004). Young adults who develop psychological flexibility throughout this stage of life can experience deeper and longer-lasting satisfaction in different areas of their lives.

An analysis of psychological flexibility in the psychological literature provides persuasive evidence of its significance as a mediator of mental well-being. It facilitates the creation of interventions that concentrate on improving adaptation through the implementation of skills training and mindfulness-based practices. Further investigation is warranted to delve into the mechanisms by which psychological flexibility influences mental health and to identify effective strategies for promoting resilience and well-being in various populations. The capacity of psychological flexibility to enhance the quality of life and mental well-being in various settings and societies presents a hopeful pathway for both clinical and community-oriented approaches to mental health.

The Role of Self-esteem in Mental Health

Self-esteem is the subjective assessment of one's own value and is a crucial psychological aspect that significantly impacts mental well-being. The notion has undergone thorough examination and is consistently associated with a broad spectrum of psychological consequences. Research has shown that individuals with high self-esteem tend to have improved mental well-being, characterized by reduced levels of melancholy and anxiety. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to experience psychological illnesses in the future (Orth & Robins, 2013). This research review examines the relationship between self-esteem and mental health, as well as how self-esteem influences the effects of different environmental factors.

The correlation between self-esteem and mental problems is extensively recognized. Multiple studies have demonstrated a clear correlation between low self-esteem and an elevated risk

of depression and anxiety. For example, Sowislo and Orth (2013) discovered that individuals with poor self-esteem are more likely to experience the emergence and continuation of depression symptoms as time progresses. This implies that therapies targeted at enhancing self-esteem have the potential to be successful in reducing the intensity of these prevalent mental health problems. Self-esteem plays a role in moderating the connection between environmental stressors and mental health outcomes. It has the ability to mitigate the adverse consequences of stressful life experiences and unfavorable family dynamics, such as dysfunctional parenting methods. A study conducted by Trzesniewski et al. (2006) emphasizes that individuals with elevated self-esteem possess superior coping mechanisms to manage interpersonal stress and adversity, which may consequently mitigate the psychological consequences of unfavorable encounters. The significance of self-esteem in resilience-building efforts and mental health interventions is emphasized by its position as a moderator. Due to the substantial impact of self-esteem on mental well-being, a multitude of therapies have been created to augment self-esteem in young adults. These interventions frequently incorporate cognitive-behavioral strategies that specifically target the alteration of negative thought and behavioral patterns that weaken one's sense of self-worth. Leary and MacDonald (2003) highlight the efficacy of these therapies in enhancing self-esteem and alleviating symptoms of mental health issues. Programs that integrate training in abilities such as assertiveness and social skills, together with activities that focus on cognitive restructuring, are very advantageous.

Method

Participants

The study encompassed a cohort of 428 young adults, exclusively consisting of students attending public universities situated in the Klang Valley region of Malaysia. This demographic was chosen to reflect a varied and representative sample of young adults going through a crucial period of growth in an educational setting. The participants varied in terms of age, major fields of study, and socio-economic backgrounds, which resulted in a diverse dataset for analyzing the influence of parenting methods, psychological flexibility, and self-esteem on mental health in this particular group. All individuals willingly participated in the study, giving their informed consent after receiving detailed information about the study's goals, the confidentiality of their answers, and the non-intrusive nature of the online survey. This configuration guaranteed a comprehensive comprehension of the variables that impact the mental well-being of university students in a prominent metropolitan area in Malaysia.

Procedure and Measures

The study commenced by contacting possible volunteers through email, furnishing them with comprehensive information regarding the research aims and methodology. The initial contact was crucial in getting informed permission, ensuring participants had a complete understanding of the study's objectives, methods, and possible consequences, and confirming their voluntary involvement. The study utilized a strictly quantitative methodology, with a specific emphasis on examining the connections among parenting styles, psychological flexibility, self-esteem, and mental health. Participants were asked to complete a well-organized online survey that aimed to evaluate their opinions of their parents' parenting approaches, their personal levels of psychological adaptability and self-worth, as well as their mental well-being. An electronic poll was used to guarantee anonymity, preserve confidentiality, and reduce any answer biases. This web-based quantitative methodology

facilitated quick data gathering from a diverse range of individuals, resulting in a significant dataset for examining the influence of parenting methods, psychological adaptability, and self-worth on the mental well-being of young adults. The study aims to collect accurate and pertinent data in order to gain a deeper understanding of these intricate relationships within a well-organized and regulated setting.

Parenting Styles

The Parenting Styles Inventory-II (PSI-II), created by Darling and Toyokawa (1997), was employed to evaluate participants' impressions of their parents' parenting styles. This inventory assesses three aspects of parenting: strictness, granting of independence, and responsiveness. Participants provided their responses to a set of 15 statements using a Likert scale that ranged from (1) indicating Strong Disagreement to (5) indicating Strong Agreement. Instances of these things encompass phrases such as "My parents hold high expectations for me to adhere to family regulations," "My parents disapprove of me confiding in them about my difficulties," and "My parents demonstrate reverence for my personal space." In order to ensure appropriate data interpretation, items 2, 5, 3, 9, 7, and 14 were subjected to reverse coding. This was necessary because certain items were negatively phrased, such as "My parents hardly ever praise me for doing well." A higher overall score signifies a more robust manifestation of the three parenting styles. The questionnaire is categorized into three subscales, each comprising of five items that assess distinct dimensions of parenting style as described in previous studies: demandingness, emotional responsiveness, and psychological autonomy-granting (Schaeffer, 1965; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1987). The reliability test shows a reliability coefficient of $\alpha=.79$ for strictness, the responsiveness scale had a reliability coefficient of $\alpha=.87$, and the autonomy-granting scale had a reliability coefficient of $\alpha=.82$.

Psychological Flexibility

The AFQ-Y, created by Greco in 2008, is a tool used to measure psychological inflexibility resulting from elevated degrees of cognitive fusion and experiential avoidance, in line with the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). This questionnaire is specifically created as a scale consisting of 10 items to assess psychological acceptance. It utilizes a 5-point Likert scale for measurement. The scale comprises statements such as "My life is contingent upon my happiness," "My thoughts and emotions disrupt my life," and "The negative perceptions I hold about myself must be accurate."

Psychological acceptance is defined as a dynamic and complex process that involves different levels of openness to experiencing personal thoughts and feelings, active participation in actions aligned with personal ideals, and the extent to which one avoids or becomes overly attached to their thoughts and emotions. On this scale, higher scores, which indicate responses that are further from "not true at all," indicate a higher degree of psychological flexibility. This suggests that unpleasant ideas and feelings have less of an impact on the individual's

life. The AFQ-Y has consistently shown strong internal consistency in many research, with Cronbach's alpha values commonly reported at approximately .84. This indicates that the AFQ-Y is a reliable tool for evaluating the psychological components associated with ACT. The AFQ-Y is a powerful instrument for examining how young individuals handle and understand their internal experiences, especially in situations where cognitive fusion and experiential avoidance are important factors in mental health outcomes.

Self-esteem

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), created by Dr. Morris Rosenberg in 1965, is a commonly employed tool in social science research to evaluate an individual's self-esteem. This tool utilizes a 10-item scale that incorporates a 4-point Likert response format, ranging from (1) Strongly Agree to (4) Strongly Disagree. The scale measures both favorable and unfavorable impressions of oneself in order to assess one's total self-esteem. Examples of statements including "I am generally content with my identity," "At times, I experience a sense of insignificance," and "I lack significant achievements to take pride in."

Greater scores on this scale, where participants express disagreement with negative claims regarding themselves and agreement with positive statements, signify higher levels of self-esteem. The design of the RSES enables researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of an individual's self-regard by evaluating their responses to both favorably and negatively worded items. This ensures a fair evaluation of self-esteem levels in various study populations.

Regarding reliability, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale has consistently shown great internal consistency in multiple investigations, with Cronbach's alpha often falling within the range of .88, which indicates exceptional reliability. The strong measure of reliability highlights the usefulness of the scale in reliably and consistently evaluating self-esteem, making it a popular option for researchers examining psychological concepts associated with self-perception and self-worth.

Mental Health

The General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12), developed by British researcher Goldberg in 1972, is a commonly employed assessment instrument for identifying and quantifying mental health problems. The GHQ-12 has gained widespread popularity as a tool for evaluating psychological distress in non-clinical groups, based on research conducted by Goldberg and Williams (1988), Hankins (2008), and Tomás et al. (2017). It is highly regarded for its concise nature and ability to accurately measure psychological discomfort. This survey comprises 12 items that employ a 4-point Likert scale to assess six favorable and six unfavorable facets of mental well-being. Some examples of the items are "Did anxiety prevent you from sleeping?", "Did you believe you were capable of making choices?", and "Did you frequently experience tension?" The scoring for this scale spans from (1) 'much more than usual' to (4) 'not at all', with higher scores suggesting superior mental health results.

The GHQ-12 has continuously shown strong internal consistency in terms of reliability across multiple investigations, with Cronbach's alpha values frequently surpassing .80. The exceptional level of dependability of this tool makes it highly suitable for extensive utilization in both research and clinical environments, enabling a rapid evaluation of mental health condition and identification of individuals requiring additional psychological assessment or intervention.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected in this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 29.0. Descriptive statistics were initially employed to summarize the demographic and psychological characteristics of the 428 young adults participating in the study. This stage was crucial for establishing a foundational understanding of the participant pool and their respective contexts.

Subsequent to the initial analysis, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to explore the relationships between various psychological factors—specifically, parenting styles, psychological flexibility, and self-esteem—and their impact on mental health. This statistical method was instrumental in identifying the strength and direction of the relationships between these variables.

Further, multiple regression analyses were performed to ascertain the unique and combined contributions of these variables to mental health outcomes. This analysis allowed for a detailed examination of how each factor—whether a parenting style or a psychological trait—individually and in combination, predicts mental health among the young adults studied. The application of multiple regression analyses was particularly effective in delineating the predictive power of each variable, providing nuanced insights into the complex interplay affecting mental health within this Malaysian youth sample.

Results and Discussion

According to the results displayed in Table 1, the data collected from 428 participants indicates an average mental health score of 32.24, with a standard deviation of 3.36. The scores range from 16 to 39. The analysis of mental health levels indicates that 2.8% of participants exhibit low mental health, 68.0% display moderate mental health, and 29.9% demonstrate good mental health. The prevalence of moderate mental health indicates that severe mental health difficulties are not common, yet there is a notable subgroup with elevated scores, indicating positive mental well-being. The low incidence of poor mental health may be indicative of efficient support networks or inherent resilience within the community. The average self-esteem score is 26.83, with a standard deviation of 3.91. The scores range from 10 to 40. The distribution across categories reveals that 1.9% of individuals possess poor self-esteem, whereas 67.5% exhibit medium self-esteem, and 30.6% demonstrate high self-esteem. The data indicates that most individuals have a good view of themselves, with a significant proportion having a strong sense of self-worth. This may be associated with improved mental well-being and individual accomplishments. The mean score for psychological flexibility is 30.29, with a standard deviation of 9.18. Scores range from 12 to 50. The analysis of levels reveals that 13.8% of persons exhibit poor psychological flexibility, whereas 58.4% display moderate levels, and 27.8% have high levels. The data indicates that although most individuals are capable of adjusting to changes and effectively handling stress, a significant fraction experiences difficulties with flexibility, which might hinder their ability to handle stress and adapt. The average score for permissive parenting is 16.57, with a standard deviation of 2.41. The scores range from 6 to 25. Approximately 77.6% of individuals are classified as moderate, while 21.0% are classified as high, and a mere 1.4% are classified as low. The average score for authoritative parenting is 16.11, with a standard deviation of 4.75. The scores range from 5 to 25. Of the total scores, 57.5% go into the moderate category, 29.6% fall into the high category, and 12.9% fall into the low category. Authoritarian parenting has an average score of 15.87 (standard deviation = 3.88), with a range of 5 to 25. Of the participants, 47.4% exhibited moderate levels of authoritarian parenting, 39.5% exhibited high levels, and 13.1% exhibited low levels. The data on parenting styles reveals a wide range of methods, with a considerable proportion of parents embracing moderate to high levels of permissiveness, authoritative, and authoritarian ways. The frequent occurrence of high scores in authoritarian and authoritative

techniques may be indicative of societal factors or individual beliefs toward child discipline and independence.

This analysis provides essential insights into the mental well-being, self-worth, ability to adapt psychologically, and approaches to parenting within a group of 428 participants that were studied. It highlights the necessity for focused interventions and assistance to improve mental well-being and successful parenting methods, according to the unique traits and requirements of the community.

Table 1
Level of Study Variables

Level	n	%	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<u>Mental Health</u>						
			32.24	3.36	16	39
Low (4 - 18)	9	2.8				
Moderate (19 - 32)	291	68.0				
High (33 - 48)	128	29.9				
<u>Self-esteem</u>						
			26.83	3.91	10	40
Low (4 - 15)	8	1.9				
Medium (16 - 27)	289	67.5				
High (28 - 40)	131	30.6				
<u>Psychological Flexibility</u>						
			30.29	9.18	12	50
Low (5 – 19)	59	13.8				
Moderate (20 – 34)	250	58.4				
High (35 – 50)	119	27.8				
<u>Parenting Styles</u>						
<i>Permissive</i>						
			16.57	2.41	6	25
Low (5 – 11)	6	1.4				
Moderate (12 – 17)	332	77.6				
High (18 – 25)	90	21.0				
<i>Authoritative</i>						
			16.11	4.75	5	25
Low (5 – 11)	55	12.9				
Moderate (12 -17)	246	57.5				
High (18 – 25)	127	29.6				

<i>Authoritarian</i>		15.87	3.88	5	25
Low (5 – 11)	56	13.1			
Moderate (12 – 17)	203	47.4			
High (18 -25)	169	39.5			

A t-test was used to compare the mean mental health scores of male and female participants. The findings revealed that males ($M = 2.718$) exhibited a statistically significant higher mean mental health score in comparison to females ($M = 2.643$), $t(426) = 2.76$, $p = .001$. The observed statistical significance in mental health ratings between genders indicates that males in this particular group reported marginally superior mental health compared to girls. This discovery may suggest gender disparities in either the perception or disclosure of mental health concerns. The elevated mental health ratings reported in males may be linked to cultural expectations, gender roles, or disparities in coping techniques across genders. Additionally, it is plausible that females may have a greater vulnerability or inclination to disclose mental health challenges, a pattern that has been corroborated by other studies. This outcome highlights the significance of taking into account gender disparities when conducting mental health evaluations and implementing interventions. Customized approaches may be required to properly tackle and assist the mental health requirements of both males and females. Additional investigation is advised to delve into the fundamental reasons behind these disparities, which may encompass societal, biological, or psychological issues.

Table 2
Difference in Gender on Mental Health

Variable	Average		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Male	Female		
Mental health	2.718	2.643	2.76	.001

Table 3 was used to conduct a Pearson correlation analysis to investigate the connections between different parenting styles, psychological flexibility, self-esteem, and mental health among 428 students from public universities in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The findings revealed strong positive associations between all the independent factors and mental well-being. More precisely, there was a correlation between the permissive parenting style and mental health, with a correlation coefficient of $r(426) = .439$, and a p -value of less than $.001$. The study found that the authoritative parenting style had a significant and substantial positive association ($r = .616$, $p < .001$) with the outcome variable. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the authoritarian parenting style exhibited a substantial and favorable link with mental health, as indicated by the statistical analysis ($r = .399$, $p < .001$, $N = 426$). Psychological flexibility showed a significant and robust link with mental health, $r(426) = .691$, $p < .001$. Additionally, self-esteem displayed the strongest correlation, $r(426) = .712$, $p < .001$.

The correlation analysis findings demonstrate a significant pattern in the associations of parenting styles, psychological flexibility, self-esteem, and mental health. The study found a significant positive correlation between mental health and self-esteem, indicating that greater levels of self-esteem are linked to improved mental health outcomes in university students. This is consistent with previous research that suggests self-esteem can have a

significant impact in protecting against psychological discomfort and improving overall well-being (Orth & Robins, 2014). The association between psychological flexibility and mental health was highly positive, highlighting its crucial role in responding to the stresses of university life. Psychologically flexible students are more adept at managing stress and adapting their behavior to changing situations, which can have a considerable positive impact on their mental well-being.

Authoritative parenting shown the most robust positive link with mental health across the other parenting styles. This suggests that a balanced approach that incorporates both warmth and structure in parenting may contribute to the observed advantages. This approach has the potential to create a setting in which pupils feel encouraged and appreciated, leading to improved mental well-being. While both permissive and authoritarian parenting styles displayed positive associations, these were comparatively weaker, indicating that although they may have certain advantages, they are not as successful in promoting mental well-being as authoritative parenting.

These findings emphasize the intricate nature of the elements that affect mental health in university students. They also indicate that interventions aiming at promoting mental health could be more effective by prioritizing the enhancement of self-esteem and psychological flexibility. In addition, advocating for efficient parenting techniques may also enhance mental health outcomes, suggesting the need for a comprehensive approach to mental health therapies. The significance of these findings is substantial, offering practical and useful information for parents, educators, and mental health practitioners who are involved in supporting university students.

Table 3
Correlations among Study Variables

Variable	Mental Health	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Permissive	.439**	.001
Authoritative	.616**	.001
Authoritarian	.399**	.001
Psychological Flexibility	.691**	.001
Self-esteem	.712**	.001

N = 428, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Table 4 displays the outcomes of a regression analysis conducted to evaluate the factors that predict prosocial behavior. An analysis using multiple regression was conducted to examine the impact of different factors, including permissive, authoritative, and authoritarian parenting styles, as well as psychological flexibility and self-esteem, on the mental health of 428 students attending public universities in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The regression model demonstrated statistical significance, with an F-value of 134.77 and degrees of freedom of 5 and 422 ($F(5, 422)$). The p-value was less than .001, indicating a very significant relationship. The model accounted for 61.5% of the variance in mental health, as indicated by the adjusted R-squared value of .610.

In the model, self-esteem was found to be the most influential factor, with a standardized beta coefficient (β) of .477, $p < .001$, showing a significant and strong positive impact on mental health. Psychological flexibility had a notable and favorable effect, with a β coefficient of .340 and a p-value of less than .001. Out of the different parenting styles, authoritative

parenting had the greatest significant impact on mental health, with a β value of .613, $p < .001$. In contrast, both permissive and authoritarian parenting styles had detrimental effects on mental health, as indicated by β values of $-.437$, $p < .001$ and $-.358$, $p < .001$, respectively. The regression analysis results offer a more profound comprehension of the interplay among parenting methods, psychological features, and mental health in university students. The significant effect of self-esteem in predicting mental health highlights its crucial significance in psychological well-being. Trzesniewski, Donnellan, and Robins (2003) argue that high self-esteem is associated with favorable mental health outcomes, such as reduced levels of depression and anxiety.

The notable impact of psychological flexibility on mental well-being underscores its importance in educational contexts, particularly in managing the academic stress and life changes that are prevalent in university settings. According to Kashdan and Rottenberg (2010), people who have a high level of psychological flexibility are better able to handle challenges, which can help protect against reductions in mental health during stressful times. The significant favorable influence of authoritative parenting on mental health underscores the advantageous outcomes associated with this parenting approach, as observed in prior research, including studies conducted by Steinberg (2001), which establish a connection between authoritative parenting and improved psychosocial development and reduced psychological distress. Conversely, the negative correlations linked to permissive and authoritarian styles indicate that excessive leniency or strictness may have a detrimental impact on mental well-being. The results align with Baumrind's (1991) seminal study, indicating that parenting techniques that are not ideal can hinder emotional and psychological growth.

These findings are crucial for creating specific interventions aimed at improving mental health among college students. Psychological flexibility and self-esteem could be very impactful in educational programs. Furthermore, parenting programs that promote authoritative practices could be advantageous, not just during early childhood but also as a continuous form of assistance throughout a child's educational journey.

This study emphasizes the intricate interaction between personal characteristics and environmental influences in developing mental health. It implies that treatments targeting both individuals and families are essential for increasing the overall well-being of university students. Subsequent investigations should further investigate these associations, including integrating longitudinal methodologies to monitor alterations over an extended period and treatments to assess their immediate influence on the mental well-being of students.

Table 4
Regression Results

Variable	Mental Health			
	B	SE. B	Beta, β	p
Permissive	-.257	.033	-.437	.001
Authoritative	.183	.032	.613	.001
Authoritarian	-.131	.022	-.358	.001
Psychological Flexibility	.105	.023	.340	.001
Self-esteem	.346	.039	.477	.001
R²	.615			
Adjusted R²	.610			
F	134.77			

Influence of Parenting Styles, Psychological Flexibility, and Self-Esteem on Mental Health

Psychological research has focused extensively on the impact of parenting approaches, psychological flexibility, and self-esteem on the mental well-being of young adults. This debate examines the interplay between these elements and their impact on mental health, utilizing data from a recent study conducted among young adults in a university environment. The analysis of the results emphasizes the crucial significance of these factors, indicating potential approaches to improve mental health therapies. Research has extensively examined parenting styles and their enduring influence on child development, which extends into adulthood. Within the scope of this research, authoritative parenting was found to have a significant and beneficial impact on mental well-being. This aligns with the findings of Baumrind (1991) and Steinberg (2001), who have linked authoritative parenting to greater psychological well-being. Conversely, permissive and authoritarian styles had a negative correlation with mental health, consistent with previous research that has shown a connection between these styles and inferior psychological well-being (Lamborn et al., 1991). These findings emphasize the importance of fostering parenting approaches that achieve a balance between affection and strictness, especially during the stages of development that continue into early adulthood.

Psychological flexibility, which refers to the ability to effectively adjust to the demands of different situations, was found to be a significant and favorable predictor of mental health. According to Hayes et al. (2006), psychological flexibility can assist individuals in effectively managing the difficulties they face in life, leading to an improvement in their mental well-being. Enhancing the capacity of young adults to adjust their ideas and behaviors might serve as a protective measure against the challenges and changes that come with university life. Therefore, therapies targeting the improvement of this adaptability can be advantageous. Consistently, there is a robust association between self-esteem and improved mental health outcomes. This study provides evidence in favor of Robins et al. (2002), who argue that having a strong sense of self-worth helps individuals cope with stress and lowers their vulnerability to mental illnesses. Considering that self-esteem serves as a protective barrier in demanding academic and social university settings, prioritizing the enhancement of self-esteem could be a strategic objective for mental health initiatives targeting young adults.

The dynamic relationship among parenting methods, psychological flexibility, and self-esteem provides a comprehensive framework for comprehending and enhancing the mental well-being of young adults. This implies that mental health interventions that are successful should utilize an integrative strategy. Educational programs can integrate instruction on psychological flexibility and self-esteem building, as well as provide guidance to parents on good parenting approaches. These extensive programs might be introduced in university wellness centers and expanded to online platforms to reach a wider range of people. This conversation examines the intricate connections of parenting methods, psychological flexibility, and self-esteem in influencing the mental well-being of young adults. Subsequent investigations should examine the long-term consequences and take into account various cultural settings in order to extend the applicability of these results. Furthermore, conducting experimental research would be advantageous in directly evaluating the effects of focused interventions on these factors. Through further investigation of these connections, psychologists can enhance the customization of therapies that promote the well-being and increased adaptability of young adults.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study offers valuable insights into the impact of parenting methods, psychological flexibility, and self-esteem on the mental well-being of young adults. However, it is important to note that there are several limitations in this research that point towards areas for further investigation. One major constraint of the study is its cross-sectional methodology, which, while useful for discovering correlations, does not allow for the establishment of causality. This prompts the inquiry as to whether attributes like psychological flexibility and self-esteem have a direct positive impact on mental health, or if individuals with better mental health are more inclined to develop or express these traits. Moreover, the dependence on data provided by individuals themselves presents possible biases. Participants may modify their responses to conform to socially accepted norms or may have imperfect recollection of prior occurrences, therefore impacting the dependability of data pertaining to parenting approaches and personal characteristics. This constraint is noteworthy because it has the potential to distort the understanding of how these components interplay in shaping mental well-being.

In order to resolve these concerns, it is recommended to do longitudinal research in the future. These studies have the potential to monitor changes over time, providing a more dynamic comprehension of how different parenting techniques influence the development of individuals into young adulthood and subsequently effect their mental health outcomes. This approach would additionally elucidate the directionality of the associations found. In addition, the inclusion of objective indicators of psychological well-being, such as clinical evaluations or behavioral observations, could improve the accuracy and reliability of the results. Incorporating a wider range of individuals from different demographic backgrounds might also yield advantageous outcomes. This may entail analyzing these connections within diverse cultural or socioeconomic contexts, as parenting approaches and the assessment of self-worth can differ considerably across various settings. To overcome these constraints, future research could better customize treatments designed to promote mental health in young adults, ultimately resulting in more sophisticated and efficient support systems in educational and community environments.

Conclusion

This study has made a substantial contribution to our comprehension of the elements that affect the mental well-being of young adults. It has emphasized the influential roles of parenting styles, psychological flexibility, and self-esteem. The results indicate that authoritative parenting has a good impact on mental health, highlighting the importance of a well-rounded approach to parental guiding that incorporates both affection and structure. Furthermore, it has been determined that psychological flexibility and self-esteem are essential personal attributes that improve mental well-being. This highlights the possibility of interventions that concentrate on cultivating these characteristics. Although it has its limits, this research establishes a strong basis for future studies and practical interventions that target the enhancement of mental well-being in young adults. Future research can provide more focused and efficient strategies for boosting mental health in this important population group by further investigating these linkages and resolving the highlighted gaps.

References

- Baumrind, D. (1966). Effects of authoritative parental control on child behavior. *Child Development, 37*(4), 887-907.
- Bond, F. W., Hayes, S. C., Baer, R. A., Carpenter, K. M., Orcutt, H. K., Waltz, T., & Zettle, R. D. (2011). Preliminary psychometric properties of the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II: A revised measure of psychological inflexibility and experiential avoidance. *Behavior Therapy, 42*(4), 676-688.
- Chorpita, B. F., & Barlow, D. H. (1998). The development of anxiety: The role of control in the early environment. *Psychological Bulletin, 124*(1), 3-21.
- Darling, N., & Steinberg, L. (1993). Parenting style as context: An integrative model. *Psychological Bulletin, 113*(3), 487-496.
- Greco, L. A., Lambert, W., & Baer, R. A. (2008). Psychological inflexibility in childhood and adolescence: Development and evaluation of the Avoidance and Fusion Questionnaire for Youth. *Psychological Assessment, 20*(2), 93-102.
- Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D., & Wilson, K. G. (1999). *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: An experiential approach to behavior change*. Guilford Press.
- Kashdan, T. B., & Rottenberg, J. (2010). Psychological flexibility as a fundamental aspect of health. *Clinical Psychology Review, 30*(7), 865-878.
- Lamborn, S. D., Mounts, N. S., Steinberg, L., & Dornbusch, S. M. (1991). Patterns of competence and adjustment among adolescents from authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful families. *Child Development, 62*(5), 1049-1065.
- Leary, M. R., & MacDonald, G. (2003). Individual differences in self-esteem: A review and theoretical integration. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 401-418). Guilford Press.
- Orth, U., & Robins, R. W. (2014). The development of self-esteem. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 23*(5), 381-387.
- Orth, U., Robins, R. W., & Widaman, K. F. (2012). Life-span development of self-esteem and its effects on important life outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 102*(6), 1271-1288.
- Robins, R. W., Trzesniewski, K. H., Tracy, J. L., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2002). Global self-esteem across the life span. *Psychology and Aging, 17*(3), 423-434.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton University Press.
- Schaefer, E. S. (1965). Children's reports of parental behavior: An inventory. *Child Development, 36*(2), 413-424.
- Sowislo, J. F., & Orth, U. (2013). Does low self-esteem predict depression and anxiety? A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Psychological Bulletin, 139*(1), 213-240.
- Steinberg, L. (2001). We know some things: Parent-adolescent relationships in retrospect and prospect. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 11*(1), 1-19.
- Trzesniewski, K. H., Donnellan, M. B., & Robins, R. W. (2003). Stability of self-esteem across the life span. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*(1), 205-220.