

IMPACT OF PARENTAL OVERPROTECTION ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN YOUNG ADULTS

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Abstract

Introduction: Emotional Intelligence is one of the most quintessential factors that determine one's successful social life. Parental overprotection is one important and recurring factors, that has proved to affect the emotional development of their children. The aim of the present study was to explore the impact of overprotection on the development of Emotional Intelligence and its domains. **Method:** A sample of 90 young adults, aged 20 to 40 years, was selected, after their positive consent. Parental Overprotection was measured using Parental Bonding Instrument. Emotional Intelligence was measured using Emotional Intelligence Scale. **Results:** The results showed a significant negative correlation between the Emotional Intelligence and over-protection experienced from both parents. Each domain of emotional intelligence was found to be impacted negatively with increasing overprotection. **Conclusion:** The study clearly shows that parental overprotection has a significant impact on the development of emotional intelligence.

Key words: Overprotection, Emotional Intelligence, self regulation, self awareness, social skills

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Introduction

Development of a healthy level of Emotional Intelligence is quintessential for an adaptive social life. Emotional intelligence is defined as an individual's ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate between the positive and negative effects of emotions and to use emotional information to guide one's thoughts and actions (Mayer, DiPaolo & Salovey, 1990) and is described in five domains, which are, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social awareness and social skills. Research suggests that emotional Intelligence is found to have a positive effect on emotion regulation in adults (Tani, Pascuzzi & Raffagnino, 2018). It is directly related to the capacity of an individual for understanding and managing his/her own emotion and reflects itself through social skills and his/her social life in general (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000; Akerjordet & Severinsson, 2004). It has been demonstrated that emotional intelligence consistently predicts positive social outcomes in children (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie & Reiser, 2000; Schultz, Izard & Bear, 2004; Izard et al., 2001).

Several factors may affect emotional intelligence of an individual. Studies suggest that playing computer games affect emotional

intelligence negatively (Saygili, 2015). Another factor that reliably predicts emotional intelligence is attachment styles (Hamarta, Deniz & Saltali, 2009). A secure attachment style is found to predict emotional intelligence and all its domains individually. Emotional intelligence is also correlated to perceived parental warmth and perceived social support from parents (Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi, 2000; Lopes, Salovey & Straus, 2003). The nature of parenting and its impact on the children needs to be explored further, as studies have also proved that approaches by mothers and fathers can have a different impact on the developing child in different ways (Ortiz, Braza, Carreras & Munos, 2017). However existence of studies that prove the contrary (Kol, 2016), prove to challenge other existing studies and extend one's thoughts towards its relevance in the present social context and the given cohort.

Literature suggests that the way parents' manage their children's interactions with the environment and react to their children's emotional displays act as examples for the children on how to cope with both internal and external circumstances, thus shaping how children regulate their emotional reactions to their environment (Morris et al., 2007; Spinrad et al., 2007). Early care-giving relationship is considered

the fundamental context in which children's emotion regulation develops (Calkins & Hill, 2007). This indicates that the quality of early relationships experienced by a child has significant influences on an individual's emotional development. Therefore, it is important to learn about different prevalent parenting approaches that lead to poor emotional intelligence.

Research focusing on disorders with emotional development indicates the crucial role of parental behaviours such as control and overprotection in the maintenance of childhood anxiety disorders (Murray, Creswell & Cooper, 2009). Parental Overprotection has been defined as protective behaviour exhibited by the parent, which is excessive given the child's developmental stage (Thomasgard, Metz & Edelbrock, 1995). Parental overprotection that predominantly involves limiting their child's autonomy, is the parenting dimension that is most consistently found to predict disorders with emotional regulation in their children (McLeod, Weisz & Wood, 2007; Van der Bruggen, Stams & Burgels, 2008; Wood et al., 2003). The increasing prevalence of overprotective parenting is often attributed to parents' attempts to prevent physical and psychological injuries to their children (Brussoni & Olsen, 2011).

However, several studies have shown that parental overprotection can lead to depression (Betts, Gullone & Allen, 2007), anxiety (Howard, Murlis, Loxton & Wege, 2016; Fulton, Kiel, Tull & Gratz, 2014; Heider, 2007), antisocial behaviour (Reti et al, 2002), and other negative personality characteristics (Bowen, Vitaro, Kerr & Pelletier, 2009; Liu et al, 2018). A controlling method of parenting has proved to create a higher level of anxiety in the developing child (Laurin,

Joussemet, Tremblay & Boivin, 2015). This in turn has a very negative impact on the child's emotional intelligence. Research indicates that overprotection and low warmth leads to social anxiety (Spokas & Heimberg, 2008) and poor friendship quality (Abell, Lyons & Brewer, 2014)

The present study aims at determining the impact of parental overprotection on the Emotional Intelligence of young adults. The study assesses how maternal and paternal overprotection predicts emotional intelligence and tries to determine its impact on each domain of emotional intelligence. The results may prove to be a useful resource in identifying, which areas of emotional intelligence an individual from an overprotective parent may need. It could help in developing a model to improve emotional intelligence of individuals from overprotected families. Diminishing the effects of parental overprotection may help us to prevent any negative personality characteristics or negative impacts it had on an individual, as he developed into an adult.

Method

Correlational Research Design was used for the study. A sample of 90 individuals within the age range of 20 to 40 years, were part of the study, after their positive consent. Young adults were chosen for this study, as adulthood is that stage of development, when he/she has passed the storm and stress of adolescence and the innocence of childhood (Hurlock, 2001). The individual has moved into the world of responsibilities and is a better judge of his present and past. Adults who are of Indian origin were selected for the study. Individuals with a diagnosis of any mental health disorder or who are caregivers of mentally disabled individuals were excluded from the study. The demographic details of the sample are given in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic details of the participants involved in the study.

Age range	20-30 years	42%
	30-40 years	57%
Gender	Male	27%
	Female	73%
Geographical location	North India	47%
	South India	53%

Firstly, positive consent was sought from possible participants for the study. They were informed that it is part of the present research and explained the assurance of the ethical guidelines that will be followed. After receiving positive consent, they were given Parental Bonding Instrument and Emotional Intelligence Scale. The forms were given to 151 potential participants, 90 participants (60%) were found to be overprotected. The filled forms of the 90 participants were collected and subject to analyses.

Materials

Emotional Intelligence was measured in five dimensions. Sixty statements were grouped into five dimensions i.e.: Self Awareness, Self-Regulation, Motivation, Social Awareness, and Social Skills. It has been developed and standardized for the Indian population. It has an internal reliability ($\alpha=0.88$), and content and face validity. Parental overprotection was measured by the parental bonding instrument developed by Gordon Parker, Hilary Tupling and L. B. Brown (1979). It has been found to have good reliability

and validity based on several studies. It also possesses good internal consistency and test-retest reliability. It has been shown to have satisfactory construct and convergent validity and to be independent of mood effects.

Data Analysis

SPSS software was used for data analyses. Correlation and Regression analysis was done between Emotional Intelligence and Overprotection. Regression analysis was also done to understand the impact of overprotection on each domain of emotional intelligence.

Results

The results of the study have revealed the astonishing reality of the depth of impact Overprotection can have on the development of Emotional Intelligence in individuals. Correlation analysis of paternal and maternal overprotection on emotional intelligence revealed a significant negative correlation between parental overprotection and emotional intelligence. The table 2 describes the aforesaid correlation.

Table 2
Correlation of Paternal and Maternal overprotection with Emotional intelligence

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r
Paternal Overprotection	90	23.1889	5.95657	-.737*
Maternal Overprotection	90	22.0889	6.31681	-.741*
Emotional Intelligence	90	168.8667		

* $p < .01$

A simple linear regression was done to predict emotional intelligence based on maternal and paternal overprotection. A significant regression

was found in emotional intelligence, with respect to overprotection from mother and father.

Table 3
Regression analysis of Emotional intelligence with respect to Paternal and Maternal overprotection

Variable	Emotional Intelligence				
	B	B SE	β	R ²	F
Paternal Overprotection	-8.019	.784	-.737	.543	104.493*
Maternal Overprotection	-7.610	.734	-.741	.550	107.436*

* $p < .01$

Simple linear regression was also done to predict each domain of emotional intelligence with

respect to paternal and maternal overprotection, which is shown in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4

Predicting self awareness, self regulation, motivation, social awareness and social skills with respect to paternal overprotection

Variable	Self awareness			Self regulation			Motivation			Social awareness			Social skills		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Paternal Overprotection	-1.797	.174	-.740	-1.58	.157	-.734	-1.54	.172	-.691	-1.51	.180	-.667	-1.57	.184	-.674
R ²	.547			.538			.478			.446			.454		
F	106.321			102.625			80.606			70.709			73.213		

p<.01

Table 5

Predicting self awareness, self regulation, motivation, social awareness and social skills with respect to maternal overprotection.

Variable	Self awareness			Self regulation			Motivation			Social awareness			Social skills		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Maternal Overprotection	-1.65	.169	-.723	-1.489	.149	-.729	-1.48	.159	-.705	-1.53	.159	-.716	-1.44	.177	-.655
R ²	.523			.532			.497			.513			.429		
F	96.601			99.940			87.023			92.645			66.152		

p<.01

Results on regression analysis predicting the domains of emotional intelligence based on paternal overprotection shows the highest influence on self awareness [$R^2=0.547$] followed by self regulation [$R^2=0.538$], motivation [$R^2=0.478$], social skills [$R^2=.454$] and the least influence on social awareness [$R^2=.446$]. Similarly, regression analysis predicting the domains of emotional intelligence based on maternal overprotection shows the highest influence on self regulation [$R^2=0.532$], followed by self awareness [$R^2=0.523$], social awareness [$R^2=0.513$], motivation [$R^2=0.497$] and the least on social skills [$R^2=0.429$]. The following tables show the results of these analyses.

Discussion

The results clearly show that parental Overprotection is negatively correlated with Emotional Intelligence. A significant negative correlation was found with both maternal and paternal overprotection, when correlated with Emotional Intelligence. This proves that as the Parental Overprotection increases, the development of Emotional intelligence decreases. A significant correlation from both paternal and maternal over-protection indicates the importance of each parent's parenting method, in growing their child. Regression analysis also confirms that

overprotection is a significant predictor of emotional intelligence of the developing individual. However a higher impact was observed with maternal overprotection when compared to paternal overprotection (about one percent).

This is in-line with previous research that has proved the detrimental nature of parental overprotection. Maternal overprotection has proven to cause increased anxiety (Laurin, Joussemet, Tremblay & Boivin, 2015) and antisocial behaviour in adult life (Reti et al, 2002). Both of which show poor emotional intelligence. Paternal overprotection has also proved to be a leading cause to externalizing problems and negative adaptive skills in their children (Ruiz-Ortiz, Braza, Carreras & Munoz, 2017), which again reflects one's poor emotional intelligence.

On analyzing how paternal and maternal overprotection affects the different dimensions of emotional intelligence, it is revealed that though overprotection significantly affects all domains of emotional intelligence, the way it affects different domains is different. Maternal overprotection seems to affect self regulation the most whereas paternal overprotection seems to affect self awareness the most. Previous research suggest that self regulation is a very important factor that

is essential for determining one's behaviour, especially those related to self harm and unhealthy habits including non-suicidal self injury, disordered eating and the like (Gouveia, Canavarro & Moreira, 2019; Buckholdt et al, 2015; Perez, Venta, Garnaat & Sharp, 2012). With respect to self awareness, research proves that self awareness is quintessential for building resilience and managing stress (Cowden RG, Meyer-Weitz A). Difficulties with self awareness have proved to cause difficulties with academic success (Yalcin & Erkal-Ilhan, 2008) and psychosomatic health (Kanbara & Fukunaga, 2016). Overall the scores indicate that self awareness and self regulation are affected the most, due to overprotection. This is an important finding as self awareness and self regulation are very important elements in one's emotional life.

Overprotection was also found to predict motivation, social awareness and social skills of the developing child. All these domains have a significant negative effect in an individual's life. While social awareness has proved to be important for life satisfaction (Celik, 2016), emotion recognition and theory of mind skills (Yeh, Lin, Liu & Fang), motivation itself is important for the physical performance of an action. Social skills manifest itself as a result of one's level of understanding on all these domains and have proved to have important influences on one's self esteem (Seema & Kumar, 2018), disruptive/prosocial behaviours (Larose et al, 2020), educational placement (Lauderdale-Littin, Howell & Blacher, 2013) and general health (Kausar & Farooqi, 2015).

The present study gives us useful insights to develop better intervention programs that would guide the parents to refrain from overprotective parenting style and adopt a healthier parenting style with their children. Considering this study was done entirely with the Indian population, the results are valid and must be utilized for this population. Previous researches have highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in today's society. A decreased emotional intelligence is found to be responsible for several instances of suicides, self harm, stress, negative coping and mental health (Extremera & Rey, 2016; Gower et al, 2014; Rahgozar, Motahari & Zolali, 2011; Cha & Nock, 2009;

MONTES-BERGES & Augusto, 2007; Ciarrochi, Deane, Anderson, 2002)

It is ironical when we consider that many parents adopt an overprotective parenting style because of the increase in the above mentioned risks in society (Niehues, Bundy, Broom & Tranter, 2015; Ungar, 2009; Thomasgard, 1998). Several factors are attributed towards development of overprotected parenting style in families. These include factors like fear of injury (Brussoni & Olsen, 2013), separation anxiety, attachment anxiety (Katrijn, Soenen, Van Petegem & Kins, 2017), phobic anxiety, psychoticism and paranoid ideation (Thomasgard, 1998). Studies also suggest that perceptions of child vulnerability also lead to overprotective behaviours by parents (Hullmann et al, 2010).

Further research may be directed toward exploring the impact these factors have on the Indian population. This will guide one to develop suitable interventions for individuals to increase their emotional intelligence by alleviating the difficulties caused due to an overprotective parenting in their childhood. It is important to spread that one of the important steps to building an emotionally healthy society would be to raise their children in non-overprotected conditions. Future research may also focus on replicating the study with larger populations for sufficient generalizability of the results.

The present study did not explore the differences in scores with respect to gender and age. This limits our understanding of the relative differences between these dimensions. The study also was purely limited to young adults; therefore its applicability in other age groups is not understood. Similarly another limitation of the study was lack of follow-up of the participants who had significantly poor emotional intelligence. The development of an emotional intelligence intervention program suitable for the population would be beneficial for the follow-up and betterment of this group of individuals.

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