



RESEARCH PAPER

Dysfunctional Parenting as a Determinant of *Indecisiveness* among Adolescents

¹Dr Anila Mukhtar and ²Dr Anjum Ara

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Karachi, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
2. Adjunct Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Karachi, Karachi, Sindh Pakistan

Corresponding Author anilamukhtar@uok.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Today the parenting become more difficult because adapting to the environment and preparing children for the dynamic life is becoming a challenge especially when the parenting styles are dysfunctional. Therefore, present study aimed to explore the relationship of dysfunctional parenting with *indecisiveness* in adolescents where the term "dysfunctional parenting" was reflecting two key factors i.e., *lack of care* and *overprotection* (Parker, et al. 1979). A quantitative correlational method was applied with a stratified random sample of N = 304, students of University of Karachi between ages of 17 to 21 years. The Frost Indecisiveness Scale (FIS) (Frost & Shows, 1993) and Parental bond instrument (PBI) (Parker, et al. 1997) has been administered. Linear regression analysis indicated that only mother care was found to be significant predictors of fear of decision making whereas father care, mother overprotection and father overprotection were not found be a significant predictor of fear of decision making and positive decision making in adolescents. Research findings can be helpful for parental training programs and adolescents' academic counseling.

Keywords: Dysfunctional Parenting, Indecisiveness, Fear of Decision Making, Positive Decision Making, Adolescents

Introduction

Every individual in this world is carrying a unique personality. Most interesting part of personality development is that it can be wrought by *many* in fact *anything* in this world. But few elements are crucial enough to grow a human personality like person's genetic or biological makeup, temperament, environment, social upbringing and many more but all of these contributing factors are somewhat connected or mediated by one very influential factor known as parenting. It may be because the parent-child relationship is the most important relationship among all the other relationships which a person can make during his entire lifespan (Steinberg, 2008). According to the American Psychological Association (APA) "Parenting practices" around the world share three major goals: ensuring children's health and safety, preparing children for life as productive adults and transmitting cultural values.

To meet these goals parents takes different strategies, practices, behaviors, and styles into considerations yet there is no hard and fast rule to have the best result of parenting. Consequently, parenting got two most common titles. One is good parenting (Johri 2014) and the other is poor/bad parenting.

Good parenting usually refers to warm, responsive, nurturing, empathetic and authoritative parenting styles, especially when there is a secure bond of attachment existing between children and their parents (Jyoati, 2025; Wolff & Van Ijzendoorn, 1997; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Landry, et.al 2001; Pettit, et.al, 1997; Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994). This idea has also been supported by Belsky et, al (1984) who identified attentively, warmth,

responsive and non-restricted care giving as characteristics or features of good parenting because it increases cognitive motivational competence and healthy socio-emotional development of the child. Moreover, according to Bowlby (1969), the children who received responsive care from their parents, have a strong self-belief that can be shown predominantly in the later stages of their lives.

On the other hand, Bowlby (1977) define anomalous parenting with reference to three important aspects, failure to provide care (i.e. by being unresponsive, disparaging, rejecting); exerting excessive control and overprotection. Based on Bowlby's theory, different theorists and Researchers till date worked upon different aspects of dysfunctional parenting such as physical, psychological and social aspects which helped them to develop some standardized measure of dysfunctional parenting. These measuring tools are based on standardized parameters of dysfunctional parenting like indifference, over control and abuse (Parker, et al. 1997), laxness, over-reactivity and verbosity (Robinson, 1995), unresponsive, disparaging, rejecting (Bowlby 1977). In the present research, two parental behaviors lack of care and overprotection (affectionless control) has been taken as a measure of dysfunctional parenting, which was originally developed by Parker, et al. (1997).

Moreover, according to Bowlby (1977) children who did not receive secure attachment and responsive care from their parents might perceive themselves as uncertain and hesitant for certain skills and can lose their sense of self-confidence. Among these skills decision making is one the important skill a person has especially in his adolescence and rest of his/her life.

"Indecisiveness" can be defined as a trait and an "Inability" to make decisions (Goodstein, 1972) and it mainly comes through authoritarian, over caring, rejecting or hostile parenting or parent's "regard with conditions" because these parenting styles or behaviors can make the child less autonomous, less self-reliant, less confident about their own decisions. As a result, child cannot make their own decisions that is indecisive or can develop a fear of decision making (Joseph, 2008).

Unfortunately, till date these links have not been addressed directly, and there is a strong need to study and verify them scientifically. Nevertheless, there is sufficient literature available to prove that these variables have strong link with both of the parental control and indecisiveness so it can be assumed that if adolescents can have depression, anxiety, lack of self-worth and self-esteem etc., the reason might be because of dysfunctional parenting similarly the indecisiveness can be caused by dysfunctional parenting as well, and that can happen directly or indirectly.

Literature Review

Today the parenting become more difficult because adapting to the environment and preparing children for the dynamic life is becoming a challenge especially when the parenting styles are dysfunctional. Many researchers have highlighted the negative consequences of dysfunctional parenting as Stormshak (2000) reported that punitive, low in warmth and physically aggressive parenting can lead to disruptive behaviors among adolescents like oppositional and aggressive behavior problems. Dysfunctional parenting can also cause anxiety (Sydney Morning), major depression in both male and female (Sato, et.al 1998); speech disorders (Long Beach Fire Department Training Center) pedophilic tendency or disorder and many more negative effects.

Parental styles can also be considered as important determining factor of negative effects on child's personality development as Baumrind (1971, 1984) reported that authoritarian parents, who control through harsh punishment, tend to produce children who are discontent, withdrawn, and distrustful whereas children of parents with a permissive style, characterized as warm and less apt to employ punishment, tend to lack

self-reliance and inquisitiveness. Impulsivity, aggression and its subtypes are also strong correlates of cold, punitive and rejecting parenting (Patterson, 1983), whereas authoritarian, over caring, rejecting or hostile parenting or parent's "regard with conditions" can make the child less autonomous, less self-reliant leading them to be fearful of decision making. (Joseph, 2008)

Reason (1990) introduced decision making as a "cognitive process which can lead to selecting a course of action among different alternatives. Even with a lot of emphasis on the importance of decision making during different stages of life, it's a fact that people are not ready to make decisions. Major or minor they are indecisive about certain decisions. There are different views about indecisiveness as Goodstein (1972) define Indecisiveness as an Inability to make decisions. In other terms, Indecisiveness is Chronic "postponing of a decision when faced with conflicts and choices...Indecision is more than not making timely decisions" Ferrari & Dovidio (2001).

Many authors define the indecisiveness in a two-dimensional way, such as "Exploratory indecisiveness" where decision making becomes a long process even when all options have been explored thoroughly, and "impetuous indecisiveness" referring to a decision which is quick in start and then have given up easily (Bacanli, 2000 and 2006). Another bi-directional approach toward indecisiveness was explicit Vs implicit. Explicit Indecisiveness is a condition where a person is regardless of available options found him/herself unable to make final choice. whereas the implicit indecisiveness is taken as an experience of difficulty, haziness, or frustration when deciding, characterized by slowness, worry, and uncertainty (Chartrand, et.al 1990) Some other researchers define indecisiveness in terms of emotionality (Elaydi, 2006); some people have taken it as a personality trait (Salomone, 1982; Van Matre & Cooper, 1984. Present research is considering the indecisiveness as a trait by focusing on indecisiveness as an inability to make the decision. (Goodstein, 1972) and the variable is composed of two sub variable fear of decision making and positive decision making based on the work of Frost and Shows (1993).

Literature also highlighting many underlying psychological sources of indecisiveness such as tendency to take "pressure of time" (Mann & Tan, 1993); low self-confidence and low self-esteem; an unclear sense of separate identity; high levels of ambivalence and frustration; externalized locus of control, helplessness, and a tendency to blame others for their situations. All these personality factors can promote indecisiveness among individuals (Salomone, 1982). Other than personality, many factors can be associated with its developmental process which can directly or indirectly cause indecisiveness, such as environment, gene, social setups and more importantly the parenting.

As far as the role of dysfunctional parenting is concern the parents who are very critical to their kids and always judge them in a harsh manner will end up having kids who can be fearful of making a decision and might become indecisive in adolescence. As Sadiq & Khatoon (2012) discussed in their research that over controlling parents do not encourage their adolescents to make their own choices which can make them inadequate and fearful of being condemned, which causes low self-esteem (Bean & Northrup, 2009) and this lack of self-esteem and fear of failure develop them as an indecisive person. Moreover, authoritarian, over caring, rejecting or hostile parenting can make the child less autonomous, less self-reliant, and less confident about their own decisions. As a result, child cannot make their own decisions that is indecisive or can develop a fear of decision making (Joseph, 2008).

Scientific literature is limited here because there are fewer researches available on the indecisiveness (Rassin, 2007) and its link with dysfunctional parenting especially with reference to the lack of care and overprotection. Because the work done till date, have more

emphasis on the relationship of parenting and career indecision or indecisiveness rather than general indecisive behavior and dysfunctional parenting (Sayre-Scibona, 2007; Germeijs, et al. 2006; Creed, et al. 2005; Marshall, 1981; and Ali & Tariq, 2009). In addition, the link between dysfunctional parenting and adolescents' indecisiveness is very important to explore because the need to take a decision in adolescents is greater than ever before (Byrnes, 2003, 2005; Wigfield, et al. 2007 as cited by Santrock, 2008). Cascio, V. L and his colleagues (2013) found that anxiety and self-esteem are the strong mediating variables between family communication and indecisiveness as well as relationship of indecisiveness with parental psychological control and self-esteem was also found significant. Moreover, results showed that self-esteem found to be a mediating variable between parental psychological control and indecisiveness of male participants. Like self-esteem and anxiety many other adolescents' characteristics could be potential mediating variables between parental over-control and indecisiveness like self-worth, self-confidence, depression, procrastination, ego identity development and adolescents' dependent personality/traits (Bornstein 2005 & Ashby, et al. 1966).

The above-mentioned discussion is creating a big question mark on the available literature and motivates the researchers to explore the topic more to fill the gaps in the existing literature. This feeling is been supported by the Eric Rassin who commented on the literature available about indecisiveness in his article that "indecisiveness seems to be a widespread phenomenon. However, the scientific literature on indecisiveness is rather limited. Indeed, even a clear definition of indecisiveness is lacking, let alone a model in which various indecisiveness-related concepts are integrated" (Rassin, 2007).

Moreover, though all the variables of the study can be studied with any age group other than adolescents yet adolescence was found to be most pertinent age group to study the variables of present research because the scope of the study was more beneficially relevant to the period of adolescence not only because it is the transition stage from childhood to adulthood and is the most energetic stage of life like a storm (Hall's, 1904 as cited by Arnett, 1999) but also that they are experiencing multiple physiological and psychological changes which affecting their overall personality. Moreover, they want to recognize and establish their own identity and want to take decision representing their true self and separate them from their family and social identities.

In continuation, another important motive behind this research is to study cultural contrast that can be highlighted when we read the available literature which mostly belongs to the western social system and culture. In the earlier part of the introduction, determinants of parenting were discussed in which culture was found to be a significant determinant of dysfunctional parenting. In the same manner, culture can alter the decision-making ability of the people especially at the age of adolescents. As Yates and his colleagues found significant cultural variations among different cultures with respect to indecisiveness (Yates et al. 2010). As far as Pakistani culture is concerned, it is considered as collectivistic culture where people are supposed to take a decision with mutual consent of other family members. This conception becomes more significant in case of over controlling parents who put forth their control in such a manner that adolescents become unable or fearful of being decisive. Pakistani culture also impels the young ones to be emotionally and financially dependent on their parents till the period of late adolescent whereas western social system and cultural values were in contrast to eastern culture in previous eras but now is going to be modified with respect to the age range of adolescents. (Jayson, 2009).

On the basis of above literature review present research have studied the following hypotheses.

H1- There would be a predictive negative relationship between mothers' and fathers' care and fear of decision making.

H2-There would be a predictive positive relationship between mothers' and fathers' overprotection and fear of decision making.

H3- There would be a predictive positive relationship between mothers' and fathers' care and positive decision making.

H4-There would be a predictive negative relationship between mothers' and fathers' overprotection and positive decision making.

Material and Methods

Participants

According to the aim of the study three hundred and ten adolescents (including both males and females) of age between 17 to 21 years (middle and late adolescents) have been collected through stratified random sampling from all representative faculties of Karachi University. Although different researches indicated different age ranges for early, middle and late adolescents but by keeping the cultural context in view the age range of 17 years to 21 years has been followed for sampling, which represented, middle and late adolescents. (Stang & Story, 2005).

Demographic Sheet

Demographic Sheet contained information regarding participants' age, gender, years of education, family system (nuclear or joint), birth order and parental marital status.

Parental Bonding Instrument

Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI; Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979) was used to measure low care and high overprotection as determinants of dysfunctional parenting. It is 4 point Likert scale ranging from 'Very like= 3', to 'Very unlike = 0'. The PBI consists of 24 items measuring two sub-scales care (items # 1, 5, 6, 11, 12, 17, 2, 4, 14, 16, 18, 24) and overprotection (items # 8, 9, 10, 13, 19, 20, 23, 3, 7, 15, 21, 22, 25). The PBI was administered separately for mother and father. The test-retest reliability in a non-clinical sample was reported to be .76 for "care" and .63 for protection scale over a three-week interval. The PBI has also demonstrated to have good internal consistency (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979) and construct and convergent validity (Parker, 1990).

Frost indecisiveness scale (FIS; Frost & Shows, 1993): Indecisiveness is an "Inability" to make decisions (Goodstein 1972) and to measure indecisiveness a widely used scale was selected names as Frost Indecisiveness Scale (FIS) (Frost & Shows, 1993). It consists of 15 items using 5-point ratings (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), and administration time is 3-5 minutes as per manual. According to the more recent scoring method, the scale was divided into two subscales (which were derived through factor analysis), given below

1- Fears about Decision Making (sum of items 1, 4, 7, 10-15)

2- Positive decision making

Internal consistency (Chronbach's alpha) of the "FIS Total score" was 0.90 in a student sample (Frost & Shows 1993). Internal consistency was .89 for the Fears subscale and .83 for the Positive subscale in a community sample (Steketee, et al. 2001). The

criterion-related validity is being checked with Yale-Brown Obsessive Compulsive Scale, Y-BOCS, (Steketee, et al. 2001), the scale of OCD (Frost & Shows,1993) and other instruments, which showed validity range of FIS from .29-.43.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Correlation for parental care and overprotection with adolescent's decision making

	Mother's care	Mother's overprotection	Father's care (115)	Father's overprotection(115)
Fear of Decision Making	-.222*	.096	.029	.104
Positive Decision Making	.048	.003	.063	.018

Note: $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .05^{*}$

Table 1 presents that male participants' fear of decision making has a significant negative relationship with mother care but do not have any significant relationship with other parental variables whereas positive decision making does not have any significant relationship with any of the above mentioned parental variables.

Table 2
Linear Regression Analysis with mother care, mother overprotection, father care and father overprotection as predictors of fear of decision-making.

Predictors	R	R ²	Adj R ²
Mother care	.15	.02	.02
Mother overprotection	.09	.00	.00
Father care	.01	.00	-.00
Father overprotection	.06	.00	.00

Table 3
Analysis of Variance for Linear Regression with mother care, mother overprotection, father care and father overprotection as predictors of fear of decision-making.

	Model	SS	Df	Ms	F	Sig.
Mother care	Regression	257.39	1	257.397	7.40	.00*
	Residual	10499.44	302	34.76		
	Total	10756.83	303			
Mother overprotection	Regression	100.90	1	100.90	2.86	.09
	Residual	10655.93	302	35.28		
	Total	10756.83	303			
Father care	Regression	1.42	1	1.42	.04	.84
	Residual	10512.21	295	35.63		
	Total	10213.63	296			
Father overprotection	Regression	48.55	1	48.55	1.36	.24
	Residual	10465.08	295	35.47		
	Total	10513.63	296			

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Table 4
Linear Regression Analysis with Mother Care, mother overprotection, father care and father overprotection as predictors of fear of decision-making.

	Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	T	Sig.
		Coefficient		Coefficient		
		B	SE	B		
Mother care	Constant	31.77	1.93		16.45	.00**

care usually putting flavor of reliance on male point of views about different house matters and on their future orientation. It may be because; in Asian society like Pakistan male children are perceived as ultimate future financial and social support for their parents. In Pakistan people commonly believe that sons are their true heir even for their family name and family trade. Moreover, boys are the ones who are expected to take care of their parents in their old age. (Qadir et al. 2011), and may be this is one of the major reasons that mothers feel more secure to have baby boys after marriage. (Bose & South, 2003). Consequently, they not only care about male child but rely more heavily on their support and advices. These types of perception of parents lead them to give more chances to young adolescents for making small and trivial decisions in daily routine or to believe more on male adolescent's decision making ability. Therefore, it can be assumed that male adolescents get more self-confidence, more decisional self-efficacy from mother's care as compare to female adolescents and subsequently become more decisive. (Rassin & Muris, 2005).

On the other hand, in case of dysfunctional mother's care males would be more indecisive and fearful about making decision as compared to females. In addition to what has been said, the male preference is not only limited to Asian countries but seems evident in developed countries too (Marleau & Saucier, 2002). In addition, Byrnes and his colleagues (1999) analyzed 150 article and indicated many common trend of society to favor male gender, for example females are considered as more risk averse as compare to males and males are trusted more for the risky decision (Byrnes, et al. 1999; Meier-Pesti and penz, 2007). On the same note Cascio (2016) have also described this gender difference especially with reference to maternal /paternal control and indecisiveness.

In addition to the above mentioned discussion related to indecisiveness the second part of the result showed that low care can significantly affect the trait of indecisiveness. According to the researches parental neglect could create worse effects on child's development as compared to physical abuse and the reason is that it can results into cognitive delays, impairments of executive functioning, problems of attention regulations and significant alteration in one's stress reactions. (Bruce et al. 2009; Egeland, & Erickson, 1983; Pollak, 2000 as reported by National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2012). Decision making is a cognitive process which becomes more complex, challenging, risky and disruptive with the passage of time (Wang & Ruhe, 2007) and multiple factors have been added to its list of determinants. For example, social upbringing which includes parental influences as well; the peer's influence to which you interact with most; your biological heritage and internal or external environment etc. Here Sayre-Scibona's (2007) research findings are worth notifying which includes many researcher's references who argued that parental acceptance and rejection both have strong association with men's and women's career decisiveness as well as indecisiveness. Perceived parental acceptance is referred to "a state when a child can positively develop a good sense of attachment, contentment, trust and positive communication with their parents. (Hughes, et al 2005; Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2005 as cited by Sayre-Scibona, 2007). On the other hand, parental rejection uplift the relationship between psychological maladjustment and indecisiveness when it pushes individuals toward low levels of self esteem, self efficacy and self confidence and higher levels of anxiety, and external locus of control. (Rohner, Chaille, & Rohner, 1980; Rohner, 1986; Rohner, 2004; Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2005 as cited by Sayre-Scibona 2007). Self esteem is proved to be a mediating variable (Cascio 2016) and a main element of decision making is that a good decision maker should have a high self esteem and a high level confidence because this tendency supports them in their decision making ability. (Mann, et al.1989; Distefano, Prayor and Smith, 1987 as cited by Ramanigopal, 2008). Self esteem is also very important with respect to the stage of adolescents because of dynamic nature of their experiences at this stage of life. Furthermore, adolescents' increased introspective abilities and preoccupation that how people perceive them has also increased the importance of role of self esteem in adolescents personality development. (Harter 1983 as cited by Barber et al. 1992). Therefore it can be said that parenting can shape the self

esteem and confidence which influences many cognitive functioning like decision making. For instance, when parents especially mothers become responsive and caring toward their children, it can uplift the self-confidence and self-esteem of a child to make their own decision without any fear. On the other side, when this care and responsiveness declines the child can be fearful of making decision.

Moreover, fear of decision making can be stem from fear of taking responsibilities as well. for example, one strong phenomenon which can be affected by the low mother care and can also effect indecisiveness, is individual's *omission biases* which is characterized by behaviors in which person prefer those options that require less behavioral actions and less responsibility. According to the experts, indecision can be directly resulted by omission biases. Here omission biases worked like a mediating variable which enhances the negative effect of lack of parental care especially of mothers and push them toward indecisiveness such as we discussed earlier that low mother-care can make the self-esteem lower. Consequently, an adolescent can lose his/her confidence to take the responsibility of any decision or a task on themselves. Other research work can also be used to verify the connection between the mother care and omission biases as Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Pettit & Bates, 1989 (cited in Bornstein, et al. 2012) not only related the maternal sensitivity with self-esteem but also with social responsibility. According to another research, the children like preschoolers who are facing severe neglect and lack of care from their parents and families are showing a great level of dependency on their school teachers as compare to non-neglected children as a result there are chances in their adolescents and adult life that they can be less independent and more indecisiveness. (Camras, 1993; Erickson, 1989; & Hoffman-Plotkin, 1984 as reported by National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. 2012).

In addition to the self-esteem and omission biases the person's capacity to process information also counts for decision making ability as Moor and his colleagues found decision making as a complicated process of "involving information search and processing to understand available options" (Moor, et al 1990 as reported by Rice, 1999). On the other hand, maternal unresponsiveness, lack of care and neglect can badly target the neural development of a child as well as his or her information processing ability which can ultimately cause some future attentional, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive disruptions.

Researchers like Germeijs and De Boeck (2002) found additional factors which can be the determining factors of indecision and indecisiveness such as lack of information, valueness problems and outcome uncertainty. According to them these factors can provide a descriptive framework of decision making issues and they can cause indecisiveness on cognitive level. All three factors can be connected to poor parenting as well as poor maternal care. For instance according to Crittenden & Landini adults who have secure attachment with their parents are well capable of integrating "temporally ordered information" and "affective information" especially with respect to the cause and effect phenomenon .(Crittenden & Landini ; 2011 as reported by Strathearn, 2011) as a result they can take decision in much easier way whereas in case of dysfunctional and insecure pattern of attachment the ability to gather or process information might be difficult for the children and adolescents which make them more reluctant to take decision in their personal social and professional lives and somehow they get more into already available rules and do not go for the choice of their own in making decision.

As supporting evidence, the factor of anxiety which was previously correlated with neglected and less caring parenting and motherhood has also been studied in relation to third determining factor of indecisiveness that is outcome uncertainty and it is proved that uncertainty has a strong positive relationship with worrying that ultimately a strong component of generalized anxiety disorder. (APA, 2000). That means the anxiety plays a mediating role between less caring parenting and outcome uncertainty which is a key factor of indecisive behavior also.

Moreover, studies showed that self-esteem found to be a mediating variable between parental psychological control and indecisiveness of male participants Whereas Ferrari & Olivette, (1993) found high indecision inclination among those late adolescent's females who perceived their parents more authoritarian, inflexible and over controlling, and less in support and warmth. He also argued that female decisional procrastination rooted in their home environment.

Conclusion

To conclude the discussion, it can be said that although it was predicted that parental care and overprotection will have a significant predictive relationship with all the variable of indecisiveness (Fear of decision making and Positive decision making) but mother's care is found to be only influential factor to affect the adolescents' indecisiveness, compare to father's care, father overprotection and mother's overprotection which can be taken as a cultural reflection of Pakistani collectivistic society.

Recommendations

It has been observed that participants have not perceived their parents as overprotective as other cultures do, this might be referred to the cultural norms and parental practices which are different from other cultures in terms of level of protectiveness that ultimately increased the threshold of parental overprotection. Rather most of them perceived and rate their parents in terms of high or low care which has been shown by our results. Hence it can be suggested that the cultural adaptation of scale especially of the subscale of overprotection; can be suggested to have more significant and clear results in future researches.

By keeping other limitations of the present research in view, it can also be recommended that in future researches, instead of random sampling, adolescents should be selected through purposive sampling such as high scorers on the scales of trait indecisiveness can be selected so that more in-depth understanding about the dysfunctional parenting as predictor of indecisiveness can be taken. Secondly, broad data collection from different cities and institutes of Pakistan can have more generalized results.

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