

The Relationship Between Perceived Parental Criticism, Self-Handicapping, Guilt Proneness, and Impostor Phenomenon in Early Career Professionals

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ABSTRACT

Background: Early career professionals often face challenges when they transition from academic settings into the professional world. This study investigates the relationship between perceived parental criticism, self-handicapping, guilt proneness and impostor phenomenon among early career professionals.

Methodology: The sample consisted of 70 early career professionals. The Parental Criticism subscale of the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, Self-handicapping Scale, Five Item Guilt Proneness Scale and Impostors Scale were administered. Pearson r product moment correlation was used to assess the relationships between the variables.

Results: The results indicated that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived parental criticism and self-handicapping ($r=0.44$, $p<0.001$). Perceived parental criticism had a statistically significant positive correlation with guilt proneness ($r=0.37$, $p<0.01$). Perceived parental criticism also had a statistically significant positive relationship with impostor phenomenon ($r=0.44$, $p<0.001$). Additionally, self-handicapping was found to have a statistically significant positive correlation with impostor phenomenon ($r=0.59$, $p<0.001$). Regression analysis found that self-handicapping and perceived parental criticism sufficiently predicted impostor phenomenon, with self-handicapping being the stronger predictor.

Conclusion: Perceived parental criticism was found to be a predictor of self-handicapping. These results highlight the need for workplace interventions, through therapy and mentorship programs, to help early career professionals navigate challenges in the professional world.

Keywords: perceived parental criticism, self-handicapping, guilt proneness, impostor phenomenon, early career professionals

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INTRODUCTION

“Without labor, nothing prospers” is a quote by Sophocles that stresses how work and effort are the foundation of success and prosperity.

Individuals who have just entered the workforce after completing their education are called early career professionals (ECPs). They can be defined as individuals with less than two years of experience in their professional field [1]. Some research suggests that early career professionals experience a unique phase of "in-betweenness" during which they simultaneously engage in organizational socialization- adapting to the culture, values, and norms of their current workplace- and vocational anticipatory socialization wherein they prepare for future career growth. They may face difficulty in balancing the current job role with future career aspirations [2]. They may also be uncertain about their capacity to achieve financial independence, maintain

a healthy work-life balance and work towards career advancements, resulting in emotional fatigue and burnout [3]. However, research on early career professionals is very limited, especially in the Indian context.

Purpose and Significance of the study

In India, parents' involvement in their children's life is observed largely due to the country's collectivistic values. Parents often influence important decisions of their children's life such as education and career choices. As young adults join the workforce, they may face tremendous pressure to perform at their best and meet others' expectations. Furthermore, criticism from parents in terms of the job, income, etc. may contribute to feelings of guilt and self-doubt. While some variables in this study have been researched in the Western context, especially in college and sports settings, they have not been extensively studied in India. Thus, investigating these variables together in the workplace with respect to early career professionals may be essential in understanding their professional experiences and challenges.

Concepts in the study

The present study investigates the relationship between perceived parental criticism, self-handicapping, guilt proneness and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals in the corporate sector. Early career professionals are individuals who are transitioning from their academic life to a professional environment [1]. They may struggle to deal with the organization's demands while simultaneously developing their own abilities. Perceived parental criticism involves one's perception of their parents' feedback. It refers to the belief that parents are extremely critical of one's attempts to meet their expectations [4]. Perceived parental criticism is a relatively underexplored construct and may be relevant for early career professionals especially in the Indian setting, but there is no research to support this.

Self-handicapping refers to the ways in which a person produces or chooses challenges to a behavior or a performance setting in response to an esteem-threatening situation [5]. Self-handicappers create obstacles to distort the relation between their abilities and performance to protect their self-esteem [6]. Some studies have shown that self-handicapping behaviors are evaluated more negatively in the work setting [7]. Guilt proneness is the tendency to expect feelings of guilt in response to a negative outcome [8] and involves motivation to amend and avoid those mistakes [9]. Research shows that guilt proneness has positive correlations with job performance and task potential with employees high in guilt proneness making greater efforts and performing better [10].

The impostor phenomenon involves feelings of perceived fraudulence occurring for some benefit of the impostor [11]. Research suggests that individuals having high impostor tendencies have few promotions but share similar salaries compared to those with low impostor tendencies, highlighting success in their work [12].

A study explored the relationship between impostor phenomenon and perfectionism in 274 students and working academics with an average age of 27.63 years. Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, and Clance's Impostor Phenomenon Scale were employed. The results indicated that when age and gender remained constant, impostor phenomenon had positive correlations with parental criticism, concern over mistakes and doubt about actions subscales. [13]. A research study examined the association between leadership styles and employee's self-handicapping behaviors in 210 US based employees aged between 20 to 67 years. Transformational Leadership Scale, Abusive Supervision Scale, Self-handicapping Scale, Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory and other scales were employed. Self-handicapping had significant positive and negative correlations with abusive supervision and transformational leadership respectively with fear of failure serving as a mediator [14].

Another study investigated the relationship between shame proneness, guilt proneness, behavioral self-handicapping and skill level in 589 elite youth soccer players aged 14 to 21 years. The Test of Self-Conscious Affect, a behavioral self-handicapping scale and coaches' ratings were used. Behavioral self-handicapping has a significant positive relationship with shame proneness, and a significant negative relationship with guilt proneness. Also, guilt proneness and behavioral self-handicapping were negatively correlated to players' skill level [15].

Fimiani and others [16] examined the role of impostor phenomenon, guilt of success, fear of success and maladaptive self-sabotaging behaviors in a sample of 146 subjects aged between 18 to 63 years. Self-Handicapping scale, Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale, Interpersonal Guilt Rating Scale-15 self-report and other scales were used in the study. Impostor phenomenon was significantly predicted by fear of success, survivor guilt, self-hate guilt, upward comparison distress, empathy and sociotropy and had positive correlations with submissiveness and self-handicapping.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To study the relationship between Perceived Parental Criticism, Self-handicapping, Guilt Proneness, and Impostor Phenomenon in early career professionals.

Objectives

- To study the relationship between perceived parental criticism and self-handicapping in early career professionals.
- To study the relationship between perceived parental criticism and guilt proneness in early career professionals.
- To study the relationship between perceived parental criticism and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals.
- To study the relationship between self-handicapping and guilt proneness in early career professionals.
- To study the relationship between self-handicapping and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals.
- To study the relationship between guilt proneness and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals.

Hypotheses

- There will be a positive relationship between perceived parental criticism and self-handicapping in early career professionals
- There will be a positive relationship between perceived parental criticism and guilt proneness in early career professionals
- There will be a positive relationship between perceived parental criticism and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals
- There will be a negative relationship between self-handicapping and guilt proneness in early career professionals
- There will be a positive relationship between self-handicapping and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals
- There will be a positive relationship between guilt proneness and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals

Operational Definitions of Variables

Perceived Parental Criticism

Perceived Parental Criticism refers to the belief that one's parents are excessively critical [17]. Here, it was operationally defined as the score obtained on the Parental Criticism subscale of the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale.

Self-Handicapping

Self-Handicapping is defined as any action or choice of performance setting that increases the chance to externalize failure and internalize success [18]. Here, it was operationally defined as the score obtained on the Self-handicapping Scale [19].

Guilt Proneness

Guilt Proneness is defined as an inclination towards negative feelings about personal mistakes or failures [20]. Here, it was operationally defined as the score obtained on the Five Item Guilt Proneness Scale.

Impostor Phenomenon

Impostor Phenomenon can be stated as “sense of being a fraud or an impostor” (Hwa et al., 2024). Here, it was operationally defined as the score obtained on the Impostorism Scale [11].

Participants

The sample consisted of early career professionals, defined as “graduates with less than two years of experience in their professional practice”. It included 70 early career professionals, of whom 38 were females and 32 were males, aged 23 to 27 years. The sample consists of 38 females (54.28%) and 32 males (45.72%). The participants had a mean age of 24.39 years, with a range of 4, standard deviation of 1.39, and variance of 1.92.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The sample included individuals aged 23 to 27 years, working full-time in the corporate sector with overall work experience of 6 months to 2 years. They had completed either undergraduate or postgraduate education with at least 10th grade level English proficiency. Individuals were excluded if they were married, living away from parents, interning or currently studying, working from home or with multiple jobs.

Research Design

This research study made use of a correlational design using the survey method for data collection.

Sampling Method

Purposive Sampling and Convenience Sampling methods were employed in the study.

Tools Used**Perceived Parental Criticism subscale of Frost's Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale**

Perceived parental criticism was measured using the Parental Criticism subscale of Frost's Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS), a 35-item scale comprising six dimensions of perfectionism: Concern over Mistakes, Personal Standards, Parental Expectations, Parental Criticism, Doubting of Actions and Organization [17]. This subscale includes four items. Scores are recorded on a 5-point Likert Scale, with 1 being Strongly Disagree and 5 being Strongly Agree. The total score ranges from 4 to 20, with higher scores indicating greater perceived parental criticism. The FMPS possesses a high internal consistency ($\alpha=0.90$), and the parental criticism subscale also has good reliability ($\alpha=0.84$).

Self-Handicapping Scale

Self-handicapping was assessed using the Self-handicapping Scale, a 25-item scale that assesses the tendency to use self-handicapping behaviors in evaluative situations [19]. It has a 6-point Likert scale with 0 indicating ‘disagree very much’ and 5 indicating ‘agree very much’. The total score ranges from 0 to 125, with high scores indicating greater self-handicapping. The scale shows acceptable internal consistency ($r(503) = .79$) and one month test-retest reliability ($r(90) = .74$) [21].

Five Item Guilt Proneness Scale

Guilt proneness was measured using the Five Item Guilt Proneness Scale, a 5-item scenario-based scale. Scores are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating ‘extremely unlikely’ to 5 indicating ‘extremely likely’. The scale is scored by averaging the five items, with higher scores indicating higher guilt proneness. The GP-5 exhibits good internal consistency reliability of 0.81 and strong discriminant validity [20].

Impostors' Scale

Impostor Phenomenon was assessed using Leary's Impostors Scale, 7 item scale measuring feelings of being an impostor. Responses are rated on a five-point scale with 1 being “Not at all characteristics of me” to 5 being “Extreme characteristic of me”. The total score ranges from 7 to 35 with higher scores showing high imposters. The scale has strong internal consistency ($\alpha=0.95$) [11,22] and a good inter-item reliability ($\alpha=0.87$) [11].

Procedure

The study made use of Convenience and Purposive Sampling for data collection. Data was obtained using Google forms from 150 participants, of which 70 met the criteria and were included in the sample. Informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the form and the researcher's email address was provided for queries, followed by the scales.

Statistical Analysis

Inferential statistics included correlation analysis while ancillary analyses used simple and multiple linear regression to examine predictive relationships. The JASP software was used to conduct descriptive statistics and inferential statistics including Pearson Product Moment correlation. Ancillary analyses included multiple linear regression to assess whether perceived parental criticism and self-handicapping predicts impostor phenomenon and simple linear regression to examine whether perceived parental criticism predicts self-handicapping.

RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Parental Criticism, Self-handicapping, Guilt Proneness and Impostor Phenomenon for (N=70)

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
PPC	10.07	3.54	15.00	4.00	19.00	12.59	0.50	-0.52
SH	61.27	11.72	56.00	31.00	87.00	137.53	-0.27	-0.17
GP	3.57	1.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.01	-0.36	-0.61
IP	18.28	6.92	28.00	7.00	35.00	47.88	0.15	-0.80

Note. PPC= Perceived Parental Criticism, SH= Self-handicapping, IP= Impostor Phenomenon, GP= Guilt Proneness

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for the variables. The mean and standard deviation of Perceived Parental Criticism (PPC) were 10.07 and 3.54. For Self-handicapping (SH), the mean and standard deviation were 61.27 and 11.72. The mean and standard deviation for Guilt Proneness (GP) were 3.57 and 1.00. For Impostor Phenomenon (IP), the mean was 18.28 and the standard deviation was 6.92. Variance, Skewness and Kurtosis were calculated to assess the normality of the data. The values obtained of Skewness for the four variables were within the acceptable range of -1 to +1. Similarly, the obtained Kurtosis values were also in the accepted range of -3 to +3, indicating that the data met criteria for normal distribution.

The current study examined six hypotheses in total. The first hypothesis stated that there will be a positive relationship between perceived parental criticism and self-handicapping in early career professionals. The second hypothesis was that there will be a positive relationship between perceived parental criticism and guilt proneness in early career professionals. The third hypothesis stated that there will be a positive relationship between perceived parental criticism and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals. The fourth hypothesis proposed that there will be a negative relationship between self-handicapping and guilt proneness in early career professionals. The fifth hypothesis was that there will be a positive relationship between self-handicapping and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals. The sixth hypothesis stated that there will be a positive relationship between guilt proneness and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals.

Table 2 displays the correlation analysis for the variables in research. A statistically significant moderate positive correlation was found between perceived parental criticism and self-handicapping ($r=0.44$, $p<.001$), supporting the first hypothesis. There was a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between perceived parental criticism and guilt proneness ($r=0.37$, $p<.002$), in line with the second hypothesis. Perceived parental criticism and impostor phenomenon also had a statistically significant, moderate positive correlation ($r=0.44$, $p<.001$), consistent with the third hypothesis. Self-handicapping and guilt proneness had a weak positive correlation, and it was not statistically significant ($r=0.06$, $p>0.05$). Thus, the findings do not support the fourth hypothesis, which proposed a negative relationship between the two variables. A

statistically significant strong positive correlation was found between self-handicapping and impostor phenomenon ($r=0.59, p<.001$), supporting the fifth hypothesis. The sixth hypothesis proposed that there will be a positive relationship between guilt proneness and impostor phenomenon. Although a weak positive correlation was obtained, it was not statistically significant ($r=0.15, p>0.05$).

Table 2: Pearson's product moment correlation between Perceived Parental Criticism, Self-handicapping, Guilt Proneness and Impostor Phenomenon (N=70)

Variables	PPC	SH	GP	IP
PPC	-			
SH	0.44***	-		
GP	0.37**	0.06	-	
IP	0.44***	0.59***	0.15	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Note. PPC= Perceived Parental Criticism, SH= Self-handicapping, GP= Guilt Proneness, IP= Impostor Phenomenon

Ancillary Analysis

Ancillary analysis involved regression analysis to examine the predictive nature of the relationships between the variables that showed significant correlations. Multiple regression analysis assessed whether perceived parental criticism and self-handicapping sufficiently predicted impostor phenomenon.

Table 3: Model Summary for Self-handicapping and Perceived Parental Criticism predicting Impostor Phenomenon (N= 70)

Model		R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
M ₁	Regression	0.62	0.39	0.37	1286.28	2	643.14	21.35	< .001
	Residual				2018.00	67	30.11		

Note. Outcome Variable: Impostor Phenomenon, Predictors: Perceived Parental Criticism, Self-handicapping

Table 3 displays the model summary for predictor variables perceived parental criticism and self-handicapping with the outcome variable impostor phenomenon. The value of R and R² for the model is 0.62 and 0.39. The F value was 21.35, significant at p-value .001 ($F_{(2,67)} = 21.35, p<.001$). This indicates that the regression model sufficiently predicts the outcome variable impostor phenomenon.

Table 4: Beta Value for Regression Model predicting Impostor Phenomenon (N=70)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized error	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t	p
M ₀ (Intercept)	18.28	0.83		22.11	<.001
M ₁ (Intercept)	-3.94	3.53		-1.11	0.269
PPC	0.42	0.21	0.22	2.05	0.044
SH	0.29	0.06	0.49	4.66	<.001

Note. Outcome: Impostor Phenomenon, Predictors: Perceived Parental Criticism, Self-handicapping PPC= Perceived Parental Criticism, SH= Self-handicapping

Table 4 displays the standardized beta (β) values in the regression model which predicts impostor phenomenon. Among the two predictors, self-handicapping had the highest standardized beta value (β=

0.49) and it was statistically significant ($t = 4.66, p < .001$). Thus, it can be inferred that self-handicapping is a stronger predictor of impostor phenomenon.

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether perceived parental criticism predicts self-handicapping.

Table 5: Model Summary for Perceived Parental Criticism predicting Self-handicapping (N=70)

Model		R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
M ₁	Regression	0.44	0.19	0.18	1849.92	1	1849.92	16.46	< .001
	Residual				7639.92	68	112.35		

Note. Outcome Variable: Self-handicapping, Predictors: Perceived Parental Criticism

Table 5 displays the model summary for the predictor variable perceived parental criticism and the outcome variable self-handicapping. The value of R and R² is 0.44 and 0.19. The F value was 16.46, significant at p-value .001 ($F_{(1,68)} = 16.46, p < .001$). This indicates that the regression model sufficiently predicts the outcome variable self-handicapping.

Table 6: Beta Values for Regression Model predicting Self-handicapping (N=70)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized error	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t	P
M ₀ (Intercept)	61.27	1.40		43.71	<.001
M ₁ (Intercept)	46.57	3.83		12.13	<.001
PPC	1.46	0.36	0.44	4.06	<.001

Note. Outcome: Perceived Parental Criticism, Predictor: Self-handicapping PPC=Perceived Parental Criticism

Table 6 summarizes the standardized beta (β) values in the regression model which predicts self-handicapping. The standardized beta value (β = 0.44) of perceived parental criticism was significant ($t = 4.06, p < .001$). This shows that perceived parental criticism predicts self-handicapping.

DISCUSSION

The present study assessed the relationship between Perceived Parental Criticism, Self-handicapping, Guilt Proneness and Impostor Phenomenon among early career professionals using correlational analysis.

The first hypothesis stated that there will be a positive relationship between perceived parental criticism and self-handicapping and the results showed a statistically significant positive correlation, supporting the hypothesis. A study by Gunderson and colleagues found that perceived parental criticism was negatively correlated to children’s incremental theories with older children reporting higher parental criticism and stronger negative correlations.

Since the incremental theory views intelligence as improvable by effort, the results suggested that children perceiving higher parental criticism were more likely to believe that their abilities may not improve through hard work, reducing their motivation to try, which intensified as they aged [23]. Such effort withdrawal is also observed in individuals having high self-handicapping tendencies when they are uncertain of success. These findings support the obtained correlation, highlighting effort withdrawal as a common factor. Self-Determination Theory also explains the results, proposing that there are three basic psychological needs- autonomy, competence, relatedness- that affect human motivation [24]. These needs may be frustrated due to controlling, critical or neglectful parenting [25]. A study found that frustrations of these needs predict a

range of self-handicapping behaviors [26]. This explains how parenting styles including criticism may be associated with self-handicapping.

The second hypothesis proposed that there will be a positive relationship between perceived parental criticism and guilt proneness and a statistically significant positive correlation was obtained, supporting the hypothesis. According to the personality sub theory of Parental Acceptance Rejection Theory, positive feedback from attachment figures is crucial for personality development in children and adults. When they receive negative responses, they may feel rejected. Another research study has found that children and teenagers who experienced greater parental rejection tend to exhibit higher levels of guilt [27]. This shows how parental rejection, which may involve negative feedback or criticism, may relate to guilt proneness. Another explanation comes from the Self Discrepancy Theory which states that guilt arises when individuals feel that their attributes from their own viewpoint (actual self) do not match the qualities they believe they are obligated to reach (ought self). These ought standards are shaped by temperament and socialization experiences like parent child interactions [28] which involve setting behavioral expectations, enforcing rules, using punishment strategies, etc. Thus, parental criticism, a component in parent child interactions, may be linked to high levels of guilt.

The third hypothesis stated that there will be a positive relationship between perceived parental criticism and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals and the results showed a statistically significant positive relationship, in line with the hypothesis. Previous research has shown that perceived parental criticism was positively correlated to internalized self-criticism [29]. Another research indicated that young adults with extreme perceptions of fraudulence engage in self-criticism, fearing others will find the flaws they see in themselves. Thus, the obtained correlation between these two variables can be understood through self-criticism. Another study supports hypothesis, with results indicating a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived parental criticism and impostor phenomenon [30].

The fourth hypothesis proposed a negative relationship between self-handicapping and guilt proneness. However, the results showed a weak positive relationship that was not statistically significant and did not support the hypothesis. These findings were supported by a study that examined the relationship between academic self-handicapping, guilt proneness and its subfactors, and found no significant relationship between them [31]. Experiences of guilt proneness in the Indian context may explain the obtained results. In the West, guilt proneness was linked to factors related to self [32], and involves making amends, which contrasts with self-handicapping. But in India, guilt proneness was associated with natural forces or chance, reducing the likelihood of self-protective strategies like self-handicapping, thus explaining the weak relationship between them.

The fifth hypothesis stated that there will be a positive relationship between self-handicapping and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals and a statistically significant positive relationship was obtained, consistent with the hypothesis. A study exploring the relationship between self-handicapping and impostor phenomenon in medical students found a statistically significant positive correlation between the two variables, providing support to the obtained results [33]. Leary and colleagues noted that individuals with high impostor tendencies were motivated by self-presentational concerns and engaged in strategies like underplaying one's own achievements or ability. These self-presentational strategies, including self-handicapping, may help maintain their public image [11], supporting the association between self-handicapping and impostor phenomenon.

The sixth hypothesis stated that there will be a positive relationship between guilt proneness and impostor phenomenon in early career professionals. While the correlation was in the expected direction, it lacked statistical significance. A study which analyzed the relationship between interpersonal guilt, impostor phenomenon and other factors, showed a statistically significant positive correlation [34], thus supporting the obtained positive trend in the results. Attribution style theory may also explain the obtained results.

Individuals with high impostor tendencies attributed failures to internal, stable and global factors [35], while guilt proneness involves internal, unstable and specific attributions to failures [33]. The shared internal attribution may support the positive association, whereas the differing dimensions may explain the weak strength of the correlation.

In ancillary analysis, the multiple linear regression model showed that both self-handicapping and perceived parental criticism were valid predictors of impostor phenomenon with self-handicapping being the stronger

predictor. Another research study found that parental criticism was strongly correlated to, and predicted impostor phenomenon [36], thus providing support to the obtained results.

The simple linear regression model indicated that perceived parental criticism sufficiently predicted self-handicapping. Research found that in males, maternal and in females both parental discouragement of behavioral freedom was negatively correlated to self-esteem [37]. Self-handicapping behaviors such as excuse making, using harmful substances, etc. are often used in response to perceived threats to self-worth, which may arise from parental discouragement or criticism, thus supporting the present findings.

CONCLUSION

For enhancing mental wellbeing, and resilience in adolescents, the most effective tool is co-regulation. Parents need to involve children in decision making and problem-solving issues which concern them and not reject them if they fail to live up to their expectations. Parents need to change their negative scripts, explore many alternatives and adapt a more flexible, open-minded attitude. This will encourage their children too to consider different possible solutions to problems. Prominent protective factors against depression are the mothers unconditional love and acceptance of their children. Added to this is their nurturing, caring and participative involvement. In typical patriarchal families of Indian society, mothers are more directly involved in rearing up children, while fathers appear to be playing a secondary role. This pattern of parenting style is offering adequate personal space to adolescents to test and try their options. Various studies have pointed to the ideal parenting style where parents work as a team, do not become clones of each other, but at the same time offer consistency to their children in terms of realistic goals and disciplinary practices. Overlap in mothers and fathers' use of Over Protectiveness, Demands, Rejection, Conditional Love, Symbolic love, and Symbolic Punishment, are not conducive to building good mental health and resilience in adolescents. In all forms of interaction and disciplinary practices involving children, parents need to ensure distributive justice (fair distribution of rewards and punishment), procedural justice (fairness in the procedures adapted for giving rewards and punishment) and transactional justice (clear and rational reasons for why rewards and punishments were given).

This study has highlighted the significance of reducing the prevalence of depression and enhancing the resilience of adolescents. Hardiness is a personality type which should be a norm among Indian adolescents. In this context, due to changes in the value system and nature of family structure, parent-child interactions need to be altered. Some of the positive parental practices are offering unconditional love and acceptance to children, becoming their compassionate partners, demand accomplishment of realistic and achievable goals, becoming effective and active listeners to them, supporting them with feedback and encouragement, and, giving reward and punishment in a just and unbiased manner, as and when required. These parenting practices for adolescents will help in building their self-worth, self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience, thereby reducing depression, in the most troubled phase of their development. In this phase, where every emotion and experience is heightened due to hormonal and physical changes, parents must extend unwavering support to their children. They must not be over controlling, hyper critical, overly demanding, rejecting, and avoid ambiguities in giving rewards and punishments. This research reiterates the necessity to keep adolescents free from depression by building their resilience and enhancing their relationship with their parents. It is a basic requirement for them to deal successfully with their relationships, academic pressures, and day-to-day hassles. They will emerge as responsible, compassionate and conscientious global citizens.

Scope for further research

Future research can investigate and compare adolescents from different socioeconomic strata for their mental health along six dimensions: integrated personality with ability to understand others; internal consistency between one's potentials and goals; attitude which enhances group affiliation; objective and realistic orientation; having positive attitude towards self and the ability to adjust to one's environmental factors. Studies can focus on effectiveness of interventions used for adolescents involving locus of control, cognitive mediation and behavioural skill to handle stress. Research can exclusively focus on studying adolescent cognitive functioning involving 'Self-Construct', ability for self-control, and use of abstract

thinking. Research can focus on adolescent's self-efficacy, and negotiation tactics they use at times of stress. Studies can try to understand the changing value system across generations, where detachment exists with materialism, collectivism with individualism and humanism with power orientation.

Limitations

Longitudinal study will highlight how parent-child interactions can change over time. Sample should include participants from all socio-economic strata of the Indian society. This would widen the study's generalizability and applicability. Online interactions with participants have constraints regarding noting ancillary observations, non-verbal cues and social desirability factors.

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