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Effect of perceived parenting style on suicidal ideation of young adults with emotional reactivity as the mediating factor

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Abstract

The paper examines the impact of perceived parenting styles on suicidal ideation among young adults, with emotional reactivity as a mediating factor. Utilizing a quantitative, correlational research design, data were collected from 240 Indian young adults (aged 18–25) through convenience sampling. The variables: Perceived parenting styles, emotional reactivity, and suicidal ideation were measured using the Perceived Parenting Style Scale, Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale-Short Form, and Suicidal Ideation Attributes Scale, respectively. Authoritarian and permissive parenting styles were significantly correlated with suicidal ideation, with negative emotional reactivity playing a mediating role in the relationship between parenting styles and suicidal ideation ($\beta = 0.325$, $p < .001$). Authoritative parenting had a protective effect on positive emotional reactivity (and negatively correlated with suicidal ideation ($r = -0.235$, $p = 0.036$). Results highlight the importance of emotional reactivity in reducing suicidal ideation, indicating that the interventions should enhance authoritative parenting and emotional regulation skills. Future studies should investigate longitudinal effects and culturally appropriate parenting interventions that promote psychological well-being in young adults.

Keywords: Perceived Parenting Style; Suicidal Ideation; Emotional Reactivity; Mediating Effect; Young Adults

1. Introduction

Suicidal ideation is a major issue for young adults and suicidal ideation and behaviours during these years can have lasting impacts later in life. Childhood exposure to various parenting styles can influence throughout the lifespan, including authoritative parenting being a protective factor and authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting styles being risk factors [1]. The extent of emotional reactivity — that is, the depth and duration of emotional responses — mediates much of this relationship. Similarly, individuals with high emotional reactivity are less likely to regulate their emotions, which enhances the risk for suicidal ideation in a negative parenting environment [2]. The evidence leading to perceived parenting styles and emotional reactivity and how they can predict suicidal ideation allows researchers to create a focused approach in aiding specific populations.

The theoretical basis for this research is Baumrind's parenting typology, which defines parenting as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful with varying psychological outcomes for children[3]. Two critical risk factors, thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness, for suicidal behaviour according to the Interpersonal Theory of Suicidal Behaviour [4], and the Diathesis-Stress Model, which posits that stressors interact with vulnerabilities, are also components of this bio-psycho-social model of suicidal behaviour. Cognitive-behavioural paradigms additionally connect maladaptive cognitive patterns and emotional distress to suicidal ideation [5] [6]. Furthermore, we consider emotional reactivity, which derives from temperament theory and is biologically driven, correlating with emotion regulation difficulties and linked to sustained amygdala activation associated with psychological disorders [7] [8] [9].

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This study is important to filling in the gaps in our understanding of the links of parenting styles, emotional reactivity, and suicidal ideation among young adults. Suicide is still the most common cause of death in this population [10], and since emotional reactivity is a modifiable risk factor, enhancing emotion regulation skills may help reduce suicidal thoughts and behaviours by the emotional mechanism. Results may help shape parenting programs and responsive mental health initiatives, to help practitioners support at-risk populations. This research also supports the field of developmental psychopathology by uncovering the enduring impact that parental influences in early life can have on mental health [11], which can then be utilized to advance prevention and treatment approaches for young adults.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Statement of the Problem

To study the effect of perceived parenting style on suicidal ideation of young adults with emotional reactivity as the mediating factor.

Objectives

- To determine the effect of perceived parenting style on suicidal ideation in young adults.
- To determine the effect of emotional reactivity on suicidal ideation in young adults.
- To determine the mediating effect of emotional reactivity on perceived parenting style and suicidal ideation in young adults.

Hypotheses

- Perceived parenting style has no significant effect on suicidal ideation in young adults.
- Emotional reactivity has no significant effect on suicidal ideation in young adults.
- Emotional reactivity has no significant mediating effect on perceived parenting style and suicidal ideation in young adults.

2.2. Research Design

The research is quantitative in nature, adopting a correlational research design.

2.3. Operational Definitions

- **Perceived Parenting Style:** Youth's perception of their parents' behaviours and attitudes toward themselves. It addresses several different methods of child-rearing with different levels of warmth, control, and granting autonomy: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful [12].
- **Suicidal Ideation:** Suicidal ideations include thoughts of committing suicide and range from fleeting thoughts to detailed plans to commit suicide. It indicates a strong risk factor for future suicidal behavior but not necessarily the execution of suicide [13].
- **Emotional Reactivity:** The level of sensitivity, intensity and duration of emotional reaction to a stimulus. It is a personality trait that influences how people feel and respond to their emotions. This may involve maladaptive response such as suicide thoughts by interfering cognitive and behaviour control [14].

2.4. Sampling

- **Sampling technique:** The sampling technique that was used is convenience sampling, as the sample included young adults of the Indian population. Participants consisted a convenience sample size of 240 young adults between the ages of 18 – 25.

2.4.1. Inclusion Criteria

- Participants above the age of 18 and below the age of 25.
- Participants should be of Indian Nationality.

2.4.2. Exclusion Criteria

- Participants who have been diagnosed with any neurological or psychological disorder.
- People who do not know how to speak or understand English.

2.5. Procedure

The questionnaires were converted into Google Forms and were circulated among the participants. After explaining the goal of the study and getting their permission to be evaluated, they were given instructions on how to complete each Google form tool and asked to submit honest responses. They received guarantees that the information they provided would be used only for research purposes and that their answers would remain confidential.

2.6. Tools for the study

- **Perceived Parenting Style Scale:** The Perceived Parenting Style Scale by Divya and Manikandan(2013) [15] captures the perception of children regarding the behaviour of their parents. It assesses perceived parenting style of the subject in terms of three dimensions - authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. Its made of 30 items in which response were sought in five point Likert scale.
- **Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale-Short Form:** The Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale-Short Form (PERS-S) [16] is an 18-item self-report measure of trait levels of emotional reactivity in people. The PERS-S operationalizes the emotional reactivity construct as defined by Davidson (1998) [17] and Becerra & Campitelli (2013) [18]; that is, it assesses the average activation, intensity and duration of one's emotional situations, doing so separately for positive (e.g., happiness) and negative (e.g., sadness) emotions.
- **Suicidal Ideation Attributes Scale:** The Suicidal Ideation Attributes Scale (SIDAS) [19] was developed for screening individuals in the community for suicidal thoughts and characterizing severity of suicidal thoughts. It includes five items, each addressing an aspect of suicidal thoughts: frequency, controllability, closeness to attempt, degree of distress associated with the thoughts and impact on daily functioning. Responses on a 10-point scale. Scores are coded such that a higher overall score means more severe suicidal thoughts.

2.7. Ethical consideration

- The researcher will circulate the form among the participants, explain the study, and request his or her participation.
- The participants will be informed that their responses will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes.
- Every participant will be made aware of their freedom to withdraw from the study at any point and that their participation is entirely voluntary.
- Throughout the form-filling process, participants will be given chances to ask questions about the program and their involvement in general through emails.
- The participants will be debriefed after the study.

2.8. Statistical Analysis

Correlation analysis and mediation analysis will be used to analyze the data on the software - Jamovi.

3. Results

3.1. Regression analysis – Between the 3 dimensions of Perceived Parenting Styles

Table 1 Regression analysis between the dimensions – authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles on suicidal ideation

Model Coefficients - Suicidal Ideation (>21)				
Predictor	**Estimate**	**SE**	**t**	**p**
Parenting Styles:				
2 – 1	17.16	1.83	9.40	<.001
2 – 3	5.49	1.83	3.00	0.003
3 – 1	11.68	1.83	6.39	<.001

Note: 1 – Authoritative, 2 – Authoritarian, 3 - Permissive

The regression analysis in table 1, shows a significant link between parenting styles and suicidal ideation. Authoritarian parenting (2) is associated with the highest suicidal ideation risk compared to authoritative parenting (1) (17.16, p <

.001). Permissive parenting (3) also increases risk (11.68, p < .001), though less than authoritarian. Suicidal ideation is significantly higher in authoritarian than permissive parenting (5.49, p = 0.003). Overall, authoritative parenting is the most protective, while authoritarian poses the greatest risk, followed by permissive parenting.

Table 2 Regression analysis between the dimensions – authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles on negative emotional reactivity

Model Coefficients - Negative Emotional Reactivity				
Predictor	**Estimate**	**SE**	**t**	**p**
Parenting Styles:				
2 – 1	2.29	1.270	1.80	0.073
2 – 3	4.59	1.270	3.61	<.001
3 – 1	-2.30	1.270	-1.81	0.071

Note: 1 – Authoritative, 2 – Authoritarian, 3 - Permissive

The regression analysis in table 2, examines parenting styles and negative emotional reactivity. Authoritarian parenting (2) shows slightly higher negative emotional reactivity than authoritative parenting (1), but this is not significant (p = 0.073). However, authoritarian parenting is significantly linked to greater distress than permissive parenting (3) (4.59, p < .001). The difference between permissive and authoritative parenting is negative (-2.30) but not significant (p = 0.071). Overall, authoritarian parenting increases emotional distress, while permissive and authoritative parenting do not differ significantly.

Table 3 Regression analysis between the dimensions – authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles on positive emotional reactivity

Model Coefficients - Positive Emotional Reactivity			
Estimate	**SE**	**t**	**p**
-8.09	1.059	-7.64	<0.001
-0.912	1.059	-0.862	0.390
-7.17	1.059	-6.78	<0.001

Note: 1 – Authoritative, 2 – Authoritarian, 3 - Permissive

The regression analysis in table 3, examines parenting styles and positive emotional reactivity. Authoritarian parenting (2) significantly lowers positive emotional reactivity compared to authoritative parenting (1) (-8.09, p < .001). The difference between authoritarian (2) and permissive (3) parenting is not significant (-0.912, p = 0.390). However, permissive parenting (3) also reduces positive emotional reactivity compared to authoritative parenting (1) (-7.17, p < .001). These findings confirm that authoritative parenting best fosters positive emotional reactivity, while authoritarian and permissive styles are associated with lower levels, with no significant difference between them.

3.2. Correlation Analysis

In table 4, suicidal ideation was negatively correlated with positive emotional reactivity among individuals with authoritative (r = -0.235, p = 0.036), authoritarian (r = -0.678, p < .001), and permissive (r = -0.647, p < .001) parents, indicating that higher positive emotional reactivity is associated with lower suicidal ideation across all parenting styles. The statistical significance in each case supports the protective role of positive emotional reactivity in reducing suicidal ideation, particularly among those with authoritarian and permissive parents, where the correlation was strongest. However, no meaningful relationship was observed between negative emotional reactivity and suicidal ideation in the authoritative parenting group (r = 0.088, p = 0.437), suggesting that other factors may play a more critical role in this context.

Table 4 Correlation between authoritative, authoritarian, permissive parenting style and positive emotional reactivity, negative emotional reactivity and suicidal ideation

		M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Positive Emotional Reactivity	30.8	7.59	-				
2.	Negative Emotional Reactivity	32.1	8.21	0.378***	-			
3.	Suicidal Ideation (>21)	13.4	13.6	0.681***	0.520***			
4.	Authoritative	32.2	7.93	0.491***	-0.118	0.549***	-	
5.	Authoritarian	29.8	8.16	0.496***	0.301***	0.582***	-0.635***	-
6.	Permissive	27.8	7.77	0.296***	-0.034	0.369***	-0.524***	0.436***

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

Conversely, negative emotional reactivity showed a strong positive correlation with suicidal ideation in individuals with authoritarian (r = 0.812, p < .001) and permissive (r = 0.601, p < .001) parents, indicating that heightened negative emotional reactivity is linked to increased suicidal ideation in these groups. These findings highlight the role of emotional regulation in mitigating suicide risk, particularly in individuals raised in authoritarian and permissive parenting environments. The overall results emphasize the importance of fostering positive emotional reactivity and managing negative emotional responses to reduce suicidal ideation across diverse parenting backgrounds.

3.3. Regression Analysis

Table 5 Linear regression between Authoritative Parenting Style and Emotional Reactivity on Suicidal Ideation

Model	Emotional Reactivity Type	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	df_1	df_2	p
1	Positive	0.833	0.694	0.363	2.10	41	38	0.011
2	Negative	0.826	0.683	0.217	1.47	47	32	0.128

Note: Model 1 examines the interaction between Authoritative Parenting Style and Positive Emotional Reactivity on Suicidal Ideation. Model 2 examines the interaction between Authoritative Parenting Style and Negative Emotional Reactivity on Suicidal Ideation.

In table 5, model 1 provides an analysis of the relationship between suicidal ideation with positive emotional reactivity and authoritative parenting through linear regression. The model is statistically significant, F(41,38)=2.10, p=0.011 indicating these factors substantially impact suicidal thought.A strong correlation (R = 0.833) confirms a meaningful relationship between the predictors and suicidal ideation.

Model 2 presents a linear regression analysis examining the effects of authoritative parenting and negative emotional reactivity on suicidal ideation. A strong correlation (R = 0.826) suggests a relationship, but the model explains only 68.3% of variability (R^2 = 0.683). And the predictive power declines with more predictors, with adj R^2 = 0.217. This model is not statistically significant (F-statistic = 1.47, p = 0.128) and does not indicate that these factors play a role in suicidal ideation in this sample of 80 cases (p > 0.05).

Table 6 Linear regression between Authoritarian Parenting Style and Emotional Reactivity on Suicidal Ideation

Model	Emotional Reactivity Type	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	df_1	df_2	P
1	Positive	0.980	0.961	0.925	26.50	38	41	< 0.001
2	Negative	0.982	0.963	0.926	25.70	40	39	< 0.001

Note: Model 1 assesses the influence of Authoritarian Parenting Style and Positive Emotional Reactivity on Suicidal Ideation. Model 2 assesses the influence of Authoritarian Parenting Style and Negative Emotional Reactivity on Suicidal Ideation.

In table 6, the results of the linear regression analysis, presented in Model 1, reveal a strong relationship between suicidal ideation, positive emotional reactivity, and authoritarian parenting. The combined influence of these predictors shows a significant correlation (R = 0.980), explaining 96.1% of the variance in suicidal ideation (R^2 = 0.961). The model is highly significant (F = 26.5, p < .001), highlighting that the variables positive emotional reactivity and authoritarian parenting strongly influence suicidal ideation.

Linear regression analysis between the variables suicidal ideation, negative emotional reactivity, and authoritarian parenting is shown in Model 2. The combined influence of these predictors shows a significant correlation (R = 0.982), explaining 96.3% of the variance in suicidal ideation (R^2 = 0.963).

Table 7 Linear regression between Permissive Parenting Style and Emotional Reactivity on Suicidal Ideation

Model	Emotional Reactivity Type	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	df_1	df_2	p
1	Positive	0.947	0.897	0.862	25.60	20	59	< 0.001
2	Negative	0.984	0.968	0.957	88.00	20	59	<0 .001

Note: Model 1 tests the relationship between Permissive Parenting Style and Positive Emotional Reactivity on Suicidal Ideation. Model 2 examines the relationship between Permissive Parenting Style and Negative Emotional Reactivity on Suicidal Ideation.

In table 7, model 1 shows linear regression analysis on the relationship between permissiveness parenting, positive emotional reactivity, and suicidal ideation. The potential of these predictors to explain 89.7% of variance in suicidal ideation is strongly supported by a very high correlation (R = 0.947) between the construct of suicidal ideation measured in some of the included studies.

Model 2 presents a linear regression analysis on permissive parenting, negative emotional reactivity, and suicidal ideation. The variance of the suicidal ideation was explained by the predictors (R^2 = 0.968, adjusted R^2 = 0.957) explaining 96.8% of the variation of the outcome; where a strong correlation was found (R = 0.984). Results: Sixty-eight patients were included. 001), indicating a significant effect of both permissive parenting and negative emotional reactivity on suicidal ideation in this cohort of 80.

3.4. Mediation Analysis

Table 8 Mediating role of negative emotional reactivity between authoritarian parenting style and suicidal ideation

Indirect and Total Effects								
Type	Effect	95% C.I. (a)						
		Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	β	z	p
Indirect	Authoritarian ⇒ Negative ER ⇒ Suicidal Ideation	0.842	0.185	0.478	1.21	0.325	4.54	< 0.001
Component	Authoritarian ⇒ Negative ER	0.834	0.163	0.515	1.15	0.496	5.12	< 0.001
	Negative ER ⇒ Suicidal Ideation	1.009	0.102	0.809	1.21	0.655	9.85	< 0.001
Direct	Authoritarian ⇒ Suicidal Ideation	0.817	0.172	0.479	1.15	0.315	4.75	< 0.001
Total	Authoritarian ⇒ Suicidal Ideation	1.659	0.224	1.220	2.10	0.641	7.42	< 0.001

Note. Confidence intervals computed with method: Standard (Delta method) Note. Betas are completely standardized effect sizes

Table 8 also shows a mediation analysis for negative emotional reactivity (Negative ER) as a mediator between authoritarian parenting and suicidal ideation. The results indicate a significant indirect effect (0.842, SE = 0.185, 95% CI [0.478, 1.21], p <. 001), further supports that negative ER is heavily impacted by authoritarian parenting (0.834, SE = 0.163, p <. 001), which ultimately predicts suicidality (1.009, SE = 0.102, p <. 001). Authoritarian parenting has a direct effect even with mediation (0.817, SE = 0.172, p <. 001). There are some major implications of these findings in identifying the importance of managing emotions for reducing suicidal ideation related to authoritarian parenting.

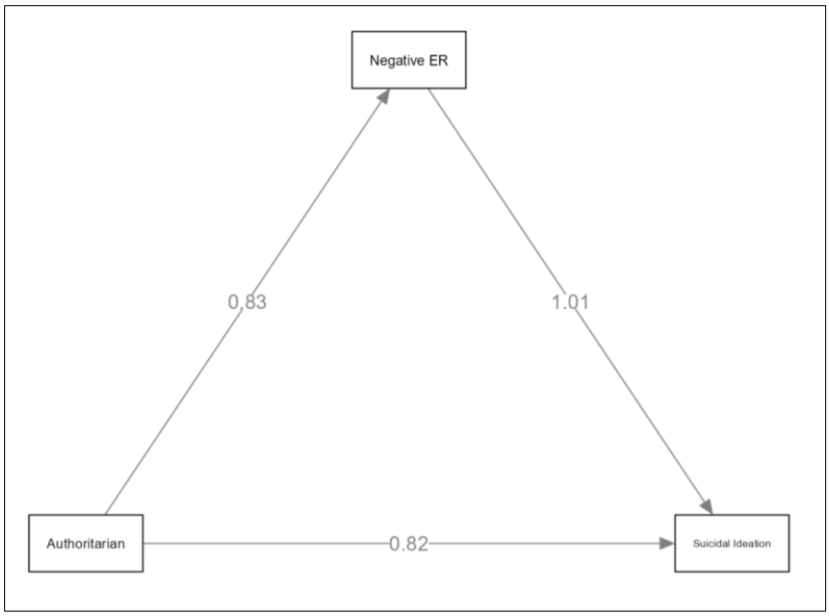

Figure 1 Mediating role of negative emotional reactivity between authoritarian parenting style and suicidal ideation

Table 9 Mediating role of negative emotional reactivity between permissive parenting style and suicidal ideation

Indirect and Total Effects								
Type	**Effect**	**Estimate**	**95% C.I. (a)**					
			SE	**Lower**	**Upper**	**β**	**z**	**p**
Indirect	Permissive ⇒ Negative ER ⇒ Suicidal Ideation	0.966	0.236	0.503	1.4285	0.341	4.09	< 0.001
Component	Permissive ⇒ Negative ER	0.815	0.158	0.505	1.1249	0.499	5.15	< 0.001
	Negative ER ⇒ Suicidal Ideation	1.185	0.176	0.841	1.5301	0.684	6.74	< 0.001
Direct	Permissive ⇒ Suicidal Ideation	-0.466	0.287	-1.028	0.0972	-0.164	-1.62	0.105
Total	Permissive ⇒ Suicidal Ideation	0.500	0.314	-0.114	1.1148	0.177	1.60	0.111

Note. Confidence intervals computed with method: Standard (Delta method); Note. Betas are completely standardized effect sizes

Table 9 shows a mediation model of negative emotional reactivity (Negative ER) as a mediator of permissive parenting and suicidal ideation. There was a large and indirect effect (0.966, SE = 0.236, 95% CI [0.503, 1.4285], β = 0.341, z = 4.09, p <. 001), which indicates that permissive parenting significantly predicts Negative ER (β = 0.499, p <. 001), a significant predictor for suicidal ideation (β = 0.684, p <. 001). However, its direct (β = -0.164, p = 0.105) and total effects (β = 0.177, p = 0.111) are tagged as non-significant; thus, suicidal ideation is primarily developed after the emotional reactivity, but not causing it directly.

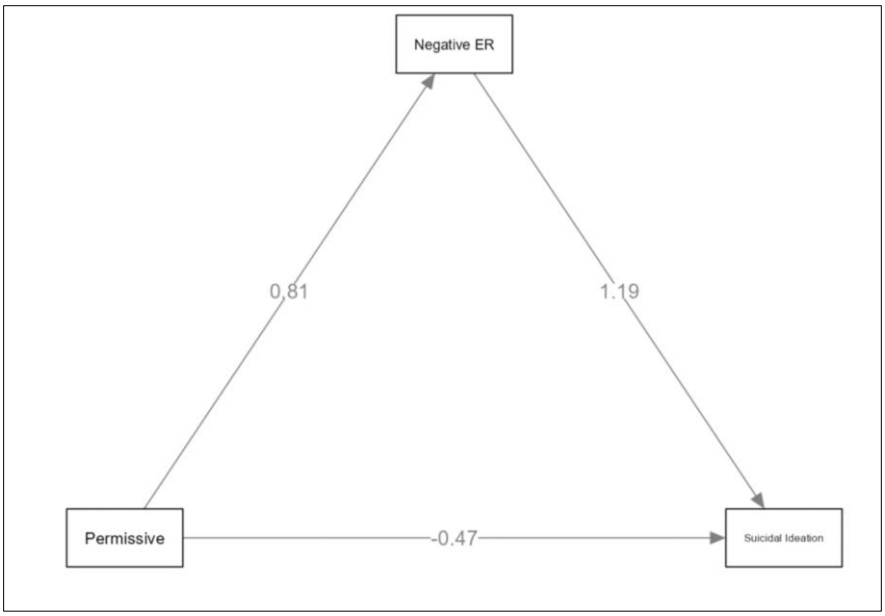

Figure 2 Mediating role of negative emotional reactivity between permissive parenting style and suicidal ideation

4. Discussion

This study highlights the impact of parenting styles on emotional reactivity and SI. Authoritative parenting is most protective, fostering resilience through positive emotional reactivity [20] [21]. Authoritarian parenting heightens SI risk via increased negative emotional reactivity [1] [22]. Permissive parenting, while less protective, offers emotional openness but lacks structure, leading to dysregulation [12]. Findings confirm that emotional regulation mediates SI risk, reinforcing authoritative parenting as the strongest protective factor against maladaptive coping [13] [23].

The findings have characterized a complicated relationship among parenting styles, emotional reactivity, and suicidal ideation (SI), which takes emotional regulation as a major mediator. Authoritative parenting characterized by warmth and structure may serve as a resilience factor against SI through promoting emotional resilience. The inverse relationship between positive emotional reactivity and SI ($r = -0.235$, $p = 0.036$) indicates that the individuals raised in authoritative households, which tend to instill emotional stability, are less likely to experience SI risk [20][21].

Meanwhile, authoritarian parenting has dual effects, positive emotional reactivity inversely correlates with SI ($r = -0.678$, $p < 0.001$), while negative emotional reactivity can strongly power the risk of SI ($r = 0.812$, $p < 0.001$). Emotion regulation is impaired in authoritarian households due to rigidity and emotional distance, leading to maladaptive coping [1]. This is consistent with the findings of Polanco-Roman et al. (2018) [22] and Liu et al. (2020) [21], which connect emotional dysregulation with depression and SI.

The effect of permissive parenting is more nuanced. Although positive emotional reactivity had a strong negative correlation with SI ($r = -0.647$, $p < 0.001$), negative emotional reactivity was also significantly correlated with SI ($r = 0.601$, $p < 0.001$). Conversely, this unrestricted parenting style causes a lack of regulation, which may lead to emotional dysregulation and subsequently may elevate the risk for SI [12]. Although emotional openness is encouraged, the lack of solid boundaries can complicate stress management.

These trends are underscored by regression analyses. Authoritative parenting accounted for 69.4% of the variance in SI ($R^2 = 0.694$), further supporting its protective role [21]. However, authoritarian parenting and emotional reactivity interactions explained a much more substantial portion of SI variance (positive emotional reactivity, $R^2 = 0.961$; negative emotional reactivity, $R^2 = 0.963$). In authoritarian households, negative emotional reactions are exacerbated by high control and low warmth, which leads to SI vulnerability [1] [23]. In a similar vein, permissive parenting was a strong predictor of SI via emotional reactivity ($R^2 = 0.897$ for positive, $R^2 = 0.968$ for negative emotional reactivity), suggesting its two-way effect of warmth and absence of structure [23] [22].

Mediation analyses highlight the link between authoritarian parenting and SI, both directly ($\beta = 0.315$, $p < .001$) and indirectly via negative emotional reactivity ($\beta = 0.325$, $p < .001$). Strict control and emotional unresponsiveness

heighten sensitivity, fostering hopelessness and isolation (β = 0.641, p < .001). Permissive parenting primarily affects SI indirectly (β = 0.341, p < .001) through emotional dysregulation. While it does not directly predict SI (β = -0.164, p = 0.105), its lack of structure exacerbates emotional instability [13] [22] [23].

To conclude, emotional regulation is a mediator between parenting styles and SI. Authoritative parenting is protective of resilience. Authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are associated with increased risk for SI, at least in part through emotional dysregulation. The results highlight the need for well-balanced parenting approaches to foster emotional wellness and reduce SI risk in young adults.

5. Conclusion

Perceived parenting styles—emotional reactivity as an intermediate variable in suicide ideation among young adults: A study. Here, an authoritative parenting model helps to develop an emotional significance that decreases risk for SI, whereas authoritarian and permissive parenting leads directly to emotional dysregulation and instability. Negative emotional reactivity was a significant mediator, with authoritarian parenting contributing to both isolation and hopelessness, while permissive parenting provided too little structure for appropriate emotion regulation. These findings corroborate studies from students highlighting the importance of contingent material and emotional warmth with contour for emotional development, which may reduce the risk for SI.

Further interventions should focus on fostering authoritative parenting in order to increase emotional regulation in young adults. Efforts should also mitigate authoritarian parenting through cultivating emotional expression and adaptive coping and support permissive parenting by implementing boundaries without sacrificing warmth. Mindfulness-based emotional regulation training that can reduce maladaptive coping and depressive symptoms, which is linked to suicidal ideation can be integrated by mental health practitioners. They provide a proactive strategy for reducing suicide risk and cultivating mental health with resilience and adaptive parenting.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest from all 3 authors to be disclosed.

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