

INTRODUCTION

Background

Parenting styles (**authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful/uninvolved**) all shape long-term emotional and psychological development (Baumrind, 1970). **Authoritative**- enhances academia and encourages independence and open communication (Febiyanti & Rachmawati, 2021; Bukhari *et al.*, 2021). **Authoritarian and Neglectful**- linked to anxiety, depression and low self-esteem (Chen, 2022; Sharma *et al.*, 2011). **Permissive**- poor self-regulation in children (Kausar & Afaq, 2024). **Mindful** and **Positive** parenting styles focus on unconditional acceptance, nonjudgmental parenting, and meeting the child’s needs consistently and unconditionally (Hidayati *et al.*, 2023; Nurhayati & Rosita, 2020).



Research approach

This qualitative study examines how young adults in the UK experienced parenting during childhood and adolescence, and how this impacted their mental well-being. The study aims to provide practical insights for improving parenting support and mental health care by addressing a gap in existing literature, which is predominantly quantitative and lacks exploration of lived experiences.

In England, 23.3% of 17-19-year-olds and 21.7% of 20-25-year-olds faced probable mental health conditions (NHS, 2023). 29.8% of adult mental health issues can be attributed to childhood adversities (Kessler *et al.*, 2010).

METHOD

Design: Qualitative design using five semi-structured interviews and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). **Participants:** Five UK-based adults (ages 18-26) were recruited via purposive and convenience sampling. **Inclusion criteria:** Aged 18-30, UK upbringing, English fluency and individuals were excluded if undergoing therapy for a mental health condition. **Procedure:** Interviews lasting 20- 40 minutes were conducted via Microsoft Teams (MT), using an open-ended interview guide. **Materials:** Five semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide and recorded, transcribed, and analysed using IPA. **Ethics:** Approved by the University of Staffordshire’s ethics board; followed BPS (2021) guidelines; data was anonymised and safely secured. **Analysis:** The data was analysed using Smith et al.’s (2022) seven-step IPA to develop exploratory notes, experiential statements, and group experiential themes (GETs).

THEMES

The Silent Burden: How Emotional Suppression Shapes Mental Well-Being Across Generations
This theme explores how emotional suppression across generations shapes mental well-being. It highlights how children internalise their parents’ emotional behaviours, leading to struggles with emotional processing, isolation, and delayed emotional responses in adulthood. *‘I didn't know how to process my emotions, and I don't think they sort of understood either’- Ava*

The Lasting Influence of Parental Bonds on Mental Health: Love, Distance, and Recognition
This theme explores how parental bonds shape mental health. Maternal support ranged from distant to nurturing, while father-daughter relationships varied from neglect to positive engagement, affecting emotional well-being and self-worth. *‘I think mum is always (1.4) her words as well towards me very she'll always tell me that she loves me she'll always she'll always say that she'll do anything for me’- Nora*
‘Always, always I've always had to be like, are you proud of me? Are you proud of me?... it doesn't hurt to hear that it doesn't hurt to hear ‘I'm proud of you’ or ‘well done for doing this’- Evie

Contrasting Parental Styles: How Conflicting Approaches Shape Mental Health
Conflicting parenting styles, including emotional neglect, exclusion, and control, shaped participants’ emotional development and affected their sense of identity. *‘My dad's parenting style was kind of he wasn't like he'd never raised his voice at me like never and if he ever did, like I knew I'd been really naughty, whereas my mum, like, we were used to have screaming matches every week’- Lilly*

Rosie: An Exceptional Case of Balanced Parental Influence and Emotional Well-Being
Rosie’s emotionally supportive and communicative parents helped her to develop resilience, self-awareness, and emotional well-being. *‘If I'm struggling, if I'm feeling low, if I'm stressed, I know that I've got that support that I could talk to them and their approach has always bin (1.1) like I say, we're here if you want to talk and we and you need us like erm (1.4)’- Rosie*

DISCUSSION

Study focus: This research used IPA to explore how childhood and adolescent parenting influences young adults’ mental health. **Key Findings:** Emotional suppression and inconsistent parenting negatively affected emotional regulation and well-being. Supportive, open parenting helped participants develop resilience and emotional security, as seen in Rosie’s case. This aligns with the newer parenting styles that emphasise unconditional acceptance, emotional availability, and nonjudgmental parenting (Hidayati *et al.*, 2023; Nurhayati & Rosita, 2020). **Implications:** Early interventions promoting emotional openness and consistent parenting could improve mental health. Mental health professionals should consider the impact of early family dynamics on clients’ coping strategies. **Future research:** Future longitudinal research could examine how parenting approaches influence mental health over time, including parent and child perspectives.

REFERENCES

Baumrind, D. (1970). Socialization and Instrumental Competence in Young Children. *Young Children*, 26(2), 104–119. Bukhari, F. K., Samar Fahd, Fayyaz, S., Iqbal, S., & Mahnoor Anwar. (2021). IMPACT OF PARENTING STYLES ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN BAHAWALPUR. *International Journal of Management Research and Emerging Science*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.56536/ijmres.v11i2.138>. Chen, Y. (2022, December). The psychological impact of authoritarian parenting on children and the youth. In *2022 2nd International Conference on Modern Educational Technology and Social Sciences (ICMETSS 2022)* (pp. 888-896). Atlantis Press. Sharma, M., Sharma, N., & Yadava, A. (2011). Parental styles and depression among adolescents. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied psychology*, 37(1), 60-68. Kausar, R., & Afaq, U. (2024). The Effects of Parenting Styles on Child Development. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, 7(2), 856-866. NHS England. (2023, November 21). *One in five children and young people had a probable mental disorder in 2023*. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2023/11/one-in-five-children-and-young-people-had-a-probable-mental-disorder-in-2023/>. Kessler, R. C., McLaughlin, K. A., Green, J. G., Gruber, M. J., Sampson, N. A., Zaslavsky, A. M., ... & Williams, D. R. (2010). Childhood adversities and adult psychopathology in the WHO World Mental Health Surveys. *The British journal of psychiatry*, 197(5), 378-385. British Psychological Society. (2021). *BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (4th ed.)*. <https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/report-guideline/bpsrep.2021.inf180>. Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2022). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research*. SAGE. Febiyanti, A., & Rachmawati, Y. (2021, March). Is authoritative parenting the best parenting style?. In *5th international conference on early childhood education (ICECE 2020)* (pp. 94-99). Atlantis Press. Hidayati, F., Sa'diyah, E. H., Hartini, N., &