


The Mediating Role of Academic Entitlement in the relationship between Permissive Parenting and Psychological Distress

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Abstract

The aim of present study was to investigate the mediating role of academic entitlement in the relationship between permissive parenting and psychological distress. The research method was descriptive-correlational. Statistical population was male students at the Lorestan University, Khorramabad, Iran. A total of 282 students were selected using voluntary response sample method. Data were collected using Academic Entitlement Scale (AES), Parenting Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21). To analyze the data Pearson correlation and structural equation modeling (SEM) were conducted. The results showed that mediating role of academic entitlement in the relationship between permissive parenting and psychological distress was significant. The current study findings indicate that permissive parenting style can increase psychological distress among university students by strengthening of academic entitlement beliefs.

Keywords: Academic entitlement, permissive parenting, psychological distress

Introduction

Entrance into college involves a period of adjustment that can last from a few months to a few years. During this period of transition, college students are typically required to take on more personal responsibility. Studies showed that a growing subset of students is encountering psychological difficulties, such as depression, anxiety and stress within university setting (Mboya et al., 2020). Research supports the assertion that parenting behaviors are associated with outcomes in the college setting. For example, students whose parents are caring, but not overprotective, experience less anxiety, depression and academic problems as they adjust to college, whereas permissive parenting behaviors are related to greater levels of student negative affect such as depression, anxiety and stress. (Mendez et al., 2020). Research based on family system theory suggests that permissive parenting leads children to become selfish, demanding, and inconsiderate, and research indicates that permissive parenting predicts children's entitlement (Sahithy et al., 2019). Entitlement, particularly that which is evidenced in the academic setting (academic entitlement), may create dissonance for students who are negotiating the university setting. Research confirms that academic entitlement shares negative associations with student mental health, behaviors, and attitudes in the college setting (Retsen et al., 2020). In general, studies suggest that academic entitlement would mediate the positive relationship between permissive parenting and psychological distress, such that greater entitlement would strengthen the deleterious relationship between permissive parenting and psychological difficulties, such as depression, anxiety and stress (Howard et al., 2017). Above all, the current study aimed to investigate the mediating role of academic entitlement in the relationship between permissive parenting

and psychological distress among university students. Based on the above literature discussion, we proposed the following Hypothesis: Academic entitlement should mediate the positive relationship between permissive parenting and psychological distress.

Method

The present study was a descriptive-correlational study that was conducted in 2020. Statistical population was B.A. male students at the Lorestan University, Khorramabad, Iran. A total of 282 students were selected using voluntary response sample method. The following instruments were administered.

Academic Entitlement Scale (AES): The AES (Chowning & Campbell, 2009) is a 15-question instrument, measuring two domains including externalized responsibility and entitled expectation. A value of 1 to 5 is assigned for each answer. In the present study, the AES has demonstrated good internal consistency with Cronbach’s α 0.83.

Parenting Authority Questionnaire (PAQ): The PAQ (Buri, 1991) is a 30-item instrument consisted of three 10-item scales representing authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting style. In the present study, according to the purpose of the study, the permissive parenting subscale was used. In the present study, the PAQ has demonstrated good internal consistency with Cronbach’s α 0.87.

Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21): The DASS-21 (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) is a set of three self-report scales designed to measure the emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. Each of the three DASS-21 scales contains 7 items. In the present study, the DASS-21 has demonstrated good internal consistency with Cronbach’s α for depression, anxiety and stress equal to 0.87, 0.81 and 0.84, respectively.

Means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations for the levels of academic entitlement, permissive parenting and psychological distress, together were conducted using SPSS 23.0. Structural equation modeling was conducted to examine the mediating role of academic entitlement using AMOS 21.0.

Results

Mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficients are presented in Table 1. The results showed that all relationships were significantly positive at $P < 0.01$. Therefore, based on the significance relationship between the variables, the necessary condition for investigating the mediating role of academic entitlement is fulfilled.

Table1. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1) Permissive Parenting	28.63	10.59	1				
2) Academic Entitlement	34.51	11.56	0.42**	1			
3) Depression	10.39	6.55	0.32**	0.27**	1		
4) Anxiety	12.03	7.38	0.36**	0.41**	0.55**	1	

5) Stress	15.67	8.26	0.29**	0.31**	0.51**	0.62**	1
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P < 0.01**

Prior to conducting structural equation modeling, it was ensured that its basic assumptions, such as data distribution normality, and multi-collinearity, were established. The research model of the relationship between permissive parenting and psychological distress mediated via academic entitlement is shown in Figure 1 based on standardized coefficients (β). As shown in Table 2, the proposed model had a good fit based on fitness indices.

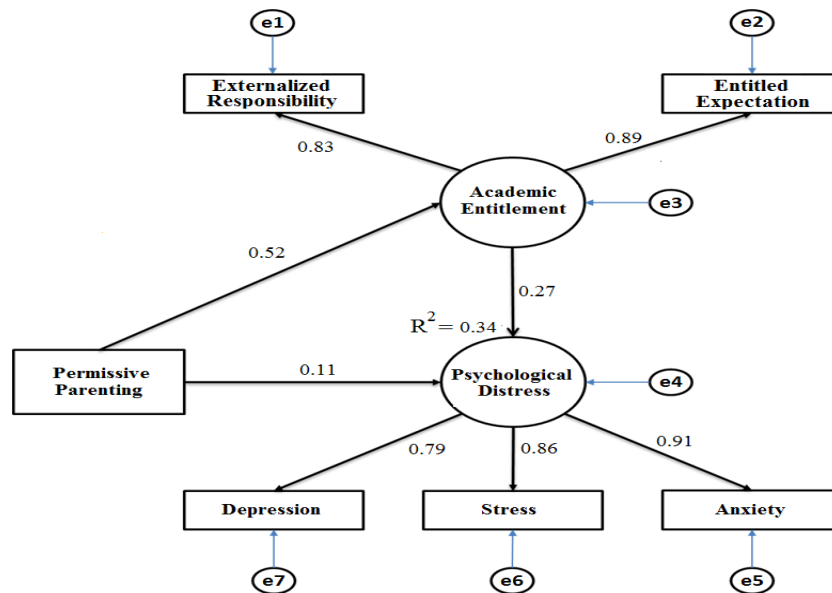


Figure1. Model of the mediating role of academic entitlement

Table2. General fit assessment indices of Model

Indices	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	CMIN/DF	RMSEA
Model values	0.96	0.92	0.98	0.91	2.69	0.04

Discussion

The results showed that academic entitlement has a mediating role in the relationship between permissive parenting and psychological distress. A possible explanation is that permissive parenting, wherein parents anticipate and avert obstacles or problems for their children, inflates children’s self-worth to artificial levels. Children, thus, develop with the anticipation that everyone should likewise remove obstacles from their paths, rather than challenging them to overcome obstacles on their own. It is possible that students who feel academically entitled approach college with unrealistic expectations about a smoother path, perhaps modeled by their permissive parents, or the lack of a need to conform to the standards of others and, thus, experience psychological distress when challenged with an academic setting. The cross-sectional design, which is not the best way to evaluate causal relations, limits the results. Limitation aside, the findings could help to guide targeted preventions and interventions for psychological distress in students.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.



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