

# Relationship between Original Family Parenting Style and Students' Mental Illness

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## Abstract:

Family of origin is one of the critical factors affecting a person's mental health. In the context of China's examination-oriented education, the parenting style of the original family has a more significant impact on students before graduating from undergraduate. This study aims to analyze the association between the parenting style of the original family and mental health problems. The samples are analyzed through parts of the EMBU (egma minnen av bardndosnauppforstran) scale, PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire-9) scale, and SAS (Self-Rating Anxiety) scale, and the mental illness will mainly refer to). Major depressive disorder (MDD), major anxiety disorder (MAD), and bipolar disorder (BD After a series of analyses, it has been found that the Chinese style of parenting is positively correlated with depression, anxiety, and mental illness. The results of the study are consistent with previous studies. This study focuses on the impact of negative parenting styles on students' mental health and emphasizes the importance of the influence of parenting styles in families of origin.

**Keywords:** Family of origin; parenting style; student's mental health; MDD; MAD; BD.

## 1. Introduction

Parenting style refers to a set of attitudes a parent holds toward their children, and it is classified into authoritarian, authoritative, and indulgent parenting [1]. Parenting style in the family of origin has always been one of the main factors that affect individuals' mental health. Improper parenting style may cause major depressive disorder (MDD), major anxiety disorder (MAD), bipolar disorder (BD), and some other mental illnesses in an individual [2]. What is more, in the context of China's examination-oriented education and some traditional thoughts in China, the long-term impact of parenting style in the original family on students may matter much more than it seems. Depression and anxiety problems are the most severe problems globally nowadays, as well as in China [3].

Within all these situations, this paper will analyze the relationship between original family parenting style and students' mental illness in Chinese families through some literature review. Moreover, through a survey that consists of parts of the EMBU scale, PHQ-9 scale, and SAS scale.

## 2. Literature Review

There are many clues that individual behaviors and thoughts are influenced by factors from the family of origin, which will influence their mental well-being in a further way. Different parenting styles will have different

effects, but some patterns exist [4]. If children live in a harmonious, joyful, tense, and orderly family, they gain a sense of security from their family. In that case, they will be able to smoothly adapt to the demands of life and solve the problems they encounter. Suppose the family is characterized by punishment, chaos, and excessive severity and has a negative color. In that case, the possibility of problems for children is relatively extraordinary, and this depends on the parents' feelings, ideological and cultural accomplishments, and scientific and educational concepts and attitudes [5]. A child's early social skills are primarily dependent on the parenting style of the family of origin. Negative parenting styles are positively correlated with behavioral problems and mental illness [6].

As mentioned, the theory used categorization, the authoritative, authoritarian, and indulgent parenting style that Baumrind had raised. Later, according to the proposed two dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness, a fourth neglectful style is raised [7]. The authoritative stands for high demandingness and high responsiveness, the authoritarian style has high demandingness and low responsiveness, and the indulgent tends to have low demandingness and high responsiveness [8]. The individuals who grow up in an authoritative family tend to be the most excellent at forming and developing independent and purposeful behavior. Also, they have a better attitude towards their peers and society. This is mainly because

the authority of parents is reflected in establishing a strict code of conduct for children and a clear explanation of the reasons for the restrictions imposed on them, as well as in giving enough respect to their children. As for the other three styles, insufficient or excessive behavioral control has been proven to have a greater connection with adverse outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and related behaviors like antisocial behavior and difficulty integrating into society [7]. Later, in China, mothers' parenting style is divided into five types: extreme, severe, doting, achievement-stressed, and positive. It is shown that positive education and parenting style have the most positive influence on children. Those individuals who grow up in this kind of family tend to have the healthiest mindset, the most appropriate interpersonal style, and the lowest level of anxiety [5].

In today's China, under the influence of the structure and philosophy of the family in traditional Chinese culture, Chinese parenting styles are often described as restrictive, controlling, and less warm or reactive, all of which are typical qualities associated with authoritarian parenting styles. One of the explanations is that Chinese parents believe that they can take part in their children's lives and show care through restrictive and controlling methods [6]. Usually, low levels of parental involvement and low levels of parental warmth are significant causes of disruptive behavior problems in children, such as aggression and opposition. A low level of parental praise and encouragement will lead to children's internalizing behaviors like depression, anxiety, and so on. Chinese parents usually have a very high level of restriction and control and hard-

ly praise or encourage their children, so the origin family negatively impacts individuals' internalizing behaviors in China [6].

### 3. Methodology

The paper's methodology is a review of pertinent literature and an analysis of a small-scale survey.

#### 3.1 Sample

The questionnaire is in the form of an online questionnaire and is filled in voluntarily and free of charge. The 151 sample was mainly from the author's social circles and some of China's key universities.

#### 3.2 Measurement

The author did a small-scale survey using part of the EMBU scale, PHQ-9 scale, and SAS scale. Despite questions 1 to 3 being for primary personal data, questions 4 to 12 are selected from the EMBU scale, which can be used to measure the parenting style. Questions 13 to 21 are from the PHQ-9 for measuring the degree of depression. Questions 22 to 28 are selected from the SAS scale, measuring the degree of anxiety. Questions 29 and 30 ask about the mental illness of the sample. In questions 4 to 28, every subject is asked to score from one to four; one point stands for "very not agree," and point four stands for "very agree." The higher the score, the stronger the negative symptoms. There are no questions that need to be scored backward.

### 4. Results

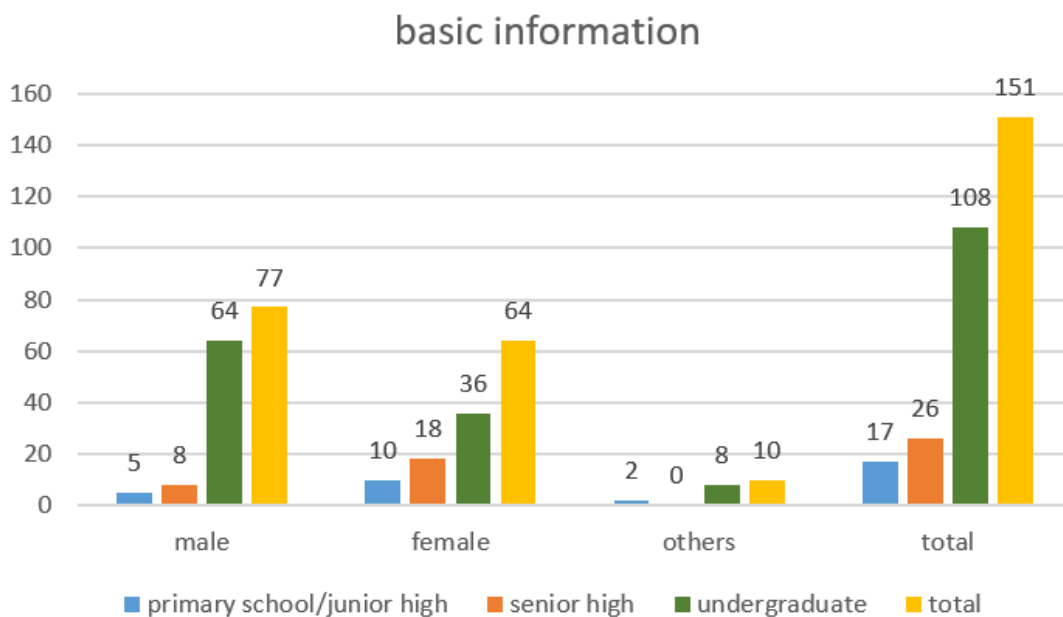
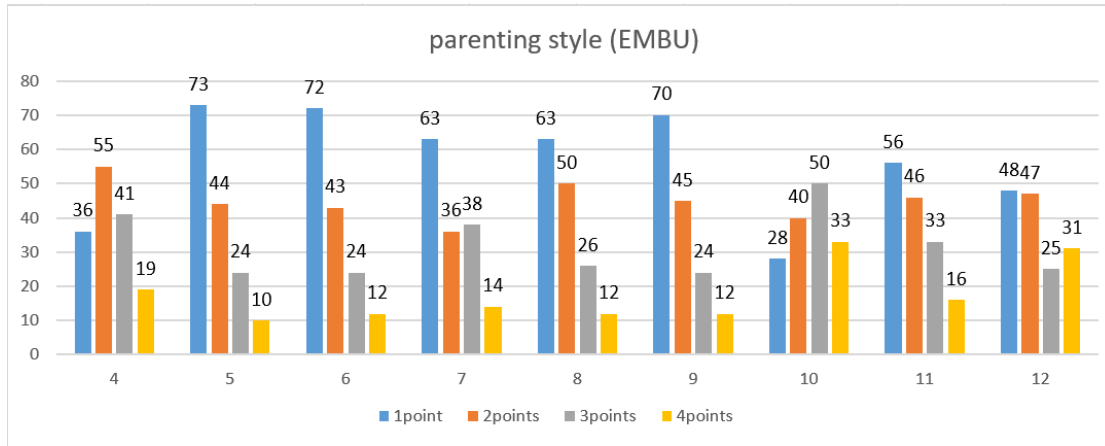


Figure 1. Basic information of valid samples

Of the 187 questionnaires collected, 151 were valid. Of these, 77 were men, 64 were women, and ten were of other genders or did not want to be disclosed. At the current

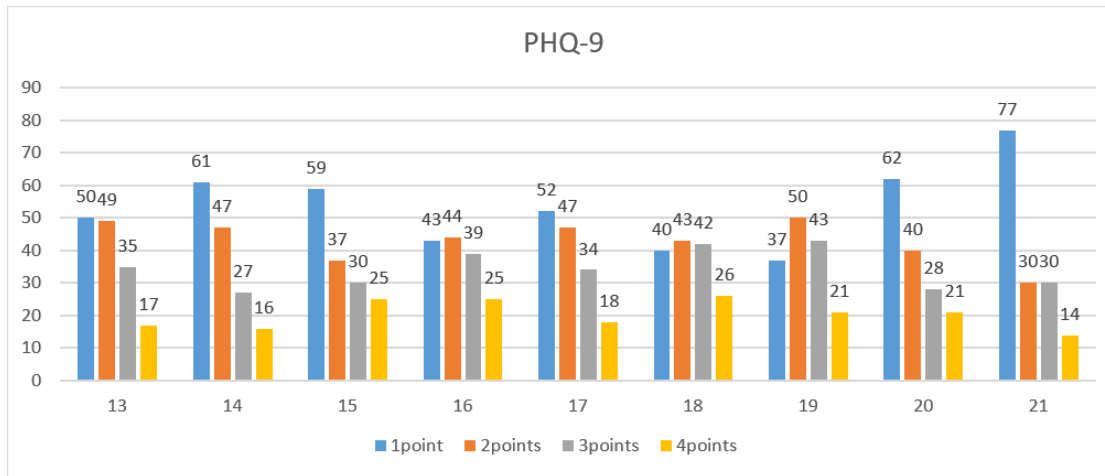
academic level, there are 17 junior high school students, 26 high school students, and 108 undergraduate students (see Figure 1).



**Figure 2. EMBU score distribution**

Above is the bar chart of questions 4 to 12, the categorization of questions, and descending average scores. The higher the score, the more negative the parenting style is. According to Yangzong’s team, when comparing the two questionnaires one by one, questions 4, 7, 10, and 11 are for over-interference and over-protection [9]. Questions 5 and 12 are for emotional warmth and understanding. Questions 6, 8, and 9 are for punishment and harshness. Questions 10, 4, and 12 have the three highest average

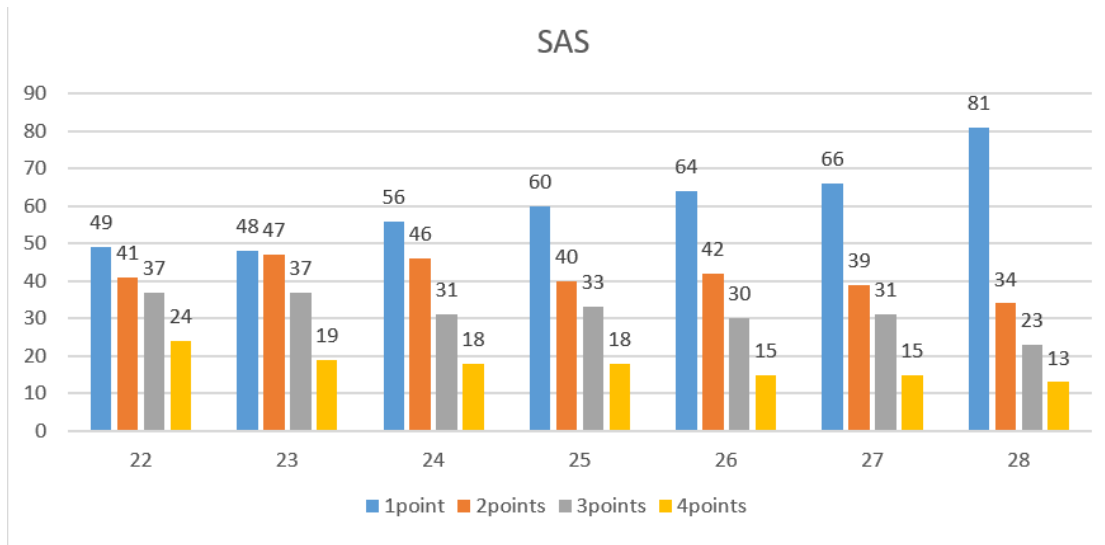
scores (see Figure 2). Interestingly, the samples had significantly different mean scores on the two questions in the emotional warmth and understanding piece. Question 12 is that “my parents hugged me a lot,” which strongly disagreed with most subjects, while Question 5 is that “I can tell by the way my parents express themselves that they love me,” which is the option most agreed upon by the sample.



**Figure 3. PHQ-9 score distribution**

Regarding the degree of depression, the questionnaire used the PHQ-9 scale, and the distribution of the scores for each question was plotted (see Figure 3). The average score is 19.28, which is nine according to the grading

criteria of PHQ-9 (sum of the means-9, then round to the nearest integer). This result means that the average may have mild to moderate depression [10].

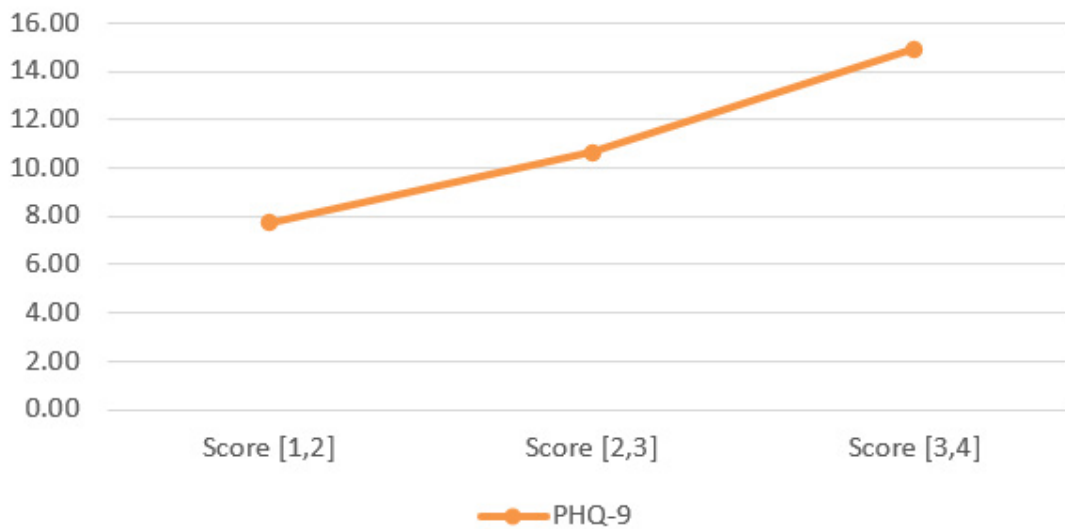


**Figure 4. SAS score distribution**

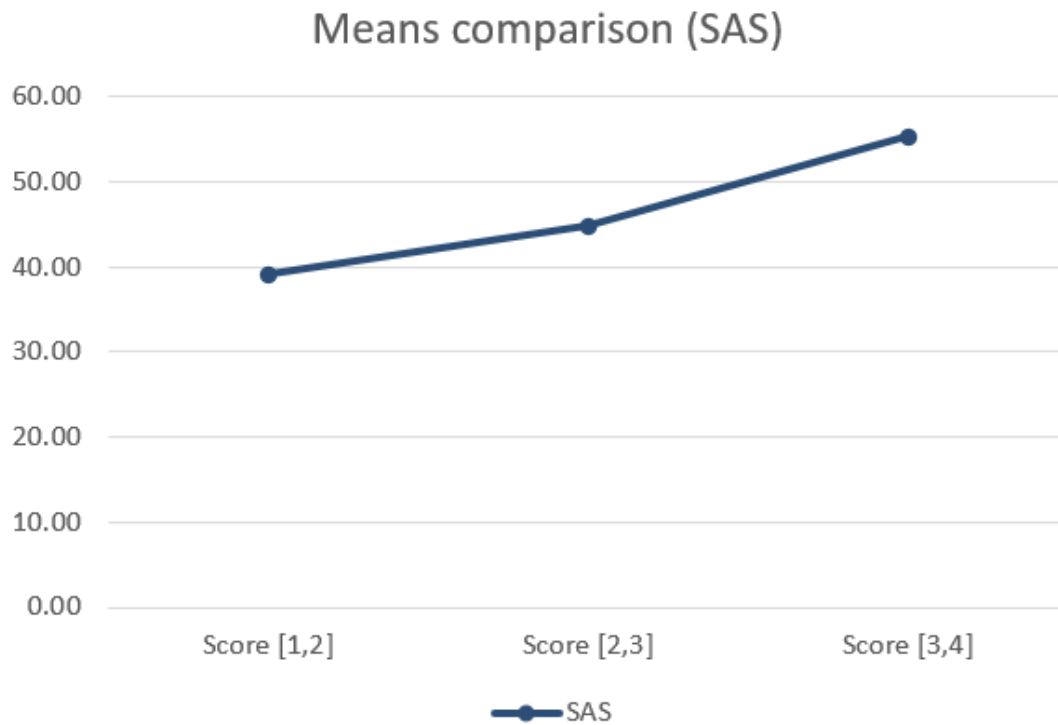
As for the anxiety level, according to the given formula, the average score is 45 (see Figure 4; the number 45 results from rounding). That is close to mild anxiety [11]. What is more, there are 38 samples over the 151 samples

that have been diagnosed with mental illnesses, including 32 MDDs, 24 MADs, 19 BDs, and three diagnosed with other mental illnesses.

**Means comparison (PHQ-9)**



**Figure 5. Line chart of PHQ-9 with the EMBU score division**



**Figure 6. Line chart of SAS with the EMBU score division**

The author divided the sample into three groups based on the average score per question based on the parenting style of the family of origin. Low segments: 1 to 2 points, middle segments: 2 to 3 points, high segments: 3 to 4 points. After grouping, three mean values were found for the scores of the PHQ-9 and the part of the SAS scale in each group (see Figure 5 and Figure 6). Based on the results of the data, it can be discovered that individuals with unhappy parenting styles in their original families have higher levels of depression and anxiety. It is also worth noting that the mean difference between the middle and high segments is more significant than between the low and middle segments in the PHQ-9 and the SAS scale results. This indicates that the happiness of the parenting style of the original family dramatically affects the depression and anxiety levels of the students. When the parenting style is inappropriate to a certain extent, the mental health of the students will be more seriously affected.

After analyzing the data, it is clear that the Chinese parenting styles in the family of origin are strict, controlling, and nearly without encouragement or understanding. That may lead to many internalizing behaviors and mental problems such as MDD, MAD, and BD.

## 5. Discussion

The findings are consistent with previous studies on sim-

ilar topics, as Xu's team's study in 2008 analyzed that over-interference and less warm methods of parenting may lead to students' severe mental health problems [5]. The results of this study intuitively reflect the impact of the original family's parenting style on individuals' mental health. There is a need for parents and children in China to rethink the way they get along with each other in their families of origin and the long-term impact of their families on individuals. Many parents are greatly influenced by their childhood parenting style, and what they know about parenting style is how they were treated as children. Therefore, it is necessary to promote the importance of the parenting style of the family of origin. At the same time, it is possible to provide educational courses such as child-rearing classes.

The size of this study was too small, the sample group was relatively simple, and most of the participants were students from major universities. From the perspective of questionnaire design, the questionnaire questions in this study are too few to reflect the problems entirely.

Future research can be a more comprehensive and in-depth study of the impact of Chinese-style native family education on students, and can also study and investigate some specific student groups, such as college students or students from vital high schools, to make the results more targeted.

## 6. Conclusion

Due to the traditional restrained expression of the Chinese, the strict family structure, and the unique concept of parenting, parents in China have changed the way of expressing love from a warm and positive way to a strictly restrained one. Children are profoundly influenced by the parenting style of their families of origin. Even if they can understand their parents' way and say that their parents' punishment and restriction of them is not very unreasonable, they still have a very high number of negative emotions. There are some disadvantages of the survey. Firstly, the scale needs to be bigger, which may cause high variability and low generalization ability. Secondly, most of the samples are undergraduate students in college, which is not universal. Thirdly, because of convenience, the questionnaire only included some of the questions from the first and last scales, which must be completed. However, by combining the literature review and the results of the survey, it is easy to find that the mental illness of Chinese students caused by the parenting style of their families is quite worrying, and further research can be held based on the perspective of parents.

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