

The Relationship Between Parenting Style and College Students' Love Attitude: The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of PS on children's love attitude from SE by questionnaire investigation approach. Using Convenient sampling method to have 101 data in a technician college in Guangxi, China. The results showed as follows: 1. Parents' emotional warmth of college students' SE has a significant positive prediction function. 2. The college students' SE of companionate love attitude has a significant positive prediction function. 3. There is a significant correlation between friendship love attitude, passionate love attitude, practical love attitude and parents' emotional warmth. 4. The correlation between game-playing love attitude and parents' emotional warmth, mother's over protection is significant. 5. Possessive love attitude is found to correlate with parents' rejection, parents' over protection and mother's emotional warmth. 6. Altruistic love attitude correlates significantly with mother's rejection, parents' over protection and parental emotional warmth. 7. Parents' emotional warmth of companionate love attitude has a significant positive prediction function. 8. The mediating role of SE is not significant. This article offers empirical evidence to illustrate how family education shapes young people's love attitude.

1 INTRODUCTION

John Broadus Watson said: giving him several babies and matched environment, he could make them to be anyone (Watson, 1930). Although the environmental determinism is too extreme, it emphasizes that the environment shapes the child in a large part. According to Watson's S-R theory, the family's educational environment is a stimulus that must be present during a child's development, and the child's personality is shaped as a result of the child's response to that stimulus. The stimulus of good family education is necessary for children to have good behavioural patterns and vice versa. In short, family education has a vital influence on the shaping of a child's behaviour and thoughts.

In the study of the self, self-esteem (SE) is an important variable, and its development is directly related to the mental health of individuals. SE, as an important factor affecting individuals, has a vital impact on the cognition and emotion of college students.

College students entering college life are immature in their psychological sex although their physical sex has matured. The relaxed university environment provides ample space and time for

young men and women to interact (Yang et al., 2020). However, unhealthy romantic relationships and psychological issues can lead to the exacerbation of conflicts in relationships. Therefore, understanding college students' romantic issues and exploring the formation of their love attitudes are crucial topics that universities must address to help students establish correct love attitudes.

Therefore, this study aims to explore, from a psychological perspective, how parenting styles (PS) influences university students' love attitudes through empirical research. Based on verifying existing theories, it helps university students better understand the deeper reasons for the formation of love attitudes and raises awareness of the significance of PS and SE.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

PS refers to the attitudes and emotional atmosphere expressed by parents in their daily behaviors, as well as the combination of their conscious, intentional behaviors and their unintentional, unconscious behaviors, such as changes in tone or emotional expressions (Ancy & Laurence, 1993). It is generally

believed that once formed, the family's PS is relatively stable over a certain period.

Different parents and different PS influence the formation of children's values (Li, 2018). As the child's first caregivers, parents' PS plays an indelible role in shaping their children's personality, thoughts, love attitudes, and criteria for choosing a partner. Love attitudes are one of the values formed under the influence of PS (Yang & Chen, 2016). Research has shown that different PS have a significant impact on university students' love attitudes and play a significant predictive role. For example, university students' practical and friendship love attitudes are significantly correlated with parental emotional warmth, and maternal emotional warmth can significantly predict students' practical and friendship love attitudes. Parental rejection has a significant predictive effect on the game-playing, practical, and friendship love attitudes (Yang & Chen, 2016); university students' passionate love attitudes are positively correlated with parental emotional warmth, game-playing love attitudes are negatively correlated with maternal emotional warmth, friendship love attitudes are negatively correlated with maternal rejection, and university students' practical love attitudes are positively correlated with parental emotional warmth but negatively correlated with parental rejection. Possessive love attitudes are positively correlated with paternal over protection (Luo & Peng, 2012).

From the above, it can be seen that PS has a significant impact on children's views about relationships, making it a meaningful area of study.

SE is an individual's positive emotional experience of themselves in social practice (Zhang, 2002). Cooley's mirror-self-theory suggests that self-evaluation is influenced by others' attitudes. Since parents are very important figures in a child's life, their attitudes toward their children significantly affect their self-awareness. In other words, PS can affect the SE level of children (Liu et al., 2024). It is generally believed that positive parenting can positively predict higher SE, while negative parenting has the opposite effect.

Love attitude, also known as love philosophy, is a multifaceted attitude toward romantic relationships, and it directly influences the establishment and development of romantic relationships (Rubin, 1970). Love attitude is an important component of life philosophy and reflects a person's basic views and attitudes toward love (Li, 2013). Since Hendrick's love attitude scale was introduced, many scholars have used it to measure love attitudes, with some studies involving SE. As a mediating personality

variable, SE plays an important role in emotional, motivational, and cognitive processes. Many researchers have also found that SE is related to love attitudes, but the conclusions are inconsistent. For instance, university students' SE levels have a certain degree of influence on their friendship love, possessive love, and self-sacrificing love attitudes (Yu, 2018). The higher the SE, the more likely students are to adopt a possessive love attitude, while lower SE tends to lead to a friendship or practical love attitude (Zhao et al., 2016). SE shows a significant positive correlation with all six dimensions of love attitude (Cao, 2011).

Existing research indicates that PS, SE, and love attitude formation are related. PS influences the formation of love attitudes and plays a significant role in predicting certain types of love attitudes. PS also affects SE levels, with different PS impacting university students' SE. SE significantly predicts certain love attitudes, so SE is a suitable mediating variable.

However, the majority of studies focus on students in undergraduate universities, and research on vocational college students is lacking. Furthermore, few studies have examined the relationship among PS, SE, and love attitudes. This study hopes to clarify the relationship among these three factors by focusing on vocational college students.

3 METHOD

3.1 Research Hypothesis

This study mainly includes four research hypotheses:

- (1) PS is related to the formation of university students' love attitudes.
- (2) PS is related to university students' SE levels.
- (3) SE levels are related to the formation of university students' love attitudes.
- (4) SE levels mediate the relationship between PS and love attitudes.

3.2 Participants

Convenience sampling was used, and 160 questionnaires were distributed to students at a vocational school in Guangxi through SoJump APP. After eliminating invalid questionnaires using standard answer-trap questions, 101 valid responses were obtained, with an effective response rate of 63.1%.

3.3 Measures

3.3.1 Demographic Profile

Researcher designed a short scale to statistics participants' sex, age, degree course, the type of origin, whether or not are an only child, parental education level, household financial situation.

3.3.2 Short-Egna Minnen av Barndoms Uppfostran-Chinese

This study used the Chinese version of the "Simplified PS Questionnaire" revised by Jiang in 2010. It includes two versions: one for fathers and one for mothers. Each version consists of 21 items across three core dimensions: rejection, emotional warmth, and over protection. The Cronbach's α coefficient for the three dimensions of PS is between 0.74 and 0.84, demonstrating good reliability.

3.3.3 Love Attitude Scale

The study used the Love Attitude Scale, revised by Cao based on Hendrick's original scale in 2007. The scale consists of 42 items and includes six dimensions: passionate, game-playing, friendship, practical, possessive, and altruistic love attitudes. Each dimension includes 7 items. The participants were asked to rate their agreement with each statement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Research has shown that this scale has good reliability and validity and is suitable for measuring the love attitudes of Chinese students.

3.3.4 SE Scale

The Rosenberg SE Scale, developed in 1965 and translated into Chinese by Wang in 1999, was used. The scale uses a four-point scoring method, where 1 indicates "very true," and 4 indicates "very untrue," with a total of 10 items. Higher scores indicate higher SE. The theoretical cut-off score for SE levels is 25. The internal consistency α coefficient is 0.804, and the scale has good reliability.

3.4 Statistical Method

After collecting the questionnaires, invalid ones were eliminated, and the data were analysed using SPSS 23.0. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were performed on the PS and love attitude variables. The predictive effect of PS and SE on love attitudes, as well as the mediating effect of SE, were tested

using multiple linear regression and mediation effect analysis.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Relationship Between PS and SE

Table 1. Correlation Between Father's Emotional Warmth and SE.

		SE	father's emotional warmth
SE	Correlation Coefficient	1	.442
	Sig.		.000

As shown in Table 1, the Spearman correlation coefficient between father's emotional warmth and SE is 0.442, with significance less than 0.05, indicating a significant positive correlation between father's emotional warmth and SE.

Table 2. Regression Coefficients in the Model.

	unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficient		
Model	B	standard error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	18.699	1.508		12.399	.000
father's emotional warmth	.539	.098	.498	5.498	.000

As shown in Tables 2, higher father's emotional warmth is positively associated with higher SE in university students.

Table 3. Correlation Between Mother's Emotional Warmth and SE.

		SE	mother's emotional warmth
SE	Correlation Coefficient	1	.463
	Sig.		.000

As shown in Table 3, the Spearman correlation coefficient between mother's emotional warmth and SE is 0.463, indicating a significant positive correlation.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Between Mother's Emotional Warmth and SE.

Model	unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	19.425	1.461		13.297	.000
mother's emotional warmth	.406	.078	.462	5.179	.000

As shown in Tables 4, higher mother's emotional warmth is positively associated with higher SE in university students.

4.2 Relationship Between PS and SE

Table 5. Correlation Between SE and Friendship Love Attitude.

		SE	Friendship Love Attitude
SE	Correlation Coefficient	1	.202
	Sig.		.042

As shown in Table 5, the Spearman correlation coefficient between SE and friendship love attitude is 0.202, with a significance of 0.042, which is less than 0.05. This indicates a significant positive correlation between SE and friendship love attitude.

Table 6. Regression Analysis Between SE and Friendship Love Attitude.

Model	unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	11.885	3.363		3.534	.001
SE	.273	.124	.216	2.198	.030

As shown in Tables 6, higher SE is positively associated with higher friendship love attitude in university students.

4.3 Relationship Between PS and Love Attitude

Table 7. Correlation Between PS and Love Attitudes.

		passionate	game-playing	friendship	practical	possessive	altruistic
father's rejection	Correlation Coefficient					.213	
	Sig.					.032	
father's emotional warmth	Correlation Coefficient	.318	.206	.387	.334		.263
	Sig.	.001	.039	.000	.001		.008
father's over protection	Correlation Coefficient					.219	.197
	Sig.					.028	.048
mother's rejection	Correlation Coefficient					.288	.208
	Sig.					.003	.037
mother's emotional warmth	Correlation Coefficient	.335	.240	.444	.443	.223	.279
	Sig.	.001	.016	.000	.000	.025	.005
mother's over protection	Correlation Coefficient		.201			.363	.233
	Sig.s		.044			.000	.019

As shown in Table 7, parental emotional warmth, rejection, and over protection are significantly correlated with various types of love attitudes. Specifically, romantic, playful, friendship, and possessive love attitudes are positively correlated with parental emotional warmth.

Table 8. Regression Analysis Between Father's Emotional Warmth and Friendship Love Attitude.

Model	unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	11.159	2.006		5.563	.000
father's emotional warmth	.547	.130	.389	4.199	.000

As shown in Tables 8, higher father's emotional warmth is positively associated with higher friendship love attitude in university students.

Table 9. Regression Analysis Between Mother's Emotional Warmth and Friendship.

Model	unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	10.803	1.882		5.742	.000
mother's emotional warmth	.474	.101	.427	4.703	.000

As shown in Tables 9, higher mother's emotional warmth is positively associated with higher friendship love attitude in university students.

4.4 Mediating Effect of SE

Table 10. Mediating Effect of SE in the Relationship Between Father's Emotional Warmth and Friendship Love Attitude.

Model	unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	11.159	2.2006	.398	5.563	.000
father's emotional warmth	.547	.130		.419	.000
(Constant)	10.305	3.220		3.201	.002
father's emotional warmth	.523	.150	.371	3.494	.001
SE	.046	.134	.036	.340	.734

Table 11. Mediating Effect of SE in the Relationship Between Mother's Emotional Warmth and Friendship Love Attitude.

Model	unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	14.011	1.341	.342	10.445	.000
mother's emotional warmth	.336	.073		4.574	.000
(Constant)	12.419	2.522		4.924	.000
mother's emotional warmth	.310	.081	.316	3.814	.000
SE	.077	.104	.062	.746	.457

As shown in Tables 10 and 11, the mediation effect of SE between parental emotional warmth and love attitude is not significant.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Analysis of the Relationship Between PS, SE, and Love Attitudes

The results show that parental emotional warmth is significantly positively correlated with university students' SE and can positively predict their SE levels. This may be because parental emotional warmth provides more care and guidance to university students, and a good parent-child relationship is an important condition for children to develop high SE. Therefore, university students raised with emotionally warm PS are more likely to have higher SE than others. Liu's research, based on university student samples, also found a similar relationship between PS and SE, which aligns with the results. Hence, the relationship between PS and SE should be given attention in society, and the significance of PS and SE should be recognized.

The results also show that SE is positively correlated with friendship love attitudes, and higher SE can positively predict university students'

friendship love attitudes. The main feature of friendship love attitudes is a gradual and peaceful emotional development. Typically, the relationship starts as a friendship and slowly evolves into love. This may be because individuals with higher SE have a stronger sense of self-efficacy, and when choosing a partner, they prefer to interact with someone who is more capable or attractive. Before a romantic relationship develops, observing and interacting as friends provides a necessary foundation. Researches by Cao and Yu both showed that SE positively had predicted friendship love attitudes, which is consistent with the findings of this study.

The results also show that parental emotional warmth positively predicts university students' friendship love attitudes. This suggests that students raised by emotionally warm parents are more likely to adopt friendship attitudes toward love and relationships. The findings are in line with Yang's research. The attitudes of university students toward family, friendship, and love are interconnected and influence each other. PS is one of the key factors in the formation of early interpersonal relationships, and it has a great influence on students' values regarding friendship. Thus, their attitudes toward love are influenced by their thoughts on friendship and the emotional expressions shown by their parents while raising them. Therefore, university students raised in emotionally warm families are more likely to view both friendship and love similarly, both emphasizing mutual understanding and warmth. These students are more likely to develop romantic relationships with their close friends.

6 CONCLUSION

The results indicate that positive and proactive PS contributes to higher SE and moderate love attitudes in university students. Specifically, father's emotional warmth has a significant positive predictive effect on university students' SE levels, meaning that higher father's emotional warmth tends to lead to higher SE. Similarly, maternal emotional warmth has a significant positive predictive effect on university students' SE levels, indicating that higher maternal emotional warmth tends to lead to higher SE. Moreover, university students' high SE significantly positively predicts their friendship love attitudes, meaning that higher SE leads to a higher tendency toward friendship love attitudes. Additionally, both father's and mother's emotional warmth significantly positively predict university students' friendship love

attitudes. Finally, the mediating effect of SE is not significant.

Due to the fact that this study's sample was concentrated in a vocational school, the level of seriousness in completing the surveys was lower compared to undergraduate university students, leading to a relatively low valid response rate. Future research can consider using more trap questions in questionnaires and trying to use concise and fewer titles to improve response rates.

Research on the relationship between PS and love attitudes is abundant, but the conclusions are not uniform, and no authoritative study has conclusively defined the relationship. Future research could explore additional factors, such as parental marriage quality, subjective well-being, anxiety, and depression, to provide authoritative conclusions regarding the relationship between PS and love attitudes.

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