CASE STUDY INQUIRY ON PSYCHOSOCIAL OUTCOMES OF UNINVOLVED PARENTING IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

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The present study is a single subject exploratory case study designed to explore the role of uninvolved parenting in shaping adolescent personality, behavior as well as physical and emotional wellbeing in the Indian culture. It attempts to understand the nuances of how the individual perceives themselves and makes sense of the world around them. Most studies have focused on the social aspect of a child's development and not the holistic psychological impact uninvolved parenting has on an individual. Thus, to bridge the cultural and methodological gap within the parenting research, the present study was designed to tap the eastern collectivistic cultural perspectives on parenting. A semi-structured interview was utilized to assess the various psychological, social, family, familial, and academic domains of the participant's life. The data were analyzed using the qualitative method of thematic analysis. Themes that emerged from the analysis included the quality of family relationships, social avoidance and fear of loneliness, distorted self-concept, issues with authority figures, hostility towards romantic relationships, and need for belongingness and affection.

Introduction

Parenting refers to the intricate activities that comprise specific behaviors that work independently as well as collaboratively to influence the growth and developmental outcomes of the child (Darling, 1999). Parenting has been of interest to various scientific disciplines for a long time (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018). It is an intricate combination of selflessness, responsibility, prosocial behaviors, beliefs, and values (Bornstein, 2016). Often, giving birth to a child (child-bearing) and taking care of an existing child (child-caring) are used interchangeably (Rosemond, 2019) while evolutionary researchers differentiate between both these concepts by comparing humans with species on the lower phylogenetic hierarchy who are primarily child-bearers (Bjorklund & Ellis, 2014).

Humans are devoted to their offspring's present, past, and future growth

and development. Since newborns are totally dependent on their parents, their survival, nurturance, socialization, and education become the parent's responsibility (Bornstein, 2016). Parenting differs across cultures in terms of developmental expectations, academic performance, social life, and other caregiving related affairs (Bornstein, 2013). Parents are in charge of supporting their children emotionally, financially, physically as well as socially while preparing them to thrive independently as fully-functioning humans (Bornstein, 1991, 2012). Research suggests that child-rearing enhances the meaning of life for parents and increases their level of happiness and positive emotions (Nelson et. al., 2013).

Parenting is the single largest variable that is responsible for causing as well as preventing childhood physical abuse as well as emotional maladjustment, substance use, child abuse, delinquency, and antisocial behaviors (Virasiri et. al., 2011; Hamner & Turner, 2012). Thus making it all the more important to increase our understanding and knowledge about different parenting strategies. This paper will talk about existing parenting styles and the impact of each parenting style on children, followed by focusing on parenting in the Indian context. Limitations of the existing parenting research will then be addressed. The aim of this study is to understand the impact of uninvolved parenting styles on an individual's behavioral and physical wellbeing in the context of collectivistic cultures like India.

Parenting styles

Parenting styles and parenting behaviors (also referred to as parenting practices) are two different concepts that are closely related to each other (Darling & Steinberg 1993). Parenting behaviors refer to the practices utilized by parents or caregivers to socialize with their children which determines the course of a child's development (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Parenting styles can be defined as the attitudes towards the child which are conveyed to them. It also sets the emotional climate within which the parent's behavior is expressed (Rodrigo et al., 2014). Parenting styles also frame the dominions of the parents' social judgments (Smetana, 1995).

Initially, Baumrind's research on parenting took into account the dimension of parental demandingness (often referred to as parental control) which she used to denote three different forms of parenting styles namely, authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive (Baumrind, 1996). She defined parental demandingness as "the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family as a whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, and disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys"

(Baumrind, 1991, p. 62). High levels of demandingness are categorized by structure and control and include parenting behaviors like monitoring and parental discipline (Hoskins, 2014). Adding on to Baumrind's research, Maccoby and Martin defined parental responsiveness (also referred to as parental acceptance) as another dimension of parenting (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parental responsiveness includes parental behaviors like warmth, support, and involvement (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). They expanded Baumrind's typology of parenting styles by classifying the parents as high and low on each dimension and added a new category of parenting style: uninvolved parenting (Hoskins, 2014).

The attitude, actions, and the environment parents create for their child play a significant role in shaping the child's social, behavioral, academic as well as emotional development (Bornstein, 2015). The next section explains each parenting style as well as the short and long term consequences each has on the children's physical and mental health as well as their behaviors.

Authoritative Parenting Style

Authoritative parents are high on demandingness as well as responsiveness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). They are supportive instead of being harsh towards their children. While these parents create rules, they efficiently convey the rationale and the need behind the rules. Authoritative parents encourage communication, foster independence, and use reason when setting limits and expectations for their children (Hoskins, 2014). The authoritative parenting style is the most effective and favored by most families. It also fosters positive outcomes in adolescents and ensures their well-being, personal growth, and development (Gonzalez et. al., 2002; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Authoritative parenting is positively associated with self-control and self- esteem and negatively related to social withdrawal (Palmer, 2010).

Adolescents raised by authoritative parents are less likely to indulge in externalizing behaviors such as substance use when compared to adolescents raised by uninvolved parents (Gonzalez et. al., 2002; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Authoritative parenting styles are negatively related to adolescent's depression rates (Simons & Conger, 2007). Research suggests that children raised under authoritative parenting styles are self-reliant, independent, academically successful, and emotionally adjusted (Carlo et. al., 2017; Leung et. al., 2017; Li et. al, 2017).

In another study, where the adolescent was raised by at least one authoritative parent, they reported higher levels of life satisfaction and self-esteem than adolescents raised using any other parenting styles (Milevsky, et. al., 2008).

Authoritarian Parenting Style

Authoritarian parents are highly demanding but low on responsiveness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The Authoritarian parenting style consists of parents who focus on compliance and conformity. These parents are harsh towards their children and expect them to follow rules without addressing any questions asked (Baumrind et. al., 2010). Research indicates that these parents have low levels of trust in their children (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Engagement with children in terms of encouraging communication and reason is low for this parenting style (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritative parents are strict and controlling (Hoskins, 2014). Verbal antagonism, psychological domination, use of coercion, and power assertive behaviors are characteristic features of the authoritative parenting style (Baumrind et. al., 2010). Research indicates that children raised in authoritarian families manifest poor social skills, a high degree of depressive symptoms, and low levels of self-confidence as well as self-esteem (Milevsky et. al., 2007)

Adolescents, irrespective of their gender, when raised by authoritarian parents, are more likely to develop externalizing as well as internalizing behavior problems such as delinquency, substance use, hyperactivity, aggression as well as lower life satisfaction (Calzada et. al., 2017; Randall et. al., 2015; Wood & Kennison, 2017; Yaffe, 2017). Another research study indicates that children who are raised by parents high on perfectionism experience rigidity and negative criticism from their parents which is likely to increase anxiety (Randall et. al., 2015).

Permissive Parenting Style

Permissive parents are high on responsiveness and exhibit low levels of demandingness (Baumrind et. al., 2010). Permissive style parents approve of their child's impulses and behaviors while including them when making important family decisions (Baumrind et. al., 2010). These parents do not have impossible expectations from their children and do not regulate their behaviors by establishing rules (Baumrind et. al., 2010). Adolescents' outcomes from permissive parents, when compared with adolescent outcomes from authoritative or authoritarian families, indicate a higher likelihood of substance use, misconduct, and lower levels of academic success and school engagement (Querido et. al, 2002). Children raised by permissive parents exhibit low levels of self-esteem, external motivation, emotional regulation, and high levels of emotional problems (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Jabeen et. al., 2013). They are more likely to be impulsive, rebellious, overly controlling, and less persistent (Blumenfeld, 2002). The permissive parenting style is also negatively related to

personal growth, happiness, and self-reliance (Lavasani et. al., 2011). Children of permissive parents are likely to be aggressive, immature, egocentric, non-compliant, and less likely to take responsibility for their actions (Filey, 2001).

Uninvolved Parenting Style

Uninvolved parents are low on responsiveness as well as demandingness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). They do not monitor or oversee their child's behavior and fail to reinforce behaviors that would help their child to develop self- regulation (Baumrind, 2010). These parents disentangle themselves from child-caring responsibilities and are unresponsive to their child's needs (Baumrind, 2010). Uninvolved parents fulfill the basic needs of their children but are unable to meet their emotional and physical demands (Miller, 2010). Since uninvolved parents lack structure, control, and closeness with their children, negative adolescent outcomes are highest when compared to the other three parenting styles (Hoskins, 2014). Adolescents of uninvolved parents are more likely to engage in externalizing behaviors such as delinquency, theft, sexual assault, and vandalism (Hoeve et. al, 2009).

Adolescents of uninvolved families are likely to overuse substances like alcohol and cigarettes and are more likely to use drugs than adolescents from authoritative and authoritarian families (Adalbjarnardottir & Hafsteinsson, 2001). An uninvolved parenting style is associated with low levels of self-esteem and high levels of depressive symptoms and loneliness among adolescents (Simons et. al., 2004; Miller, 2010). Research suggests that individuals with uninvolved parents are more likely to develop emotional and behavioral problems (Simons & Conger, 2007). Children of uninvolved parents face difficulties at school, as the parents' decline academic support and attribute their child's problems to another child in the household or the school system itself (Miller, 2010). As these children lack social support from home, they try to fill the void through their friends and are more likely to become involved with gangs as it provides them with a sense of interconnectedness that they desire (Miller, 2010).

It can be beneficial for parents to understand their parenting styles and how they promote positive or negative academic, physical, and emotional outcomes for their children (U. Echedom et al., 2018). Parents do not indulge in a single parenting style i.e, a parent can be authoritarian in one situation and authoritative in the other (Dewar, 2018). By developing an understanding of all the parenting styles, parents and their children can determine which parenting style(s) can best facilitate positive outcomes for the child in a given specific situation (U. Echedom et al., 2018).

Parenting in India: cultural context

Parenting in the Indian context cannot be understood without understanding the collectivistic culture of India. Parents across different cultures have different developmental, academic, social, emotional expectations for their children (Sondhi, 2017). Cross-cultural research conducted in this field indicates that individualistic cultures expect children to be autonomous while in a collectivistic culture, interdependence, parental control, and familial commitments are given more importance (Albert et. al., 2007; Greenfield et.al., 2003). Parenting in India centers around fostering interdependence (Seymour & Seymour, 1999). A reason for this can be that western cultures usually have smaller families whereas, in India, the family sizes are relatively larger, and most often up to three generations live together (grandparents, parents, and the children). Smaller family units focus on developing independent beings as dependence in such families can be maladaptive (Zervides & Knowles, 2007).

Interconnectedness is a primal component of collectivistic cultures and importance is placed on family relationships, dynamics, and one's duty towards the family (Albert, et. al., 2007). Given the cultural background of extended families, respect and loyalty towards family and its values are respected deeply in India and unlike western cultures, practices such as "moving out" of parent's houses to seek independence are disapproved and looked down upon (Sondhi, 2017). In the Indian context, fathers are seen as strong patriarchal figures who are most often the sole breadwinners in the household (Ranganath & Ranganath, 1997). Research indicates that Asian parents often employ an authoritarian style of parenting (Pong et. al., 2005; Roopnarine et. al., 1992). It is tempting to assume that restrictive parenting in India is associated with low levels of parental warmth and high levels of parental rejection; however, this notion is not true (Deković et. al., 2006; Güngör & Bornstein, 2009). Indian parents usually expect a high level of obedience from their children and lay less importance on self-interest and self-reliance (Yamen et. al., 2007) As the values of collectivism are integrated into parenting practices, individual needs are often inhibited to respect and fulfill the needs of the others (Sondhi, 2017).

It is crucial to emphasize that not all Asian cultures are the same. South-Asian cultures and values differ drastically from East-Asian cultures and belief systems. (Tamis–LeMonda et. al., 2008). Within India, it would be common to observe families that do not place an emphasis on following the traditions, values, and beliefs that have existed for decades on their children (Lieber et. al, 2004). Thus, it becomes all the more important to study individual families and their cultural beliefs to understand the experiences and impact of

different parenting styles on the physical, behavioral, personality, and emotional adjustment of the adolescent.

Limitations of existing parenting research

The existing parenting research focuses mostly on mothers while ignoring the role of fathers as caregivers (Lamb, 2000). Extending to this issue there exists a dearth of literature understanding the roles and experiences of same-sex parents. Another area where the current parenting research is lacking is in diversity and cultural integration. Most of the existing research is focused on the Western perspective, which differs greatly from South-Asian therefore, it is not particularly applicable to such different populations(Smith 2010). Research indicates that different parenting values are perceived positively or negatively depending on the cultural context (Smith, 2010). Aspects of parenting such as control, discipline, and monitoring yield different positive as well as negative outcomes for different groups (Deater-Deckard, & Dodge, 1997). Perspectives on parenting from eastern cultures, specifically in South Asian regions where the culture of collectivism is promoted and valued more than the culture of individualism is missing in the existing research (Rothbaum, 2000).

Studies examining different parenting styles and their consequential outcomes on the children suffer from various methodological issues such as over-dependency on questionnaires some of which fall short on measures of convergent validity. These findings indicate that multiple measures should be employed when investigating the theme of parenting (McLeod et. al., 2007; Gorostiaga et al., 2019). The literature on parenting also lacks case studies and qualitative analysis of the experiences of adolescents. With regards to assessment methodology, there exists disagreement in determining which method among observation, interview or self-report questionnaire is of utmost effectiveness; each method has their own set of advantages as well as disadvantages (Dadds et. al., 2003; Gaylord et. al., 2003; Rhoades & O'Leary, 2007)

Present Study

Rationale and need for the study

The present study attempts to recognize the role of uninvolved parenting in shaping adolescent personality, behavior as well as physical and emotional wellbeing. As mentioned above, parenting research has covered the Western perspective but little is known about the Eastern (specifically the Indian context). The study endeavors to understand the outcomes of parenting where

the parents were neglectful and uninvolved in their child's life. Although various studies have been done that delineate the negative impact of uninvolved parenting on adolescents (Adalbjarnardottir & Hafsteinsson, 2001; Simons et. al., 2004; Miller, 2010), there is an absence of literature when understanding this phenomenon in the context of a collectivistic culture like India. In India, parents are often involved in their offspring's life not only during childhood and adolescence but all through adult life. Given this context, it would be interesting to understand the concept of neglectful parenting in India.

This study is an attempt to understand the nuances of how the individual perceives themselves and makes sense of the world around them. It will examine how the individual copes with filling the void created by their family structure in their personal and social life. These findings will add to the literature on uninvolved parenting styles and their effects on adolescents in the Indian context. The review of the literature showed that not only is there insufficient literature pertaining to the Eastern and South-Eastern culture, but also a lack of qualitative studies. Most of the studies conducted in Western cultures used surveys and self-report measures to collect data. Using quantitative approaches without tapping into the experiential aspect of this phenomenon can promote inaccurate generalizations. It was also noted that most of the studies focused on the social aspect of a child's development and not the holistic psychological impact uninvolved parenting has on an individual.

The present study uses a qualitative method of data collection and analysis to capture the complexity of parenting styles, and an adolescent's approach to deal with their home environment. The case studied in this particular research is situated in India in order to bridge the cultural gap in the understanding of uninvolved parenting styles. Case study as a method is most suitable for this study as it calls for an in-depth understanding of the participant's life and requires viewing and understanding the whole situation through the vision of the concerned person. This study can encourage more researchers to use this method to develop an in-depth and thorough understanding of this phenomenon from an eastern perspective.

Research Question and Objective Of The Study

The present study attempts to find answers to the following research question:

What are the subjective experiences of a person who grew up in a family environment where parents adopted an uninvolved parenting style as a child-rearing practice in India?

The goal of the present study is to understand and analyze the *impact of uninvolved parenting in shaping adolescents in India.* This research seeks to adhere

to the following objectives
1. To understand the relationship shared by an individual who was reared through an uninvolved parenting style, with themselves and others.
2. To understand the challenges faced by an individual who was reared through an uninvolved parenting style in various spheres of her life and its impact on her overall psycho-social well being.

Participant

Nicole (allonym) is a 19-year-old female who was brought up by uninvolved parents. Born to a middle-class family, Nicole is an engineering student and was originally born and raised in an Urban city in Hyderabad, India. She moved to New Delhi when she was 10 years old with her grandparents as they wanted to give her better opportunities. She now lives with her paternal parents, is a single child and her mother occasionally visits her. Her grandfather is a retired army officer and grandmother is a teacher.

Design

The social, ethnic, religious, and economic background unique to the participant will enable us to establish an understanding of the experiences of a girl who was brought up by parents who were uninvolved in her life. Thus, a single subject exploratory case study design is adopted. The case comprises various segments and units which are analyzed individually to find answers to the research questions. The participant is the only child in the family consisting of father, mother, and grandparents. She has been living without her parents since the age of 10. Her father is suffering from alcohol use disorder and the mother is the sole breadwinner for her family. Her grandparents decided to take her responsibility as they felt that her parents were not able to give her the attention and care she required.

Procedure

The case was selected on the basis of relevant research and review of the literature. After which, the research question and need of the study and objective of the study were determined. Once the design was finalized, the participant was approached. The next steps involved determining the further areas and subareas of interest to study and ponder upon, which lead to the creation of relevant questions and the construction of a final interview schedule. A demographic sheet was then made and presented along with an informed consent form which was duly filled and signed by the participant ensuring her informed participation in the research study. The interview

was conducted in two sessions of 120 minutes each, and the data gathered was analyzed using the method of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data were transcribed verbatim and then it was coded by the author and themes were then determined. The last step involved analyzing the themes in the context of the existing review of the literature and the research questions.

Method of Data Collection

To obtain data regarding the role of uninvolved parenting in shaping an adolescent, the method of the interview was used. A semi-structured and open-ended interview schedule was created in a manner that various domains such as psychological, social, family life, etc. were tapped and the participant was asked these questions. The interview was electronically recorded with prior consent from the participant. These recordings were secured on a password-protected computer to ensure confidentiality and were destroyed upon the completion of the study A demographic sheet was also used to obtain details on the participant and their family. The subdued form of observation was also used to understand nonverbal cues like body language while the interviewee was answering the questions, which helped to obtain additional information on the participant.

Method of Analysis

Since qualitative approaches are considered to be complex, nuanced, and diverse (Holloway & Todres, 2003), a grounded thematic analysis was conducted. Braun and Clarke (2006) in their work define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p.79). Furthermore, the thematic analysis contributes to generating 'qualitative analyses suited to informing policy development' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.97). The generated themes were discussed in light of the relevant evidence and researches.

Results and Discussion

Context and case summary

The objective of the present study was to understand the subjective experiences of an individual who was raised by uninvolved parents. The data was collected through an open-ended semi-structured interview. The participant, Nicole, was born in India and describes herself as a 19-year-old simple girl, who is adaptable to almost all situations. She lives with her grandparents in New Delhi and her mother visits her occasionally. Her father suffers from alcohol

use disorder and the mother works in a government agency in her hometown, Hyderabad. The various themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview include the quality of her family relationships, social avoidance and fear of loneliness, distorted self-concept, issues with authority figures, hostility towards romantic relationships, and the need for belongingness and affection. Each of these findings is discussed in detail below.

Quality of familial relationships

The entire narrative in the interview related to her "familial relationships". She repeatedly mentioned her relationship with her mother, father, and grandparents. There were various instances in the interview which give a clear image of the negative relationship she shares with both of her parents; she recalled various painful memories of the past which have scarred her mental health quite profoundly she says, *"My dad was badly drunk when he tried to sell me and my mother for just 2 bottles of whiskey, I managed to escape with my mother, and my grandfather had to call the police and get my father arrested. From that day I simply hate(d) that man"*

She indicates that her memories of that day are vivid and she can still feel the pain as she recalls that night. Parents are supposed to be the first persons a child lays their faith upon, as it's through the parents that the child learns to trust the world, and for her to witness her own father trying to sell her has instilled a sense of mistrust not only for her father but for others as well. Her father was also violent and abusive towards herself and her mother. She mentions an incident where her father assaulted herself and her mother with a belt. It was dark and she could not go out to ask for help. She recalls, *"I still remember that night, I thought he would kill me, I am still scared of the dark."*

After this traumatic incident, she developed an overall fear of darkness. She mentions that she still gets flashbacks and nightmares from that night. Since her father and mother were both uninvolved and neglectful towards her, she has developed a sense of indifference towards them now. She recalls that her parents never showed up for parent-teacher conferences despite her performing well in academics. She used to feel jealous when she would see her classmates with their parents. She always used to lie to her teachers when they would ask her about her parents.

She assumed she would be able to get her parent's attention if she performed well at school. Instead of spending time with her friends, she used to stay at home and do household chores in the hope that her mother would notice. She feels disconnected from her parents and resents them for ripping off *"her childhood and innocence".* These findings are validated by other

researches which indicate that children of neglectful and abusive parents are more likely to experience anger, hostility, impulsivity, self-isolation, emotional dysregulation, and troubles forming and maintaining meaningful and lasting bonds (Connel, 2020; Sprankles, 2020; Curie & Widom, 2010).

She spent a major portion of her childhood with her grandparents and is currently living with them. Unlike her parents, she holds positive emotions for her grandparents; They compensated for the void that was created in her life by her parents. She received unconditional support, care, and affection from her grandparents. Her comment, "*My grandparents are my only prized possession, I cannot imagine my life without them, they are the most selfless beings one could ever come across.*" clearly indicates that she acknowledges the presence of her grandparents, respects them and the efforts they have made for her. The positive attitude that she holds towards her life, despite a traumatic and unfavorable childhood is because of her grandparents.

Nicole does not fail to recognize the contribution that her grandparents have made in her life, as she says: "*My grandparents are my pillars, I can confide in them, expose my secrets to them without being scared of being judged, and this is what makes them so close to my heart.*" Her grandparents helped her improve as a human, and have given her a non-judgmental and positive environment for her to grow and realize her true self. She too has given them a very close and special position in her life, which indicates that she shares a high degree of emotional warmth and affection with them. Research indicates that grandparents play an important role in determining their grandchildren's outcomes (Zeng & Xie, 2014), including increased endurance, physical (Sear et al. 2000) as well as mental health (Pettit et al. 2008).

In their research, Ruiz and Silverstein (2007) indicated that the inner strength of grandparent-grandchild relationships mediated the negative emotional, physical and mental health effects caused by neglectful and emotionally distant parent-child relationships (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007). Overall, research findings show that positive grandparent-grandchild relationships and adolescent outcomes are positively related to each other (Hoskins, 2014), which is also evident in this case.

Social avoidance and fear of loneliness.

As an impact of such a disturbed childhood and family structure, she has developed several interpersonal as well as intrapersonal issues. She indicates that she feels helpless in dealing with certain situations especially when people ask her about her parents and as a result, she tends to avoid social gatherings. She calls herself an introvert who enjoys her own company. At the same time,

she expresses "fear of loneliness" which is clear in the statement, *"I have a phobia of losing people in my life, I already have not more than four or five people anyways."*

She wants to build quality relationships with people, but her preoccupation with the thought that she cannot maintain stable relationships inhibits her to do that. As a child, she was not able to form a secure attachment with her parents which explains her conflict of wanting to have people around versus socially isolating herself. This finding is validated by the deterioration model of social support which indicates that childhood stressors like neglect and abuse are likely to exhaust social support (Eckenrode & Wethington, 1990; Kaniasty & Norris, 1993)

She feels a constant void in her life and finds it impossible to express herself. These findings are validated by previous researches which indicates that children of neglectful parents face issues of self-isolation, emotional dysregulation, and troubles forming and maintaining meaningful and lasting bonds (Connel, 2020; Sprankles, 2020; Curie & Widom, 2010). Research also indicates that social avoidance, loneliness, and social isolation can be incessant impacts of neglect in childhood (Flood & Holmes, 2006). Other studies indicate that low levels of family support indicate a high level of loneliness in children (Uruk & Demir, 2003; Bullock, 1993

Distorted self-concept

Nicole is extremely critical of herself, she accepts the fact that her grandparents love her unconditionally but assumes that she is a burden to them. She mentions, *"I sometimes feel I am baggage for my grandparents but they never made me feel so."* Her sense of self is distorted and considers herself emotionally vulnerable. Nicole believes she has no strengths, which is indicative of self-confidence and self-esteem issues. These findings are validated by studies that concluded that uninvolved parenting styles yield the lowest levels of self-esteem as compared to other parenting styles (Martinez et al., 2020; Driscoll, 2013; Macdonald et. al., 2004).

She also has underlying issues with her body image and appearance; which is reflected in her statement *"I don't like going out of my house because people judge me on the basis of how I look, my color, complexion, etc."* She feels inferior to others because of her dusky complexion. She finds herself not being "liked" and accepted by people so she avoids social situations. self-concept and perception of self is distorted thus giving rise to body dysmorphia and other body image issues. The findings from the present study have been validated by previous research which indicates that childhood neglect is a strong predictor of body dysmorphia (Didie et al., 2006; Hund & Espelage, 2006)

Issues with Authority

She indicates that she becomes uncomfortable when someone tries to tell her how she should behave. She has developed an intolerance towards controlling behaviors. This can be attributed to the deprivation of care and parental guidance in her life. She had to manage and cross several milestones of her development process alone, which has made her bitter and very hostile not only towards people but to also her own self. As a child, her problems and decisions were her own responsibility. Thus she has developed an intolerance towards people who try to command or direct her, even when it is for her own good. These findings are validated by the previous studies which indicate that individuals who experience neglect in childhood are more probable to develop externalizing behaviors such as aggression towards others which negatively impacts their relationships, physical and mental health (Cicchetti & Valentino, 2006; Jaffee et. al., 2007; Rogosch et. al., 2010).

Hostility towards romantic relationships

It can be difficult for individuals who have been neglected in childhood to form meaningful and lasting bonds with others. They are often scared that they are not "good enough" or even worthy for someone to love them. As they are not given proper attention, care, and love as a child they grow up with a belief that there is something intrinsically wrong with them. It is evident that the participant is hostile towards romantic relationships**.** She has developed a very sour and resentful attitude towards love, as she says, "*Love is a sophisticated way of saying let me get closer to you, and then control you and your emotions and in the end, completely destroy you. And leave you to die every day*". In her statement, the fear of being controlled is emphasized. She feels that love makes her emotionally weak and dependent on her partner. She stated that she will rather have a live-in relationship where she has the freedom to walk out at any given point of time. She wishes to build a meaningful connection with her partner, but the overwhelming anxiety associated with commitment prevents her from staying in any relationship for too long.

She has also associated the concept of marriage and commitment to control. She commented in the interview "*I broke up with my boyfriend because he used to talk about marriage in the future. I miss him, I cry for him but I can't let him control me*". These findings are validated by previous research which states that individuals who have experienced neglect in childhood face difficulties in communication and expressing emotions (Bogdanos, 2018; Piekarz, 2018). They also feel uneasy in close relationships as it has been absent from their formative years (Bailey, 2018). Studies have also indicated that childhood emotional neglect is a strong

predictor of difficulties with romantic relationships and emotional hostility in dating relationships (Crawford & Wright, 2007; Gay et. al., 2013). Other relationships between neglect in childhood and interpersonal issues include difficulties in initiating and maintaining meaningful intimate relationships, low levels of satisfaction with one's relationships, being emotionally distant, and having interpersonal difficulties (Paradis & Boucher, 2010).

Need for affection and belongingness

Nicole exhibits a strong need for affection and belongingness, but at the same time feels anxious and overwhelmed when presented with these emotions. In one section of the interview she clearly states that she does not wish to get married or make a commitment. Towards the end of the interview, she displays a clear need for "affection and belongingness." She says: "*In the future, I see myself in a government research lab, with kids, husband, and a loving family*"

She eventually mentions that she wants a family of her own. She aspires to have a social standing in a society which indicates that she is seeking affiliation with people. Although her grandparents have acted as her parents and tried to compensate for the void that was created in her life, she still craves the parental love and affection she was unable to receive. She agrees that her life would have been in a better place if her parents would have been more concerned and involved with her. She commented, *"I would have definitely enjoyed my childhood, would have had more stable relationships if at all my parents cared a little about my existence".*

Her idea of an alternate reality involves a happy, supportive, and understanding family structure. Research on neglect and parenting indicates that individuals who have suffered from childhood neglect can go to unreasonable extents to feel attached and fulfill their need for affection (Crawford & Wright, 2007; Ludwig & Rostain, 2009). From the above discussion, it is evident that Nicole's family environment has affected her behavior and understanding of herself and others negatively. She has developed various conflicts and difficulties in her relationships with others. This is evident from the interview as in one section of the interview she is adamant about the fact she likes being alone and does not like socializing with people, and towards the end of the interview, she accepts that "being alone" is one of her biggest fears. It is also clear that she is scared of commitment and bitter towards the concept of love and marriage yet she also aspires to have a settled family. She not only holds issues with others but with herself too, which includes a poor body image, a poor self-concept, low self-esteem and not being able to recognize her strengths.

Conclusion

Family, for a child, is the universe of their existence; it provides them with stability, support, and an environment to positively foster and understand their potentials. When the family, rather than being one of support and affection becomes a place of conflicts, pain, and violence, the child is the one who suffers the most. The purpose of the present study was to understand the subjective experiences of a person raised by uninvolved parents. As a result of her circumstances, Nicole has developed various fears pertaining to darkness and being left alone, as there are some painful memories associated with these cues. She has developed various interpersonal issues as she remains socially excluded and faces a constant fear of judgment. Nicole has developed a pungent and hostile outlook on romantic relationships. Apart from interpersonal conflicts she also faces intrapersonal challenges. She holds irrational beliefs regarding herself and fails to recognize her strengths. She considers herself to be useless baggage. The neglect she faced as a child has left her with a constant need for affection and belongingness.

Limitations and directions for future research

Even though the present research study is distinctive on its own and adds to our understanding of the impact of childhood neglect in the Indian context, the study assumes some limitations. The data was collected through a semi-structured interview only, future research can use multiple qualitative data sources such as daily diaries and extensive naturalistic observations to enrich our understanding regarding the issue. The present study taps into the experiences of a female participant, future research can focus on the experiences of males as well as the non-binary gender individuals. Additionally adding perspectives from the parents, grandparents, and other caregivers would be interesting to explore within the parenting research. Since the study was restricted to a single case and the participant belonged to a middle socioeconomic stratum living in New Delhi, these study findings might not be generalizable to the other communities within India. However, future studies can use the present study as a foundation to build case studies that would represent an inclusive sample.

Children reared under various parenting styles have been and will continue to be a subject of interest for many, and substantial work is done around them. However, nobody except a child who has practically been through and witnessed a parenting style can explain its psychological and social implications on behavior and outlook towards life. This study is an attempt to bridge the cultural and methodological gap within parenting research. There is a need for more qualitative research in this field, which focuses on the perspectives

of collectivistic societies and eastern cultures for capturing the nuances of individual and collective experiences. Finally, a cross-cultural perspective to understand the cultural differences of uninvolved or neglectful parenting experiences across cultures would be an interesting addition to the existing parenting research. Regardless of the limitations, the present study adds to the existing research and can act as a foundation for the development of future research especially focusing on childhood neglect and uninvolved parenting styles.

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