

# Exploring the Impact of Parenting Styles on the Well-Being of McMaster University Undergraduate Students

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## Abstract

Parenting styles and their influence on children's well-being have been a longstanding topic of interest in the field of social psychology. Although many studies indicate positive associations between responsive parenting and well-being and negative associations between demanding parenting and well-being, little research analyzes this correlation in emerging adults. The current study used a mixed-methods approach to examine the extent to which caregiver responsiveness and demandingness impacted the psychological well-being of McMaster University students, using self-acceptance, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, purpose in life, personal growth, and autonomy, Carol Ryff's (1989) six dimensions of well-being to understand psychological well-being. Participants ( $N = 57$ ) were primarily Caucasian female students in their fourth year who completed quantitative scales and a qualitative open-ended question in an online anonymous survey. This survey measured participants' ratings of their caregivers' responsiveness and demandingness, as well as their ratings on the six dimensions of well-being. Our findings revealed that caregiver responsiveness was positively correlated with overall well-being, autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal growth. Caregiver demandingness revealed no significant relationships with well-being. This study serves to fill the gap in existing literature regarding how parenting styles impact the well-being of emerging adults.

## Introduction

As students in social psychology, we have explored various factors that can affect well-being, the origin of these effects, and their manifestations in later life. Throughout the course of childhood, family plays a pivotal role in shaping a child's development and socialization within the world. In particular, parenting styles can drastically influence a child's behaviour, attitudes, and decisions. These learned characteristics persist throughout an individual's life and are essential for understanding how and why people feel the way they do. As such, this research study aims to understand how parenting styles affect young adults' psychological well-being.

## Social Psychological Context

Our study is guided by established social psychological theories and concepts that we found relevant to exploring parenting styles on well-being. The first theory that guides our

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research is John Bowlby's (1958) attachment theory, which posits that relationships formed during infancy influence an individual's well-being throughout life. Additionally, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan's (2008) self-determination theory adopts a holistic lens to explain motivation, which serves as a required variable to obtain a state of well-being. Self-determination theory is the second framework discussed throughout our paper to guide our research and explain our findings.

### **Problem and Purpose of Research**

While existing literature widely covers the impacts of parenting styles on well-being, it primarily concentrates on children and adolescents as the target demographic. Our thesis project aimed to fill the gaps in the existing literature by researching the impact of perceived parenting styles on Carol Ryff's (1989) six dimensions of well-being in emerging adults. Simultaneously, we hoped to bring more knowledge to participants, parents, and future research. Through our research process, we aimed to aid participants in self-reflection. This project could help participants understand themselves on a deeper level, specifically, how their caregiver's perceived parenting style has translated into their adult psychological well-being. Acquiring knowledge about this topic could assist our generation with future parenting attitudes and behaviours. This is because learning about the positive and negative impacts of parenting styles on well-being could encourage participants to make informed decisions about their future parenting choices. In addition, we hope our survey gave participants a safe space to share their lived experiences and express their feelings free of judgement and other emotional consequences. By fostering open dialogue, we aimed to enhance our comprehension of the connection between parenting styles and Ryff's (1989) dimensions of well-being in emerging adults.

### **Research Question**

Our research question was, "How do parenting styles impact psychological well-being in McMaster undergraduate students in terms of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance?" (Ryff 1989). The topic under investigation has primarily been studied in child and adolescent populations; thus, our research aimed to analyze this area in emerging adult populations using McMaster undergraduate students. Parenting styles and their influence on psychological well-being is an area of interest to everyone who is part of this research. Therefore, we selected this question to comprehensively analyze this concept and address the existing gaps within the current literature.

### **Overview of Paper**

For a concise flow to our paper, we thoroughly explain John Bowlby's (1958) attachment theory and Edward Deci and Richard Ryan's (2008) self-determination theory, which have guided our research. Next, the literature review section of this paper will define parenting styles and the six dimensions of well-being, followed by an exploration of the relationship between the two. The four parenting styles are authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful, each determined by the extent to which a parent exhibits responsiveness and demandingness (Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). In the context of this study, Carol Ryff's (1989) six dimensions of well-being are used to explore this complex concept. These six dimensions include self-acceptance, positive

relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989). In the methodology section of our paper, we provide a detailed outline of the procedures employed in our research study, along with any ethical considerations and risk mitigation strategies. Following this, we summarize the study results through graphs, figures, and text. Our paper concludes by discussing the broader significance of our results, the limitations of the study, and our final thoughts.

## Theoretical Frameworks

### Attachment Theory

The first foundational theory discussed throughout this thesis paper is attachment theory, coined by psychoanalyst and psychiatrist John Bowlby (1958). *Attachment* is a social-psychological, developmental, and ethological theory that describes the emotional bonds and interpersonal relationships infants share with their primary caregivers (Bowlby, 1958; Fletcher & Gallichan, 2016). The theory provides valuable insight into attachment dynamics and has implications for understanding and supporting healthy emotional development and relationships (Fletcher & Gallichan, 2016).

The concept of attachment first originated following Bowlby's (1958) research on the adverse effects of maternal deprivation on infants. His scholarly inquiry into attachment continued with the publication of two additional papers (Bowlby, 1959; Bowlby, 1960). A fundamental tenet of Bowlby's (1958) attachment theory is that attachment is an evolutionary process, reflecting an inherent drive within infants to establish bonds with primary caregivers to fulfill their basic human needs (Flaherty & Sadler, 2012). A significant contribution of Bowlby's (1988) research is his concept of internal working models, which begin developing in the first year of life when interactions with primary caregivers become internalized into one's mental blueprint. According to Fletcher & Gallichan (2016, p.13), Bowlby (1988) proposed that if caregivers are responsive, reliable, and trustworthy, a child will develop a secure internal working model where they feel "valued, accepted, and competent." Alternatively, if caregivers are unresponsive, unreliable, and untrustworthy, children will develop insecure internal working models, perceiving the self as "unacceptable, devalued, and incompetent" (Fletcher & Gallichan, 2016, p.13). A child utilizes their internal working model of their primary caregivers to guide expectations and behaviours in future relationships (Bowlby, 1988).

Mary Ainsworth, Bowlby's former colleague, is a key theoretician who expanded on his original attachment research by conducting a series of observational studies titled "The Strange Situation" (Ainsworth, 1963). This famous study involved analyzing the reactions of American infants aged 12-20 months after separating, then reuniting them with their mothers in a laboratory environment (Ainsworth, 1963; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Flaherty & Sadler, 2012). Researchers examined the infant's eagerness to explore, anxiety, and behaviours upon reuniting with their mother (Ainsworth, 1963; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Fletcher & Gallichan, 2016). Grounded in her observations from this study, Ainsworth (1963) derived three well-known attachment classifications: secure, avoidant-insecure, and anxious-ambivalent insecure (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970).

Among the infants observed in The Strange Situation, a significant majority, ranging from 65-70%, were classified as having secure attachments (Ainsworth, 1963). These infants initially experienced moderate distress when their mother left but gradually felt comfortable exploring the new environment and expressed happiness upon her return

(Ainsworth, 1963; Fletcher & Gallichan, 2016). The remaining 30-35% of infants exhibited either an avoidant-insecure or anxious-ambivalent insecure attachment style (Ainsworth, 1963). Those who displayed avoidant-insecure attachment showed no signs of distress when their mother left and minimal interest upon their reunion (Ainsworth, 1963). Conversely, infants characterized as anxious-ambivalent insecure were deeply distressed by separation, finding it challenging to be comforted upon their mother's return (Ainsworth, 1963; Fletcher & Gallichan, 2016).

According to Bowlby (1988), one's attachment style has a substantial influence on their psychological well-being in adulthood. Notably, attachment profoundly shapes an individual's self-acceptance, quality of relationships, and feelings of competence (Fletcher & Gallichan, 2016). Those who develop secure attachments during infancy exhibit heightened resilience, maintain positive interpersonal relationships with others, and experience increased self-acceptance as adults (Flaherty & Sadler, 2012; Fletcher & Gallichan, 2016). On the other hand, those who develop insecure attachments may have negative perceptions of themselves, struggle to form meaningful connections and be more susceptible to mental health challenges (Fletcher & Gallichan, 2016). Doinita and Maria (2015) suggest that a child's attachment style is closely linked to the parenting styles of their caregivers. Given this profound relationship, attachment theory will be referenced as a framework to investigate the influence of parenting styles on the psychological well-being of university students.

### **Self-Determination Theory**

In addition to attachment theory, which lays the foundation for understanding parent-child relationships, we also analyze the impact of parenting styles on well-being through self-determination theory. Theorized by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (2008), this macro approach aims to explain the inter- and intra-personal conditions that affect an individual's motivation and, in turn, quality of life. More specifically, self-determination theory looks at three domains that facilitate motivation and predict well-being: competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Through this lens, we can address the external factors that affect personal issues: personality development, attainment of psychological needs, and social environments, all of which influence well-being.

It is essential to recognize the scope of this theory, as its application covers many areas of life (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Many other existing theories address human motivation, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs; however, self-determination theory offers a unique perspective, taking a holistic approach to explain multiple variations of motivation. This allows for a more qualitative lens that we can use to predict "psychological health and well-being, effective performance, creative problem solving, and deep or conceptual learning" (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p.182). Furthermore, the most important distinction in this theory is between autonomous and controlled motivation, as both lead to vastly different results in the domains this theory analyzes (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

First, *autonomous motivation* can be defined as a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that arises when an individual voluntarily participates in activities they perceive as beneficial and integrates it into their self-concept (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Simply, it is motivation that stems from an individual's perceptions. In this study, we address the impact of parenting styles on an individual's decision-making process regarding what is

beneficial to them and how this is related to their overall well-being. In contrast, controlled motivation refers to external factors which either reward or punish an individual for their actions, motivating them to behave in a way that leads to approval and thus improved self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Further, this approach aligns with behaviourism, attributing the other side of motivation to the human desire to seek external rewards and avoid punishment (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Taking self-determination theory into account, this tenet is helpful in linking parenting styles and motivation, subsequently impacting well-being. Covering internal and external factors, along with controlled and autonomous motivation, heavily contributes to the holistic approach self-determination theory takes to explain human motivation.

Understanding the influences of motivation is a foundational part of self-determination theory. However, as previously discussed, this theory also highlights the relationship between motivation and psychological well-being. Based on research across years and cultures, Deci and Ryan (2008) found that satisfying "needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness do indeed predict psychological well-being in all cultures" (p.183). This finding is essential, as it addresses how both controlled and autonomous motivation affect how and whether individuals fulfill their psychological needs. Additionally, the authors recognize that individual differences in causality orientations influence how the three dimensions manifest themselves in psychological outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

*Causality orientations* can be broken down into autonomous, controlled, and impersonal orientations (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Self-determination theory asserts that these interact with one another and can predict psychological health outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008). To elaborate, the higher the level of autonomy orientation, the better the psychological health, while controlled and impersonal orientations are associated with poor well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In addition to causality orientations, self-determination theory also explains motivation through people's long-term goals and aspirations. While the authors do not categorize these as essential needs, they note an association between intrinsic and extrinsic goals and increased overall well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Thus, self-determination theory provides a comprehensive explanation of psychological well-being due to motivation.

### **Summary of Theoretical Frameworks**

In summary, this research explores John Bowlby's (1958) attachment theory and Richard Ryan and Edward Deci's (2008) self-determination theory. While attachment theory analyzes the impact of early caregiver relationships on adult psychological well-being, self-determination theory examines the influence of motivation on the six dimensions of well-being. Through these theoretical frameworks, this paper aims to comprehensively understand the dynamics between early attachment experiences, motivation, and psychological well-being.

## **Literature Review**

### **Well-Being Factors**

Many studies demonstrate the relationship between parenting styles and child behaviour. However, our research explores parenting styles within the context of psychological well-being in emerging adults. Specifically, we use Professor Carol Ryff's (1989) core dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, purpose in life,

environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, autonomy, and personal growth. These defining features are developments built upon the work of various theorists, including Erikson, Allport, Rogers, Maslow, Jung, Jahoda, Birren, Bühler, and Neugarten (Ryff, 1995). Ryff (1995) critiques the frameworks these theorists created, stating that they "have had little impact on empirical research on psychological well-being" (p.99). In turn, she utilized elements of these theories to construct the six dimensions that pertain more to psychological well-being. However, Ryff (1995) recognizes that the purpose of these dimensions is to define key characteristics associated with well-being, as opposed to the existing plethora of scientific studies that are not founded in theory and attempt to quantify happiness (Ryff, 1995). Since its creation, numerous studies have incorporated these dimensions as a foundation for their research (Abbott et al., 2009). Focusing on the six dimensions is an effective way to assess moderate levels of well-being competently. However, the authors note that the level of precision falls when assessing high levels of well-being (Abbott et al., 2009). Our research considers these dimensions as we explore the link between undergraduate students' psychological well-being and parenting styles.

### **Parenting Styles**

In social psychology, *parenting styles* is a term used to explain differences in parenting practices. In 1966, Diana Baumrind, a clinical psychologist specializing in child development, introduced the concept of three distinct parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Researchers Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin (1983) expanded on Baumrind's (1966) typology by categorizing parents based on the dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness. Responsiveness encapsulates a parent's ability to respond to a child's needs, promote individuality, and generate self-awareness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Demandingness is the degree to which a parent controls their child, emotionally or behaviourally (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). With this new framework, a fourth style, neglectful parenting, was introduced to the field of social psychology (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

*Authoritative parenting* is characterized by a high degree of responsiveness and demandingness, as parents promote a nurturing relationship by prioritizing support over punishment (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Mendez & Sanvictores, 2022). While these parents have clear expectations and rules for their children, they are also receptive and patient, established by ongoing communication to promote long-term self-regulation skills (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Mendez & Sanvictores, 2022). *Authoritarian parenting* is an approach that employs a power imbalance between a child and their parent due to a high degree of demandingness and a low degree of responsiveness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Mendez & Sanvictores, 2022). This parenting style emphasizes the strict adherence to rules without flexibility or exceptions, teaching children to behave according to their environment (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Mendez & Sanvictores, 2022). This parenting style is associated with greater obedience. However, it also leads to lower self-esteem and decreased autonomy (Mendez & Sanvictores, 2022). Conversely, *permissive parenting* is described as high responsiveness with low demandingness, promoting equal power dynamics (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Mendez & Sanvictores, 2022). This translates into children obtaining a high degree of freedom and independence, but as a result, they may lack crucial self-regulation skills (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Mendez & Sanvictores,

2022). Lastly, Maccoby and Martin's (1983) *neglectful parenting* style describes parents who score low in both responsiveness and demandingness, meaning they employ minimal discipline, communication, and nurture. This results in self-sufficient children with low emotional regulation, poor social skills, and academic difficulties (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Mendez & Sanvictores, 2022). Each distinct parenting style directly affects a child's upbringing, which determines their short and long-term attitudes and behaviours (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

### **Parenting Styles and Ryff's Six Dimensions of Well-Being Self-Acceptance**

*Self-acceptance* is one of the six dimensions of Carol Ryff's (1989) well-being model. According to Ryff (1989), obtaining a high degree of self-acceptance and the other five dimensions promotes positive emotional and psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989). Yerdaw & Rao (2018), propose that optimal well-being is not exclusively characterized by the absence of negative factors but rather by the presence of essential personal traits (Yerdaw & Rao, 2018). Ryff (1989) explains that self-acceptance is a trait that allows an individual to obtain a sense of self-worth and actualization within the world without relying on external appraisal, thereby promoting positive well-being (Ryff, 1989). However, it is also essential to note that self-acceptance is attainable when taught and enforced at the early stages of child development (Ryff, 1989). Attachment and self-determination theories will further explain how and why self-acceptance, a trait fostered by particular parenting styles, contributes to enhanced psychological well-being.

Lathren et al., (2021) analyze the associations between parenting styles, attachment theory, and self-acceptance in achieving positive mental health. The authors propose the concept of self-compassion as a term that connects self-acceptance, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Lathren et al., 2021). The study mentions that authoritative parenting styles promote positive and supportive environments, leading to engagement in self-compassionate behaviours (Lathren et al., 2021). An essential element of this research involved investigating the influence of parenting styles on a child's behaviour and its subsequent effects on mental health. They suggested that children who acquire self-compassion are more likely to have improved mental health outcomes (Lathren et al., 2021). However, learning self-compassion and self-acceptance stems from being raised in an environment high in responsiveness and supportiveness (Lathren et al., 2021).

Conversely, the authors indicate that in families low in supportiveness and responsiveness but high in dysfunction, it is unlikely for a child to acquire the traits required for practicing self-compassion and self-acceptance (Lathren et al., 2021). Attachment theory can also explain these results, as they suggest that secure attachment can co-develop with self-compassion and self-acceptance (Lathren et al., 2021). Attachment theory further suggests that children who exhibit secure attachment to their parents are often brought up by authoritative parenting, which leads to positive self-compassion and enhanced mental well-being (Lathren et al., 2021).

Roth et al., (2019) ground their research on self-determination theory to explain how parenting styles contribute to the positive development of emotion regulation in adolescents. Their study suggests that self-acceptance is learned when parenting styles align with autonomy-supportive characteristics (Roth et al., 2019). Autonomy-supportive behaviours, seen in authoritative parenting styles, manifest when parents unconsciously

teach their children self-sufficiency and emotional regulation through inadvertent guidance and observed behaviours. Consequently, when parents display accepting qualities, their children tend to internalize these traits, fostering self-acceptance and encouraging self-reflection (Roth et al., 2019). Controlling parents, linked to authoritarian parenting, are less open and accepting of their child's experiences, and this translates to children who are non-accepting of their feelings and emotions (Roth et al., 2019). This is explained by self-determination theory, which cites that emotion regulation is developed by learning and perseverance (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Therefore, when children are taught to be self-accepting by their parents, they must also learn to reinforce this trait within themselves. In turn, positive mental health is more likely to be maintained throughout the life course (Roth et al., 2019).

Overall, the way a child is raised by their parents determines how they regulate their emotions and perceive themselves. Attachment and self-determination theory explain how parenting can either support or hinder learning self-acceptance and how to uphold self-acceptance throughout life to maintain positive mental health.

### ***Positive Relationships with Others***

*Positive relations with others* are a fundamental component of psychological well-being, defined as one's ability to establish and maintain caring interpersonal connections (Ryff, 1989). According to Ryff (1989), the foundational traits necessary for forming positive relationships include empathy, trust, reliability, affection, and maturity. The development of these personal attributes is significantly influenced by the interplay of childhood attachment and parenting styles (Doinita & Maria, 2015).

This connection is supported by Neal and Frick-Horbury (2001), who analyzed the relationship between parenting styles and the development of positive relationships in undergraduate students. Participants included 56 students aged 18-22 who completed assessments focused on parenting practices and interactions with others (Neal & Frick-Horbury, 2001). A critical scale employed was the Relationship with Others (RO) scale (2011), which assesses one's availability, dependability, and attentiveness to needs (Neal & Frick-Horbury, 2001). The colleagues found that students with authoritative parents, associated with secure attachment styles (Zeinali et al., 2011), scored the highest on the RO scale (Neal & Frick-Horbury, 2001). In contrast, those with authoritarian parents, associated with avoidant-insecure attachment (Zeinali et al., 2011), scored low on the RO scale (Neal & Frick-Horbury, 2001). This demonstrates the significant influence of parenting styles on an individual's relationships with others, ultimately contributing to their psychological well-being.

The findings from the Neal and Frick-Horbury (2001) study regarding how authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles impact relations with others are well-supported by the work of Doinita and Maria (2015) and Yadav et al., (2021). However, there is a lack of consensus regarding whether permissive parenting styles positively or negatively impact the development of strong interpersonal relationships with others. While Neal and Frick-Horbury (2001) concluded that students raised by permissive parents achieve lower scores on the RO scale, Doinita & Maria (2015) and Yadav et al., (2021) indicate that this parenting style is associated with stronger relationships with others. The discrepancy in these findings will be explored in-depth during the analysis of our final thesis paper. The fourth parenting style, labelled as neglectful, has received significantly less research in



this field. With this being said, results found by Doinita & Maria (2015) implies that parents who are low in demandingness and responsiveness evoke attachment insecurity, consequently resulting in weaker relationships with others. Struggling to maintain relations with others is associated with decreased psychological well-being because these connections are essential sources of emotional support and provide individuals with a sense of relatedness (Doinita & Maria, 2015), one of self-determination theory's key domains (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Overall, the results from these studies imply that the parenting styles one adopts heavily influence a child's attachment and internal working model, subsequently impacting their self-perception and feelings towards others. This complex interplay significantly contributes to the development of positive relationships with others, which is linked to enhanced psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989).

### ***Environmental Mastery***

According to Carol Ryff's (1989) six psychological well-being dimensions, environmental mastery pertains to an individual's capacity to shape or select environments that complement their mental state and allow personal advancement. This dimension of well-being examines how well an individual can modify and take advantage of opportunities within their environment (Ryff, 1989). Compared to the other facets that make up Carol Ryff's (1989) well-being dimensions, environmental mastery is the least researched, demonstrating a limitation within the existing literature. Subsequently, most research examining environmental mastery combines its analysis with other dimensions of well-being.

The existing literature discussing environmental mastery explores how parenting styles affect the development of this dimension among young adults. This research supports the argument that an authoritative parenting style positively correlates with environmental mastery (Yadav et al., 2021). For example, Segrin et al., (2022) examined how overparenting and maladaptive family communication traits associated with an authoritarian parenting style affect the well-being of emerging adults. As mentioned previously, authoritarian parenting is an approach that employs a power imbalance between a child and their parent due to a high degree of demandingness and low degree of responsiveness (Mendez & Sanvictores, 2022). The study found that parents who employ these overparenting practices become too involved in decision-making processes, risk management, and directing their children's lives (Segrin et al., 2022). Ultimately, the colleagues concluded that this authoritarian style has no beneficial outcomes; instead, it inhibits a child's environmental mastery and psychological well-being (Segrin et al., 2022).

In addition, Kamrani and Malik (2014) examined the impact of traits associated with an authoritative style on environmental mastery and well-being. Specifically, the colleagues examined how mothers' warmth, a trait compatible with an authoritative parenting style, affects environmental mastery. The results indicated that the mother's warmth directly impacted environmental mastery (Kamrani & Malik, 2014). Yerdaw and Rao (2018) support these findings by stating that when parents practice warmth and supportive parenting, their children experience higher rates of psychological well-being. Mendez and Sanvictores (2022) argue that this outcome can be attributed to parents maintaining clear expectations and rules for their children and demonstrating receptiveness and patience.

These qualities are fostered through consistent communication to encourage the development of long-term self-regulation skills (Mendez & Sanvictores, 2022).

As displayed from the existing literature, it is clear that authoritative parenting is positively correlated with achieving environmental mastery and well-being. Environmental mastery requires that an individual is given the support and discretion to take advantage of their environment and make creative changes to best suit their mental state (Ryff, 1989).

### ***Purpose in Life***

According to Carol Ryff's (1989) six psychological well-being dimensions, purpose in life outlines the encompassing aspects of maturity, directedness, intentionality, and mental health. It is described as the variety of evolving life goals and overall emotional integration (Ryff, 1989). In essence, if one has goals, intentions, and a sense of direction, there is a higher likelihood of a persistent feeling of purpose in life (Ryff, 1989). Research has examined how familial relations, particularly parenting styles, contribute to the stability of adolescent behaviour and psychological well-being throughout the lifespan. One example is in the Francis et al., (2020) study, which assessed the correlation between psychological well-being and parenting styles (Francis et al., 2020). The authors conducted a correlational survey in five Southern Indian schools, with 554 adolescent participants in eighth and ninth grade (Francis et al., 2020). The collection of data was adopted from the use of a self-administered perceived parenting scale and a Ryff (1989) scale for psychological well-being assessment (Francis et al., 2020). Upon data collection, psychological well-being, specifically purpose in life, was found to have a positive relationship with authoritative parenting (Francis et al., 2020). The authoritative parenting style, based on its support and stability, fostered purpose in life and positive relationships with others (Francis et al., 2020). Oppositely, a negative correlation was found between purpose in life and neglectful parenting (Francis et al., 2020).

Bringing forth similar findings, Ortega et al., (2021) focus on examining the differences between maternal and paternal parenting styles and how these affect emotional outcomes in early adolescents (Ortega et al., 2021). The sample included 744 children, with 45.8% being in fifth grade and the other 54.2% being in sixth grade (Ortega et al., 2021). The measures included several scales, for example, the Affect Scale (1999; measuring affect, communication and parental criticism/rejection), the Rules and Demandingness Scale (1999; measuring how parents establish rules and expect them to be followed), the PROMIS Depression Short Form Scale (2011; measuring hope, optimism, purpose in life and goal orientation), and other scales of the same subject matter. Upon data collection, the study revealed that both mothers' and fathers' affect and communication (consistent with authoritative parenting) positively correlated with purpose in life, while it negatively correlated with depression and anxiety (Ortega et al., 2021). Furthermore, perceived affect was deemed a protective factor in preventing anxiety and depression, whereas perceived criticism and rejection (consistent with authoritarian and neglectful parenting) were considered to be risk factors for feelings of purpose in life (Ortega et al., 2021). Parental affect was positively associated with feelings of purpose, such as the ability to reach goals and feeling like life is logical and worthy (Ortega et al., 2021). This finding also appears prominent in the relation between parental warmth,

associated with authoritative parenting, and overall higher life satisfaction (Ortega et al., 2021).

Altogether, the literature continuously emphasizes that the fundamental traits of the four parenting styles (affect, communication, criticism, and rejection) and overall perceived parenting styles have a strong effect on adolescents' emotional well-being, specifically, their perceived sense of purpose in life (Ortega et al., 2021).

### **Personal Growth**

According to Carol Ryff's (1989) six psychological well-being dimensions, *personal growth* encompasses the continual positive development of one's potential and the ability to adapt in ways that reflect greater effectiveness and self-knowledge. Subjectively, numerous factors can be associated with this well-being domain, including anxiety, motivation, self-regulation, academic success, and more. Research has investigated parenting styles' influence on many of the components associated with personal growth. Several studies analyze the relationships between undergraduate students' anxiety levels, academic success, and their parents' parenting styles, highlighting numerous mediating variables, including self-regulation, stress, depression, and motivation (Barton & Kirtley, 2012; Silva et al., 2007).

As an example, Barton and Kirtley's (2012) research on undergraduate students' levels of anxiety, stress, and depression about their parents' parenting styles highlights differences in male and female students. The findings demonstrate that maternal permissiveness is positively associated with stress and anxiety in female students. In contrast, paternal authoritarianism is positively associated with stress in male students, leading to the development of depression symptoms in both males and females (Barton & Kirtley, 2012). Additionally, maternal authoritative parenting was negatively associated with anxiety and depression in female students, while paternal authoritative parenting was negatively associated with depression in male students (Barton & Kirtley, 2012). Interestingly, maternal and paternal authoritarianism had no significant relationship with the variables for female students, and both maternal and paternal permissiveness had no relationship with the variables for male students (Barton & Kirtley, 2012). Transitioning into college and university often comes with many stressors for students, and therefore, successful navigation requires good self-regulation and a strong sense of support (Barton & Kirtley, 2012). Mother's permissive parenting likely inhibited daughters' self-regulation, increasing their stress and anxiety during their transition into college (Barton & Kirtley, 2012). Correspondingly, a father's authoritarian parenting likely caused sons to feel a lack of support, thereby also increasing their stress during this transition (Barton & Kirtley, 2012). Successful navigation of this difficult transition will allow for optimal personal growth, and authoritative parenting seems to have the highest positive outcomes on students' ability to thrive in their new college environment (Barton & Kirtley, 2012).

Likewise, Silva and colleagues' (2007) research on college students' anxiety, motivation, and academic achievement about their parents' parenting styles found similar results. Maternal authoritarianism was positively correlated with students' anxiety levels and negatively correlated with their grade point average (GPA) in college (Silva et al., 2007). Paternal authoritative parenting was negatively correlated with students' anxiety levels, and maternal authoritative parenting was positively associated with students' college GPA (Silva et al., 2007). The researchers suggest that students' motivation is a mediator for

anxiety and academic achievement in college, proposing that students' anxiety was associated with their motivation, which, in turn, was associated with their academic achievement (Silva et al., 2007). Seeing that the mother's authoritarian parenting was yielding higher anxiety levels and lower GPAs among students, we can assume that this was negatively affecting students' motivation. According to self-determination theory, motivation facilitates well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Therefore, more significant anxiety in students resulted in less motivation, thus decreasing academic achievement and ultimately lowering students' psychological well-being. Additionally, higher levels of anxiety, lower levels of motivation, and lower levels of academic achievement can inhibit students' ability for personal growth (Ryff, 1989, 1995). This leaves them feeling personal stagnation and the inability to see improvement in themselves, their skills, and their behaviours over time (Ryff, 1989, 1995).

In general, parental authoritativeness is significantly negatively associated with students' anxiety levels, whereas parental authoritarianism and permissiveness are significantly positively associated with students' anxiety levels (Barton & Kirtley, 2012; Silva et al., 2007). Neither of the studies mentioned neglectful parenting and its impacts on well-being. With a lack of sense of support from their parents, students are prone to experience higher levels of anxiety, stress, and depression, along with lower levels of motivation and self-regulation (Barton & Kirtley, 2012; Silva et al., 2007). In combination, these can negatively influence students' academic success and their ability to thrive in their changing environments, altering their personal growth during these emerging adulthood years.

### **Autonomy**

Much research has demonstrated the complex role parenting styles play in human development. A substantial aspect of development involves acquiring independence, which ultimately dictates one's life and, consequently, their well-being. Embedded within this concept lies Ryff's (1989) notion of *autonomy*, one of the six dimensions of psychological well-being. Although the concept of autonomy has been developed into many different definitions by numerous theorists and researchers (Adams & Berzonsky, 2006), at its core, it can be defined as "such qualities as self-determination, independence, and the regulation of behaviour from within...does not look to others for approval, but evaluates oneself by personal standards" (Ryff, 1989, p.1071). Developing a healthy level of autonomy is crucial to psychological well-being; too little can result in regressed adulthood states, and too much can damage an individual's social and psychological well-being (Adams & Berzonsky, 2006). For example, those who experience overparenting and a lack of autonomy, in relation to attachment theory, can experience unstable relationships and insecure attachment due to increased anxiety and avoidance (Jiao & Segrin, 2022). Self-determination theory maintains this idea by examining what factors (i.e., parenting styles) influence motivation that enable individuals to meet their psychological needs, with autonomy as a principal foundation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The current literature effectively demonstrates the strong influence of parenting styles on how adolescents develop autonomy and the positive relationship between autonomy and psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989).

Across research studies, authoritative parenting has proven to have the best outcomes for children regarding autonomy and, subsequently, psychological well-being (Yerdaw &

Rao, 2018). By allowing children to experience more independence, within reason, authoritative parents are simultaneously enabling them to regulate their behaviour and activities on their own, contributing to their sense of autonomy (Yerdaw & Rao, 2018). Looking retroactively, Ryan, Deci, and Grolnick (1995) further this idea, stating that for autonomy support, it is essential to encourage children to problem-solve and give them choices with a helping hand (Adams & Berzonsky, 2006). As mentioned previously, autonomy is characterized by a strong, individualized sense of self, personal principles, and internal regulation (Adams & Berzonsky, 2006). Through proper authoritative parenting, adolescents can build a crucial foundation for autonomy, which they can expand upon throughout their lifetime (Adams & Berzonsky, 2006). Over generations, literature has consistently supported that the elements of authoritative parenting are key to adolescents successfully gaining autonomy.

Contrasting authoritative parenting, which is the most successful in cultivating autonomy in adolescents (Adams & Berzonsky, 2006), other parenting styles can adversely affect how autonomy develops. Notably, it becomes problematic when children live with overbearing parents, as the more controlling and involved the parent is, the more issues children face in developing their independence (Jiao & Segrin, 2022). This is in accordance with a more authoritarian style of parenting, which restricts the child from developing their independence and negatively affects their psychological well-being (Yerdaw & Rao, 2018). By utilizing coercion or psychological control, the child is bound to feel constrained and controlled to behave in a certain way, reducing their level of autonomy (Adams & Berzonsky, 2006). Additionally, while the work of Jiao and Segrin focuses on overparenting, underparenting, or permissive parenting, it also has implications for adolescent autonomy development (Yerdaw & Rao, 2018). As mentioned previously, too much autonomy can be problematic for well-being, and parents who allow their children ultimate autonomy foster an environment for this to occur (Yerdaw & Rao, 2018). Although there may be cases in which autonomy prevails in these parenting styles, the existing literature demonstrates the negative relationship between these types of parents and the levels of autonomy in adolescents.

It is important to recognize the emphasis current research places on how parenting styles affect adolescents in terms of Ryff's (1989) six dimensions of well-being. Additionally, the existing research predominantly focuses on these relationships within adolescents. This provides an above satisfactory explanation of autonomy in its developing stages and provides reason which can be applied to well-being. Maccoby & Martin (1983) as cited, theorized that autonomy develops in three stages; "parental regulation of children...increasing co-regulation between children and parents, eventual self-regulation" (Adams & Berzonsky, 2006, p.192). Additionally, autonomy is a key component of self-determination theory, stating that humans' functionality is based on their levels of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Our research examines how emerging adults can maintain this self-regulation and if those who did not experience authoritative parenting in adolescence could still attain autonomy. Furthermore, it analyzes whether adolescents who attain autonomy (among the other well-being factors) due to their parental influence will continue to develop and maintain this foundation as they progress into other stages of life.

### **Limitations of Current Literature**

There is a great amount of research on parenting styles and their influence on the psychological well-being of children, however, there are gaps in existing literature relating parenting styles to the well-being of emerging adults. As well, little research has directly measured the impact of parenting styles on Carol Ryff's (1989) six dimensions of psychological well-being. Our study aimed to fill in these gaps to obtain an understanding of how parenting styles influence the psychological well-being of emerging adults in the McMaster undergraduate community, specifically relating to autonomy, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, purpose in life, positive relations with others, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989).

Furthermore, much of the existing literature on parenting styles seems to disregard neglectful parenting, primarily focusing on authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles (Barton & Kirtley, 2012; Silva et al., 2007). This is a limitation of current research because neglectful parenting represents a parenting style that can significantly affect one's well-being. Our study included all four parenting styles, aiming to bridge the knowledge gaps regarding the impact of neglectful parenting on psychological well-being.

Lastly, it is imperative to acknowledge that the conclusions drawn from this literature review may not be generalizable to cultures beyond North America. The influence of cultural values plays a significant role in determining the psychological outcomes associated with the four parenting styles (Peterson et al., 2005). These variations highlight the importance of considering the context in which parenting practices and their impacts are examined and were taken into consideration when analyzing our research findings.

### **Literature Review Summary**

This literature review explores the intricate relationship between parenting styles and psychological well-being, focusing primarily on emerging adults. The findings underscore the significance of authoritative parenting, characterized by a high degree of responsiveness and supportiveness, in fostering positive outcomes across all dimensions of psychological well-being. Conversely, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles exhibit varying degrees of impact on individual well-being, often resulting in challenges such as decreased autonomy, lower self-esteem, and impaired interpersonal relationships. This exploration of literature also highlights several notable limitations in current research, such as the lack of focus on emerging adults and the tendency to overlook the impacts of neglectful parenting.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Question**

This research study aimed to answer the question: "How do parenting styles impact psychological well-being in McMaster undergraduate students in terms of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance?"

### **Ethical Considerations**

Our study posed minimal risks for participants, including no physical risks or any possible risks that are greater than those participants might encounter in their everyday

lives. However, some potential psychological and social risks associated with our study were communicated to participants in our survey's preamble and consent section.

### ***Psychological Risks***

The psychological risks included possible feelings of embarrassment, discomfort, and worry during survey completion. These reactions might have occurred if the survey questions evoked distressing thoughts or brought up traumatic childhood experiences, potentially impeding the participant's psychological well-being and ability to complete the survey.

### ***Social Risks***

Furthermore, participants might have encountered social risks, including potential compromises in privacy, reputation, or status arising from their engagement in the online survey. Regarding privacy, there was a possibility that participants who completed the study in a public setting, thereby exposed private responses on their devices to others. Additionally, if an individual liked or responded to a post related to our survey, their identity could have been revealed, which could result in a negative shift in the participant's reputation and/or status.

### ***Ethical Risk Management Strategies***

We have devised several risk management strategies to minimize participants' potential psychological and social risks.

### ***Psychological Risk Strategies***

To reduce psychological risks, an online, anonymous survey ensured that participants could share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences without fearing judgment or repercussions. In addition, we provided details on how to access support resources on both the letter of information and the concluding page of the survey. This placement encouraged participants to access mental health support if they experienced any feelings of embarrassment, discomfort, or worry while completing the survey. Finally, participants were allowed to withdraw from the survey at any time before submission with the assurance that their information would not be saved. This allowed participants to withdraw from the study if they experienced negative feelings, ensuring we prioritized their well-being throughout the research process.

### ***Social Risk Strategies***

In addition to psychological risk strategies, we also utilized strategies to manage potential social risks associated with completing our survey. First, we designed the study to be completely anonymous and online so that participants were not identifiable. This guaranteed that the survey results did not have any connections to participants' identity markers, ensuring their responses were safe and confidential. Moreover, we asked participants to complete the survey in a personal space and to avoid engaging with or responding to posts regarding details about the survey. This was to prevent other individuals from observing the completion of their survey to minimize potential harm to their status and/or reputation. Finally, all survey questions are below minimal risk, meaning they posed no greater harm than participants would experience in everyday life.

## **Survey Development**

To examine the impact of parenting styles among McMaster University undergraduate students, we conducted an online anonymous survey on the MREB-approved software LimeSurvey. The research study was approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board (MREB #0327). The survey consisted of 47 questions about participants' perceptions of their parents' parenting style and their own perceived psychological well-being. Parenting style questions were based on the English validated Parental Socialization Scale ESPA29 (Martinez et al., 2017), using a 4-point Likert scale (1 = "never", 4 = "always"), with a fifth answer option being "non-applicable" (N/A). Psychological well-being questions were based on Carol Ryff's (1989) six dimensions of psychological well-being (self-acceptance, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth), using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 5 = "strongly agree") to measure each dimension of well-being. One open-ended question asked participants to describe how they feel their caregivers' parenting style(s) have impacted their psychological well-being. The last seven questions pertained to demographic information about the participants' year of study, program, faculty, GPA, gender identity, age, and ethnic identity.

## **Recruitment**

After obtaining ethics approval, we began recruiting participants on November 27th, 2023. The sampling methods used included convenience and snowball sampling. To recruit participants, we emailed five McMaster Student Union-approved clubs and associations, including The Social Psychology Society, the McMaster Social Sciences Society, the Health, Aging and Society Student Association, the Sociology Society, and the Anthropology Society. Each student investigator actively participated in drafting and sending emails to recruit participants.

## **Survey Procedure**

If participants voluntarily decided to complete our survey, they would first have the opportunity to read through the letter of information on the preamble and consent page. The letter of information outlines the principal investigator, undergraduate student investigators, purpose of the study, procedures involved in the research, potential harms, potential benefits, confidentiality, the right to withdraw, and information about the study results. Additionally, the letter of information outlined the approximate length of the survey (15-20 minutes). After participants read the letter of information, they were presented with two options: 1) Yes, they consent to participate in the research, or 2) No, they do not consent to participate in the research. Once participants selected option 1, they then had access to complete the survey.

## **Data Collection**

The survey commenced on November 27th, 2023, and closed on February 16th, 2024. The study was designed with the initial goal of securing 80 survey responses. However, when the survey closed, 273 responses were received, of which 214 were partial responses and 59 were deemed fully completed. Two of the 59 fully completed responses were excluded from the sample due to the participants' inability to pass the attention



check question, establishing a final sample size of 57 ( $N = 57$ ). Following the survey closure, all participant data was stored securely, concluding the data collection procedure for this study.

### Challenges to Data Collection and Analysis

Throughout our data collection process, we encountered several challenges. First, we had a limited timeframe to recruit participants from November 27th, 2023, until February 16th, 2024. This restricted time frame hindered our ability to collect a large number of participants, which would have enhanced our study's generalizability and external validity. Additionally, as a part of our recruitment efforts, we contacted various student-run clubs and associations, seeking their collaboration in promoting our survey on their social media platforms. Unfortunately, a considerable number of these organizations did not respond to our emails, which significantly reduced the number of participants we could secure. Moreover, during data collection, our participants may have engaged in sloppy or dishonest responding due to fatigue or a lack of interest. Such behaviours could have introduced biases into our dataset, reducing the reliability of our findings. However, we strategically included an attention check question halfway through our survey, saying "This is an attention check question. Please select Disagree for this question." During data analysis, we removed any participant responses that failed to pass this question.

### Data Analysis

The data analysis process began following the closure of our survey on February 16th, 2024. We transferred all qualitative responses from LimeSurvey to an OMB file compatible with a statistical software called Jamovi. Subsequently, we utilized this platform to analyze the quantitative data gathered from Likert scale questions. Additionally, we used an inductive codebook approach to interpret the qualitative responses provided from the open-ended question on the survey. This method allowed us to systematically categorize and analyze recurring themes within the data to better understand how parenting styles affect psychological well-being.

### Data Collection and Analysis Timeline

Task	Date
Create drafts to email student-run clubs and associations for recruitment	October 19th, 2023
Survey opens	November 27th, 2024
Send emails to student-run clubs and associations for recruitment	December 2023 to January 2024
Send follow-up emails to student-run clubs and associations for recruitment	February 12th-14th, 2024
Survey closes	February 16th, 2024

Data analysis begins	February 17th, 2024
Data analysis completion	March 5th, 2024

### Summary of Methodology

In summary, the methodology in this study aimed to investigate the influence of parenting styles on McMaster University undergraduate students' psychological well-being. We created an online anonymous survey using the LimeSurvey software, approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board (MREB #0327). The survey encompassed 47 questions related to participants' perceptions of their parents' parenting style and their own psychological well-being, measured through established scales. The recruitment process involved convenience and snowball sampling, resulting in 57 completed responses after exclusions. Data analysis involved quantitative coding on Jamovi and an inductive codebook approach to analyze qualitative data, aiming to elucidate recurring themes regarding the impact of parenting styles on psychological well-being.

## Results

### Participant Demographics

A total of 59 McMaster undergraduate students completed our survey, however, 2 participants failed the attention check question and were therefore removed from the population ( $N = 57$ ). Out of the 57 participants, 38 (66.7%) identified as female, 18 (31.6%) identified as male, and 1 (1.8%) identified as non-binary, with 3 (5.3%) being 18 years-old, 1 (1.8%) being 19 years-old, 1 (1.8%) being 20 years-old, 45 (78.9%) being 21 years-old, 2 (3.5%) being 22 years-old, 4 (7%) being 23 years-old, and 1 (1.8%) being 25+ years-old. The majority of the participants reported being in the fourth year (7% in the first year, 1.8% in the second year, 12.3% in the third year, 75.4% in the fourth year, and 3.5% in the fifth year). Six faculties were reported across all 57 participants: Social Sciences (39.3%), Science (19.6%), Engineering (14.3%), Health Sciences (7.1%), Business (12.5%), and Humanities (7.1%). The most common program participants reported being in was Social Psychology (17.5%). Participants were asked to report their ethnicity in an open-ended response, thus the results were sorted into the following broad categories: Caucasian (66.7%), European (10.5%), South-West Asian (3.5%), South Asian (3.5%), Chinese (3.5%), Middle-Eastern (1.8%), South-East Asian (1.8%), Latino (1.8%), Russian (1.8%), Indigenous (1.8%), Multiethnic (1.8%), and Did Not Answer (1.8%).

### Well-Being and Parenting Style

Table 1 presents Pearson's correlations of caregiver responsiveness and overall well-being. Caregiver responsiveness ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ) was found to have a significant positive correlation with overall well-being ( $M = 3.6$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ). Tables 2, 3, and 4 outline the significant positive correlations between caregiver responsiveness and autonomy ( $M = 3.2$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ), environmental mastery ( $M = 3.3$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ), and personal growth ( $M = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ), respectively. Interestingly, there were no significant correlations between caregiver responsiveness and self-acceptance, positive relations with others, and purpose in life ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 1**

Correlation Matrix: Responsiveness x Overall Well-Being

		Responsiveness	Well-Being
Responsiveness	Pearson's r	—	
	p-value	—	
Well-Being	Pearson's r	0.428***	—
	p-value	<.001	—

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 5 demonstrates Pearson's correlations of caregiver demandingness and overall well-being. Caregiver demandingness ( $M = 2.0$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ) had a negative correlation with overall well-being ( $M = 3.6$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ), however, this correlation was not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). None of the six dimensions of well-being showed significant correlations with caregiver demandingness: Autonomy ( $r = -0.17$ ,  $p = 0.195$ ), self-acceptance ( $r = 0.09$ ,  $p = 0.528$ ), positive relationships ( $r = -0.01$ ,  $p = 0.970$ ), environmental mastery ( $r = 0.10$ ,  $p = 0.462$ ), purpose in life ( $r = 0.08$ ,  $p = 0.577$ ), and personal growth ( $r = -0.12$ ,  $p = 0.388$ ).

### Gender Differences

We used linear regressions to analyze gender differences between well-being and parental responsiveness/demandingness. Figure 1 revealed that higher ratings of caregiver responsiveness were significantly associated with greater well-being ( $\beta = 0.44$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), and participants who identified as non-binary had a higher likelihood of having greater well-being after rating their caregiver as more responsive. However, these gender differences were insignificant ( $p = 0.66$ ). Figure 2 presents that caregiver demandingness would have been associated with lower well-being, but the data is insignificant ( $\beta = -0.11$ ,  $p = 0.417$ ). Additionally, those who identified as non-binary had a higher likelihood of having lower well-being after rating their caregiver as more demanding, however, these gender differences were also insignificant ( $p = 0.532$ ).

**Table 2**

Correlation Matrix: Responsiveness x Autonomy

		Responsiveness	Autonomy
Responsiveness	Pearson's r	—	
	p-value	—	
Autonomy	Pearson's r	0.333*	—
	p-value	0.011	—

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 3**

Correlation Matrix: Responsiveness x Environmental Mastery

		Responsiveness	Environmental Mastery
Responsiveness	Pearson's r	—	
	p-value	—	
Environmental Mastery	Pearson's r	0.464***	—
	p-value	<.001	—

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Furthermore, we utilized chi-square tests to observe gender differences in autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal growth ratings. Table 6 reveals that out of the 38 participants who identified as female, 21 (55.3%) had high autonomy, and 17 (44.7%) had low autonomy. Out of the 18 respondents who identified as male, 12 (66.7%) had high autonomy, and 6 (33.3%) had low autonomy. There was only 1 participant who identified as non-binary, and they had low autonomy (100%). However, these results are insignificant:  $X^2(1) = 2.05$ ,  $p = 0.359$ .

Table 7 outlines differences in environmental mastery by gender, highlighting that out of the 38 respondents who identified as female, 22 (57.9%) had high environmental mastery and 16 (42.1%) had low environmental mastery. Out of the 18 respondents who identified as male, 15 (83.3%) had high environmental mastery, and 3 (16.7%) had low environmental mastery. The 1 participant who identified as non-binary had low environmental mastery (100%). These results are also statistically insignificant:  $X^2(1) = 5.35$ ,  $p = 0.069$ .

Lastly, Table 8 analyzes differences in personal growth by gender. Of the 38 female-identified participants, 33 (86.8%) had high personal growth and 5 (13.2%) had low personal growth. 16 (88.9%) male-identified subjects had high personal growth, and 2

**Table 4**

Correlation Matrix: Responsiveness x Personal Growth

		Responsiveness	Personal Growth
Responsiveness	Pearson's r	—	
	p-value	—	
Personal Growth	Pearson's r	0.303*	—
	p-value	0.022	—

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 5**  
Correlation Matrix: Demandingness x Well-Being

		Demandingness	Well-Being
Demandingness	Pearson's r	—	
	p-value	—	
Well-Being	Pearson's r	-0.140	—
	p-value	0.298	—

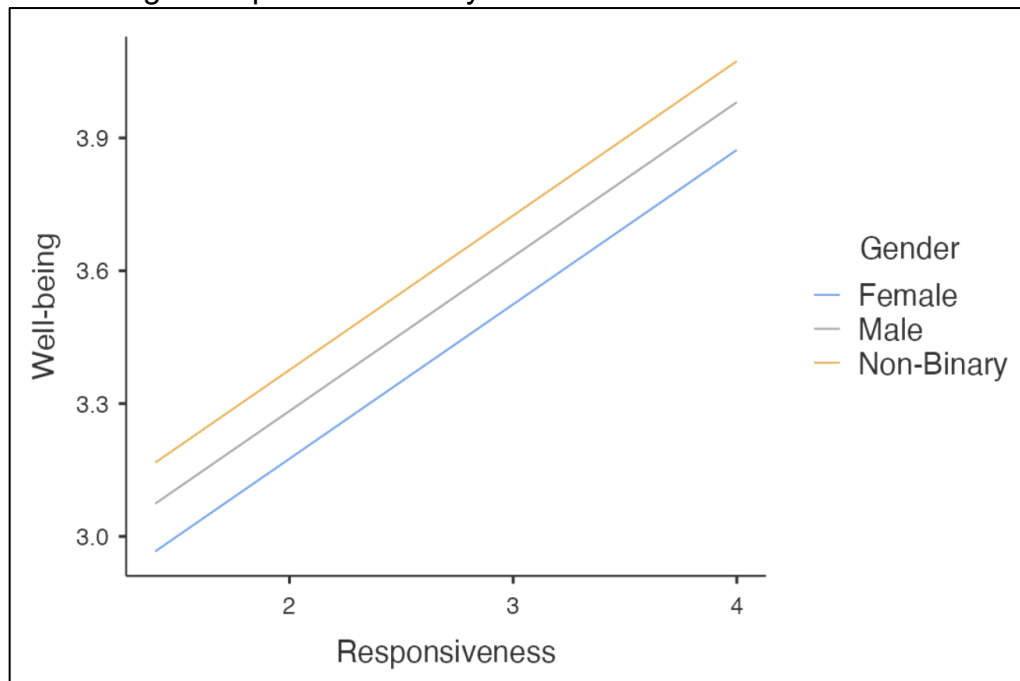
Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

(11.1%) had low personal growth. Finally, the 1 subject who identified as non-binary had high personal growth (100%). This data is also statistically insignificant:  $X^2(1) = 0.190$ ,  $p = 0.909$ .

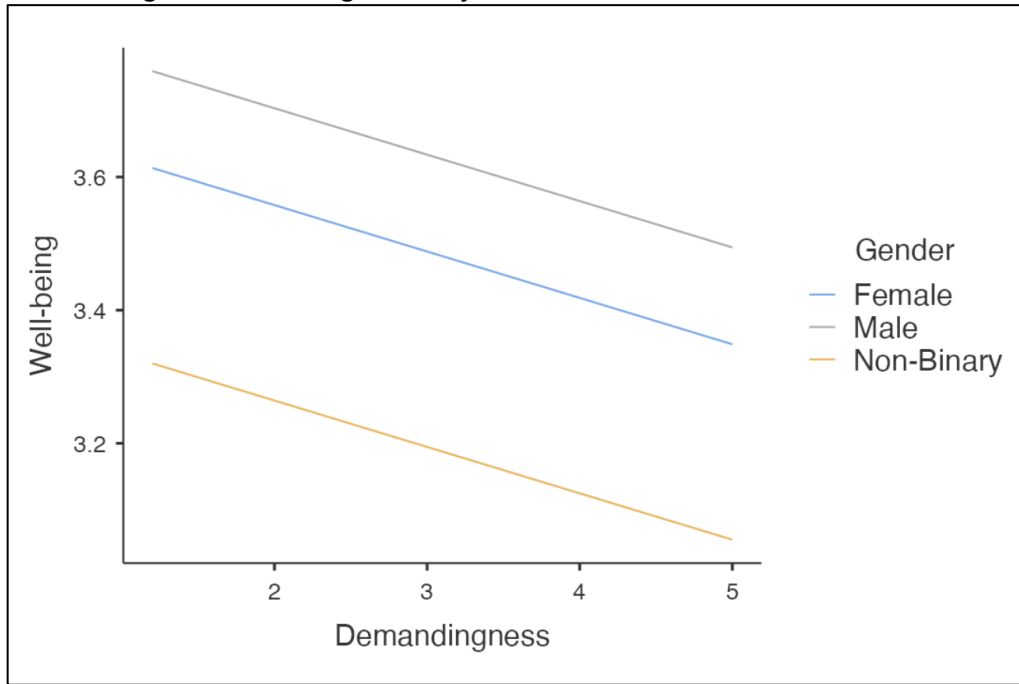
### Ethnic Differences

In addition to gender, we were also interested in analyzing whether there were differences in ratings of caregiver responsiveness, demandingness, and overall well-being in terms of ethnicity. Linear regressions (Figure 3) revealed that Russian respondents were more likely to have higher ratings of overall well-being after rating their caregiver(s) as higher in responsiveness, but the data is insignificant ( $p = 0.904$ ).

**Figure 1**  
Well-Being x Responsiveness: by Gender



**Figure 2**  
Well-Being x Demandingness: by Gender



**Table 6**  
Chi-Square Test: Autonomy x Gender

Gender		Autonomy		Total
		high autonomy	low autonomy	
Female	Observed	21	17	38
	% within row	55.3%	44.7%	100.0%
	% within column	63.6%	70.8%	66.7%
	% of total	36.8%	29.8%	66.7%
Male	Observed	12	6	18
	% within row	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within column	36.4%	25.0%	31.6%
	% of total	21.1%	10.5%	31.6%
Non-Binary	Observed	0	1	1
	% within row	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within column	0.0%	4.2%	1.8%
	% of total	0.0%	1.8%	1.8%
Total	Observed	33	24	57
	% within row	57.9%	42.1%	100.0%
	% within column	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of total	57.9%	42.1%	100.0%

**Table 7**  
Chi-Square Test: Environmental Mastery x Gender

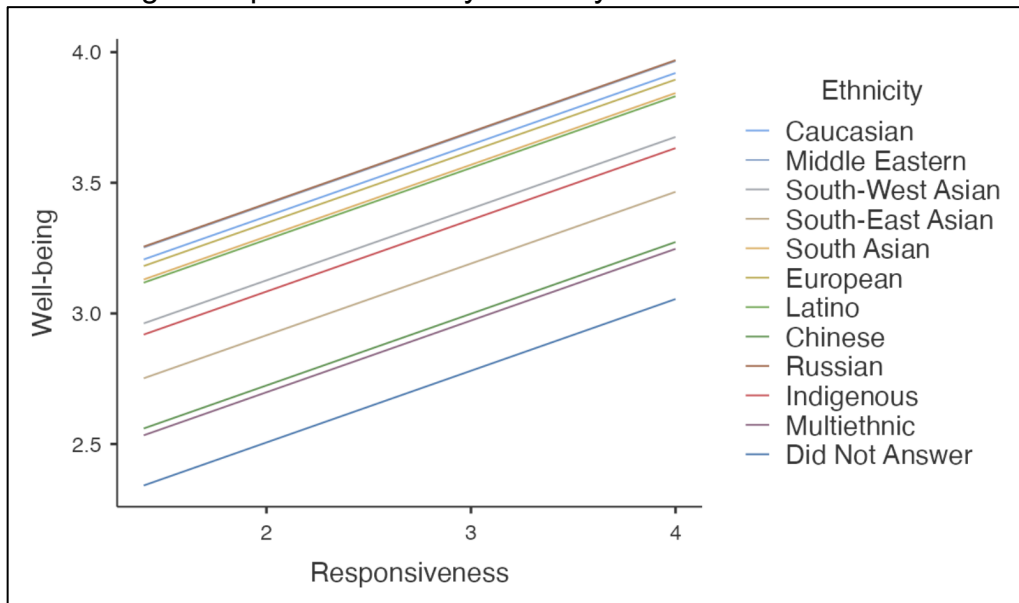
Gender		Environmental-Mastery		Total
		high environmental mastery	low environmental mastery	
Female	Observed	22	16	38
	% within row	57.9%	42.1%	100.0%
	% within column	59.5%	80.0%	66.7%
	% of total	38.6%	28.1%	66.7%
Male	Observed	15	3	18
	% within row	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%
	% within column	40.5%	15.0%	31.6%
	% of total	26.3%	5.3%	31.6%
Non-Binary	Observed	0	1	1
	% within row	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within column	0.0%	5.0%	1.8%
	% of total	0.0%	1.8%	1.8%
Total	Observed	37	20	57
	% within row	64.9%	35.1%	100.0%
	% within column	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of total	64.9%	35.1%	100.0%

Figure 4 represents ethnicity differences for ratings of caregiver demandingness and overall well-being. Chinese participants were significantly more likely to have lower ratings of overall well-being after rating their caregiver(s) as more demanding ( $\beta = -1.87$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ).

**Table 8**  
Chi-Square Test: Personal Growth x Gender

Gender		Personal-Growth		Total
		high personal growth	low personal growth	
Female	Observed	33	5	38
	% within row	86.8%	13.2%	100.0%
	% within column	66.0%	71.4%	66.7%
	% of total	57.9%	8.8%	66.7%
Male	Observed	16	2	18
	% within row	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
	% within column	32.0%	28.6%	31.6%
	% of total	28.1%	3.5%	31.6%
Non-Binary	Observed	1	0	1
	% within row	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within column	2.0%	0.0%	1.8%
	% of total	1.8%	0.0%	1.8%
Total	Observed	50	7	57
	% within row	87.7%	12.3%	100.0%
	% within column	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of total	87.7%	12.3%	100.0%

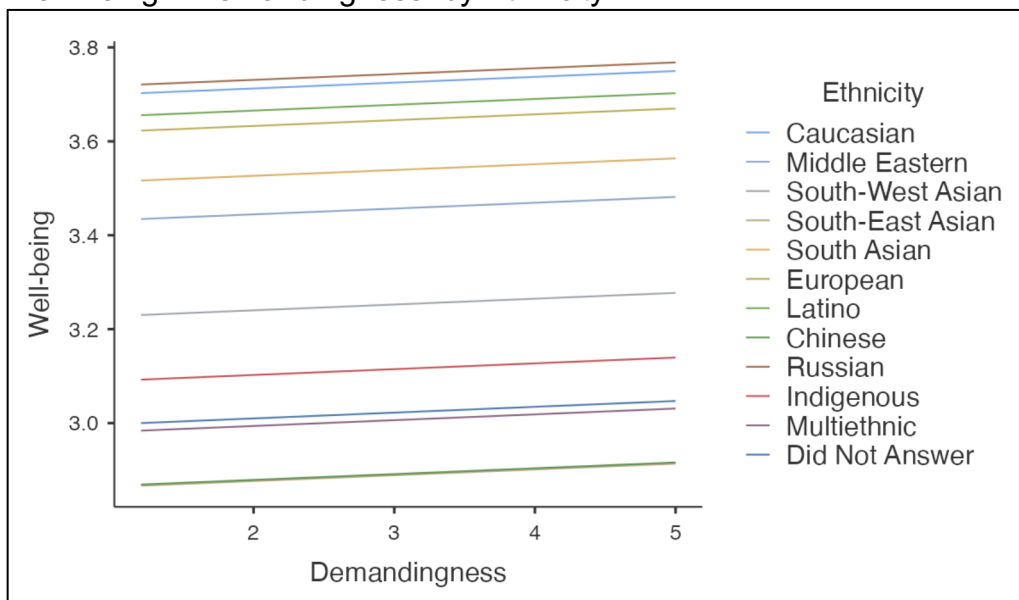
**Figure 3**  
Well-Being x Responsiveness: by Ethnicity



**Faculty Differences**

Differences in ratings of caregiver responsiveness and demandingness, along with overall well-being based on the participants' faculty were investigated using an independent sample T-Test. Since most respondents were in the faculty of Social Science, we coded the variable to be dichotomous, in which one group are respondents from the Social Science faculty and the other group are respondents from every other faculty. Tables 6 and 7 revealed that participants within the Social Science Faculty were

**Figure 4**  
Well-Being x Demandingness: by Ethnicity





**Table 9**  
Independent Samples T-Test

		Statistic	df	<i>p</i>
Well-being	Student's <i>t</i>	0.670	55.0	0.506
Responsiveness	Student's <i>t</i>	-0.431	55.0	0.668
Demandingness	Student's <i>t</i>	0.685	55.0	0.496

equal in overall well-being ( $M = 3.6$ ,  $SD = 0.42$ ) to those in other faculties ( $M = 3.6$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ), although these results were insignificant:  $t(55) = 0.67$ ,  $p = 0.506$ . Similar results were found for ratings of caregiver responsiveness, as those within the Faculty of Social Science were equal in their ratings of caregiver responsiveness ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) compared to those not in it ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ). However, these results were also insignificant:  $t(55) = -0.43$ ,  $p = 0.668$ . Finally, ratings of caregiver demandingness were only slightly higher for participants in the Faculty of Social Science ( $M = 2.1$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ) compared to those not ( $M = 2.0$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ). These differences are insignificant as well:  $t(55) = 0.68$ ,  $p = 0.496$ .

### Age Differences

Chi-Square tests were utilized to observe age differences in ratings of autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal growth. Both autonomy ( $X^2[1] = 9.00$ ,  $p = 0.173$ ) and environmental mastery ( $X^2[1] = 5.51$ ,  $p = 0.480$ ) had insignificant results, however, personal growth revealed significant data. Table 6 outlines high versus low personal

**Table 10**  
*Group Descriptives*

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Well-being	Social Science	23	3.6	3.78	0.418	0.0873
	Other faculties	34	3.6	3.53	0.467	0.0800
Responsiveness	Social Science	23	3.1	3.30	0.635	0.1324
	Other faculties	34	3.1	3.30	0.511	0.0877
Demandingness	Social Science	23	2.1	1.90	0.745	0.1553
	Other faculties	34	2.0	1.80	0.715	0.1226

growth differences in terms of age, indicating that out of the 3 participants who were 18 years old, 2 (66.7%) had high personal growth and 1 (33.3%) had low personal growth. Out of the 45 respondents who were 21 years old, 41 (91.1%) had high personal growth and 4 (8.9%) had low personal growth. Only 1 (100%) participant was 19 years-old and they had low personal growth, as well as the 1 (100%) participant who was 20 years-old. Both participants (100%) who were 22 years old had high personal growth, all participants (100%) who were 23 years old had high personal growth, and 1 (100%) participant who was 25+ years old had high personal growth. These age differences were statistically significant:  $X^2(1) = 17.0, p = 0.009$ .

### **Qualitative Results**

An inductive codebook approach was used to code 54 responses to the question “Please describe how you feel your caregivers’ parenting styles impact you.” Three main themes were generated from the responses: 1) strict parenting impacts, 2) supportive parenting impacts, and 3) absent parenting impacts. The themes and sub-themes are reported in Table 12.

#### **Strict Parenting Impacts**

##### ***Anxiety***

The majority of participants who reported that either one or both of their caregivers were strict also reported that they developed anxiety about their external environment, as one participant responded:

“They do impact us because if we are raised with too much over protecting it makes us feel anxious and less confident and vice versa for non-over protecting parents. I have one parent with an overprotective style and another that does not. Both equally care for me, but the parent that is more overprotective did cause me to be more anxious in my life.”

##### ***Insecurity***

Many participants who reported that either one or both of their caregivers were more strict also reported that they had developed insecurities about themselves.

“My caregivers’ approach to parenting was based on “traditional” gender roles that they tried to force onto their kids. Since I didn’t personally align with those same beliefs, Caregiver 1 would often berate and mock my beliefs and remove all affection. Their disrespect of me led to the destruction of our relationship and we are no longer on speaking terms. This caused me to develop self-doubt and question their love for me.”

##### ***Academic Achievement***

Several participants who reported that either one or both of their caregivers were more strict also reported that this drove them to high academic achievement and educational success, mostly out of the desire to meet the expectations of their caregiver(s).

“I think that my caregivers have always been supportive of my goals and activities. They have been actively engaged in my life. This has led me to hold high standards (social, academic, and employment) for myself and others.”

**Table 11**  
*Chi-Square Test for Personal Growth x Age*

Age		Personal-Growth		Total
		high personal growth	low personal growth	
18	Observed	2	1	3
	% within row	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within column	4.0%	14.3%	5.3%
	% of total	3.5%	1.8%	5.3%
19	Observed	0	1	1
	% within row	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within column	0.0%	14.3%	1.8%
	% of total	0.0%	1.8%	1.8%
20	Observed	0	1	1
	% within row	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within column	0.0%	14.3%	1.8%
	% of total	0.0%	1.8%	1.8%
21	Observed	41	4	45
	% within row	91.1%	8.9%	100.0%
	% within column	82.0%	57.1%	78.9%
	% of total	71.9%	7.0%	78.9%
22	Observed	2	0	2
	% within row	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within column	4.0%	0.0%	3.5%
	% of total	3.5%	0.0%	3.5%
23	Observed	4	0	4
	% within row	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within column	8.0%	0.0%	7.0%
	% of total	7.0%	0.0%	7.0%
25+	Observed	1	0	1
	% within row	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within column	2.0%	0.0%	1.8%
	% of total	1.8%	0.0%	1.8%
Total	Observed	50	7	57
	% within row	87.7%	12.3%	100.0%
	% within column	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of total	87.7%	12.3%	100.0%

**Table 12**  
Main Themes & Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-Themes
Strict Parenting Impacts	Anxiety Insecurity Academic Achievement
Supportive Parenting Impacts	Independence Confidence Motivation
Absent Parenting Impacts	Emotional Avoidance Independence

### **Supportive Parenting Impacts**

#### ***Independence***

Majority of participants who reported that either one or both of their caregivers were more supportive also reported that they had a strong sense of independence. As an example, one participant responded:

“My mother’s parenting styles made me who I am; she is caring, trustworthy, respectful, and always listens to what I have to say. She gave me freedom because of the trust we built with each other. I have a strong bond with my mother still and we chat on the phone constantly. I am very independent because of my mother’s parenting styles.”

#### ***Confidence***

This was another prominent result of participants’ caregiver(s) being reported as more supportive, as participants reported that they felt more confident in themselves. For instance, one individual said:

“My parents parenting style has ensured my self confidence and I feel I know what a good relationship and parenting style is. I can be very independent but can also rely on others.”

#### ***Motivation***

A third common sub-theme among respondents who reported their caregiver(s) as being more supportive involved them feeling motivated to work hard and achieve their goals.

“My mom has been very warm and loving. That has strengthened my ability to form close relationships with others. My dad’s parenting has changed over time. He has higher expectations for me but is very supportive, which motivates me to try hard.”

### **Absent Parenting Impacts**

#### ***Emotional Avoidance***

The majority of participants who reported either one or both of their caregivers as being more absent also reported that they struggled to express their emotions and feelings, as one participant responded:

“One parent is overly emotional and the other is absent of emotions. I have a very difficult time expressing how I truly feel and tend to break down when I have to.”

### ***Independence***

Many of the participants who reported either one or both of their caregivers as being more absent also reported feeling as though they had a stronger sense of independence primarily due to the lack of authority/presence from their caregiver(s). As an example, one participant responded:

“I am extremely independent because I never felt I could lean on my parents and since I was expected to be able to do things for myself.”

## **Discussion**

### **Analysis of Results**

#### ***Autonomy***

There was a significant positive correlation of 0.333 ( $p = 0.011$ ) between caregiver responsiveness and autonomy. This finding is consistent with the existing literature that associates parents who continue to respond to their child's needs past adolescence with feelings of autonomy (Adams & Berzonsky, 2006; Yerdaw & Rao, 2018). As defined by Carol Ryff (1989), autonomy refers to how independent an individual is and their level of self-determination. This domain significantly correlates with the well-being of emerging adults, as evidenced by our findings. Since our study was conducted on individuals between 18-25 years old, and the majority of participants were 21, our participants were at an age of expected independence. With the transition to university being a major life event, our findings underscore the importance of parental responsiveness in fostering autonomy within this new environment.

In contrast, the qualitative findings depicted that those who reported having strict, overbearing parents commonly reported higher levels of anxiety and insecurity. However, it is important to note that those with uninvolved or absent parents also expressed increased feelings of independence, likely stemming from the need for self-reliance in their circumstances. Those with high levels of autonomy do not rely on external validation but on how they view themselves, providing them with a sense of independence (Ryff, 1989). Therefore, while absent parenting may lead to a sense of independence in emerging adulthood, our findings suggest that responsive parenting encourages complete autonomy.

Overall, achieving autonomy during the university years is crucial, and the positive correlation identified with responsive parenting highlights the importance of caregivers continuing to support their child's needs into emerging adulthood. This sustained support not only fosters confidence but also cultivates autonomy, thereby enhancing the child's overall well-being.

#### ***Environmental Mastery***

Our study demonstrated a significant positive correlation of 0.464 ( $p < 0.001$ ) between parental responsiveness and environmental mastery. Individuals who reported that one

or both caregivers were highly responsive also reported higher levels of environmental mastery. According to Carol Ryff (1989), these individuals can create and choose environments that complement their mental state, allowing personal advancement. Environmental mastery requires that an individual receives the support and discretion to take advantage of their environment and make creative changes that best suit their mental state (Ryff, 1989). Our study complements pre-existing literature, demonstrating that parental practices fostering consistent communication, warmth, and support positively influence children's long-term psychological well-being (Mendez & Sanvictores, 2022; Yerdaw & Rao, 2018).

We believe that it is through parental responsiveness that caregivers provide the support necessary for their children to thrive within this dimension of well-being. The qualitative data from our study reaffirms this argument; individuals who reported having a caregiver high in responsiveness also reported having a stronger sense of independence, confidence, and motivation. On the contrary, individuals who reported having parents with more of a strict parenting style reported feelings of anxiety and insecurity. These participants noted experiencing anxiety and insecurity surrounding the development of themselves and their external environment. In this regard, we can clearly see how supportive parents foster the ability and belief for one to take control of their environment and how strict parenting styles, contrary to this approach, inhibit individuals from being able to do so.

Analyzing pre-existing literature and the results of our study, we reiterate the significance of parental responsiveness as a determinant of psychological well-being. More specifically, as it correlates to environmental mastery, parental responsiveness plays a significant role in providing individuals with the support, confidence, and tools necessary to modify and take advantage of opportunities in their environment as emerging adults.

### ***Personal Growth***

When analyzing parental responsiveness and well-being, our study found a significant positive correlation of 0.303 ( $p = 0.022$ ) between parental responsiveness and personal growth. The overall findings present that participants who reported having one or both caregivers high in responsiveness also indicated experiencing greater levels of personal growth, which encompasses the continual positive development of one's personal prospect and ability to adapt in a manner that demonstrates greater effectiveness and self-realization (Ryff, 1989, 1995). Through parental responsiveness, individuals are encouraged to expand their individuality and self-awareness, both essential for personal growth. Moreover, numerous factors are important in this well-being domain, including anxiety, motivation, self-regulation, academic success, and more.

The qualitative data from our study revealed that individuals who were raised by strict parents reported feelings of anxiety and insecurity. These participants reported an increased sense of anxiety and insecurity towards themselves and their environment. The implications of this parenting style diminished any feelings of ability, effectiveness, and self-knowledge that would allow an individual to grow and prosper. In contrast, participants who were raised by supportive parents reported increased feelings of independence, confidence, and motivation. The support these individuals received from their caregiver(s) transcended into the development of fostering traits that positively

impacted personal growth. Our findings are consistent with previous literature, stating that authoritative parenting, high in parental responsiveness, is associated with positive outcomes on students' ability to thrive in their new college environment and significantly negatively associated with students' anxiety levels (Barton & Kirtley, 2012; Silva et al., 2007).

Furthermore, there were notable age differences in the domain of personal growth. Our findings indicate that as the participants' age increased, so did their personal growth. The data outlined that 66.7% of the 18-year-old participants had high personal growth, and 100% of the 19 and 20-year-old participants had low personal growth. As the participants' ages increased, 91.1% of the 21-year-olds had high personal growth, and 100% of the 22, 23 and 25+ participants reported high personal growth. Therefore, our results indicate that personal development increased with the participants' age.

Upon thoroughly examining our study's findings, we conclude that parental responsiveness is the key to achieving great levels of personal growth. Caring for a child's needs, encouraging individuality, and promoting self-awareness brought forth by parental responsiveness is key in shaping individuals' growth through fostering independence and cultivating a strong sense of identity.

### ***Ethnic Differences***

Interestingly, our results revealed that Chinese participants were significantly more likely to have lower overall well-being after rating their caregiver(s) as more demanding. This could be attributable to numerous reasons. First, there are differences in collectivistic and individualistic cultures surrounding parenting styles, and some collectivistic cultures may have norms towards using more authoritarian parenting styles (Peterson et al., 2005). Despite these norms, several comparison studies have indicated that Chinese adolescents had lower ratings on specific aspects of psychological well-being when they had more authoritarian caregivers than adolescents from Western cultures (Bi et al., 2018; Mousavi et al., 2016). Peterson et al., (2005) noted that in traditional Chinese culture, it is common for families to avoid confrontation in order to maintain harmony, which might explain why several studies are revealing that, when compared to Western adolescents, Chinese adolescents report lower levels of various psychological well-being dimensions (Bi et al., 2018; Mousavi et al., 2016). Perhaps Chinese adolescents feel as though they are unable to express their emotions to their caregivers, and this causes them to experience psychological strain. In relation to our study, the Chinese participants were more likely to have lower ratings of overall well-being when they rated their caregiver(s) as more demanding, which aligns with previous research analyzing this relationship.

### ***Insignificant findings***

While our study uncovered several significant findings, numerous aspects of our research revealed no significant correlations. Notably, we did not find a significant correlation between parental responsiveness and increased positive relations with others, purpose in life, or self-acceptance. These outcomes were unexpected, particularly in light of previous literature suggesting notable correlations in these domains (Lathren et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2007; Zeinali et al., 2011). Additionally, our research did not find a significant relationship between overall well-being and parental demandingness. Previous

research has consistently linked high levels of parental demandingness, often associated with an authoritarian parenting style, with adverse effects such as reduced personal growth (Barton & Kirtley, 2012), purpose in life (Ortega et al., 2021), self-acceptance (Roth et al., 2019), environmental mastery, (Segrin et al., 2022), positive relationships with others (Zeinali et al., 2011), and autonomy (Adams & Berzonky, 2006; Yerdaw & Rao, 2018). However, we attribute these insignificant findings to our small sample size ( $N=57$ ), as research with larger and more diverse samples yields significant correlations in these areas. Despite the lack of significant correlations in certain areas, our study underscores the importance of continued research into the relationship between parenting practices and psychological well-being, which has far-reaching implications for future research and parenting policies.

## **Broader Significance**

### ***Future Research***

Our analysis of pre-existing literature revealed a massive gap in research surrounding the implications of parenting styles on the well-being of emerging adults. As discussed previously, most of the existing literature exploring the impacts of parenting styles on well-being is primarily concentrated on children and adolescents. In response, our study focused on the emerging adult population, using McMaster undergraduate students as a sample to conduct a comprehensive analysis and fill in the gaps within the existing literature. The findings of our study revealed that parenting styles have long-term implications on individuals' psychological well-being, even in adulthood. Not only does this research provide greater insight and enlarge the scope surrounding this topic, but it also demonstrates the need to conduct more longitudinal research examining these implications. Based on our findings, future research should seek to examine the duration of these implications throughout the life course of an individual; this will allow for a truly comprehensive understanding of the impact that parents have on their children.

### ***Connection to Policies***

Our research findings can be integrated into existing practices, as caregivers must grasp the impact of their parenting style on various facets of their child's well-being. As highlighted, students exhibiting higher levels of overall well-being, particularly in areas including personal growth, autonomy, and environmental mastery, consistently rated their caregivers higher in responsiveness. This observed correlation suggests that parents who foster a responsive environment for their children contribute positively to their overall well-being, which has long-term impacts. These insights are extremely valuable for awareness and education, emphasizing that parents should understand that being responsive can help their child achieve higher levels of overall well-being.

However, we acknowledge that not all individuals have the means to access scholarly articles to obtain this vital information. Thus, it is imperative to translate this knowledge into accessible resources to bridge the gap between research findings and policy implementation. One approach to incorporate these insights into policy is by integrating parenting classes. By offering such classes at local community centres, parents could receive reasonably priced guidance on effectively creating a responsive environment for their children, eliminating the need to seek out research independently. This approach ensures that parents can receive guidance on maintaining balance in the household to



avoid excess coddling while fostering a supportive atmosphere. In addition, since this option may not be feasible for everyone, another avenue for parents to access this crucial information is through professional support such as pediatricians or therapists. Integrating research such as our own into the training curriculum for professionals who engage with families can help parents receive advice in a more accessible manner, aiding in the cultivation of a healthy parent-child relationship. Furthermore, interventions within educational institutions offer another avenue for implementing these research findings. By providing free opportunities to participate in workshops or information sessions grounded in research, schools can play a pivotal role in educating parents about creating a responsive home environment. These initiatives aim to elucidate the long-term effects of parent styles on a child's overall well-being, empowering parents with the knowledge and skills essential for fostering healthy development.

## Conclusion

### Summary of Findings

Our study explored the impact of parenting styles on Carol Ryff's (1989) dimensions of well-being, illuminating how early childhood experiences shape psychological and emotional health among young adults. Quantitative analysis of the data found that parenting styles significantly impact overall well-being. Specifically, caregiver responsiveness emerged as a factor associated with higher levels of autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal growth. In contrast, parental demandingness did not correlate significantly with overall well-being or any of Ryff's (1989) well-being domains. Complimenting these quantitative findings, our qualitative analysis provided deeper insights into the dynamics of parenting styles, with three primary themes: strict parenting, supportive parenting, and absent parenting. Participants who were raised with strict caregivers experienced heightened levels of anxiety, insecurity, and academic achievement, whereas those with supportive caregivers had increased independence, confidence, and intrinsic motivation. Lastly, the absence of caregiver involvement, as seen in neglectful parenting, resulted in participants' reporting increased emotional avoidance and a premature sense of independence.

### Limitations

One limitation that could have potentially impacted the objectivity and integrity of our thesis project is that all members of our research team are students at McMaster University. Our study sample comprised undergraduate students at McMaster University, the same demographic as all of our group members. It is important to note that Madeline Facey, Kyla Guerriero, and Mia Dimovski had previously been employed by McMaster University as teaching assistants. These affiliations introduce the possibility of bias within our study for two main reasons. First, students might have experienced a sense of obligation to participate in our study, arising from prior interactions with Madeline F., Kyla, or Mia as teaching assistants, or alternatively, due to our shared membership at McMaster University.

Another limitation of our study is that minimal research has been published that analyzes how parenting styles affect adult populations. While attachment theory and parenting styles have been extensively researched, current literature explores these concepts in the context of child and adolescent development, relationships, and well-

being. The implications of childhood attachment and parenting styles on young adults, specifically in the context of well-being, have received significantly less attention. This is a significant limitation as lacking research might have hindered our ability to draw connections between our study results on McMaster students and the broader population. Therefore, while our study has attempted to bridge this gap in current research, the scarcity of available studies on adult populations is a notable limitation of our topic.

The final limitation of this study pertains to data collection and analysis. Despite our initial goal of recruiting 80 participants, we encountered some challenges during the recruitment phase, resulting in a total of 57 participants. While this sample size provided valuable insights into the attitudes and behaviours of McMaster students, it falls short of our intended target. Consequently, our results may be less generalizable to the broader McMaster undergraduate community and the young adult population as a whole. Nevertheless, the insights gained from this study still offer valuable contributions to the existing literature in this research domain.

### **Significant Insights**

Our study has uncovered three significant positive correlations between parental responsiveness and key dimensions of Ryff's (1989) well-being domains: autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal growth. These insights underscore the crucial role of parental responsiveness in shaping emerging adults' psychological well-being, aligning with the principles of self-determination theory. Interestingly, our qualitative analysis further supported these domains, illustrating how supportive parenting fosters independence, confidence, and motivation. In light of these findings, our study offers a deeper understanding of how parenting practices profoundly influence the development of young adults. These insights are useful for the academic community and have practical implications for fostering positive developmental outcomes across adults.

### **Concluding Thoughts and Statements**

In conclusion, our study provides valuable insights into the impact of parenting styles on the psychological well-being of emerging adults, specifically McMaster undergraduate students. Through a mixed-methods approach, we found that parental responsiveness significantly correlates with higher levels of overall well-being, autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal growth, emphasizing the enduring influence of early caregiving experiences. By bridging the gap in the literature, our study contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors shaping individuals' psychological well-being, with implications for future research, parenting practices, and policies.

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