

The Impact of Authoritarian Parenting on Romantic Relationship Quality among Chinese Emerging Adults: The Mediating Roles of Type D Personality and Self-Compassion and the Moderating Role of Authoritarian Filial Piety

Wen Mei, Nor Shafrin Binti Ahmad*

School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Email: wenmei123@student.usm.my

*Corresponding Author Email: sham@usm.my

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Abstract

This conceptual review explores how authoritarian parenting impacts the romantic relationship quality of Chinese emerging adults, with a focus on two mediating psychological factors: Type D personality and self-compassion, as well as the moderating influence of authoritarian filial piety. Grounded in Attachment Theory and Self-Determination Theory, this study proposes that an authoritarian parenting style, characterized by high control and low warmth, can predispose offspring to a Type D “distressed” personality marked by high negative affectivity and social inhibition, while also lowering levels of self-compassion. These psychological outcomes, in turn, undermine the quality of later romantic relationships. Furthermore, the study posits that these dynamics are shaped by cultural context. The traditional value of authoritarian filial piety, which emphasizes unquestioning obedience to parents, may amplify the negative effects of strict parenting on relationship outcomes. To substantiate this model, we review current literature on romantic relationship quality, parenting styles, personality development, and cultural values in Chinese contexts. The proposed framework sheds light on the interplay of familial socialization, individual personality traits, and cultural filial beliefs in shaping young adults’ romantic relationship satisfaction and stability. In conclusion, this paper highlights a critical research gap and suggests directions for future empirical studies to test the moderated mediation model in Chinese populations.

Keywords: Authoritarian Parenting, Romantic Relationship Quality, Type D Personality, Self-Compassion, Filial Piety

Introduction

Romantic relationships are a central aspect of emerging adulthood (late teens to twenties), significantly contributing to emotional well-being and life satisfaction (Braithwaite, Delevi, & Fincham, 2010; Arnett, 2000). High-quality romantic relationships, typically characterized by

strong intimacy, trust, commitment, and satisfaction - are associated with better mental and even physical health outcomes in young adults (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Neff & Beretvas, 2013). In the Chinese cultural context, these formative relationships do not develop in isolation; they are heavily influenced by enduring family values and social expectations (Chen & Wu, 2021). Chinese emerging adults often hold relatively conservative dating attitudes and prioritize parental approval in choosing their partners, reflecting deep-seated family-oriented values (Chen & Wu, 2017; Gao, 2001). Consistent with Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood, parental and family factors remain critical influences on Asian young adults' romantic lives (Chen & Wu, 2021; Li, Li, & Yang, 2020).

Cultural norms such as filial piety, a Confucian ethical system emphasizing respect, obedience, and devotion to parents, significantly shape relationship expectations among Chinese youth (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). Filial piety can exert both positive effects, such as fostering relational commitment, and negative effects, such as creating external pressure, guilt, and stress when romantic preferences conflict with parental expectations (Chen & Wu, 2021; Yeh & Bedford, 2019). This complex cultural backdrop provides an essential context for examining how parenting experiences during childhood may subsequently influence the quality of romantic relationships in adulthood.

A crucial aspect of family socialization relevant to relationship outcomes is parenting style. Authoritarian parenting, in particular, has been extensively studied in developmental psychology as a style marked by high demandingness, reflected in strict rules and rigid control, and low responsiveness, reflected in limited warmth, emotional support, and autonomy granting (Baumrind, 1971; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Baumrind's classic research highlighted that children raised in authoritarian families typically display greater withdrawal, lower contentment, and poorer psychosocial adjustment compared to those from authoritative families, which balance warmth with appropriate discipline (Baumrind, 1971). Studies in Western samples have consistently shown that authoritarian parenting is associated with diminished social skills, lower self-esteem, heightened anxiety and depression, and more frequent behavioral problems in offspring (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989).

However, in Chinese and other East Asian contexts, strict and controlling parenting behaviors can be more culturally normative and might not always carry the same negative implications perceived in Western cultures (Chao, 2001; Pinquart & Kauser, 2018). A cross-cultural meta-analysis by Pinquart and Kauser (2018) revealed that authoritarian parenting had comparatively less detrimental effects on children in Asian contexts than in Western contexts, suggesting cultural moderation. Indeed, Chinese parenting practices sometimes integrate strictness with high parental involvement and care, a phenomenon described as "training" or *guan* (Chao, 2001). Nevertheless, even within this culturally nuanced perspective, authoritarian parenting has been linked to notable psychological difficulties among Chinese youth, including higher rates of anxiety, depression, and interpersonal difficulties, all of which can negatively impact relationship formation and maintenance later in life (Chen & Wu, 2021).

This paper specifically addresses the critical question: How does authoritarian parenting affect the romantic relationship quality of Chinese emerging adults? To answer this question, a conceptual model is proposed that incorporates two psychological mediators: Type D personality and self-compassion. Type D personality, often referred to as the "distressed"

personality type, is characterized by high negative affectivity and strong social inhibition, which together reflect chronic emotional distress and difficulties in social interactions (Denollet, 2005). We posit that authoritarian parenting fosters the development of these Type D traits, which subsequently impair romantic relationship functioning. In addition, self-compassion is considered a positive self-regulatory trait that involves showing kindness toward oneself during experiences of failure or adversity (Neff & Beretvas, 2013). Harsh and critical parenting practices are hypothesized to weaken the capacity for self-compassion and to promote self-criticism, both of which may undermine the quality of romantic relationships. Finally, authoritarian filial piety (AFP) is introduced as a critical cultural moderator in this model. AFP represents a strong adherence to hierarchical and obligatory filial norms, emphasizing absolute parental authority and obedience (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). Individuals high in AFP are likely to internalize parental authoritarianism more deeply, potentially intensifying its negative effects on romantic relationships. These individuals may experience heightened psychological pressure and conflict, given the rigid expectation to comply with parental wishes even into adulthood (Yeh & Bedford, 2019).

The motivation for this study stems from the need to better understand how early family socialization shapes the romantic lives of Chinese emerging adults, an area that remains underexplored despite its developmental and cultural significance. While prior research has examined parenting styles, personality traits, or cultural values in isolation, little is known about their joint influence on romantic relationship quality. This paper addresses this gap by proposing an integrative conceptual model that highlights the mediating roles of Type D personality and self-compassion, as well as the moderating effect of authoritarian filial piety. In doing so, the study contributes to the literature by (1) situating the effects of authoritarian parenting within a culturally grounded framework, (2) extending Attachment Theory and Self-Determination Theory to explain personality and relational outcomes, and (3) offering a nuanced perspective that underscores both psychological and cultural mechanisms shaping intimate relationships in contemporary Chinese contexts.

In the subsequent sections, this paper systematically reviews relevant literature and theoretical perspectives to build support for the proposed integrative conceptual model. The discussion first clarifies the concept of romantic relationship quality and its significance, then examines authoritarian parenting and its developmental impacts within Chinese cultural contexts. It further explores Type D personality and self-compassion as potential mediators, and considers authoritarian filial piety (AFP) as a moderator of these associations. The paper also delineates the theoretical foundations, specifically Attachment Theory and Self-Determination Theory, that inform this framework. Finally, it highlights critical research gaps in the existing scholarship and presents a conceptual model designed to guide future empirical investigations. Ultimately, this analysis seeks to provide a nuanced, culturally informed understanding of how familial experiences shape romantic outcomes for Chinese emerging adults.

Literature Review

Romantic Relationship Quality in Chinese Emerging Adults

Romantic relationship quality refers to the overall goodness or health of a romantic relationship, typically reflected in factors such as mutual satisfaction, intimacy, trust, commitment, and constructive communication (Braithwaite, Delevi, & Fincham, 2010;

Hassebrauck & Fehr, 2002). High-quality relationships are those in which partners feel happy, secure, and supported. Hassebrauck and Fehr (2002), for example, identified multiple dimensions of relationship quality, such as intimacy, agreement, and independence, which collectively contribute to an overall sense of fulfillment in the partnership. In Chinese cultural settings, the conceptualization of a "good" romantic relationship may place additional emphasis on harmony, sacrifice, and respect. Gao (2001) observed that Chinese individuals particularly valued respectfulness and gentleness in an ideal partner compared to their Western counterparts, reflecting traditional cultural values influencing relationship expectations. Nonetheless, common core elements, such as emotional closeness and satisfaction, appear important in defining relationship quality across cultures.

Why is romantic relationship quality important for emerging adults? Research indicates that the quality of one's romantic relationships during young adulthood significantly impacts mental health, academic or work functioning, and future family stability (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Li, Li, & Yang, 2020). Positive romantic relationships provide social support, reduce stress, and enhance well-being, whereas poor-quality or distressed relationships contribute to depression, anxiety, and other negative outcomes (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Li et al., 2020). A longitudinal study in China by Li et al. (2020) demonstrated that higher interparental conflict during childhood predicted lower romantic relationship quality in emerging adulthood, largely because family conflict undermined the child's sense of security and healthy attachment. This underscores that family-of-origin dynamics significantly influence romantic relationship development among emerging adults. Generally, having a supportive, loving romantic partner during the transition to adulthood can buffer life stressors, whereas involvement in high-conflict or unsupportive relationships can compound these stresses (Braithwaite et al., 2010).

Given these stakes, understanding predictors of romantic relationship quality is crucial. Prior research has shown that individual differences (such as personality traits and mental health), relationship processes (like communication patterns and conflict resolution skills), and social-contextual factors (like cultural norms and family influences) all play roles in shaping relationship quality (Gao, 2001; Neff & Beretvas, 2013). For Chinese young adults, parental influence is a particularly notable factor. Many still live with or near parents until marriage, and parental opinions significantly influence dating decisions (Chen & Wu, 2021). Moreover, cultural scripts in China often encourage young people to approach romantic relationships cautiously and seriously, emphasizing marriage and family approval (Chen & Wu, 2017). These factors elevate the importance of early family socialization in shaping how young adults conduct and experience romantic relationships. Therefore, exploring how a parental factor such as parenting style might influence later relationship quality is both culturally relevant and developmentally important.

Authoritarian Parenting and its Influence

Authoritarian parenting is one of the classic parenting styles identified in developmental psychology, characterized by strict discipline, high demands for obedience, and low emotional warmth or responsiveness (Baumrind, 1971; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Authoritarian parents enforce rigid rules and expect children to follow them without question, often using punishment or withdrawal of affection to control behavior. They emphasize respect for authority and obedience over open dialogue or autonomy granting. Baumrind (1971) first

systematically described this parenting style, later expanded by Maccoby and Martin (1983). Children raised under authoritarian parenting typically experience high control coupled with low emotional support.

Numerous studies conducted in Western contexts link authoritarian parenting to less favorable developmental outcomes. For example, children and adolescents with authoritarian parents generally exhibit lower self-esteem, poorer social skills, and higher levels of internalizing problems such as anxiety (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). They often become less independent and assertive, learning to suppress their opinions to avoid parental disapproval. Adolescents from authoritarian families are frequently more withdrawn, distrustful, and discontented compared to those from authoritative families who tend to be self-reliant and confident (Baumrind, 1971; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Such effects are typically explained by the absence of warmth and autonomy support, thwarting children's basic psychological needs and hindering the development of secure self-concepts (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989).

In Chinese and other East Asian societies, authoritarian parenting has historically been relatively common and culturally accepted to a certain degree (Chao, 2001; Pinquart & Kauser, 2018). Influenced by Confucian traditions, many Chinese parents perceive strict discipline and high expectations as expressions of love and responsibility, a concept often described as the "training" or *guan* style (Chao, 2001). However, it is important to distinguish between this culturally embedded "training" style, which involves strictness combined with involvement, and the harsh, emotionally distant authoritarian style commonly described in Western literature. Nonetheless, many Chinese parents do fit the profile of authoritarian parenting (high control, low warmth), and research has documented its negative impacts on Chinese children. Ang and Goh (2006), for instance, found in Singapore - an Asian context with similar cultural values - that authoritarian parenting was associated with poorer emotional adjustment among adolescents. A meta-analysis by Pinquart and Kauser (2018) also revealed that while authoritarian parenting's negative effects (e.g., behavior problems, academic challenges) were weaker in Asia compared to Western contexts, they were still significant. Thus, even in cultures where strict parenting is normative, authoritarian parenting presents risks to children's healthy development.

One pathway through which authoritarian parenting may influence children is via attachment and social relationships. According to Attachment Theory, insensitive or cold parenting can lead children to develop insecure attachment styles, which impair later romantic relationship quality (Li et al., 2020). Indeed, Chinese emerging adults who recall their parents as overcontrolling or unaccepting often report difficulties with intimacy and trust in romantic relationships (Chen & Wu, 2021). Parental authoritarianism can influence children's models of relationships, teaching them to perceive relationships as based on hierarchy and criticism rather than mutual warmth. Consequently, such individuals may struggle with open communication or expect harsh behaviors from romantic partners, straining their relationships. Further theoretical elaboration will be provided in later sections.

In summary, authoritarian parenting within the Chinese context presents a double-edged sword. On the one hand, its emphasis on discipline aligns with cultural expectations of filial obedience and sometimes promotes external successes, such as academic achievement. On

the other hand, its lack of emotional support and autonomy can impede psychosocial development critical for intimate relationships. Emerging evidence suggests that Chinese young adults from authoritarian families experience more conflict, lower satisfaction, and avoidant attitudes toward intimacy in romantic relationships (Chen & Wu, 2021). Cultural values such as filial piety could moderate these outcomes, leading us to consider authoritarian filial piety as a significant contextual factor influencing authoritarian parenting effects.

Type D Personality

Type D personality is a construct defined by two stable tendencies: (1) negative affectivity, which refers to the propensity to experience frequent negative emotions such as worry, irritability, and gloom, and (2) social inhibition, which reflects a tendency to suppress self-expression and avoid social interactions due to fear of disapproval (Denollet, 2005; Mols & Denollet, 2010; Williams & Wingate, 2012). In essence, individuals with a Type D personality are chronically distressed and socially reticent. This construct was first introduced in health psychology by Denollet (2005) to explain why certain cardiac patients demonstrated worse prognoses. Research showed that the chronic stress and lack of social support associated with Type D personality were linked to poorer health outcomes (Denollet, 2005; Kupper & Denollet, 2018; van den Broek et al., 2010).

Subsequent research has extended Type D personality to general populations, finding it to be associated with a range of negative outcomes including depression, anxiety, low quality of life, and poor interpersonal functioning (Allen, Wetherell, & Smith, 2019; Mols & Denollet, 2010; Pedersen & Denollet, 2006). People with Type D profiles often report feeling lonely and misunderstood. They tend to have a pessimistic outlook and high self-criticism, while also being uncomfortable opening up to others, which can lead to limited social networks and support (Allen et al., 2019; Pedersen & Denollet, 2006; Williams & Wingate, 2012).

A critical question is how a Type D personality develops. While genetic predispositions may play a role, environmental factors in childhood are thought to contribute significantly. Parenting style is one such factor. Research has found that adverse parenting experiences, such as high parental criticism, coldness, or overprotection, are linked to later Type D traits (Meesters & Muris, 2004; van den Broek et al., 2010; Vukasović & Bratko, 2015). In a Dutch study by van den Broek et al. (2010), adults who remembered their parents as less caring and more controlling were more likely to exhibit Type D personality characteristics. Importantly, that study showed Type D personality mediated the relationship between remembered adverse parenting and poor self-reported health in adulthood, implying a developmental pathway from early parenting to personality or coping style (van den Broek et al., 2010; Meesters & Muris, 2004; Vukasović & Bratko, 2015).

Children raised by punitive, emotionally unsupportive parents often exhibit more social anxiety, shyness, and pervasive worry, core features of Type D. They learn to suppress opinions and emotions to avoid punishment, a habit generalized to peer and romantic relationships as social inhibition. Constant criticism or high expectations also predispose them to inadequacy and anxiety, forming negative affectivity (Allen et al., 2019; Kupper & Denollet, 2018; Pedersen & Denollet, 2006). Indeed, individuals with Type D personality report lower perceived social support and greater loneliness regardless of their actual social

contacts, suggesting a cognitive-affective tendency rooted in early experiences of low parental warmth (Allen et al., 2019; Mols & Denollet, 2010; Williams & Wingate, 2012).

How might Type D personality affect romantic relationship quality? Given its characteristics, Type D can be detrimental in intimate relationships. Type D individuals may be overly sensitive to criticism from partners, quick to feel negative emotions during conflicts, and hesitant to express needs or feelings, causing partners to perceive them as distant or emotionally difficult. Studies show Type D individuals often experience lower relationship satisfaction and communication issues, likely due to withdrawal and rumination rather than addressing problems constructively (Borkoles et al., 2018; Pedersen & Denollet, 2006; Spindler et al., 2009). Additionally, they have higher rates of being single or lacking close confidants, aligning with difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships (Borkoles et al., 2018; Mols & Denollet, 2010; Williams & Wingate, 2012).

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is a positive psychological construct defined by being kind and understanding toward oneself during instances of pain or failure, recognizing one's difficulties as part of the broader human experience, and holding painful feelings in mindful awareness rather than over-identifying with distress (Neff, 2003; Gilbert, 2009; MacBeth & Gumley, 2012). Kristin Neff identifies three components of self-compassion: self-kindness versus self-judgment, sense of common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification (Neff, 2003; Gilbert, 2009; MacBeth & Gumley, 2012).

Self-compassionate individuals treat themselves with similar warmth and care as they would offer a good friend during difficult times. This quality has been linked to numerous positive outcomes, including enhanced emotional well-being, resilience, and adaptive coping with stress (Neff & Beretvas, 2013; MacBeth & Gumley, 2012; Yarnell & Neff, 2013). Conversely, low self-compassion, characterized by harsh self-criticism, shame, or isolation, is associated with higher depression, anxiety, and maladaptive perfectionism (Gilbert, 2009; MacBeth & Gumley, 2012; Yarnell & Neff, 2013).

The family environment significantly influences self-compassion development. Parents who are supportive, accepting, and emotionally warm model compassionate self-treatment for their children. If children experience unconditional love, they learn kindness towards themselves even when they fail (Kelly & Dupasquier, 2016; Pepping et al., 2015; Wei, Liao, Ku, & Shaffer, 2011). Conversely, overly critical, shaming, or rejecting parenting teaches children to base their self-worth on perfection, punishing themselves harshly for errors, leading to a persistent lack of self-compassion (Kelly & Dupasquier, 2016; Pepping et al., 2015; Wei et al., 2011).

Empirical studies support these links: Pepping et al. (2015) found young adults recalling mothers as warm and supportive reported higher self-compassion, whereas maternal coldness correlated with significantly lower self-compassion. Similarly, Irons et al. (2006) found individuals who experienced high parental criticism and low care struggled significantly with self-kindness, becoming strongly self-critical. Recent findings also showed parental responsiveness (warmth, nurturance, acceptance) positively correlated with adolescents'

self-compassion, whereas parental demandingness or strict control had little direct positive association (Kelly & Dupasquier, 2016; Pepping et al., 2015; Wei et al., 2011).

In authoritarian parenting scenarios, emotional climates are low in warmth and high in criticism or conditional approval. Children may learn to evaluate themselves against strict standards, harshly chastising themselves for shortcomings - mirroring parental behavior. They may also feel isolated and ruminate on failures, solidifying low self-compassion. Studies confirm adults recalling authoritarian parenting struggle significantly with self-compassion, showing supportive parenting predicting increased self-compassion and psychologically controlling parenting predicting lower self-compassion or increased self-critical traits (Kelly & Dupasquier, 2016; Pepping et al., 2015).

Self-compassion significantly affects interpersonal relationships, including romantic relationships. Individuals high in self-compassion have better relationship outcomes, handling conflicts constructively, communicating openly, and being more accepting of partner imperfections (Neff & Beretvas, 2013; Yarnell & Neff, 2013; Zessin, Dickhäuser, & Garbade, 2015). They respond less defensively during conflicts, acknowledging faults with equanimity and forgiveness. Neff and Beretvas (2013) demonstrated that higher self-compassion relates to greater relational well-being, with more compassionate individuals described by partners as caring and supportive, and partners reporting greater relationship satisfaction. Other research also found self-compassionate emerging adults experienced higher romantic satisfaction through trust, expressed love, and commitment (Yarnell & Neff, 2013; Zessin et al., 2015).

In this model, it is proposed that authoritarian parenting can harm later romantic relationship quality by impairing self-compassion. A Chinese emerging adult raised by critical, unsupportive parents might experience pervasive self-doubt or criticism, negatively affecting romantic relationships. Conversely, self-compassion developed through supportive relationships or personal growth might buffer authoritarian parenting effects, enabling healthier romantic interactions. Thus, self-compassion significantly links early parenting with adult romantic relationships.

Underpinning Theories

This study is underpinned by two major psychological theories: Attachment Theory and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). These frameworks help explain the pathways from authoritarian parenting to personality development, self-compassion, and relationship quality, as well as the role of cultural context.

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1988) provides a lens for understanding how early parent-child interactions shape later relationship patterns (Bowlby, 1969; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Simpson & Rholes, 2017). According to Attachment Theory, children develop internal working models of relationships based on the responsiveness and sensitivity of their caregivers. A warm, responsive parent fosters a secure attachment, wherein the child feels worthy of love and expects others to be supportive (Bowlby, 1969; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Simpson & Rholes, 2017). In contrast, an authoritarian parent, often cold or rejecting when the child does not comply, and possibly inconsistently emotionally available, fosters insecure attachment: either anxious (with the child becoming clingy and fearful of abandonment) or

avoidant (with the child suppressing attachment needs to avoid rejection) (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Simpson & Rholes, 2017; Thompson, 2008).

In China, secure parent-child attachment has been linked to better interpersonal security and smoother romantic relationship experiences in emerging adulthood (Li, Li, & Yang, 2020; Shi, Wang, & Zou, 2017; Xia et al., 2018). Insecure attachment resulting from authoritarian parenting may manifest as difficulties in trust and emotional closeness with romantic partners, echoing internal working models such as “others are controlling or unresponsive, and I must either cling or withdraw” (Simpson & Rholes, 2017; Xia et al., 2018; Zhang & Labouvie-Vief, 2004). Attachment theory also aligns with the mediation by personality and self-compassion: a child with insecure attachment may develop a negative, anxious personality (similar to Type D traits) and a more critical self-view (low self-compassion), both of which carry forward into adult relationships (Pepping et al., 2015; Simpson & Rholes, 2017; Wei, Liao, Ku, & Shaffer, 2011).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasizes the importance of satisfying three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, for healthy development and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT distinguishes between autonomy-supportive environments, which encourage choice, volition, and self-initiation, and controlling environments, which pressure individuals to think, feel, or behave in particular ways (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Authoritarian parenting is quintessentially controlling: children are given little room for autonomy or voice, with compliance enforced through power (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). According to SDT, such environments thwart the fundamental need for autonomy and strain the need for relatedness (due to a lack of genuine warmth), leading to poorer internal growth (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Over time, this can result in controlled motivation or amotivation in the individual. For instance, a child might become motivated primarily by avoiding punishment or seeking approval rather than by intrinsic interest or personal values (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

This theoretical perspective sheds light on why someone from an authoritarian family might struggle in romantic relationships: healthy relationships require autonomous expression and mutual fulfillment of psychological needs (autonomy and relatedness) (Knee, Hadden, Porter, & Rodriguez, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). If conditioned to suppress autonomy and follow authority, individuals may become passive in relationships or replicate controlling behaviors because that is the relational model they have learned (Knee et al., 2013; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). SDT also explains how authoritarian parenting impedes self-compassion; controlling, critical parenting often internalizes as controlling, critical self-talk, meaning individuals treat themselves with the same lack of empathy as their parents did. Frustration of the relatedness need (feeling unloved) could directly reduce the capacity for self-kindness, while autonomy frustration contributes to anxiety and resentment - traits associated with Type D personality (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Together, Attachment Theory explains how authoritarian parenting fosters insecure attachment and negative working models that predispose Type D traits and low self-compassion, ultimately impairing romantic bonds in adulthood (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Simpson & Rholes, 2017; Thompson, 2008). Self-Determination Theory elucidates how authoritarian parenting frustrates basic psychological needs, leading to maladaptive motivational and emotional patterns (distress, inhibition, self-criticism), which similarly damage romantic relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Both theories underscore the importance of early experiences for later interpersonal functioning, providing a robust theoretical foundation for our proposed model of interrelated influences.

Research Gap

A review of the existing literature identifies several critical research gaps. First, although the impacts of authoritarian parenting have been extensively studied, few studies have directly examined its specific influence on romantic relationship quality among Chinese emerging adults, especially from an integrative perspective considering personality traits and self-compassion (Chen & Wu, 2021; Xia, Li, & Liu, 2018; Li, Li, & Yang, 2020). Second, while personality factors such as Type D personality and psychological traits like self-compassion have been separately explored, their potential mediating roles in linking authoritarian parenting to romantic relationship outcomes remain underexplored (Pepping, Davis, O'Donovan, & Pal, 2015; van den Broek, Smolderen, Pedersen, & Denollet, 2010; Yarnell & Neff, 2013). Third, although filial piety is widely recognized as an influential cultural factor in East Asian contexts, research seldom examines its moderating role on parenting effects specifically concerning romantic relationships (Bedford & Yeh, 2019; Chen & Wu, 2021; Yeh & Bedford, 2003). Addressing these gaps, the present conceptual model integrates authoritarian parenting, Type D personality, self-compassion, and authoritarian filial piety to offer a culturally nuanced understanding of how early parenting experiences impact the romantic lives of Chinese emerging adults.

Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework (as shown in figure 1) illustrates how authoritarian parenting influences romantic relationship quality among Chinese emerging adults. Specifically, it suggests that authoritarian parenting negatively impacts romantic relationship quality through two mediators: Type D personality (negative affectivity and social inhibition) and low self-compassion (self-criticism and reduced emotional resilience) (Denollet, 2005; Neff, 2003). Additionally, authoritarian filial piety (AFP) moderates these pathways, strengthening the negative effects of authoritarian parenting for individuals who strongly endorse filial obedience and parental authority (Bedford & Yeh, 2019; Yeh & Bedford, 2003). This model integrates psychological and cultural factors, highlighting the combined influence of family environment, individual traits, and cultural beliefs on young adults' romantic relationships.

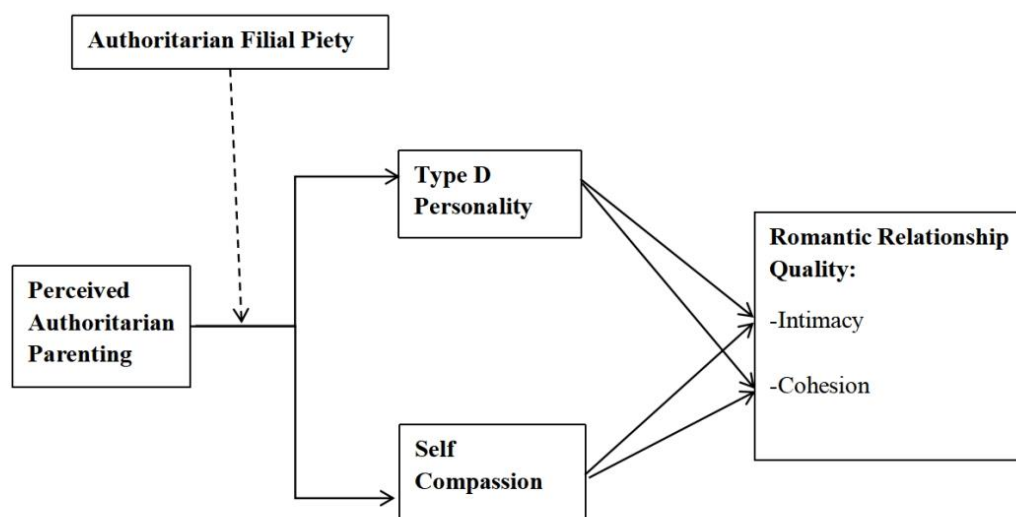


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Conclusion

This conceptual review has explored the impact of authoritarian parenting on romantic relationship quality among Chinese emerging adults, highlighting Type D personality and self-compassion as key mediating factors, and authoritarian filial piety (AFP) as a significant cultural moderator. By integrating Attachment Theory and Self-Determination Theory, the model explains how early authoritarian parenting experiences shape personality traits and self-compassion, subsequently influencing adult romantic relationships. High AFP intensifies these negative outcomes by reinforcing internalized parental expectations, thereby exacerbating relational distress. This framework fills important gaps in existing research, emphasizing the interconnected roles of parenting style, personality, self-compassion, and cultural context. Future empirical studies should investigate these relationships longitudinally and across diverse cultural settings, aiming to support emerging adults in fostering healthier romantic relationships despite early familial challenges.

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